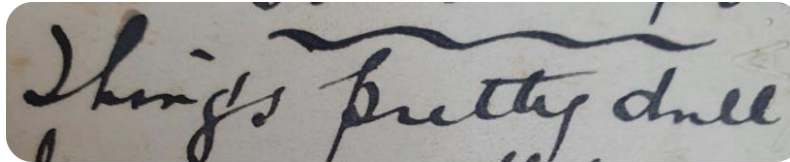


Things pretty dull: Materiality and the making of Muizenberg in the 20th and 21st centuries

Jenna Hiscock

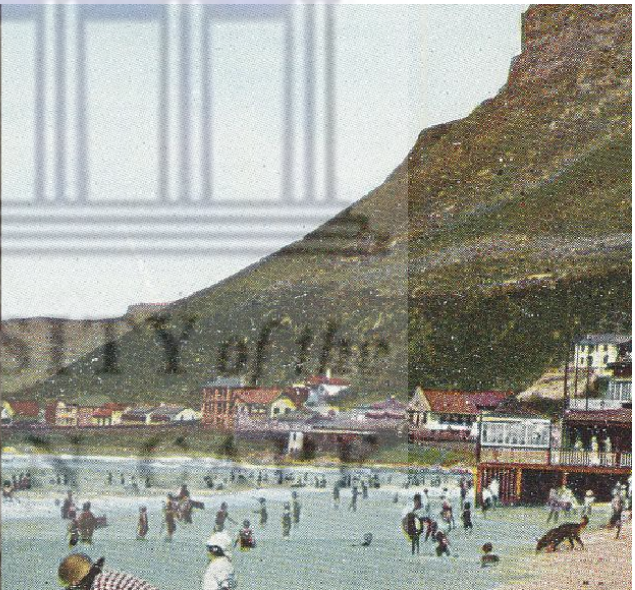
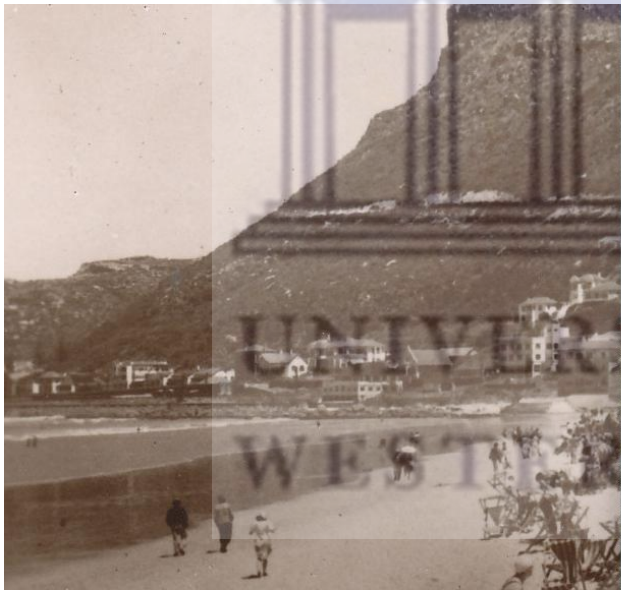
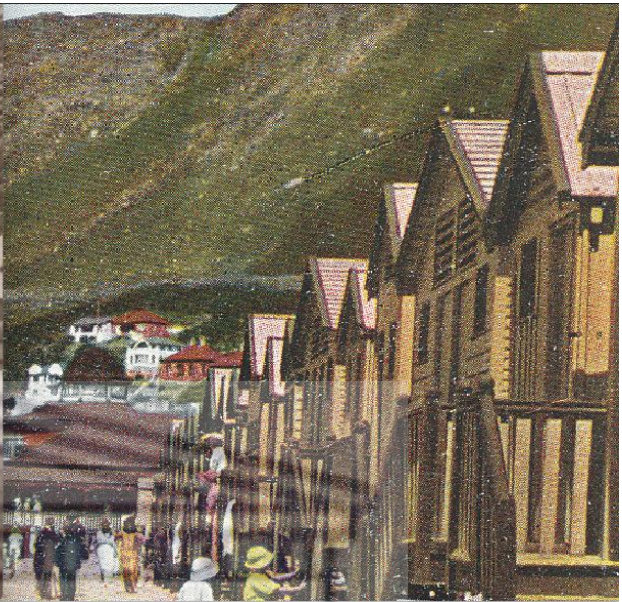


UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Supervisor: Professor Leslie Witz (University of the Western Cape)


A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Historical Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of the Western Cape.

November 2023



Plagiarism Declaration

I, Jenna Hiscock, declare that ‘Things pretty dull: Materiality and the making of Muizenberg in the 20th and 21st centuries’, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination other than the University of the Western Cape, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Jenna Hiscock
November 2023.



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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore processes of historical production and ideas about public space in Muizenberg, South Africa. It argues that the dominant narrative told about Muizenberg from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reinforces colonial hegemony concerning public space, development and progress. This research attempts to challenge and undermine this narrative.

In order to do so, this research looks at postcards of Muizenberg as a way of re-reading history and historical production. Throughout, I explore whether the postcard can become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its dominant histories. What can such a reading address? What sort of events are included in these dominant histories, who is present and absent, and which representations are included or excluded by local historians? Beginning with an analysis of the 'golden years' of Muizenberg, I problematise dominant production of Muizenberg's history, and discuss how it is depicted on postcards, particularly within books produced by local historians. I engage with the postcard as a material object, looking at 'more' than its image, considering both its sides, and the stamps, addresses, messages, physical appearance, manufacturer, etc.

Secondly, I look at other histories that appear on postcards which are 'outside' of dominant histories, including more contemporary postcards that I found in Muizenberg. These include moments in Muizenberg where several communities, artists, and activists attempted to push back against homogenising narratives through postcards and other mediums. This research culminates in the making of my own postcards that weave together themes of fugitivity, environmental humanities and perceptions of time and space. Through this process, I found that the postcard is not only a banal or romantic object, but rather can metamorphose into a dissonant object, one which deciphers and challenges the 'golden years' of Muizenberg. This research considers who or what is absent/silenced from the 'golden years,' but rather than writing an alternative narrative that attempts to fill in the gaps, it creates connections between multiple Muizenbergs, where there is no beginning or end, nor a universalising image of the town and its subjects.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Leslie Witz, for encouraging me to explore this research through creative practices. His insight and care of history was a continual source of inspiration.

Dr Samuel Longford, for reading my second draft, encouraging me to write about Muizenberg, conversations about politics and introducing me to Stuart Hall. His patience, knowledge and passion for slow work will keep my fire burning for years to come. Stevie and Loretta have my thanks for our family, sleep overs and their love over the years.

To Romy van Leeve, Sister Karin, and Dr Nicole Phillips, who helped create well being in my life throughout this research. Frank, Caitlin, Dara, Simone, Ralph, Reuben and Dr Aidan Erasmus, for visits to Muizenberg, boat trips in False Bay, drives to campus, and nourishing moments together. Their friendships held me over the two years. The final stretch was infinitely better because of Ella and Leo's companionship, my thanks to them for getting me walking everyday. Gratitude to Tamzyn Botha, Aragorn Eloff and Dylan Valley, who shared their ideas and work with me. Neil and Ryan, from Print Art, who assisted with the scanning and printing of my postcards. And to the Postcrossing senders and receivers around the world who keep postcards traveling.

Special thanks to the Department of Historical Studies and the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape. Every lecture, seminar, workshop and conference provided immense motivation which developed this research and taught me the rigour with which I needed to keep refining my work. They include but are not limited to Professor Maurits van Bever Donker, Bongani Kona, Professor Rory Bester, Dr Michelle and Dr Ross Truscott, Professor Mark Gibbons and Dr Caio Simoes de Araujo. Professor Patricia Hayes and Professor Maurits van Bever Donker allowed me to audit their courses, which became incubations for my initial conceptual framework and chapters. I am grateful for every lesson together. And to the administrative staff, Guest Lecturing Assistant program and fellow tutors, whose work made the two years smoother and more enjoyable.

My thanks to the archivists at the National Library of South Africa for their help in finding postcards of Muizenberg, especially Karel Schoeman whose work expanded the postcard archive. I also want to acknowledge the Muizenberg residents who shared stories with me over

the past four years. Those discussions developed my interest in this topic. And thanks to Muizenberg for being a place to swim, explore and contemplate.

The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA.



Preface

At the start of the Covid outbreak in South Africa I was working at a clothing retailer in Kalk Bay. I had already been living in Muizenberg for about a year and often walked along the St. James walkway. I would use this as my route home after work, especially on weekends because of the traffic along Main road. I loved being able to walk along the shoreline watching the rising and falling of the sea and people running through certain sections to avoid getting wet from the bigger waves that splashed up onto the walkway.

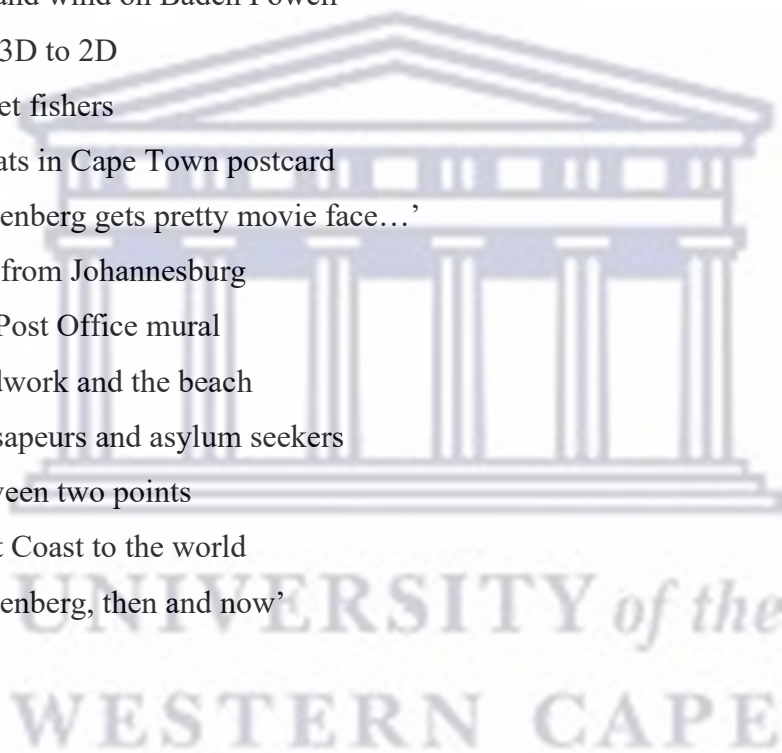
At one point, I noticed the Kalk Bay Village Market sign peeping over the top of a stone wall. Unfortunately I could never make it as it happened on Saturdays from 09:30 until 16:00 which were the same hours as my shifts. It took about two years until I eventually went to the market after a hike with friends. I had already done some research about Muizenberg for my Honours in Development Studies. so I knew that there was something left untouched which I wanted to explore in my Masters. I flicked through a few piles and boxes of books at a second hand bookseller but didn't come across anything related to my research. One of the smaller boxes contained maps and hiking trails which I perused through and found a peculiar looking book. It had two and a half images on the cover that looked dated, maybe fifty or sixty years ago, and was titled *Muizenberg: The Golden Years* by Michael Walker. Little did I know that months later this book would catapult me into a world of postcards, nostalgia and oceanic stories, and open up history in such a way that I could not have anticipated. This book has become the blueprint for my work, it walks with me as I go into archives and libraries, it sits at my desk everyday, and watches me read endless postcards. For me, its fifty pages are (inadvertently) a microcosm of the histories and memories that speak to systemic violence and exclusionary communities, public space and water politics.

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Here, then, we find ourselves between Scylla and Charybdis, between the devil and the deep blue sea. We always knew that the dismantling of the colonial paradigm would release strange demons from the deep, and that these monsters might come trailing all sorts of subterranean material. Still, the awkward twists and turns, leaps and reversals in the ways the argument is being conducted should alert us to the sleep of reason that is beyond or after Reason, the way desire plays across power and knowledge in the dangerous enterprise of thinking at or beyond the limit.¹

Go wherever you will — be it up the Nile or the St. Lawrence, across Spain, Hindustan, or Southern Italy — there you will find the postcard pictorial awaiting your selection.²

To read is for something to be addressed.³



¹ Stuart Hall, “When was the post-colonial? Thinking at the limit”, in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, edited by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 259.

² Christraud M. Geary, *Postcards From Africa: Photographers of the Colonial Era, Selections from the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications, 2018), 11.

³ Ross Truscott, “Reading, Apartheid, and the Unconscious,” *The Minor*, 24 October 2022, Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), Homecoming Centre.

Introduction

Things Pretty Dull

25 Nov: Cape Town

Things pretty dull here yet income tax papers are not being sent out, they are going to cause a lot of trouble I'm thinking. Weather very changeable.

Regards to all



Figure 1: 'The Beach, Muizenberg', Special Collections, National Library of South Africa, Cape Town, date unknown⁴

Figure 1 is a black-and-white printed postcard. In the foreground are four adults walking towards the photographer. The women appear to be smiling, they wear long-sleeved shirts and skirts that are tailored in at the waist. The woman on the right has frills on the front of her blouse, while the second woman wears a matching, fitted jacket. They appear to be wearing closed shoes. Both men wear full suits, handkerchiefs poking out of their top pockets. They too are wearing suit shoes. The man closest to the centre of the image has what looks to be a towel wrapped on top of

⁴ The images of postcards in the NLSA were taken on my phone, mostly using scans of the postcards done in the archive. This means that the images are not always high quality. I have tried to date the postcards based on when they were sent, but the date (of both sending and manufacturing) is often unknown.

his head (perhaps because of the wind), while the others all wear boater hats. Their clothing, as well as those in the background, portray Edwardian fashion of the early 1900s when King Edward VII was reigning in Great Britain. They were captured in motion, the creases of their clothing and position of their feet indicative of movement. The wind is visible in the woman on the end's skirt and her gesture to tuck her hair away.

The background is a typical seaside image that has been used on other postcards depicting the beach.⁵ Someone is riding a bicycle, while others walk along the shore (suggesting it is low tide). There are beach huts on the edge of the image, as well as indistinct buildings along the coast line. The mountains that make up half of the frame are the Muizenberg mountains which now form the Eastern part of the Silvermine Nature Reserve. Peck's Valley, Jacob's Ladder and Spes Bona are hiking trails on the mountains which lead into Kalk Bay, Clovelly and Simon's Town. In the top left hand corner, the publisher has inserted a caption "The Beach, Muizenberg".

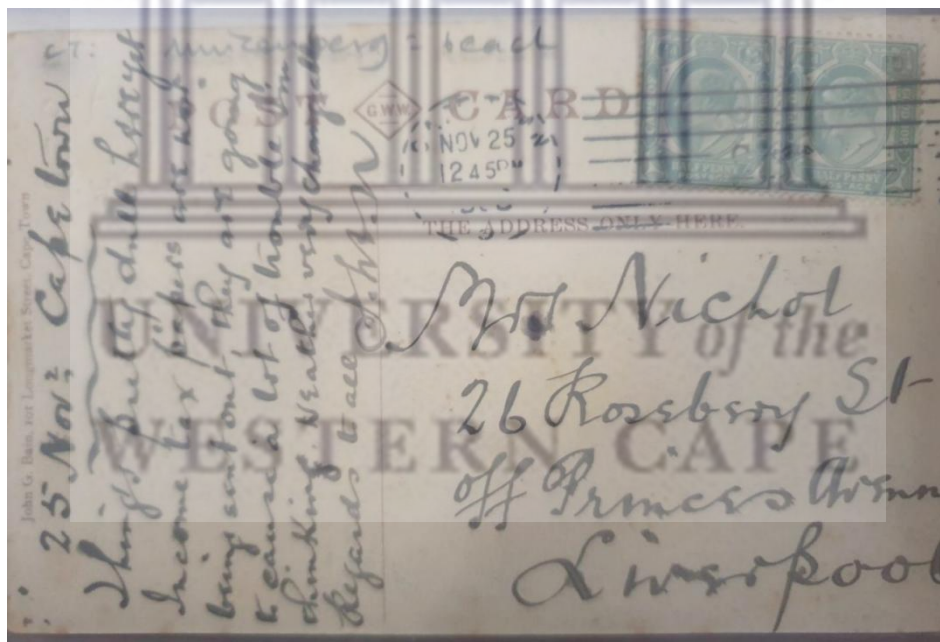


Figure 2: 'Things pretty dull...', Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

⁵ To my knowledge, earlier picture postcards of Muizenberg were produced in the early twentieth century. Postcards showcasing people on the beach would have become popular at the same time because of locomotive advancements and more standardised leisure time.

The reverse⁶ side (Figure 2) has been printed with a divided format (message on the left, address on the right) which was introduced in 1902. Prior to this there was only an address in the centre. During this period, the Universal Postal Union standardised certain features of the postcard, namely the size, text placement, and stamping protocol.⁷ The postcard shows basic information about the publisher, such as the small, vertical text on the left-hand border “John G. Bain, 101 Longmarket Street, Cape Town” and a “G.W.W” logo in the top centre. The publisher has also printed “the address only here” on the right half where the sender has written: *Mrs. Nichol, 26 Rosebery St, off Princes Avenue, Liverpool*. According to Google Maps, these roads still exist (see Figures 3-5). Rosebery street is where John Lennon first performed as a member of The QuarryMen.⁸ The message is handwritten in cursive lettering using an ink pen. A National Library of South Africa (NLSA) archivist has written in pencil “CT: Muizenberg = beach,” likely for categorisation purposes.

The circular post mark was made by a rubber stamp, including the location of the post office curved at the top, “Cape Town”. The date format is “Nov 25 1245pm,” the year is illegible. There are two green stamps in the right hand corner which have been cancelled with a striped hand-rolling stamp. They have ½ dime printed in the corners, with “halfpenny postage” in the centre bottom of the frame. King Edward VII appears in the centre of the frame, with a small crown at the top of the ovular secondary frame. The text on either side of the King says “Cape of Good Hope” which refers to certain time periods in South Africa’s construction, as Colony, Union, and Republic. The stamp affirms British rule in the country, where the face of the king appeared on the majority of stamps in territories that were under British rule during this time. The ‘Cape of Good Hope’ stamp was first printed and used on 1 September 1853, which would have changed to the Union of South Africa stamp after 1910.⁹

⁶ I have not adhered to contemporary postcard descriptions where the image on the postcard is assumed to be the ‘front’ and the message and the address is the ‘back’. It has not always been this way, especially prior to the inclusion of an image on a postcard. In chapter one I present the dichotomy of ‘front’ and ‘back’ and how the ‘golden years’ of Muizenberg are produced through the ‘front’ of the postcard. I read the reverse of the postcard as a method of understanding the lacunary function when focusing on the image.

⁷ Andrew Curry and Victoria Ward, “Postcards as Doorways,” in *Journal of Futures Studies* 18, no.3 (2014), 110.

⁸ M.P. Ashworth, “The QuarryMen, Rosebery Street and King John,” Beatles Liverpool Locations, 20 February 2013, <http://beatlesliverpoollocations.blogspot.com/2013/02/rosebery-street-and-king-john.html>.

⁹ “C.O.G.H 1904 2 1/2d Ultramarine SG73 Fine LMM,” Cape of Good Hope, Empire Philatelists, accessed on 20 February 2023, https://www.empirephilatelists.com/british-commonwealth-stamps/south-africa-and-states/cape-of-good-hope/king_george_vi_stamps-mint_stamps-stamps_on_cover.



Figure 3: Rosebery Street from Princes Avenue before demolition, M.P. Ashworth, “The QuarryMen, Rosebery Street and King John,” (Accessed 17 October 2023)



Figure 4: Rosebery Street from Princes Avenue after demolition, M.P. Ashworth, “The QuarryMen, Rosebery Street and King John,” 20 February 2013 (Accessed 17 October 2023)¹⁰

¹⁰ Figures 3-4 [<http://beatlesliverpoollocations.blogspot.com/2013/02/rosebery-street-and-king-john.html>]



Figure 5: Google Street View, Rosebery Street from Princes Avenue 2022 (Accessed 17 October 2023), <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ENyNW6waGD8KfHZJ8>¹¹

These postcards (Figures 1-2) serve as an introduction for what this research aims to do. It contemplates how the banality of a postcard can be worked and re-worked, like the motion of tilling soil or kneading dough, in such a way that its banality becomes useful for understanding historical production. “Things pretty dull” on the postcard is likely referring to the sender’s life, to the weather, an overall feeling of monotony. Although this specific postcard feels like it could have been commissioned by a beach photographer, this dullness, for me, is transposed into the image on the postcard, an image repeatedly printed and seen, showing nothing spectacular at all. It has become so conventional that it isn’t even mentioned by the sender. The reverse side holds this same triviality, perhaps only becoming valuable if the stamp is collectable. It is an apt title for this research because the postcard in many ways has become a banal or ordinary object, partly because of the repetitive imagery on the postcards, and partly because of the postcard’s decline in the twenty-first century (becoming an ‘old’ technology and form of communication).

This research is led by the postcard in an attempt to engage with it as a moving image object. In doing so, one can learn about the history of postcards in South Africa (and the world in general), about the production and distribution of postcards, and how it is linked to apartheid,

¹¹ Terry Kurgan uses Street View in her book which I find fascinating as a research tool. One can see that Rosebery Street has the same street corner. Liverpool has changed many times, and yet this building is largely unaltered. “I manoeuvre the mouse, travel down the road, rotate the image around its axis and find myself right back here, in another time, and from a less steeply inclined perspective”. Terry Kurgan, *Everyone Is Present: Essays on Photography, Memory and Family* (Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2018), 92.

tourism, colonialism, photography and representation. Furthermore, this research problematises how postcards, as romantic objects, have been used by local historians as illustrative of histories of the Cape Town seaside suburb of Muizenberg, and the country more generally. The postcard comes to stand in for Muizenberg. This thesis is born out of a critique of such histories, asking how, if at all, the postcard can become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its public histories? Can these “things pretty dull” be troubled through a nonlinear reading of postcards as moving images? When the postcard becomes a dissonant object, what can it tell us about how Muizenberg was made, what this making enables, and which histories are obscured? And to carry this further, is it possible to interrupt Muizenberg’s dominant histories by using the technology of the postcard, perhaps subverting the dichotomy of ‘front’ and ‘back’?

A general introduction: Materiality, SPIDER and the rhizome

The foundation of this research lies in the postcard becoming ‘more’ than an image. This becomes possible when engaging with materiality as a practice. It introduces the question: how does materiality and the postcard become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its public histories? Firstly though, what is materiality, how can it be used, and what happens to the postcard when it is studied as a material object?

Elizabeth Edwards argues that “materiality translates the abstract and representational ‘photography’ into ‘photographs’ as objects that exist in space and time”.¹² Through postcards becoming spatial and temporal objects, we can learn about how postcards were used during the twentieth century and what these uses tell us about societies. However, Edwards, as well as scholars such as Tim Ingold, take the practice of materiality one step further. They see the objects as influencing humans and having agency, it is not as simple as us influencing them. “Thinking materially provides an interpretative focus in which things become historically activated”.¹³ Edwards suggests that the writing and research of history is a practice, encouraging historians to think about the ways in which a specific archive mutates over time, distance, event, scale, context and materiality. Resulting in a better understanding of the implications that these mutations have for our understanding of the object.¹⁴ Each of these dimensions have influenced my reading of postcards.

¹² Elizabeth Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 97.

¹³ Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*, 98.

¹⁴ Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*, 1.

For example, the postcard carries temporalities. It not only allows the receiver to ‘look back’ in time, but also brings the receiver ‘into the present’ with the sender. We might see the postcard as containing a piece of the sender as it travels through time and space. The postcard also becomes a window to “glance backwards through and beyond our own experience” bringing a physical image along with it.¹⁵ It is as if the sender hopes a part of their life is carried on the postcard. Perhaps the postcard scatters the ashes of a memory. Time and distance are not only metaphysical in this regard, they come to represent a physical past and place that is far away and elsewhere. They represent a physical presentness, one which speaks to Barthes’ notion of the *punctum* in an image.¹⁶

The question then, is what the object does, and what it makes humans do? In ‘Towards an Ecology of Materials’ Ingold argues that an object’s agency resides “not in their material form but instead arises from the object’s involvement in the processes and relations of the world”.¹⁷ Ingold proposes that materiality is an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the object’s form-making processes, hence opposing object-centred materiality because it is human-centred and usually occurs at the expense of living organisms (this includes nonhuman entities, plants and animals), an argument explored in the third chapter.¹⁸ Seen in their work on materiality, Deleuze and Guattari can be read along with Ingold, when they write that by approaching materiality within one discipline, or through a more object-centred lens, it is harder to understand the “fields of force and circulations of materials that actually give rise to things and that are constitutive of the web of life”.¹⁹ Ingold writes that by cutting off an object from its source of vitality, of energy and materials, the object’s liveliness and capacities for perception are blocked or frozen. This is particularly productive when considering the postcard. What, for example, is the vitality of energy and materials of the postcard? Is it possible that the historian can cut an object off from its source through our (dis)engagements and (mis)perceptions of/with it?

Ingold proposes a ‘meshwork’ called Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness (SPIDER).²⁰ He argues that Bruno Latour’s linear network (Actor-Network Theory) of relations is too simple an explanation for the intricate ecology between

¹⁵ Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*, 29.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage, 2000), 27-47.

¹⁷ Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*, 6.

¹⁸ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 428.

¹⁹ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 428.

²⁰ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 436.

human and nonhuman. “The emphasis in SPIDER is not on the interactive convocation of existing entities but on the co-responsive movement of occurrent things along their manifold lines of becoming”.²¹ Ingold’s SPIDER is related to Deleuze and Guattari’s work on the rhizome and movement of material, which is that objects are in constant motion and cannot be simplified into linear networks. Deleuze and Guattari explain how form shifts from the ‘objectness’ of things to the material flows and formative processes wherein they come into being.²² They encourage an abandonment of one’s perception of matter as a fixed, homogeneous form, as this keeps us blind to the variability of matter, “its tensions and elasticities, lines of flow and resistances” and its “conformations and deformations to which these modulations give rise”.²³ As historians, this movement of the material can reveal the objects within this flow, that it is in flux, and therefore we can only follow the ‘matter-flow’, becoming ‘itinerants guided by intuition in action’.²⁴ Matter is already a fragment of the past existing in the present, it is an ‘ongoing historicity’. To get to know a material requires the historian to attempt to observe and engage with what *is* there and then to follow its movements precisely because “everything may be something, but being something is always on the way to becoming something else”.²⁵ For Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Ingold, the challenge that is set before us is to break with the linear, to try to see the paths of the material’s movements as potentially disconnected because they are ‘perpetually on the threshold of emergence’ rather than only tracing their connections. “Materials, as noted above, are substances-in-becoming.” They refer to this as the ‘rhizomatic’.²⁶

In this research, and specifically in chapter one, I argue that by emphasising the image on the postcard, we are closed off to deeper perceptions of it (and history). This, I argue, has a tendency to imprison the postcard, often as a romantic object. Although there is much to study within an image, my critique does not lie with visual culture as such, it lies with the reality that an object-centred approach seems to perpetuate and reproduce a linear history of progress and development, as is seen in the case of Muizenberg. Rather than solely focusing on the image on postcards, I want to explore how their materiality, as moving images with multiple sides — the front and back is never already determined — can intervene in rethinking and remaking histories.

²¹ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 436.

²² Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 431.

²³ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 433.

²⁴ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 433.

²⁵ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 435.

²⁶ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 435.

The postcard

The postcard emerged in the late 1800s, presumably in the Austro-Hungarian empire.²⁷ It was at first a plain card, undergoing a series of changes until the early 1900s where it became similar to what we are familiar with today. It originally had an address on one side and the handwritten message on the other, which then changed to include an image on one side with just the address on the reverse. As previously mentioned, it was changed again in 1902 with the introduction of the ‘divided back’.

Chapter one will look in more detail at these physical and technical innovations and changes, revealing certain developments in the twentieth century that relate to social and economic changes, technological advancements and institutional innovations. Some of these factors include: cheap printing and postage (due to the mechanisation of certain industries such as automatic typesetting machines and photocopying, and automatic conveyor belts transporting parcels in post offices); limited communication technologies (the majority of houses in South Africa did not have telephones); an increasingly literate population and a middle class who were travelling more easily via train and bus (throughout Europe and its colonies).²⁸ These changes, especially the evolution of colour printing and photography, led to the picture postcard’s ‘golden era’ of the twentieth century. “In Britain alone, the number of postcards passing through the Post Office... rose from 313 million in 1895 to 926 million in 1914 and it is estimated that by 1910, 2.5 million postcards were sold every day in the United States”.²⁹

Each chapter aims to view postcards primarily as a moving image object, extending the analysis of its visual representations beyond the romanticised nostalgic image of Muizenberg’s *Golden Years*.³⁰ By reading postcards in such a way, there is the potential of exploring what these fragments do or do not tell us. It is important to ask if it is possible to let the postcard speak. In that sense, we might be able to recognize that the object has an expanded form, its liveliness therefore transformed. In this research, I see postcards as doorways to study historical approaches and practices.

²⁷ Curry and Ward, “Postcards as Doorways,” 110.

²⁸ Curry and Ward, “Postcards as Doorways,” 110.

²⁹ Stephen Brown and Darach Turley, ed(s)., *Consumer Research: Postcards from the edge* (London: Routledge, 1997), 265.

³⁰ Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years* (Cape Town: self-published, 2004), 1-50.

The Making of Muizenberg

The first chapter of this thesis looks at postcards of Muizenberg found in the National Library of South Africa, in private collections, and bought from various stores in Muizenberg. These postcards are made to represent a history of Muizenberg, one which is supported by several local historians such as Michael Walker, Arderne Tredgold, Vincent van Graan and Anthony Hockly.³¹ The chapter shows how a historical practice of only looking at the postcard's image affirms a linear reading of history and historical production. What becomes clear throughout chapter one, is how the 'golden years' narrative of Muizenberg is produced, and how it is reproduced by the postcard.

I have attempted to use a nonlinear reading of the postcards throughout the chapter, as a tool of analysis. It is written in such a way to explore if the postcard can be "reframed,"³² and if there is a way to challenge the histories which postcards and historians produce. The first chapter presents a critique of writing a straightforward, uncritical version of history, one which has a tendency to obscure histories of colonialism, apartheid and racism. Muizenberg serves as a site through which to explore these broader histories.

I discuss the histories of Muizenberg which local historians write, discussing their roots in colonial nostalgia, apartheid, progress and 'development'.³³ I am not necessarily interested in how accurate these histories are, instead looking at historical production, and not history as events found in an archive. I have tried to stay as close to popular histories of Muizenberg as possible in order to create conversations and engagements with the memorial complex³⁴ of the 'golden years' of Muizenberg as portrayed in images on postcards. The two main texts which form the initial focus of the chapter are Walker's *Muizenberg: The Golden Years* and the Kalk Bay Historical Association's *Historical Walk: Muizenberg/St. James*.

The above books and other archival material offer detailed accounts of Muizenberg as a heritage site and tourist destination. They include buildings and monuments such as the

³¹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 1-50; Arderne Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1995); Vincent van Graan, *Cape Town: Then and Now* (Cape Town: Struik Travel & Heritage, 2013); Anthony H. Hockly, "A Study for the Redevelopment of Muizenberg" (Master's thesis, University of Cape Town, 1968).

³² Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2009).

³³ I have put development in quotation marks as I view development as a failed project of economic security, as the 'solution' to 'under'-development.

³⁴ The term 'memorial complex' comes from the work done by Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool, and Gary Minkley (individually and together), such as *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* and *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts*.

Muizenberg Railway Station, Het Posthuys, the Natale Labia Art Museum and the Pavilion. These historical buildings, the beach and ocean (as depicted on postcards) are valuable because of the meanings that they carry. In this initial chapter, it is important for me to look at how both sides of the postcard move together.

Mediating Muizenberg

Chapter two introduces different mediums, besides the postcard, such as documentaries, newspaper articles and books. It consists of various media that potentially show other histories of Muizenberg and what they represent in terms of race, the seaside and dominant historiographies. The media in this chapter have been selected as interventions in the (re)making of Muizenberg's erased histories. *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea* by Hedy Davis, which specifically looks at social histories of the Jewish community who were living in and visiting the beach during its busiest era (1920s-1960s), is one of the texts that ground this chapter.³⁵ Surfing postcards are also engaged with as they are important interventions made by the surfing community with regards to activism, anti-racism, beach inclusion, and the deracialisation of leisure activities and spaces. One of the books that will be looked at in this section is *Afro Surf* (which has received its fair share of criticisms).³⁶ Various newspaper articles and short films are also used, such as *Free Surf* which is about prominent Muizenberg surfer and activist Cass Collier.³⁷ In this chapter, I also look at 'alternative' postcards from the Muizenberg Postcard Project (2011-2016) as 'other' representations of Muizenberg.

The histories in this chapter are thought about in relation to creolization. They are not written about as a way to complete a missing history, as tempting as that might be. I think about this incompleteness alongside Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the 'rhizome' which, according to them, "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo".³⁸ For Deleuze and Guattari, the 'tree' (I.e the linear) imposes the verb "to be", yet the rhizome is the conjunction "and...and...and".³⁹ This helps me with thinking

³⁵ Hedy I. Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea* (Self-published, 2014).

³⁶ Mami Wata, *AfroSurf* (California: Ten Speed Press, 2021).

³⁷ Bioscope Films, "CORONA FREE SURFER: CASS COLLIER directed by KYLA PHILANDER," Youtube Video, 3 May 2022, Series, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ml2zsUWEgJo>.

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 25.

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia*, 25.

about temporality, that Muizenberg is not ‘finite’ at a certain point in time, it, and all public space (and all being), is the conjunction and...and...and.

Whereas the archive used in chapter one only looks at the one side of the postcard reaffirming a dominant history, the archive in chapter two (which also looks at the front of the image on postcards) does so for a different reason. It shows some of the people and events who have been obscured in chapter one’s archive and brings to light these histories that have been silenced. This requires contemplation about diasporic communities, systemic racism, erasure, and violence. If chapter one appears to be a line, chapter two would break and/or stratify that line, presenting why history cannot be linear. It creates a series of layers and connections which pry open the ‘golden years’ narrative, problematising how history is used, who spaces are made for, and which people are seen.

Creolizing Muizenberg

The final chapter attempts to further reorientate the postcard by including creative methods and mediums. I have specifically used artistic practice in the form of postcards as an intervention. I reintroduce the reverse of the postcard whilst destabilising the front. This speaks to some of the more conceptual arguments in this mini-thesis, continuing to draw on creolization and nonlinearity. In Mudimbe’s *On African Fault Lines*, he explains how linearity is far more topographical than what dominant discourse presumes, resulting in his intervention of nonlinearity, as a political and philosophical practice.⁴⁰

The key scholars and texts in this section are; *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* by Stacy Alaimo, *History 4° Celsius* by Ian Baucom, and *Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?: Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations* by Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick.⁴¹ Their arguments about the Anthropocene, deep time, historiography, and conceptions of nature are drawn on for the creation of the postcards. They are inspired by the question of “who is the ‘anthro’ in

⁴⁰ Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *On African Fault Lines* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press, 2013), 28.

⁴¹ Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Ian Baucom, *History 4° Celsius: Search for a Method in the Age of the Anthropocene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020); Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Anthropocene”?⁴² My goal is to create a space to further contemplate how materiality and the postcard can become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its public histories.

A final word as a beginning

Following Witz, Rassool and Minkley’s work on the post-apartheid memorial complex, this research will consider the ways that postcards of Muizenberg have “transformed the way we relate, and think about public culture and history in particular” and how they “echo and reinforce already amenable and transferred public representations around the heritage complex”.⁴³ This is reiterated by De Grassi in his work on narratives around nationalism, the dynamics of hegemony and understanding geo-histories.⁴⁴ What does it mean for a space to be *made* into something through its representation on postcards? And who or what does this kind of production serve? This reading of post-cards transforms them into apparitions in a waiting room, or ashes in an obscure urn. As written by Derrida, ash or cinder “means the difference between what remains and what is,” they are traces of something no longer there.⁴⁵ In the same way that “the phrase does not say what it is, but what it was,” so does the postcard.⁴⁶

This research destabilises the front and back of the postcard into moving/movement. This is illustrated by undermining the dichotomy, after all a postcard continually moves time. Historically what constituted back and front was never predetermined and in my interventions I am going back in time to an early history of the postcard when it was not always clear what was back or front, and while it appears as dichotomous it is not always so.

⁴² Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, 143.

⁴³ Gary Minkley, “‘A fragile inheritor’: The post-apartheid memorial complex, A.C. Jordan and the reimagining of cultural heritage in the Eastern Cape”, in *Kronos* 34 (Nov 2008), 17.

⁴⁴ Aharon de Grassi, “Monumental Relations: Connecting Memorials and Conversations in Rural and Urban Malanje, Angola”, in *Kronos* 45 (Nov 2019), 17-45.

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, trans. Ned Luckacher (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 23.

⁴⁶ Derrida, *Cinders*, 17.

Chapter 1

The Making of Muizenberg

Introduction



Figure 1.1: 'The Children's Paradise — Muizenberg', Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, date unknown

This postcard montage is the front and back cover of Walker's book. It is made up of nine pictorial postcards and images (including the 4 insets). Each is a quintessential beach side image, presumably used by Walker as for him they represent Muizenberg's *Golden Years*. Walker's book includes sixty postcard images which present the transformation of Muizenberg from "a motley settlement of shacks and farm houses" (1880s) to "the premier holiday resort of Southern Africa" (1920s).⁴⁷ Walker's book is a culmination of reading one side of the postcard only. He makes a history as a postcard, omitting the reverse side.

After struggling to find other Muizenberg postcards at antique shops and flea markets, I visited the National Library of South Africa's Cape Town campus. This was my first experience with postcards as material objects, as opposed to images found in Walker's book. I requested

⁴⁷ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 1-50.

postcards of Muizenberg from the archivist at Special Collections and spent the first few hours sorting through and re-categorising them by sender, date and manufacturer (rather than by image). As they lay out on the table, the postcards metamorphosed into clues, fragments, puzzle pieces, or even what Derrida has referred to as ashes.

I was sitting in the Special Collections room at a wooden desk, deep shadows and warm, low lighting, a magnifying desk lamp reaching over piles of postcards. Things pretty dull. Postcards that, for example, told me about someone who should no longer come and visit the sender. It became apparent that I could try to piece together straightforward narratives about the past via the images I ‘discovered’ in the archive. However, this production would still be an incomplete history, even when read alongside books such as Walker’s. After looking at over two hundred postcards, of images and messages, I decided to try and make certain deductions based on the physicalness of the postcards. Deductions concerning why photographers were often unnamed, or who was sending these banal messages. It felt like these fragments could tell me more if I could see them as something other than an image or text. To let them revolt, so to speak, against their makers (publisher, sender and receiver!). I contemplated the ways that people used postcards and if historians had to view the postcard in the same way. Was there something the text or imagery wasn’t illustrating? What does it mean to leave objects in the archive in the first place? Were there other histories to read that challenged a linear reading of history through text and image? I was left with fragments.

Provoked by Karen Harvey who argues that we should consider how objects can be active in the world, helping to create meaning, rather than being reduced to passive things that reflect the meaning we create, I decided to be led by the postcard itself.⁴⁸ I went back to the same archive several times, seeing what else the postcards showed, what meaning it helped to create, either directly or ambiguously. I made photocopies and took notes, cross-referencing what was in the archive and private collections. In between these viewings, I read several key historians who wrote about Muizenberg, such as Walker, Tredgold, Brodie, van Graan, and Hockly. They spoke about the ‘golden years’ of Muizenberg, the years that the postcards were made to depict. Which events do they include? Who was there or not there? Which illustrations do they use? Exploring

⁴⁸ Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Alternative Sources*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2017), 3-4.

these questions, the initial chapter considers postcards of Muizenberg as an archive, engaging with dominant histories and narratives that move according to a colonial logic.

Muizenberg's histories

Why Muizenberg IS the centre of the universe

Sir.— Your story (Weekend Argus, January 12) remarking on the signposting in the Cape that all roads lead to Muizenberg neglects the obvious explanation: Muizenberg IS, for many of us, the centre of the universe.

*Jeremy Isaacs,
Chiswick,
London.*

Footnote: Mr Isaacs is the producer of The World At War series now back on SABC-TV. He was in South Africa last week.

This letter to the editor of *The Cape Argus* (1985), offers a doorway into Muizenberg and its 'golden years'. It exemplifies certain perceptions and feelings towards Muizenberg which, I argue, shape ideas about the seaside in the twenty-first century, and reveals much about popular or dominant narratives of Muizenberg during the early twentieth century.

Mr Isaacs' sentiment and distinctive representation is a useful starting point when considering narratives about Muizenberg (the centre of the universe) which local historians and residents perpetuate. This nostalgic framework presents a linear progression of a town, aspiring to a supposed rationalism and clarity of history, a simple truth. Preserved by key authors, the significance of this historical account of Muizenberg shows the production of a Capetonian suburb during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Uncritical of race, class, gender, colonialism and apartheid, it steps into history as if it were homogeneous and can be observed in situ. I argue that through homogenising Muizenberg during a specific time period, an obscured history is produced. I hope to intervene in this, by prying open and troubling dominant histories of Muizenberg.

Sombre Currents

A plethora of local historians have written dominant histories of Muizenberg. The majority of these histories follow a narrative of origins – what I call sombre currents – adversity – omens on the bay – moving towards the triumph of settlement – rolling swells. These pro-settler narratives begin with Dutch settlement in 1652 when minor outposts along the bay were advantageous to securing their position in this newly acquired territory. Simon’s Bay (now Simon’s Town) is significant as the official winter anchorage for the Dutch East India Company’s (VOC) ships in 1743. Muizenberg appears in these narratives as a strategically advantageous location between Table Bay and Simon’s Bay for the VOC. It was a lookout point to see incoming ships into the bay, “a watchdog,” that also became home for a handful of trek-fishers who fished in False Bay and came ashore in Muizenberg.⁴⁹

The second origin story occurs nearly 150 years later, with the ‘Invasion of the Cape Colony’, also known as ‘The Battle of Muizenberg’ or ‘the British Invasion’ in 1795.⁵⁰ Local history narrates that the British relied on Muizenberg as a port for ships travelling to and returning from various trade routes. Therefore, when the French entered the Netherlands, it threatened Britain’s access to Southern Africa. The Battle of Muizenberg resulted in a changing of the guard and created a second beginning for Muizenberg, one that has been incorporated into a national settler narrative.⁵¹ As noted by Witz, “the British, whose moment of landing in Muizenberg in 1795 was long regarded by ‘educated men’ as the beginning of ‘noteworthy’ South African history”.⁵²

Omens on the bay

Once occupied by the British, expansion along the peninsula moved slowly.⁵³ Hockley imagines how during the late 1800s “the view of the ocean was uninterrupted by buildings; the mountain was uncluttered with houses and whaling boats operated offshore” and that “plots could be

⁴⁹ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 126.

⁵⁰ These names were told to me on a walking tour that I did in 2022 and can also be found in the following book: Michael Walker, *Historical Walk: Muizenberg/St. James* (Cape Town: Kalk Bay Historical Association), 3.

⁵¹ See Leslie Witz *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Past* for the outline of settler narratives, tracing Jan Van Riebeck’s landing in 1652 and the construction of colonial landings into South African nationalism and public history during apartheid.

⁵² Leslie Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Pasts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 24.

⁵³ Nechama Brodie, *The Cape Town Book: A Guide to the City’s History, People and Places* (Century City: Struik Travel and Heritage, 2015), 227.

bought for a deposit of R10-00.”⁵⁴ The beach was desolate with few visitors and bathers, and was predominantly used for trek-fishing and whaling (depicted in the first three postcards in Walker’s book). The whaling industry ended by the 1880s in Muizenberg when it was still considered a ‘motley settlement’.

One event which is emblematic of development in local narratives was the arrival of the much anticipated railway at Muizenberg in 1882: the train had “at last began to wind its way down to the sea”.⁵⁵ Previously, ox-wagons were the predominant mode of transportation from Cape Town to Simon’s Town. The trip was arduous and roads remained in poor condition until the train arrived, as well as the widening, kerbing and guttering of the main road in 1904.⁵⁶ The new station meant that “thousands of local day-trippers could have access to the sea where previously only the wealthy who owned horses and traps could regularly visit Muizenberg”.⁵⁷ The railway and its halt in Muizenberg signified its official path towards development.

Rolling Swells

Although the Anglo-Boer (South African) War is rarely mentioned in Muizenberg’s history, it provides another historical turning point. The municipality would have “considered various schemes put forward for increasing the attractions of the town after the war”.⁵⁸ An influx of British soldiers coming from Simon’s Town naval base, and an increase of British tourists and colonists looking to settle in the new colony, are said to have been the impetus for rapid development in Muizenberg.

The opening of the first pavilion on the beachfront (1911) is a significant development post-South African War. The South African Railway Holiday promoted that it was “able to accommodate 3000 bathers a day so that Muizenberg, besides being the best beach on our coast, could now offer every comfort and convenience”.⁵⁹ For Walker, the attraction firmly established Muizenberg as the “most sought after resort and literally thousands of local and up-country beach-goers flocked to the ‘sands of Muizenberg’”.⁶⁰ The pavilion and its facilities made the

⁵⁴ Hockly, “A Study for the Redevelopment of Muizenberg,” 8.

⁵⁵ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 85.

⁵⁶ Walker, *Historical Walk: Muizenberg/St. James*, 1.

⁵⁷ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 14.

⁵⁸ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 136.

⁵⁹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 6.

⁶⁰ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 6.

seaside into a beach, the golden sands beneath the building pre-empting the subsequent ‘golden years’.

The old Muizenberg, of simple houses, trek nets, booths for pickling fish, cows on the beach, stelliasies on which harders and other fish swung drying in the sun and wind had almost disappeared. The little fishing village had been transformed into a popular, crowded seaside resort.⁶¹

Development accelerated in the early 1900s owing to the “cross fertilizing influence of holidays, rail travel and prosperity,” hence Muizenberg became “the Lido of South Africa... the shore with the finest bathing beach in the world”.⁶² The enduring ‘golden years’ narrative created contemporary nostalgia for a time when ‘things used to be better’. The community history website “Muizenberg Looking Back,” speaks to this nostalgia, what “old Muizenberg” represented, and still represents in 2023. There appears to be a reverence for these memories, of what development promised to do, a Muizenberg which is supposedly “for us”.⁶³

An eye for Muizenberg: Muizenberg postcards

Coinciding with Muizenberg becoming a popular holiday destination, there was a proliferation of postcards containing images of the beachfront, surfers, and prominent buildings such as Rhodes cottage and various hotels. After reading Walker’s book, I wanted to locate other postcards to ascertain which postcards he had excluded, to delineate the ‘golden years’ and obscured histories of Muizenberg. Below is a curation and analysis of selected postcards of Muizenberg, which I read as coinciding with (and critiquing) the ‘golden years’ of Muizenberg.

When reading Christraud Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, it is evident how postcards were born out of colonial worlds, offering “a panorama of the African continent, with its deserts, rivers, rain forests, mountainous regions, and ocean shores”.⁶⁴ However, postcards did not only represent the picturesque. They also produced “damaging and painful stereotypes, with images reinforcing Eurocentric, imperialist views of Africa that had been deeply rooted in Western

⁶¹ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 140.

⁶² Hockly, “A Study for the Redevelopment of Muizenberg,” 8.

⁶³ The ‘us’ that is referred to here changes depending on the predominant residential population. It is produced by those who live there and are usually represented in dominant historical narratives. In Muizenberg it tends to mean white, middle class South Africans. See Charlotte Lemanski and Grant Saff, “The Value(s) of Space: The Discourses and Strategies of Residential Exclusion in Cape Town and Long Island,” *Urban Affairs Review* 45, no.4 (2010), 507-543.

⁶⁴ Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 35.

thought for centuries.”⁶⁵ Postcards of colonies displayed the supposed accomplishments of colonial presence and their administrative infrastructure. Residents back home perceived these images as affirmations that “provided visual evidence of the ‘civilising’ of African peoples under European rule”.⁶⁶ One is therefore prompted to consider the ways in which postcards affect contemporary residents of Muizenberg. “How do these representations, used in the past primarily as mementos for travelers, inform popular memory in the present?”⁶⁷ I argue that the postcards represent a version of Muizenberg that incites specific desires concerning public space and development. van Eeden explains how “postcards have the ability to evoke artificial nostalgia for a past that never really existed, presenting ‘an idealized self-portrait [of a country] at a particular moment in history’”.⁶⁸ Thompson expands on this ‘artificial nostalgia’, describing postcards as ‘visual placebos’.⁶⁹

Postcards contributed to “Africa’s ever-growing ‘image world’... The term *image world* alludes to the multitude and complex nature of these pictures, which moved about the world, sharing and connecting spaces — and linking image makers and consumers in Africa, Europe, and across the Atlantic and other oceans.”⁷⁰

This artificial nostalgia can be seen in the juxtaposition between colonialism and apartheid, where Muizenberg’s ‘golden years’ happen after unionisation, during the formalisation of apartheid. The silencing of this conjuncture is necessary for the ‘golden years’ nostalgia.

Muizenberg from the mountain: Boyes Drive

Walker writes about the general advancements following the improvements of the road between Muizenberg and Fish Hoek in 1904:

Due to the rise in popularity of the motor car in the early 1920s it was decided that a scenic drive along the coast above Muizenberg, St.James and Kalk Bay should be constructed. This formed part of Sir Frederic de Waal’s dream of having an ‘All Round Cape Peninsula Road’. The drive was completed in 1929 and was named Boyes Drive after Mr George Boyes who for many years (1904-1916) was the Resident Magistrate of Simon’s Town... This high-level road took four years to build and convicts were the main

⁶⁵ Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 35.

⁶⁶ Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 35.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 254.

⁶⁸ Jeanne van Eeden, “Surveying the ‘Empty Land’ in Selected South African Landscape Postcards,” *International Journal Of Tourism Research*, no.13 (2011), 600.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 254.

⁷⁰ Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 16.

source of labour. In January 1924 two hundred of them were relocated from the Witsand Slangkop road to start work at both the Kalk Bay and Muizenberg ends.⁷¹

The importance of Boyes Drive can be seen in these postcards where the view of Muizenberg from the mountain proliferated, coinciding with the opening of Boyes drive.

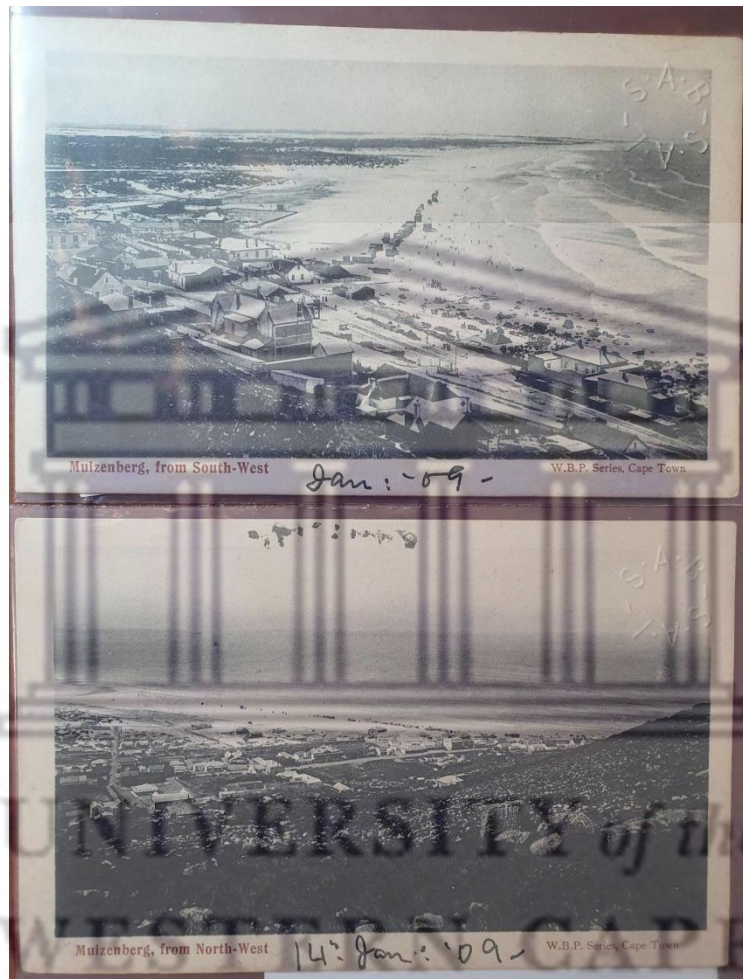


Figure 1.2: 'Muizenberg, from North-West', Special Collections, NLSA, circa 1909

The two Real Picture Postcards (RPPCs) in Figure 1.2 depict a seaside-village panoramic view. The black-and-white photographs illustrate a handful of double-storey buildings closer to the beach, likely hotels, and smaller farmhouses. Several beach huts are speckled around on the barren beach, no promenade or walkway in sight. Muizenberg's first railway station is barely recognisable. These earlier landscape images suggest safety, leisure, charm, serenity. Seaside houses appear to be randomly placed, going up the mountain as much as the slope will allow,

⁷¹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 18.

and as close to the beach as the Indian Ocean will permit. Vague silhouettes walk in the distance with noticeable space between buildings and open tracts of land which would later become Vrygrond and Capricorn. Reading with Phindi Mnyaka: “What if one considers the way photographs simultaneously recall the past while prefiguring the future?”⁷² When contemplated alongside Mnyaka’s provocation, the openness of this ‘background’ land presents not only a physical open canvas, one which is ‘undeveloped’, but also visions of future displacement, forced removals and informal settlements. The photograph on the postcard necessitates a reading of the future and moves across temporalities in such a way that it provides the contemporary with antecedent markers of comparison.

The postcards (Figure 1.2) are two of thirteen topographical landscape postcards in the NLSA, most of them pre-1920s. Figure 1.2’s images are likely from around 1900-1909 as there is no pavilion yet. Six of the postcards have undivided blank sides, which means that they were likely printed pre-1902. There are three seasonal greeting postcards, such as Figure 1.3. Besides its embossed decorative border, what also stands out is that it was sent to a group of people, The Jurity crowd, who were staying at a villa in Three Anchor Bay. The sender has written on the image, adding in “to you all” at the top and signing off at the bottom.

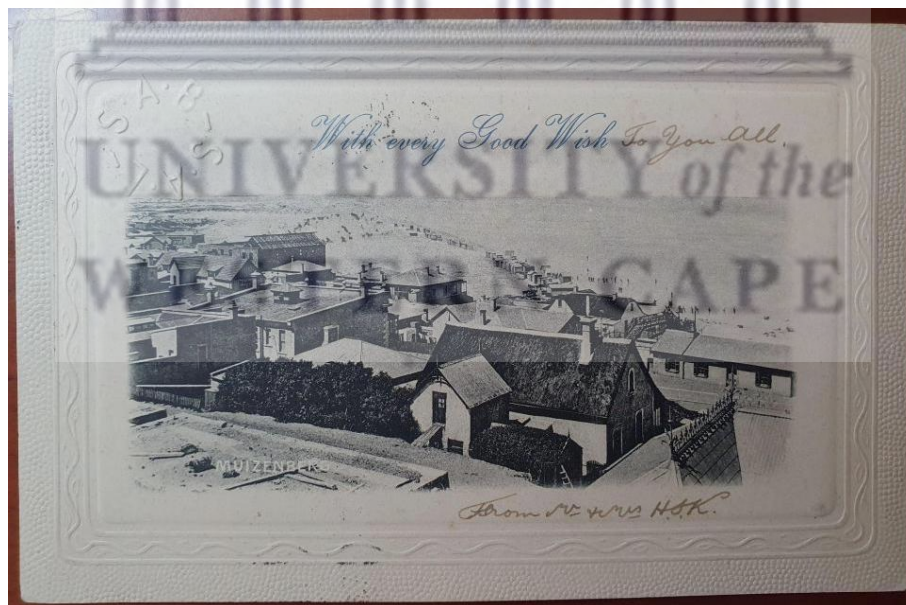


Figure 1.3: ‘With every Good Wish’, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

⁷² Phindi Mnyaka, “The Profane and the Prophetic at a South African Beach,” in *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, ed(s). Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019), 209.



Figure 1.4: ‘1893 Cape of Good Hope Penny Stamp’, eBay (Accessed 16 July 2023),
<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/285312789554>

Another of the season’s greetings postcards contained a carmine stamp (Figure 1.4). It depicts a woman standing inside an oval decorative frame, wearing a dress that flows down to her feet, leaning against an anchor. She appears to be on land, the background is the ocean with a ship, likely headed ashore. Most of the stamps from the early 1900s are portraits of King Edward VII who reigned from 1901-1910 so I find this illustration peculiar. The figure is the allegorical Hope (Cape of Good Hope) likely inspired by earlier artistic depictions of Hope, supposedly one of the seven virtues of Christianity.⁷³ The figure’s pose and gesture are comfortable and confident, she rests a hand on her thigh and the other leans on an anchor, another symbol of hope.

Figures 1.5-1.6 illustrate the colourizing of black-and-white images, and their slight modifications in subsequent editions. They are No.651 from the “Camera” Series, photographed by T.D. Ravenscroft. The Ravenscroft’s website provides information about their family tree tracing at least six generations. They mention that the family has been in South Africa from around 1824 when the first Ravenscroft, George Ravenscroft, came to the country after working in the British military on Saint Helena.⁷⁴ Thomas Daniel (T.D) was the grandson of George and he started taking photographs at the end of the nineteenth century. The website states that he “travelled around the Cape in a Cape Cart where he would go from town to town taking and selling photographs”.⁷⁵ As shown on the colourized postcard, his studio was based in Rondebosch.

⁷³ Denver Art Museum, “Allegorical Figure of Hope or Stability (L’Espérance),” accessed on 20 November 2023, <https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/2019.565>.

⁷⁴ “George Ravenscroft - The First Ravenscroft to settle in Southern Africa,” Origins, South Africa, accessed on 10 July 2023, <https://www.ravenscroft.za.net/originsa.html>.

⁷⁵ “Thomas Daniel Ravenscroft -97 Years - 1851 to 1948,” About, TD, accessed on 10 July 2023, <https://www.ravenscroft.za.net/td.html>.

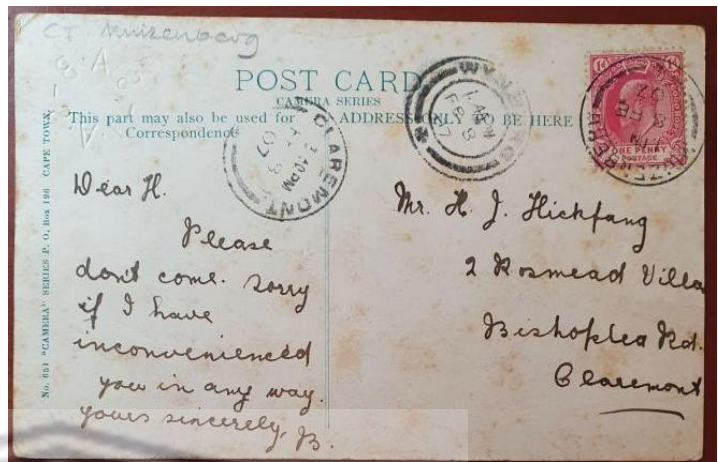
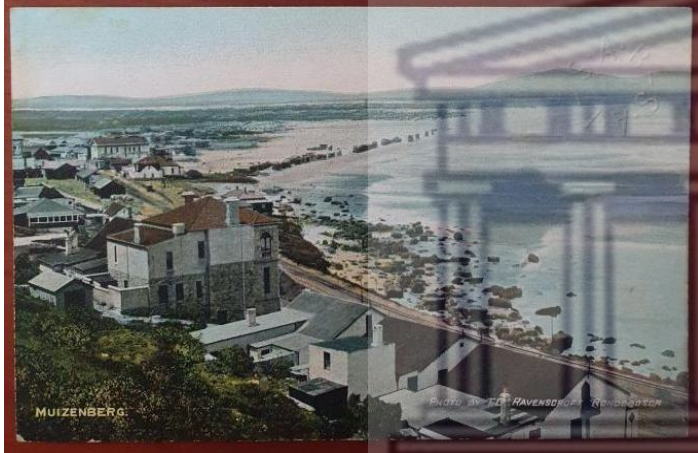
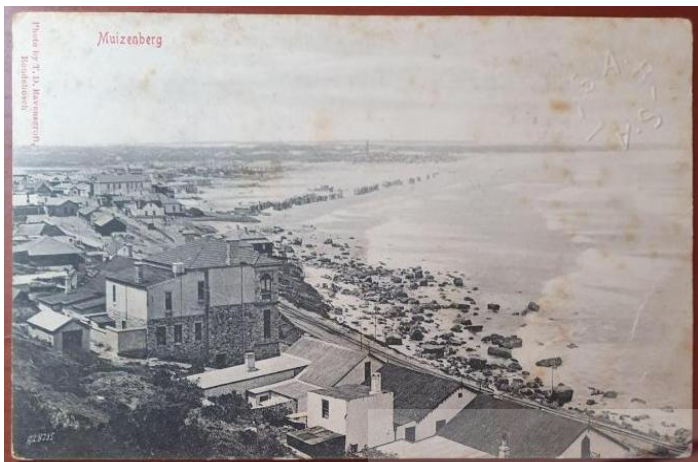


Figure 1.5 (left): Two postcards of Muizenberg, Special Collections, NLSA, 8 February 1907

Figure 1.6 (right): ‘Please don’t come...’, Special Collections, NLSA, 8 February 1907

The top postcard illustrates a black-and-white landscape of Ravenscroft’s that has been posted to Mr Hickfang in Claremont telling him not to come anymore. They have addressed the message to “H” and signed off as “B”, which diverges from epistolary formalities at the time, perhaps their relationship intimate enough to use only one letter. The canceller is 8 February 1907 which was stamped on a Cape of Good Hope stamp that depicts King Edward VII. Figure 1.7 shows a similar photograph of Muizenberg, but the first pavilion has now been built and the pre-Edwardian Railway Station is visible on the ocean-side of the road.

The first railway station (shown in Figure 1.7, just off-centre) was built in 1882 and was a “standard Cape Government Railway design,” but was later demolished and rebuilt as “a

magnificent Edwardian styled station with an impressive clock tower” in 1913.⁷⁶ The later railway station is a significant building in Muizenberg, even in contemporary times. Tredgold writes how Muizenberg had attracted enough dignitaries at the time that it was justifiable for the new station (Figure 1.9) to be made with more ornate decorative details, suiting the overall ambience of Muizenberg as a premier holiday destination that was home to several mining magnates.⁷⁷ The emphasis of the station on the postcard is emblematic of progress in the British colony, a locomotive achievement of society.



Figure 1.7: Boyes Drive postcard, Special Collections, NLSA, June 27, 1917

⁷⁶ Walker, *Historical Walk: Muizenberg/St. James*, 2.

⁷⁷ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 137.

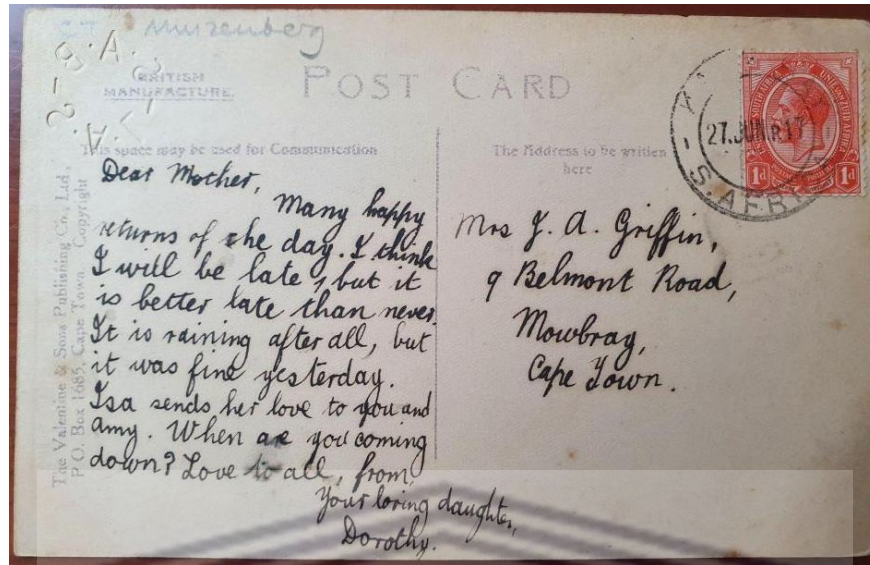


Figure 1.8: ‘Dear mother...’, Special Collections, NLSA, June 27, 1917



Figure 1.9: Railway Station, Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 15⁷⁸

Figure 1.8, the reverse side of Figure 1.7, contains a stamp showing King George V who reigned from 1910-1936. The text in the oval frame reads “Union of South Africa - Unie van Zuid Afrika”. There are Dutch translations of each English word on the stamp, “postage - postzegel / revenue - inkomst”. The postcard’s message carries birthday wishes from a daughter to her mother, who has sent the postcard a bit late. She mentions that it is raining and asks if the mother will be “coming down” for a visit.

⁷⁸ The illustrations that have been scanned from Walker’s book are not dated because he has not dated them.

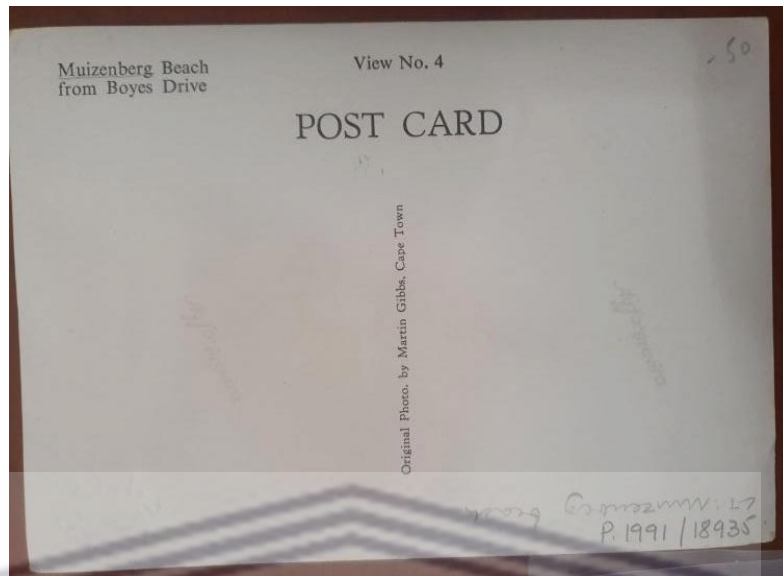


Figure 1.10: 'Muizenberg Beach from Boyes Drive', Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

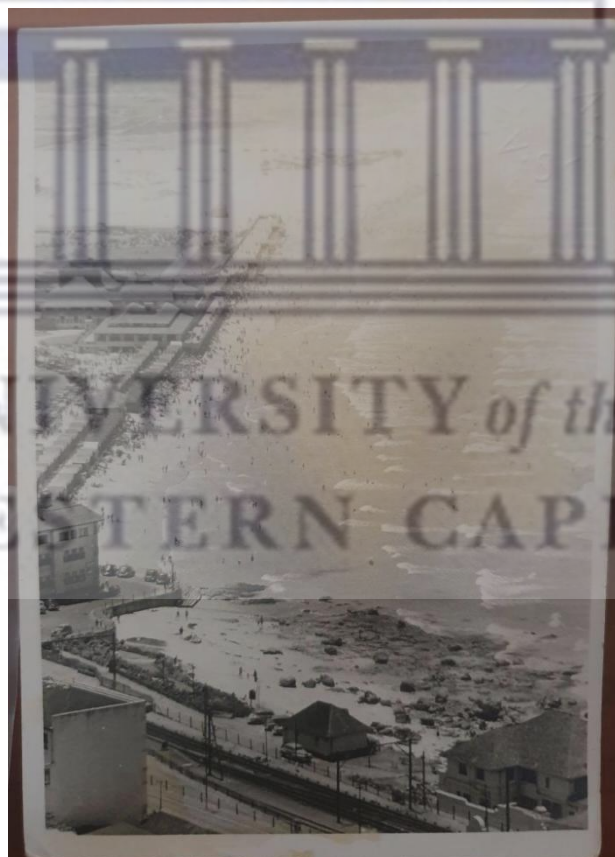


Figure 1.11: Boyes Drive vertical, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

The Real Picture Postcard (RPPC) in Figures 1.10-1.11 is strikingly different to the previous topographic postcards. As noted by Carol Hardijzer these types of postcards emerged around

1902 after earlier permanent photographic techniques (the Daguerreotype and Ambrotype), and paper-based methods (the Carte-de-Viste and Cabinet cards). The RPPC allowed for more efficient production of images, initially involving a photograph and a stiff paper being pasted together. Most RPPCs were printed in black-and-white and if they were coloured in, it was done manually. “Interestingly, a relatively small percentage of social/portrait related photographs ended up being put through the postal system (used as a postcard). They may have been posted in an envelope or were simply handed to loved ones who then placed them in family photograph albums”.⁷⁹ Hardijzer explains how the images on RPPCs are “fresher and clearer compared to the printed postcard” and that they have a much smoother, shiny surface. He also comments on the fact that the photographers of RPPCs tend to go by uncredited.⁸⁰



Figure 1.12: Boyes Drive colour, Special Collections, NLSA, 17 January 1965

⁷⁹ Carol Hardijzer, “A reflection on the South African Real Photo Postcard (RPPC) - 1902 to the 1930's”, The Heritage Portal, last modified 20 November 2017, <https://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/reflection-south-african-real-photo-postcard-rppc-1902-1930s>.

⁸⁰ Hardijzer, “A reflection on the South African Real Photo Postcard (RPPC) - 1902 to the 1930's”.

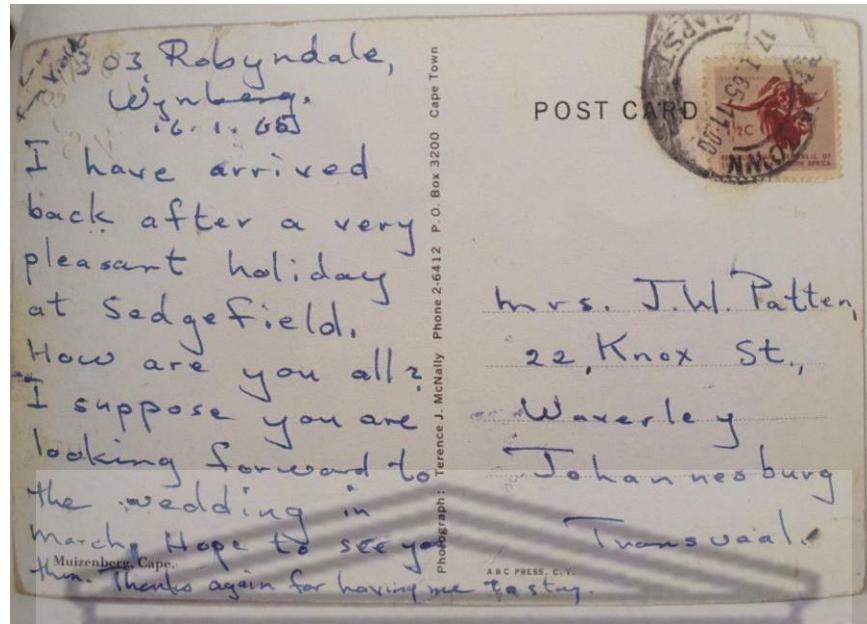


Figure 1.13: 'Love from Violet', Special Collections, 17 January 1965

The penultimate Boyes Drive postcard that I have included is Figures 1.12-1.13. It was posted 17 January 1965, 11:00am from Cape Town to Johannesburg. The carmine stamp contains an 'afrikanerbul' and the country has now become the "Republic of South Africa - Republiek van Suid Afrika". It was sent from Violet to Mrs J.W Patten concerning her arrival home from holiday and seeing them shortly for a wedding. This is one of three landscape-style postcards photographed by Terence J. McNally in the NLSA. McNally was a prominent Cape photographer who worked from 1960-1990. The postcard presents a twentieth century picture of Muizenberg, one which speaks to the 'golden years' nostalgia. There is noticeable development around the second pavilion, with parking lots clearly established. The row of beachfront hotels from the corner down to the main parking lot is also distinguishable. The residential houses are closely set and have expanded further into the background.

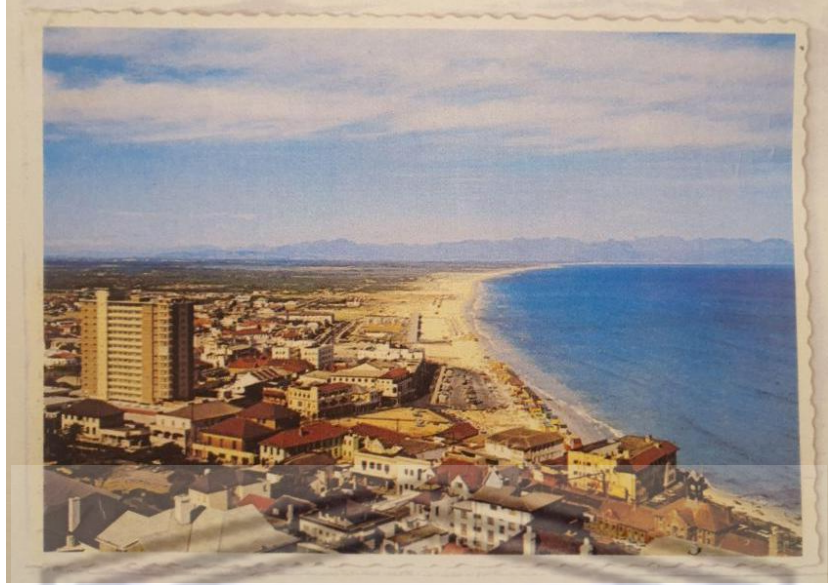


Figure 1.14: Cinnabar and parking bays, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Figure 1.14 looks to be within a similar time period likely in the late-60s early-70s, since the second pavilion has been demolished and the third is yet to be built. The close proximity of all the buildings is obvious, and the infamous 14-storey apartment block, Cinnabar, catches the eye. As posted about on “Surftheberg” Instagram stories, The Cinnabar is one of the only tall buildings in the entire Southern Peninsula (it is seven storeys above the legal limit). They noted how architecturally, Cinnabar looks similar to Mark Heights in Goodwood, both sharing a history that is connected to the 1930s housing crisis and the Jan Hofmeyer Improvement Scheme (South Africa’s first subsidised housing scheme for impoverished white South Africans). Cinnabar was built in spite of legal regulations because of a relaxation in building codes to make housing more affordable for white citizens.⁸¹

This postcard was printed by Protea colour prints Pty Ltd, where the divided side has both English and Afrikaans text, ‘postcard - poskaart’. “1986” has been written in pencil, probably by the NLSA. The caption printed at the bottom says “Muizenberg with its famous beach, on the False Bay Coast, Cape Peninsula, South Africa”. The postcard has a soft, wavy decorative border and the image shows the renowned primary-coloured beach huts. Both the Railway Station and Surfer’s Corner are visible, the latter being a contemporary tourist location surrounded by surf schools and beach-facing restaurants.

⁸¹ Surftheberg, Instagram Story, 12:12, 9 July 2023.

Figure 1.15 is the final postcard in this section. It is the only postcard of a sunrise that I have found, likely due to camera and lens advancements and large-scale colour printing in the late twentieth century. The postcard was printed by “Clifton Publications, PO Box 248, Woodstock, Cape Town”, and is copyright as “Mark van Aardt”. It has been reproduced by “Hirt & Carter” and the description says “Cape Peninsula - False Bay. Tinted crimson by the early glow of the rising sun above the Hottentots Holland mountains with the lights of Muizenberg in the foreground”.



Figure 1.15: Muizenberg Sunset, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Part of the image’s beauty lies in the purple and pink hues stretching across the ocean, and the streetlights glimmering along Beach road and Baden Powell Drive. In the distance, below the mountain silhouette are the speckles of lights emanating from Strandfontein and Mitchells Plain. During apartheid, beaches were segregated resulting in Muizenberg being a ‘whites’ only beach. The beaches that were ten to fifteen minutes away, like Strandfontein and Mnandi, were designated ‘coloured’ and ‘bantu’ beaches.

For van Eeden these panoramic images reinforce “middle-class ideas about the landscape and unspoilt nature, as well as the advances of modernity in the form of bustling cities, industries, bridges, dams, and above all trains. The ensuing dyad of nature/culture ties in with a far older

colonialist discourse”.⁸² In a different paper, van Eeden explains how “looking at images of landscapes is not the same as looking at the landscape itself, but this process of mediation was incredibly important in inscribing places with cultural meanings”.⁸³ The panoramic view, such as those depicted in images from Boyes Drive, are what van Eeden describes as “the so-called monarch-of-all-I-survey view, which characterized nineteenth-century travel writing and situated the (male) ‘traveller as an invisible, passive observer.’”⁸⁴ I think about van Eeden’s work in relation to the postcards as it demonstrates how landscape was presented and constructed as being available for the audience to ‘enter’ or ‘possess’ as they feel fit. This further reiterates power dynamics over land in South Africa.

What is clear about the postcards detailed above is that the images on the postcards from Boyes Drive proliferate the nostalgia of Muizenberg’s ‘golden years’. They are linked with nostalgia because of their depiction of land and sea from ‘above’. The viewer gets a sense of the closeness with the ocean, that it is right on one’s doorstep. This proximity and relationship is complemented by the line of the ocean onshore, its convex curve and beachfront well-known and recognizable. For me, these postcards are linked with nostalgia because of the prominent perspective they contain. This specific view of Muizenberg is seen by those using Boyes Drive from Lakeside through to Fish Hoek, and vice versa (pedestrians, runners, cyclists, motorists, etc).

Building Muizenberg⁸⁵

Besides panoramic views, postcards of Muizenberg generally depict a more horizontal vista at ground level where individual buildings and the growth of ‘urban’ seaside infrastructure come into focus. These buildings are a common motif produced by publishers, including places like roads and railways which connect coastal and inland regions. These images celebrate progress,

⁸² Jeanne Van Eeden, “South African Railways Postcard Calendars, 1961 to 1984”, *South African Historical Journal* 66, no.1 (2014), 80.

⁸³ van Eeden, “Surveying the ‘Empty Land’ in Selected South African Landscape Postcards,” 605.

⁸⁴ van Eeden, “Surveying the ‘Empty Land’ in Selected South African Landscape Postcards,” 605.

⁸⁵ There are a plethora of buildings and urban developments which were not included in this section but have been mentioned in several of the local historical books and in walking tours. Some of these being The Carnegie Library, The Yokohama house, Rust-en-Vrede, the Old Wesleyan-Methodist Church, the first Muizenberg Public School, the bridge across Zandvlei, and the Convalescent Camp. All of these buildings have undergone various transformations, some of which no longer exist, others remain but as ghosts of their former glory. Their presence, in historical narratives and on postcards, is palpable and have only been excluded because of writing constraints.

and the postcards portray these advancements. Moreover, they show the metamorphosis from a Victorian beach to an apartheid holiday resort.

Rhodes Cottage

Rhodes Cottage is one of the more omnipresent buildings in Muizenberg's history, which can be seen in the excess of postcards depicting it. The cottage is ubiquitous in stories of the area, and many local historians have written about the building because it was, very briefly, owned by Cecil John Rhodes from 1899 until his death in 1902. It is more or less a midpoint between Muizenberg and St James, located between Rust-en-Vrede and Long Cottage. Architecturally, it is not as ostentatious as one might presume. Rather it is a quaint seaside cottage that has three bedrooms and a living room, with a thatched roof, which later changed to corrugated iron with dormer windows prior to Rhodes' purchase (and back to thatch after becoming a National Monument).⁸⁶



Figure 1.16: 'Kalk Bay Muizenberg Municipality', Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 45

Walker includes four postcards of Rhodes Cottage detailing a history of the cottage itself (pre- and post-Rhodes' death), emphasising its importance as a National Monument. The postcard in Figure 1.16 not only shows Rhodes Cottage, but also the Kalk Bay-Muizenberg Municipality's coat of arms. Muizenberg became a municipality in 1895, which allowed for the building of a reservoir in Silvermine. This became a reliable fresh water supply for the upcoming residential

⁸⁶ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 43; "The History of Rhodes Cottage," Cottage History, Rhodes Cottage, accessed on 7 June 2023, <https://rhodescottage.co.za/history-of-rhodes-cottage/>.

and tourist village.⁸⁷ The establishment of the municipality meant that money could be raised and spent specifically for the development of Kalk Bay and Muizenberg, and in 1904 “the Municipality issued a series of postcards which depicted the Municipal coat of arms as well as various scenes, buildings and facilities that existed in the Municipality at that time”.⁸⁸ The extract below is Walker’s interpretation of the Municipal coat of arms, demonstrating its significance:

The coat of arms is a mismatch of hopes and reality. The top left hand corner shows a sailing fishing boat which is self-explanatory in a fishing village, while the crest of a paschal lamb inserted within the top left corner is that of the De Villiers family — a long established and prominent family from neighbouring Fish Hoek. The top right-hand corner illustrating eight fleurs-de-lis is difficult to explain. These iris flowers which appeared on the former royal arms of France imply Huguenot connotations which in the village of Muizenberg seem misplaced, as is the bunch of grapes which dominate the lower half of the coat of arms... The arum lily in the centre, however, is more obvious as these lillies grew in abundance around the Muizenberg neighbourhood although it was perhaps the first time one was depicted in an heraldic design.⁸⁹

Figure 1.17 shows a close-up of an intriguing detail from one side of a Rhodes Cottage postcard (1927). Its seasonal message wishing the receiver a “prosperous 1928.” The post office added two ink stamps that read “Buy South African made goods / Koop Suid Afrikaanse goed”. This is one of the earlier slogans of “buy local” which promotes South Africans buying locally-produced goods, and referring back to Mnyaka’s argument points toward trade embargoes introduced during apartheid.



Figure 1.17: ‘Koop Suidafrikaanse Goed’, Special Collections, NLSA, 1927

There are a plethora of printers of Rhodes cottage postcards in the NLSA: PG Glass, Perry & Co, T. D Ravenscroft, Conrad Productions, and PS&C. The two PS&C postcards are both the same

⁸⁷ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 136.

⁸⁸ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 19.

⁸⁹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 20.

image, one is black-and-white, the other is colourized. The same postcard is seen in Walker's book. The caption reads: The house in which the late Cecil Rhodes died, Muizenberg (C.C.).⁹⁰ Someone has drawn an 'X' on his cottage although it is not obvious and so viewers could get confused between his cottage and Long Cottage which dominates the image. The colour postcard has the exact same 'X' which means it was drawn on the original image of which duplicates have been made.



Figure 1.18: Rhodes Cottage montage, Special Collections, NLSA

⁹⁰ A similar caption is seen on most of the postcards of Rhodes Cottage (Figure 1.19).



Figure 1.19: ‘Cecil Rhodes died’ montage, Special Collections, NLSA

Figure 1.18 is a temporary collage of all the Rhodes Cottage postcards in the NLSA. What stood out while placing them together was the repetition of “death,” clearly a fact about the building that’s as important as the building itself (Figure 1.19). The vertical postcard in the bottom centre of Figure 1.18 is noted by Walker to be “rare among collectors,” which I presume is related to being vertical. It was also the only vertical shot of the cottage in the NLSA. Another postcard which is aesthetically distinctive is the one of an artistic sketch by Désirée Picton-Seymour. It was printed by PG Glass and states that “albums obtainable from PG Glass”, referring to the artists’ sketches. Another postcard in the NLSA, one of Het Posthuys, also uses a Picton-Seymour sketch. The postcard caption reads “A national monument” (also in Afrikaans). Picton-Seymour was an English artist who attended Michaelis School of Fine Art, consequently authoring several books on architecture in South Africa. She was involved with the conservation of historical buildings and was “awarded the *Cape Times* Medal for Conservation in 1983”.⁹¹

The Conrad Productions postcard, “PO Box 3865, Cape Town”, reference code “edina B286” shows a newer iteration of Rhodes Cottage, likely having been manufactured in the late twentieth century. This is noticeable in the front garden which has aloes and succulents instead of the previous garden’s hedges. You can also see that the stonewall has been re-built (top right postcard in Figure 1.18).

⁹¹ “Picton-Seymour, Désirée,” Artefacts, accessed on 23 October 2023, <https://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/archframes.php?archid=5965>.

I read these postcards alongside histories of mining capital. Rhodes was a well-known mining magnate, who enhanced Muizenberg as a holiday destination purely by owning a house in the area. If it was good enough for someone like Rhodes, it was good enough for anyone. Counterposed with these postcards is another postcard from Geary's book. She sheds light on the mining industry in South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth century and by doing so, we are reminded about the gruelling hardships that Africans and South Asians experienced for the mining magnates to make their fortunes. Geary includes a postcard (Figure 1.20) which she argues is "reminiscent of dust-bowl photographs taken in the United States during the Great Depression".⁹²

The postcard depicts two barefoot men from the Colony of Natal (now the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal) on their way to the goldfields. They wear tattered clothes and carry bundles holding their few belongings. The striking image reminds us today of the dispossession of Africans and the many migrants who labored in the mines and lived under inhumane conditions in their racially segregated all-male compounds. It is rare among early South African postcards, which mostly present Africans, especially the Zulu, as exotic, tribal people dressed in traditional costumes, for the visual consumption of residents of European descent, visitors from the geographic north, and viewers and collectors elsewhere. The sender's message reads "Don't know if you like this kind of PC better than views, this came into my possession by mistake. We had a frightfully wet day yesterday. Love to all. Dick".⁹³

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⁹² Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 42.

⁹³ Geary, *Postcards From Africa*, 42.



Figure 1.20: ‘Natal Natives bound for the Goldfields’, Christraud M. Geary, *Postcards From Africa: Photographers of the Colonial Era, Selections from the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive*, 42

The postcard has become iconic in South African history as the photograph of migrant labour and the symbol of social history. The logo of the University of the Witwatersrand’s History Workshop is also reminiscent of the men in this postcard.⁹⁴

Liminal spaces: land and ocean

This third section of postcards moves from inland (Boyes Drive and buildings) to the beach and shoreline. I see these postcards as a different set to the previous sections because of their imagery and the associations made between them and the ‘golden years’. The first group of postcards

⁹⁴ “History Workshop,” University of the Witwatersand, accessed on 13 November 2023, <https://www.wits.ac.za/history-workshop/>.

contain The Pavilion, which although is a building, it is on the beach which is why it was included in this section instead of the previous.

The Pavilion

According to Walker, “the popularity of the ‘sands of Muizenberg’, was immortalised by Rudyard Kipling’s poem, ‘white as the sands of Muizenberg, spun before the gale’. This popularity slowly grew and by the beginning of the twentieth century the beach had become busy enough that a tea-room, public change-room and toilet facilities were needed.⁹⁵ This led to the building of the first pavilion which was opened on Saturday, 16 December 1911, Dingaan’s Day, later renamed Day of Reconciliation after 1994. It was also called Day of the Covenant or Day of the Vow under apartheid, commemorating the defeat of Zulu forces at Blood River/Ncome by the trekker armies in 1838.⁹⁶

[The Pavilion] was reported in the South African Railway Holiday brochure as ‘being able to accommodate 3000 bathers a day so that Muizenberg, besides being the best beach on our coast, could now offer every comfort and convenience.’ This attractive pavilion firmly established Muizenberg beach as the most sought after resort and literally thousands of local and up-country beach-goers flocked to the ‘sands of Muizenberg’.⁹⁷

The pavilion (Figures 1.21-1.28) calls for attention, luring in an audience by its spectacle on the beachfront, especially on postcards. The Muizenberg archive has a proliferation of images, memories and tales involving and associated with the pavilions. It seems to occupy a distinguished place, perhaps more so than any other structure on and nearby the beachfront, save for the beach huts. The first pavilion, also called the Old Pavilion, was not built on land or at sea, but in between these two spaces. This liminality is part of its status. Each time it’s been destroyed and reborn (closer inland), it accumulated greater meaning, layering it’s biography with significance.

There are sixteen postcards of the Old Pavilion in the NLSA, three in Walker’s *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, and eleven in Leigh Hen-Boisen’s private collection. Four in the NLSA are Real Picture Postcards (RPPC), all taken from different angles, some from the ocean towards the pavilion, others from the promenade. One postcard shows four children posing

⁹⁵ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 6.

⁹⁶ Dalifa Ngobese and Theophilus Mukhuba, “Re-Inventing the Battle of Ncome/ Blood River : Reflection on Its Contested Historical Consciousness and Commemorative Events,” in *Gender & behaviour* 16, no. 2 (2018), 11751–11761.

⁹⁷ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 6; Brodie, *The Cape Town Book*, 227.

together on the beach, another taken from the top of the pavilion's light post, and one is a macro-shot of the entire building. Two postcards (by SAPSCO and J.G.B) have negatives inside their sleeves, a rare accompaniment to the postcards in the NLSA. They are the original negatives of the images on the postcards. I presume they come from the manufacturer, although there were no details about the origin of the negatives on hand. Overall, five of the Old Pavilion were manufactured by Valentine & Sons, five by J.G.B, four by SAPSCO, one by "Eclipse" Photo Co, and two were uncredited.⁹⁸

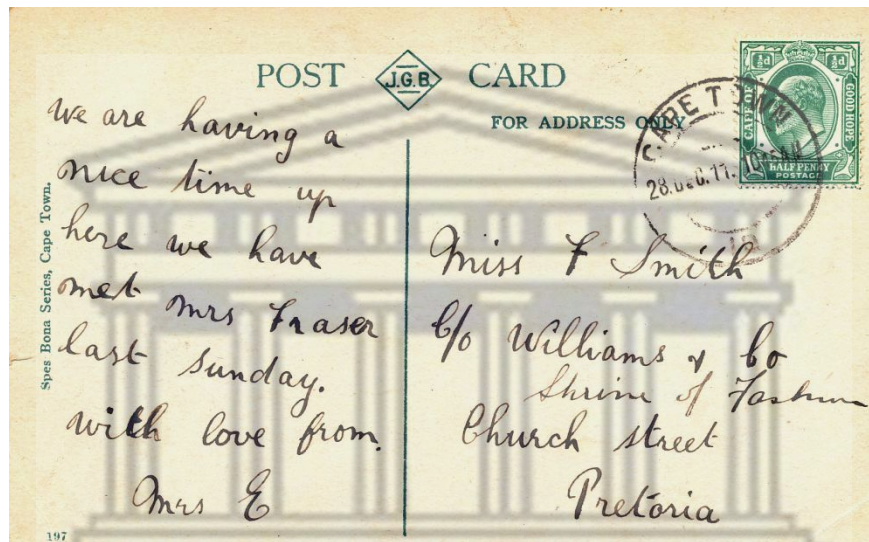


Figure 1.21: 'Miss F Smith', Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, 28 December 1911



⁹⁸ They were perforated on one of their edges, so they likely came from a booklet of postcards.

Figure 1.22: 'The Beach and Pavilion, Muizenberg, C.C', Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, 28
December 1911

Three postcards in particular warrant further attention. Each was produced by a different publisher, which in itself also provides information about the prevalence of the pavilion on postcards and its association with the 'golden years'.

The first postcard (Figures 1.21-1.22) was cancelled "Cape Town Post Office 28 December 1911, 10:45am". King Edward VII appears in the centre of the stamp's frame, it is the same as that in Figures 1-2 ('Things Pretty Dull...'). The postcard was published as part of the "Spes Bona"⁹⁹ Series" by John G. Bain publishers, reference code "197". The postcard is addressed to Miss Smith, in Pretoria, which indicates that postal services were operational between the different provinces, attributing to locomotive and communication innovations in South Africa during the early twentieth century. The sender, Mrs E, has written in cursive handwriting, *We are having a nice time up here we have met Mrs Fraser last Sunday. With love from Mrs E.* I wonder why Mrs E refers to Cape Town as being "up here" when it is down South from Pretoria. The style of the message seems to be the most common text on postcards of Muizenberg, what I see as an antiquated Short Message Service (SMS). It is a rather banal message, it doesn't transmit lengthy or important information.

In Curry and Ward's *Postcards as Doorways*, they reiterate how "postcards were a rapid and amusing means of communication... Small talk, gossip, holiday messages, and even romances were pursued on cards. Albums filled with cards provided entertainment for family and friends"¹⁰⁰ Curry and Ward demonstrate how writing on a postcard reflects "a chapter in the history of self-presentation, as defined through a given technology"¹⁰¹ This act of self-presentation is owed to the shortness of the message, the obstruction of limited space meant that senders could communicate more easily, especially because they could write "without the stern formalities of 19th century letter writing... Almost everyone could manage a few words on a card."¹⁰² However, historically in South Africa, not everyone could self-present through postcards.

⁹⁹ Spes Bona is Latin for 'Good Hope'.

¹⁰⁰ Curry and Ward, "Postcards as Doorways," 110.

¹⁰¹ Curry and Ward, "Postcards as Doorways," 110.

¹⁰² Curry and Ward, "Postcards as Doorways," 110.

The first census performed in the Union of South Africa in 1911 showed that nearly 76 percent of ‘Europeans or Whites’ could read and write, whereas less than 9 percent of ‘other than European or white’, 7 percent of people classified as ‘Bantu’, and 21 percent of ‘mixed and other coloured’ could read and write.¹⁰³ One can infer that postcards were predominantly written and read by Europeans. For me, this is evident not only because of the census statistics, but also by the kinds of messages being sent. The messages on these postcards speak of mundane middle class moments in the senders’ lives, about arriving by train on a certain day, enjoying a swim in the ocean, or spending the day at the shops in the Muizenberg village, something afforded predominantly to Europeans [or people classified as white]. Moreover, the postcards were manufactured by white business owners and printers (and the named photographers), which is evident in all of the manufacturers of Muizenberg postcards in the NLSA.

Returning to the postcard (Figure 1.22), the image is a coloured-in printed postcard, a technique used by printing houses where a black-and-white image was painted or coloured in and then large quantities printed. Hues of green have been painted darker in some parts of the mountain which is indexical of the land’s perceived fertility and lushness. The water and sky are a pale blue, perhaps reiterating fabricated dreams for crystal-blue waters and good weather. The people in the image seem to move with a sense of ease and closeness, they are together in this space, lightheartedly enjoying the beachfront and pavilion. Each gesture is smooth and pleasant, two men walk closely together, children roaming on the shore with their arms open, a wave has broken, and people converse with one another over the railing of the pavilion. The clothing is smart and formal, speaking to bygone beach attire. The women wear long, loose fitting dresses, and the men in full suits, their gendered European style recognizable. The pavilion itself has been coloured in yellow, blue and green. Whether these were the actual colours of the building is not known.

¹⁰³ Dumine Tocknell, “A comparison of South Africa’s colonial education system with other African countries,” accessed on 12 June 2023, https://etd.uwc.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11394/8738/tocknell_m_ems_2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

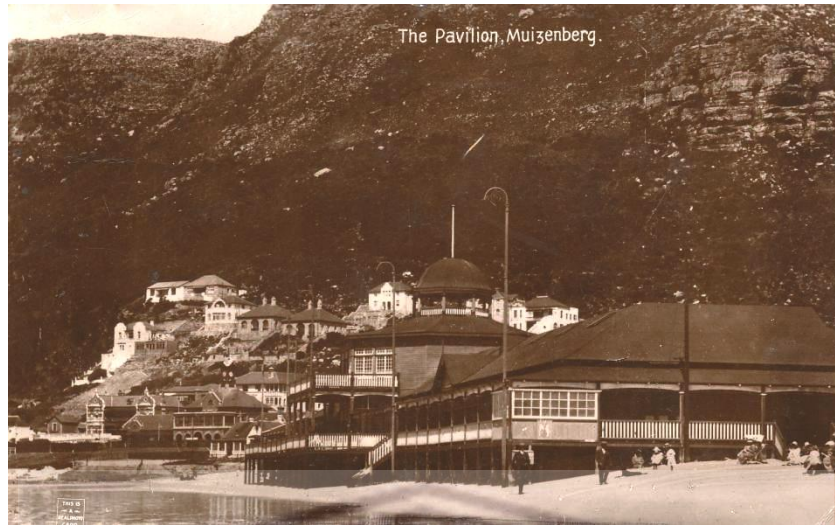


Figure 1.23: 'The Pavilion, Muizenberg', Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, 7 January 1924

The mid-ground of the RPPC in Figure 1.23 portrays wealth and development, stature and hubris. The millionaire mansions of the Randlords are more noticeable in this image than in later ones from the mid-late twentieth century. There are only a few smaller residential houses indicating that it is primarily a holiday destination during this period, due to all the hotels alongside the beach road. The grandstand stairs (which still exist in 2023) in the bottom left corner are discernible and towards the foreground of the image, the pavilion and beach invoke tranquillity. A handful of people are in the bottom right corner. The dark, featureless shape in the middle of the four beach-goers resembles an animal, maybe a seal or a dog. A slight reflection can be seen in the water on the shore, the tides changing. The pavilion itself emanates sophistication, made out of wood and built on stilts with several viewing decks and floors.

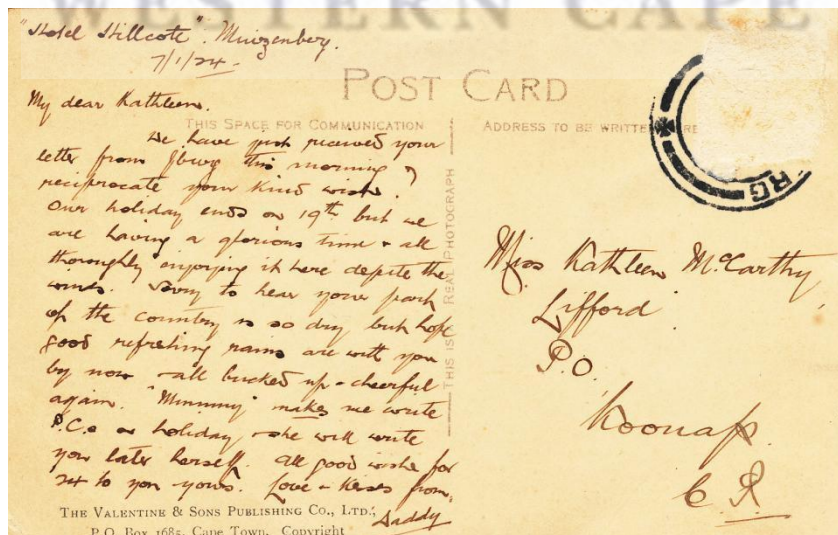


Figure 1.24: Rectangle from stamp removal, Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, 7 January 1924

The reverse side does not have its stamp, perhaps someone valued the stamp more than the postcard which is why they chose to separate the two, presumably to keep only one. A faint, lighter-coloured rectangle remains, cinders of what was. There is a date in the top left corner, 7/1/1924.

The message reads: *My Dear Kathleen. We have just received your letter from Joburg this morning and reciprocate your kind wishes. Our holiday ends on 19th but we are having a glorious time and all thoroughly enjoying it here despite the winds. Sorry to hear your part of the country is so dry but hope good refreshing rains are with you by now and all bucked up and cheerful again. Mummy makes me write PCs on holiday and she will write you later herself. All good wishes for you and yours. Love and kiss from Daddy.*

Besides the obvious familial connection, the message reveals a particular experience of seasons in Muizenberg and Johannesburg. The last sentence on the postcard, about being made to write postcards on holiday, emphasizes the popularity of postcards at the start of the twentieth century and a ‘civilised’ culture of education. There are several reasons for the postcard’s popularity, the first being the mechanisation of several industries during this period which led to cheap printing (collotype, chromo-lithography) and postage (transportation), making postcards more affordable. The second factor was the rapid expansion of “the modern tourist industry — the so-called ‘democratisation of travel’ that accompanied the industrial and communication revolutions of the nineteenth century (paid holidays, railways, steam-ships, travel agencies, etc.)”.¹⁰⁴ These advancements, alongside the evolution of colour printing and photography, led to the picture postcard’s golden era of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁵ Walker notes how “access to a good quality camera was difficult, and the alternative was to send your friends and family a picture postcard of your holiday at the seaside. Postage was inexpensive and consequently many thousands of picture postcards were published”.¹⁰⁶ The postcard depicting Muizenberg as a holiday destination coincides with the popularity of postcards. Both of their ‘golden years’ imbricated with urban development and settlement. Additionally, the climax of the postcard is intimately tied with markets of leisure and tourism, a time and space set aside for consumption beyond the rituals and rhythms of working lives, whose access in South Africa for much of the

¹⁰⁴ Brown and Turley, *Consumer Research*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Curry and Ward, “Postcards as Doorways,” 110.

¹⁰⁶ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 1

20th century was marked by race, inequalities and broader geographical limitations. This reiterates the popularity of Muizenberg increasing at the same time as the culmination of apartheid.

The additional information on the postcard states that it was printed by Valentine & Sons, which was a printing business founded by John Valentine in Dundee, Scotland (1825). His son, James Valentine, “had studied the daguerreotype process in Paris in the 1840s and was consequently able to add the important element of photography to the company’s offerings in the year 1851”.¹⁰⁷ By 1980 it was “Scotland’s most successful commercial photographer”.¹⁰⁸

The University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums houses one hundred and twenty thousand albumen prints, black-and-white film negatives, collotype prints, gelatin dry plate negatives, gelatin silver prints and relief halftones in the James Valentine Collection. It states that Valentine & Sons’ monochrome negatives were “without doubt the largest and most universal ever established in Great Britain”. The lack of information concerning employees and commissioned artists means that many of the image-creators are unknown.¹⁰⁹ The little information that focused on Valentine & Sons in South Africa stated:

In 1985 the Southern Africa Postcard Research group reported the discovery of what appeared to be a complete register of the South African postcards published by Valentine. Although there is no firm evidence that all the cards listed were in fact published — the material is in the form of an index of photographic negatives rather than a list of cards — it is clear that this small exercise book is a major discovery.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Toronto Postcard Club, accessed on 13 June 2023, <https://torontopostcardclub.com/canadian-postcard-publishers/valentine-sons/>.

¹⁰⁸ Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Toronto Postcard Club.

¹⁰⁹ Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Toronto Postcard Club.

¹¹⁰ Martin Nicholson, “The Postcard Catalogue Of Southern Africa,” accessed on 13 June 2023, <https://postcard.co.uk/research/lists/sa11.htm>.

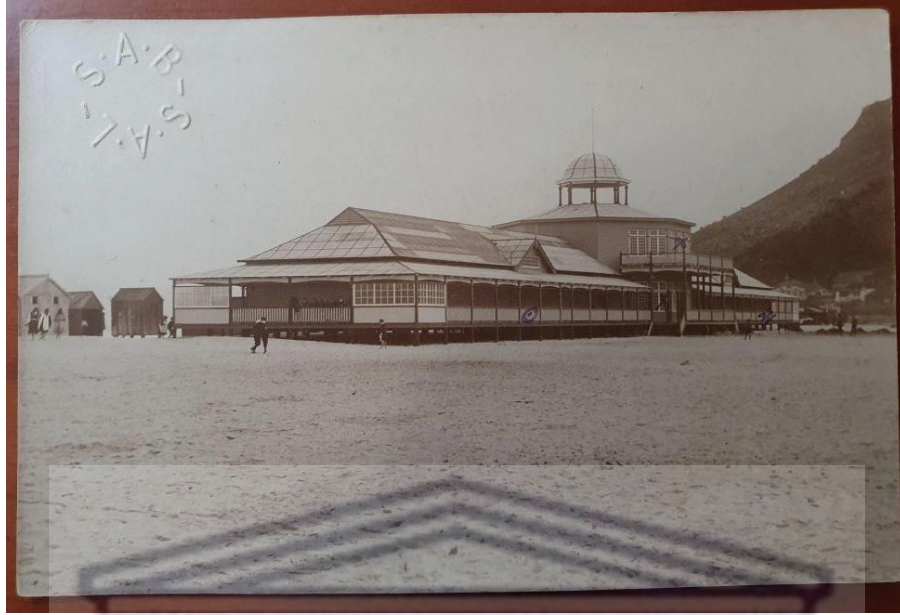


Figure 1.25: Drawing on the image, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

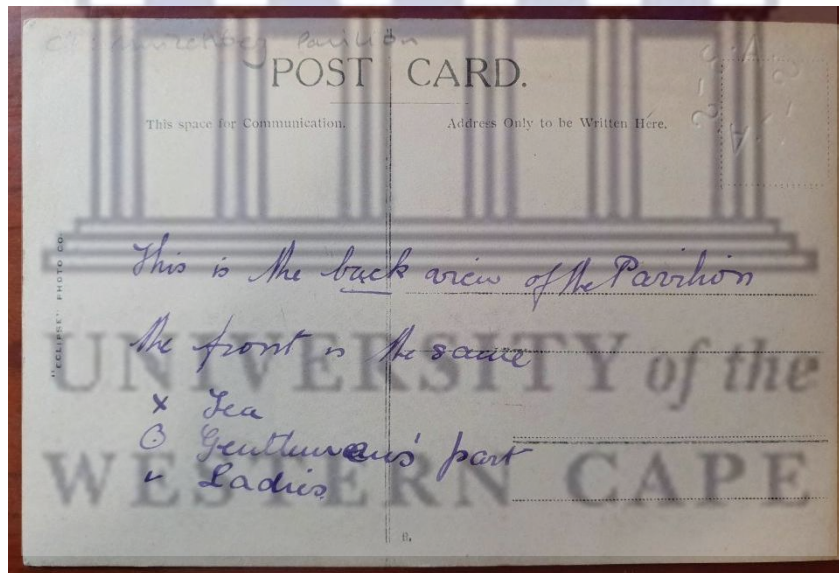


Figure 1.26: Key on postcard, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Figure 1.25 is a rare (and rear) angle showing the pavilion from the back towards the ocean. The postcard has not been addressed, but someone has indicated what each of the sections are used for. The key on the other side explains each of the symbols drawn on the image, the tea room, the gentlemen's part, and the ladies' part. As Walker points out, "there were 97 dressing cubicles for men and 77 for ladies," so I assume that the sender is referring to these gendered changing

cubicles.¹¹¹ It is also one of the instances where the postcard is used differently than the norm, both sides correlate with one another. This was presumably done to show a more ‘lived experience’ of the building. The image doesn’t show this specific relationship which seems to be important to the sender, maybe wanting to share a more intimate piece of their own experience. It could also be that gendered changing rooms represented civility, something to be acknowledged.



Figure 1.27: Cookhouse, Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, circa 1924

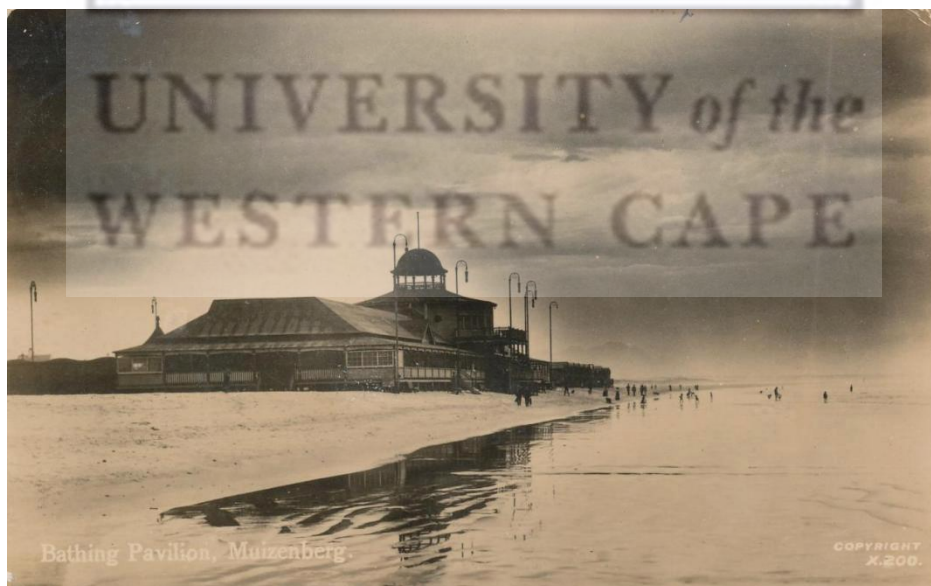


Figure 1.28: ‘Bathing Pavilion, Muizenberg’, Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, circa 1924

¹¹¹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 7

Figures 1.27-1.28 depict a RPPC produced by SAPSCO. The carmine stamp used in this postcard is a One Dime, Union of South Africa (both in English and Dutch¹¹²) stamp of King George V, which was issued in 1913.¹¹³ King George V reigned until 1936, so it was posted sometime between 1913-1936. The first digit of the smudged year resembles a ‘2’ and the second digit is clearly a ‘4’ so it could be 1924. The sender, K, has written to a Miss Vivien H. Watson, in Cookhouse¹¹⁴. The message reads: *It is simply shocking to see the “mixed bathing” going on here. I was forced to join in myself but ? very quietly. I am sure you will like Cape Town and its numerous suburbs. It is grand being on holiday. Hope you are enjoying yours. Sorry I can’t come see you. Kind regards, K.*

It is not clear whether “mixed bathing” refers to race or gender. It is however likely that it refers to gender, which is also mentioned in this postcard of Brighton beach in 1949 (Figure 1.29).¹¹⁵ According to Catherine Horwood:

Before 1900, women’s swimming activities had been tentative to say the least. The image of the Victorian bathing machine holds the key to attitudes of the time. Decency kept female bathers at distance from men at all times... ‘A person of the female sex shall not, while bathing, approach within one hundred yards of any place at which any person of the male sex, above the age of twelve years, may be set down for the purpose of bathing’. Regulation also required that women wore a ‘suitable gown or other sufficient dress or covering to prevent indecent exposure of the body’. When women did ‘take the plunge’, the weight of clothing could be a safety hazard.¹¹⁶

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¹¹² There were attempts to gradually replace Dutch with Afrikaans during 1910-1914, but it was only after the Official Languages of the Union Act No 8 of 1925 that Afrikaans officially replaced Dutch. Since the postcard was likely sent in 1924, I presume it was Dutch on the stamp (“Afrikaans becomes the official language of the Union of South Africa,” South African History Online, accessed on 13 November 2023, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/afrikaans-becomes-official-language-union-south-africa>.)

¹¹³ “King George V,” Stamp catalog, Stamp, Colnect, accessed on 12 July 2023, https://colnect.com/en/stamps/stamp/859001-King-George_V-King_George-South_Africa.

¹¹⁴ Colonial settlement in Eastern Cape

¹¹⁵ “Brighton Postcard 1949 Real Photo Morley Mixed Bathers Beach Pay Hut Sussex,” eBay, accessed on 12 July 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/35tz9mzh>.

¹¹⁶ Catherine Horwood, “‘Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions’: women and bathing, 1900–39,” in *Women’s History Review* 9, No. 4 (2000), 656.

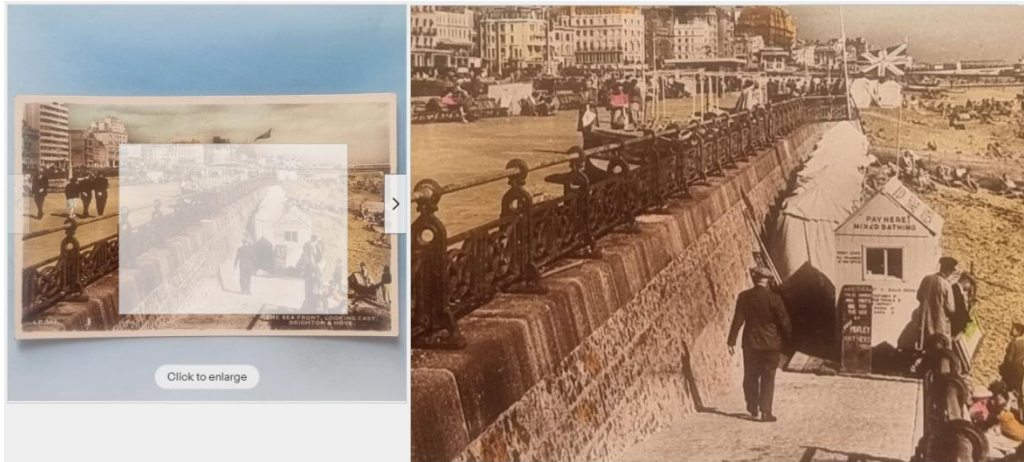


Figure 1.29: Screenshot of Postcard, “Brighton Postcard 1949 Real Photo Morley Mixed Bathers Beach Pay Hut Sussex,” eBay, accessed on 12 July 2023

The fact that K mentions mixed bathing reiterates how ‘new’ this must have been culturally. The gendered message speaks to race, civility, whiteness and modernity, showing how when the postcard is romanticised, or made apolitical, we miss how much more it contains and carries. The image is not associated with K’s shock at having to swim with men, the specks of people in the distance are gender neutral to the viewer. Through K’s message we can begin to see a nonlinear history of Muizenberg.

Moreover, the photograph on the postcard (Figure 1.28) is particularly arresting in relation to other postcards of the pavilion. The clouds blur between being ominous and radiant, the skies celestial with what looks like subtle movement of light in the foreground. The ambience is gloomy, a kind of brooding presence of both land and air. The darker reflection of the pavilion in the ocean contrasts with the sky’s luminescent reflection. The figures in the distance are walking on light. The photograph reminds me of Figure 1.30, a photograph in Special Collections. Its heading “The Approaching Storm” reminds me of Mnyaka’s ‘profane’ and ‘prophetic’. When read alongside the message on the postcard (Figure 1.27), the opaqueness is a glaring profession of a colonial past and future.

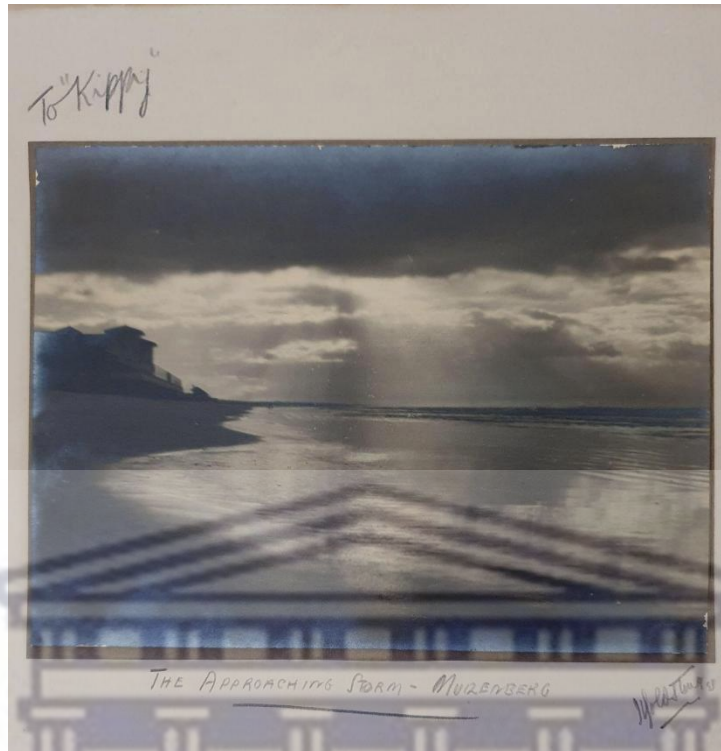


Figure 1.30: ‘The Approaching Storm-Muizenberg’, Photograph, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Beach Huts

One of the most iconic buildings in Muizenberg are the beach huts. These primary-coloured wooden shelters have transformed countless times throughout Muizenberg histories. They are the objects that gave Muizenberg its appellation of ‘the Brighton of South Africa,’ and have been a contentious point for local council for most of the twenty-first century because of their constant disintegration and repair. The beach huts are intimately linked with surf culture, tourism and beach aesthetics in the area, making their removal objectionable.

Historically, the beach huts are depicted with as much enthusiasm as one would expect based on their iconic status and nostalgia associated with them. It is said that the bathing boxes (a British phenomena) came to the shores of Muizenberg in the 1820s when Farmer Pecks Inn built the first one. There were also thatched huts on the beach built by Filipino fishers for storing their equipment.¹¹⁷ Thereafter, more privately built tin huts began to appear, out of necessity to domesticate the beach according to fashion and social etiquette at the time.

¹¹⁷ “Muizenberg Looking Back,” Go South, accessed on 7 June 2023, <https://gosouth.co.za/muizenberg-looking-back/>.

“The original ancestors of the beach hut were bathing machines, which were relics of the era of bathing as a medical ritual. The machines housed bathers as they were pulled by horses or winches from the shore into the water for a brief immersion, ensuring privacy and modesty”.¹¹⁸ They also reiterate British history (Figure 1.27-1.29) concerning gender and mixed bathing on the beach. Also seen in Figure 1.31, a comic-style illustration and ‘humorous’ postcard, that relies on lewdness. This type of illustration is associated with the British seaside resort.¹¹⁹ It shows the style of earlier bathing machines, the red wheel reminiscent of a winch. However, there are stairs attached to the bathing box so the wheel is likely for aesthetic purposes. The caption in the top right hand corner is “Muizenberg, C.P”. It has been damaged over time, a large section at the lower half has been torn off, and then mended with two pieces of sellotape. There is also some discolouration to the left of the image. The picture represents romance, the look on the woman’s face is mischievous, flirtatious. She’d be changing into swimming attire which could be why she’s peeking out and smiling at him whilst he’s reading a book or magazine waiting for her. On the reverse side, the postcard says that it was printed in Great Britain by Valentine & Sons and at the top it says “Mailing Novelty”. The image does not appear to be Muizenberg, and this style of beach hut hasn’t been depicted in any other postcards, suggesting that the image is a more generic changing room box. Perhaps because Muizenberg was known for its beach huts, it was printed with “Muizenberg, C.P” as the caption.

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¹¹⁸ Laura Chase, “Public Beaches and Private Beach Huts – A Case Study of Inter-war Clacton and Frinton Essex,” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton, (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), 212.

¹¹⁹ I came across two similar lewd postcards in Walker’s book, and other postcards of Capetonian beaches and their ‘beach girls’. I am not entirely sure if the image even depicts Muizenberg.

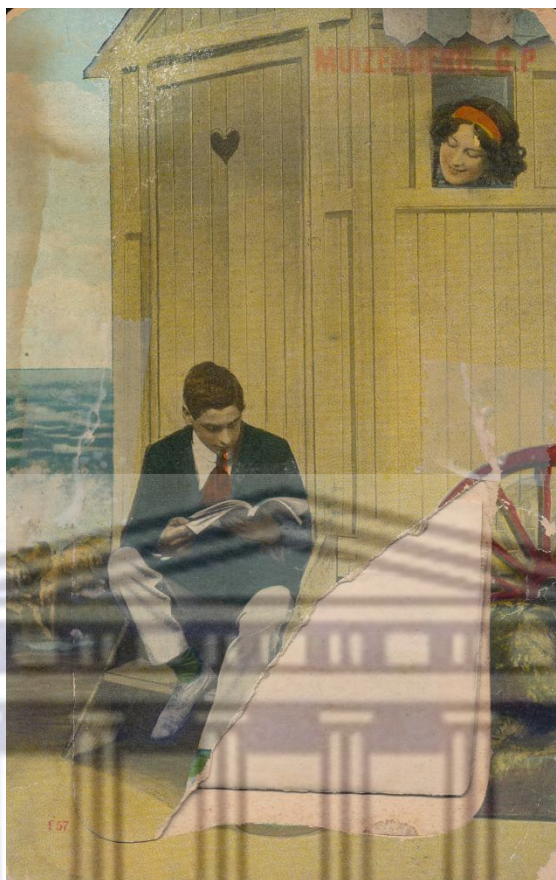


Figure 1.31: Beach changing hut, Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, date unknown

Rhodes is believed to have had his own beach hut, which a few people have pointed out in photographs on various Facebook groups. Walker mentions how the earlier, disorderly beach huts speckled on the beach were demolished by the Kalk Bay-Muizenberg municipality and upgraded by the council, along with the wooden pavilion in 1911.¹²⁰ These newer beach huts are also seen lined up alongside postcards of the second pavilion.

With regards to their physical make up, the municipal beach huts were constructed through “a system of builder’s tenders,” which meant that they would now be uniform in terms of size and colour, and were either available for hire or sold for private use.¹²¹

In 1913 near on one hundred bathing boxes stood along the beachfront. They were constructed in rows on either side of the pavilion which was the hub of beach activity. The maintenance cost of these boxes, however, proved too expensive and gradually the

¹²⁰ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 10; van Graan, *Cape Town: Then and Now*, 136.

¹²¹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 10.

municipality began to repossess them, and once they had deteriorated to a certain point they were demolished and not replaced.¹²²



Figure 1.32: 'The Beach, Muizenberg, C.P', Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, date unknown

Figure 1.32 shows the sea bathers moving fluidly, collectively engaged with the beach. The beach huts have changed and plenty of houses go up the mountain side. The first pavilion has been built and there are several dogs in the scene, one seems to be playing fetch in the waves. What looks to be an out-of-place cartoon snail is at the centre bottom of the image, either an error with the printing press or the ink smudged at some point. The date and printer are unknown. Two more postcards (Figures 1.33-1.34) illustrate a similar composition where the beach huts are on the right side of the image, the ocean on the left and the wedge of beach in the centre. The depiction of beach huts, the first pavilion, busy shoreline and mountains altogether in one image gives the impression that this is an enjoyable beach to visit. It is a conventional touristic postcard that one would buy whilst on holiday. Even though it feels congested, and is compositionally compact, there is enough room for your eyes to make out that a bustling seaside resort exists in Muizenberg with all the required amenities.

¹²² Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 10.



Figure 1.33: '918 Beach scene, Muizenberg, C.P.', Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

There were six postcards with this type of composition that I grouped together in the NLSA. Two were by Valentine & Sons which were coloured in, and showed the first surfboards which looked like rectangular planks. One postcard had an unknown publisher and was cancelled November 1912, the message was about walking to see the “sea cats” and “other funny creatures at St. James”. The one that I have selected (Figures 1.33) is a RPPC published by Valentine & Sons. It shows people walking and standing on the promenade. The second pavilion is just behind the row of beach huts indicating that it is post-1929. Although the beach is not as busy as Figure 1.32, there are many more fold-out chairs and people sitting on the beach. The beach huts look unchanged and a handful of the hotels have increased in height. Because the people are wearing coats and jackets, and no one is swimming, it is probably colder in this image than in Figure 1.32.

The clothing represented in Figure 1.33 shows people in more casual attire than earlier postcards when it was a Victorian beach. There are also more bathing suits being worn, highlighting what Laura Chase argues that from the 1930s, on beaches like Clacton in the United Kingdom, beach-goers had begun to wear bathing suits that showed their legs. This was becoming more acceptable as:

Perceived health benefits of ultraviolet rays providing the medical rationale for the acceptance of otherwise overly daring Continental’ styles... The new fashions were part of a discourse which integrated swimming and suntanning with health, hygiene and

progress, essential characteristics of the ‘modern’ inter-war resort image. This discourse often took the course of giving seaside towns feminine characteristics, in contrast to ‘masculine’ inland industrial towns. In this discourse, the female beach-goer projected confidence and vitality, clouding other comic postcard images of the passive bathing beauty.¹²³

This difference in beach attire is reflected in the postcards of Muizenberg, especially from the 1940s. In these moments, one can see the influence of the culture of the coloniser on the postcolony, where gender, fashion and the beach reflect the values at the time.



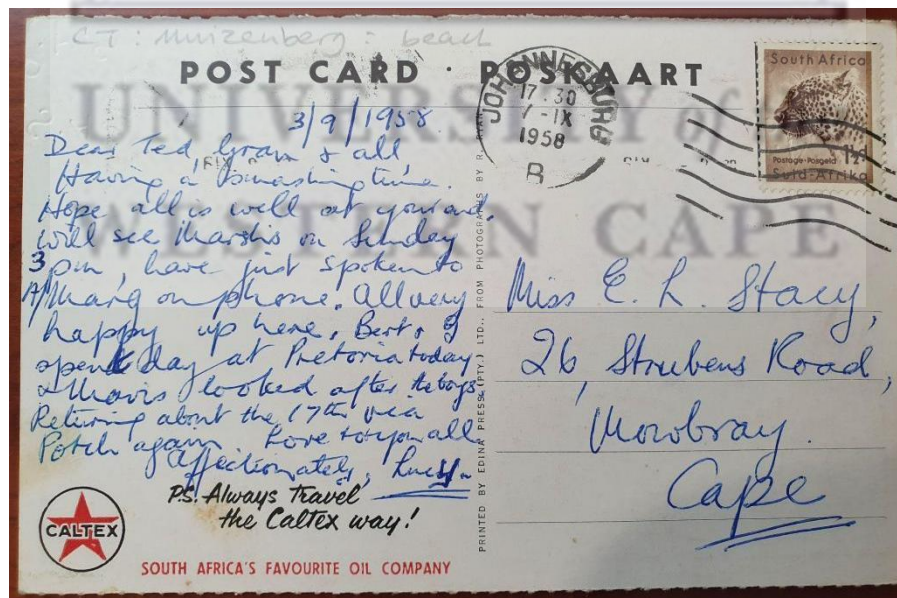
Figure 1.34: ‘Muizenberg Beach, Muizenbergstrand’, Special Collections, NLSA, 7 September 1958

Figure 1.33-1.34 are images from a similar decade as they’re dated 1950 and 1958, respectively. Figure 1.34 illustrates Muizenberg beach at its peak. This is the period when there were the most people visiting the beach, the primary colours of the scene reminiscent of modernity, technological advancements (the car and colour photograph), and invoke a nostalgia that for many will continue to this day. The zenith of the ‘golden years’, as depicted in this postcard, coincides with the formalisation of apartheid under the National Party. The image tells of present, past and future racism. The inclusion of Afrikaans on postcards manufactured during apartheid another indication of the segregation and discrimination of the country.

¹²³ Chase, “Public Beaches and Private Beach Huts – A Case Study of Inter-war Clacton and Frinton Essex,” 218.

Figure 1.34 was posted from Johannesburg to Mowbray at 17:30 on 7/9/1958, written on 3/9/1958. The message reads: *Dear Ted, Gran + all, Having a smashing time. Hope all is well at your end. Will see Marsh(?) on Sunday 3pm, have just spoken to A/Marg on phone. All very happy up here. Bert + I spent day at Pretoria today + Mavis looked after the boys. Returning about 17th via Potch again. Love to you all. Affectionately, Lucy.*

The stamp is of a cheetah, the depiction of South Africa cleansed of King and Queen. Afrikaans and English are on both the stamp and postcard. The photographer is “R. Ryan” and printed by “Edina Press Pty Ltd”.¹²⁴ Caltex is advertised on the bottom left corner, presumably having sponsored the printing of these postcards. There are perforations at the bottom of the postcard so it’s been removed from a postcard booklet. Coinciding with the production of these postcards, as noted by Witz, Caltex was a primary sponsor of South African heritage as settler heritage, seen in a series of booklets which they also produced titled ‘South Africa’s heritage’.¹²⁵ The booklets depicted how Cape Town was “on the threshold of history as the ‘gateway to Africa’, ‘the first centre of civilization in Africa south of the Equator’... Almost totally devoid of conflict, it was this collection of foundings, firsts and ‘forefathers’ in the ‘bygone times’ of the home that was rendered by Caltex Africa as ‘the knowledge and appreciation of Our Heritage’”.¹²⁶



¹²⁴ These later postcards tend to credit the photographers.

¹²⁵ Leslie Witz, *Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022), 54-55.

¹²⁶ Witz, *Museum Times*, 54-55.

Figure 1.35: '26 Strubens Road', NLSA, 7 September 1958



Figure 1.36: Google Street view, 26 Strubens Road, Mowbray (address in Figure 1.35), accessed on July 16, 2023, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/MpnekratowofDESk8>.

The screenshot is an image from Google Street View. Much like Kurgan's use of Street View in *Everyone is Present*, I use this technology to try ascertain whether the house on the postcard still exists, where the postcard arrived in 1958 and if I can learn something more about this other time.

Unlike street photographs that are made in the presence of an engaged human eye, Street View retains the detached obliviousness of the automated camera as it goes about capturing all detail on every street. It doesn't attribute special significance to anything and this suits my purpose now, as I breathlessly explore.¹²⁷

The house does still exist, the voyeur does not learn much else.

The image in Figure 1.34 seems to have frozen time entirely. Everyone paused in motion. A man swinging a child across his back, a child running from the sea, a woman with her arm bent behind her back. The beach huts' primary colours announcing their prominence. There are more umbrellas, hinting that the families and friends are spending a significant part of their day at the beach and need protection from the sun. During the 50s and 60s, sun lotion had a very low

¹²⁷ Kurgan, *Everyone Is Present*, 92.

Sun Protection Factor (SPF), only increasing to SPF30 in the 90s.¹²⁸ Several of the women appear to be in typical domestic worker's uniforms, although I am not entirely sure. The majority of the people on these postcards may have been classified in apartheid South Africa as 'white'.



Figure 1.37: Beach huts and see-saw, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown



Figure 1.38: Beach huts on Muizenberg beach, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

¹²⁸ Michael Winerip, "For Boomers, Sunblocks Come Late," *The New York Times*, 14 May 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/fashion/16genb.html?smid=url-share>.

Only two postcards that I found show the beach huts on their own, Figures 1.37-1.38. On the reverse side, they are titled “Muizenberg colourful change rooms on Muizenberg beach” and “Muizenberg beach change rooms”. The printer is Wayron Postcard Distribution CC, photographer Mark van Aardt, produced by Ronny Smith. There is English and Afrikaans text, POSTCARD/ POSKAART. These are more contemporary photographs of the beach huts which are ubiquitous on Instagram and Facebook photographs taken today. There are no people in the shot, just a close up of the beach huts. In 2022-2023 the beach huts were renovated in Muizenberg and St. James, calling on residents to donate to the cause. Ironically, “in terms of its place in forming and reflecting British identity, the beach hut can also be viewed as a little colonial outpost, on the boundary between the manmade and natural worlds”.¹²⁹

On the beach and in the ocean

In dominant historical narratives of Muizenberg, the ocean is considerably important. It is viewed as a tourist attraction, a place of leisurely activities. These next postcards have been grouped together by the proximity of people to the beach and ocean.

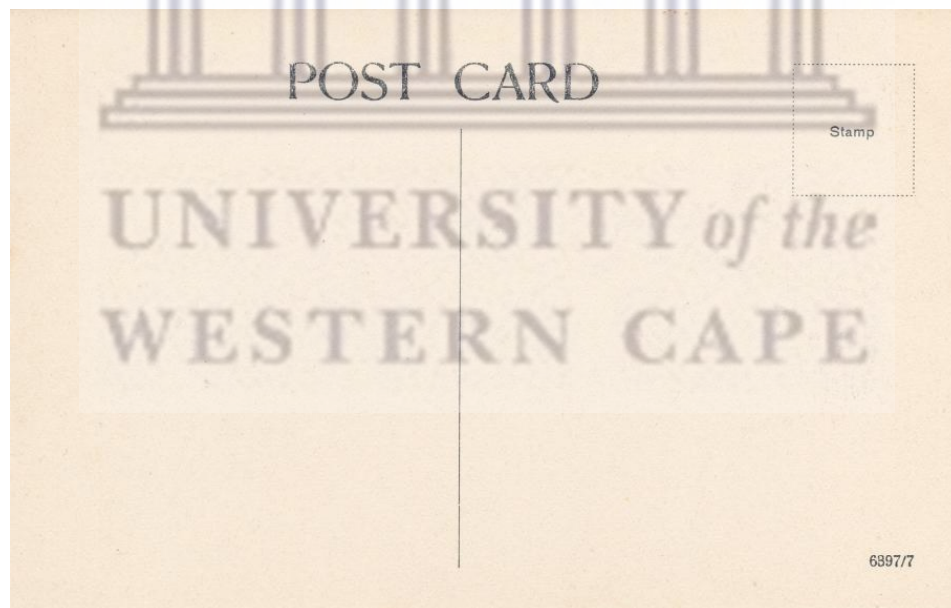


Figure 1.39: Postcard 6397/7, Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, date unknown

¹²⁹ Chase, “Public Beaches and Private Beach Huts,” 214.



Figure 1.40: 'Going for the morning dip, Muizenberg, C.C', Leigh Hen-Boisen, Private Collection, date unknown

Figure 1.39 does not contain much information, we do not know who the publisher was or when it was printed. All we can tell is that its reference code is “6397/7” and its text is in English. It also looks a bit dated, the cream colouring an indication of its age. The reverse side (Figure 1.40) is a printed postcard titled “Going for the morning dip, Muizenberg, C.C.” The women wear broad-brimmed hats and skirts with softly-defined waists, speaking to the period when Muizenberg beach reflected typical British culture. Their shadows are behind them, the sun hasn't reached its peak yet, indicating that the photographer has indeed taken a photograph of their morning dip. The man walking in the foreground has his towel rolled under his arm, as does the little boy to the left. The cheerful face of another child just above his head, like a bobble on his flat cap. Each footprint has left its mark in the sand, speckled all over the image. It feels as if everyone is walking leisurely, a relaxed ebb and flow between one another. The first pavilion takes up a large part of the image, its presence unmistakable, steadily watching people strolling by. What stands out about this image is that the majority of people have their back to the camera, making it feel like the viewer is walking with them. In postcards illustrating people, they are usually walking towards the photographer, now one feels more involved in the scene.



Figure 1.41: 'Surfing at Muizenberg', Special Collections, NLSA, circa 1917

Within the various postcard collections, I found a handful of postcards depicting people in the ocean, i.e. the shore and land are not the focal point. For me, the ocean is a figure within the frame (of history and the postcard). I have selected four postcards to study, which vary in printing format and medium. Five of the 'oceanic' postcards in the NLSA were printed by Valentine & Sons, which includes Figures 1.41-1.42. The image on the postcard titled 'Surfing at Muizenberg,' affirms that surfing had come to Muizenberg by 1917. Three people are riding surfboards, on what appears to be earlier versions of body-boards. The women are wearing headscarves or swimming hats, and their bathing suits cover most of their upper torsos, whereas the men's do not. I think about their bathing suits and how long they could stay in the water for. Muizenberg's waters are known to be a few degrees warmer than the Atlantic Seaboard's beaches, however it is still considerably colder than the East coast beaches with the Indian Ocean waters. The sea foam softly undulates around the swimmers. They are depicted in such a way that the waves look gentle and mellow, both human and ocean landing onshore with little effort. Everyone seems comfortable with one another, the women standing in the back are physically close to one another, their eyes (and bodies) looking towards each other. By showing people in the ocean, there is an impression of comfort and enjoyment with the ocean, crystallised in the facial expression of the woman in the centre right.

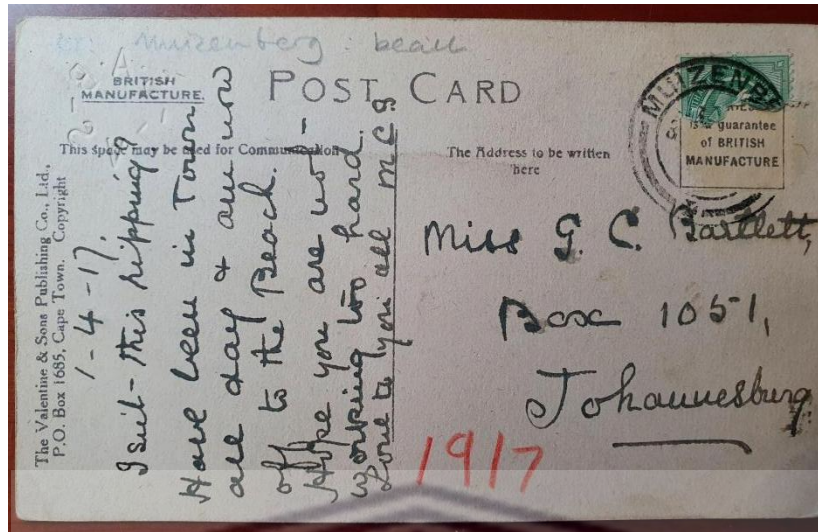


Figure 1.42: ‘Have been in town...’, Special Collections, NLSA, circa 1917

The postal mark in Figure 1.42 is missing, half the stamp has been torn off. The top half of the stamp looks like “Unie van...” so we can assume it is post-1910. Someone has written “1917” in red pencil, perhaps referring to the postal date, although it seems out of place in relation to the rest of the handwriting and pen. I wonder if the receiver wrote the date once the postcard had arrived. The date written by the sender “1-2-17” appears at the top of the message so it seems unlikely that they’d write “1917” again. It was posted from Muizenberg to Johannesburg, to a Miss G. C. Bartlett and has been stamped by the South African Library (S.A.R-S.A.L embossing). The message reads *Isn't this shipping? Have been in town all day + am now off to the beach. Hope you are not working too hard. Love to you all. M.C.S.*

The reference to being in town all day makes me think about where ‘town’ is, possibly Cape Town city centre. The fact that they are mentioning it seems like they don’t go there often, such as for their job. They end their day by going to the beach, evocative of winding down with a walk on the beach. The receiver can nearly imagine their friend in the waves, enjoying themselves like the people in the image are. It transports the receiver to the beach, giving them a glimpse of the bathers’ conviviality.

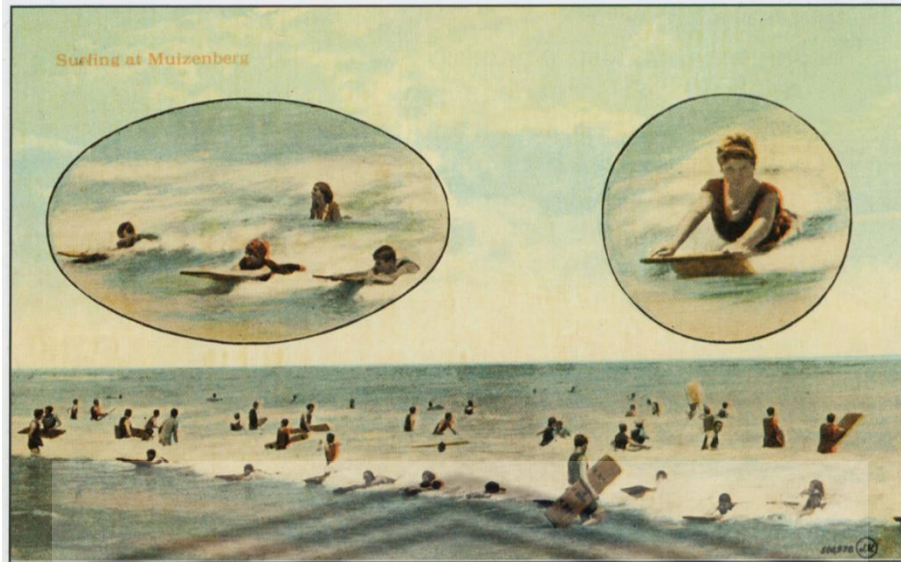


Figure 1.43: ‘Surfing at Muizenberg’, Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 15.

Figure 1.43, also titled “Surfing at Muizenberg” embodies a similar sentiment. Figure 1.41 has in fact been used as the oval inset in the left corner and has now been coloured in. Both postcards have a reference code beginning with 500 and ending with J.V, therefore Figure 1.43 has also been manufactured by Valentine & Sons. The image has been coloured in, the clouds and sky imagined to have looked like what’s been represented. There are more bathers in this postcard, overtly displaying the popularity of surfing (three surfing images on one postcard). The surfboards are an earlier design made of wood and rectangular in shape. Surfing appears to be an amusing activity and the postcard encourages its audience to come and participate. Although this is prior to the Group Areas Act which made Muizenberg a whites-only beach, there are only people who were classified as ‘white’ in the images. The postcard shows that Muizenberg has shed its conventional Victorian appearance and is becoming a (segregated) holiday resort.



Figure 1.44: Standing and surfing, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Figure 1.44, a newer surfing postcard, was printed by Arthur English Colour Prints and credits Arthur English as the photographer. English was a prominent Capetonian photographer who also earned an income doing printing and publishing. Several online stores, such as ‘eBay’, ‘Bobshop’ and ‘Artefacts’ sell photographs, books and vintage postcards of English’s. The caption on the reverse side says “Sliding down the waves of Muizenberg in what is fast becoming South Africa’s number one water sport — surf riding. But the waves are not always as gentle as this and inexperienced surf riders can be roughly dumped,” which is followed by an Afrikaans translation. The surfboards are visibly thinner and longer in comparison to Figures 1.41 and 1.43, their materials have changed from wooden planks to modern make-ups: soft-top foam, polyurethane and epoxy. The men’s bathing suits have also been redesigned, some are in Speedos, others in wetsuits and neoprene shirts. These modern swim suits insulate the body in cold waters and protect surfers from board rash meaning that they can stay in the water and surf for longer periods than before. The surfers are now standing upright, their positions and movements confident. Only the children are body-boarding in this picture, they are looking backwards keeping an eye on when the next wave will emerge. The ocean and sky are picturesque, a typical beach spectacle displayed on pamphlets, postcards and advertisements.



Figure 1.45: 'Surf False Bay, C.P', Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Figure 1.45 is an extraordinary postcard in that the photograph focuses on the ocean without including any people in the frame, it is no longer 'human-centred'. All postcards that I looked at, either depicted humans or human development such as hotels, pavilions, beach huts. The beauty of this image lies in its representation of 'untouched nature,' promoting an idyllic picture, one that's waiting for you to witness and enter. I imagine the photographer walking along the coast until they found this particular stretch and felt like it contained whatever it was they wanted to photograph that day. For me, the punctum in the image is the carefree bursting of waves over the rocks. The ocean is liberated from its role of entertainer, celebrating with sprays of salt water. Conversely, the image is predominantly associated with a romantic tourist gaze of the ocean, nature waiting for one's solitary consumption of it, "a privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze".¹³⁰ All of these postcards of people on the beach and in the ocean, when read alongside apartheid, obscure people of colour from the beach. These depictions silence the injustice of apartheid, producing a crude historical narrative.

From the air

The postcards which are the pinnacle of technological and photographic advancements during the end of the twentieth century are aerial photography postcards. Although aerial photography had existed prior to the manufacturing of Figures 1.46-1.48, postcards in the early twentieth

¹³⁰ van Eeden, "Surveying the 'Empty Land' in Selected South African Landscape Postcards," 601.

century were all taken from Boyes Drive (as was seen in the first section “Muizenberg from the Mountain”). These three aerial postcards were the only ones that I found in the various postcard collections. Figure 1.46 was printed by Arthur English Colour Prints, and has English/Afrikaans text. The description says “Aerial view of Muizenberg showing the Lake and Caravan Park, South Africa / Lugfoto van Muizenberg, met die meer en woonwapark, Suid-Afrika”. The postcard has a wavy decorative border, which also seems uncommon in postcards of Muizenberg. “Copyright” has been printed just below the space for an address, indicating official legal regulations coming into practice.

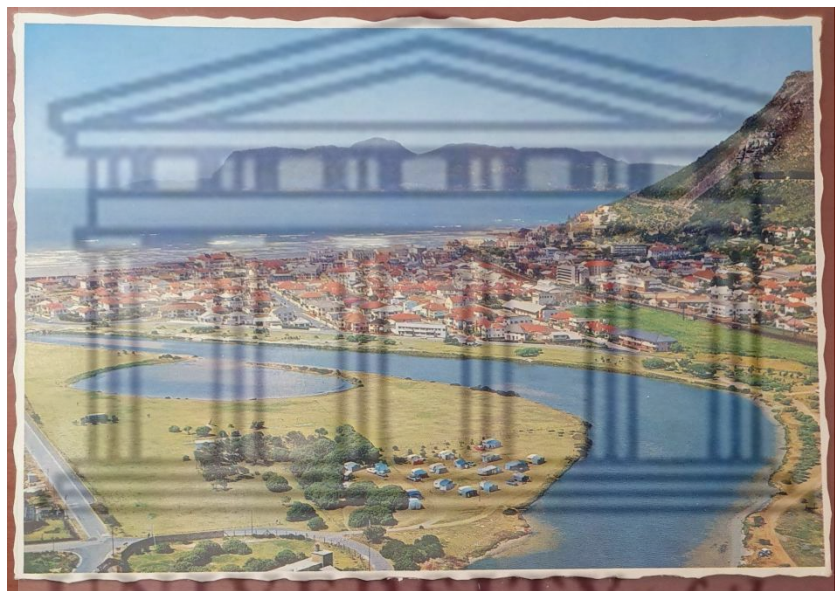


Figure 1.46: Aerial of Zandvlei, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

The photograph shows the Zandvlei estuary and its Caravan Park in the centre, and is another striking depiction of Muizenberg ‘as a whole,’ due to the fact that it is a high-oblique aerial shot representing the horizon, land, mountain and sea.¹³¹ It has been taken from inland and faces the ocean, which accentuates the flow and movement of water and land. Similar to Figure 1.45, it feels like the postcard is advertising a place anticipating arrival, at either the caravan park or the houses nearby. The residential houses below the mountain are squeezing up close to every available edge, giving an idea of the true expansion of the seaside village. The start of the roads into Marina da Gama, a more modern suburban area, can be seen in the bottom left corner.

¹³¹ “Vertical and Oblique Aerial Photography,” Features, Home, National Collection of Aerial Photography, accessed on 16 July 2023, <https://ncap.org.uk/feature/vertical-and-oblique-aerial-photography>.

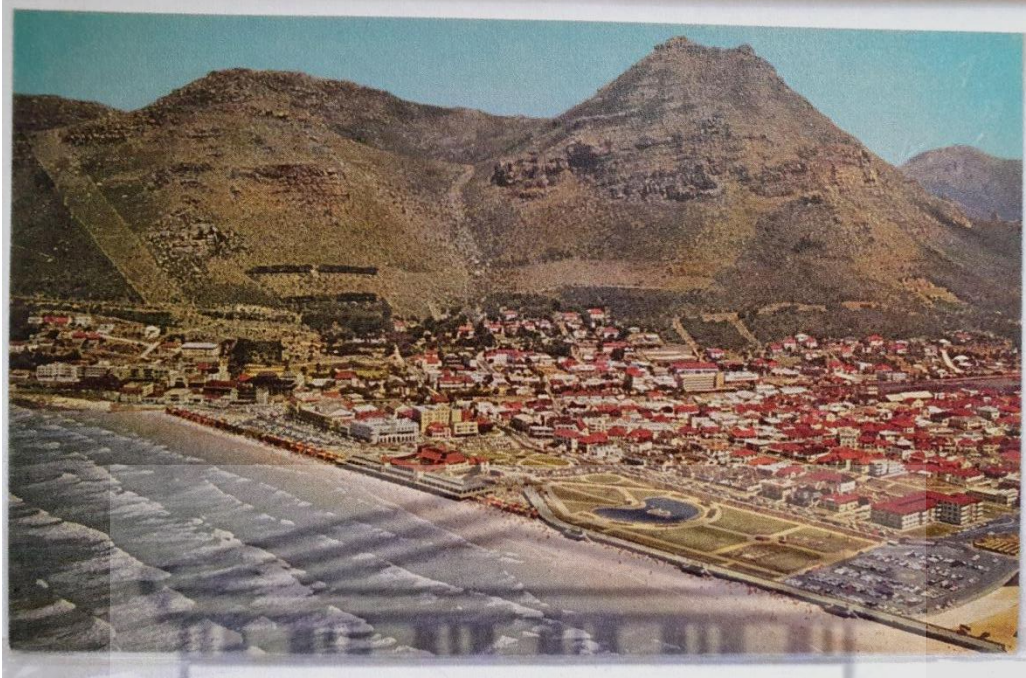


Figure 1.47: Aerial of Muizenberg, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

Figure 1.47 is also a high-oblique aerial shot that has been taken from the ocean towards the Muizenberg mountain. When I look closely at the various buildings I can see the iconic spaces that are mentioned in histories of Muizenberg, specifically the ‘golden years’. There is a large parking lot to the bottom right, which motorists would see as they enter the area from Royal Road onto Atlantic Road. Beside the parking lot are grassed entertainment areas with activities like putt-putt, and in the centre is a small man-made lake where visitors could hire a pedal boat (this no longer exists, it was replaced with water slides, a public pool and the third pavilion/civic centre). The second pavilion is just to the left of the lake which has a plethora of primary-coloured beach huts stretching out from either side (these have currently downscaled, numbering about ten on the beach-side pavement). Behind the longest row of beach huts is another parking lot and Surfer’s Corner — the corner where Beach Road ends and pedestrians cross over the train line to get onto Main Road towards St. James (to the left). Hundreds of beach-goers and motor cars ramble from one end of the postcard to the other. The bigger buildings are hotels before being demolished or renovated in the twenty-first century, a cluster of them behind the pavilion are distinguishable. The paved promenade starts at the bigger parking lot and runs straight down to the pavilion. All of these details are indicative of progress, development and a bustling seaside village/ welcoming resort.

The reverse of the postcard is unposted, it was photographed by Terence J Mc Nally and it has both English and Afrikaans text. Its caption: “An aerial view of the famous Muizenberg seaside resort, Cape Town”.

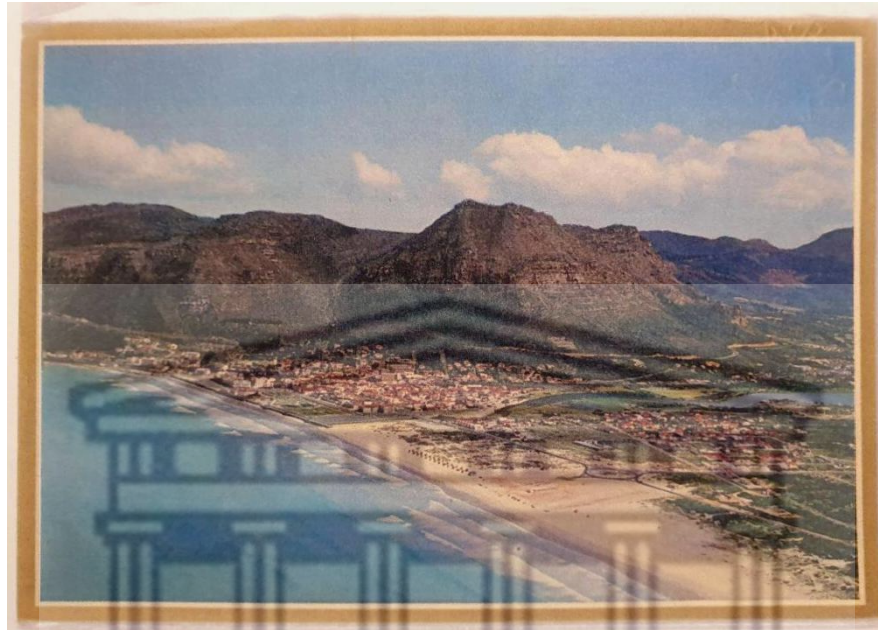


Figure 1.48: Aerial of Muizenberg and Lakeside, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

The third aerial postcard (Figure 1.48), was distributed by Print Ad Products Pty Ltd and credits Foto Max as the photographer. The text is also in English and Afrikaans, “Muizenberg on the False Bay coast of the Cape Peninsula”. The image, framed by a thin beige border, is a wider shot of Muizenberg. Baden Powell, the main thoroughfare from the right side up to Sunrise Circle and leading onto Royal Road into Muizenberg is visible. There are two rows of beach huts at Sunrise Beach, and Zandvlei and Marina da Gama are included in this image.¹³² Boyes Drive can be seen in the distance, snaking horizontally along the slope of the mountain. These aerial postcards that have more distance from Muizenberg beach give the viewer a better idea of its physical make up. The sea and mountains dominate these images, rather than the beach. Developments illustrated in previous postcards are in the mid-ground but now appear as minuscule in relation to sea and mountains. Interestingly, as noted by Hayes, aerial photography “is a technical and cultural by-product of warfare” in that it was developed to map and surveil territories during war. Moreover, “aerial photography enabled forms of spatial domination reminiscent of the earliest maps of Africa, in which sections of the continent were represented as

¹³² All of which are not usually seen in postcards of Muizenberg. They are seen as peripheral areas.

a *terra nullis*, and where ‘time and space had been emptied of experience’”.¹³³ The aerial photograph and postcard feel disjointed when thinking about aerial photography in relation to its history and use. It dislodges the image on the postcard, and instead of representing the progress of a seaside village, it details the history of imperialism, exploitation of natural resources, and the impact of human development on land. It also presents us with an eagle eye view of the Group Areas Act and the intentional racism behind town planning.

Furthermore, the anonymity of aerial views highlights that we do not know or see the labour that went into the manipulations of land and water. Even hiking trails and lookout points, such as High Steenberg and Muizenberg Beacon, have been fabricated through manual labour. Builders come and go, unnamed and underpaid, in precarious positions from the onset of construction, and then excluded from the places they literally built. We can see the exclusion and inclusion of people in these aerial views, not only by what is depicted, but also by what is not. As pointed out by Lemanski and Saff, “Muizenberg as a whole was still heavily White dominated in 1996, composing almost three-quarters (72%) of the population”.¹³⁴ For example, the surrounding areas that are slightly out of frame (to the right in Figures 1.47-1.48) such as Vrygrond and Mitchells Plain, are disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

These systemic issues can be traced back to geopolitics and relationships with land such as that seen through the above analysis of postcards of Muizenberg. “One of the most fundamental gestures of colonialism is that of taking possession of land and inscribing it with new meanings by means of travel, naming and mapping”.¹³⁵ An example is the physical construction of previous British neighbourhoods, such as Newlands and Muizenberg, where the land has been named and mapped to reflect settler identity, the trees that were planted, the roads that were built, the sites of leisure, all reflect a construction of ownership and land. This ideological territorialization was transmitted over generations which helps in understanding the geopolitics behind the production of nationhood of ‘white South Africa’ in the twentieth century, which I argue is illustrated on these aerial postcards.¹³⁶

¹³³ Patricia Hayes, “Vision and Violence: Photographies of War in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia,” *Kronos* no. 27 (November 2001), 134.

¹³⁴ Charlotte Lemanski and Grant Saff, “The Value(s) of Space: The Discourses and Strategies of Residential Exclusion in Cape Town and Long Island,” 515.

¹³⁵ van Eeden, “Surveying the ‘Empty Land’ in Selected South African Landscape Postcards,” 604.

¹³⁶ van Eeden, “Surveying the ‘Empty Land’ in Selected South African Landscape Postcards,” 604.

Conclusion

This initial chapter used my overall thesis question as a tool for engaging with postcards of Muizenberg. How does materiality and the postcard become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its public histories? I consider the materiality of the postcard and of Muizenberg, which provides space for exploring colonial nostalgia and dominant history's omissions. What emerges from reading Walker, Tredgold, Brodie, van Graan, and Hockly as auxiliary material to the postcards, is that the nostalgia of the 'golden years' is the impetus behind which events, buildings, and experiences are included, and more importantly, who was obscured.

Tourism is an important consideration when reading the postcards of Muizenberg. The increase of tourists in the area meant that the 'motley settlement' by the sea could become 'The Brighton Beach of South Africa'. Postcards of the Railway Station, Pavilion and hotels during the early twentieth century are indexical of Muizenberg's leisure industry. The postcards reiterate the tourist gaze for wide, open spaces, the beach anticipating their arrival. As van Eeden asserts, "photographs and postcards mediate landscapes and create intertextual networks that envision what tourists should travel to see and how they should see it".¹³⁷

Postcards, while appearing to conform to, enable us to read between the lines of images and ideas that people have of a place. Throughout this chapter I considered the image, stamp, message, publisher, and condition of the postcard. I explored where and how postcards of Muizenberg were used, and to look at what other material existed concerning their make up. The postcards have the ability to unsettle the 'golden years' when both sides of it are read together.

Postcards not only reiterate histories of Muizenberg, but they create layers of meaning for nationhood and perceptions of public space, as well as the relationship between image and place. When read with Geary alongside Edwards' *Photographs and the Practice of History*, and provocations made by Hayes' reading of Didi-Huberman's lacunary function, a postcard holds the potential to reveal a re-reading and examining from multiple perspectives. What occurs then, is a prying open, of finding new ways of "mining and undermining the archive".¹³⁸

After looking through and studying the postcards, I did, however, question myself, if I was asking too much from the postcards. Was I demanding something from the images and from the people at the time where I myself had repeated their 'errors'. As a resident of Muizenberg, I

¹³⁷ van Eeden, "Surveying the 'Empty Land' in Selected South African Landscape Postcards," 604.

¹³⁸ Anjali Arondekar, *For the record. On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3.

too only had photographs on my phone of the beach and landscapes that sometimes reproduced conventional narratives. So perhaps I was expecting the archive to tell me a story that it couldn't tell in the way that I wanted it to.

There are a handful of photographs in the NLSA which I contemplated because they were the rare images depicting people of colour in Muizenberg. The images represented a snake charmer, two buskers, a domestic worker and a few fishers. All of these unidentified people were in positions of employment or entertainment. They spoke of an incomplete history of Muizenberg, of certain people's lives not being shown on postcards because they did not fit in with a romanticized history. These images were not included in this chapter as they were not on any postcards. However, they are incorporated into chapter three.

This chapter concludes with a question posed by Hayes, which serves as a segue into chapter two: "How do photographs with their time-space compressions interact with or disrupt conventional understandings of the unfolding of historical time?"¹³⁹ What else can postcards tell us? What is the story that they tell? Perhaps it is the postcard's straightforward nature that makes it able to be taken for granted, that it supposedly captures *as is*. One can meditate on this linearity, about how if viewed in a specific way, nostalgia is part of how Muizenberg was/is made. 'Muizenberg' within this discourse is produced through its materiality, i.e. buildings, businesses, beach, kelp, residents, visitors. It is a space where people lived, and died, and where they experienced very specific things which can tell us about a time, a society, and public space. The postcard is not merely a sign of superficial history nor always a romantic vision. Instead, the postcard can, in its two-sidedness, where the front and the back are not clear, challenge linear readings and production of image and history. As summarised by Longford when reviewing Didi-Huberman's *Uprisings*:

Yet photography, the author demonstrates, also functions as a medium through which to blur as well as to reveal. Didi-Huberman, then, is attentive to the ways in which photography can have both an illuminating effect and an obscuring one. For him, photography is a medium of overexposure and underexposure. As he puts it in *Images in Spite of All*:

[W]e often ask too much or too little of the image. Ask too much of it — 'the whole truth' for example — and we will quickly be disappointed...Or else we ask too little of the

¹³⁹ Patricia Hayes, "Northern exposures: the photography of C.H.L. Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland 1915-1946," in *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History*, ed(s). Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), 137.

images: by immediately relegating them to the sphere of simulacrum we exclude them from the historical field as such.¹⁴⁰

I have asked much of the postcard and its double-sidedness, and perhaps it is that double-sidedness which brings them into a historical field.



¹⁴⁰ Samuel Longford, "Putting Gestures to Work: Didi-Huberman, *Uprisings*," in *Kronos: Southern African Histories* No.42, ed(s). Iona Gilbert and Patricia Hayes (Belville: University of the Western Cape, 2020), 285.

Chapter 2

Mediating Muizenberg

Introduction

If the previous chapter looked at the materiality of postcards (because they enable us to understand relationships between image and place), then the postcards in this chapter offer further ways of “mining and undermining” the Muizenberg archive.¹⁴¹ This chapter introduces different mediums that show peripheral representations of Muizenberg’s dominant history and what these ‘other histories’ enable us to do. It deals more directly with the intersection of histories of race, gender and class in Muizenberg.

The title of this chapter, “Mediating Muizenberg,” is derived from ‘media’ and ‘mediate’. ‘Media’ because of the various mediums (newspapers, books, documentaries, podcasts, postcards, etc) that I have included throughout the chapter. And ‘mediate’ drawing on the notion of intervening, being part of a dialogue. I see mediating as a tool for thinking through existing interpretations of Muizenberg’s occluded histories and communities. For me, this method is suggestive of creolization (as a practice — more in chapter three), or what Deleuze and Guattari call the rhizomatic.

I consider these ‘alternative’ representations as connected with the postcards in chapter one. They’re a step away from postcards as romantic objects, and instead I see them as dissonant objects that speak to divergent nostalgias and histories. The following sections reveal parts of these histories, narratives which have been relegated to the margins of postcards. It begins with “Crashing Waves,” which looks at Muizenberg in the late twentieth-and early twenty-first centuries. I then moves onto three ‘categorical histories’. Although these are not separated by rigid time periods, they overlap and co-exist.

The first is “The Shtetl by the Sea,” which considers how one of Muizenberg’s histories becomes Jewish. In order to demonstrate what makes it a Jewish-oriented history I focus on histories of the Jewish community in Muizenberg, a key text being *Muizenberg: The story of the Shtetl by the Sea* written by Hedy I.Davis. The second section, “Surf Mecca,” considers ‘alternative’ surf histories, through reading two postcards and *AfroSurf The Book* by local surf brand Mami Wata, who design and manufacture apparel and surfboards. This is followed by

¹⁴¹ Arondekar, *For the record*, 3.

“Postcard Club” where I read several postcards produced from 2011-2016 by local Muizenberg creatives.

These sections are not written as finite narratives, but rather as openings into their archives and what I have learnt about Muizenberg from them. This chapter is still looking at what sort of events are included in these mediums, who is there/not there, and what illustrations are used/not used. I do not approach the material hoping to fill in the gaps created by the ‘golden years’ nostalgia and pro-settler history, even if the creators intended to do so. I study them because of the clarity and blurring that they enable, both visually and historically.¹⁴² I want to engage with the lacunary function within the Muizenberg archive and engage with silences as an act of acknowledging the incompleteness of ‘a’ history, to explore the multiple histories that exist, in memory, in ocean, on land. This is important as if one looks around Muizenberg, in businesses, restaurants, streets, buildings, beachfront, tidal pools, etc, one can find traces that disrupt a homogenising story of Muizenberg.

Whereas chapter one was led by the postcard, chapter two is led by the absence/excess of postcards. It is interesting how authors, such as Davis, have employed postcards differently. Davis uses several of the same postcards from chapter one but connects them with another history, one that is distinctly Jewish. The image on the postcard has not changed, but its associations have moved (a moving image object).

I want to briefly consider nostalgia as it is important to delineate the politics of nostalgia as not all nostalgia is inherently problematic. Nostalgia is a useful concept when thought about alongside the subsequent histories in this chapter. Grafton Tanner writes:

One of the hallmark characteristics of nostalgia, is its tendency to make one remember the past as a time of perfection, or, at the very least, a better time than the present. Scholars of nostalgia have noted these utopian aspects. Nostalgia and utopia are indeed two sides of the same coin. This might seem contradictory at first. Utopian thinking is normally associated with futurism: the utopia is the perfect society to come, the one we must hope (and plan) for.¹⁴³

For some however, utopia is not an act of futurity, but rather pastness. It is an act of looking back, when life was maybe easier, a sense of belonging more apparent, and job security attainable.

Tanner argues that nostalgia should be understood as an emotion, as an:

¹⁴² Patricia Hayes, “The blur of history: student protest and photographic clarity in South African universities, 2015-2016,” *Kronos* 43, no.1 (2017), 152-164.

¹⁴³ Grafton Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock* (London:Repeater Books, 2021), 36.

intense longing for things lost. It's a yearning for a place you can't get back to, because we are prisoners of the present. It's a longing for stability and autonomy after losing control. It's also a quiet reflection, a slight ache for the old days... It can fill you with awe or mourning. It can also drive you to commit strange and atrocious acts in the name of restoration.¹⁴⁴

In the first chapter, I argued that the kind of nostalgia which emerged was exclusionary, and although the atrocious acts that Tanner is referring to have likely not occurred in Muizenberg, it has allowed for the perpetuation of systemic racism. Even if nostalgias can be problematic, they are still useful for thinking through our current conjuncture and why so many people are nostalgic and yearning for another time.

Grafton argues that there are different kinds of nostalgias, some of which are linked to fugitivity and dispossession. Although we often think about nostalgia in terms of time, it was originally used as a clinical term when someone yearned to return home.¹⁴⁵ If thought about in this way, nostalgia is associated with being homesick. But what does 'home' refer to? In the following sections, each community has their own version of home, not only a physical place where they grew up, or where their families still are, but also in relation to a specific time period, or "a place to which you could return but only partially, because homes aren't forever".¹⁴⁶ This connects back with Derrida's *Cinders* and invokes the post-card as tracing what is no longer there.

Crashing waves

The production of the 'golden years' implies that there would have been a period of slow decline at some point, when it was no longer 'golden'. In dominant histories, this occurred at the end of the twentieth century (90s) and the start of the twenty-first century (00s), coincidentally at the end of apartheid. The 'golden years' nostalgia is about an era to return to, an illusion that 'development' can return Muizenberg to. The depiction of its decline is not directly illustrated on postcards. That would go against the intended purpose of the postcard.

In Walker's book, the NLSA and Leigh Hen-Boisen's collection, postcards appear to pause in the 1970s and then re-emerge with new imagery of the third pavilion (Civic Centre), beach huts or modern surfing (2000-2008). An article from the *Sunday Times* printed in January

¹⁴⁴ Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock*, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock*, 41.

1999, summarises the dilapidated state of Muizenberg during its period of decline. It starts off by pointing out how in the 1960s business owners would have waited at least a year before property became available along the beachfront, which was not the case in 1999. One specific business that was still running in 1999 was Lifestyle Surf Shop, opened by Tich Paul in the 70s. The article notes how it was one of the last businesses on the beachfront-strip still open, “an island of success in a sea of dilapidation”.¹⁴⁷

Janet Heard, the author, writes about Empire cinema and a block of flats being boarded up, in a state of limbo until being demolished on some unconfirmed day. But it was not always that way: “At the turn of the century Muizenberg was a boom town, home to Jewish immigrants who had fled Lithuania. Backed by a breathtaking mountain and fronted by what is still considered the best bathing beach in Cape Town, it became the premier holiday destination for gold and diamond magnates”.¹⁴⁸ At the time, the surrounding residential roads appeared to be in better condition than the beachfront, noted by Heard through her descriptions of the beach huts and buildings. The core of its deterioration occurred closer to the beach, what Heard called “a slumlord’s paradise”. The derelict hotels that remained open at the time were occupied by “a new generation of immigrants” mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.

Heard interviewed business owner Gerald Musikanth, of the local pharmacy in Muizenberg. He said that the area dwindled because of a lack of investment by Cape Town Council in Muizenberg, unlike their support of Sea Point and Camps Bay which had developed significantly in the mid-late twentieth century. The shift to these newer areas suggests that white South Africans were improving their residential options, especially in areas that were further away from informal settlements, during a period when apartheid seemed to be unravelling.

In the article Heard also speaks with Professor Ben Turok who was a Member of Parliament at the time. Turok says that he has:

recollections of a tranquil, laid-back suburb of mainly white lower-middle-class and middle-class families with many visitors coming from Johannesburg each year. In time the character changed — partially because of the removal of segregation. People from neighbouring African and coloured areas took their rightful place on the beach. I suspect

¹⁴⁷ Janet Heard, “Awaiting a new golden era,” *Sunday Times*, 31 Jan 1999, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Heard, “Awaiting a new golden era,” 9.

that when segregation was removed, white business interests didn't want to invest. The council neglected the area, and locals failed to do anything for themselves.¹⁴⁹

A Congolese resident, Constant Kimpunga, living in what was Green's Hotel, spoke with Heard about his experience, that the building was well-kept and that he felt comfortable there because the Congolese transmigrants were unwanted in other communities in Cape Town. He had recently been told to "get out by the end of the month".¹⁵⁰ As I read this newspaper article, I felt like it revealed certain historical narratives that I wanted to explore throughout this second chapter, namely the connections between seemingly disparate diasporic communities and histories. How were they included or excluded on the postcard?

According to the dominant narrative of Muizenberg in the first chapter, the 'golden years' are said to have lasted until around the 1960s, which is when Muizenberg slowly started to decline. This occurred for various reasons, the more popular reason being that the affordability of motor vehicles opened up new destinations irrespective of railways, and that Jewish residents mainly relocated to Sea Point, Australia and Israel/Palestine.¹⁵¹ Additionally, as noted by Hockly, these shifts happened due to the holiday resort being expected to attract guests by offering more recreational activities which Muizenberg had not previously needed.¹⁵²

In the aforementioned article, Turok also touched on the role of apartheid during this period, and what post-apartheid Muizenberg meant to previous residents. For example, on earlier postcards of Muizenberg from Boyes Drive (seen in chapter one), Vrygrond did not 'exist' yet. It was an open tract of land that within a few decades would be built out of the necessity for workers to live closer to their place of employment and having very little choice about where to move to. In 2023, the semi-informal settlement is not officially included in the suburb of Muizenberg, a common edging off of 'unappealing' residential areas prior to and during apartheid. Vrygrond, which translates to 'Free Ground', is said to have been established in the 1930s, although trek-fishers could have been living on the sand dunes prior to this. It is "one of the oldest 'informal' settlements in the Western Cape," that has remained in spite of forced removals and demolitions. Today, 40,000 residents live there, less than a ten minute drive from

¹⁴⁹ Heard, "Awaiting a new golden era," 9.

¹⁵⁰ Heard, "Awaiting a new golden era," 9.

¹⁵¹ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 194-209.

¹⁵² Hockly, "A Study for the Redevelopment of Muizenberg," 12.

Muizenberg's beachfront. Muizenberg (also 40,000 residents) is approximately ten times the area size of Vrygrond.¹⁵³

The shtetl by the sea

“Disappearance,” Franco Berardi notes, “is the mark of nostalgia”.¹⁵⁴ Disappeared things once existed and although we can't be sure, presumably still exist somewhere, even if they aren't commonly encountered in the present anymore. They reside in the past, when we were younger. One of the ways to access our memories of them is through nostalgia. This can be seen in the Jewish community who lived in Muizenberg from the early 1900s-1960s. This time in Muizenberg's history is sometimes affectionately sometimes disparagingly called 'Jewsberg' or 'the shtetl by the sea' by those who lived and holidayed there.¹⁵⁵ A similar image of the beach huts is used on the cover of Hedy I. Davis' *Muizenberg: The story of The Shtetl by the Sea* as those on the postcards seen in chapter one.¹⁵⁶ The use of the image reiterates the sentiment of those in chapter one, showing the busy beach, and the beach huts in their primary colours. Although colouring is largely influenced by the type of film, light exposure, and shutter speed, what is apparent is that the colours now come to the fore through these newer postcards. The colours come to be as symbolic as the beach itself, signifying in this case the nostalgia for a Jewish history.

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¹⁵³ Camilla Renée Thorogood, *Food provision challenges facing Early Childhood Development Centres in two Cape Town townships*, Masters thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2020, https://etd.uwc.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11394/8238/thorogood_m_ems_2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁵⁴ Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock*, 233.

¹⁵⁵ Brodie, *The Cape Town Book*, 228.

¹⁵⁶ I am unable to determine whether it is a postcard or a photograph

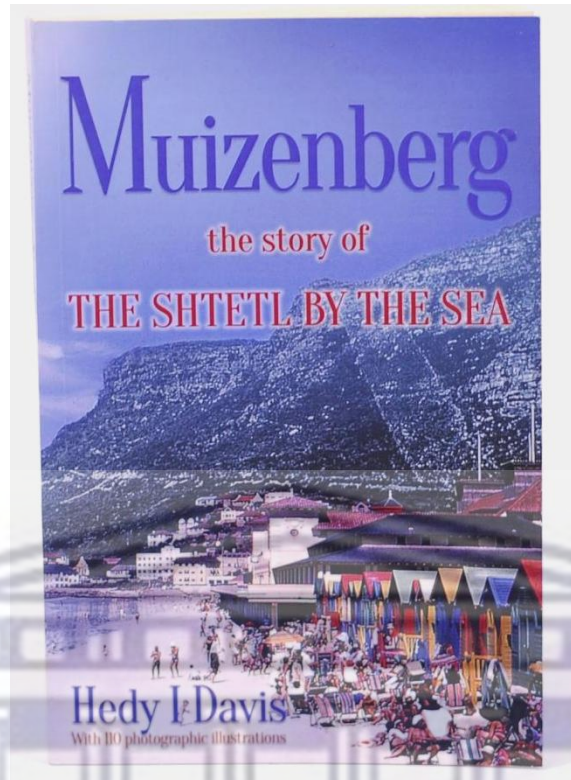


Figure 54: Book cover of Muizenberg, Hedy I. Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea* (2014), Quagga Books, <https://quaggabooks.co.za/product/muizenberg-the-story-of-the-shtetl-by-the-sea-davis-hedy-i/>.

What is noticeable is that the two images from chapter one and Davis' book cover show a specific representation of Muizenberg. It seems that Davis intentionally chose this image because of what it contains; the pavilion, beach huts, ocean and mountain. According to the blurb on the back of the book, "the book brings to life the fascinating story of the colourful Jewish community of Muizenberg".¹⁵⁷ By association she connects the image with an intimate history which she wears on her sleeve, so to speak. Davis uses the postcard in a similar manner to Walker. For her, it is illustrative of the historical narrative that she is writing, but she also attempts to move away from a static reading of the postcard.

In the 1900s-1950s Muizenberg had a large population of Jewish people residing and holidaying there, so one can presume that they are likely the subjects in most of the picture postcards created during this period. Apart from the book cover, this can also be seen in the second chapter of Davis' book, which spans the period from 1904-1926. Davis includes at least

¹⁵⁷ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, back cover.

two postcards in the eighteen photographic illustrations in this chapter, and of the one hundred and ten photographs included in the book, several are likely postcards (although Davis has not credited them as such). The two that I can identify are of the pavilion which was also used in Walker's *Muizenberg: The Golden Years* (Figure 2.2 below) and one of Knight's Villa which has not been included in this research. For Davis, the postcard of the pavilion represents the expansion of the small town and reiterates the influence that the Jewish community had on Muizenberg as a whole. A recent newspaper article (2021) published in the local newspaper *False Bay Echo*, showing the unveiling of several blue plaques in Muizenberg states that:

The Muizenberg Historical Conservation Society has commemorated the contributions made by both the town's Jewish community and the architect, Sir Herbert Baker, with blue plaques unveiled by DA federal chairperson Helen Zille. The society's chairman, Chris Taylor, said the influence of the Jewish community helped establish Muizenberg as a top holiday destination and developed it into the quaint seaside village it is today.¹⁵⁸



Figure 2.2: 'The Pavilion and Beach, Muizenberg from East', Michael Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 6

Davis explains how the Jewish community considered it a *shtetl* because it was “big enough to support the basic network of institutions essential to Jewish communal life — at least one synagogue, a ritual bathhouse, a cemetery, schools, and a framework of voluntary associations

¹⁵⁸ Yolande Du Preez, “Another nod to Muizenberg’s rich heritage,” *False Bay Echo*, 15 September 2021, <https://www.falsebayecho.co.za/news/another-nod-to-muizenbergs-rich-heritage-984f3cc6-c65e-41e6-b742-33927702a968>

that performed basic religious and communal functions”.¹⁵⁹ This indicates how Davis uses the same postcards but links them with a unique Jewish history. The image on the postcard has not changed, but its associations have. The postcard no longer means the same as it did for Walker, a translation into a dissonant object has taken place, their meanings shifting. This reiterates Edwards’ provocation that the photograph mutates, in this case the postcard mutated by event and context.

Davis’ book, along with “Remembering Muizenberg”, a YouTube series created by the Muizenberg Shul, and the “Memories of Muizenberg” exhibition that took place in 2010, are part of what I refer to as the Jewish-Muizenberg archive. Davis uses the material that was collected for the 2010 exhibition (120 memoirs and 1000 photographs), and 400 memoirs and interviews for her book, all of which contribute to the writing of the story of the shtetl by the sea. The “Remembering Muizenberg” YouTube series is run by Rabbi Ryan Newfield of the Muizenberg Shul where, in each Zoom recorded episode, two or three Jewish presenters speak about their memories of Muizenberg. At the end of each episode the audience is given the opportunity to ask questions, discuss some of the topics covered, and connect with old friends.

What stood out for me in Davis’ book was when she mentioned people making their own photographic postcards to send back to family in Europe. One of these postcards included in the photographic illustrations is of Solomon Shapiro (Figure 2.3). Davis writes that Solomon “arrived in Cape Town on 8 February 1931. On that day he set off for Muizenberg with a mate from the ship, and after they had swum in the sea had a photograph postcard taken which he would send home to his wife and family in Latvia, who were familiar with the boulevards of Riga”. Davis does something here that is intriguing. She reads the reverse side of the postcard in order to weave it into a Jewish history of Muizenberg (even though she does not include this as an image in the book). She also dates the postcard, a move that Walker does not make. For Davis, Shapiro sends the postcard in order to reassure his family of what was awaiting them when they hopefully came to Muizenberg to join him. He wrote in Yiddish: “*The houses you see are hotels, and behind us there is a square with benches and canals. On a Sunday, people from Cape Town come here in their thousands*”.¹⁶⁰ What stands out is that Shapiro connected both sides, the message with the image, similar to a postcard in chapter one where the sender made a key on the

¹⁵⁹ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 55.

¹⁶⁰ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 58.

pavilion. Shapiro wants to provide a snapshot of his life and by connecting both sides, he is trying to portray a more 'lived experience' of the *shtetl*.

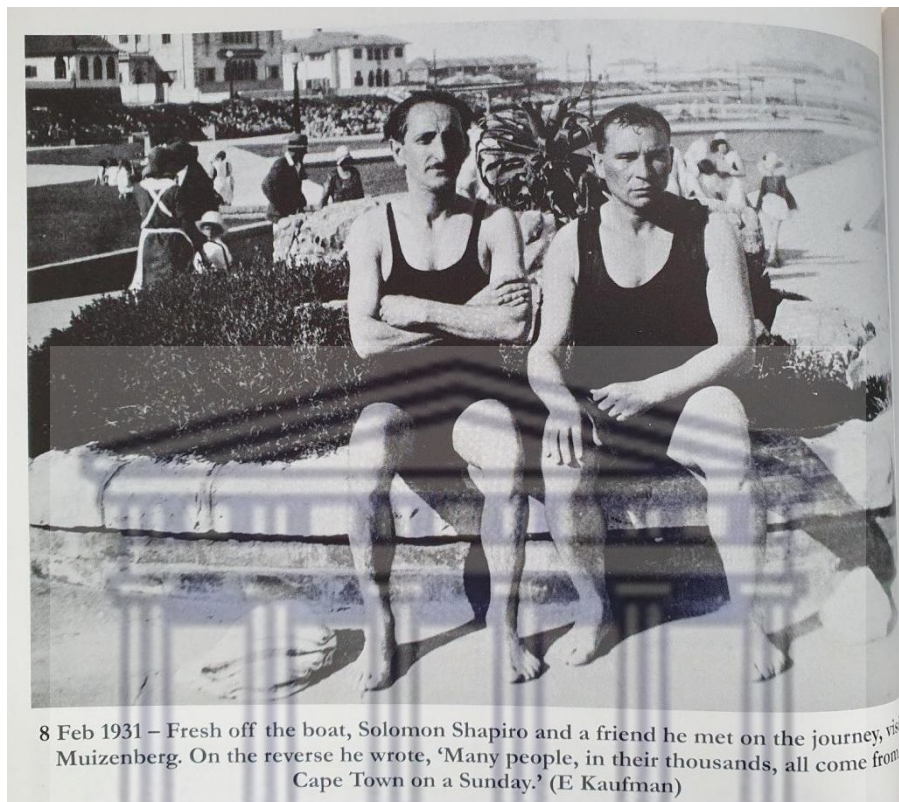


Figure 2.3: Solomon Shapiro's self-made postcard, Hedy I.Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 8 February 1931

The postcard shows Shapiro and his friend in the centre of the frame, both wearing dark-coloured swimsuits which covered their torsos and upper thighs. They're sitting on the wall of a manicured garden, holding posed shapes. Shapiro's facial expression is slightly softer, looking straight at the photographer, whereas his friend is looking off to the right, a more serious expression on his face. A towel is heaped just next to Shapiro's foot: I imagine that they quickly had their photograph taken for the postcard, either before or after a swim, and the towel plopped down where they sat. I am not sure how far in advance this photographic postcard was planned, if the friend knew or not, had they seen the photographer doing the same for others? It feels like Shapiro wanted to show his family the beach scene, in his bathing suit, with a friend, exuding safety, community, and comfortable living. In the background, a woman wears a domestic workers uniform, while other people walk around by the benches and canal.

The two men sharing a leisurely day on the beach, were unaware of the Holocaust that would happen. Although there were signs of antisemitism, such as the pogroms in Lithuania and Latvia, Shapiro seems to have found a safe place to live, the banality of the scene suppressing the violence back in Europe. Writing to his family on this postcard signals the profane and prophetic, transforming into a dissonant object, of cinders and ashes. The postcard is a trace of something no longer there, becoming what was. In this way, the postcard and the history it makes mutates, because of time and context. Relating back to one of my initial provocations at the start of this research, the banality can become useful through the practice of working and re-working the postcard. By trying to see “substances-in-becoming,”¹⁶¹ postcards become ‘more’ than an image or a message of one history.

Davis then moves to writing about certain ethno-tensions within the diasporic community, the *shtetl*. The Shapiros came from Courland in Latvia, whereas the majority of transmigrants in Muizenberg came from Lithuania. She points out how “a snobbery existed between the two groups although they all communicated in Yiddish”.¹⁶² Moreover, culture and region intersected with class, which is seen in the kinds of accommodation that the Jewish diasporic community experienced whilst in Muizenberg. Davis writes about a specific woman, a working class *balaboste*,¹⁶³ Bessie Myers, who was a single mother that brought up “her brood of children” and was “so poor they lived in a rented room”.¹⁶⁴ When I read through this section, it struck me how both the Jewish and later Congolese residents of the 90s could not afford adequate housing and were pushed into sharing rooms, which the wealthier residents bemoaned. Moreover, the ethno-tensions of being Litvak is not directly visible on the postcard, it is only through Davis’ interviews and research that this deeper history is associated with the postcards in the book. Although she does not read it on the postcard, for Davis the postcard does indeed carry this history.

In most of the postcards presented in chapter one, apartheid was hardly mentioned. This is surprising considering it was a segregated beach, but perhaps histories of apartheid disrupt the idea of the ‘golden years’. The Jewish-Muizenberg archive is extraordinary in that it explicitly acknowledges the affective nature of apartheid. For example, Davis notes how the majority of

¹⁶¹ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 435.

¹⁶² Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 58.

¹⁶³ Yiddish word for a Jewish entrepreneurial woman [Brodie, *The Cape Town Book*, 228].

¹⁶⁴ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 59.

the Jewish Muizenberg residents voted for the United Party and that they were not comfortable with the way in which apartheid was enacted (though the United Party were advocates of and implemented policies of racial segregation).¹⁶⁵ However they did not protest when businesses owned by people of colour closed down because of segregation, and were replaced by white owners. This is further reiterated when Davis writes how “the caretaker who kept the *Shul* property clean was still referred to in the Minutes as the ‘boy’”.¹⁶⁶ These subtler histories are occluded from dominant histories, even within the Jewish history. The postcard in this regard continues to be a romantic object, silencing some histories while illustrating others. It has become cut off from its vitality, its “lines of flow and resistance”¹⁶⁷ concealed. I look at these materials, such as Davis’ book, to help understand this concealment, to analyse the interpretation and production of histories. In doing so I can better understand this archive’s connection to my research question and nonlinear reading of postcards.

This silencing in the Jewish-Muizenberg archive appears in the second episode of the second season of the YouTube series, where Farrell Hope speaks about his memories of living in Muizenberg in the 50s-60s. He acknowledges that there are “darker” histories from when he was living there, that are not as easy to talk about than the “lighter” histories. Later in the episode, after regaling tales of body-boarding and friendships, he brings up a specific veggie seller, Sydney Daniels, who was classified as ‘coloured’ under apartheid and how they have remained friends over the years. Hope details how Daniels wanted to retire in a Jewish retirement village but was not permitted to because of his race. Davis also writes briefly about Daniels: “The most popular vendor of all was “Ganif”, who would chatter away in Yiddish entrancing his audience of youngsters, who did not have the mastery of the language that he had growing up in the backyard of a home where his mother was employed by a Yiddish speaking couple”.¹⁶⁸

The film depicts Hope grappling with these incongruencies, to make sense of these incompatible narratives, whilst not offending the Jewish participants and still naming what he feels has been silenced in the community and their nostalgia of those years. This relationship, although depicted on video and photograph (not postcard), can be connected to the profane and

¹⁶⁵ Hedy I. Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 141-142.

¹⁶⁶ Hedy I. Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 142.

¹⁶⁷ Tim Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 433.

¹⁶⁸ Hedy I. Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 166.

prophetic. Daniels, and the various vendors on the beach, appearing in this Jewish history, are prophetic of the partitioning of South Africa that was soon to come.

Throughout the Jewish-Muizenberg archive, it is evident that the construction of a Jewish history is not one seamless narrative. Instead, the material within this archive allows me to think through what the postcard does or does not show, and allows me to contemplate fugitivity and incomplete histories of Muizenberg. In relation to the postcards in chapter one which were used by historians to set a dominant history in place, these fragments establish the discrepancies with producing history in such a manner. They push back against the postcard as a romantic object, demonstrating the presence of occluded histories on postcards.

Surf mecca

It is difficult to separate surfing from chapter one as it is represented in postcards (Figures 1.43-1.44). However, I have chosen to include surfing in chapter two as it entails ‘more’ than what the postcards in chapter one show. Having its own misrepresentations in dominant histories of Muizenberg. Surfing is also connected to the silencing of a history, namely one concerning contests over the beach between trek-fishers and surfers, which I will expand on in chapter three. I struggled to find contemporary postcards that reflected the richness of surf culture in Muizenberg, especially because the ones in the NLSA only depicted white people surfing. According to Walker, surfing came to the area in the early 1900s, 1914 to be precise, when an Australian man was stationed in Muizenberg during the First World War. He notes how the Australian “shaped a wooden board and demonstrated the skills of wave-surfing to an appreciative audience who ‘soon took to the waves’ in great numbers”.¹⁶⁹ Another story is more iconic, involving a woman named Heather Price. According to this narrative Price met two American marines in 1919 who “had docked in Cape Town on [their] way back to America post World War 1” and they taught her how to surf.¹⁷⁰ A photograph was taken of Price while surfing, which is supposedly the first photograph that showed a woman surfing. It became, and for some still is, a surfing cult symbol. During my Honours research, one of the local residents who I interviewed was part of the Muizenberg Improvement District (MID) board when they planned on constructing a statue of Price in the middle of Surfer’s Corner. The interviewee said that he

¹⁶⁹ Walker, *Muizenberg: The Golden Years*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ “Muizenberg celebrates 100 years of surfing,” *Cape Town Magazine*, <https://www.capetownmagazine.com/muizenberg-surf>

was one of the first people to object to the planned statue. He felt that it was problematic to build a statue of yet another white person, and as a member of the MID, managed to have the proposal rejected.

The following two postcards are entryways into thinking about surfing in Muizenberg. As a beach activity, surfing is understood as humans having an intimate relationship with the ocean. Over time, we have developed certain technologies that assist with an even deeper relationship with the ocean. We can measure the wind, waves and tides, and be able to see the sets from our own homes using “surfcams.” Ironically, it is also about having an intimate relationship with technology. It has become so popular in Muizenberg that the majority of the businesses on the beachfront are either surf shops/schools or surf-influenced restaurants offering services such as hot showers or a place for surfers to store their surfboards while eating. I must admit that at first I was reluctant to engage with surfing. It comes across as a leisurely activity where people have a job that allows them to spend hours in the sea throughout the working week. However, after living in Muizenberg and interviewing participants during my Honours research, it became evident that this is not always the case. Although representations in the postcards of surfing in chapter one suggest it is a “white person’s sport,” there are other histories of surfing, which I want to highlight below.

Figure 2.4 is a triptych postcard from the NLSA. It is made up of three images of the same woman posing on the beach. The postcard is an advertisement for the Rustenburg Pharmacy in Muizenberg which stands out because of the neon-coloured surfboard, especially in the vertical image where the surfboard is almost in the centre of the postcard. The woman’s face is not seen in two of the images, in fact she is purposefully posing to hide her face, and in the third when it is shown, her facial features are indistinguishable save for the beach-blonde curls. She wears a neon-pink bikini in two of the images and a pale blue boob-tube bikini in the third. The woman, as well as the beach hut, ocean and sky, are all props for the surfboard advertisement. In Muizenberg, surfers wear wetsuits whilst in the ocean, and so her bikini is not for surfing, another indication of its function as an advertisement. The pharmacy is a two minute walk from the beachfront, which explains why they’d use Muizenberg beach as their backdrop. It is an iconic beach, and surfing is now as iconic as the beach huts. The aesthetic is also reminiscent of Baywatch and American television culture.



Figure 2.4: Rustenburg Pharmacy postcard, Special Collections, NLSA, date unknown

When reading *AfroSurf*, a “coffee-table book”, there are multiple mentions of surfing in Muizenberg reiterating the importance of the beach in South African surf culture. In the book’s introduction, they make its conception and intention clear — it aspires to depict the rich diversity and relevance of African surf culture, quoting Selema Masekela: “African surf culture will redefine the manner in which people will perceive the activity known as surfing and the lifestyle that comes with it”.¹⁷¹ The introduction traces an African surfing genealogy, showing various styles of surfing, such as in Ghana, Senegal and Angola in the 1640s where fishers raced in the sea on small canoes. “For instance, in 1834, while at Accra, Ghana, James Alexander wrote: “From the beach, meanwhile, might be seen boys swimming into the sea, with light boards under their stomachs. They waited for a surf; and came rolling like a cloud on top of it”.¹⁷² The book attempts to represent obscured histories, a particular history which postcards of Muizenberg for example, tend to avert or make ‘white’.

¹⁷¹ Mami Wata, *AfroSurf*.

¹⁷² Mami Wata, *AfroSurf*.



Figure 2.5: Lifeguards on duty, Personal Collection, date unknown

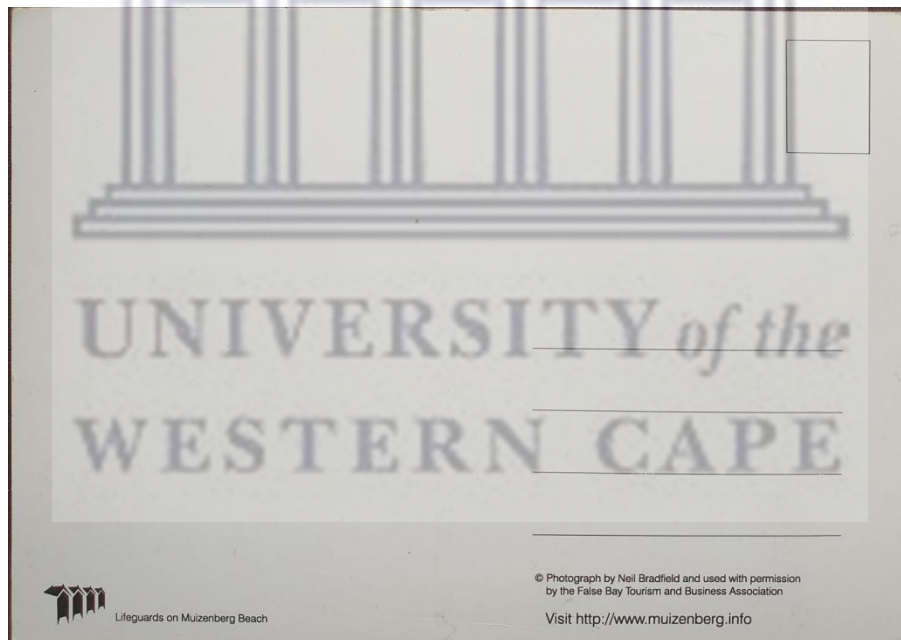


Figure 2.6: Visit Muizenberg, Personal Collection, date unknown

Figures 2.5-2.6 are photographs of a postcard that I found in the Rustenburg Pharmacy in 2022. It was printed by the False Bay Tourism and Business Association and the description says “Lifeguards on Muizenberg Beach” with the email address of the tourism website included at the bottom. The photographer has been credited as Neil Bradfield whose Instagram profile is made

up of surf photography from across South Africa. The focal point for me is the beach hut logo on the bottom left corner which I have seen on several contemporary postcards. It must be used by the False Bay Tourism and Business Association for their postcards, reiterating the iconography of beach huts and their role in tourism. The reverse side is the only one that I have come across of its kind. It is the first postcard depicting people of colour on the beach. The two lifeguards have purposefully been included in the photograph. The photograph is aesthetically pleasing, a derivative of famous British photographer, Martin Parr, perhaps. The primary colours of the inflated boats pop off the beige sand, and the blues in the background complement the blues inside the boat. There are strong shadows made by the boats which hint at the strength of the sun. The lifeguards are both reclining in their boat-sofas, legs opened wide enough so their feet hang over the edge. There's some sand stuck around the edges of the one lifeguard's feet. This same lifeguard, the one on the right, seems to be a bit smaller than the lifeguard on the left. He is wearing unbranded board-shorts whilst the lifeguard on the left wears official 'lifeguard' board-shorts. They seem to be caught in the moment by Bradfield, like he came across them already in these positions and took a photograph of them in their natural state. There are a handful of beachgoers on the horizon, which perhaps speaks to the softness of their seating. They are comfortable in this scene and seem prepared if their services are required (life vests and oars ready to go).

As I contemplate the role of lifeguards on the beach I remember one of the stories that a fellow interlocutor mentioned to me in 2022 at a university workshop about the lifeguard club in Muizenberg being inclusive from its inception, even during apartheid when Muizenberg was a whites-only beach. This intersects with the production of surfing as a non-racial activity that is shown in the short film *Free Surfer: Cass Collier* directed by Kyla Philander. It opens with a shot of a wave's barrel and surf instructor Cass's voice, "Freedom feels like riding a tube, like you're controlling the world at that moment, every surfer's dream is to ride inside the barrel. I've spent my whole life in the ocean. I'm a master of riding the barrel."¹⁷³ It then shows Cass coming out the ocean in a wetsuit with his surfboard. Subsequently, the short film establishes Cass's personal journey and life as a surfer/activist. He mentions the threat of great white sharks along South African beaches, and how the ocean is freedom. Cass recalls how the nice beaches were whites-only in the 1980s and how his father, Ahmed Collier, would go and surf at the white beaches. "He was the first black surfer to go to all the local beaches in Cape Town, take on the

¹⁷³ Bioscope Films, "CORONA FREE SURFER," 00:00-00:22.

apartheid government... there were lots of times we went to beaches and left in the police van.”¹⁷⁴ In the short film there is archival footage of his dad and family on the beach, and various close-ups of Cass in 2022. He speaks about being told by friends and family that they’d get nowhere with surfing, but Cass lands up being a Triple Western Province Champion, a world-renowned surf coach, and the first person of colour to become a Big Wave World Champion. It closes with Cass silhouetted by the sunset saying, “I grew up in a terrible environment, but the ocean wasn’t a terrible environment... I think the ocean is more about healing. There’s no greater freedom than the ocean”.¹⁷⁵

If you are familiar with surfing and Surfer’s Corner, you will no doubt have come across Cass. His perspective, although not unique for most surfers, resonates differently in relation to his politics, the history of Muizenberg’s beach and the postcards depicting surfing. When he speaks about freedom, he is referring to a political freedom, a freedom to exist. This health and freedom, derived from a relationship with the ocean, can be seen and heard in many stories told by people of colour who surf in Muizenberg, and disrupt ideas about surfing being an individualist leisure pursuit. The postcards of Muizenberg depict surfing as a sport of people who may be categorised as ‘white’, seen in the postcards of people in the ocean in chapter one. I challenge these depictions by reading other histories alongside the postcards. Therefore, although the postcard is imbricated in the making of whiteness, it is also a dissonant object that has the potential to unsettle these productions and associations.

Postcard club

This section considers the postcards that I bought from Joon’s restaurant in July 2022. There were 6 of them on display in a corner of the cafe and were sold at R15 per postcard. They were dusty and a few had spilt candle wax dried on one side, clearly remnants of something special. They were neither valuable enough to keep in good condition, nor were they insignificant enough to throw away. The postcards were all long rectangular shapes (210mm x 99mm), a deviation from the standard (105 x 148mm).

All of them had the same design printed on one side (Figure 2.7) which details that it is the Muizenberg Postcard Project, produced by The One Love Studio, printed on recycled paper

¹⁷⁴ Bioscope Films, “CORONA FREE SURFER,” 01:32.

¹⁷⁵ Bioscope Films, “CORONA FREE SURFER,” 02:59.

by Epic Print. ‘Recycled paper’ indicates that they are aware of environmental pollution and want to show their efforts to reduce waste. There are three or four icons scattered around, “wish you were here” and “Love Muizenberg” are in speech bubbles in either corner, with icons of a bee and honeycomb, and a hand holding a pen. One of them also has an icon of a person holding a surfboard. The postcards with graffiti images (Figure 2.8) also credit the artist on the reverse side.



Figure 2.7: Muizenberg Postcard Project, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016

According to several Facebook posts on the Muizenberg Postcard Project page, it was a community initiative that aimed at getting locals to collaborate to “create a collective vision

incorporating past, present and future.”¹⁷⁶ It was established in 2011 “to showcase local creatives, celebrate Muizenberg and be a fundraising stream for the Muizenberg Festival”.¹⁷⁷ At its peak, their postcards were sold in more than 15 outlets around Muizenberg and during the Muizenberg Festival in the foyer of the pavilion in October 2014. They ran regular Doodle nights where creatives made postcards together, and participated in the Muizenberg Open Studio Tour on 10-11 October 2015, with their own exhibition at 29 Palmer Road. Their last Facebook post was 12 October 2016, so I presume the project closed around that date. In several of their Facebook posts they used a postcard shape and design as a digital poster to advertise various events they were hosting, making the postcard into a digital object. When looking at their postcards, one can notice the construction of their Muizenberg, one that reflects the artists who were living there, and their relationship with the space.



Figure 2.8: Muizenberg Postcard Project graffiti designs, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016

¹⁷⁶ Muizenberg Postcard Project, accessed on 1 November 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/ete9zveh>.

¹⁷⁷ Muizenberg Postcard Project, accessed on 1 November 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=706099396201553&set=pcb.706110129533813>.

The postcards are not only different to their predecessors in shape and design, but in image and representation too. For example, the photography of graffiti artworks (Figure 2.8) has been included because graffiti means something to the postcard makers, its visual communication speaks to their personal values. Graffiti's association with urban street culture and art must be important since there are several different artworks used on various postcards. Although they seem to be void of politics, it also seems as if the postcards illustrate an alternative Muizenberg that they'd like represented. Both artworks were done by Serge One, who was one of the co-founders of One Love Studio. The artwork of the two whales swimming together has geometric lines in the background, presumably a commissioned piece on someone's private exterior wall.



Figure 2.9: Muizenberg Postcard Project abstract triangles design, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016

The postcard (Figure 2.9) of abstract triangles layered on one another has font typed onto the bottom left corner, “oneone creation... ‘... our aggregating rainbow...’”. I am not sure what this refers to, perhaps something to do with the rainbow nation. The abstract triangle rainbow, instead of being a ‘normal’ semi-circle rainbow, seems to want to do something different in terms of representation. It was likely created using graphic design software, although I first thought it was also graffiti, and not a digital design.



Figure 2.10: Muizenberg Postcard Project promenade, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016



Figure 2.11: Muizenberg Postcard Project beach, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016

There are two postcards depicting photographs of Muizenberg beach, one of the promenade (Figure 2.10) and the other the beachfront during low tide (Figure 2.11). Figure 2.10, a one-point symmetrical photograph, portrays a heavenly aesthetic, the pinks and sunlight reflections accentuating the romance of the image. The beach huts to the right and the slide to the left balance the image on either side. The top left corner has a heart icon “Muizenberg” which seems to be done to create an aura of tranquillity and love. Figure 2.11, portrays a similar emotion for me, of tranquillity or peace. The intense blue colourising with hints of light on either side makes it feel like I am walking on the beach at twilight, on my own, an otherworldly stillness.



Figure 2.12: Muizenberg Postcard Project texts, Personal Collection, circa 2011-2016

The final postcard (Figure 2.12) is made up of about twelve different fonts, each one I presume is a local restaurant or shop, maybe involved with the Muizenberg Festival. I recognise a few of them which are still open in the village, the others either closed down or renamed since the making of the postcard. The top right corner displays a wooden heart that says, “YES! we are open” with a heart icon. It is an invitation to visit, or a statement of a collective Muizenberg. It reiterates the sentiment of the postcards in general, that Muizenberg is a community and anyone is welcome. I think it is this ethos that the Postcard Project wanted the postcards to represent.

“The Postcard Club” is a segue between chapter two and three in that both the project and myself made postcards of the Muizenberg that we want to see. By constructing ‘alternative’ representations, the project demonstrated how the postcard can make ‘other’ histories. The project’s postcards are another history, a more contemporary one, that presents Muizenberg as a place where artists and creatives live, and where their community is thriving. The beach resembles a sacred place, the graffiti hints at counter-culture, and the icon of the beehive signalling an engaged neighbourhood, the ideal society. This representation, when read at face value, reiterates contemporary dominant histories. In the same way older dominant histories occlude and silence, so do their contemporary counterparts. For example, they occlude histories of gentrification in Muizenberg, and present a community of collectives at peace with itself. The redevelopment of Muizenberg in the 2000s, which is a continual process, re-frame gentrification and the racial profiling of private security companies and the Muizenberg Improvement District as necessary for the ‘community’.

Conclusion

To close this chapter I will summarise the postcards' movement and undulations. The excessive/absent nature of the postcard as a romantic object is what enables its co-option and transposition, especially those that are committed to colonial nostalgia and settler narratives. In this chapter, the postcard shows how it can mutate and reveal its unfamiliar forms. Reading Thompson, "the postcards have also become central sites in the project of postcolonial reconstructions of subaltern histories," which was seen in each of the three sections.¹⁷⁸ In order to write about divergent (stratified) histories, I had to turn to several complementary and sequestered media whilst still trying to remain with the postcards themselves. Unsettled by the constrictions created through the excessive images on the postcards in chapter one, this chapter became a way to test the waters, to see where else the postcards of Muizenberg might take me, revealing its ambiguity and concealments (the lacunary function).

Throughout "Mediating Muizenberg", I focused on writing a history "against the grain" of dominant narratives whilst still looking at the postcard. I included Jewish, surfing and contemporary histories of Muizenberg (and yet they are not the only occluded histories in dominant narratives). The rhizomatic movement of the postcard allowed for a better understanding of how history is produced and how the postcard can potentially be read outside of its Eurocentrism. I also found it useful to think about nostalgia and the ways in which it is intertwined with politics, memory and fugitivity.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 273.

¹⁷⁹ Tanner, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clocks*, 248.

Chapter 3

Creolising Muizenberg

Introduction

The title of this chapter is prompted by Jane Anna Gordon and Drucilla Cornell's *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, which considers the connections between Luxemburg's anti-capitalist work, and contemporary issues regarding the environment, feminism and racism. As noted by Michael R. Cope and Mark J. Schafer, "since the emergence of this unique ethno-cultural group, the meaning of the label, Creole, and the identities associated with it have been contested, distorted, subdivided, and otherwise shaped through interactions, comparisons, and competitions with other groups and labels".¹⁸⁰ This introduces the idea that at its core, creolization is a polemical term that can be opened up, its use can shift and morph. I argue that its ambiguity allows one to re-think and confront ideas of 'complete histories'.

Walking or swimming with Gordon and Cornell's work, the specifics of creolization (read alongside the rhizome¹⁸¹) in Muizenberg involves looking at the interconnectivity of 'supposed binaries' (ocean and land, living and not living, white and black) which presents a critique of produced dichotomies and identities. Coinciding with this analysis is the idea of 'collective becoming and dispossession'¹⁸², which speaks to the ways in which diasporic communities have lived or live, and have worked or work in Muizenberg. This also touches on fugitivity, the precarity of transmigrants and indigenous peoples, and the more recent gentrification of the area. This final chapter is therefore interested in creolization as an intervention for putting "different, previously sequestered sides of a shared political situation together to explore the results".¹⁸³ I do so here by producing my own postcards that engage with history as a practice, considering environmental humanities, marine ecologies, deep time, and subjectivities in Muizenberg.

Through making my own postcards, I have experimented with different techniques and mediums to create a conversation between histories and conceptions of Muizenberg. I am

¹⁸⁰ Michael R. Cope and Mark J. Schafer, "Creole: a contested, polysemous term", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40, no. 15 (2017), 2665.

¹⁸¹ Mentioned in the introduction of this mini-thesis

¹⁸² Drucilla Cornell and Jane Anna Gordon, ed(s)., *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021), 1.

¹⁸³ Cornell and Gordon, *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, 1.

interested in destabilising the image on one side of the postcard whilst reintroducing writing on the reverse side, exploring the epistolary form. The postcards are fragments of Muizenberg and its historical production and have been curated as such. Each postcard's image and text speak to one another, whilst also connecting with themes touched on in other postcards. In this way, they weave together and become a patchwork of histories and ideas, a kind of stratified piece of work, representing nonlinearity and the rhizomatic. For this reason, I have not made these postcards as a way to fill in any gaps, but rather to trouble dominant historiographies of Muizenberg and explore the lacunary function within existing postcards and archives. Throughout the chapter each postcard attempts to pry open the 'golden years' narrative in order to problematise how history is used, spaces are made, and people are seen.



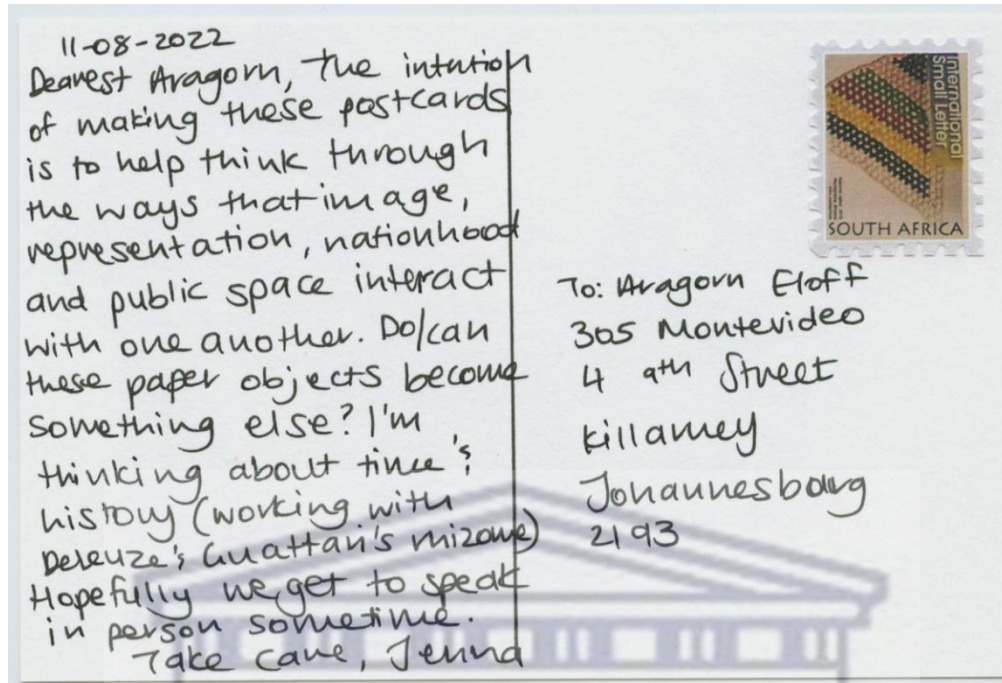


Figure 3.1: Snakcharmer by Pavilion, Personal Collection, 11 August 2022

This first postcard serves as a segue between the introduction and following section. It depicts three photographs which I found in the NLSA of an unnamed snake-charmer performing in Muizenberg, in front of the now George Whitefield College, a Christian theological training school (Figure 3.2). The building is distinguishable in the top right inset of the postcard, especially in architectural elements like the windows and roof. The snake-charmer would have been performing in front of the second pavilion.



Figure 3.2: Comparison images of building using Google Street View, Muizenberg Civic Centre towards Beach rd (Accessed 14 November 2023), <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Yb4NnSjFV1prKg639>

The information written in pencil on the back of the one photograph dates circa 1935. These three images show a man sitting on a mat with a snake inside a basket. He wears a headdress and suit and is surrounded by an audience in each of the images. His outfit changes which suggests that each photograph was taken on a different day. I notice how the snake's basket is in various positions, which perhaps indicates different stages of the performance, either the snake is inside the basket, partially standing upright, or the lid slightly ajar. The man looks comfortable as the snake-charmer, relaxed in front of both the audience and the photographer. In one image, someone dressed in the uniform of a domestic worker watches from the sideline. In another a younger man is behind the snake-charmer on his haunches. I wondered who this elderly performer was, and why his photographs had been archived. Later, when reading Hedy Davis' book, I found a reference to a snake-charmer, who I presume was the unnamed person in the archived photographs.

A seasonal migrant to Muizenberg who was part of the scene every summer from 1927 onward, was the Indian snake-charmer who would arrive from Durban each year and then depart when the Season was over... No one ever knew his name, but he became known by his mysterious chant, "Yuldi Yuldi Fooballa"...But in the summer of 1942 a face was missing in the crowd, that of "Yuldi Yuldi Fooballa", who must have passed away during the previous year and never returned to his spot on the promenade... The holiday-makers may or may not have noticed his absence, and life went on.¹⁸⁴

Davis' last sentence is particularly interesting because of my reading of presence and absence, cinders and ashes. The ambiguity surrounding his absence is another example of the postcard as a moving image object, an object that exists (carries) temporalities and spatialities. It also holds the traces of someone no longer living, telling the future of the figure's inevitable ending. In another book written by a previous resident, Barbara Titley, collating stories and memories from a 'bygone era,' there are two references to the snake-charmer:

Indian Charlie was one [sideshow], with his round cane basket containing a cobra and the three little baskets that he used in his tricks. We small children did not have much money but we always used to throw him our pennies. He used to pick them up with a look of great sarcasm and say, with his queer accent, "Kep Town half crown!"¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 81 & 112.

¹⁸⁵ Barbara Titley, *Muizenberg Remembered: The Rise and Fall of The Brighton of South Africa* (Noordhoek: self-published, 2008), 84.

Another mentions how the “old Indian snake-charmer... known as ‘Cape Town Charlie’...came to South Africa from the Punjab in 1910,” and that “his snake was just a prop for his tricks”. They also mention the snake-charmer’s death, noting how he died in Durban “in 1941 having been bitten by his cobra”.¹⁸⁶

The reverse side of the postcard is a message to a friend about why I made these postcards and what I was thinking about whilst working on them. I use it as an introduction not only to this chapter, but also as a preface to the decentred histories that I have found throughout my research. For me, using it as an introduction connects some of the fragments and ideas that thread throughout this dissertation, such as public representation, relationships with the ocean, and the postcard as a moving object.

Anthropocene postcard



¹⁸⁶ Titley, *Muizenberg Remembered*, 123.

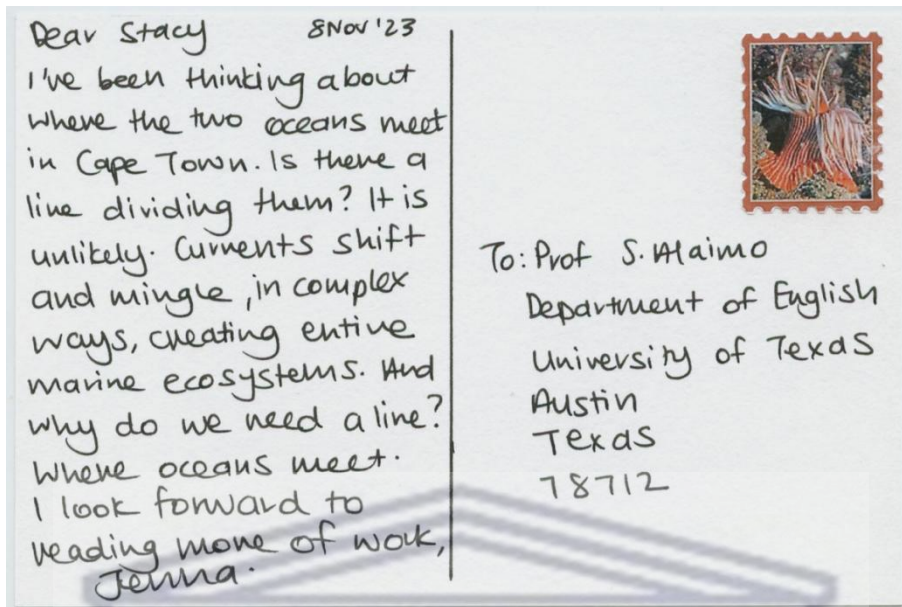


Figure 3.3: Muizenberg from False Bay, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

The photograph for this postcard, Figure 3.3, was taken whilst on a boat trip of False Bay which I organised with a local fisher. I was interested in seeing Muizenberg from the ocean because in postcards we usually see it from the land (or air). What does it look like from the ocean? And what does a postcard of Muizenberg from this position say?

Conversely, Table Bay is often depicted from the ocean towards the land, especially because of Table Mountain's iconic status. As noted by Witz and Rassool:

Table Mountain not only presents a vista of European discovery and exploration but it is also from its slopes that European Cape Town is seen to be fathered. From the foot of the mountain, the city 'oozes history from every pore and measures traditions and buildings in centuries. Where 'lions roared', 'hippos wallowed' and people lived in 'shabby huts', constructions of a European past with its gabled Cape Dutch homes, brookie lace Victorian facades and scattered garden suburbs emerged. While these have largely given way to a more modern city with its 'tower blocks', 'skyscrapers' and 'streams of traffic flow', they still serve as 'national monuments' proclaiming Cape Town as 'not very African'. When visitors 'speak of the fabled "charm" of the Cape' it is this 'colonial "Europeanised" atmosphere' that they are referring to, where the city's 'Africanness is concealed beneath [the] [. . .] foreign patina' of a mountain evoking 'awe, wonder and majesty'.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, "South Africa: A World in One Country. Moments in International Tourist Encounters with Wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36, no.143 (1996), 362.

Because of Table Mountain's vista, I find it productive to depict Muizenberg within this framing and perspective. The photograph on this postcard presents Muizenberg in a different light, from the ocean only certain buildings are distinguishable, namely Cinnabar. There are several structures to the right that create a jagged silhouette of a small town. The left of the image is dominated by the Muizenberg Mountains, its presence colossal in relation to the inconspicuous buildings at its base. In my reading, the cloud appears to be lingering over the town, peering down upon the land dwellers, almost cognisant of our ways of being with the environment and each other. The cloud carries an obscurity in its greys and lowlights. I also notice how the grain in this postcard contrasts with the Baywatch-style postcard in the previous chapter.

Compositionally, the ocean makes up nearly half of the image, creating a stable foundation for life to exist on. Water is the key element to our evolution and society and so this foundational presence in the image reflects our dependence on it. Giulio Boccaletti, in writing a biography of water, details not only the evolution of water since the big bang, but also our relationship and manipulations of it. Boccaletti offers that the history of water is in fact a story of politics: "The effects of humanity's ongoing relationship with water are not merely written in rivers. They are etched into the fabric of society, into the belief, behaviours, and systems that regulate everyday life. What is most engineered is not landscape, but political institutions".¹⁸⁸

Not only is this evident in contemporary Muizenberg with regards to flooding and drought, maintenance of water pipes, sewage drainage and access to water in homes, but also historically in terms of who could use the ocean and in what ways. For example, Tredgold writes about how "the strandlopers made traps to catch fish by building dams in the sea, into which the fish swam at high tide and then could not escape when the tide went out. The strandlopers also speared fish in shallow water. The shell-fish on which they feasted included perlemoen, alikruikels, mussels and perdevoetjies (limpets)".¹⁸⁹ Over time this relationship with the ocean changed, namely because of development and the subjugation of indigenous people. No example presents this better than the Group Areas Act and Muizenberg beach being declared a whites-only area, fundamentally changing how the beach was used. Jayne Rogerson explains the systematic introduction of several Acts by the National Party which allowed for the segregation of beaches in South Africa. The most well-known is the Group Areas Act (1950 and 1966) which

¹⁸⁸ Giulio Boccaletti, *Water: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2021).

¹⁸⁹ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 18.

created residential areas segregated by racial groups. The 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act permitted “the reservation of public premises and vehicles or portion thereof for the exclusive use of persons of a particular race or class” and the 1935 Sea Shore Act which “declared the Queen, the owner of the sea-shore and the sea within the territorial waters of South Africa”.¹⁹⁰ The 1960 Amendment Act stated that ‘the sea’ refers to “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.” The final regulatory measure was the 1972 Sea-shore Amendment Act which empowered “the Minister of Agriculture to delegate to provinces and local authorities for the enforcement of apartheid on beaches”.¹⁹¹ These histories are visible in the image on the postcard, in the buildings and position of Muizenberg, as their very existence depicts racial segregation in South Africa.

The stamp on the reverse side is made from an image in a photographic series “Anthropocene,” by David Thomas Smith. Smith uses aerial and satellite photography to create the tapestry-like images. His work reflects on specific locations and the influence of global capitalism, transforming sites of natural resource extraction and human excess from data into pictographic rugs. “From afar, the images may appear abstract and ornamental, yet upon close inspection, they begin to reveal all sorts of new-found contexts and topographies”.¹⁹² This connects with the overall Anthropogenic theme of this postcard.

Part of this chapter, and research, has been inspired by previous transdisciplinary work by scholars such as Lesley Green and Ian Baucom. Within this exploration of the environment, science and history is a deeper conception of time and ‘nature’, thinking about Muizenberg as a physical space that has existed for millennia. This physical site, as it looks today, is not how it has always been, nor will it remain the same. It has changed in subtle and overt ways over millions of years. Conceiving of Muizenberg in such a way allows me to consider some of the concepts linked with ‘deep time’ and ‘nature’. As written about by Lesley Green, these include the ‘technosphere’, ‘Capitalocene’, ‘Plantationocene’, ‘new materialisms’ and the

¹⁹⁰ Jayne Rogerson, “Kicking Sand in the Face of Apartheid’: Segregated Beaches in South Africa,” *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, no.35 (2017), 99-101.

¹⁹¹ Rogerson, “Kicking Sand in the Face of Apartheid’,” 99-101.

¹⁹² Demetrios Gkiouzelisart, “From Google Maps To Ornamental Photographic Artworks,” *Yatzer*, 19 April 2013, <https://www.yatzer.com/anthropocene-david-thomas-smith>.

‘Anthropocene’.¹⁹³ Each of these can be connected to Muizenberg in some way, either through imperialism and apartheid, development and modernity, and capitalism, but it also dislodges our human-centric understanding of history and the idea of man’s dominion over nature. I mention these connections here so as to acknowledge the transdisciplinary inclinations within the postcards that are in this chapter.

In a later postcard, “Deep down tidal,” I write about who is the ‘anthro’ in ‘Anthropocene’, as asked by Stacy Alaimo in *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*.¹⁹⁴ Prior to exploring this question, I want to think about what is meant by ‘anthropocene’ and how we can bring Muizenberg into this conversation. “The term Anthropocene,” writes Baucom, “is intended to identify a new epoch of geological time (following the Holocene) in which the core geological condition and future of the planet have been fundamentally reconstituted by human actions”.¹⁹⁵ There are disagreements over when the beginning of the Anthropocene is exactly and how we can understand it as an epoch within “the continuum of ‘deep time’”.¹⁹⁶ For Baucom, it began during the latter part of the 18th century which coincided with certain advancements such as the 1784 invention of the steam engine.¹⁹⁷ Through this lens, one can conceptualise periodization as in relation to “capital *and* also to carbon” and “in dates *and* in degrees Celsius”.¹⁹⁸

The Anthropocene can therefore be seen through “the *forces* of human politics, history, and culture” and “the *forcings* of climate change”.¹⁹⁹ By reading Baucom alongside my research on Muizenberg, I attempt to try to read both the *forces* and *forcings* of human history and geological time, considering “the dynamics of *forces* and the operations of *forcings*, in concert and dialectical interplay with one another”.²⁰⁰

In a review spanning thirty years titled “A synthesis of three decades of socio-ecological change in False Bay, South Africa: setting the scene for multidisciplinary research and management,” researchers consider the changes in False Bay, specifically through oceanography and marine biology, and our relationship in these processes. In this review, specific *forces* are

¹⁹³ Lesley Green, “Paradigm shifts for a planetary emergency: Towards an anthropocenography for urban coastal research at False Bay, Cape Town, South Africa,” *South African Journal of Science*, 118 (2022), 2.

¹⁹⁴ Alaimo, *Exposed*.

¹⁹⁵ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 10.

¹⁹⁶ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 10.

¹⁹⁷ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 10.

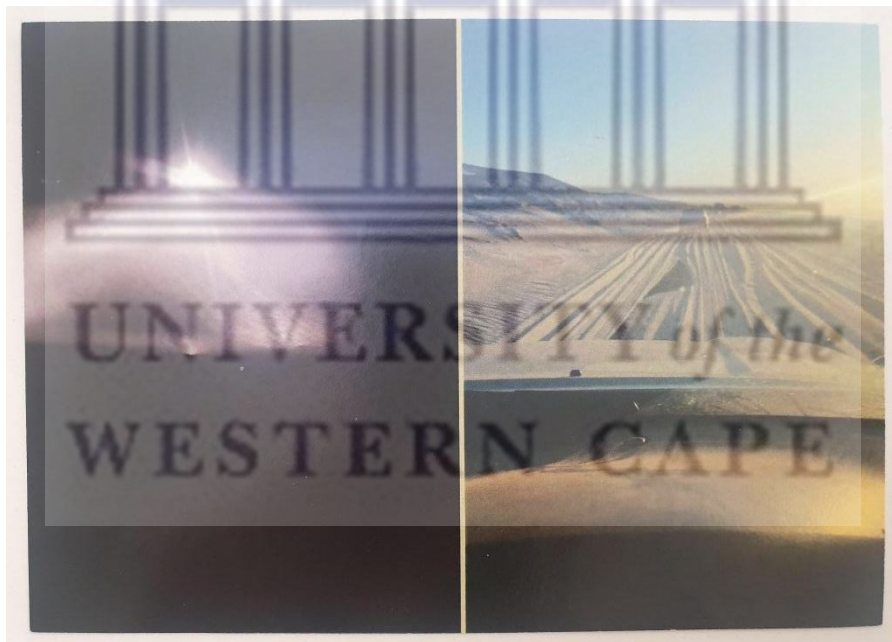
¹⁹⁸ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 6.

¹⁹⁹ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 8.

²⁰⁰ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 14.

presented within scientific and oceanographic parameters, such as bacterial contamination, metal concentrations, algal blooms, and oceanic ecosystems. Although several case studies are included in the review, I have selected two *forces* that are relevant to Muizenberg.

The first is related to bacterial contamination, which states that in 2011 thirty percent of the City of Cape Town’s forty-nine sampling points along False Bay showed high results for “intestinal Enterococci-based human health criteria for intermediate-contact recreation. These authors identified the highest levels of contamination along the northern shoreline between Muizenberg and Strand, with localised contamination hot spots, such as Kalk Bay Harbor”.²⁰¹ The contamination has been caused by leaking sewage and contaminated storm-water, which is often a result in poorly serviced areas (i.e. disadvantaged communities).²⁰² The second result is concerned with metal concentrations, which were evident in water and sediment along the northern shore (Muizenberg and Strand), “where the most populous and industrialised catchment areas are located”.²⁰³



²⁰¹ Maya C. Pfaff, Renae C. Logston, Serge J. P. N. Raemaekers, Juliet C. Hermes, Laura K. Blamey, Hayley C. Cawthra, et al, “A synthesis of three decades of socio-ecological change in False Bay, South Africa: Setting the scene for multidisciplinary research and management,” *Elementa* 32 (2019), 10.

²⁰² Pfaff, et al, “A synthesis of three decades of socio-ecological change in False Bay, South Africa,” 10.

²⁰³ Pfaff, et al, “A synthesis of three decades of socio-ecological change in False Bay, South Africa,” 10.



Figure 3.4: Sand and wind on Baden Powell, Personal Collection, 7 November 2022

In terms of *forcings*, one of the more recent storms that occurred along the coastline comes to mind. On the 16th of September 2023, the yearly Spring tide rolled in. It was coupled with heavy rains and wind. The Eastern and Western Cape coastlines were devastated by the tide, resulting in beaches being closed for safety reasons, such as Gordon's Bay and Kalk Bay. "According to the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI), businesses affected by the spring high tide include The Brass Bell restaurant in Kalk Bay, as well as extensive damage in George, and along the Southern Cape coastline".²⁰⁴ Baden Powell Drive leading into Muizenberg was also temporarily shut down and most informal settlements experienced flooding. An earlier postcard that I designed in 2022 (Figure 3.4), illustrates another storm that occurred between 31 October-1 November 2022. The images show Baden Powell Drive in Muizenberg during the night of the storm and the road the following day. The wind blew enough beach sand onto the road that it was closed for several days for clearing.

The above postcards, by changing our usual perspective, allow me to begin contemplating Muizenberg's history in relation to *forces* and *forcings*. What Baucom describes as an entirely new iteration of time, not solely as the Anthropocene, but as "an order of time

²⁰⁴ Cebelihle Mthethwa, "Spring tide damage: Woman dies as waves crash into Wilderness car park, more dangerous surges expected accreditation," *News24*, 17 September 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/spring-tide-damage-woman-dies-after-waves-crash-into-george-car-park-another-dangerous-surge-expected-20230917>.

knotting together... the historical, the infra-historical, and the supra-historical... a counter-historicist subaltern conception of “now-being,” and a post-humanist articulation of object-oriented time”.²⁰⁵ In a 2023 publication by Audronė Žukauskaitė, she introduces a different way of thinking about the Anthropocene, one that intervenes in object-oriented time: organism-oriented ontology.²⁰⁶ I briefly include Žukauskaitė here, although I engage with her book more closely in the last postcard of this chapter.

A final interlocutor for this postcard is Shawn Michelle Smith’s “An Orientation to the Sea”. By looking at Hiroshi Sugimoto’s photographic seascapes, Smith presents how instrumental oceanic photographs can be “in an era marked by climate change, warming and rising oceans, and perilous migrations at sea”.²⁰⁷ Smith and Sugimoto think about plural temporalities and ‘deep time,’ represented in his photographs through portraying the expansive nature of the ocean (which I see in my postcard). His images anchor us in our own insignificant existence, whilst still speaking to “human histories of empire and diaspora” that are present in the ocean. When taking the photographs for Figure 3.3, I was inspired by Smith’s exploration of the history of photography, of audience and gaze, ‘deep time’ and the precarity of people taken, shipped or fleeing via the ocean. I agree with Smith, that by seeing the ocean (and Muizenberg) from these different perspectives, we can see ourselves differently in relation to the ocean, and to history. Through this postcard, I became aware of how distant, yet close I am to Muizenberg. There is an intimacy between us, but out here on the ocean, its specific character was muted by my connection to the ocean. I am separate from the land, and feel closer to the ocean in some way. Inspired by Sugimoto’s consideration and representation of evolutionary processes, and natural and human history, as well as Smith’s writing on oceanic liquidity and its “seemingly anonymous materiality”, creates an impression of “an anchorless image loaded with time”.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 6.

²⁰⁶ Audronė Žukauskaitė, *Organism-Oriented Ontology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

²⁰⁷ Shawn Michelle Smith, “An Orientation to the Sea,” *Art Journal*, 80, no.1 (2021), 48-65.

²⁰⁸ Smith, “An Orientation to the Sea,” 53.

Woven postcard

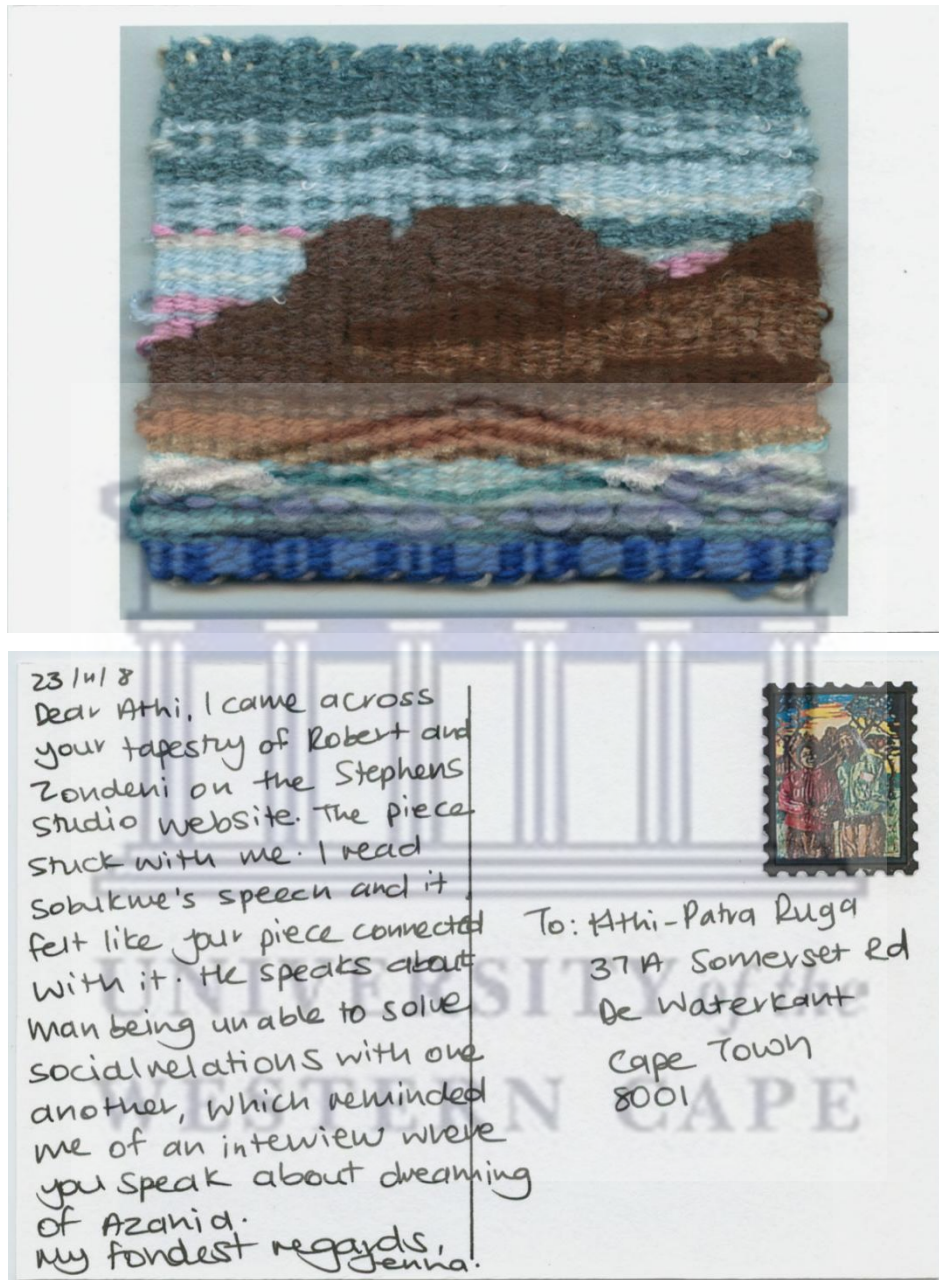


Figure 3.5: From 3D to 2D, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

The postcard seen in Figure 3.5 was made using a technique called 'cardboard weaving' which I learnt from Carol Ellis in Johannesburg (2015). It is a simplified tapestry weaving technique where a piece of cardboard is used as the structure to tie a warp onto. The picture is created by weaving through the warp with another yarn, called the weft. I created a more abstract tapestry of

Muizenberg beach using a perspective from being in the ocean swimming, looking towards the beachfront.

The postcard depicts early evening, with the ocean in the foreground, and a thin line of beach which blends into the base of the Muizenberg mountains. In a similar way as the previous postcard, I hadn't seen postcards of Muizenberg from the ocean, especially one from a more common perspective, of bathers in the ocean looking towards the shore. This is a closer perspective than the previous postcard, one that accentuates the significant presence of land. I chose this perspective because it illustrates an intimacy with the ocean. It is derived from my own memories of swimming in the waves during summer looking back towards the beachfront and mountains, elated from the cold waters and view. This affinity, for most beach-goers, is one of the main reasons that they continue to visit Muizenberg, a 'quintessential Muizenberg experience'. If I were to create woven panels of its history, this would be included.

The stamp on the reverse side is a tapestry depicting Robert and Zondeni Sobukwe. It was made by Stephens Tapestry Studio and artist Athi-Patra Ruga for the Robert Sobukwe Foundation in Graaff-Reinet. The message on the postcard reiterates the reason behind creating and using this tapestry for the stamp. I think tapestries hold the potential for re-imagining and dreaming, something which is reflected in the postcard.

Tapestries have a deep-rooted connection with historical production which can be seen around the world in various cultures and time periods. Textiles have the ability to tell stories about our histories and cultural practices. It creates a space for conversations about identity, power and politics, and creativity. Some of the more famous historical tapestries in South Africa are the 120 metre Keiskamma Tapestry, which "begins with the San people and ends with the first democratic elections in 1994"²⁰⁹ and the Voortrekker Tapestry which depicts The Great Trek and was "commissioned in 1952 by the Vrou-en Moederbeweging van die ATKV²¹⁰ (Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorweë en Hawens) and presented to the Voortrekker Monument in 1960".²¹¹ Historical tapestries blur the boundary between history and artwork, which creates a sensorial

²⁰⁹ Lucinda Jolly, "The Keiskamma Tapestry: How the hands of 100 women coaxed a visual account of South African history into life, stitch by stitch," *Daily Maverick*, 12 April 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-04-12-the-keiskama-tapestry-how-the-hands-of-100-women-coaxed-a-vivid-visual-account-of-south-african-history-into-life-stitch-by-stitch/>.

²¹⁰ ATKV - Afrikaans Taal en Kultuur Vereniging

²¹¹ Liese van der Watt, "Art, gender ideology and Afrikaner nationalism : a history of the Voortrekker Monument tapestries," Masters Thesis, University of Cape Town, January 1996, <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/18377>.

and visual record for the audience. I wonder if their creative status imbues the historical narrative with greater meaning, or a more romantic perspective of history.

Stephens Tapestry Studio, located in Diepsloot, Johannesburg and Piggs Peak, Swaziland, is a prominent weaving business that transposes artworks into tapestries. They have worked with South African artists such as Cecil Skotnes, William Kentridge and Athi-Patra Ruga. When interviewed about his tapestries, Kentridge stated that “tapestry is like a frozen projection. A portable mural that you can roll up and take to your next palace. A tapestry is also pixelated. It’s not a brushmark. It’s made up of a series of very discrete stitches”.²¹² For Kentridge, there is something intriguing about its movement from being a blank warp to a complete image through the build-up of discrete stitches. Drawing on this movement, I do not see it as having a beginning or an end, the complete tapestry is not its final destination. Instead, it continues to move through time and space, gathering and shifting meaning depending on the audience and format. A photograph or scan can be taken of the tapestry, such as the case with my woven postcard, and it becomes another image. It is no longer the same as it was on the cardboard loom before its release, and it is no longer the same as it was when I laid it down to scan.

During my years of weaving, I learnt about the processes involved in creating tapestries (much like the many involved with photography). These processes align with Ingold’s conception of the ecology of materials. For example, cotton or wool is needed, which comes from animals and plants. It is extracted through various mediums and then gets washed and dried. The raw form is brushed and carded and made into curls (if it’s wool). The curls are spun into thread, usually using a spinning wheel, and later dyed to its desired shade. “Dyestuffs and dyeing are as old as textiles themselves. For dyeing (especially in the past), almost the same coloring organic material was used as for painting... Nature provides a wealth of plants that yield color for the purpose of dyeing, many having been used since antiquity”.²¹³ Once dyed, the yarn is usually labelled and sold, which conforms to a supply chain. For this woven postcard, there is also the manufacturing of the needles and cardboard, as well as the various businesses involved such as craft stores and shopping centres. There is also the manufacturing of my camera, of the printer, and the design software used too. And these are only the more noticeable, macro-

²¹² Art21, “On Tapestries: William Kentridge: Anything Is Possible,” Youtube Video, 2010, 00:00-00:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hvU1aL_A44.

²¹³ Katarzyna Pawlak, Maria Puchalska, Agata Miszczak, Elzbieta Rosłonec and Maciej Jarosz, “Blue natural organic dyestuffs – from textile dyeing to mural painting. Separation and characterization of coloring matters present in elderberry, logwood and Indigo,” *Journal Of Mass Spectrometry* 41 (2006), 613.

processes involved. My point is that this woven postcard, as a moving image object, is a case study for thinking through the unseen nature and labour behind history, be they in the form of a tapestry or a conventional text. This invisibility, for me, is inevitable in the “age of mechanical reproduction,”²¹⁴ symptomatic of our human-centred relationship with objects.

Two tapestries which I connect with my own postcard tapestry of Muizenberg, are the Rhodesian Tapestry and The Bishop Stortford’s Mural. The latter tapestry was made by over two hundred people, headed by Leila Riddell and Sally Howard-Smith, who embroidered the seven panels depicting the history of the town. Its fame is linked to being the birthplace of Cecil John Rhodes, who is depicted and referenced in several of the mural’s panels. The seven panels depict scenes and buildings of the town’s history, dated “from the beginning”²¹⁵ and ended in the 1990s. The former tapestry, as mentioned in *Rhodesian Tapestry: A History in Needlework* (1971), was said to be on display in the House of Parliament in the Members’ Dining Hall.²¹⁶ The tapestry is 42 panels, made by the Women’s Institutes of Rhodesia between 1946-1963. The tapestry depicts “the cardinal events in Rhodesian history on the lines of the famous Bayeux Tapestry”.²¹⁷ Interestingly, it also starts “from the beginning,” but conceives of the beginning as “the story of the gradual unveiling of that portion of central Africa which forms present-day Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]”.²¹⁸ The first panel depicts storks, flamingoes and the secretary bird, the flame lily (*Gloriosa Superva*), and Pharaoh Necho’s circumnavigation of Africa. This panel is interested in a ‘deep’ history of Zimbabwe, considering early pleistocene creatures, the cradle of mankind, fossilised fragments found on Zimbabwe’s borders, and nomadic people who dominated “the great Rhodesian plateau” around the fifth millennium B.C.²¹⁹ The Bayeux tapestry echoes modern English representation about nation-building, charting England as a Norman, and distinctly modern nation. This is similar to the Rhodesian tapestry which reinforces the becoming of Rhodesia. It’s also connected with Muizenberg because after Rhodes’ death, his coffin was taken by train, for five days, from Muizenberg to Bulawayo. The tapestry of Muizenberg endeavours to resist these nation-building aesthetics by not focusing on a human-centred history.

²¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books, 1936).

²¹⁵ *The Bishop Stortford’s Mural*, Rhodes Centre (sponsored publishing, 1990).

²¹⁶ Oliver Ransford, *Rhodesian Tapestry: A History in Needlework* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia Publishing Company, 1971), 8-9.

²¹⁷ Ransford, *Rhodesian Tapestry*, 8.

²¹⁸ Ransford, *Rhodesian Tapestry*, 10.

²¹⁹ Ransford, *Rhodesian Tapestry*, 10-13.

Fisher postcard

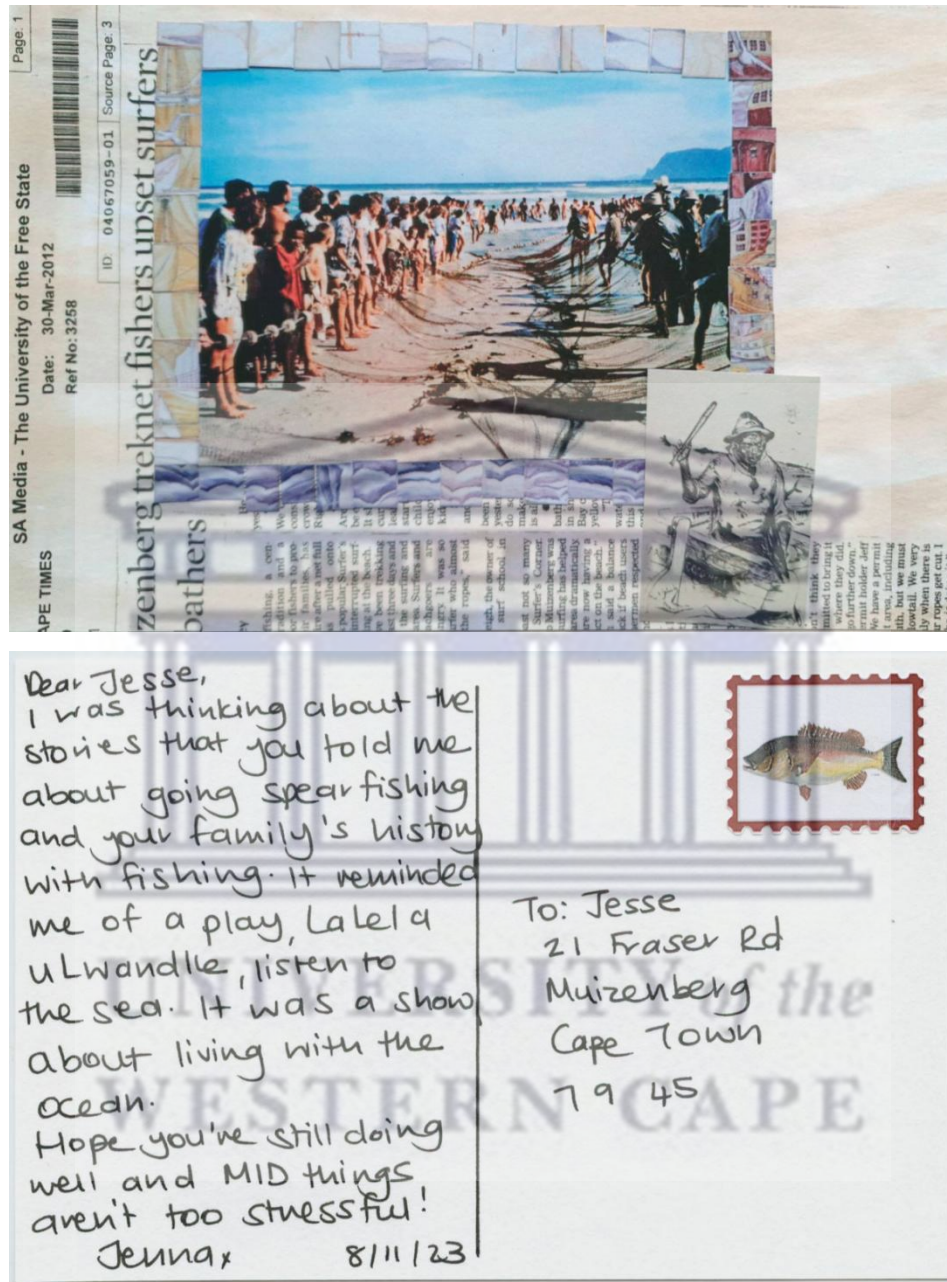


Figure 3.6: Treknet fishers, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

The postcard seen in Figure 3.6 has been constructed from four materials. The photograph in the centre was posted in a Facebook group “Muizenberg. Then and Now”. It shows fishers and beach-goers working together to haul in a treknet. The fisherpeople, mainly standing on the right of the image, exert effort to pull in the net, their feet dug into the sand and they’re leaning backwards to garner more strength for hauling. Their facial features are obscured by the shadows

of their hats. The beach-goers on the left appear to be holding the net as a photographic gimmick. Their postures are more easygoing. Compositionally, the photograph is divided into two, created by the sun and shadows. The people on the left are more visible, a line of them curving from the front all the way to the right. In relation to this, the line of people on the right are visually compacted. The side of the net that they are hoisting creates intense shadows on the sand. A few of their bodies also make distinguishable shadows. The scene feels like it has been caught in action, the only indication of an awareness of the photographer is a boy in a red t-shirt who is looking directly at the camera, his arm frozen in time as he grabs the towel slung over his shoulder.

The frame around the photograph is made from a selection of ceramic tiles which were photographed, printed and cut out. They are from one of the murals outside the Old Post Office in Muizenberg. Each tile either illustrates the ocean, clouds, parts of ships (sails, masts, nets, oars, etc), or seagulls. A smaller black-and-white image appears to be floating on the postcard, outside of this frame. It is a photograph of an illustration from *Bay Between the Mountains* by Tredgold that was one of the introductory pages of the book. The Filipino fisher has just caught a fish and is about to stun it with a wooden club (also called a priest). He sits in a small wooden boat named “Good Hope”. These three elements (the photograph, mural frame, and illustration) have been pasted on top of a photocopied newspaper article from 2012 titled “Muizenberg treknet fishers upset surfers and bathers”.²²⁰

The history of fishing in Muizenberg predates the creation of a “Muizenberg” and is also not included in dominant histories seen in chapter one. As noted by several scholars, and one of the information boards by St. James²²¹, indigenous people had been fishing along the coastline for centuries. Evidence suggests that they constructed earlier versions of tidal pools which were used as fishing catchments. These tidal pools are currently used as spaces of leisure. Without tracing a genealogy of fishing in the area, I want to acknowledge the various forms of fishing along the southern Peninsula. There were also fishers living on the sand dunes who built the first beach huts as housing as well as whaling stations which were the first three postcards in Walker’s book. Additionally, there is spear fishing, Filipino fisher history strongly connected to

²²⁰ Aziz Hartley, “Muizenberg treknet fishers upset surfers and bathers,” *Cape Times*, 30 March 2012, 3.

²²¹ The information boards have been built alongside the Main road from Muizenberg to Simon’s Town. Each board contains historical and tourist information about the area. Most of them have either City of Cape Town or Tourist Association logos on them. The one particular board that refers to indigenous people is close to the St. James rock pool.

Kalk Bay's history (as shown in Traci Kwaai's "Fisher Child" project²²²) and treknet fishing. The St. James/Muizenberg walkway is popular amongst fishers who stand along the trainline and cast into the ocean during high tide.

The narrative surrounding fishing in Muizenberg changes depending on who one speaks to and reads with. As shown in the newspaper article on the postcard, treknet fishing causes tensions along the beach because it interrupts surfing and bathing, taking place "right across the surfing and recreational area".²²³ Surfing is said to have revived the beach after its slump, improving the area, whereas "treknetting's impact on the environment and businesses was 'not positive'".²²⁴ This stands in contrast to the photograph on the postcard which represents beachgoers excited by the treknetting, as well as fond memories recalled throughout Hedy Davis' book.²²⁵

In a 2015 issue of *Save Our Seas*, the history of fishing in False Bay is presented, mentioning how treknet fishing is a "centuries-old practice" and if they accidentally catch sharks such as a *Carcharhinus brachyurus* they will release them.²²⁶ Later in the issue they state that "the pioneers of fishing were the Muslim people. Some of them were runaway slaves and some were freed slaves. When they became free they became fishers," a thread with the following kramat postcard.²²⁷ False Bay, also known as "die blou dam" to local fishers, reflects a similar situation that is seen in coastlines around the world: where there were once flourishing fish populations are now decimated fish stocks due to concentrated exploitation. "And yet, despite shrinking catches and increasing costs, the communities whose culture and livelihood were founded on fishing are still desperately clutching their lines".²²⁸ As mentioned in the message on the postcard, this dynamic between commercial fishing and local fishers is touched on in the play "Lalela uLwandle, listen to the sea".

Weaving the stories, histories and contemporary concerns of diverse South African coastal communities into an Empatheatre production, Lalela uLwandle explores themes of

²²² Traci Kwaai does walking tours of Kalk Bay, called a Walk of Remembrance. Traci tells stories of the fishing community who have lived in Kalk Bay for over 200 years.

²²³ Hartley, "Muizenberg treknet fishers upset surfers and bathers," 3.

²²⁴ Hartley, "Muizenberg treknet fishers upset surfers and bathers," 3.

²²⁵ Davis, *Muizenberg: The Story of the Shtetl by the Sea*, 54.

²²⁶ Lisa Boonzaier, "From the Field," *Save Our Seas*, Summer 2015, Issue 3, 38.

²²⁷ Boonzaier, "From the Field," 62.

²²⁸ Boonzaier, "From the Field," 62.

intergenerational environmental injustices, tangible and intangible ocean heritage, marine science and the myriad threats to ocean health.²²⁹

This harks back to Baucom's *forces* and *forcings* of history. In 2000 and 2005 when the South African government introduced conservation efforts to try and reduce commercial line-fishing. Their efforts were ineffectual and plenty of native reef fish are still struggling to replenish. "The red steenbras, a cousin of the red roman, is perhaps in the most precarious state of them all. Old photographers show 50- kilogram red steenbras being hooked out of False Bay in the 1920s, but now even small specimens are rare. These critically endangered fish live for 33 years and have been reduced to less than 5% of their historical population."²³⁰

The reverse of the postcard is a message to one of the interviewees from my Honours research who spoke about his grandfather and father's relationships with the ocean. He had mentioned the red steenbras too which is partly why I decided to base the stamp on it. The illustration comes from the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI). The website notes that the red steenbras, endemic in False Bay up to St. Lucia, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. This means that they cannot be sold in South Africa.²³¹

For this postcard, I found it useful to think about Judith Butler's *Frames of War* and the idea of calling the frame into question. My thesis has indirectly scrutinised framing of postcards and historical narratives and this postcard was an exploration of problematising framing. What happens when one realises that the frame never contains the scene as it was, "that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable".²³² Butler purports that something "exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things".²³³ For me, this allows certain historical narratives and obscurities to break out of the frame, allowing for a stratified reading of the frame.

²²⁹ "Lalela uLwandle," Empatheatre, accessed on 14 November 2023, <https://www.empatheatre.com/lalela-ulwandle>.

²³⁰ Boonzaier, "From the Field," 61.

²³¹ WWF SASSI, "Red Steenbras," accessed on 7 November 2023, <https://wwfsassi.co.za/fish-detail/102/>.

²³² Butler, *Frames of War*, 9.

²³³ Butler, *Frames of War*, 9.

Kramat postcard

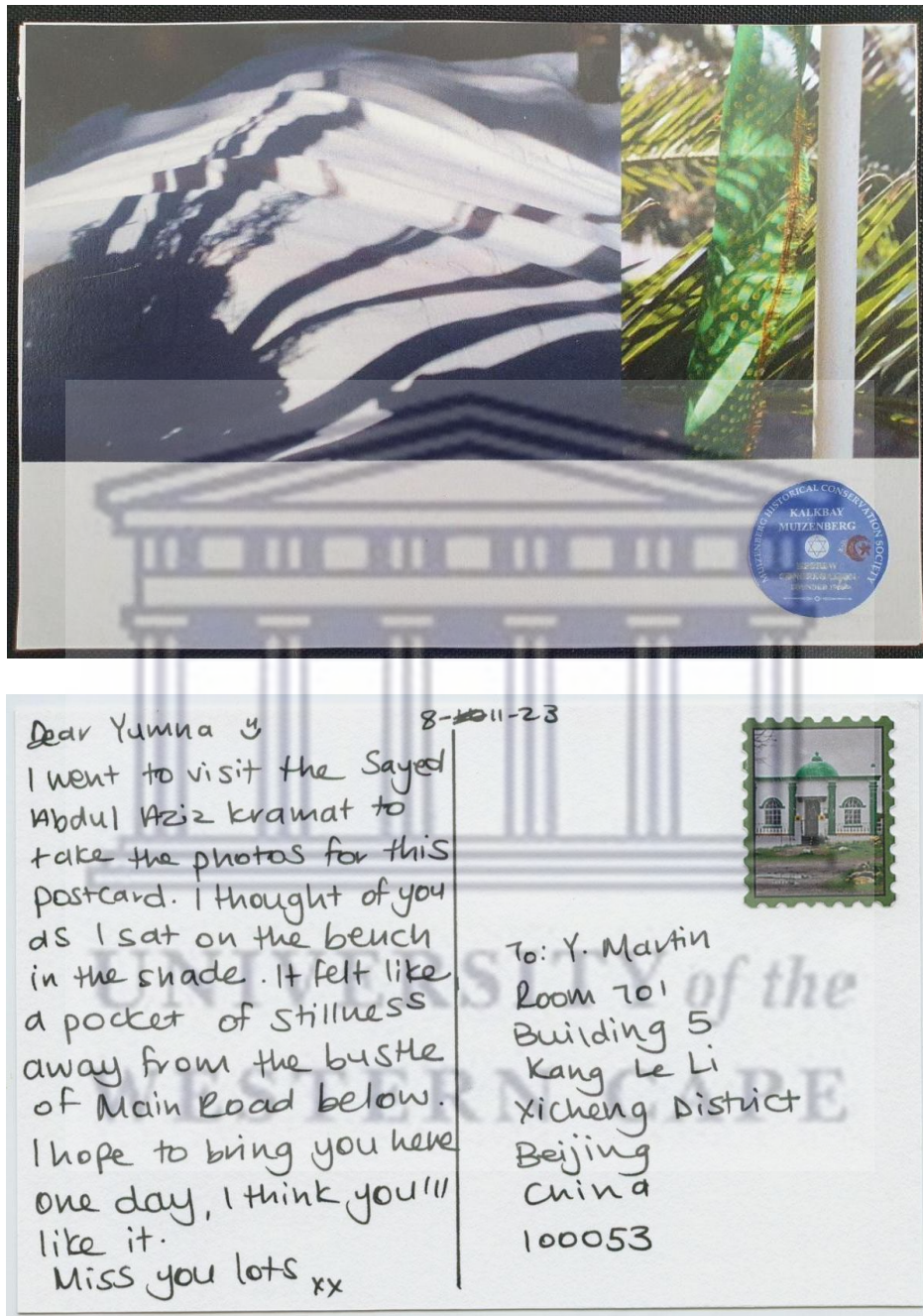


Figure 3.7: Kramats in Cape Town postcard, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

The postcard of the Sayed Abdul Aziz Kramat in Muizenberg, Figure 3.7, depicts two photographs both taken on 28 August 2023. They are abstract images. Rather than showing the kramat from a distance, I chose to take close-up shots. For me, a feeling of intimacy is created

through the abstractness of the images, and a gesture of respect for the *Auliyah*.²³⁴ Photographing it like a monument felt impersonal. The shadows created by the flower arrangement on the kramat (left-hand image) leak into the shadows and light of the leaves in the right-hand photograph. The movement in the images are slow and soft, exuding a gentleness that one associates with the sacredness of the physical space.

The blue plaque in the bottom right corner has been altered to include the crescent moon and star emblem of Islam. The Muizenberg Historical Conservation Society has erected several blue plaques around the area, namely those linked with English figures, such as Agatha Christie and Cecil John Rhodes. More recently, they revealed blue plaques which acknowledged the Jewish communities significant historical role, such as the one included on this postcard. It felt important to explore “Muslim histories” in Muizenberg because the kramat is still relatively obscured from Muizenberg’s history. For this postcard I wanted to put the kramat, historical production, heritage sites and tourism, and community into conversation with one another. These connections are useful when thinking about why certain places are popular tourist destinations and what heritage sites do for communities who are invested in their preservation.

On the reverse side the message is to a friend about visiting the kramat together. The kinship between myself and the receiver is seen in the language used, noticeably different than in the messages on other postcards where the dynamics of the relationship are more formal. The stamp also shows a kramat in South Africa, The Sheikh Ghaibie Shah Kramat on Signal Hill. I thought it would be interesting to include a kramat on the stamp as they usually depict tourist attractions like Table Mountain or South African symbols like beadwork.

Louise Green and Noëleen Murray argue that two kramats in Simon’s Town and Oudekraal are case studies for us to think about post-apartheid heritage and conceptions of space and temporality, especially with regards to private property and municipal law. The kramats are not just physical sites, they are miraculous sites, “where it is claimed the laws of nature themselves are interrupted to mark the particularity of the site, bodies do not decay, raging veld fires are averted and animals behave strangely”.²³⁵ It’s miraculousness and meaning to the Islamic community questions postapartheid memorial complexes: which spaces are produced as heritage sites and who consumes them, especially in the twenty-first century. Certain sites are

²³⁴ Muslim saints

²³⁵ Louise Green & Noëleen Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous: the kramats and the city of Cape Town,” *Social Dynamics*, 38, no.2, (2012), 203.

prized over others depending on their histories, positionality in the country, and being a potential tourist attraction.

There is a connection with slavery and fugitivity, something which I touch on later in relation to another postcard, “Ship mural,” as well as a thread of fugitivity between Muslim and Jewish communities. This fugitivity can be seen in both Shapiro’s postcard in chapter two, and this postcard here. Green and Murray explain how after 1994, heritage practices attempted to introduce and rectify the past by bringing in erased or silenced histories, such as the Slave Lodge in Cape Town and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum in Strand. However, it is evident that the threads of slavery and fugitivity are still present in physical spaces and buildings, in memory (at both a personal, cultural, social and national level), and in the everyday lived experiences of many people. “Slavery’s traces are managed in complicated ways in the contemporary city. Despite being signs of a traumatic past, sites have ironically become inscribed in the present as picturesque spaces of tourist consumption”.²³⁶ They have in the common usage of the term been reduced to ‘postcard images’.

My usage of the kramat in the postcard tries to counter the imagery of the picturesque. In terms of their location, the kramats tend to be “outside the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century city limits, along the lower reaches of Table Mountain and beyond”.²³⁷ This illustrates how the mountains and open tracts just outside of the city were places of refuge, especially for slaves who had escaped from the colony and political exiles. The kramats in Muizenberg, Sayed Abdul Aziz, would have been a public space during apartheid and yet Muizenberg was a whites-only beach. This reiterates what Green and Murray argue, which is that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the kramats would have been “partly occluded public space well known within the Muslim community but under apartheid rendered almost invisible to those outside it”.²³⁸ Interestingly, they note how the kramats are usually situated in places where local residents often don’t know about their existence, owing to the fact that they are “often slightly off the road, reached by a narrow path and concealed by trees and foliage,” which is the case with the Muizenberg kramat.²³⁹ Their peripheral positioning further exemplifies the fugitivity of the dedicated figures of the kramats.

²³⁶ Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 204.

²³⁷ Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 203.

²³⁸ Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 204.

²³⁹ Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 204.

Another set of material that influenced this postcard is a 2013 short documentary, *Jumu'a: The Gathering*, directed by Dylan Valley. The documentary shows the lives of several Muslim residents in Muizenberg, all of whom are part of Cape Town's Murabitun community, "Muslims who differ somewhat from Cape Town's 'traditional' Islamic population," as explained by Valley.²⁴⁰ By analysing Muizenberg through the Murabitun community, it provides a distinct, almost obscured perspective. The view of a familiar neighbourhood through this perspective shifts one's associations so the same buildings and streets are now connected with other histories, cultures and communities. It reiterates the incompleteness of history and the heterogeneity of the town. The short film opens with a group of Muslim men reciting verses in the Jumu'a Mosque in Cape Town. It cuts to Boyes Drive at sunset and pans from the ocean to the residential village of Muizenberg. The opening figure is a local baker, Abdul Latif, who owned "The Real Bread Co". Latif unfortunately passed away during 2022, deeply affecting those in the community who were close with him.

In another scene, we see a person walking with his children in wetsuits and with a surfboard. In a voiceover, Harun says: "You can say that, I just like it. You know, that kind of village vibe, that's what it is, isn't it? You know, you stay in a place for a long time and then, you know, the buildings and the people become familiar... Surfing does teach you a lot about life, I have to say, you know, about perseverance. I mean sometimes you go out, you paddle out and you know, it's just so much water pounding. So cold, but you know that when you catch that wave, it's going to be amazing. It's going to give you such an adrenaline rush. It's going to give you such a feeling. So you persevere".²⁴¹ For me, his words resonate with the notion of creolization, of holding previously sequestered sides together, and what this holding enables us to learn about history and culture. Through this postcard, I want to consider Islam, Muizenberg, the ocean and memory politics.

²⁴⁰ Dylan Valley, "Shameless self-promotion. Jumu'a: The Gathering," *Africa's a Country*, 6 November 2012, <https://africasacountry.com/2012/06/jumua-the-gathering>.

²⁴¹ *Jumu'a: The Gathering*, directed by Dylan Valley (2013, Traffik Productions), 25:00, private link.

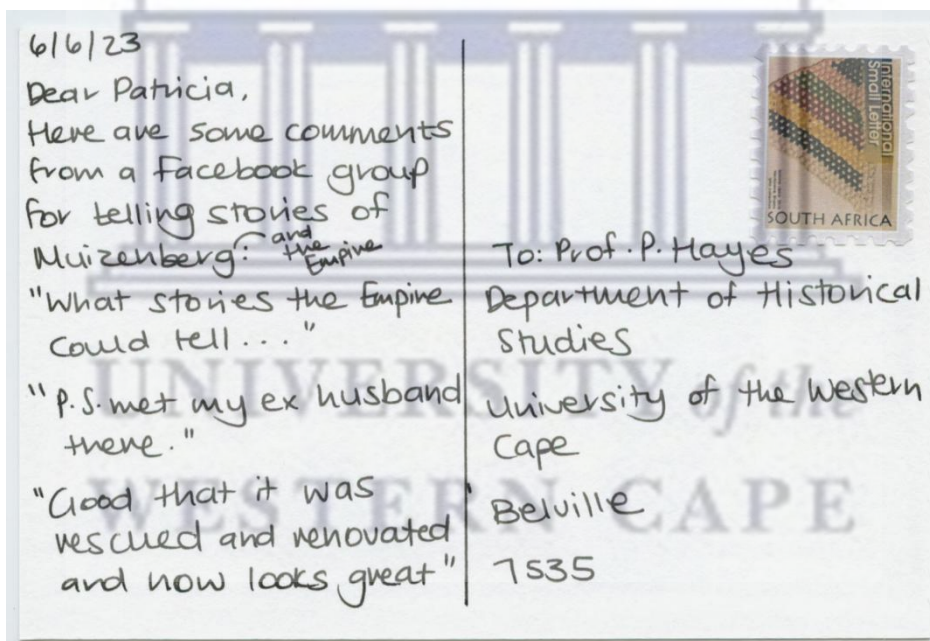


Figure 3.8: ‘Muizenberg gets pretty movie face...’, Personal Collection, 6 June 2023

Green and Murray also explain how at the dawn of a post-apartheid South Africa, there was an aura of “newness and possibility... The closed and divided space of the apartheid city” now held the potential for new uses of space, different kinds of spaces.²⁴² However, alongside this opening up, land was increasingly closed off as private property through free market neoliberalism. “While the City of Cape Town has initiated projects to redress the inequalities of the apartheid

²⁴² Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 202.

city, what is more visible is the expansion of luxury property developments aimed at a global market”.²⁴³ This is clearly visible in Muizenberg too, with the latest development of the Wavescape apartment block where apartments sold for between R2-6 million. Another example is the renovation of the Empire building in the 2000s which is seen in the above postcard (Figure 3.8). The background is an image of the Empire building during demolition and redevelopment, and various newspaper headings detailing the rebuilding are pasted on top. The gentrification of Muizenberg through property development is depicted in the image, newspaper clippings and message on the reverse side of the postcard.

Ship mural postcard



²⁴³ Green & Murray, “Private property and the problem of the miraculous,” 202.

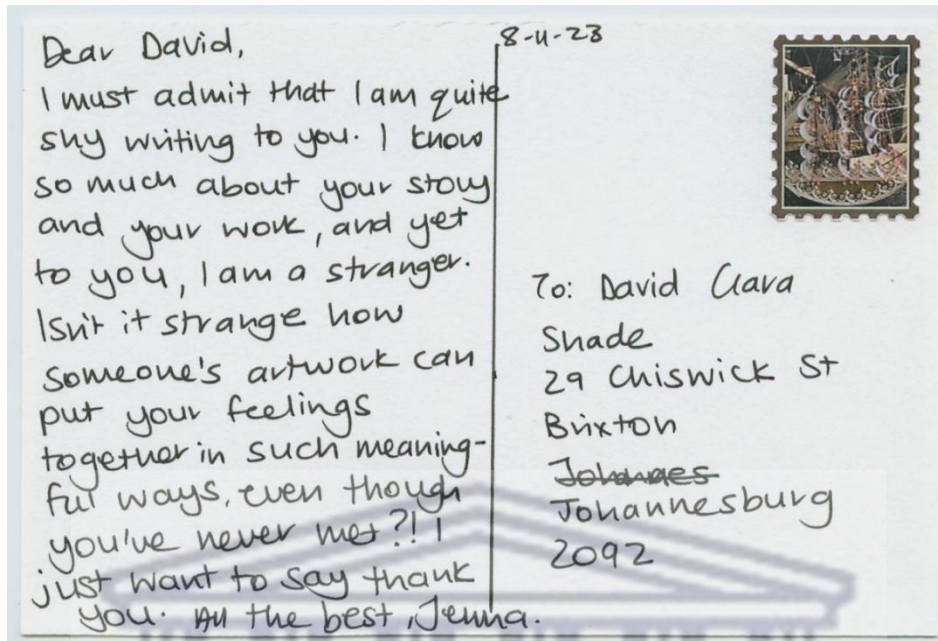


Figure 3.9: Ships from Johannesburg, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

For this postcard, I painted a pastel coloured oceanic scene based on Muizenberg’s Old Post Office’s display of four ceramic murals, all of which depict settler histories. In Walker’s *Travels along the coastal road: Simon’s Town to Muizenberg 1743-1890: The journey, the milestones and toll-gates* he writes about the ceramic murals, one of which is of Vasco da Gama (Figure 3.10). He says:

The left-hand mural, wording *Vasco Da Gama 1497*, depicts him as a large figure landing at some shoreline... Smaller figures at the base of the left-hand corner are those of seven Africans, one with spears, while on the base of the right-hand corner four other African carrying provisions, presumably for Da Gama’s fleet... [with reference to the ship in the top right corner] It has been included because a caravel was one of Da Gama’s four-ship fleet that successfully negotiated the sea-route to India in 1497.²⁴⁴

This interpretation and analysis of the murals is an example of the way in which the history of Muizenberg has been written, “with the privilege of seeing without being seen”.²⁴⁵ As suggested by Sartre, to write histories where “whiteness” and the “white gaze” are always the subject, and never the object. The narrative enables certain histories to be written whilst not interrogating the subjects included or excluded in them.

²⁴⁴ Michael Walker, *Travels along the coastal road: Simon’s Town to Muizenberg 1743-1890: The journey, the milestones and toll-gates* (Self-published, 2016), 83.

²⁴⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *“What Is Literature?” and Other Essays* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 291.



Figure 3.10: Old Post Office mural, Michael Walker, *Travels along the coastal road: Simon's Town to Muizenberg 1743-1890: The journey, the milestones and toll-gates*, 83

The mural that I based my painting on depicts one of the earlier ships used by the Dutch East India Company during the 1600s, which is a different mural to Figure 3.10 (although similar aesthetically).²⁴⁶ Instead of choosing dark or vibrant colours, similar to the mural, I chose lighter pastel colours in order to accentuate the collaged ship in the centre. I made some of the watercolour paints from shells and rocks that I collected from Muizenberg beach. Professor Mark John Gibbons from the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology at the University of the Western Cape helped me to identify some of the shells that I collected which were: *Nucella squamosa*, *Bullia laevissima*, a rock with bryozoan and spirorbis, *Cymbulia miniata*, *Nucella dubia*, *Bullia digitalis*. As noted by Gibbons, the *nucella* species are whelks which are carnivorous and bore into the shells of other species; the *bullia* are also whelks which live in the sand coming up to eat any dead sea mammals on shore (such as bluebottles); and the *cymbulia* are a species of limpets.²⁴⁷ The process of collecting shells and making paints for the postcard was inspired by Baucom, Wynter and Alaimo (mentioned in the earlier postcards of this chapter).

The ship in the centre of my postcard is a photographic cut-out taken during the Brixton Light Festival (BLF), which happened in Brixton, Johannesburg on 2 September 2023. The BLF is a unique parade in that the spectators are part of the parade where residents walk the parade route together and watch performances or exhibitions along the way. One such performance was

²⁴⁶ Walker, *Travels along the coastal road*, 82.

²⁴⁷ This information was provided over an email conversation with Professor Gibbons.

a collaboration between artist David Gara and the Well Worn Theatre. Gara creates his ships using non-recyclable waste materials and purposefully creates them in likeness of typical colonial ships. The performance was called “Tekwana,” and involved David sitting and working “in the middle of the street with all these lit-up ships and mist around him, while the puppeteers slowly walked in circles, holding ships and wearing ships on their heads in a way that mimicked sailing on the sea, all to a crazy soundtrack that included David’s own voice.”²⁴⁸ Musicians Muhammad Dawjee and Jared Parenzee helped to work on the soundtrack at “Shade” in Brixton, where they created oceanic sounds using waste materials such as a comb against Kreepy Krauly pool pipes.

Gara’s performance considered the status of refugees in South Africa as well as the precariousness of physically crossing the ocean. Other artists, such as those being held illegally, have also built ships as a means to express their fugitivity. Artists like Moath al-Alwi, who appeared in Dara Kell’s short documentary, “A Ship From Guantanamo” and the Uppington Trialists of 1989 who built ships while being wrongfully detained in prison.²⁴⁹ Both artists used materials which they were permitted to have in their cells, for al-Alwi this was dental floss, prayer beads, sponges and old T-shirts, and for the Uppington Trialists it was thousands of matches. What is interesting about Gara’s ships and the BLF is that Johannesburg is not at the sea, and that Brixton was the site of the South African Police’s infamous Brixton Murder and Robbery Unit, which during apartheid used methods of torture on political prisoners.²⁵⁰

The message is addressed to artist David Gara who created the ship depicted on both sides of the postcard. The ship on the stamp was taken inside Shade prior to the performance at BLF. Certain recycled objects can be deciphered, such as the decorative skirting at the base of the ship. Present within my postcard are themes of European imperialism, the slave trade, sound and music, and the ocean. I read these alongside Muizenberg’s history too, bringing the ocean as a historical presence into the frame, or at least watching it wash away a part of the frame. In *Stuart Hall’s Voice: Intimations of an ethics of receptive generosity*, David Scott thinks about Roland Barthes’ ‘graininess’ of a sound, explaining how ‘grain’ refers to “the texture that marks

²⁴⁸ Heather Mason, “The Spectacular Brixton Light Festival,” *2summers*, 8 September 2023, <https://2summers.net/2023/09/08/the-spectacular-brixton-light-festival-revisited/>.

²⁴⁹ Dara Kell, “A tale of two boats,” Power: Remaking Selves, Archives, Environments Workshop, 27 July 2023, Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), Greatmore Humanities Hub.

²⁵⁰ Sean Tait and David Bruce, “Police torture continues,” *Mail and Guardian*, 24 January 2020, <https://mg.co.za/article/2020-01-24-police-torture-continues/>.

the specific phenomenological facticity of this—rather than some other—singular speaking presence... Grain, he memorably said, is the ‘body of the voice’”.²⁵¹ Although Scott is thinking about the body of Hall’s voice, it made me think of the ocean’s voice, the sonic presence of the ocean, in Muizenberg. How the ocean’s voice, much like a human’s voice, has a ‘graininess,’ one that holds weight and “imparts an intelligible volume” and “lends it altogether and at once a very recognizable inflected sense of proximity and gravity and intimacy”.²⁵² In this sense, the ocean’s voice is not just acoustic sound, but contains within it a specific meaning.

When looking at this postcard I think about the ocean’s voice in several ways, having started with the soundtrack created by Dawjee and Parenzee for the BLF. I also think about the ocean’s sound. When you are walking along the Main Road in Muizenberg the traffic drowns out the sound of the ocean, but as you walk up the Muizenberg Mountains, the traffic can no longer be heard. The ocean is more audible. The wealthier homeowners live higher up the slope, avoiding the traffic and accessing oceanic sound waves. Sound functions as a selling point, becoming a commercialised quality.

Another way of thinking about the ocean’s voice is in its ‘under-tones’: the ocean is also a medium for the sounds of creatures to communicate through, sound is as imperative to living undersea as air is to living on land. Sound waves move through water four times further and faster than in air.²⁵³ New research shows us how human noise pollution is affecting marine life. “Ship traffic noise has doubled every decade since the 1960s,” resulting in mammals like whales and dolphins being unable to communicate properly, especially hearing one another’s voices over the noise pollution of ships. Severe noise pollution is also said to occur during seismic surveying, which is a technique used to map the ocean. During my years in Muizenberg, two protests occurred against seismic surveying in South Africa. The first took place in December 2021 which saw over two hundred people protesting against three-dimensional seismic surveying in the Wild Coast. The survey was being planned by Shell in order to find hydrocarbon reserves under the seafloor.²⁵⁴ The second protest occurred a few months later in February 2022, when

²⁵¹ David Scott, *Stuart Hall’s Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 31.

²⁵² Scott, *Stuart Hall’s Voice*, 31.

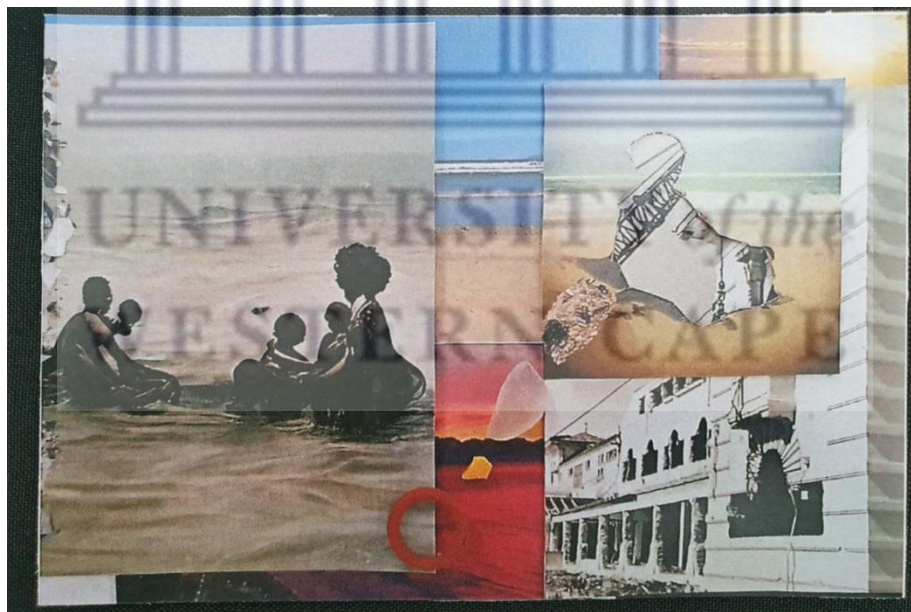
²⁵³ Christophe Haubursin, “Why the ocean is getting louder,” *Vox*, 18 July 2017, <https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/7/18/15988494/ocean-noise-pollution>.

²⁵⁴ Shakirah Thebus, “Increased pressure to stop Shell’s seismic survey sees nationwide beach protests,” *Independent News Online*, 6 December 2021, <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/increased-pressure-to-stop-shells-seismic-survey-sees-nationwide-beach-protests-0e5b7bbe-de52-4822-bb61-bd6e0ef1538d>.

one hundred protesters gathered on Muizenberg beach opposing seismic surveying by Australian company called SEARCHER, which would take place along the West Coast. The seismic survey would have included a two-dimensional survey totalling a length of up to about 22,000km as well as a three-dimensional survey covering an area of 10,000 km².²⁵⁵ Both surveys were said to potentially harm marine life, which would also impact the livelihoods of local fishers.

To conclude the discussion on this postcard, I want to think about the figure in the centre of the image. The silhouette of the performer is ambiguous, like a memory, perhaps representing travellers who make it across the ocean. The pink lighting of the performance stands in stark contrast to the pastel background, it is a signal, perhaps one travelling from ocean across land, carrying a message of caution. The performer's hand is barely visible, but it is there, a part of the ship's voyage forwards. It is as if the ship is breaking out of the image itself, and not only the frame, suggesting a release, "a loosening of the mechanism of control, and with it, a new trajectory of affect".²⁵⁶

Little Congo postcard



²⁵⁵ Liezl Human, "Protest against West Coast seismic blasting ahead of court case," *GroundUp News*, 6 February 2022, <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/protest-against-west-coast-seismic-blasting-ahead-court-case/>.

²⁵⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, 11.

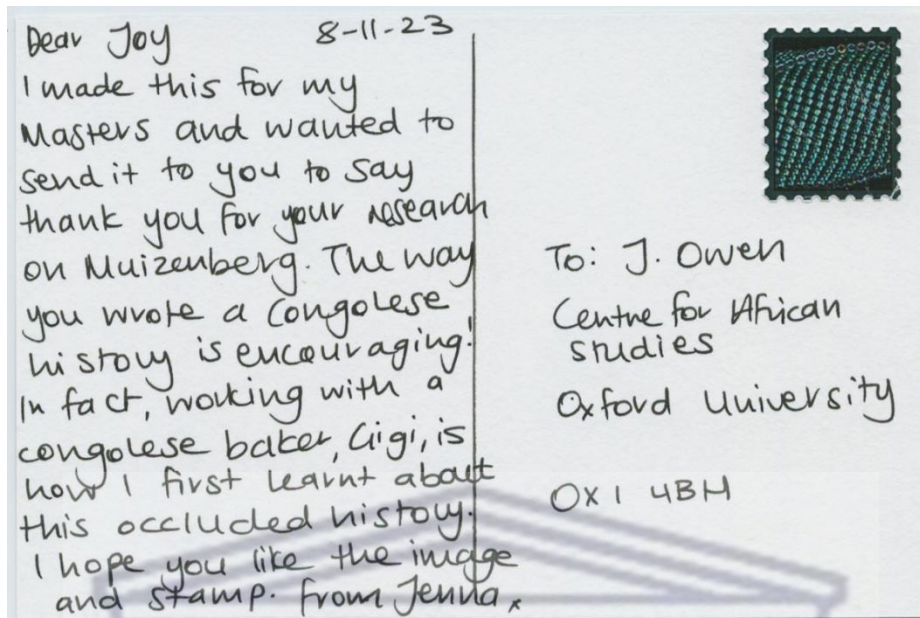


Figure 3.11: Beadwork and the beach, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

The message on the postcard is addressed to Joy Owen, author of several books and papers about the Congolese community who lived in Muizenberg during the 90s and early 2000s. Owen is one of two authors that I found who have written about the Congolese history of Muizenberg, when it was known as “Little Congo”²⁵⁷ or Matonge.²⁵⁸ This refers to the period where Congolese people lived in dilapidated buildings in and around the beachfront. Matonge is a vibrant and bustling city in Kinshasa with a strong music culture, lots of bars and restaurants, and a busy nightlife. What is striking about Matonge being used to describe this period in Muizenberg is that it is also a nickname used by the Congolese diaspora for a suburb in Ixelles, Brussels that emerged in the 1950s.²⁵⁹ The way a word can travel across the land and ocean by a people to mean something specific, a piece of home, or something familiar, is an example of Gordon’s use of the term creolization and relates back to Tanner’s work on nostalgia and dispossession. The use of ‘Matonge’ and ‘Little Congo’ also defies the association of this period in dominant narratives of Muizenberg, it pushes back against the negative connotations of gangs and violence, instead being linked with their home, culture and society. I wanted to depict Little Congo’s importance (and multiplicities) through these postcards, a meaningful place that is highlighted by Vuninga:

²⁵⁷ I will now refer to this as Little Congo, which is the specific time period when a large population of Congolese transmigrants lived in Muizenberg.

²⁵⁸ Anesca Smith, “It’s important to be elegant in the DRC even if you’re poor,” *City Press*, 9 July 2006, 23

²⁵⁹ Marine Strauss and Bart Biesemans, “Matonge, an African home in Brussels,” *Reuters*, 29 June 2020.

In the late 1990s, Muizenberg was already nicknamed “little Congo”, not only because the Congolese represented 64% of its remarkable African immigrant community, but also because of the Congolese cultural hegemony. As Boluka put it in Lingala: “Muizenberg ezalaki base na biso, place ya sentiment na biso, place ya retrouvail, place ya recreation” (Muizenberg was our base, our sentimental place, a place of reunion, a place of recreation). In the early 2000s, Muizenberg was to Congolese what Bellville (nicknamed Mogadishu) was to Somalis.²⁶⁰

The stamp on the postcard is from “Oceanic Beadwork,” a collaborative project between the Marigold Beadwork co-operative and Isabel Hofmeyr and Charne Lavery (from the Oceanic Humanities for the Global South). Through “Oceanic Beadwork,” they asked if necklaces can “be made to represent the ocean?”²⁶¹ The research aimed at producing “new styles of oceanic and watery research in the humanities” and they wanted the necklace to feel “watery”. They say, “With watercolour painting in mind, we tried to produce a necklace that shifted imperceptibly from one tone to the next in a gradient from dark to light”.²⁶² The twisting of the beadwork creates highlights of varying shades and hues, shimmering like the water of the ocean.

The image on the reverse side is made using different layers of images and objects. The background image of sunrise and sunset are pre-existing postcards. The former is an original postcard from the Muizenberg Postcard Club and the latter a photocopy of one in the NLSA. The photograph of Muizenberg beach (top left corner) was taken by the author (28 August 2023) and the black-and-white image is a printed photograph from “Muizenberg. Then and Now” Facebook group. The two images of the Congolese beach-goers were both created using Mid Journey, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) program which generates artworks using language prompts. For the smaller silhouette image, the prompt was “Congolese woman on beach relaxing in Muizenberg” and for the larger image it was “four Congolese people swimming in the ocean woman and children”. The red rubber circle, yellow plastic shape, sand-encrusted kelp, and crushed shells were all collected on Muizenberg beach (28 August 2023). The images and objects layered on top of one another bring to mind histories of fugitivity, precarity, global apartheid and postcolonialism.

For this postcard, I wanted to engage with the Little Congo history of Muizenberg because there are so many postcards of Muizenberg pre- and post- Little Congo, and none of

²⁶⁰ Rosette Sifa Vuninga, *Baswahili and Bato ya Mangala: Regionalism and Congolese diasporic identity in Cape Town, 1997-2017*, PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, 2022, 140.

²⁶¹ Marigold beads, “Oceanic Beadwork,” accessed on 7 November 2023, <https://www.marigoldbeads.com/copy-of-2020-genome-beadwork>.

²⁶² Marigold beads, “Oceanic Beadwork”.

Little Congo. Some of the few materials detailing a historical narrative linked to this period was when Muizenberg was considered to be rundown, neglected and unsafe (pre-redevelopment/ gentrification) as depicted in newspaper articles (Figure 3.12).

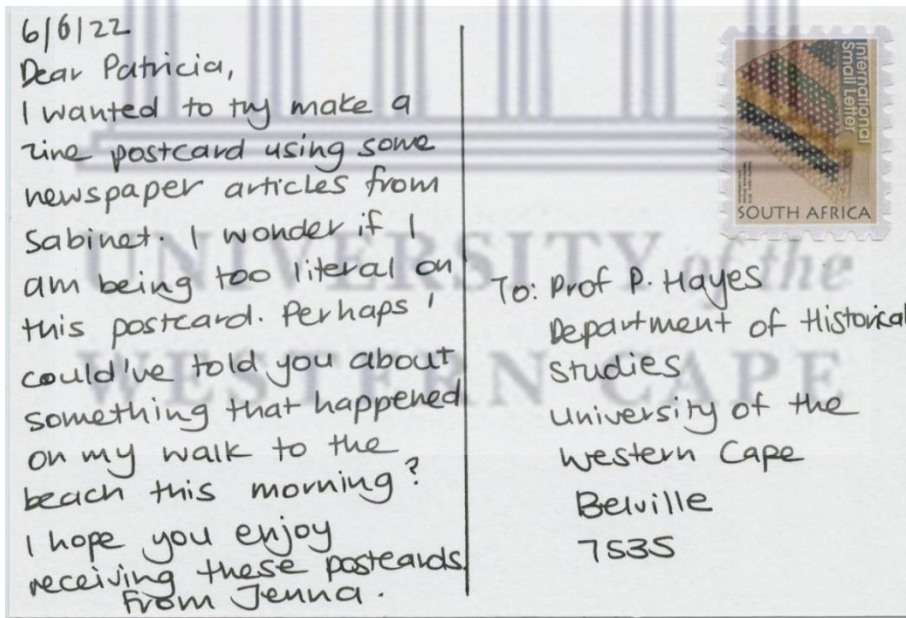
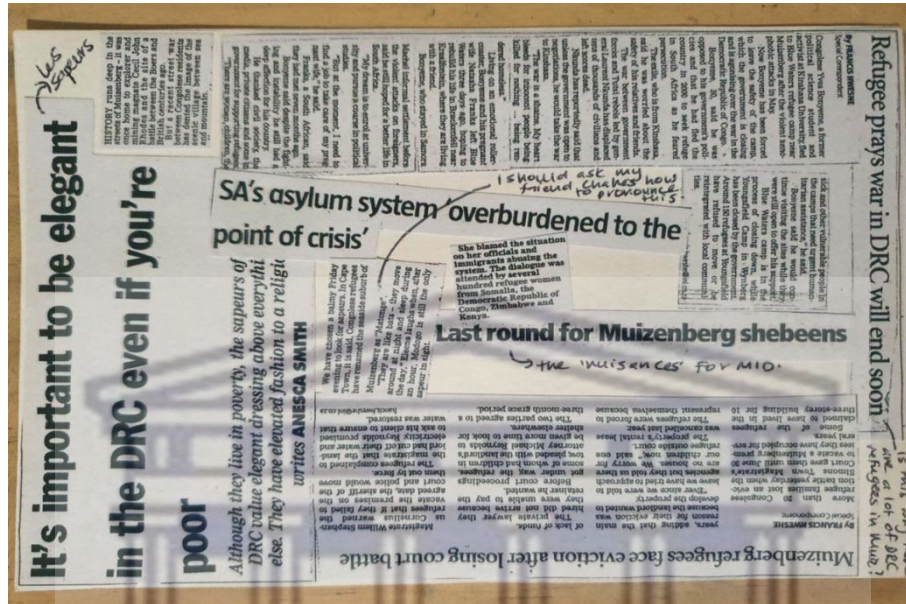


Figure 3.12: Les sapeurs and asylum seekers, Personal Collection, 6 June 2023

The postcard shows several newspaper clips from the 90s and 00s, illustrating the way that Congolese transmigrants were produced. I read Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer's work about the Congolese exhibition in Zürich alongside these two postcards, with Rosette Sifa Vuninga's thesis about the Congolese community in Cape Town, and Joy Owen's research on

Muizenberg. These postcards are not meant to create a complete image of Little Congo, but rather introduces ways to think about and imagine these histories. I therefore chose to make the postcard in Figure 3.11 without glue or fixing any of the layers, allowing each layer to move and become connected to something else. In this way, the image of the postcard only captures the moment that I chose to represent, but does not capture the moving image object entirely.

Guyer and Oberhofer wrote a book about an exhibition that happened at Museum Rietberg “Congo as Fiction” (2020). Through their artworks, the artists bring to light the impact that colonialism, globalisation and Christian proselytization had on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “Although the Congo is the product of a fictitious drawing of borders, and then as now, also a projection surface for Western and Congolese imagination, it is nonetheless a real, existing space whose history and art creation is shaped by a relationship of exchange with the West”.²⁶³ This idea of producing a ‘Congo’ is reiterated in the image on the postcard, such as in the AI images. The fact that the AI produced an image of a Congolese person the way that it did, represents how the Western world perceives ‘Congo’. In most of the AI-generated images, there is an essentialized portrayal of ‘Congolese,’ one homogeneous representation. I wanted to depict Congolese people on the beach, as beach-goers, as while they were living in the buildings on the beachfront, they were not just ‘transmigrants’ or ‘foreigners’.

An interesting case study of housing insecurity, evictions and gentrification is seen in several of the newspaper articles in Figure 3.12. They introduce the history of a building named ‘Don Pepe,’ the previous hotel’s Portuguese restaurant.²⁶⁴ *The Cape Times* (1998) details how five or more transmigrant residents were forced to sleep in one room so that they could afford the monthly rental of R650. In the article, owner Zhauns Anud said: “We have actually improved the condition of the buildings. When they were owned by whites they were never looked after...When we took over the buildings we found the lowest scum whites living with rats and filth. But it is only when black people move in that problems are raised...as far as black tenants go it is in their nature to congregate... that does not mean they are all sleeping in the building”.²⁶⁵ The article ends by mentioning Ben Turok and how he hopes to improve living conditions, “not

²⁶³ Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, *Congo as fiction: Art worlds between past and present*, edited by Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer, (Museum Rietberg Zurich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2019), 13.

²⁶⁴ Roger Friedman and Benny Gool, “Muizenberg facade conceals life of filth,” *The Cape Times*, 11 February 1998, 9.

²⁶⁵ Friedman and Gool, “Muizenberg facade conceals life of filth,” 9.

to restore the place to its former whites only colonial glory, but to restore the dignity of its ordinary residents”.²⁶⁶

Eleven years after the above article, the *Saturday Weekend Argus* (2009) reports a police raid of Don Pepe, “a slum building housing mostly immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC),” and that “the MID is concerned that a handful of slumlords are allowing drug traffickers to operate brazenly from their run-down properties”.²⁶⁷ Local resident, Emile Rorke, was contracted by the MID to investigate the buildings but there is no mention about the qualifications of Rorke in terms of fulfilling duties and whether investigations are legal.

Owen also mentions Don Pepe in her research where she was informed about a Congolese woman who opened up a small restaurant in her flat during the early 2000s serving traditional Congolese food, the only restaurant in the area serving African food. As the diasporic community was pushed out of Muizenberg during the ‘redevelopment’, the restaurant was closed down. The woman changed it to ‘Yellow Rose,’ a space where destitute Congolese families could go whilst they found jobs and employment.²⁶⁸

These stories represent topographic histories of Muizenberg and, I argue, demonstrate why it is important for us to problematise the ways in which binaries and dominant histories are produced. However, as noted by Hall, “out of our subaltern position there emerged the possibility of engaging with history anew. That colonialism, despite itself, bequeathed to us this way of seeing indicates that within what I’ve identified as the ‘bad’ dynamic of history, contrary and liberating forces were also generated”.²⁶⁹ This sentiment reiterates the usefulness of holding previously sequestered sides together (through the postcards), and by creolising Muizenberg we can potentially start to acknowledge the rhizomatic nature of history.

²⁶⁶ Friedman and Gool, “Muizenberg facade conceals life of filth,” 9.

²⁶⁷ Helen Bamford, “Police turn screws on slumlords,” *Saturday Weekend Argus*, 21 February 2009, 12.

²⁶⁸ Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 79.

²⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: Life Between Two Islands*, (London:Penguin Books, 2018), 62.

Deep down tidal postcard

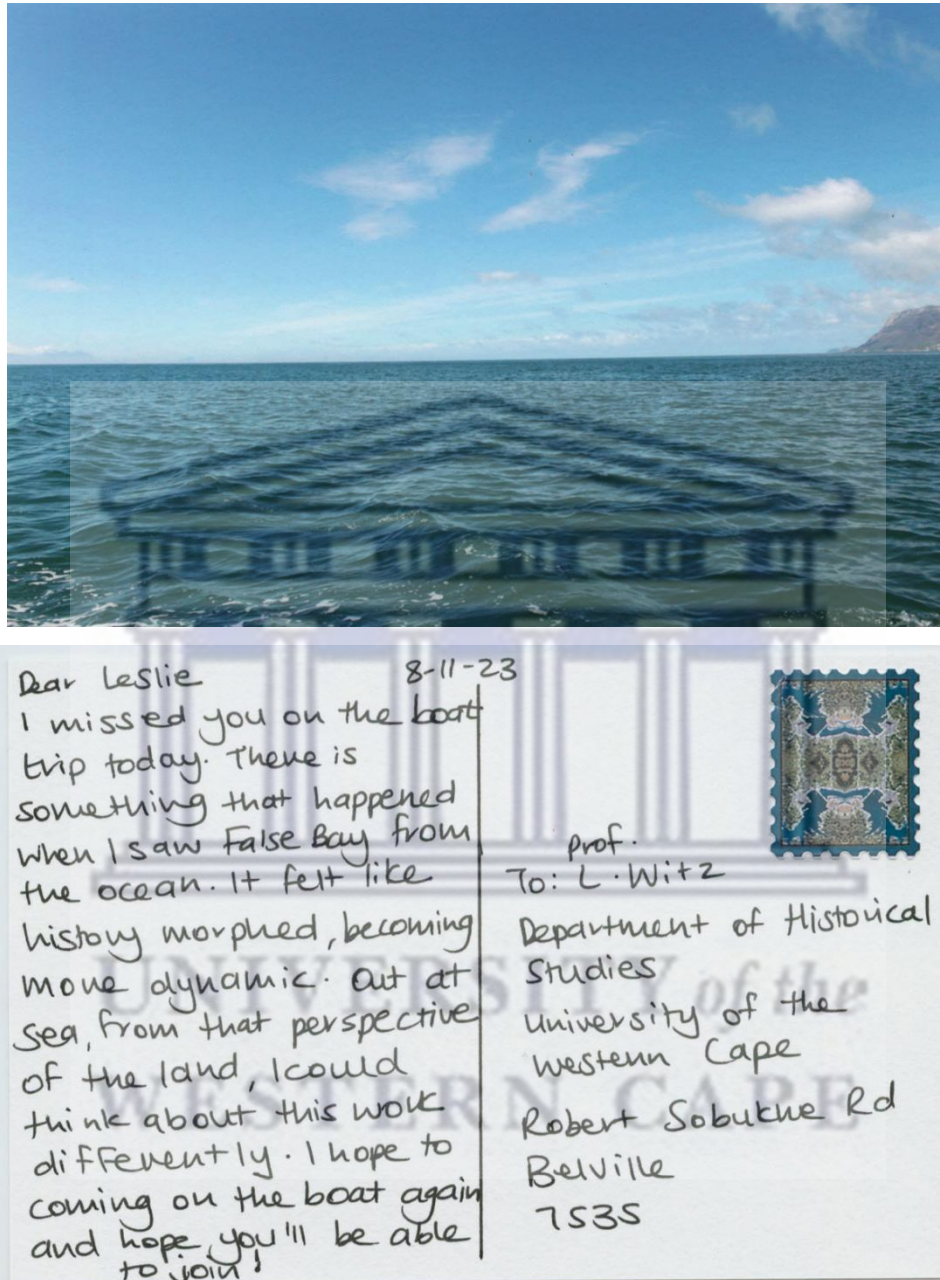


Figure 3.13: Between two points, Personal Collection, 8 November 2023

Figure 3.13 is the last postcard in this chapter. It uses a photograph showing the two 'ends' of False Bay, Hangklip, faintly seen to the left, and Cape Point to the right. It is called False Bay because sailors on their return journeys from the East mistook Hangklip for Cape Point.

The message on the postcard is concerned with the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meeting at Cape Point or Cape Agulhas. There is contention over where in fact the two oceans meet since

Cape Point seems to be more popular with tourists, it's surroundings are more dramatic and it's closer to Cape Town, and so being *the* place where two oceans meet is an additional selling point. This is tied in with my critique of historical production and tourism, such as with the kramats, where a place is produced in a specific way. Through this postcard, I hope to further blur the line, opening up space to consider other histories and themes. The stamp is of a Spinnaker Anemone, endemic to the South Africa coastline from False Bay up to St. Lucia. I found the image on iNaturalist, an online platform community where nature enthusiasts, scientists and biologists share fauna and flora species that they have observed at a specific location. There were 59 total observations of the Spinnaker Anemone in South Africa.²⁷⁰

In the first postcard I asked “what is the Anthropocene?” and so this final one asks “who is the ‘anthro’ of the “Anthropocene”? As prompted by Alaimo, “in its ostensible universality, does the prefix suggest a subject position that anyone could inhabit?”²⁷¹ It may seem out of place to ask such a question in relation to Muizenberg, but as I will show through this particular postcard it overlaps with historical production and oceanic histories. I attempt to see beyond the ocean's horizon, whilst thinking about the ‘anthro’ in the Anthropocene. The line of the horizon makes the illusion of an ending, the horizontal line is where the ocean ends. But where does the ocean in Muizenberg end? And where do the Atlantic and Indian oceans end and another begin? Is there something beyond or beneath the line?

Artist Tabitha Rezaire explores this in her video art, *Deep Down Tidal*. Rezaire looks at the relationship between exploitation and submarine fibre optic cables, tracing the Atlantic Slave Trade across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. She compares this map with the submarine fibre optic network, presenting a resemblance between both of their positions across the oceans. In the video art, Rezaire's voice-over says “phone calls, emails, websites, digital images and videos, memes and emojis... all travel as light signals through submarine fibre optic cables... the deep sea transports our digital information”.²⁷² Beneath the horizon of False Bay is a deep sea fibre optic cable. At present, there are eight subsea cables in South Africa, built by communication conglomerates such as 2Africa, SEACOM and METISS.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ iNaturalist, “Spinnaker Anemone,” accessed on 7 November 2023, https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/671611-Korsaranthus-natalensis/browse_photos.

²⁷¹ Alaimo, *Exposed*, 143.

²⁷² *Premium Connect*, directed by Tabitha Rezaire (2017), Vimeo video, 05:02-05:12, <https://vimeo.com/247826259>.

²⁷³ “Submarine Cables in Africa,” Submarine Cable Networks, <https://www.submarinenetworks.com/en/africa>.

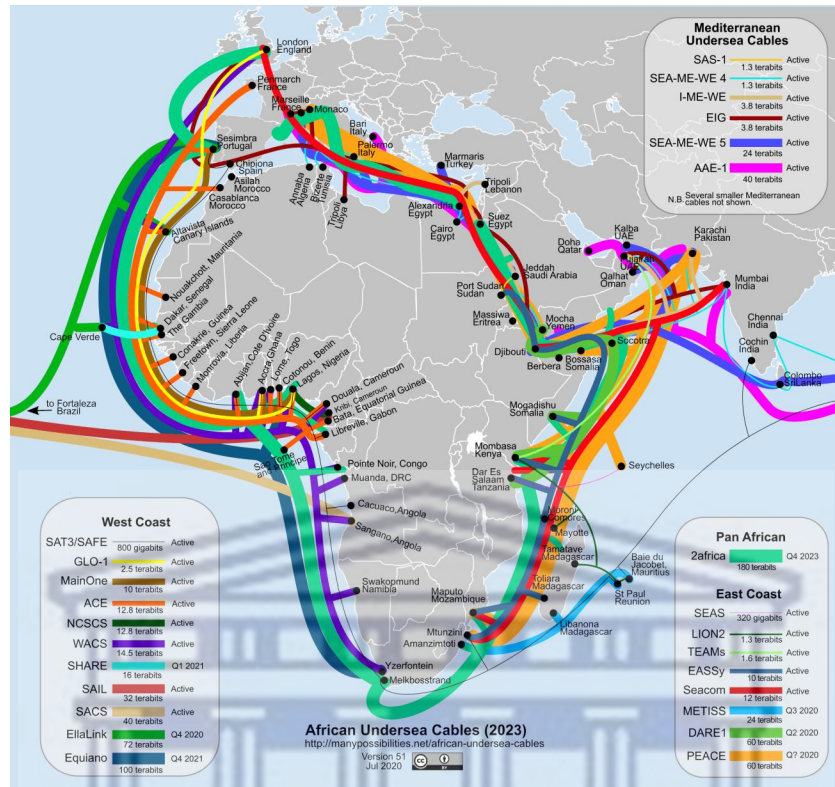


Figure 3.14: West Coast to the world, Steve Song (2023) *African Undersea Cables* accessed on 15 October 2023, <https://www.submarinenetworks.com/en/africa>

As seen in the above map, one subsea cable operated by 2Africa transmits data from Melkbosstrand up to Amanzimtoti, Mozambique, Tanzania to the Middle East stopping in Europe. We cannot see these cables, and yet they are there. Although some research has been done on the impact of subsea cables, there is not enough evidence to understand the true impact that it has on the environment. For example, studies performed in aquariums show that marine animals and organisms exhibit behavioural responses to electromagnetic frequencies.²⁷⁴ When thinking about the impact of such technology in the ocean, there are also questions of human impact and politics. That is why Rezaire makes the connection between the Atlantic slave trade and the submarine fibre cables, to contemplate the existence of data and whose interests are in mind throughout the movement of data.

²⁷⁴ Adrienne Bernhard, "How undersea cables may affect marine life," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, 2 February 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230201-how-undersea-cables-may-affect-marine-life#:~:text=Beyond%20localised%20habitat%20damage%20or,the%20introduction%20of%20artificial%20substrates.>

This postcard highlights how Alaimo's question brings politics and power into the realm of the environment, much like Baucom does earlier in this chapter. I read Alaimo's work alongside Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter's critique of 'whiteness', what they refer to as Man1 and Man2. Man1, "invented by the Renaissance's *studia humanitatis* as *homo politicus* and therefore differentiated but not wholly separate from the *homo religiosus* conception of human" is a version of 'man' which links 'humanness' to religion and Europe.²⁷⁵ In doing so, it created fertile ground for Man2, "a figure based on the Western bourgeoisie's model of being human that has been articulated as, since the latter half of the nineteenth century, liberal monohumanism's *homo oeconomicus*".²⁷⁶

Man1 and Man2 help me with thinking through Muizenberg's dominant history and the ways in which history is produced, namely that Man1 and Man2 are visible, in the centre of the frame. By virtue of the existence of Man1 and Man2, there is an ignorance surrounding the complexity of human history and 'nature,' which we see up until today in issues over land, water and labour.

As previously mentioned in the first postcard of this chapter, Žukauskaitė proposes an organism-oriented approach which enables one to consider the politics of the Anthropocene. That we can think about the histories (*forces*) that threaten life on the planet, whilst not falling into the trap of "outsourcing responsibility" to a "fictitious 'Anthropos'".²⁷⁷ For Žukauskaitė and Alaimo, the erroneous creation of a homogenous 'anthro' falls back into the deception of colonialism and the Enlightenment of a 'universal man' (or Man1 and Man2), ignorant of postcolonial and feminist theories.²⁷⁸ An organism-oriented approach therefore resists "the biopolitical demand to differentiate, classify and decide which forms of life are worth living".²⁷⁹

The above ideas help me to think about subjectivity and plurality, of the individual and the environment. This postcard's depiction of Muizenberg from the ocean serves as a doorway to decenter the human. Inspired by Sugimoto's photographs, it creates an impression of an endless horizon, that time continues as infinitely as the horizon in the distance. I associate this with the idea that the viewer is no longer anchored to the obstructions of land, instead the frame is fixated on ocean and sky. Returning to Shawn Michelle Smith, by photographing the ocean in such a

²⁷⁵ McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, *Sylvia Wynter*, 10.

²⁷⁶ McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter, *Sylvia Wynter*, 10.

²⁷⁷ Žukauskaitė, *Organism-Oriented Ontology*, 155.

²⁷⁸ Žukauskaitė, *Organism-Oriented Ontology*, 155.

²⁷⁹ Žukauskaitė, *Organism-Oriented Ontology*, 156.

way, I can consider the history of Muizenberg in relation to the history of photography, about framing and the gaze, as well as “biographical, biological, nomological, geological, cosmological, and theological scales of being and time”.²⁸⁰ It’s a synthesis, as shown by Baucom, where one attempts to decenter the human, whilst recognizing the injustices of history.

Conclusion

Each postcard in this chapter are fragments of Muizenberg’s history, inspired by scholars and artists from various disciplines. I found it very useful to think about the imbrication of history, politics and environmental studies; considering the human within and out of the frame. As the first and last postcards showed, our conception of the ocean as an expansive and unlimited resource closes humans off from considering how we impact it. The ‘modern’ world has produced separate oceans and deep undersea alien worlds, ignorant of the movement of water and mammals across mapped lines. This relationship with the ocean is reflective of our history with the natural elements and with one another. I am reminded of Robert Sobukwe’s opening address where he says, “In spite of all these rapid advances in the material and physical world, man appears to be either unwilling or unable to solve the problem of social relations between man and man”.²⁸¹ Wynter, McKittrick and Alaimo are helpful with thinking about this further, connecting the question of social relations with the Anthropocene, explaining that there is no universal human within the ‘anthro’. Environmental, climate and social justice is not linked to a homogeneous experience, and the global South is undoubtedly in a more precarious position than the global North. Moreover, issues of race, fugitivity and precarity in relation to the environment question historical narratives of immigration and neocolonialism.

Drawing from *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, I was able to contemplate Luxemburg’s work in relation to Muizenberg and use creolization as a tool of inquiry. Gordon invites us to think about Luxemburg’s openness to acknowledge an “active, acting, living wisdom of the natural world and its ability to communicate with us”.²⁸² For Gordon, the work involves seeing ourselves in such a way that balances history, nature, space and time (although she recognises how complicated this actually is). It therefore “involves a radical reevaluation of the way we look at

²⁸⁰ Baucom, *History 4° Celsius*, 112.

²⁸¹ Sobukwe’s Speech at the at the ‘Completers’ Social’ at Fort Hare College, publication not identified (photostat copy), May/June 1959, A2618-Ca4, Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

²⁸² Cornell and Gordon, *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, 141.

the world around us,” questioning whether we are ready for “a painful intellectual journey to discover the parameters reconciling history and nature”.²⁸³ When thinking about one of the histories of Muizenberg, i.e. it’s coming to be ‘Muizenberg’ in the first place, several of the postcards thought about its geological scale. False Bay is believed to be at least six thousand years old, having already been moulded by millions of years of wind, wave, temperature and continental shifts, volcanic eruptions, “and the small erosion of tiny pebbles”.²⁸⁴

To conclude, this chapter involved creating my own postcards in order to explore what postcards represent and the deconstruction of themes and scenes from my research. Postcards, predominantly thought to be trivial or exclusionary objects, can move and shift to become another kind of object. The postcards in this final chapter attempt to explore, breakaway and destabilise historical production of Muizenberg and the postcard as a mode of communication. Affirming that postcards exist as moving image objects, that they blur between multiple contexts, unable to locate them in the singular is a quote from Anne McCauley: “Are they part of the history of art, the history of modes of communication, the history of photography or printmaking, the history of tourism, the history of literature and autobiography, the history of the particular iconographical traditions of their subject matter, or, as the title of this anthology proclaims, the history of something so vast as modernity itself?”²⁸⁵

The histories of Muizenberg as place, site, and water that my postcards represent could be seen as decentered histories. They’re histories that align with critiques of apartheid and problematic histories, of the ‘golden years’ nostalgia, and of silencing. The postcards, as objects, attempt to distort dominant histories. They work as an intervention into history as practice, drawing on conceptual and historical ideas about time and space. I return to a question posed in my introduction, if it is possible that the historian can cut an object off from its source through our (dis)engagements and (mis)perceptions of/with it? My aim with these postcards was to try to witness their tensions and elasticities²⁸⁶, conceptually and materially. Perhaps disengaging and misperceiving at times, whilst also aware of their becoming.

²⁸³ Cornell and Jane Anna Gordon., *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*, 141.

²⁸⁴ Tredgold, *Bay Between the Mountains*, 12.

²⁸⁵ Anne McCauley, “Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity,” *Visual Resources* 27, no.3 (2011), 267.

²⁸⁶ Ingold, “Towards an Ecology of Materials,” 433.

Conclusion

Becoming Muizenberg

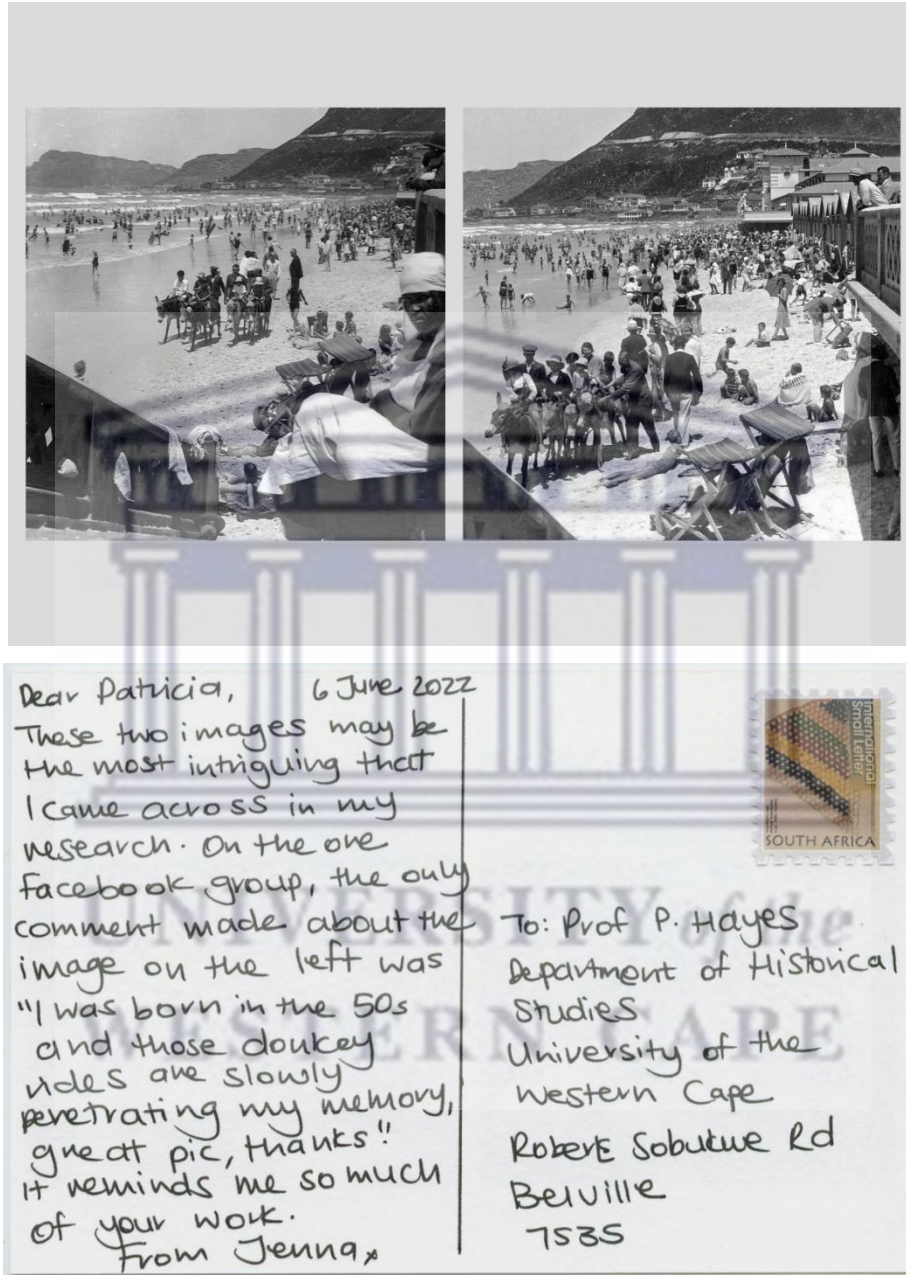


Figure 4.1: 'Muizenberg, then and now', Personal Collection, 6 June 2022

Figure 4.1 is the concluding postcard of this research. It depicts two photographs of the same scene. I found both images on Facebook group, "Muizenberg. Then and Now". The images had been posted separately by the same person, nearly a year apart to the day (left image 13 February 2022, the right image 12 February 2023). I'm not sure if they received a reminder as Facebook

sometimes does, “this time a year ago” and they had the similar image to post. The original post does not credit the photographer or archive. I presume that the photographs were taken after 1929 as the second pavilion can be seen in the top right corner. The beach is filled with beachgoers and bathers, a typical beach side image. The image on the left struck me as it’s one of the few images on the group that depicted a person of colour from this period, especially someone framed (for me) as the focus of the photograph. On further contemplation, it became evident that the woman, dressed in the uniform of a domestic worker, may have been an accidental inclusion, and that the donkey rides and beach were the focus. Perhaps the image on the right was taken afterwards as the photographer realised that they had included an unintended figure. They seem to be taken on the same day as the two beach chairs are in the same position. The facial expression and posture of the woman doesn’t seem to be intentionally posed for the photographer, in fact she seems to be scowling at the photographer. For me, this photograph, alongside the analogous image, is the crux of my research. It opposes the notion “Things Pretty Dull,” that the postcard is not as banal as presumed to be, and regardless of what we can say about it, disrupts the historians’ attempts at discovery and homogenisation.

The aim of this research was to consider how materiality and the postcard can become an intervention for re-reading Muizenberg and its public histories. Throughout the three chapters, I engaged with this question, exploring different methods for a nonlinear reading of Muizenberg’s histories. It doesn’t necessarily conclude with a more complete version of Muizenberg, instead leaving an incomplete picture, with unframed images and dislodged narratives. In doing so, I have critiqued the ways in which history is produced, and what these productions justify in later years. It calls into question why public space is used in the ways that it is, and how certain dominant histories produce problematic nostalgias.

The postcard as a moving image object, is an intervention into seeing the stratified histories of Muizenberg, troubling linear readings of history and the postcard. By seeing the postcard as a dissonant object, Muizenberg takes on a fragmentary form. The subversion of ‘front’ and ‘back’ enables a subversion of supposed dichotomies in Muizenberg, mutating its ‘complete’ histories. When the postcard is used by the historian or the archivist as purely representational, its ‘thingness’ is diluted and oftentimes depict historical narratives of progress, development and coloniality as neutral or positive events. This means that the fleeting moments captured erroneously come to represent Muizenberg as it really was. The postcard, when used in

such a way, is a crystallisation of all that was admirable in the past vis-a-vis the present, and the maintenance of its beautification a rational objective to pursue. In contrast to this, rather than thinking of the images and photography on postcards as purely representational, this research considers them in terms of their materiality, looking at both sides, the messages, stamps, overall condition, publisher, photographer, etc.

The starting point for this Masters was considering the making of Muizenberg, how authors such as Walker tell the story of Muizenberg's development from 1880-1930s. Walker wrote a narrative of Muizenberg and uses the visual to innocently illustrate this history. The postcard sets this narrative in place. The first chapter showed how Muizenberg is written in the postcard, and how Walker equated Muizenberg as a place with postcards. It thought about linear historical production and the making of history a postcard. This linearity was shown to be incongruent with history by looking at the postcard as a moving image object.

I then considered some of the occluded histories of Muizenberg that are especially seen in contemporary postcards. The second chapter explored why these postcards were different to those in chapter one, connecting themes such as race, gentrification, and "other" representations of Muizenberg, analysing how these occluded histories have been produced. Moving into creating my postcards, the final chapter delved into subtler histories, shifting perspectives in terms of temporalities, on land, sea and mountain. I conclude by revisiting some of my earlier questions: What does it mean for a space to be *made* into something through its representation on post-cards? And who or what does this kind of construction serve?

The research in general explored ways of reading postcards. I began with postcard images that create romantic, nostalgic stories of the road of development, creating a 'golden era' which in turn is a narrative of progress (but also signals an unspoken decline). Shifting reading, I then looked at postcards in the archive regrouping them visually (as categories of seeing) to expose the discourse of progress, the tensions inherent in their linear reading, and their double-sidedness where front and back are blurred/removed. Although I am tempted to write about the 'real' history of Muizenberg, I want to set up a conversation between different Muizenbergs. And although I make postcards, I am hesitant of reproducing the same images linked with a similar nostalgia. In chapter 3 I return to self-made postcards to create a Muizenberg where the tensions and contestations are always necessarily apparent.

Concluding with an exhibition from earlier in 2023, at Stevenson Gallery by artist Penny Siopis, titled *Never the Same Water Twice*. The exhibition included Siopis' paintings, videos, photographs and several installations exploring water conceptually and materially. Siopis draws on Heraclitus' you can never step into the same river twice. The constant changing, shifting, morphing. Returning to the rhizome, where there is no beginning or end, only a becoming.



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