

# Far from Kimberley

wendy morris

visitors' guide

**21**rozenaal ■  
ACTUELE KUNST ■

This book is intended as a guide to visitors to the exhibition. It starts with two essays that contextualise the exhibition: one by the curator, Nanda Janssen; the other by the artist, Wendy Morris.

Thereafter the book is divided into four sections, corresponding to the four film projects on exhibition. In each section there is an introduction to a film followed by images and texts about the drawings out of which the film is constructed. All texts are by the artist.

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## Introduction

The first work that I saw by Wendy Morris was the film *Off the Record*. I was thrilled by the quality of the film. I found it well drawn, the various scenes were strung together superbly, and it was full of clever or witty ideas. The film tore into everything and shook things up, although I didn't understand every element it touched upon. I think I watched *Off the Record* maybe five or six times in a row the first time. Slowly, I gathered the thread of it and picked up clues.

The film made me aware of the gaps in my knowledge about South Africa. I know so embarrassingly little about this country. This country in which the Dutch played an important role a few centuries ago. This country which still shows traces of the Netherlands, even today. Somewhere in the back of my head, dates and names were jumbled: 1647, shipwreck, the fort at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652, replenishment station, Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutch East India Company, colony. A period in history in which the Netherlands was guilty of slavery, exploitation, and other unpleasant things. What is remarkable is that Jan van Riebeeck and co. are still described in such neutral terms in history books and information on the Internet. But that's another matter.

Since all eyes will be turned to South Africa this summer because of the football World Cup, it seems like a good time to approach South Africa again from a different perspective. By 'different', I mean a perspective that is not touristic,

consumerist, or colonial. Wendy Morris's charcoal drawings and animations, as well as her diary entries, essays, and articles, offer an interesting look at South Africa. Because she moved to Belgium in the mid-1990s, she has a foot in each continent – Europe and Africa. It is interesting that she does not set South Africa against Belgium or Europe, but instead focuses on their similarities. She interweaves moments in the histories of both black and white and of Europe and South Africa. Unlike Wendy Morris I would propose, referring to the title of the exhibition at 21rozeniaal, that the town of Kimberley in South Africa is not so far removed from Enschede or from myself. This exhibition has brought Kimberley and South Africa 10,000 kilometres closer.

One of the reasons the significance of the film *Off the Record* filtered through to me so slowly was that it featured historical moments with which I was not familiar and which did not tally with my image of the relationship between Europe and

Africa. For instance, I did not know that black South African soldiers fought in Belgium and other European countries in World War One, and that they did this to defend their motherland (read: the British rulers). My fixed views also made it difficult for me to understand that South African chieftains donated money to help reconstruct Belgium. Didn't money always move from Europe to Africa? From white to black? These 'revelations' helped me see that my view of things had a European bias. Of course I had already known this to be the case, but Morris's film made me newly conscious of that bias.

Wendy Morris deviates from the official annals and heads down side-streets, examining events that paint history differently. She digs through archives and reads old newspapers and publications. A number of years ago, she discovered her own family history as a source and started to use it in her work. It is interesting how her family felt the urge to record their history in diaries, letters, and stories from

the middle of the nineteenth century. She links this micro-history to the larger whole. These days it is more and more common to illustrate 'big' history through smaller, personal stories. This approach allows one to look at the same event from multiple perspectives. In *Off the Record*, Morris places her white great-uncle Walter Giddy's journey to Europe alongside that of Sol Tshekisho Plaatje, a black South African intellectual. They form an interesting parallel. Two men of roughly the same age, from the same country, but with totally different backgrounds, travelling to the same country at the same time, but with different motives.

I would still like to ask Wendy Morris what else this digging into family history, this 'Selbstforschung', reveals. I have however noticed that I have adopted her methods and have looked at my own family history – as much as I know of it, at least – and my version of European history, in relation to her films and drawings. It puts the connections between myself, my family,

my country, my Europe, and my world in a broader perspective. In this way, I get the feeling that the exhibition is also about me. And I hope it is also about you.

Nanda Janssen  
curator 21rozenaal

### **Far from Kimberley**

The city of Kimberley is about half way between Johannesburg and Knysna. Every year, on our way to the coast for our summer holiday, we stopped overnight in Kimberley. While there we visited Uncle Harold Morris, cousin to my grandfather, as well as the Great Hole, the De Beers diamond mine. As a child Kimberley was not high on my list of interesting places. I wanted to get to the coast and swim in the sea. It is only recently that I return in thought to this place and to the people who made lives there or briefly passed through. It has begun to feature in my thoughts as a point of convergence of a number of different historical moments.

References to Kimberley start to appear in my studio notebooks at the time that I was researching the film *Off the Record*. I was following the life and work of the writer, editor and intellectual, Solomon Tshekiso Plaatje, who took his first job as an interpreter at the court of justice in Kimberley at the end of the 19th century. Plaatje was an influential Kimberley resident and has been an important informant for much of my work over the years. *Off the Record* is about the black men who volunteered for the Labour Corps in the First World War and it is Plaatje who writes of the lack of recognition that these men were granted for their services to country and Empire. A majority of the men who enlisted in the South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) were from Kimberley.

References to Kimberley appear again when I started reading *Agnes' Tales*, the unpublished story of the lives of my forebears in South Africa. Agnes tells of her brothers Orlando and Henry Giddy (my great-grandfather) who, as part of a group

calling themselves the Red Caps, discovered diamonds on a hill on a farm in the northern Cape, and so set off one of the great mining rushes of the 19th century. Thousands of prospectors rushed to the diamond fields, and the town of Kimberley was born.



The Red Caps Party, 1871

Agnes recalls travelling to Kimberley (then still called New Rush) by ox-wagon with her mother, sisters and younger brothers to help Orlando and Henry work their claim. She tells too of their father, the Wesleyan missionary Richard Giddy, holding church services for the miners in a makeshift tent, the wind blowing out the candles that were propped into empty gin bottles.

Henry and Orlando Giddy worked their claim for a few years and seem to have done quite well on it. Then the hazards of living and working in the fine dust thrown up by the diggings started to affect their health and they sold their claim and went farming in the Eastern Cape. Fifty years later Henry Giddy wrote his reminiscences of the early days on the diamond fields and these were published in Kimberley's Diamond Fields Advertiser. I have copies of these reminiscences in both Henry's sloping handwriting and as the published articles.

Henry's half-brother, Richard Hoskins Giddy (one of the babies in the *Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy* drawing), became

the magistrate of Kimberley. He was an ardent free-mason and started a free-mason's lodge in Kimberley. The Giddy Lodge still exists. Giddy Street has long since been renamed.

My forebears were constantly on the move and it is impossible to locate one place that could be termed a place of origin. The family migrated from south west England to the Cape Colony - in one of the great waves of emigration away from Europe at the beginning of the 19th century - then to the borders of Lesotho, followed by intermittent moves around the country. My parents, myself, were no different. Now, like many South Africans of my generation, I have moved beyond the borders. Not back to England but to Belgium - in one of the smaller waves of emigration away from South Africa. This sense of flow, of dissipation of family, is not something I regret. I love this spirit of adventure, of constantly seeking new challenges, new places, new experiences. It has its downside too of course. We are always separating from family. But that in

turn provokes something rich and creative. We write letters to each other to keep connected. We seem always to have written letters to each other, and to have preserved these letters as the physical traces of those from whom we are separated. My father has tens of boxes of letters between family members - his parents, grandparents, aunts, great-aunts. We keep diaries too - to record these new experiences in new places - as great-uncle Walter did while in France in World War I. And these collected letters and diaries, unpublished narratives and reminiscences become the next generation's connection to the past, to a series of pasts.

The title, *Far from Kimberley*, makes reference, too, to a documentary film by Jill Godmilow, *Far from Poland*. Wanting to make a film about the Solidarity movement in Poland but denied permission to enter the country, Godmilow decided to make it from New York. Using re-enactments, actual footage smuggled out of Poland, images from American television newscasts, 'acted'

interviews with Polish exiles, and even a voice-over of a conversation that she supposedly had with Fidel Castro, she constructed a film that challenged most of the conventions of documentary. Her title speaks of an enforced geographical distance from the place and the political events with which she wanted to engage.

*Far from Kimberley* is a way to describe the distance between a place in South Africa and Enschede, a place in the Netherlands. It is intended too, to be understood as a way of describing the unreachable - referring not so much to a place but to a time, to the past. It is a metaphor for a series of historical moments that are impossible to revisit, even as I am determined to revisit them. It refers to a certain anxious desire on my part to know and possess this past, even as I know the impossibility of the venture. *Kimberley* represents this search into the past, into my past.

# Salvation

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*Salvation* is the title of a new project. It is based on a document entitled Agnes' Tales, an unpublished narrative of a particular family history in South Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Written by Agnes, the sister of my great-grandfather (and one of the babies in the *Sarah Jane* drawing), it tells of her father Richard Giddy's journey to the Cape as a young Wesleyan evangelist in the 1830s with his wife and young family, of his remarriage after the death of his first wife to Agnes' mother, and of his own death in the 1880s, after having fathered seventeen children by these two women. The Tales cover about

eighty years of family narratives and are a combination of Agnes' own memories of growing up on mission stations, and of stories told to her by her mother. It is an interesting text, not least because of what is not included. It follows a very 'white' story and if black country-men and women are featured at all then they are on the peripheries as thankful converts.

The plan for *Salvation* is to use Agnes' Tales as a baseline and to extend outwards to wider social events and political currents. The Wesleyan missionaries were instrumental, for instance, in introducing literacy to local populations. They set up the first printing presses upon which Christian literature was published in Setswana, Sesotho and Xhosa. Richard Giddy was trained as a printer in England and brought a printing press out with him when he came to South Africa. Within a number of years newspapers were appearing from these mission presses with black Wesleyan converts swiftly assuming positions of writers and editors. By the mid 1870s a

field of tension was arising in which (black) editors and (white) missionaries disagreed upon the ideological tone of articles in the newspapers. This resulted in the break-away of some editors to start their own publications - and the beginnings of a black press in South Africa.

Crucial to the film is an examination of the fact that I am South African by virtue of a group of impassioned ancestors who decided to spread the Word to those who had apparently not yet heard it. I am a non-believer, an atheist, agnostic, a 'free-thinker', and through the film I examine my attraction to and rejection of these ancestors. It is difficult not to be indulgent when looking at family history because one tends to concentrate on the most prestigious of one's forbears. In *Salvation* I am prepared to be indulgent at times, but I also want to focus on the players on the periphery: on the women who bore the missionary, Richard Giddy, seventeen children; on the converts who disagreed with the missionary's point of view.

Though I am still working on the film I am showing some of the drawings in this exhibition. These drawings have a dual role. They are both independent drawings that can be viewed without reference to the rest of the project, as well as being the 'remnants' of an animation process out of which *Salvation* will be constructed.





***Sarah Jane and her ten children***  
***The Unfortunate Mrs Giddy (Stand-In)***

Journal notes. February 2010

There are two drawings in my studio. Both are large works, each a meter eighty high and one fifty wide. Neither are framed, one is hanging from a wire 'washing line', the other is still on the drawing board. The latter is still at an early stage of drawing – nothing more than an outline really - but it has progressed enough in my mind to prompt the writing of this article. The finished drawing, the one pegged to the washing line, has a title, '*Sarah Jane and her ten children*'. It is a drawing of a slightly larger-than-life woman wearing

mid 19<sup>th</sup> century clothes. Floating around her are nine babies, each of whom is named. The tenth baby, this one unnamed, is drawn as a foetus. The babies sleep, cry, play with their toes. They take no notice of each other or their mother.

The second drawing is of another woman, also in 19<sup>th</sup> century clothes. Her positioning on the paper mirrors the positioning of Sarah Jane, but in reverse, so that she looks away, to the other side. The drawings are going to be a pair.

The figure of Sarah Jane Giddy, my great-great grandmother, is drawn from a portrait of her found in the family archive. In it she poses resting her hand on the back of a chair. Her face in the portrait is rather dark and indistinct and so I worked from two other head-and-shoulder portraits of her, so that her face is a composite of these three photographs. The babies - drawn, filmed and named in the order in which they were born - are drawn from images of contemporary (21<sup>st</sup> century) babies found on the Internet.

I made this first drawing out of a sense of frustration. I had been researching and reading so much around the subject of this family and Wesleyan missionaries that I had reached a point where I was overloaded with ideas. The result of which was that I couldn't restrain myself to one area to draw and I started and stopped a number of unsuccessful drawings. To clear my head and to get closer to the main characters of *Agnes' Tales*, I thought I would make a 'documentary' style drawing of a woman and her ten children, all named, and some with birth and death dates. It would simply be a family tree, a visual genealogy.

When this drawing was finished - and I liked it - I decided to make a second drawing, this time of Mary Ann Giddy, the first wife of Richard Giddy, the missionary. This woman had seven children before she died at the age of forty-four. There was one small problem though. I have no photo of Mary Ann (for the simple reason that I am not related to her and so no photo's of her have passed down into my

family archive). So for a while I wondered if it was possible to make a 'documentary' drawing of a woman of whom I have no photograph. But then, the babies in the first drawing might have been portraits but they weren't portraits of the children of Sarah Jane. Why not then find an image of a woman who could stand in for Mary Ann? Which is what I did. I selected a photo from an archive of Victorian-era women that I found on the Net. I chose this particular woman because she looked pensive, faced the right way, and matched Sarah Jane in ways that were useful for the drawing. I could find no name for her.

I'm drawing this woman at present and even though I don't know who she is and it is really not important if the drawing is a good likeness of her or not, I still want it to look like her. When it is finished it'll be a portrait of an unnamed woman who is standing in for a known woman of whom I have no image. And the seven children floating around her and named are equally likenesses of babies who aren't the babies that I say they are.

What genre of historical work is this drawing, and by extrapolation, the film *Salvation*? To what extent can we call it documentary? What does that term even mean? My films are frequently labelled as documentaries when they are shown at short film festivals but I think the term has come to have little meaning and is too loosely used. It is a term that carries a number of expectations. The first of which is that we expect the people who are being featured to be the people who are being observed, who are the subject of the work. We expect to be able to believe in what we are being shown.

These drawings are about people who did exist. They are based on historical research, the names and dates are correct. The children are revealed in the animation in the order in which they were born. But they aren't all drawn from archival imagery of the people they purport to be. I am calling the second drawing *The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy* with the appendage (*Stand-in*). So I will be drawing attention to the fact that it is not a

portrait of Mary Ann Giddy but someone standing in for her. This requires on the part of the viewer a certain suspension of disbelief – something that is a requirement of fictional work – film or novel. When we watch a film like Gandhi, we know that Ben Kingsley is an actor playing Gandhi. He does not have the physical features of Gandhi but we do not understand this as a misrepresentation. We suspend disbelief because the kinds of acts that he performs and the historical setting in which he acts seem plausible. So the expectations are different. This is similar to what happens in these two drawings.

My thinking here was not only about what counts as documentary and what as fiction, but also about what can be found in the archive and thus remains in view, and what drops out of the archive and is lost to view. Sarah Jane Sephton, who became the second Mrs. Giddy, is talked about in glowing terms by her daughter in *Agnes' Tales*. She married the missionary Richard Giddy less than a year after his

first wife died and she took over the responsibility of his seven young children. A year later her father died (her mother had died when she was fifteen) and her nine younger brothers and sisters came to live with them. And then she heroically produced ten of her own children. Her predecessor, however, features only as a negative. In *Agnes' Tales* she is an absence – a woman who leaves behind seven young children. She appears too in *Of Revelation and Revolution* (by the historical anthropologists, Jean and John Comaroff) as the 'infamous Mrs. Giddy', the missionary's wife who died an 'unchristian' death.

"Shocked reports reveal occasional acts of resistance on the part of mission wives. They included sexual impropriety, taunting impiety, and threats of desertion. Hear the Reverend Cameron in 1844 (the year she died) on the infamous case of Mrs. Giddy.

*Mrs. Giddy has been called to exchange worlds. Her death alas! was not that of a Christian. It is painful to be obliged to say so of a missionary's wife, but it is needless*

*to hide from you a fact which is notorious here. The committee should be extremely careful to send any married man out as a missionary, whose wife is not as truly devoted to the work as himself”*

Exactly what Mrs. Giddy did to earn such notoriety is unknown – at least until I can get to the Wesleyan archives in London to find out for myself.

I don't want to make dramatic or emotive films. I don't want to make a work that goes into whatever it was of which Mary Ann Currelly was supposedly guilty. I do want to suggest, however, a difference in the record between her and the second wife. In the Comaroff book she is referred to as the *infamous* Mrs. Giddy. If I use this in a title of a drawing of a woman with seven children around her I will create the impression that she has done something criminal or cruel to the children, and this is not my intention. So I chose the *Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy* for the title. Of all the Victorian women I could have selected I deliberately chose the image of a

pensive, even slightly depressed woman. And I composed the drawing in a way that has the babies not connect to her, whereas in the Sarah Jane drawing I drew the babies surrounding the mother figure, with her hands connecting to them.

Beyond wanting to suggest differences between the women, or rather between the recorded narratives about the women, I wanted to say something about the transience of family. That for a moment we are all connected to a family – to a set of people who are related by blood or marriage or companionship, who share a home and an involvement in each other's activities and upbringing, people who eat together – and then this family dissipates and its members go on, if they so wish or if they are lucky enough, to form new family groups. I was struck in the story that is Agnes' Tales by the description of one family or household that once existed and then dissipated. That there is a short moment in which a family exists and then it is no longer.



### ***New Rush***

Two of the babies in the Sarah Jane drawing, Orlando and Henry (my great-grandfather), left the family home in Colesburg in 1869 as young men and went diamond prospecting with a group of friends. Known as the Red Caps Party the men have gone down in the historical record as the group who discovered the first diamonds in what came to be known initially as the New Rush, then the Diamond Fields, and then the Kimberley mine. The group of eight are pictured soon after their discovery working their claims on what was, at the outset, a hill, but which quickly became an open mine and, five years later, the largest man-made hole in the world.

At the New Rush diamond prospectors had to register claims, all of which were of a similar rectangular size. Then, with the help of black labour, they dug their claims downwards, removing the rock, bucket by bucket, to a sorting area away from the mine. Some claims were dug out faster than others, creating the uneven effect of an archaeological dig, a strange landscape of block-like formations of differing heights. At the outset, roads were marked out between the claims to allow for the removal of the rock for sorting. As the mine became deeper these roads disappeared and the mine became an open pit. Diggers had the increasingly difficult task of getting their soil and rock out from an ever deeper mine and, if one studies photographs of the mine from the beginning of the discovery until operations was taken over by large companies, the ingenuity of the men in constructing ever more complicated systems for removal of the buckets is remarkable. It is these ingenious wooden constructions devised by the diggers that I wanted to draw.





### ***Orlando's Book I & II***

Orlando's Book I and II are drawings of a book that used to belong to my great grandfather's brother. He was awarded the book as a schoolboy in the late 1860s for being 'the boy most liked by his classmates'. It is a book of engravings and poems about the English countryside. The engravings are of a rather idealised view of English farm life. Drawn during a period in which many peasants were being forced off the land and into the industrial cities to work, the images seem to represent an imaginary golden period, a rural idyll. The

book was awarded to a young man living in very different circumstances on Wesleyan missionary settlements in the rocky, dusty landscapes of the Cape and the Orange Free State - landscapes that looked nothing like the pastoral scenes in the engravings. Since there was hardly any publishing of books that were set in South Africa at this time, most stories and, it follows, most illustrations, were from elsewhere.

Not much had really changed by the time that I grew up in South Africa over a hundred years later. All the books we read as children were written, published and illustrated in the UK. Which meant that our earliest literary memories were of other places, for we never saw our place illustrated in books. This is why Orlando's book is interesting to me and it is this, the space between those accumulated memories of un-witnessed places and the experienced realities of the places in which we live, that I wanted to explore through a series of drawings.

# Off the Record

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## **On Record**

The direction that the film *Off the Record* would take was never certain. I did know that two documents would be the starting points – a war diary kept by my great-uncle Walter, and an account, by Sol Plaatje in his 1917 treatise *Native Life in South Africa* of the frustrated attempts of many black South Africans to play their part in the war effort. I was also certain that two defining moments would be central to the narrative – the sinking of the SS Mendi and the Battle of Delville Wood. The SS Mendi, carrying a battalion of the South African Native Labour Contingent (the SANLC), sank in the English Channel.

Over six hundred men of the SANLC drowned. The event was never written into official (meaning white) South African history books but memory of it was kept alive through oral means and unofficial commemorations amongst black South Africans. The other event, and one that was commemorated officially, was the battle of Delville Wood. In this battle in northern France hundreds of white South African men lost their lives. Walter Giddy, my great-uncle, was one of the few to have survived Delville Wood.

It was always clear that intrinsic to the film would be the differing experiences and treatment of South Africans active in the European theatre of war, differences that depended on the communities from which they originated. Walter, 21 years old and adventurous, signed up with his old school friends to go and fight. He took his freedom to volunteer and defend the Empire as a given, being white. He had no political reasons for going. Reading his diary it is clear that he experienced both the best of male camaraderie and the

worst of war's horrors. Having survived the battle of Delville Wood, he was killed in the battle of Arras the following year.

The picture gets more complicated when it comes to black volunteers. At the outbreak of war, Sol Plaatje writes, there was agreement amongst the majority of South African Native Congress members that their own grievances against Parliament should be put aside until a better time, and that every assistance should be offered to the authorities. Numerous offers of raising, sponsoring and equipping black regiments for service in German West Africa or Europe were made. All were ignored or refused by the Union government. Through the continued persistence of the Imperial Office the government was eventually persuaded to mobilise a labour contingent and over 21 000 black men did serve in France.

The motivations for volunteering, firstly for active service, and then, when this was flatly refused, for service in a labour contingent, were frequently political.

Which is to say that they need to be understood in the wider context of black intellectual resistance at the turn of the century. Congress members and other intellectuals felt that if they were to demonstrate their loyalty to the British Crown through action rather than words, then it would not be unfair to expect, after the war, that their political grievances would be given greater consideration by the Imperial Office. Black working classes were less loyalist towards Britain, for it was associated with the oppressive employment systems under which they laboured. For them, Germany was seen as worthy of sympathy and if they volunteered to join the SANLC it was because they needed the work.

The government was nervous of what it considered to be the dangers of allowing black labour troops to serve in Europe. Opponents argued that sending the Contingent would be equal to “letting loose a boomerang, the force of which, on its return, will strike at the root of our social life”. It was feared that service

overseas would raise consciousness and on their return these men would dare to demand the vote. The Cape Liberal, John X. Merriman, was of the opinion that “anything that tends to lessen or break down the almost superstitious regard that the native races have for the European makes for evil”. The author, activist and long-time professor of languages at the University of Fort Hare, D.D.T. Jabavu - while not quite displaying that ‘almost superstitious regard’ - did note that black people were taken by surprise that European nations, “who led in education and Christianity, should find no other means than the sword and accumulated destructive weapons to settle diplomatic differences”. To many black observers the outbreak of war did show up the weaknesses of the much vaunted white civilization and culture and its credibility as a model to which every educated African should supposedly aspire. It emphasised the fallibility of whites and it was hoped after the war that they might boast a little less about their supposed

civilization that “lays so great a burden on the people”.

Throughout the drawing I was trying to decide on a structure for the film that could bring together the differing experiences of black and white volunteers without being either divisive or indulging in ‘rainbowism’. One choice would be to show the events as parallel to each other, with the film structured around the contrast between black and white experiences. After all, it was the comparisons that were the most striking. Take, for example, the issue of freedom of movement and association. Walter writes of taking part in friendly rugby matches held between his regiment and those of the Australians and New Zealanders. He mentions, in time off from the front, of playing a game of tennis with two young women on a beach. In Egypt he was able to visit tourist sites. Given the limitations of war, the soldiers still had a little freedom of movement and some interaction with the civilian population – both male and female. The experiences of

the men of the SANLC were very different. The very basis upon which their being in Europe rested depended on their being barred from contact with either the civilian population or military or labour units from other countries. To ensure their isolation these men were housed in closed compounds that were, preferably, situated away from towns or populated areas. These compounds were based on a system of labour control that had been developed on the South African mines, the purpose of which was to isolate, regiment and exploit black miners. Miners were confined to the compounds for the length of their contract. It was a brutal system that has been described as 'a college of colonialism that did much to rob Africans of their dignity and help mould servile black populations'. Integral to the compound system on the mines was the prevention of the development of an organised working class. Part of the fear of the mine owners and industrialists of sending black South African labourers to France was that they might pick up socialist ideas from other labour

contingents, and on their return refuse to work for the pittance they were paid.

The compounds in northern France were surrounded by a 6m high fence topped with barbed wire, with the addition of a corrugated iron screen around the fence if in a populated area. Entry to and from the compound was guarded and the men were only allowed out to work or under escort of a white NCO. They were effectively POW camps. The men found the system overly restrictive. Like most of the labour contingents from other countries the men of the SANLC were volunteers and they were angry 'that they of all the King's soldiers are singled out for differential treatment'. In 1917 and 1918 there was continued resistance to the system and the 'temper of a large proportion of the men' was described as 'distinctly nasty'. When in early 1918 resistance in the compounds increased, the South African government chose to disband the contingent and ship them back to South Africa rather than address

the men's issues about the conditions of the closed compounds.

While it was the intention to examine the differences in treatment and experience of the South Africans, structuring these as parallel to each other, without points of interaction, seemed too easy an option. It would reflect a mistake so often made in our country – of thinking that we have lived in hermetic communities and that our histories are somehow separate from each other. Finding where the stories converged seemed essential to making a work that was relevant in the present. Without recognizing those points of convergence or interaction, we cannot conceive of a shared history in South Africa, and by extrapolation, of a shareable future.

In part it is through the animation process itself that points of convergence could be found. In this kind of animation, in which one object or image is morphed into another by gradually rubbing the one out and replacing it with the other, quite disparate imagery can be linked. It allows

the experiences of Walter to be enmeshed with those of the SANLC. Citashe's poem, *Fire with the Pen*, the copper tray made by my grandmother, the setting of Delville Wood, the sinking of the SS Mendi, and the rugby games of Walter, can all meet in a number of sequences in which they are drawn into and out of each other.

During the process of drawing clear points of convergence did begin to emerge, one of which was an overriding sense of loss. It had to do not only with losses attributed to the war, but with other losses incurred around this time. Loss was the motivating factor in Sol Plaatje's writing of *Native Life in South Africa* as well as in his novel *Mhudi*. He witnessed and chronicled the loss of land and the dislocations that this caused to so many South Africans. World War I broke out a year after the notorious Land Act was introduced. Through this Act territory that was occupied by blacks was formally annexed, unsurveyed territories were confiscated, and blacks who owned property were forbidden to sell to anyone but whites. Plaatje saw the Act as having

two objectives: segregation and exploitation. Those who wished to continue with their agrarian existence found themselves moved to desolate areas of the country that were unproductive for farming. Those who were unable or unwilling to move had no alternative but to sell their labour.

Loss of land and its impact on black South African culture is an issue too in the poems of I.W.W. Citashe, better known as the Reverend Isaac Wauchope Dyobha. Dyobha drowned on the morning of the 21st<sup>th</sup> of February 1917 when the SS Mendi was rammed by the SS Darro and sank off the coast of the Isle of Wight. He is remembered as the person who rallied the men on the ship that morning to die like warriors. Twenty years earlier he wrote a poem, *Fire with the Pen*, in which he called on his countrymen to abandon forced resistance and to take up a tool of the colonizer – literature - to reclaim that which had been lost. The poem is important in that it introduces into Xhosa poetry, and into wider black intellectual

thought, a changing historical sensibility and an altered political strategy. It is not only a call for the struggle to be taken up at centres of learning, but a call too from Citashe for Africans to move out of the protective refuge of ethnic identity and to embrace a broader identity that transcended ethnic and racial boundaries. The words he is purported to have said to the men aboard the Mendi that fateful morning reflect his continued belief in a national and pan-African redefinition of identity, “ I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers...Swazis, Pondos, Basotho...so let us die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa.”

Loss was central to another document that has been integral to this research, the war diary of my great-uncle Walter Giddy. The diary covers Walter’s experiences as a young soldier in Europe and North Africa, from the moment he arrived at Borden camp in England, until a few days before his death near Arras two years later. Walter’s experience in the war is an account of adventure and male

camaraderie in exceedingly difficult circumstances that includes the loss of most of the school friends with whom he joined up. In the early days in England and then in Egypt he longs to see action and be in the thick of battle. Later in northern France he sees more than enough, as is evident from an entry in July 1916:

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>.

Shall never forget it, as long as I live. Coming up the trench we were shelled the whole time, & to see a string of wounded making their way to a dressing station, those who can walk or hobble along; another chap had half his head taken off, & was sitting in a huddled up position, on the side of the trench, blood streaming on to his boots, & Jock lay not 5 yds. further with his stomach all burst open, in the middle of the trench. Those are only a few instances of the gruesome sights we see daily. As I am writing here, a big shell plonked into the soft earth, covering me with dust, one by one they are bursting round us. I am just wondering if the next will catch us (no it was just over.) Oh! I thought one would get us, it plonked slick in our trench & killed old Fatty Roe, &

wounded Keefe, Sammy who was next to me, & Sid Phillips, poor beggar, he is still lying next to me, the stretcher bearers are too busy to fetch him away.

The tragic aspect inherent in the story recorded in the diary – of a young man just out of school, killed in a war that takes place far from home – is one repeated possibly hundreds of thousands of times during this war. For our family this particular story is compelling because Walter is our (great)uncle, and the retelling of his story becomes part of a family narrative, one that includes a series of losses.

The original diary was ‘war-torn’ and so, a number of years after his death, his younger sister wrote it over into a hard-covered notebook. Kate Muriel had completed art college at Grahamstown and added to the diary a painted front page and a bound leather cover. She included in the diary a number of photo’s and documents. Stuck in at the back are two press cuttings from a local newspaper recording news of Walter’s death in

France, and a memorial service held for him in his home town of Barkly East in the Eastern Cape. There is a poem on Delville Wood. Tucked in loosely are a number of letters, the earliest is from Walter to his two sisters. Sent from training camp in England, it scolds them in brotherly fashion for not having written. In quite a different mood is a letter from an officer informing the family of Walter's death, the circumstances in which it occurred, and the esteem in which Walter was regarded. Another is one of condolence to the family from a school friend who served with him in the same regiment. Loosely inserted inside the front cover of the diary are two photo's, in uniform, of Walter and his older brother Lan. Towards the end of the diary is an informal photo of Walter in Egypt. Written into the book, after the last transcribed entry, is a piece entitled "The Cost of the War", an extract that Kate must have copied from a newspaper article.

It is the sum of these documents and images, together with the transcription of

Walter's diary, that is part of the reason why this book is so compelling. By transcribing the diary it is no longer Walter's work alone, it has become Kate's work too. The painted front page, the hand-made leather cover embossed with her K.M.G. initials, have added other layers to the document. It has been transformed by Kate as an act of homage to her older brother as well as an attempt to hold on to his memory. It has also become, due to the circumstances that followed, a coveted object of memory about Kate.

After finishing art school in Grahamstown, Kate returned to her parent's farm in the district of New England in the Eastern Cape. The youngest of her surviving siblings, she took it upon herself to care for her ageing parents. My father has in his possession a set of letters written during these years by his mother to his father. They tell of a growing bond between her and Robert (Bob) Morris, their engagement, and then a long wait before they could be married. Another set

of letters in his possession are written by his father to his mother, during a period of three months during which she returned to her parents' farm to give birth to my father. The letters from my grandfather are filled with expectation – about the impending birth, about the time that he, Kate, and the baby will be re-united, about the life they will have together. The last set of documents pertaining to this relationship are telegrams of condolence sent to Bob by family and friends after the death of Kate seven months after the birth of their first child.

In his later years my grandfather passed the diary over to my father. Bob Morris had been a Magistrate and District Commissioner. It was a position that saw him posted to many outlying districts. My father recalls joining him during school holidays in places like Rundu near the Angolan border, a place that took six days to reach from Johannesburg where he was in boarding school. My father recalls that though Bob was clearly lonely, he had promised his son that he would not

remarry until John was twenty-one. It seems a harsh decision for a man who clearly loved to be sociable and longed for family life, but it seems to indicate the degree of his feelings for Kate and the emotional devastation his losing her caused him. Since Kate died when my father was only seven months old, my father had no sense of ever knowing her. He tried on occasion to ask his father to tell him something of his mother but when he saw how upsetting this was for his father, he stopped himself from asking. Kate's siblings had shown little interest in the boy and had never invited him to visit. When as a young man he visited anyway, his relatives were never forthcoming with information about his mother. Kate remained a vague figure. It wasn't until this year, when my father and I were talking about the research I was wanting to do for this film, that my father decided finally to open the hand-made wooden box in which Bob had kept his and Kate's correspondence. For the best part of a week my father and I sat in the shade of the grape-vine in his garden in Knysna and

read the letters. Through her own words Kate slowly came to life, and by the last of the letters we felt we had gained a sense of her. I don't wish to speak for my father, for the relationship is so much more complex for him, but for myself, after the week of reading those letters, I felt that I had gained a family member. Now the photo's of this young woman, photo's that had long been part of my family image-file, lost their opacity and started to reflect an individual about whom I felt I now had a little insight.

When, late in his life, Bob handed the diary over to my father, he inscribed on the front page the following message, "Dear John, This is your uncle Walter's diary as copied by your mother from the original which was war torn, Dad". The information is important, though it could be seen as unfortunate that he wrote it in pen over the painting on the front page. In another sense, my grandfather has, wittingly or unwittingly, added another layer of complexity to the diary. Through his inscription he and Kate are

reconnected on this front page. Now the diary is the work of Walter, Kate and Bob. His naming of John means that my father is brought into this compilation too. In an anachronistic way, on the painted front page of this transcribed diary, Kate, Bob and their son John are re-united.

I have described the layering of these historical traces in some detail because they are, in many ways, analogous to the way that the animation films are layered. Traces of images remain even after the object has left the frame or morphed into something else. New images appear over existing ones, partially, but never completely, obliterating the previous image. New histories are written into the old.

The people who become important to this story – Citashe/Wauchope, Plaatje, Walter and Kate – all shared a belief in the importance of literary processes of recording. Their determination to document, to note down, to post, to diarise and to transcribe experiences and events, has ensured the existence of a

material that carries the past into the present. It provides, for those of us who wish it, a material out of which to construct memory of events and experiences to which we were not witness.

There are other kinds of documentation that are intended to ensure memory. Medals issued for service in war are one form. In 1919 King George issued a British War Medal to commemorate the war service of subjects of the Empire, including the veterans of foreign labour corps. The South African government, however, took it upon themselves to decide that these medals would not be awarded to ex-SANLC members. Their conviction was that there should be no official acknowledgement that black South Africans had played a key role in a global conflict. Acknowledgement that whites had required the help of blacks during the war had the potential to raise 'unwarranted' expectations. Since the battalions of the SANLC had been made up of men from neighbouring states as well

as South Africans, the latter saw men who had served in their own battalions, but who came from Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana, receive medals while they were denied them.

The title of the film, *Off the Record*, refers to the lack of official recognition for the contribution of black South Africans in the war. This lack of recognition was more widespread than the Union government alone. Belgians were, and still are, generally unaware of the extent of the support given them by black South Africans. In *Native Life* Plaatje gives the following account:

The writer has received several letters expressing the native resentment of the idea that they should fold their arms and cogitate while other British subjects, irrespective of colour, are sacrificing their lives for the defence of the Empire in this, the darkest period of His Majesty's reign. Our reply to each of these letters was that the natives should subscribe, according to their small means, to several war funds; and our latest information is that they are subscribing to the Prince of Wales' Fund,

the Governor-General's and the *Belgian Relief Fund*. (my italics)

Plaatje also chronicles the war-efforts of black women who looked beyond their own political troubles to show a solidarity with those fighting the war in Europe. In the Free State, after Union in 1910, a system of residential passes had been introduced to curtail the movement of black women. These passes had to be renewed and paid for monthly, failure of which resulted in prison sentences with hard labour. Thousands of women resisted and were jailed. Plaatje visited one such group from Bloemfontein and was appalled at the inhuman conditions of their imprisonment. He ends his account with the following observation: "as often as the coloured woman has been attacked she has humbly presented 'the other cheek'.... After the war broke out (the Bloemfontein *Friend* tells us) the native women of that city forgot their own difficulties, joined sewing classes, and helped send clothing to the afflicted Belgians in Europe"

When SANLC survivors of the Mendi met King George in Abbeville in July of 1917, they heard his assurances that they were part of his great armies who were “fighting for the liberty and freedom of my subjects of all races and creeds throughout the Empire”. The governor-general of the Union reiterated this message at the end of the war at a Thanksgiving Service in Johannesburg. His words were that “the war has proved to you that your loyalty was well placed, and I can assure you it will not be forgotten”. The South African Native National Congress (of which Plaatje was a leading member, and which was later to become the African National Congress) wasted no time in reminding King George of his promises once the war was over. In December 1918 they sent him a petition, reiterating both his words and those of Lord Buxton, and setting out their political difficulties and hopes for his intervention on their behalf. The response was a deafening silence. The delegation sent to deliver the petition was given no access to the King. Though they did eventually get

an audience with the prime minister, their request that they be rewarded for their loyalty and contribution in the war by the return of their civic rights, amounted to nothing. They were not the only subjects of the British Empire to be sorely disappointed by promises made by those holding power.

*Off the Record* is a tribute, in visual terms, to those who recorded their experiences, their social concerns, and their opinions. The concerns of these writers were not with ensuring that their records remained beyond their own lives. Their concerns were with the present. Walter Giddy kept his diary in an attempt to make sense of war-time, to establish a routine in an ever-changing existence. Kate wrote his diary over in an attempt to hold onto his memory, to hold onto him in her present. Solomon T. Plaatje and I.W.W. Citashe wrote not for the historical record, but with the conviction that they could change the present. *Off the Record* is a work about events in the past but, like the concerns of the writers whose documents

are the basis of the work, it's chief concerns are with the relevance of these events in the present.

This is an abridged version of the essay 'On Record' published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Off the Record* at In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper, 2008. Reproduced with kind permission. Translation: Freddy Rottey.



### ***Grinning Orientals***

The idea for this first drawing came from reading an article in the War Illustrated of 1918. The journalist was describing a tour of the Front in Flanders in which he had met up with a group of Chinese labourers returning to camp after a days' work. His comments about these 'grinning Orientals' who looked so alike that one seemed to see the same man a hundred times over, were paternalistic in the extreme. 'Personally', he wrote, 'I attribute no profundity of thought to them, for they are as children'. I wanted to make a drawing that refuted the ideological underwriting of this article and I decided to do it by drawing a Chinese labourer, in great detail, in a large drawing of more than 2m in height. The form and the detail were to be an ideological statement in

themselves. A drawing of that size would be imposing, something that could not easily be ignored. This, of course, would only work for the viewer of the actual drawing, the viewer of the film would have no sense of the scale of the work in the film, but there other strategies would be at work. The drawing would be filmed as a pan – with the camera seeming to move up the body of the man from feet to head (in fact the camera is stationary and the paper is moved downward a centimetre and a half after every two frame exposure). On reaching his face I would transform his features into those of other Chinese labourers, continuing until five different faces had appeared. The idea was to make the viewer notice the changes in the faces, thereby refuting the journalist’s comment that the Chinese ‘had only one face among them’.

I wanted to draw attention, too, to another set of phrases that the journalist used in describing the men he encountered. ‘What a romance of labour is here’ he pontificated, adding that they

had, in his opinion, 'no exalted notions of the dignity of labour' to trouble them. The term 'a romance of labour' is one that can only be used by someone who has not or does not 'labour'. It speaks of detachment and distance and seems very far from other reports of the trenches in Flanders and the mud and rain and cold and desperate conditions. I can't think that the labourers on the front had it any easier than the soldiers, and the phrase seems misplaced and arrogant. I wrote it onto the drawing where it functions rather enigmatically, not being 'readable' or explanatory. It is a relic, an ideological trace from the past.

As the pan would move upwards, I needed some kind of detail or movement to hold attention. I added three that came from other sources than from the little photocopy from which I was working. The first detail was the puttees that most soldiers and men of the labour contingents wore that were tied on from ankle to knee. In this drawing I had them

winding up the man's legs as the camera (seemingly) started to move upwards. The second detail was a cup of instant noodles that I drew in half way up the paper and which I then animated following the instructions for use: the tinfoil curls back, water is poured in, steam rises up, chopsticks appear and the noodles are stirred. I chose this cup of instant noodles because, while working on the drawing, I heard an item on BBC World radio about the death the previous day of Momofuku Ando - the man who had invented instant noodles in the 1950s and single-handedly changed eating patterns in China.

For the film viewer the pan moves upwards at such a rate that there are few, unfortunately, who will notice the noodle cup and the actions around it. It is difficult, when drawing and filming, to anticipate the speed of a pan. I can work out how many seconds the pan will take but not always if that is long enough for the audio-viewer to perceive all that is happening in the drawing. Due to the speed I don't

think this particular detail works in the film. The remnants of the action are perceivable in the drawing.

The third action that I added during the pan upwards was concentrated around the leather shoulder bag of the man. I drew a rolled document emerging and unrolling to show sets of finger prints. This document refers to the contract that volunteers 'signed' with 48 fingerprints. It is based on an account I read but I was not able to see such a document. In a way, then, it is both an archival and a narrative element. Or rather, it is taking an element out of the archive and transforming it into a narrative fragment.

*Grinning Orientals* is not a portrait in the sense that I want the viewer to know this specific man. While I do want to stress particularities of his clothing and his physical appearance, I am not concerned with his emotional state, personality, attitude or anything like that. Not that I could know any of this any way. The man that I want to draw is a vehicle for an idea.



### ***P.O.W.***

From the beginning I wanted to make a series of large full-length portraits of men who laboured in the First World War. In the end I made just these two, *P.O.W.* (Prisoner of War) and *Grinning Orientals*. They were really time-consuming drawings and I worked on each of them for more than a month.

I found this man, described as a Turko (which was understood at the time to mean a North African), in a photograph of a group of prisoners-of-war held by the German army. I wanted this figure to reflect some of the men who were involved in the Mendi disaster and so I had his face transform into a series of other

faces. Rev. Wauchope's face is there (with the white priest's collar), Alfred Tshite, a Mendi survivor, is there. An Australian soldier, unrelated to the Mendi, is also included. The last face is fictional.

I have a way of working where I block in the general shape of the figure or object that I am drawing and then work on and animate just a part of the drawing. You can see this in the studio photographs of the *P.O.W.* I worked on his head first - transforming his face into the different portraits. Then I worked on the food bowl in his hand and those areas around the bowl that would be in camera view. Lastly I drew the medals attached to his shoulder. Only when the animation was finished did I return to and finish the rest of the drawing.

The two medals are of a Springbok - the national symbol of South Africa (though there never was a springbok medal) - and the King George medal issued to all who contributed in the war (though these were never issued to the men of the South African Native Labour Contingent).



### ***Brotherhood and Empire***

The paper airplane from the previous drawing flies towards the empty typewriter, dives in behind the roller and re-emerges as a poster that advertises a talk by Solomon T. Plaatje in London July 1914. The poster is drawn from a combination of two different posters advertising Plaatje's public appearances, the other being from 1921. The drawn face of Plaatje started out as reproduction of his face on the earlier poster, but ended up as the face on the later one. Drawing the finer details of a face on such a small scale, in charcoal, is not so easy and at one stage the face was going so horribly wrong

that I switched to drawing the other photograph as a solution. An alert viewer might see it switching from the one to the other.

A problem I sometimes have in making the films is the discrepancy between the slowness of the drawing process (at times up to fifteen minutes for a change that is almost imperceptible) and the speed of the moving film (25 frames per second), so that I often misjudge how long I need to hold an image before transforming it further. Because I am seeing a word or an image for hours or days as I am drawing it, I tend to think that the camera has 'seen' it that long too -or at least for long enough. While I do keep a log book in which I note every frame recorded so as to be able to calculate how long a sequence or shot will be, I find I regularly underestimate the timing.

I had this problem in this drawing. As the paper rose up out of the typewriter I wrote on it the single word 'Empire' and I wanted this word to linger a while before

the rest of the text and images appeared. I wanted it to read ambiguously as in, is it about present-day Empire (as explored by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in their book of the same name) or is it about the colonial-era notion of Empire - the British Empire? When the footage returned from the lab it was clear that the word was only visible for a split second before the other words on the poster appear -which I don't think allows enough time for the play on the word. I would be interested to see the results of the eye-tracking experiment on the film here, and to see if viewers are able to fix on this word.

Beyond the word Empire, the information on the poster is important for its introduction of a person whose writings were instrumental in the forming of my ideological position on the issues around which the film circles.

Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* (1916) was written in response to the imposition of the 1913 Land Act in South Africa that denied citizen's rights and land-

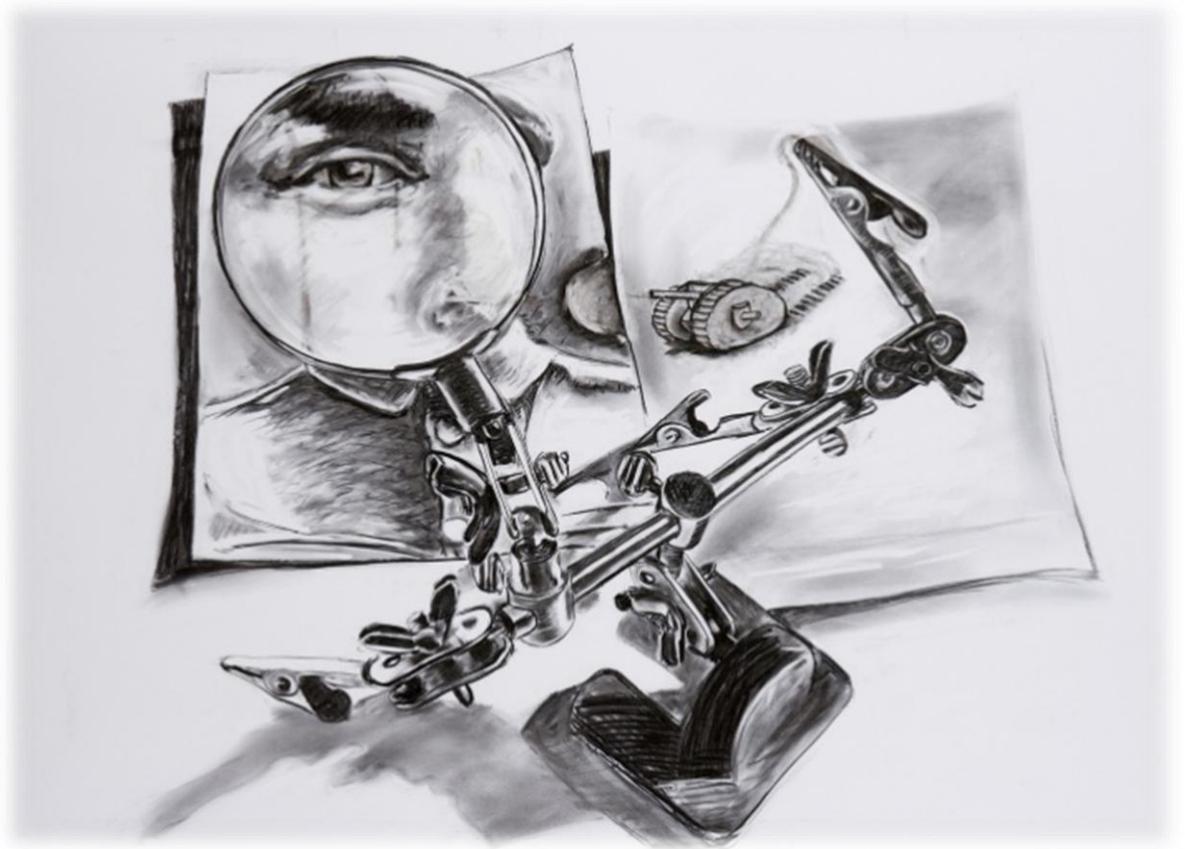
ownership to black South Africans in the greater part of the country.

The book also deals with the frustrated efforts of many black South Africans to play their part in defending the Empire during the war. Plaatje argues that although white men liked to think that it was a white man's war, it did in fact involve more than white men alone, and he chronicles the efforts of black men and women to play their part in the defense of the Empire. He writes of the lack of recognition that those who were involved were given:

It would seem that the South African Government is so deeply in love with the Natives that they are scrupulously careful lest the Natives should singe one hair in the present struggle, and that white men alone may shoot and kill each other. But, in point of fact, black men ARE required by the Union Government to proceed to the front as Government wagon drivers, driving provisions and ammunition wagons, and acting as orderlies to the white burgher. In these capacities they are

exposed to all the risks and horrors of the war, yet even if they are shot, they must not, under any circumstances, be mentioned in the casualty lists, nor must they carry arms, lest their behavior should merit recognition; their heroic deeds and acts of valour must, on account of their colour not be recorded. These native drivers are classed with the transport mules, with this difference, that while the owner of the mule receives monetary compensation for each animal that falls on the battlefield, or is captured by the enemy, the Government's interest in the black driver ceases when he is killed.

The title of the film, *Off the Record*, reflects Plaatje's contention that there was a deliberate silence in the official record around the contributions of black men and women.



## ***Eye***

The rugby ball becomes Walter's eye. A cotton reel becomes a tank. As children we played with toktokkies - wooden cotton reels fitted with an elastic band and a pencil that moved slowly and laboriously like the Toktokkie beetle. Emptying out the cellar recently of a defunct tailoring business in Kortrijk we came across a drawer full of wooden cotton reels. New cotton reels are made of plastic and can't be made into toktokkies. With our newly found wooden supplies we started making these toys again.



## ***Tea***

Lady Grey is a town in the Eastern Cape province, close to the farm where Walter and Kate grew up. My grandfather was living there when he met Kate, my grandmother, and it is mentioned in the letters between them. Two generations earlier the Giddy's, who were Wesleyan missionaries, were living at a mission station nearby and, according to Agnes' Tales (a family history written by Kate's aunt), the daughters used to ride by horseback to Lady Grey for piano lessons. The town has long featured in my awareness of the area around the farm Lauriston where Kate and Walter grew up and which now belongs to my father.

On a visit to the supermarket here in Belgium, while working on the film, I noticed the Lady Grey tea on the shelf. I had tasted this tea before but at this juncture it seemed pertinent to do more than drink it and I decided to draw it. The flask and cup in the drawing are my own, used daily in my studio, and it seemed a good idea to combine the Twining's tea bag with these personal objects. Right through making the film I was aware that most of the imagery I was using and the documentation to which I was referring was about male experience in the War and I really wanted to try to find a way to introduce female experience or voice. In my family tea-making is a decidedly female occupation and it is through my memory of this that I wanted to approach the experiences of Kate, the transcriber of Walter's diary.

It worries me a little that the references embedded in this drawing are too hermetic. South African viewers will recognise the town name. Twining's tea drinkers will recognise the tea sort. Family

members will know that the farm on which Walter grew up is near Lady Grey. My children will recognise the flask. Only I know why they are combined. Does it matter? Will it be frustrating for viewers? In this drawing I think it could be. The way that I have set up the animation with the words 'Lady Grey' given prominence suggests that it is referring to something, but what that might be is not given. Perhaps it has become too personal.

Now when I look at the drawing I'm quite pleased with it, especially with the softness of that shadow thrown by the cup. Judging by the entries in my process journal at the time, though, I was concerned that the drawings were becoming facile and illustrative. The problem I was encountering was that I had stopped wanting to be critical - after all, of what was I to criticise Walter and Kate, or Plaatje - and as the film edged towards becoming a tribute to them the drawings started to lose their critical edge.

# **Bully Beef**

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**S.O.S**

**Banquet**

**Progress in the Colonies**

## **Bully Beef**

When I set about making this film I wanted to say something about lack of empathy. Growing up in South African I was always aware of the lack of empathy shown by whites to black South Africans. At school we learnt of the struggles of Afrikaners for self-rule in what they felt was their homeland, of how Afrikaner women and children were imprisoned in concentration camps by the British, and of how those women and children died in great numbers of starvation or related disease. I was always struck by the similarities in the struggles of Afrikaners

and black South Africans for equitable societies and self-rule, and continue to puzzle over how the Afrikaners, finally in a position of power could feel no empathy for the struggle of their disenfranchised black countrymen and women. How much harsher they were against black resistance than the British had ever been against Afrikaner resistance.

The analogy can be made with the Israelis too. Few will deny how European Jewry suffered in the 1930s and 40s, and yet the survivors of the horrors of German concentration camps have colonised a territory to which they had no valid claim, have evicted the native population to walled ghetto's and refugee camps bordering this now exclusively Jewish state, and recreated, for those they deemed to be of less worth than themselves, many of the conditions of their own earlier suffering. Even as this lack of empathy is ignored Jewish memories of their suffering in the Holocaust continue to be a growth industry.

One more analogy about a lack of empathy, this time the one that is featured in the films. In 1914 Germany invaded 'little' Belgium. Her allies saw her suffering and came to her rescue. It took four years and over forty different nations or ethnic groups – many of the latter colonised to the Allied nations - to hold the German imperialists at bay. The memory of that trauma is still vivid, it seems. Tourism to sites of battle in the First World War is at an all-time high. Daily busloads of schoolchildren are led around the museums and Commonwealth graveyards in Ieper and the Westhoek. More books are being published in Belgium on the First World War than ever before.

There is, in contrast, a dearth of publishing that investigates memories of another invasion concerning the Belgians that occurred only thirty years previous to 1914. Many of the officers and generals honoured for their roles in defending Belgium in the First World War had practised their trade not in Europe but in

the acquisition, control and exploitation of a piece of land eighty times the size of the motherland, the Congo Free State.

Belgium did to the Congo what Germany was hoping to do to Belgium and other parts of Western Europe. Repelling the German invader with the help of her allies, Belgium continued its invasion of the Congo for a further forty years.

*Bully Beef* is the collective title of three short films: *S.O.S. (Save our Souls)*, *Banquet* and *Progress in the Colonies*.

## **Save Our Souls**

S.O.S. explores superstition and rumour in times of crisis. Crises precipitated by the uncertainties and anxieties of war or colonisation.





## **Banquet**

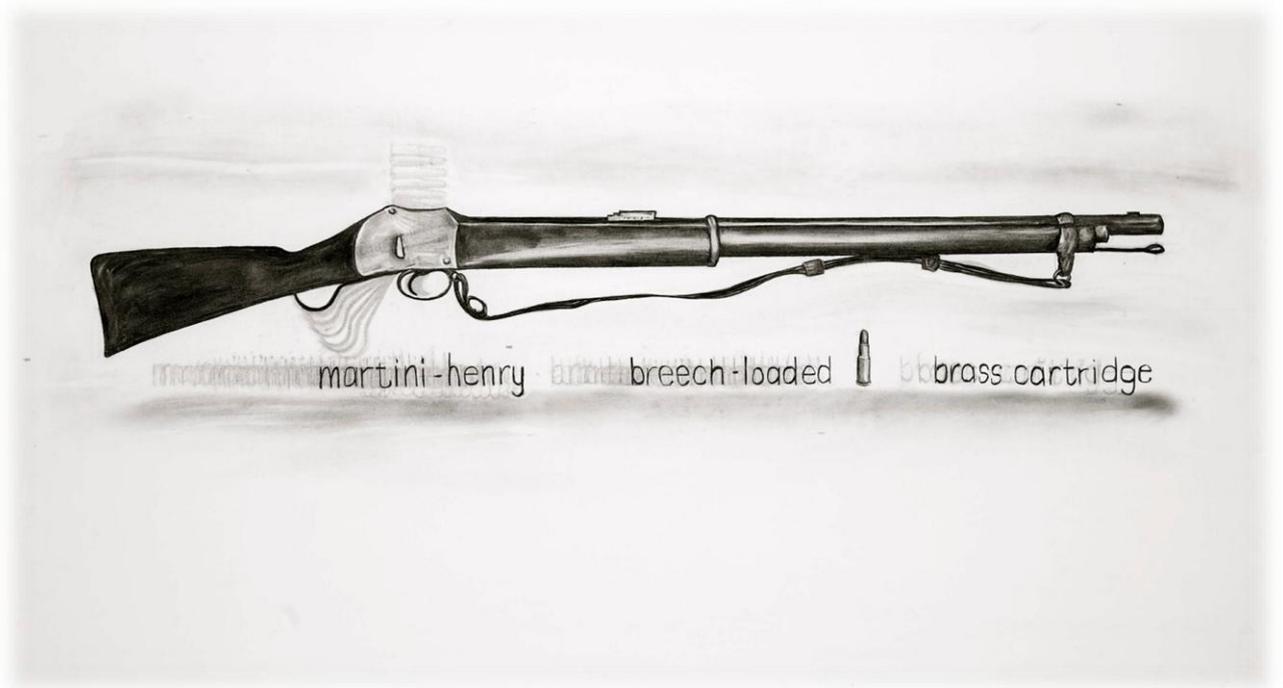
Banquet is set at the museum of Central Africa at Tervuren and makes connections between histories seldom viewed in the same frame. Colonial history and European history are not separate histories. They are intimately connected.

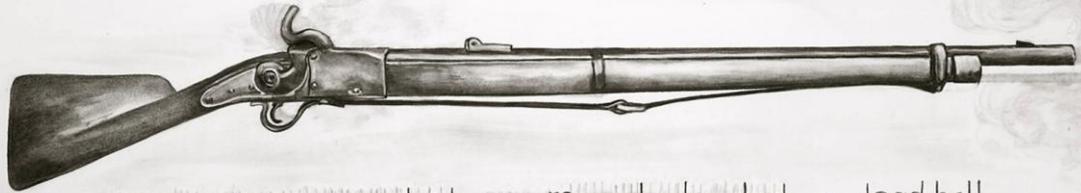




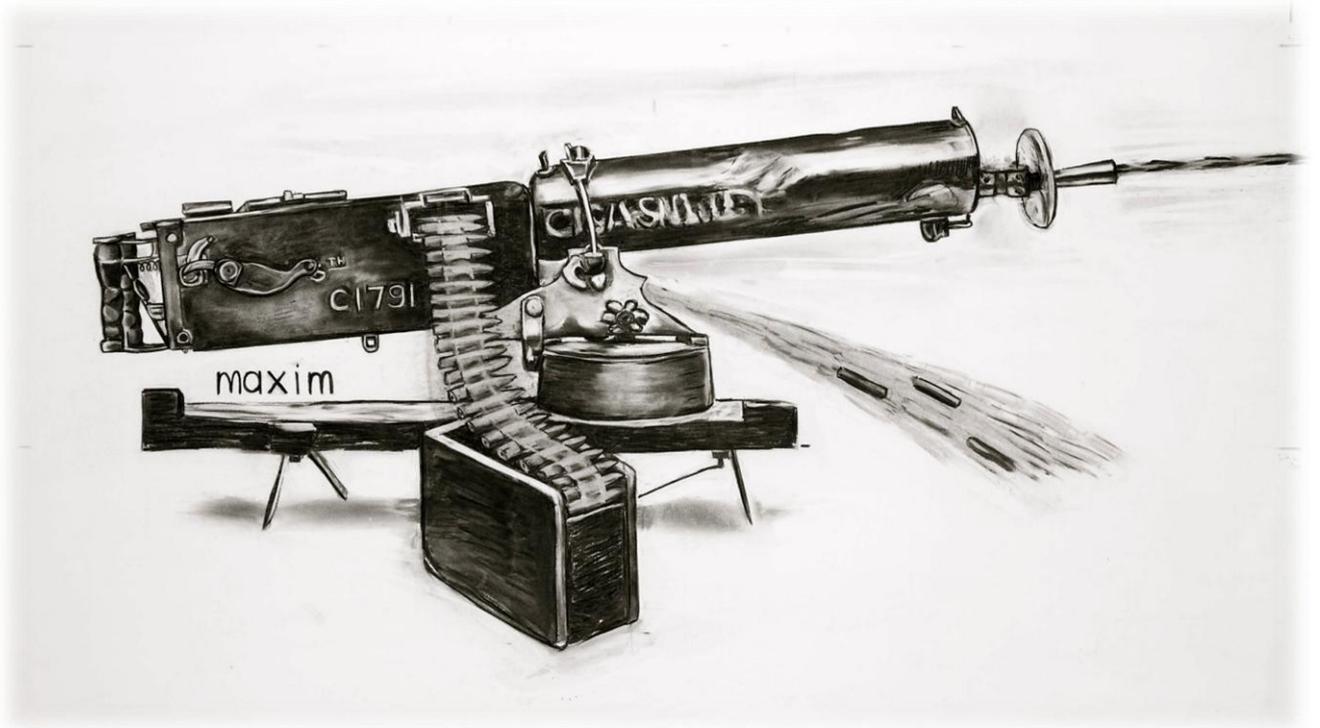
**Progress in the Colonies :  
A technological history of colonialism**

Idea for this set of drawings came from Sven Lindqvist's book 'Exterminate the Brutes' in which he undermines the idea of the 'civilising mission' with the facts about the technological development of weapons that made it possible for Europe to conquer and control large parts of Africa.





musket • muzzle-loaded • lead ball





# Taste the World

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### ***Taste the World***

*Taste the World* explores tourism as a form of neo-colonialism. In structure the film is a parody of the pastoral convention. This literary and secular form of travel describes a journey from a familiar place (home or court), to the 'wilderness' (a rural, simpler, primeval setting) and then the return home, the traveller transformed by his/her experience. The familiar place in the film is the 'West', with its self-certainties of its own 'modernity', the 'wilderness' is that projected onto a 'pre-modern' 'Third World'.

The title of the film is taken from a tourist brochure in which European travellers are exhorted to '*taste the world*'. The subtext of the advertisement is that the world is out there for 'you' - for the 'you' of the discerning connoisseur, the 'you' of the Eurostocrat with excess leisure-time. Borderless, this 'Third' world is presented as a consumer domain of unlimited choice: culinary, sexual, economic, cultural.

As is reflected in the title, the film is concerned with consumption. The film begins and ends with a meal. The first images are of a table laden with food - not a well-planned gastronomic dinner but an unhappy combination of items: raw sushi and fried egg and bacon, jiffy-wrapped pig's trotters and half-dead fish. At the end of the film the same table setting appears with the remnants of the meal removed. In their place are souvenir objects collected on the journey: small sculptured African heads, playing cards picturing San hunters and other 'fauna', and snapshots of 'encounters' with local

people. These souvenirs refer to a different kind of consumption, a touristic consumption of other cultures.

Intercut into the narrative, and disturbing the idyll of the pastoral form, is a reference to the journey and homecoming of Sarah Baartman, the South African Khoi woman displayed in Europe in the 18th century as an example of 'primitive' sexuality. She died in Paris and parts of her body were bottled and displayed in the Museum of Man. In 2003 her remains were finally repatriated to SA and she was buried.

In colonial discourse, geographical distance across space is figured as historical difference across time. Imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. The return journey to Europe, in contrast, traces the evolutionary logic of historical progress. Tourist advertisements for journeys to the 'Third World' still rehearse this logic. The past it seems is still reachable geographically and European

tourism to Africa continues to be inscribed as a journey into the 'living' past.

The narrative in the film details a journey from 'modernity' to 'premodernity' and back. I have used a series of clocks to indicate the direction that time is moving: from digital to analogue and a sundial and then reversed. In this way I am hoping to draw attention to the manner in which Europe prefers to deny non-Europe 'modernity'. The film places 'the wilderness' - pictured as both desert and forest - at the centre of the film and as a metaphor of timelessness. To emphasize that it is a metaphor, I have set the 'wilderness' beyond two small wall openings above which is placed a sign that exhorts the tourist to 'take your picture here'. This sign also emphasizes the degree to which tourists are 'directed' along well worn routes. The words 'out of the ordinary' and 'home from home' refer to the contradictions of tourism that seek to both create difference and establish sameness.

While the film criticizes neo-colonial tourism from Europe to the 'Third World', it takes care to not to draw a sharp division between Europe and non-Europe. Deliberately many of the 'others' who are 'collected' in the film are found within Europe – Jews and trans-gendered people such as the bearded lady, for instance.

## Colophon

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