P O S T I N G S

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Drawing on the Past
Implicit : Explicit : Complicit

Dissertation presented to obtain the degree of
Doctor in the Arts
by Wendy Morris

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Introduction

The *Postings* are a set of thought-pieces written weekly over the period of a year. Each week they were printed out in six-fold, tucked into little manila-brown envelopes and posted to recipients in three countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and South Africa. A day or two later one of those envelopes would arrive back at my address, postmarked and a little bruised around the edges, and would join those from earlier weeks in a box on the desk. By the end of December there was a pile of brown envelopes, unopened, that I tied together with string. It is a work of words comprising fifty-two sealed thought-pieces.

These thought-pieces are reflections on the making of six short films. Two of the films, *Bully Beef* and *Off the Record*, were made prior to the *Postings* being written. The other four make up the *Salvation* cycle and were still in production at the time of writing. A number of the thought-pieces reflect on decisions made in the earlier two films, others are considerations of issues in the making of the more recent films.

The six films range in length from two to ten minutes. They are made by filming, altering and re-filming charcoal drawings. The process is slow, taking approximately two years to make a five minute film. The films are built up drawing by drawing, idea by idea. There is no story-board or scenario. Rather, the animated sequences are ordered and re-ordered as the work progresses. At the finish there is a black and white film and approximately twenty large drawings that have functioned as sequences in the film. Each of these drawing bears traces of an animation process. Some turn out to be drawings that can be shown as independent works, others serve the narrative of the film but are not interesting as drawings in themselves. Some drawings are erased in the process of animation.

The films and the drawings, this work of writing that is the *Postings*, and the exhibition *Implicit:Explicit:Complicit* make up a practice-based doctorate in the arts, the full title of which is *Drawing on the Past. Implicit:Explicit:Complicit*.

Prior to starting on the doctorate I had made two short films, *A Royal Hunger* (2002) and *Taste the World* (2005). The first referred to Leopold II and his 'consumption' of the Congo Free State, that in certain institutions of Belgium was still being told as a story of heroism and moral achievement. *Taste the World* referred to

the ‘consumption’ of an Africa assumed to be ‘out of time’ by modern European travellers. Both films were made whilst living in Belgium and were critical of colonial and neo-colonial attitudes towards Africa. And all the while that I was making these films, and delivering this criticism, I was keenly aware that my own history as a South African of settler origins put me in a rather delicate position as a critic of colonial and neo-colonial attitudes of another country. I felt that this position needed to be examined and that my films needed to engage more rigorously with my own personal relationship to and role in these histories. It was this desire that resulted in the setting out of the project *Drawing on the Past*.

The *Postings* emerged out of experiments with different kinds of writing over the last six years. Since making *Bully Beef* I have been keeping a process journal in which I make notes on the different stages and aspects of my work: the drawing, the filming, and the historical research. This process journal, or studio notebook, functions as a mental space in which I can explore ideas for a single drawing or for the entire film. It allows me to hold the various elements of the project together, something very necessary given the time it takes to make a film. It is a space within which the often opposing demands of historical or ideological content and visual or poetic form can be thought about in order to keep them in some kind of balance. It becomes, retrospectively, a repository and resource of ideas generated in the process of making each film.

The journal writings are notes to myself, a form of inner monologue. The *Postings* were to be of another order, a ‘second-order’ kind of writing, dependant on and drawing from the journal notes but synthesised into a different register.

I had already experimented with a form of ‘second-order’ writing, based on entries in the process journal, in a book I made for an exhibition of *Off the Record* in the Museum M in Leuven. Called *Postscripts*, this book consists of short written pieces on each of the twenty-four drawings that make up that film. The pieces were composed by synthesising entries that had been made in the journal during the process of making the film. Directed now towards a reader, they were still written in the informal, personal tone of the journal entries.

This more informal and personal way of writing had a precedent in yet an earlier piece. This was an essay in which I sought to examine the relationship between my practice of animating drawings into short films and that of William Kentridge, the artist who developed this method of film-making. This piece of writing began with a

notebook entitled *Conversations with William* in which, over a period of six months, I considered every aspect of the relationship between his work and mine. The ways in which the work and process was similar, the ways in which they differed. Quite quickly the differences in our practices came to the fore. And then I wrote the essay *Anxieties of Influence: Imitating Kentridge*[1]. The writing of this piece was different to anything I had written earlier. I discussed the work of another artist but from the position of my work. I positioned myself - something I hadn't done in earlier writings. This writing was self-reflexive. It entertained doubt and uncertainty. It was also quite personal. I risked something by writing it – which I hadn't done previously. Because it was in essence a defence of my appropriation of Kentridge's technique, by writing it I was opening myself up to criticism. But I was also taking possible criticisms in hand by anticipating them and presenting an argument in my favour.

The thought-pieces that make up the *Postings* are a further development on both this essay and the *Postscripts*. From the *Postscripts* came the practice of writing short pieces on one small area of activity, such as on one drawing, and in an informal and a-scientific manner. From the *Imitating Kentridge* essay came a manner of writing that is personal, is positioned and is an attempt to understand an issue more deeply. Both are 'second-order' writings that rely on the resource of the journals. The *Postings*, however, were to have a different focus to either of these. It was to be a work of writing that communicated the research of the last six years, research that filled the thirty-odd notebooks and five process journals that I had been keeping. I had no interest in attempting to form this research into a set of coherent arguments and the chapter structure of a dissertation. I wanted a kind of writing that was not so much *about* an artistic practice as it was *part* of that practice.

It was important too that this writing co-exist with the drawings and the films. So that 'the work' becomes all of these things in combination – films, drawings, writings and documentation. The written pieces needed to be closer to the way I create the films where drawings are made not in 'narrative' order but as the impulse and research dictate. The animated sequences then accumulate and are ordered and re-ordered until they gel into a desired shape. The format of thought-pieces could allow for a similar piece-by-piece construction. Distillations of thoughts and ideas drawn from the journals could be written weekly, with the accumulated pieces slowly gelling into a larger work.

Each thought-piece was conceived of as an independent piece that would connect – at times obliquely, at other times more directly - to other thought pieces. This form would allow for fluidity, room for digression, and accumulative construction, all features of the animated sequences. One difference, though, was that the chronology of the written pieces would be fixed by the order in which they were written. There would be no pre-determined scheme beyond the decision that there would be fifty-two pieces. There were clusters of subjects that I wanted to approach, but what was written each week was decided during that week. This open structure was to allow for developments within the writing.

As the work progressed, the form and tone of the pieces began to change. In the earlier months there was a concern to deal with more analytical issues – on how to position myself towards the histories with which I wanted to engage, on how to characterise the nature of my work, on what my films borrow from different genres. These were subjects and concerns that I had been carrying with me for awhile and which related mostly to the two films already made, *Off the Record* and *Bully Beef*. Simultaneous to this writing I was drawing, researching, and scribbling in my journals on the four new films that I was making. Gradually these more present concerns started to filter in. *Postings 22: Sound in Sacred Spaces* is the first of these pieces that are less analytical or theoretical and more personal, more prose-like and more immediate. Written during the making of a film and not after it was finished, these newer pieces weren't explanation or reflection on something that had gone before. They were *of* the process and in the present. At times they even seemed to drive the process.

Something else was beginning to emerge in the *Postings* too, something that reflected changes occurring in my practice. This was a growing engagement with personal histories, with explorations of ego-documents and unpublished family narratives. Initially these were used as a lens through which to explore larger histories, but more and more these diaries, letters and family chronicles were prompting explorations into my own past. Problems of distance and engagement become less of an issue than they were at the outset of the doctoral project. Three of the last Postings, 49, 50 and 51, explore this shift, over six years, towards a more engaged, even complicit position.

The *Postings* are published in the order in which they were written. There are clusters of thought-pieces that approach similar subjects or films but these do not

necessarily follow on from each other. For the reader who would like to read other pieces within the same cluster there is a number given at the end of a thought-piece indicating that there is another one on a similar subject. The Table of Contents goes some way to indicating groupings too. Broadly, these clusters would divide into those pieces that explore genre and attempts to characterise my work, those concerned with art as a form of history-work, those that explore ideas of drawing and animation, and those relating to the *Salvation* cycle of films.

Acknowledgments

My heartfelt thanks go to my five readers for their perseverance in reading the *Postings.*

Thanks especially to my promoter Prof. Dr. Hilde Van Gelder for her constructive support not only in regard to the *Postings* but for the seven years that she has guided me in this doctorate. Her invitation to publish three of the *Postings* on her *blog invité* at Jeu de Paume came as valuable confirmation, midway in the process, that the thought-pieces were communicable.

And to Prof. Dr. Johan Wagemans, for his close reading of the *Postings* and his positive, questioning, and insightful comments on each of them. Our collaboration in Parallellepipeda resulted in many discussions about artistic practice and convinced me that the articulation of practice by artists could be of interest to practitioners and non-practitioners alike.

To Nanda Janssen for the letters she sent me in return, in white envelopes and blue logo, with their hard questions and positive comments. Thanks to her too for the article she wrote for *Kunstbeeld* on artists who correspond, a wonderful spin-off of the *Postings*.

To Paul Willemsen for being a silent reader.

And to my father, John Morris, for reading parts of Walter's diary to me and thereby setting me off on a journey into the past through the letters, chronicles and diaries of family. The *Postings* are letters too, and a form of correspondence between us in the present. They are intended as a contemporary contribution to those archives.

Postings 01

This is the first of fifty-two planned thought pieces that will make up Postings. Weekly, between January and December of 2011, I will be sending a thought piece to six addressees. One copy will go to myself and this copy will not be opened but kept as a collection of thought pieces sealed in fifty-two post-marked envelopes. Five copies will be posted to people whose opinions I value. Not wanting to burden them with the necessity of response I make it clear that there is no expectation on my part that they read all the postings, never mind that they respond to them. They are quite free to file them in the unopened envelopes in the same way that I shall be doing. One of those weekly copies will be going to South Africa to my father. Since I left the country in the mid 1990s I have been sending back instances of my work: invitations to exhibitions, articles, catalogues, images and writings. The thought pieces will continue this practice.

In this, the last full year of preparation for a doctorate in the arts, I intend not only to finish drawing the film *Salvation*, but to bring together all my writings of the last five years into a new work. The thought pieces that make up these *Postings* will be distillations of thoughts and ideas drawn from my journals, from articles I have written and from presentations that I have given. Some will be no longer than a page, others will be more extensive. Each will be an independent piece that connects - obliquely at times, more directly at others - to other thought pieces.

Sending thought pieces to recipients with the instruction that they are under no obligation to read them raises the question of purpose. Why take the trouble to write and send these pieces if there is the possibility that they will not be read? My first thought was of posting the thought pieces to myself. The idea of breaking the task of writing into weekly instalments has the appeal of a piece-by-piece approach. Instead of attempting to write a few extensive, linear essays in which I try to connect all the issues that have been occupying my thoughts these last five years, I can consider one issue a week. The order in which the pieces are written is open. I can digress to other subjects, something not as easily accommodated in the format of an article or chapters of a thesis. In the form of thought pieces the manner of writing more closely mirrors my practice of journal entries that move fluidly between subjects. Sending them only to myself, however, has two possible shortcomings. For one thing, who would notice

if I didn't send any for a few weeks? For another, and more importantly, the point of this activity of writing is to communicate. Addressing my thoughts to a reader requires that I focus the pieces in a way that is communicable. I already write endlessly to myself, my journals are evidence of that. The point here is to make something else of those journal entries.

I have to admit that part of the appeal of committing myself to writing fifty-two postings in one year is the element of challenge in the undertaking. Will I be able to keep it up? It is a project of some proportion, and by stating that I will be sending the thought pieces to others beyond myself is to create an expectation that I am then obliged to fulfil.

The Postings are conceived of as an edition of six copies. My intention is to have my copies, the fifty-two unopened envelopes, as one of the works on the exhibition of this doctoral project, *Implicit:Explicit:Complicit,* in Leuven in 2013.

Wendy Morris
January 2011

Postings 02

Footnote

{Figure 1: *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition}

The Norwegian writer Dag Solstad published a work in 2006 entitled *Armand V. Footnotes to an unexcavated novel*. Two years earlier the American writer Mark Dunn wrote *Ibid: A Life*, a set of footnotes for a larger and non-existent biography. Both novels exist in the footnotes alone.

When I entitled the documentation wall exhibited in the *Parallellepipeda* and *Far from Kimberley* exhibitions, as *Footnote*, I was not going as far as Salstad or Dunn in suggesting that this work stood on its own. This footnote depends upon a 'text' and that text is the film *Off the Record*. But I was playing with the idea of footnotes liberated from their usual academic function as concise, explanatory notes. I did want to suggest that the archive of source images, drawing book sketches, process journal notes and extracts from diaries and works by others that made up the wall of documents, could function as footnotes to the film.

Off the Record is a five minute film that covers a two year work period and is a sedimentation of all the ideas, reading, researching, looking, that I did in this period. It is a compression of these ideas into a new work and into a different register. But it is also a reduction that excludes from sight that rich network of stories, images, anecdotes, books, and viewpoints out of which the drawings and the film emerged. I had previously brought some of these references into exhibitions in the form of a catalogue essay or, in a limited way, in the form of newspaper cuttings, photographs and photocopies displayed with the film. This was very selective however, in the sense of concise 'footnotes' that did not disrupt the reading of the main 'text'. With the exhibiting of the documentation wall I wanted to go much further. I wanted to create a footnote that was larger physically than the projected film, that was inclusive, and that went some way to revealing the thickness of the material out of which the film emerges.

There was another aspect to it too. In debates about the validity of history on film within professional history writing circles, one of the criticisms has been that in films there are no references and that the viewer cannot know which reading has influenced the filmmaker's ideological stance. Specific sourcing, additional

information, other people's ideas on the subject, and contradictory readings are simply left unaccounted. The filmmaker Jill Godmilow countered this by including two verbal footnotes into her experimental documentary *Far from Poland*. They fitted, she suggested, as the film was structured as a form of essay. She included them by having the performer stop and wait while an off-camera voice filled in some background details[2].

One of the reasons for calling the documentation wall *Footnote*, then, was to encourage and allow the viewer to trace the genealogy of a drawing and to find the sources for the ideas. To counter the opacity of the filmed work, I liked the idea of exposing the sources for scrutiny. It was an acknowledgment too of the interpretive intentions of the film. The variety of documents included – from little sketches of how a drawing might develop, to notes that reveal a frustration at the speed of the animation, to historical research – was also intended to reveal the interconnectedness of ideological issues with issues of form.

Exposing influences to scrutiny is not a common impulse amongst artists. Erik Andersson writes of his experience of working on a project together with artists and social scientists and compares their methodologies and approaches[3]. One of the differences he describes is in their use of references. Artists, he suggests, tend to use references to associate themselves with artistic traditions, agendas or paradigms. Their references demonstrate an inspiration in terms of art, knowledge or social forces, but without making explicit their active adherence to or disassociation from a particular theory. There seems to be no expectation on the part of the artist to clarify the relation of her work to the referred theory, tradition or paradigm. These clarifications have until recently been understood to be the work of the critic, researcher or art literate audience. In Andersson's experience, artistic references don't hold the same kinds of obligations as academic ones. In the latter, and especially in those of scientists, references to theories or research by others do come with an obligation – that of having understood the theory or empirical material so as to be able to treat it fairly and to use it in a way that does not thwart its meaning.

{Figure 2: *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition}
{Figure 3: detail *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition}

When making *Off the Record* I was wanting to create a work that was both essayistic and discursive. In South Africa, since the first democratic elections of 1994,

there have been debates about the purpose of history in the school curriculum. For many years it was considered to be too divisive an issue and was thus eliminated as a school subject. Later it was reintroduced as a neoliberal program emphasizing heritage over history. Alongside, and despite, these debates there has been a major project of excavation of the histories of those previously relegated to the margins. It was important to me to make a work that not only stood on its own as a visual work, but was also aware of being a part of these debates among South African historians. To this end *Footnote* plays a role in locating the work within these discourses.

→ 05 (Genre, *Off the Record*)

Postings 03
Between intention and result

Ten years ago I read Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate all the Brutes*, in which he searches through works of European literature, anthropology and the sciences for the source of the expression that is the book's title. It is with this phrase that Joseph Conrad, in the novel *Heart of Darkness*, has the character Kurtz end his report on the civilizing task of the white man in Africa[4]. Reading Adam Hochschild's, *The Ghost of Leopold II*, I again came across this kind of phrase. In this instance it was in a letter written by a Belgian colonial agent working in the Crown Domain of the Congo Free State. Jules Jacques orders a subordinate to inform the natives that if they are caught cutting through the rubber vines to extract the rubber - thereby killing the vines, instead of merely tapping them as they were required to do - then he 'will exterminate them to the last man'[5]. The author, Hochschild, adds: "Conrad was not making much up when he had Mr Kurtz scrawl the infamous line "Exterminate all the brutes!". Judging from Lindqvist's investigations into racial attitudes of the 19th century, and Hochschild's examination of circumstances in the Congo Free State, such European convictions about the expendability of African lives were horribly commonplace.

There was something else that caught my attention. It was a footnote in Hochschild's book on Jules Jacques. In it he notes that Jacques later won glory in World War I, and today has a statue of himself in the main square of Diksmuide, Belgium[6]. That interested me because it connected the colonization of the Congo and the First World War, two 'events' of major importance in Belgian history that are

seldom connected, seldom seen as being in the same historical trajectory. So I visited the square in Diksmuide and discovered an immense public statue of Baron Jules Jacques de Dixmuide. The larger than life figure of Jacques, in greatcoat and army helmet, towers above four life-sized figures placed on the four corners of the plinth that supports him. Three of these figures are soldiers, the fourth is an African slave clutching his broken shackles and looking up towards Jacques. Inscribed on the plinth near the African figure is the town name of M'Pala and a date, 1892, a reference to the 'pioneering' work of Jacques in supposedly freeing the population from the Arab slave trade. Given the citation from the letter of Jacques - used by Edward Morel in his campaign to draw attention to the oppressive conditions in the Congo Free State[7] - Jacques' anti-slavery credentials have long been in question. His statue in Diksmuide has been defaced with blue paint and is the site of yearly demonstrations by Flemish nationalists who object to this French-speaking Belgian having been awarded the title of 'Baron de Dixmuide', and having his statue placed on the square that was annually the starting point of a march of the Flemish movement.

{Figure 4: Statue of Jules Jacques in Diksmuide.}
{Figure 5: Statue of Jules Jacques in Diksmuide.}

Standing on that square in Diksmuide the idea for the film *Bully Beef* took shape. In the person of Jules Jacques I had a figure linking the two histories, and controversially so. Villain in the Congo - according to Morel and Hochschild, hero in the First World War - according to any Belgian website that pops up when you type in his name[8]. Seldom is any link made in Belgian historical writing or research, that the country has been both victim of an attempted colonization (by Germany) and perpetrator of a colonization (of the Congo). Belgium's invasion and control of the Congo is still portrayed here as an act of civilization, a moral crusade against Arab slavery. Generally expunged from the story is any hint of the violence it entailed. In contrast, the Westhoek of Belgium, the site of trench warfare in the First Word War, is and has been since 1918, an immensely popular tourist destination. Preserved trenches, collections of weapons, stories and images of destruction abound. The museum In Flanders Fields is the centre of this 'memorial'. The violence of this attempted colonization and the resistance to it, is everywhere displayed. And the message is about the bravery of the resistance and the notion that such warring should never again

be repeated. Stories of the resistance of the Congolese to Belgian aggression, in contrast, are nowhere to be found in Belgium.

I wanted to make a work around this idea, and Jules Jacques was to be one of the axes upon which it hinged. By the time the film was finished, however, there was no sign of him in the work, beyond his name on an invitation to the banquet at Tervuren.

{Figure 6: Banquet invitation. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}

On that visit to Diksmuide I took a series of photographs of this statue, and in the year that followed I made a number of attempts at drawings referring to these photographs. None of them were any good. This difficulty is not uncommon. It can take a while to find an approach that works. In this case it was difficult to get a detailed image of the man who towered four metres above the ground, and it was difficult, in the horizontal format of the studio camera shot, to get him and the African figure in the same view. Whatever the reason, I wasn't able to find a way to draw him into the film. Given the importance of his presence as an axis in the film I still felt the need to include Jacques, and moved on to the idea that if I couldn't draw him, I could possibly film the statue on the market square and introduce this footage into the film.

The idea of filming the statue remained with me the entire period of making the film, and I convinced myself that I would eventually get to doing it. I never did. More recently I have begun to consider why that was so and how it relates to my resistance to including other visual registers than drawn animation into my work. Many artists switch medium in their work. Hans op de Beeck, for instance, has said that in his practice the idea comes first and then the consideration of the medium in which that work should take form[9]. In my practice the form that the work takes is integrally tied to the medium of drawing. So little can be planned beforehand because it is through the drawing that the ideas evolve. I have learnt that the best laid plans come unstuck when the drawing begins. It is for this reason that I seldom work out a 'scenario', and if I do (usually in order to communicate the intended project so as to get funding) I find it more of a hindrance than a help. If plans for the film are too focussed at an early stage then the making of the film resembles an execution of ideas – in both senses of a 'carrying out' and a 'killing off'. Rather, it is the search through drawing for the deepening of ideas, and the more nuanced understandings, that is the purpose of

making the work. Having an idea and executing it is of little interest to me. And it doesn't work. I simply don't draw.

Postings 04

On drawing as an act of possession

{Figure 7: Pictures of English Landscape. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}

In considering why I have an aversion to the introduction of live footage or photographed images into the films, I have come to think that it might also be to do with the issue of possession. An image or object photographed is source material to me. It is the prompt to make a drawing, but it isn't something fully interesting in itself. It doesn't hold my gaze in the same way that a drawing can. If it is an enigmatic or exciting photo - because it has potential to be drawn - then I want to make it my own. Which is why I say it is about possession. In drawing an object or image there is an act of ownership involved. I want to own it by knowing it in its every detail. I don't want an impression of it, nor an expression of it. When I decide to draw something it is because I want to savour it in all its detail, light and shadows, bumps and scratches.

It is of course more than visual possession alone, I want to connect to some objects in other ways too. Like the book, *Pictures of English Landscape*, that I have been drawing for the film *Orlando's Book*. It is an old book that is falling apart. The cover is curious, of red leather finely embossed with a complex pattern of gold lettering and floral flourishes. The engraved plates inside are briefly interesting but tend towards the nostalgic and sentimental. The same can be said for the poems accompanying them. Together they portray an idyllic farm life. My attraction to the book is not only in the way it looks and feels, but also for its connection to a particular past. The inscription in the book links it to Orlando, the uncle of my grandmother. It was awarded to him at graduation from Shaw College in King Williamstown, South Africa, in the 1860s, for being the 'boy most liked by his school fellows'. The award and the book are mentioned in *Agnes' Tales*[10], his sister's manuscript which is the text at the heart of the set of films upon which I am currently working. The book was later handed down to my grandmother - a sign that it was a valued item - and, later still, to myself. Because of all these connections it becomes a compelling object, and one that requires that it is drawn.

→ 07 (looking, drawing, animating)

Postings 05

Suspending disbelief

{Figure 8: Sarah Jane and her ten children. *Kin*. 2013.}
{Figure 9: The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy (Stand-in). *Kin*. 2013.}

There are two drawings in my studio. Both are large works, each a meter eighty high and one-fifty wide. The first is a drawing of a slightly larger-than-life woman wearing mid 19th century clothes. This is Sarah Jane Giddy, my great-great grandmother. 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 19th 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 my great-great grandmother, is drawn from a portrait of her found in the family archive in which 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 twenty-first 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 of overload. 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' drawing of a woman and her ten children, all named, and some with birth and death dates. It would be a family tree, a visual genealogy.

When this drawing was finished, and it pleased me, I decided to make a second drawing, this time of Mary Ann Currelly, the predecessor of my great-great grandmother, the first wife of the missionary Richard Giddy. This woman had seven

children before she died at the age of forty-four. But there was one small problem. I have no photo of Mary Ann (probably because I am not related to her and so no photographs 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 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 online. 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.

Even though I did not know the identity of this women, and it was not really important if the drawing was a good likeness of her or not, I still wanted it to resemble as closely as possible the photo from which I was working. It became a portrait of an unnamed woman standing in for a known woman for 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.

The drawings are about people who existed. 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. As in a fictional work this requires of the viewer-reader a certain suspension of disbelief. 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. Because I want the viewer to know that the second portrait is staged, I am calling it *The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy* with the appendage *(Stand-in*).

Given that there is certain fictionalization involved, can I still think of this work as documentary? Can history-work, documentary and fiction co-exist in one set of drawings, and if so, then how can this hybrid object be described?

So far this has been about the two drawings. But these drawings are also animations and are to be combined with other drawings and animations to make a film called *Kin*. Beyond historical or documentary data the intention is also to embed in this work a number of reflections, one of which concerns the transience of family, another the fallibility of the archive.

Sarah Jane Sephton, who became the second Mrs. Giddy, is talked about in positive terms by her daughter in *Agnes' Tales*. She married Richard Giddy less than a year after his first wife died and 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 produced ten children of her own. Photographs of her abound. Her predecessor, Mary Ann Currelly, features in the story only as an absence, as the mother who left behind seven young children. So far I have been unable to trace a single photograph of her. Reference to her does appear in the Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*[11] where she is described 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 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"

In *Agnes' Tales* she is an absence. Exactly what Mary Ann did to earn such notoriety is unknown – at least until someone goes to the Wesleyan archives in London to seek it out.

The objective is not to make a dramatic or emotive film. It is not to delve into the possible failings of one of the women. I do want to reflect, however, on the difference in the record between the first and the second wife and to convey this through the drawings. In the Comaroff book she is referred to as the *infamous M*rs. 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. Using

aesthetic means I want to suggest different kinds of relationships between the two women and their children, or rather between the recorded narratives about the women.

In reading the story that is *Agnes' Tales* I have been struck by a sense of transience in the description of a family or household that existed and then dispersed. It has made me reflect on the idea 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, who eat together. And that this family then dissipates and its members go on, if they so wish or if they are lucky enough, to form new family groups. It is a realisation that there is but a short moment in which a household holds together, and then it is no longer. It is pertinent to my own experience – of having moved a continent away from my parents and siblings, and of gradually becoming aware of the imminence of one of my own offspring's departure. This is one of the reflections that I want to convey in the film.

Postings 06

Thinking about documentary

Looking back over my journals I see that thinking about documentary started at the point when I was trying to define my work in relation to that of the South African artist William Kentridge. In an article entitled "Anxieties of Influence: Imitating Kentridge"[12], I described my approach as documentary to contrast it to his more literary, theatrical and art-historically aware approach. I chose the term because it seemed then to suggest an antithesis to the epic, the emotional and the humanistic – all terms used by others to describe the work of Kentridge. I wanted to draw attention to my rather more domestic ambitions of talking about the past and about memory through material culture, through reproductions of images and documents already in circulation. In that article I wrote:

"By animating my own work I started to see his work in a different light. For one thing I began to realise how male Kentridge's world-view was and how impossible it would be to make similar work as a female. At the heart of his work is the body, and it is frequently a male body, often with autobiographical traces, and on occasion naked. A naked self-portrait astride a gym-horse, or be-hatted listening to a megaphone would, in the female, incline towards the abject rather than the absurd. The female gendered body does not lend itself as easily to existential angst. Kentridge's

work is very much about a male universe. He consciously reflects on other work that has gone before, embedding his work in a veritable tradition of great men and their artistic or literary works. He attributes influence to such artists as Dürer, Max Beckmann, Georg Grosz, Goya and Honoré Daumier. He remakes parodies by William Hogarth, revisits such literary and dramatic works as Faustus, Woyzeck and Ubu Roi. He remoulds the work of dramatic, operatic and filmic forebears as various as Brecht, Mozart, Eisenstein and Georges Melies. Clearly he sees himself as belonging to this rich, artistic, European and all male tradition.

While it is impossible to be active intellectually in our time and not to have ingested, digested and regurgitated this tradition in some way, those who are not male, not European, and not Christian, may not feel as comfortable towards it. I know that I don't. Much as I can appreciate the richness of this cultural heritage, I do feel like a foster child towards it. Wanting to belong but realising my own, and others, exclusion. I don't recognise myself in it and as a result I avoid using it as framework in my visual work - in the way that Kentridge clearly feels he can. In my work I increasingly avoid references to literary, dramatic or artistic history. I take rather a *documentary* approach. My work is more concerned with a politics of memory, narrativized through interactions of objects of material culture – souvenirs, postcards, enigmatic or fetishized objects, diaries, archival photo's and so on. It is those objects that have been left over from a prior time, dislocated from their original or intended use, that interest me as vehicles for examining traces of the past in the present.

{…}

Reviewers have described Kentridge as having a 'robust humanist vision', as dealing with the 'larger human issues' and the 'nature of human emotion'. His art, it seems, is an 'art of elegy that explores the possibilities of poetry in contemporary society'. Whether or not he intends his art to be all of these things Kentridge's work is epic. It is dramatic and it is emotive. The sound-spaces by Phillip Miller that include those haunting tracks by musicians such as Alfred Makgalemele add to the films a sense of the tragic. The films have an emotional force. In contrast, and independent of my appreciation of this in Kentridge's work, in my drawing I try to avoid emotion, any sense of the tragic, dramatic, the universal or, God forbid, any 'humanist vision' (it is difficult for me to think of many female artists ever described as having a humanist vision anyway, with the exception of Kathe Kollwitz perhaps). When I am drawing and thinking a film I want it to be analytical, metaphoric. I want to draw comparisons.

I want to take images that are recognized and make them no longer recognizable, not by altering them but by setting them into relationships with other objects or images in ways that defamiliarize them. Though I am working with notions of history and memory I try to avoid any sense of the nostalgic or the melancholic. In Kentridge's work there is a distinct quality of nostalgia, which he suggests is unavoidable when working with out-dated objects, and it seems not to trouble him. I think my avoidance of it - as with my avoidance of an emotional register in my work - has to do with our very different approaches to narrative and fiction. Kentridge noted somewhere that he reads little and almost no non-fiction. I read a lot but seldom fiction. He describes his films as 'straight-forward stories', which of course they aren't, though they do carry enough of a narrative to make describing a set of characters and a turn of events possible. My work, on the other hand, is narrative only in the fact that one image morphs into or is edited into another – thereby creating a temporal progression that can be described as narrative. In my first film, *A Royal Hunger*, I did have a set of characters - Leopold II and those colonial agents honoured in the Museum at Tervuren - but even there the figures were drawn from existing busts, sculptures and plaques in the museum. I don't create characters in the way that Kentridge has. I only animate reproductions of people that are already in circulation. In *Taste the World*, Sarah Baartman is drawn from a sculpture by the South African artist Willie Bester. In *Bully Beef*, the men in the drawing *Three on a Match*, are drawn from a World War I photograph of three soldiers in wheelchairs. When people are in my films they are pictures of existing people who have already been photographed, painted, sculptured, placed on book covers, sent as postcards etc. It is an art of re-animation perhaps. My concern is with items that provoke memory, with official and unofficial recordings of history, with that which is maintained and honoured and with that which is quietly forgotten or relegated to the archive."

Though I was describing my approach as documentary, I was not thinking of my films as *being* documentaries. They might have used documents already in existence as the starting point for drawings but what happened within those drawings and the ways in which they were connected was very far from what I understood as documentary film. The intention in making the works was more essayistic, an attempt to reflect on current perceptions of certain events in the past. The items drawn in the films were vehicles through which to think about these issues. They were used metaphorically.

It came as a surprise, then, to hear myself being introduced in 2009, at the short film festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France, as a documentary filmmaker. It had not occurred to me that these non-narrative, associative films would be perceived as documentary. The very idea of drawing and animating seems so opposite to films that start from an existing 'reality'. My starting point is a sheet of white paper and everything that appears on that paper, no matter to what it refers, is an invention, a representation, an imaginative fiction.

It got me thinking about why my films might be considered as documentaries and what it was that I might have been unwittingly borrowing or sharing from the genre. I'm not even certain that documentaries should be viewed as a genre since the term is loosely used and made to refer to a very diverse group of films. Despite that, I think that we, viewers, do share some notion of what is being indicated. In the chapter 'Some Ways to Think about Documentary', Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane[13] argue that documentaries differ from other film types - such as narrative film or experimental avant-garde works - in four distinctive ways which they list in terms of their subject, their purpose, their form, and in the expectations they create in the viewer.

If we follow Ellis and McLane then documentaries are about actual people, places or events. They are about public rather than private matters. They may be investigating historical issues but they are usually set in the present.

Off the Record was about actual events - the sinking of the SS Mendi during the First World War, and about actual people - Walter Giddy and poet-priest Isaac Wauchope who volunteered for armed or labour service abroad. It concerned both public matters in the case of the sinking of the Mendi as well as more private matters in references to the personal war diary kept by a great uncle. The more personal elements were drawn from material traces out of the family archive, the more public from research into writings by those who experienced or witnessed the events, or by those who have since attempted to recover the events and their meanings. The point of the work was certainly to bring recognition to those who volunteered for the Native Labour Contingent but were never awarded their rightful medals, as well as to those who drowned aboard the Mendi, but were never commemorated officially. But there were other concerns too. There was a concern to think about different kinds of remembering – a prestigious monument at Delville Wood in Northern France for white South African soldiers who lost their lives, no monument or mention of black men who lost their lives. There was a concern to think about our entrenched practice in

South Africa of separating black and white history as though we had no reciprocal influence upon each other. The film sought not only to bring to the fore the role and experiences of these men in the First World War but also to find a means of merging memories of these two histories, to find crucial points of convergence.

On the issue of subject, then, I would concede that *Off the Record* could be considered a documentary.

The second way in which documentaries differ from other films, according to Ellis and McLane, is in their purpose. They are about recording social or cultural phenomena considered significant. They are intended to increase our understanding of, interest in, and sympathy for their subjects. They are about persuading the viewer to hold some attitude towards the subject, and they need to achieve something in addition to entertaining.

According to all of these criteria *Off the Record* is a documentary. It sought to record histories otherwise relegated to the margins and to make these known. It was intended to be persuasive, though within the limitations of its medium, and its intentions went beyond entertainment.

The form of the work that documentaries take is the third difference and here it is clear to see where not only my films but most of the documentaries shown on film festivals take a divergent path from the criteria set out by Ellis and McLane.

They state that the form of a documentary evolves from the formative process and is derived from and limited to actuality. In suggesting that the makers of documentaries limit themselves to extracting and arranging form from what already exists rather than making up content, they seem to be expressing one of the central assumptions of the genre: that a documentary film is more about content, subject matter and information than about form, style or pleasure. A documentary is expected to divulge *information* about reality and any use of expressive devices is supposed to be on the terms dictated by the subject matter.

{Figure 10: Knitting. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Clearly my films are created differently. Though I may start with a drawing that is fairly ‘true’ likeness of an object it is quickly absorbed into an animated universe that has a logic and appearance quite different from any experienced ‘reality’ or ‘actuality’. My images are ruthlessly manipulated and there is no desire whatever to

limit them to associations that already exist. The intention is to work the images to such an extent that they lose their familiarity. The language is exaggerated, metaphoric, compressed. The form can be likened to that of a poem. Not some supposedly transparent vehicle that carries the content, form is meshed with content, and it is through this meshing that meanings can be generated in my films.

The final difference concerns audience expectation: the viewer of a documentary responds not so much to the artist or filmmaker as to the subject matter. Not in my films. Through the constant transformation of images, content and form are intertwined to the degree that the viewer is unable, initially, to separate the one from the other. The films are not easily 'read', and certainly not in a single viewing at a film festival. When shown in a gallery or museum, looped, and with the written *Postscripts* or wall of *Footnotes*, the different subjects of the film will eventually emerge, but there, in an art space, viewers' expectations are seldom about seeing a documentary. The expectation in the art museum is of seeing the work of an artist. For another, because the film is composed of drawings rather than live-action or even computer-generated images, it is more clearly the work of one person and the kind of animation and style of drawing become easily recognisable as the work of a particular artist. To my mind, the viewer's first response is to the particular form of the work, before he or she starts to pick up on the subject.

If we understand that the chief purpose of a documentary is to communicate and to persuade audiences about a particular subject then my films are poor documentaries. In certain aspects they do share qualities, but viewing them as documentaries seems rather limiting, missing the more personal ambitions in making the films. It is not the communication of facts and attitudes that is at the heart of the project but a desire to create a rich visual universe within which to think about certain issues.

→ 19 (genre)

Postings 07

Looking

{Figure 11: Grinning Orientals. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

For four years now I have been keeping a ‘process journal’, a studio note-book in which I write down thoughts on the work I am doing. I make notes in it at different stages of working. A number of entries relate to the planning of a drawing. Others are more reflective and relate to looking at a drawing on the board in an effort to understand how it is taking shape and in which direction it should or could proceed. Still others are made when a drawing is finished and I am thinking about its success or failure or its usefulness in the narrative I am constructing. Keeping the process journal is not only about reflection on drawing but also crucially a means to hold the project together. A film can take up to two years to make and in that period there is ongoing research into the subject of the film and a growing body of pertinent information that I want to keep close at hand. As the research progresses so do the ideas for images – ideas that I don’t want to lose, ideas that need to be examined, explored, then stored for later use. Crucially too, the journal functions as a mental space within which the often opposing demands of historical or ideological content and visual or poetic form can be thought about in order to keep them in some kind of balance.

Added to those myriad scribblings on issues of content and form are, more recently, a growing number of thoughts on different aspects of looking. I have come to realise that in the different stages of making a drawing and a film - from planning a drawing and seeking an image as a starting point, through to the finished film being projected onto a screen in a gallery - I am looking at the image in different ways. There is a close-up kind of looking when I am drawing and a reflective kind of looking when I step back to take stock. There is a way of looking at darks and lights as they are built up that is different from the way of looking at the lines crossing the edges of the grid being used to transfer an image to the drawing paper. Looking through the camera at the drawing or at the thumbnail images downloaded onto the computer, is not the same as looking at the whole drawing on the board. Seeing the drawings on the wall of my studio is different from seeing the same drawings in a museum.

I don’t think that I would have noticed these different aspects of looking, never mind started noting them down, had it not been for the series of conversations I have been having over the last few years with perception psychologist Johan Wagemans. Together with other artists and scientists we have been part of the Parallellepipeda project and, through shared seminars and discussions, the artists in the project have been introduced by Johan into some of the complexities of looking and seeing.

Over a series of thought pieces – that may or may not follow on consecutively - I am going to consider some of the kinds of looking that I think I do as I work, starting from the stage where I am still deciding what I will draw and looking for the image to help me do it, until that strangely unsettling moment where I am one of an audience in a cinema watching my own film[14].

The first kind of looking is the search for an image through which to convey an idea. During the research period I collect visual images that I store for later use, but I am also on the lookout for those anecdotes or descriptions in the reading that suggest to me images or sequences that could be developed. It is from such an anecdote-description that the drawing *Grinning Orientals* in *Off the Record* came about. In the War Illustrated of 1918 a British journalist described a tour of the
Front in which he met up with a group of Chinese labourers returning to camp after a day's work. He noted that these 'grinning Orientals' 'looked so alike that one seemed to see the same man a hundred times over'. The tone of the article was overly paternalistic and I wanted to make a drawing that took issue with his attitude. Since he was talking of the faces of these labourers, it seemed obvious to me that I could refute this statement by drawing a number of portraits of Chinese labourers in which I paid careful attention to the particularities of their different faces. Searching through World War I websites I found enough detailed images of Chinese men to allow me to make a large full-length drawing of one man and have his face transform through five other portraits, thereby drawing attention to very different Chinese faces.

The first kind of looking, then, is for an image from which to work. This can be a sorting process, seeing what can feasibly be drawn. Of the images of Chinese labourers that I have collected I need to select those that have potential for manipulation. Those that share a frontal view allow me more easily to transform one face into another. Hats or beards, for instance, give me ideas about elements that could be interchanged. So, while I am sorting I am thinking about possible animations of the elements in the image. As the drawings are often quite large the source image needs to be detailed enough to allow for this blow-up. If one image doesn't provide all that I need then I will use fragments of different images.

It could be that instead of going from an idea towards a drawing I could go from a drawing towards an idea. At times I have an image or object that I really want to draw even though it doesn't necessarily connect to an idea for the film. By combining it with something else I can usually find a good reason for including it.

Like the matchboxes that keep reappearing. I like drawing them. I like having them open and release unexpected contents. I like the space on their covers that asks for information to be added.. Not every image has to be important to the narrative. At times I draw things for no other reason but that they interest me, and then I give them some small function in the film.

Once the image is chosen I start to draw. The first step in the process is to transfer the image to the drawing paper. If it is a complicated image I draw a grid onto both the source image and the drawing paper as an aid to setting it out in reasonable proportion. In my hand I have an A4 photocopy of the image – laden with information - and in front of me an expanse of white paper, and I'm looking from the one to the other as I transfer the image. I'm looking at the photocopy and seeing the image divided up into little squares – and I am concentrating only on the lines or shadows that intersect with the grid. And I have to briefly memorise this intersection so as to recreate it on the larger grid on the white paper.

It is a measuring kind of looking and drawing. I'm not seeing the whole object or image, only that line or shadow that intersects with the grid. It feels like a process of mapping, of registering the co-ordinates. It would make little difference if at this stage the drawing was upside down. At this 'technical' stage I am not yet committed to the drawing. The placing or size of the object may not seem right and often I erase all that I have done, repositioning the object on the paper or redrawing the grid so as to make the object larger or smaller. It is the least interesting of the drawing stages and while it involves a level of concentration to transfer the image it is a fairly automatised process requiring little conscious thought. It doesn't feel demanding in any way.

When the outline and placement is established I often stop drawing for that day. I don't switch easily from this stage to the next – which is the working up of the drawing, fleshing it out with more complex shadows, and thinking about the kind of mark that I am making.

At the next stage I am looking and drawing across the entire surface of the drawing. I am hardly noticing the grid. I am still working from the source image and am concentrating on the darks and lights, seeing the object through the relationships between the shadows and the lit areas. Often I am looking with half-closed eyes, squinting at the drawing, the better to see the illusion of depth and mass being created. It sounds obvious but the longer I spend drawing an object, the better I see it. I start to see details in it that I hadn't noticed earlier and I start to really know that object.

When the object or scene being drawn seems to make enough visual sense then I am ready to start animating. Again, I notice that I don't go straight in and start animating, but will stop for the day at this stage too. I don't know if, here, it is so much an issue of switching from one mode of looking and drawing to another, as much as it is moment that I like to savour. If I have a drawing on the board and it is in a state of 'readiness', then I am content to go and do other, more mundane things, knowing that I have a drawing ready and waiting. It is a moment of pleasurable anticipation. Animation is the most enjoyable part of drawing but it is also the most demanding and before I start a sequence I need to be fresh and to have my wits about me.

Postings 08

Looking, animating, remembering

Animating a drawing is not unlike a performance, at times in slow-motion, at times at speed. There are three points to it: making the change on the drawing, stepping back to the camera and activating the shutter, stepping over to the log-book and noting down the shot. Depending on the complexity of the drawing an alteration to the image can take a few seconds or a half hour.

When I am in the process of animating I work for longer periods between breaks. I am more engaged in the process than I was in the earlier stage of setting up the drawing. There my concern was with the 'technical' aspects of drawing – mark registration, revealing the object through lights and darks, making it recognisable. Now there is a switch towards thinking about the actions that will occur in the 'arena' that has been created. I don't work with a storyboard and it is not decided in advance in which direction an animation will be heading. I do have an idea about where it might be taken but drawing is an uncertain art and there can be a wide gap between intention and result. By this I do not mean that it fails to go where I hoped it would go, but rather that interesting possibilities or unforeseen difficulties arise during the process and suggest or demand other, often far more interesting, routes. It is this unexpectedness about the process that keeps me coming back to it again and again.

A few months ago a visiting South African friend brought me a packet of Strelitzia bulbs. This flower, which is sometimes called the Crane flower because of its resemblance to the Crested Crane, is one that grew in my mother's garden in

Johannesburg. I disliked it then because it bore the colours of the old South African flag – orange, white and blue. Thirty years later and with that flag safely stowed away in the archive, I looked at the Strelitzias anew and realised not only that they were very beautiful flowers but that they made me nostalgic for an earlier period of my life. I decided to include them, together with other plants from my mother's garden, in the film *Orlando's Book* that is about memories of places, both literary memories and memories of places experienced.

I drew a Strelitzia plant and planned for the spathe to open and the flowers to fan up and outwards, releasing pollen as they emerged. Simultaneous to this I would have leaves and other spathes rising up around the main flower. It wasn't a great animation. The flowers emerged from the spathe too quickly. There were too many movements in different directions. The attention was taken away from the central flowers by the other two spathes that appear alongside it. The shadows of the leaves in the background were distracting. The entire sequence was too short. The flowers were too small in the frame. As an animation the movements of the flowers up and backwards were too irregular. I needed the movements to be more flowing and rhythmical. The flowers needed to burst out, stretch, bloom, elongate, and wilt, even as the next little flower was doing the same. I wanted the spray of pollen to flow into being something else, to sweep upwards and out of frame – so as to make a following drawing inevitable.

{Figure 12: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}
{Figure 13: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}
{Figure 14: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}
{Figure 15: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013 }

I started a new drawing. This time it showed only one, larger, spathe. I slowed down the opening up of the flowers and the release of the pollen so that the sequence was twice the length of the first one. There was more pollen and it created a denser pattern of marks across the surface. Reviewing the sequence afterwards, the simultaneous movements of the flowers arching upwards, and the spraying of the pollen, seem to work together better than in the previous drawing. They are more in harmony with each other, and it is possible to follow both sets of movements without the one dominating or drawing attention away from the other. As an image this drawing is more striking than the first.

It frequently works out this way, that as I make a first animation I become aware of how it could be improved - as image, as narrative, as an action that can lead to another action. It is through the act of drawing that ideas or possibilities for other drawings and animations occur. It is difficult to plan these in advance, better, I have learnt, to simply start drawing from however small an idea. The discarding of a number of drawings is not wasted work but part of the process towards making those drawings or animations that are interesting, apt, and that add density to the film.

If I have decided that I will be animating a certain object or part of a drawing then I try to keep that object as simple as possible, so that it can reasonably be animated. Imagine that I am drawing Leopold II's tricycle and it needs to move across the paper - as it did in the film *Bully Beef*. The tricycle has to contain enough detail that it 'reads' as a tricycle, but no more than that, or it becomes too difficult to redraw over and over again. For each frame that I film the tricycle must be erased and entirely redrawn a centimetre or so further on.

{Figure 16: detail Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}
{Figure 17: detail Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}
{Figure 18: detail Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}

There is, then, an issue of looking and remembering involved in this kind of animation. Even though some charcoal traces are left in the paper, the tricycle does disappear, and I have to remember how and where it was. I have noticed that after having erased and redrawn it a few times – referring each time to the source image that I am using – that I start to develop a memory of this object, or at least a memory of the lines that I am using to reproduce it. I sort of schematise it so that its reproduction becomes easier and easier and I become less dependent on the source image. While the sequence is being animated I am unable to look though the camera for fear of bumping it, and so can't see what has come before. I have to try to remember it.

At an earlier stage of thinking about looking, I had written that "the constant redrawing of an object eventually etches it into my brain and I find I can run through the entire sequence, even the entire film, transformation by transformation – with my eyes closed". I remember when I was working on 35mm film and couldn't see the exposed film for about three month - because I needed to expose the whole roll before sending it to the film laboratory for development - that I would repeatedly go over the

sequences with closed eyes so as to remember them. I needed to hold the film in my head so that I could plan new sequences and fill in gaps in the 'story'.

In response to the statement that I could run through the entire sequence with my eyes closed, perceptual psychologist Johan Wagemans has queried whether this is actually possible. In a personal response he writes: "I wonder how much of the detail you experience is actually there, if you were really to shut your eyes and draw from memory. In general, for most people, visual experiences, let alone visual memories, are much less detailed than we think. For most people, the richness of visual details is an illusion. I can believe, however, that for you it is different because you have so much more experience at looking for details and remembering them".

Rethinking it in the light of Johan's response, I think that what I am rehearsing in my mind is more likely a series of actions, the steps in the animation. I agree with Johan that I don't think I could redraw a sequence with anything like the same richness of detail of the original, but I think I could recreate a series of actions that have *recently* been animated. I would hesitantly suggest that I could redraw the Strelitzia sequence with the flowers emerging, rising up and releasing pollen, though there would very likely be an economising on the number of actions and the details. I think it is the repeated action of drawing a simplified shape over and over again that I could reproduce, due to the simplified 'scheme' I have made of it as it was being animated.

Postings 09

Looking, reflecting, structuring

The kinds of looking already mentioned are all done in close-up, with my eyes inches away from the drawing. The next kind is about looking from a distance and it happens when I step back from the drawing. It is a pause in the drawing process. In many artist's studios there is a chair positioned for good viewing some way back from the working space. Not only does mine afford me a chance to sit down but it enables me to see the drawing as a whole, which allows a different kind of looking than the concentrated attention to the drawing surface while working. It has been noted by the British artist Rebecca Fortnum, who researches artists' writings on studio practice, that 'many artists spend longer looking at what they have done than making'[15]. In my experience this reflective looking is about getting distance from the drawing so as to

analyse what has been happening. It is an attempt to make sense of the evolving work. Only from a distance can I see how the different elements are adding up, how the black mark is distributed on the white paper, what the drawing might be missing. In this slow gazing period I see what I have done that I hadn't realised I was doing. I notice rhythms developing in the drawing. Rhythms that I can exploit to create strong directional vectors around and within the drawing. For instance, when working on the *Sarah Jane and her ten children* drawing I began to see that the right arm and hand of the mother was linking her with the baby drawn underneath, and that together they were starting to set up a directional movement that went from the mother's face, down her arm, along baby Henry and across the surface of the drawing. By careful placing of the next few babies this became a circular movement that led back to the mother's face. It came to add a dynamism in the image by leading the eye around the work.

A second stage of reflective looking occurs when a drawing is finished and joins the others on the studio wall. If the purpose of looking reflectively at one unfinished drawing is to gain understanding of the direction that drawing is taking, then the purpose of looking at a wall of finished drawings is to try to understand the direction the film is taking. This second stage of reflective looking allows me to see the gaps that need to be addressed and to find the lead into a new drawing.

{Figure 19: Sinking of the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

When making Off the Record I wanted a sequence about the sinking of the SS Mendi[16]. The idea was not to 'tell' the story of the sinking but to explore it through a set of images that were suggestions or pointers towards the event. I started with a drawing that would show a scene under water, using a photograph of parts of the wreck of the SS Mendi on the ocean floor that had been collected from a published archaeological project on the ship wreck. To create a feeling of sinking I thought to make a drawing with a downward movement. I began with the knitting from an earlier drawing and had it unravelling in the water. As the camera panned downwards (actually as the paper moved upwards) objects that were salvaged from the wreck - a knife, a plate, and a clock - were drawn sinking down to the bottom of the sea. As pointers to what was happening I drew a brass plate with the name of the SS Mendi on it and a postcard image of the ship. To convey some idea of the loss of life that occurred, and to name those men whose deaths were omitted from the official record, I

included some of them in the drawing: the poet-priest Isaac Wauchope-Dyobha (and his pen name Citashe) and three Pondoland chiefs.

Looking at that drawing on the wall of the studio, I began to realize that it was not enough in itself to convey the sense of loss that I was after. Further, it came too directly to the sinking without some sort of lead-in that could prepare the viewer for that event. I decided that I needed a drawing prior to this to suggest a ship being rammed.

I collected a number of possible visual elements that could be used. There were four images of the interior of a ship circa 1914 that were potentially interesting for allowing a setting in which objects could fall, to create the suggestion of the ship being rammed. The first one I tried, of an officer's pantry with cups hanging from the ceiling and plates on racks, didn't work out and was discarded. The second one, of a wheel house or bridge of a ship, worked better and is the one that was used.

I decided to animate the drawing in a way that would show the ship running normally, and then have it registering a bump or shock, with the magnifying glass spinning in its casing, the speedometer shuddering, and a ball falling from its casing. Then water would fill the cabin.

{Figure 20: Bridge. *Off the Record*. 2008.

With these two drawings finished and on the studio wall, the sequence still seemed to be in need of a narrative element that could create a sense of foreboding and that sense of loss was not yet enough in evidence. So working backwards again, I made a third drawing that was to go before the *Flooded Bridge* and the *Sinking of the Mendi* drawings.

I chose to make an image of a letter sent from a man aboard the doomed Mendi to a family member back home in South Africa. The intention was to do two things through this drawing – to create a little twinge of tension that something unpleasant was about to happen to the ship, and to draw attention to the relatives who would be left behind - thereby accentuating the sense of loss. To this end the letter was addressed to a fictitious female relative of Rev. Isaac Wauchope-Dyobha, and to the town of King Williamstown where Wauchope-Dyobha had lived. On the envelope is the army censor's stamp of approval and it is postmarked two days previous to the

sinking of the SS Mendi. It is sent from the port of Plymouth from where the ship set sail.

{Figure 21: Letter from the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Out of the envelope a postcard of the ship appears, behind it a number of blank pages become the plate that was salvaged from the wreck. The postcard image of the ship clouds over as fog starts to fill the sky.

It often works this way, building up a sequence in reverse order. Mostly it is because I am wanting to make a particular drawing that explores a certain event or idea and then, when that is made, I realize that it can't stand alone but needs an 'introductory' drawing or set of drawings to lead towards it. I'm sure many writers work like this too, that their stories are fleshed out in reverse.

Thinking about what could or needs to be drawn is prompted by a sustained scrutiny of the drawings on the studio wall. During this looking I am organizing and structuring the material so as to build my argument or form my narrative by deciding which image will be placed next to which other image.

Surrounded by the drawings, I start to get a feel for how the film is taking shape. My concerns are not only about meaning and narrative but also about form, that there is a variety of form in the film. If there have been a number of very dark drawings then the next could be lighter. If there are many that are very complex, large and 'realistic', then I might choose to make something more diagrammatic or 'technical', small and simple, or something more poetical and less literal. If there are too many 'iconic' images, by which I mean full frontal, single images, then I might decide to make a drawing that is more complex spatially, possibly one in which the animation moves more deeply into the space behind or in front of the image. At times I make 'master' drawings upon which many animations can be drawn and filmed, such as the *Sarah Jane and her ten children* drawing, at other times I make more simple drawings intended for only one animation, such as the *Strelitzia* drawing. Looking at these drawings I can also see if there is too much writing appearing, and can space its occurrence.

→ 34 (drawing, animating)

Postings 10

Listening-looking

It is hard to describe the extent to which the film changes for me when the soundtrack is added. The pristine silence in which I seem to have been working all these months is gone. Gone too is the sense that this film exists in my head, it seems to have escaped, and I watch it from now on from a distance. Once the surprise is over I start to listen attentively to the way the sound affects the flow of images. They resonate differently now, welded to new and unexpected sounds that add nuances and a spatial dimension to the film. The way the work is held together has changed, being driven now as much by the sound as by the transformations in the images.

The films are made in a silent state, they come out of a quiet part of my mind, out of a process of drawing alone in my studio for a period of up to two years. Though my mind is filled with ideas about the drawings, about the ideas out of which I want to make images, about a hundred different aspects of the process, sound has not been one of the issues that I regularly consider. To me the internal world of the film is soundless.

When I have thought about sound it has been as an historical reference or as a sound effect to mimic an animated object. Sol Plaatje, in his 1916 *Native Life in South Africa*, translated the popular World War I song *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* into Xhosa. It seemed a good idea to bring this version back to life by having it sung on the sound track of *Off the Record*. Because there were so few moments in the film where female presence could be suggested I sought a female singer, Ishmame Pauwels, with whom to record a Xhosa version.

Occasionally I would plan to include a sound effect for a sequence that I was drawing – such as the sound of a foghorn before the sinking of the SS Mendi - because this was mentioned in survivor accounts of the sinking. But here I was not thinking of the qualities of the sound itself but rather of the sound effect as a marker – in the same way that I use documentary elements as markers. At times I would think about diegetic sound, those sounds made by objects seen in the film, such as a shot from a gun or the tricycle moving forwards across the table. Possibly I thought I needed these effects to strengthen the illusions being created in the animations, as though I was not entirely convinced that the drawing alone could do it.

Progress in the Colonies is a film within the film *Bully Beef* and it opens with the sound of newsreel music. Before the advent of television, newsreels were the chief source of filmed 'news'. Presented in that 'voice of authority', their chief purpose seemed to be to spread the preferred viewpoints, if not outright propaganda, of the government of the time. The *African Mirror*, begun in South Africa in 1913, reached a peak in the war years when it brought stories of accomplishments on the various fronts back to home audiences. In the apartheid years it celebrated the rise of the Afrikaner and Afrikaner culture. I remember newsreels being shown in cinemas before the feature film, until the introduction of television and televised news in the mid 70s which spelt their demise. In *Progress in the Colonies* it was the patriotic, rousing symphony music that was so commonly used in newsreels that I was after, so as to suggest that the images could be read as propagandistic, a parody of the old newsreels. It is one of the few times I was thinking about the metaphoric qualities of sound.

Even when I had planned a certain sound, such as the newsreel music, hearing and seeing the soundtrack combined with the images for the first time was a strange experience. After the quietness of making the film the images were now welded in unexpected ways to sounds. There were times when it felt almost like a violation of the images, with nuances or information added that I had neither imagined nor intended. It required a real adjustment on my part to share my work in this regard, to listen and to allow for these new dimensions that were being added to my images. Dimensions over which I seemed to have little control.

I did consider not having sound, but quickly realized that even sound of which I was not entirely convinced had a powerful impact on the drawings. It remained a concern to me that I was not understanding what the sound was doing. I was making the drawings with great care as to the potential 'reading' of images and then was having sound put to those images without understanding how it altered those readings.

Postings 11

Looking-listening

{Figure 22: Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

There is a run of images in *Off the Record* that interweaves references to the experiences of different South Africans in Europe in World War I. A copper tray on

wooden legs (an item made by my grandmother) appears in a destroyed forest (Delville Wood after the battle of 1917). The plate deepens, fills with water and two miniature ships ram into each other (the SS Mendi and the SS Darro). The SS Mendi sinks and the water transforms into strands of paper that become a book. The words of Citashe's (aka Wauchope-Dyobha) poem, *Fire with the Pen*, appear on the rim of the copper tray. The book becomes a rugby ball (a reference to the friendly rugby matches played between South African, Australian and New Zealand troops). The word 'FIRE' from Citashe's poem is written on the ball which then catapults out of frame. In the following drawing the rugby ball sails through rugby posts and becomes the eye of Walter. A cotton reel transforms into a tank that edges forward and fires. The shot pierces the edge of the photo of Walter, leaving the paper smouldering.

{Figure 23: detail Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.}
{Figure 24: detail Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

In drawing this run of images I was wanting to connect the differing experiences of my great-uncle Walter and the priest-poet Wauchope-Dyobha, of my grandmother and the writer Sol Plaatje, by having them transforming into and out of each other. So that, instead of drawing discrete sequences that referred to one or other of their experiences and then editing these to follow on from each other, I was using the animation process itself to connect these seemingly disparate experiences. The sequence is built up not of narrative elements that lead towards an end point, but of images that connect associatively. The images refer, they don't tell.

{Figure 25: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.}
{Figure 26: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Off the Record has three different sound tracks. The first was composed by Philippe Ryckman for the exhibition of the film at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper, 2008. The second and third were composed by Carl Van Eyndhoven and Yannick Franck. All versions were part of the Parallellepipeda exhibition in the museum M in Leuven in 2010. These three versions of the film are from three very different composers and they provide an opportunity to explore how sound affects readings of the images of the film.

Michel Chion, composer, filmmaker and film-sound theorist has written a book, Audio-Vision[17], in which he provides a vocabulary and a number of concepts

with which to start to think and speak about the affect of sound on image. As one who has no musical background and finds difficulty in articulating issues relating to sound, I have found his work useful.

Chion demonstrates his concepts through references to particular narrative live-action films. I am going to try to understand his concepts through reference to the different sound versions of *Off the Record*, a non-narrative animation film. Here I am going to limit the discussion to the run of images described above.

The sound track by Philippe Ryckman for these sequences is dramatic. From the point of the rugby ball rising up from the copper basin and catapulting out of frame, until the tank is fired, the music is ominous and foreboding. It is the kind of music used in narrative films to alert the viewer-listener to impending danger. But what impending danger is there in this sequence of a rugby ball that becomes the eye of Walter, of the cotton reel that becomes a tank that fires through the edge of a photograph? The sound seems to project a narrative reading of the images as elements leading towards some tragic event, an event that never materialises, for the menacing music recedes after the tank has fired.

Such a dramatic reading was never my intention. But might I have unknowingly created this narrative of threat through the editing of the images, through the selection of images, or through the transformations from one object to another? Is the sound adding a narrative to the film or is that narrative already in the run of images? If we follow Chion then it is through the relationship between sound and image that this illusion is created.

Chion contends that much of the act of seeing in a film is changed by the fact that we simultaneously hear a sound track. We do not see the same thing when we also hear, and we do not hear the same thing when we also see. This audiovisual relationship he terms the audiovisual contract. He terms it a contract because it is the opposite of a natural relationship.

{Figure 27: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.}
{Figure 28: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Watching the rugby-ball-to-tank-firing with the music of Ryckman will, in the listener-viewer, create an impression that the sense of foreboding is contained in the images themselves and that the sound enriches this sense. This, Chion argues, is the illusion, for the expressive value with which a sound enriches a given image is not

contained already in the images themselves. Sound does not duplicate meaning but brings it about. It does this in a reciprocal manner. Sound shows us the image differently than what the image shows alone. Image makes us hear sound differently than if the sound was ringing out in the dark. Then sound re-projects onto the image the product of their mutual influence.

Yannick Franck, in his sound track, does not isolate this sequence for special emphasis but he too suggests a rising tension that culminates in the firing of the tank. His build-up begins earlier, in the sequence of a Christmas card showing the British and French flags where a hint of rousing trumpets of marching music are embedded in the sound. The rising tension continues through the rugby ball image and culminates in the firing of the weapon on the tank. As with Ryckman, the sound is foreboding. In contrast, Van Eyndhoven's sound is neither tense nor ominous, though there are emphases here too on the little ships being rammed in the copper basin and the rugby ball lifting upwards.

At the point of handing the image track over to Ryckman I talked about this sequence, with the background of Delville Woods, being 'darker' than the sequences around the diary, which I described as being about my grandmother and needing a lighter feel in the sound. With Franck and Van Eyndhoven I made no mention of this. Yet they too composed sound over the rugby-to-tank sequence that is more tense than elsewhere in the film.

I wrote in a previous thought piece that even when I was not entirely convinced by the sound it still had a powerful impact on the images. It does, but if it drives readings of the film in ways that are not intended then it risks undermining what I have been trying to do with the images. The problem, I think, is due in part to my reticence in the past to engage in a collaboration and to 'share' the film with a composer. Not feeling confident to talk about sound has been another difficulty. Creating the project 'The Audiovisual Contract', as part of my collaboration with the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology in the Parallellepipeda project[18], has been a way of admitting that there are problems and of creating a space within which to contemplate solutions to those problems.

→ 22 (sound)

Postings 12

Postscript Bully Beef : Monuments

{Figure 29: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}
{Figure 30: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}

In the Westhoek, near Ieper, there is a private café-museum called Hill 62. Behind the café are remnants of the trenches from the First World War. There a tree grows that has bullets from the war still lodged in its trunk. Inside the café stand two enormous clocks constructed of old ammunition. They are examples of 'trench art', the name given to three-dimensional objects of metal, cloth, wood, bone and stone, made by soldiers, prisoners-of-war and civilians throughout the First World War and its aftermath. While the term originated in the Great War, trench art has been made by people affected by conflict for at least two hundred years, from the early nineteenth-century Napoleanic wars to the late-twentieth century conflicts in the Balkans[19]. One of the clocks at Hill 62 is a relic of the South African War (the Boer War) and was held by Belgian customs for eighty years before being released and bought by the owner of the café. The ammunition used in the clock was still charged and the work was considered a danger to public safety.

I drew both clocks, and one of them I drew and animated twice. I spent weeks drawing the first and then noticed when the film came back from the laboratory that as the structure rose up it leant to one side of the frame, instead of being parallel to it. It worried me enough to make me redraw it entirely, bullet by bullet. So now I have two drawings of the same clock, similar in many ways, different in others.

In the first of the Monuments I drew a series of corned beef tins that I had been collecting. In the animation they were passed over relatively quickly, and I was concerned that the viewer would not have the time to register their presence. In the second version I left them out, determining to use them elsewhere where I could better draw attention to them.

The image of the corned beef tin is one that appears regularly in my drawings for its density of historical associations. As a form of provision it has long been associated with armies of occupation. The process of preserving meat in tins was invented in the eighteenth century, in the time of Napoleon and at his request, as a means of providing field troops with transportable provisions. By the First World War 'bully-beef' had become synonymous with western soldier's rations. In the Congo

Free State colonial agents were seen to eat it, and here it acquired an added set of meanings.

In his book, *The Ghost of Leopold II*, Adam Hochschild[20] explains how these added meanings came about. Colonial agents in the Congo Free State issued African soldiers of the Force Publique with a specific number of bullets to enforce the collection of rubber from the local population. Out of fear that the soldiers might stock the bullets and use them against the authorities in an armed uprising, the colonial agents obliged them, on their return to the post with the bounty of rubber, to account for every bullet used. This they did by providing the right hand of every victim upon whom a bullet had been spent. Given the climatic conditions and the distances from the post, each platoon or battalion had a soldier whose job it was to smoke the amputated hands to prevent them from decomposing before they could be presented to the agent.

It was the habit of Europeans in the Congo, as it was throughout colonial Africa, to eat corned beef from tins. Hochschild writes that, "as news of the white man's soldiers and their baskets of severed hands spread through the Congo, a myth gained credence with Africans that was a curious reversal of the white obsession with black cannibalism. The cans of corned beef seen in white men's houses, it was said, did not contain meat from the animals shown on the label, they contained chopped-up hands".

The idea of human flesh as the content of corned meat tins continued to circulate in the Congo long after the rubber terror had subsided. Stories of captured Africans who were fattened up and canned aboard Sabena aircraft, destined for European consumption, are recorded well into the 1950s and beyond. The recurrent use of such metaphors, according to the historian Luise White, in her book *Speaking with Vampires: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa*[21], were a means of describing a world of vulnerability and unreasonable relationships. They revealed the anxieties of those whose ways of life were being fundamentally altered by colonialism. White's interviews suggest that the rumour of the human contents of these tins continued until independence.

As a visual metaphor this one item of packaged food can be said to carry associations of both sustenance and cannibalism. It can connect the First World War and the colonialisation of the Congo. The bully-beef tins did not, eventually, appear in

the Monument animation, but they are to be seen later in the Progress in the Colonies sequences. *Bully Beef* was always the title of the film.

Postings 13

Postscript Bully Beef : Gasman

{Figure 31: Gasman. *Bully Beef*. 2006.}

In the period in which I was collecting images for the film *Bully Beef* I saw many gasmasks. They went from very simple eye or mouth protection to quite complicated and very uncomfortable looking constructions that entirely covered the head and some even part of the body. They all had a strangeness about them, suggestive of the human face or body they were designed to protect, but distorted and alien. In the search through images I found, too, many of bodies of soldiers that had decomposed inside their boots, uniform and helmet. The gas-suit drawn here reminded me of these disintegrating bodies and gave me a way of referring to them without actually drawing those bodies.

To precede the Gasman animation I planned to draw a stereoscope box. Hill 62, a private café-museum near Ieper, has a number of these viewing devices and a large collection of photographs of the First World War to be viewed through them. Looking into this device at near identical photographs - taken by a stereoscopic camera – the images merge into sharply three-dimensional single images. The plan was to draw first the outside of the stereoscope box and then the inside and a number of different photographs coming into view. These would not only be images of destruction from the Great War – the general subject of the collection of photo's at Hill 62 – but also images of violent death and destruction in the colonization of Africa. There was one photograph that I had been wanting to examine and I decided to refer to it here. It is a photograph from southern Africa, taken in the late nineteenth century. It graphically depicts the hanging of three Khoisan men from a tree.

Standing behind the hanging men are a number of onlookers, perpetrators of the hanging we must assume. Their placement does not seem fortuitous for they are grouped in a row that effectively 'frames' the hanging men. They look past the bodies towards the camera. The attitude of the man on the far right, his foot raised on a tree stump, is arrogant in the extreme.

{Figure 32: The Hanging Tree.}

The purpose of taking the photograph is not clear. It could have served as a form of 'evidence' that a sentence has been effectively carried out. It could have pictured an impromptu hanging for which there was no sentence. It could have belonged to that broad group of 'trophy' photographs that have, since the invention of photography, been stuck into albums as memento's or, more recently, e-mailed to friends in the confident belief they will enjoy the image as much as the photographer, perpetrator or bystander in the photo. Lynchings in America, firing squads in Spain, Nazi killings, torture in Abu Ghraib, are just a few that have been used in one or other of these ways. These 'trophy' photographs contrast two images: the violent death or torture of one or more persons, and the complete lack of compassion of those who are watching or causing the offence. That perpetrators and bystanders are content to pose with the bodies points to a certain pride in their having been the cause of, or spectator to, a violent death. It reveals a confidence on their part that they have the backing of, or are serving the interests of, their community.

I do not remember where I first came across the photograph of this execution. At the time I did not know its context, who was being executed, when or why. What seemed obvious, and the reason why I thought to use the image, was that the balance of power rested clearly on the side of the colonizers. For much of the nineteenth century the Khoisan, the indigenous peoples of southern Africa, were enslaved, hunted and, for the smallest of offences, killed. Specific information about the photograph seemed unnecessary, the 'evidence' was in the image.

Yet, as I was drawing it I became more and more uneasy about doing so. For one thing, I felt uncomfortable about so closely examining an image of violent death in order to be able to reproduce it - 'lovingly' reproduce it - in all its details. For another, I started to question my desire to make of this miserable scene an aesthetic work, an animation film. I started to wonder at my attraction to it in the first place. Why was I drawn to an image of violent death? I wasn't showing dead white men in the film. Rather I had chosen to refer to the decomposing bodies of soldiers obliquely, through a gas-suit that resembled an emaciated body. Yet I was prepared to draw these hanging Khoisan bodies. It began to look like a double standard, one in which there was an ethics of respect for European death, and a lack of respect for African death.

South African-Dutch artist Marlene Dumas has the following advice on the use of questionable images: "It is hard to be opposed to degrading images and to use them nevertheless, without getting some perverse pleasure out of this process. But, if one wants to join in the fun, then don't use images of those who are (long) dead or those who are anonymous. Rather use images of those who have the power to sue you (as they should) if they don't agree with what you have done with images of them."[22]

In much the same vein Dutch cultural analyst Mieke Bal criticises the practice of lavishingly reproducing objectionable images in the context of a critique of colonialism. Bal contends that a quotation is always inevitably a repetition – in this case then, a repetition of the original offence – and as such it contaminates the critical discourse in which it is embedded. Worse, the critical scholar or artist ends up revelling in the material to which she objects.[23]

It seems that I was not alone in being attracted to using this image. A while after trying to make this drawing I realised it had been drawn ten years earlier by William Kentridge in his production of *Faustus in Africa*. In this drawing the perpetrators or bystanders are excluded and we see only the three bodies hanging from the tree. Kentridge combines the image with others of violent deaths, these from other parts of Africa. There is an image of a man tied to wooden stakes and left to die for crimes unknown, one that was used by the British to 'prove' the 'savagery' of the ruling powers in Benin, and as justification for a punitive expedition in which the British took control of the kingdom and its riches.

Kentridge sets his remake of Goethe's Faust in colonial Africa where Faust trades his soul for a colonist's right to exploit the continent – to turn its forests into shooting galleries, it's population into cheap labour, its resources into booty. His production is not situated in any one specific country or historical set of circumstances, his *Faustus* is a work about colonialism in all Africa. The images that he chooses to use support this broad approach.

Bully Beef, on the other hand, was to be a film-essay about the re-connection of two major narratives in Belgian history – the colonization of the Congo and the invasion by Germany in the First World War. There was no good reason to include the image of the execution in this film. Even though I was not aware of the specific context of the photograph, the events most certainly occurred in southern Africa. In my notebook I wrote: "*hanging 'bushmen' bear no relation to Belgian-Congo history so why use them? Need to examine this*". Art theorist Irit Rogoff's 'nagging worry'

that ‘on occasion we espouse the causes of someone else’s horrific political realities out of a need to articulate a position for ourselves within our own, far less dramatically marked, political arenas’[24]. Seemed rather too close to the mark. I decided not to use the image.

Postings 14

Setting the record straight

{Figure 33: From a photograph.}

“After a while it was a common occurrence for a detachment of troopers to go out in the morning, shoot down some rebels and return to breakfast. What rebel spies were caught were summarily tried and hanged. There is a tree known as the hanging tree, to the north of the town, which did service as gallows. Hither the doomed men were conveyed. On the ropes being fastened to their necks, they were made to climb along an overhanging branch, and thence were pushed or compelled to jump into space after “a last look at Bulawayo”. Their bodies were left suspended for twenty-four hours.[25]”

Frank Sykes, the author of the above citation, served as a trooper with the Relief Forces who were sent up from the Cape Colony to quell the Matabeleland Rebellion in what is today Zimbabwe. Sykes published *With Plumer in Matabeleland: an account of the operations of the Matabeleland Relief Force during the rebellion of 1896* in London in early 1897. In February of the same year a second book was published that referred to the activities of the Matabeleland Relief Force, this time a novella in allegorical form. *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, was a fictional work by the South African writer, feminist and theorist, Olive Schreiner, but it referred to atrocities carried out by the troopers of the Relief Forces. The photograph of the hanging tree is the frontispiece to the first edition of this book. It is simply captioned, ‘From a photograph’[26].

Schreiner’s novella concerns a young trooper of the Relief Forces, Peter Halket, who has been sent ahead as a scout and who loses his way, forcing him to spend a night alone in the veld. During the night a stranger approaches and is invited by Peter to warm himself at the fire, the latter thankful for the man’s company.

"They were silent again for a little while. Then Peter, seeing that the stranger showed no inclination to speak, said, "Did you hear of the spree they had up Bulawayo way, hanging those three niggers for spies? I wasn't there myself, but a fellow who was told me they made the niggers jump down from the tree and hang themselves; one fellow wouldn't bally jump, till they gave him a charge of buckshot in the back: and then he caught hold of a branch with his hands and they had to shoot 'em loose. He didn't like hanging. I don't know if it's true of course. I wasn't there myself, but a fellow who was told me. Another fellow who was at Bulawayo, but who wasn't there when they were hung, said they fired at them just after they jumped, to kill 'em. I.."

"I was there," said the stranger.

"Oh, you were? Said Peter. I saw a photograph of the niggers hanging, and our fellows standing round smoking; but I didn't see you in it…"[27]

The photograph that Schreiner is describing was found and bought in a "hairdresser's" in Kimberley by her husband Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner[28]. It serves as frontispiece in the first English and Dutch publications of Schreiner's book. In subsequent editions, even from the same year, it was not included. In 1974, in a re-publication of the book by A. D. Donker, the frontispiece was again used, though this time glued in on one side only to allow for its removal from all copies sold in South Africa.

That the photograph was important to Schreiner is confirmed when in 1911 the author travelled up to what was then Rhodesia and specifically sought out that tree. Her niece, Lyndall Gregg, describes their visit:

"At Bulawayo, Aunt Olive took us all to see the attractive Government House on the outskirts of the town… But beside it rose the tree, which she had really come to see – the tree mentioned in *Trooper Peter Halket* – from which were hanged the Matabele chiefs who had dared to oppose the white intruders on their land. In my First Colonial Edition of the book, the frontispiece is a photograph of this tree, bearing its grisly fruit, whilst Pioneers in big felt hats stand proudly around.[29]

The various descriptions of the photograph that are given here are done so in an attempt on my part to locate this photograph in as particular a context as possible[30]. Though there is no date given for the image, nor the names of the men executed or of their executors, it seems fairly certain that the photograph was taken near Bulawayo during the sieges and the uprisings of 1896.

Postings 15

Approaching politics of vision

In ignorance of its historical context I had assumed that the 'hanging tree' photograph portrayed Khoisan men. In a way it had not really mattered to me who the particular people were, the image was so powerfully shocking as to condemn all colonial ventures. That there are repercussions in using such photographs in this 'blind' manner, and that these affect not only the artist but also the viewer, is something that I have begun to realize. Reproducing the 'hanging tree' photograph in the film *Bully Beef* would not only have revealed my own rather prurient interest in the spectacle of violent death, but would have compelled my viewers to share in that spectacle and would thus have implicated them as fellow 'voyeurs'. It might, rightly perhaps, have opened my work up to the criticism that the image was being used as a means of energizing the film with 'pre-packed' political relevance. It might also have revealed a rather blinkered view of whom I assumed my audience to be.

Given that I did not know the historical circumstances leading up to the moment of that photograph, I might have assumed that viewers of my film were equally ignorant of its origins. A mistaken assumption possibly, for there could be viewers who recognize this photograph, who recognize the events in which the hangings took place, and who are offended that the murders of their forebears are being made into yet another public spectacle.

In *Regarding the pain of others*, Susan Sontag suggests that to anti-war polemicists war is generic, and it is of little concern if the victims and events portrayed are anonymous. The arbitrariness of the slaughter is evidence enough. In contrast, for those who believe themselves to have been victims of an injustice and for whom the battle is still being fought, precisely who has been killed and by whom, is of crucial importance."[31]

Not thinking through who might be offended by one's use of images can have repercussions for an artist. Of course there are artists who aren't concerned if they offend - who may deliberately set out to offend - and there is place for this approach, but for those artists interested in the recovery of marginalized histories, interested in what could broadly be termed post-colonial work, there are issues of affect that are worth examining.

A number of years back I followed the controversy surrounding an exhibition

entitled *Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan History and Material Culture* held in Cape Town in 1996. Curated by Pippa Skotnes, an artist, and set in an art museum, the exhibition was intended to engage critically with the ways that the Khoisan had been pathologised, dispossessed and all but eradicated through colonialism and apartheid. Skotnes sought to show the ways that science, religion and literature had been responsible for creating and furthering destructive myths around the Khoisan. The exhibition was held at the National Gallery and many of the reactions to Miscast related to this blurring of contexts of museum and gallery. Art historian Sidney Littlefield Kasfir noted that: "despite its installation in the National Gallery, it was not an art exhibition in the sense of a collection of aesthetic objects but a show which tried to give form to an idea using a powerful arsenal of visual and textual strategies, from body casts to trophy heads and from anthropomorphic photographs to an auctioneer's list of mammal skins, including that of a "Buschmann Frau."[32]

Skotnes described her exhibition as being in line with contemporary postcolonial museum practice[33]. Okwui Enwezor, curator, art writer and critic, described it as postmodern ethnography and the tactic of the curator as "dilettante – neither ethnographer nor historian, neither member of the clan nor intimate outsider".[34] Many Khoisan viewers were insulted that their history of dispossession and degradation had been shown in an art gallery, and were further incensed when Skotnes offered to include their critical responses to her curatorial strategies into the exhibition, turning their protest into 'instant art'[35].

I have long been wanting to examine some of the debates raised by this exhibition in relation to my own work. Issues relating to whom the assumed audience was thought to be and the curatorial strategies designed to communicate to that audience, are of real interest to me. My medium may not be large exhibitions of historical material, but many of the decisions taken by Skotnes in constructing her exhibition seem not unlike decisions that I take in constructing my short animation films. We have access to and interest in the same 'colonial archive', we have similar postcolonial concerns. We have, I suspect, similar blind-spots.

Now that the moment of writing about these issues has arrived I am a little hesitant in getting on with it. One of the reasons, I think, is because I didn't actually see the exhibition and am thus not able to write about it from personal experience. Some of the most critical reviews of Miscast are written by people who never saw the exhibition. I think here of influential articles by Okwui Enwezor and Ernst Van

Alphen - though the latter at least makes clear that he was not there[36]. My thoughts on Miscast have therefore been influenced by the writings of others, understandings based on the considerable literature that has come to surround the exhibition. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, but when pen meets paper I would prefer to write from experience, from my own reactions to the exhibition.

Another reason for my hesitancy is because I have grown a little tired of the arguments. The period of 1996 (when the exhibition was held) and 1997 (when most of the responses were published) was a particular moment in the first rather painful re-negotiations of cultural and historical terrains in South Africa. Since then the debates have moved on, which is not to say that the issues have been resolved. And yet, more than ten years on, I have still not scrutinized my work, in writing, in the light of the criticisms aimed at Miscast. I know I have learned lessons from the controversy. I have become more circumspect in my use of images. Possibly I have become too circumspect in my usage. There is, at the back of my mind, the idea that it is safer to avoid certain images than to get it wrong. But I still need to draw conclusions. I need to write about this exhibition, need to work through the criticisms, and then need to examine how my work holds up against these criticisms.

P o s t i n g s 1 6

Miscast

Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan History and Material Culture was held at the National Gallery in Cape Town in 1996. It was to be a critique of western practices of exhibiting the Khoisan, and of the complicities of these practices with colonialism and genocide. In the catalogue the curator, Pippa Skotnes, described her project as:

"a critical and visual exploration of the term 'Bushmen" and the various relationships that gave rise to it. These relationships were conducted on many levels, between strangers and indigenes, between colonists and resistance fighters, between researchers and their objects, and, more rarely, between individuals whose mutual respect for each other brought about mutual understanding."[37]

Archeologist Paul Lane saw *Miscast* and describes it as follows[38]:

"The exhibition is accommodated in three interconnected rooms. Each has its own focus, dominant form of imagery, and function within the corpus as a whole. (…)

Entering (the central atrium) one is confronted by a centerpiece of neatly stacked rifles, chained together and guarded at each corner by a solitary, severed head. Between the centerpiece and the doors lie a series of pedestals, arranged in a broad arc. On these, are mounted a miscellaneous collection of moulded human torsos, disembodied legs and genitalia, looking for all the world like some macabre and slightly pornographic Greek statuary. Towering above these images is a text, printed in blood-red letters half a metre high along the length of the back wall proclaiming: *There is no escape from the politics of knowledge*."

{…}

"Imposing glass exhibition cases filled with gleaming steel instruments of measurement and dissection and the related paraphernalia of the craniologist stand on either side of the main doorway. These are flanked by double racks of Dexian shelving, weighted down by layer upon layer of classic archival storage boxes. Each is neatly labeled; a step-ladder stands between two of the racks. From a distance the labels resemble museum accession cards. On closer inspection, some simply declare "Human Remains. Not Suitable for Display".

{…}

"More boxes are stacked on the floor beside the racks, and, next to these on either side of the room are low piles of dismembered body parts. Arms, legs, headless torsos lie jumbled together as if just discarded after an episode of mass butchery. Of course, the body parts are not real, but merely hollow moulds once used by making the 'Bushman' casts that now stand in museum dioramas. Their proximity to the cases of dissection tools, however, evokes a sense of more brutal treatment and one immediately imagines that the racked boxes contain their missing bones."

On the walls of the adjacent exhibition hall is a set of photographs of contemporary San communities in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa by the photographer Paul Weinberg. Moving from photograph to photograph Lane is at first "unaware of other images covering the floor. Closer inspection reveals printed reproductions of colonial documents, photographs and scholarly papers on genitalia and other academically-defined 'unusual' characteristics of Khoisan anatomy, stretching from wall to wall. As realization of the content of the texts and images that were literally underfoot dawned, I became increasingly uncomfortable. My movement around the room became constrained, yet there was no way of skirting around this material. Actual, physical involvement with the substance of the exhibition became

inevitable. Perhaps it was because of this, that of all the shocking elements of the exhibition, I found this one to be the most disturbing."

Lane was not the only person who expressed discomfort at having to walk over the screen-printed floor. Some visitors refused to cross it. Many elements of the exhibition were found to be problematic and *Miscast* proved to be an extremely controversial exhibition. Depending on one's distance from the history being examined, viewers seemed either to acclaim or condemn the exhibition. To those who viewed the oppression of the Khoisan as an issue of the past, the exhibition was considered critical and self-reflexive. To those who believed that little had been done to redress the wrongs of the past, the exhibition seemed more like a re-enactment of the degradations of the past. It was described by some Khoisan viewers as humiliating and shameful.

So, what was it about the form of the exhibition that elicited such strong reactions? Anthropologist Carmel Schrire suggests that it was due to *Miscast* … "…stepping right out of the mould of mannered dioramas and curated collections by exhibiting these same objects in an utterly different way. It does all this by dint of artistic creativity and sheer bravado, offering a series of images that catapult right into the darkest heart of the anthropological venture, to conflate science and sorrow, archives and agony, and to invest museums and their tidy displays with the cold sour stench of the mortuary."[39]

Others were less positive. Khoisan viewers felt that the curator had failed to take them into consideration as audience. They argued that the exhibition had been designed for a white audience, and that they were once again reduced to objects of examination.

There are three problematic aspects of Skotnes' curatorial strategies that are interesting to examine. The first is that Skotnes seems not to have thought through whom her audience would be and how they might react to the exhibiting strategies that she chose. The second is that she has taken as her subject the manner in which the Khoisan have been pathologised, dispossessed and degraded through colonialism and apartheid, but has nowhere shown Khoisan resistance to these acts. The Khoisan as cast in *Miscast* are eternal victims, seemingly without historical agency. The third is that Skotnes seems to have paid little attention to the possibility that her manner of presenting images could re-invoke in viewers what Ernst Van Alphen describes as historical trauma - a traumatic re-enactment of an historical event or situation that is

experienced in the present. With the help of Yvette Abrahams, Okwui Enwezor, Ernst Van Alphen, and others who have considered these issues in the light of the exhibition, I want, in the next few thought pieces, to work through these particular criticisms

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Misjudging audience

The floor proved to be one of the most controversial aspects of the exhibition. There was no escaping it, visitors had to walk over it to reach the main halls of the exhibition. It was created out of linoleum tiles screen-printed with slightly yellowing images and texts from nineteenth and twentieth century illustrated journals, anthropological and medical journals. Included were accounts of a police manhunt for a 'Bushman', posters that advertized spectacles in Europe that featured Khoisan men or women, images of incarcerated men, anthropometric photographs and newspaper reports on 'genetic studies' carried out by scientists.

The intention of the curator, it seems, was to compel viewers to walk across this floor and thereby re-enact a colonial 'trampling' over the Khoisan, a compromising viewing position that was intended to make contemporary viewers aware of their own possible complicity in destructive viewing processes. It seemed to have found a response in viewers like Paul Lane who notes that while the experience was disturbing he could see in it a parallel to his own archeological practice:

"Reflecting on the experience, however, I was struck once again by an archaeological parallel and forced to consider my own practice. Just as texts and images on the floor represent the debris of a particular history, so too do the artefacts strewn across the surface of a site. Yet archaeologists, in trying to define sites and their history, feel they can tread on the debris of their own and others' ancestors with equanimity, colonizing that space for themselves.[40]

Lane was uncomfortable about the floor but he was still able to distance himself and see the ironic intention in the curator's strategy. Others were not able or willing to do so. To many Khoisan visitors the floor was a humiliation. They were repelled at the idea of having to 'trample' on what they viewed as images of themselves. At the opening ceremony of Miscast Mario Mahongo, a church minister and spokesperson for the !Xu San from Schmidtsdrift, Namibia, voiced this position when he stated, "I do not want to walk on this floor, because I am walking on my

people. Their suffering is too important. It should have been shown on the wall."[41]

This reading of the exhibition was more literal than metaphorical. What Skotnes seems not to have considered is that specific, local viewers might not share her distanced and ironical perspectives. Irony requires the ability to distance oneself from the events or peoples portrayed, and these viewers still identified strongly with those on display. While a major goal of the curator seems to have been to offer visitors a critical education about colonialism, she seems to have neglected the fact that many still experience colonialism and its legacies in a painfully intimate way. For many it is not a subject distant from everyday concerns and experiences.

Ernst Van Alphen did not see the exhibition but he writes that:
"the mere description of the linoleum carpet seems to me telling enough. The carpet was embossed with photographic images of the "Bushmen", upon which the viewers were invited to walk or trample. It is clear that this curatorial design was meant as a critical and didactic strategy: the viewers were invited to do in the most literal sense what the constative content of the exhibition tried to convey – that colonial history is always a history of people walking upon other people. However this artifice is only critical or didactic when directed at white viewers. The message that colonial subjugation implies that people (whites) have walked upon others ("Bushmen" in this particular case) is impressed upon white viewers – for black viewers this device is not critical at all."[42]

That the exhibition was perceived to have been designed for white viewers is clear from responses by viewers who identify themselves as Khoisan. Yvette Abrahams, in an exchange with Skotnes, states that "we have here an exhibition created by white people about white people's reaction to the native, but the terrain of discourse is naked Khoisan bodies."[43] Lane quotes from a statement issued by the !Hurikamma Cultural Movement which states that the exhibition was "obviously aimed at white people." Khoisan, it said, do not need to be reminded of the humiliations they have suffered, for they feel these "daily and hourly". For this group, the exhibition simply reaffirmed their "status as a conquered people"[44].

So, why is this story of the floor and the reactions to it interesting to my practice? Because it is a warning. There are different audiences with different relations to the history with which the curator / artist wants to engage, and these audiences are fully capable of challenging the manner in which that history, their history, is being represented. There is a politics of representation and it needs to be negotiated. I have

come to realize that it is better as an artist to speak for and of myself and my history, rather than for and of others. Which is not to say that I cannot approach other histories in South Africa, or elsewhere, but that I need to do so from my own subject position. There is no neutral space from which to approach histories.

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Trophy head

{Figure 34: Target Corned Meat. *A Royal Hunger*. 2002.}
{Figure 35: Target Corned Meat. *A Royal Hunger*. 2002.}

In *A Royal Hunger*, the first animation film that I made, I drew a human head. It appears on a table littered with human body parts that include fingers, eyes and a pot labeled 'vleesch'. The animated sequence begins with a hand of which the fingers are severed. The hand, minus the fingers, is then 'tinned' as Target Corned Meat. Later the tin opens to reveal, not the hand seen going into it, but a severed human head.

{Figure 36: Cover of Southern African Review of Books.}

I saw the head in an article on *Miscast*, in the first article that I read about the exhibition. It was printed large on the front page of a web issue of the South African Review of Books. There was no information about the head, no information about the photograph. It was just there. The articles that accompanied the photograph were three responses to Miscast, as well as an exchange between one of the respondents, Yvette Abrahams, and the curator Pippa Skotnes. In none of the articles did anyone mention the head. It seems to have functioned as a macabre 'illustration' to the articles, a spectacular image for the front cover, an image that was guaranteed to shock[45].

Which is pretty much the reason why I copied the image and drew it into my sequence on the table.

A Royal Hunger was a film about the greed of Leopold II, and in the sequence with the head I was wanting to convey the idea that in their consumption of the Congo Leopold and his acolytes were cannibalistic. Not literally of course, but metaphorically. I drew two 'pioneers' of the early colonization of the Congo - men who are honoured with busts in the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren - facing each other across a table upon which different items of 'food' appeared. I

wanted to reverse the direction of cannibal accusations away from coveted European notions that it is the Africans who are cannibals, towards ideas gleaned from Congolese historians that it was the European conquerors who were held to be the cannibals. I wanted strong images to convey this point. So, while the 'trophy head' clearly had no historical relevance to the history of the Congo, it was a powerful visual element to use in constructing my premise that the colonial consumption of the Congo was cannibalistic.

The reason I have made certain films is because I have had strong feelings about a certain issue – in the case of *A Royal Hunger*, by revelations about Belgian or Leopold's practices in the Congo and by the complete lack of self-reflection on this history in the one museum that ought to be concerned with it, the Royal Museum of Central Africa[46]. I have wanted to convey my feelings through the film. To do this I have selected images that I think are compelling and have placed them into strange juxtapositions and manipulated them through transformations. A corned beef tin that is shown to contain not animal meat but a preserved human head is intended to cause surprise. By creating a sense of the unfamiliar in this way I have hoped to prompt a heightened alertness in the viewer that would prompt them to look and think about certain subjects in fresh ways.

In the light of arguments around *Miscast*, it is hard to justify using that severed head. Respect for the person whose head ended up as a 'trophy' and for an audience who may be affected by its use, are reason enough to seek other ways to make my argument. But what could also be considered is the meaning of that image to myself as well as my personal reasons for wanting to use it. Yes, it is macabre and my fascination with it probably reveals prurient interest, but I am also personally moved by the image to the extent that I want to remember it. I want to imprint it on my memory as a reminder of the history of which I am a part. Those colonials who subjugated the Khoisan are my forebears. That history of colonization is mine. My way of imprinting images into memory is through drawing. Before I draw this head to convey a message to an audience, I draw it to shock myself, to make me feel that history and my personal role in it. *A Royal Hunger* may be a film essay about the relation of Belgium to the Congo but, like all my films, it is also a thought-piece on my relationship with South African histories.

I don't think, in the end, that that is justification enough to include it in a film that is for public distribution. As Yvette Abrahams points out to Skotnes in a heated

exchange about the 'moralities of her exhibition':

"What I have been trying to explain to Skotnes and still cannot seem to get across, is that I am sorry but after all these centuries we are sick of being your projected other. Be it for the exhibition of liberal guilt, public wrist-slitting, or a defensive laager mentality, deconstruct yourselves by all means but leave us out of it."[47]

In an online discussion a year prior to the opening of the *Miscast* on the subject of accessing the trophy heads kept in European museums, Alan Kirkeldy argues that "the point (Skotnes) wishes to make in the exhibition and text can be made quite adequately without resorting to sensationalism and defilement of individuals' remains." He asks if there is "any qualitative difference between what she wishes to do and what those who collected the heads for display in the first place were doing? He concludes with the question of whether "we really need to resort to tactics of this nature to portray the past?"[48].

I take cognizance of these arguments. There are more considerate or more restrained ways to engage with painful histories.

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Things vaguely apprehended

Much of the search in the last five years has been directed towards determining what kind of investigation my films are, and what kind of discourse I enter by making the films. I do it in an attempt to locate my work with that of other, similar, practitioners, who may or may not be visual artists. I do it to alert myself to the various games that are being played, and to the game rules that might apply. Clearly my work is hybrid, straddling a number of different genres, but before I even begin to understand what this hybridity itself could mean I need to explore what it is that I have been borrowing from particular genres or disciplines. No work is made in a vacuum and I suspect that I have been borrowing strategies from different kinds of practices almost unknowingly. Being described as a documentary filmmaker when I don't see my own work as documentary could mean that I am sending out conflicting signals with my work due, possibly, to not fully realising what it is that I am borrowing from the genre. The desire to name what I do is about recognising the strategies of which I make use so as to understand the implications of using those strategies.

I do not think that I am alone in wanting to name the kind of work that I do. A filmmaker who thinks in interesting ways about the implications of documentary strategies, Jill Godmilow, admits to investing time in trying to figure out what to call the kind of work that she does. "I've been looking for a label to replace "documentary" that would include, besides the kind of films that I produce, all the films that make some kind of claim to represent a real (not fictional) world, and that do not contain performances by professional actors – everything but scripted drama." Godmilow seeks a category that would include all films that have a common defining trait: "inherent in their stance towards their audience is the claim not so much to educate but to edify. So I like to call this huge class of films "films of edification". At least this label avoids classic truth claims of documentary and acknowledges the intention to persuade and to elevate, to raise up audience to a more sophisticated or refined notion of what *is*".[49]

At the outset I was certain that my practice was a kind of history-work[50]. The films are about an engagement with the past, with historical 'events' that continue to reverberate in our age. So I read into history as a field - into the philosophy of history, the history of history, into postmodern approaches to history, into micro-history. I wanted to know what it is that contemporary historians do, how they approach their task, what in fact they saw as their task. Hayden White and post-modern historians were immensely influential in my thinking of how to approach history-making in the present time.

At every stage of my reading into the field of contemporary historiography I felt a strong affiliation with the approach of historians. I gained insights into what I was doing that I hadn't realised I was doing. Which of course was part of the objective. But I also realised that viewing my films as historiography – better to use Hayden White's term 'historiophoty' ('the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse[51]) - was only highlighting some aspects of the process and intention. It didn't take into account the imaginative elements in the films, the fictionalization of the collected materials through drawing.

This process of fictionalization of historical materials was perhaps closer to the work of contemporary historical novelists. Those writers who researched events and times and mental attitudes of the past but who narrativised them into literary forms. In the way I collect and use materials for my films I think have a closer affiliation with the way that these writers work than with historiographers. The close interrelationship

of idea and form that is an essential component of my work, while not of equal concern to historiographers, can play a major role in the work of historical novelists. I am thinking here of a writer like WG Sebald who approached historical subjects obliquely, developing a literary form that was part hybrid novel, part memoir, part travelogue, part dream sequence. Sebald too cared about how his work was described, disdaining the word 'novel' for its emphasis on personal relationships and the heavy plotting that was seemingly required. Unlike Godmilow, Sebald did not come up with a more apt term to name his work.

In an earlier thought-piece I mentioned my surprise at having my work described as documentary. It became necessary to consider if there was validity in that claim and if my understanding of the term documentary was too limited. I decided to investigate, and started searching for documentary makers who might share some of my concerns. In the writings and discussions of film maker Jill Godmilow I found innovative ways to think about the concept. Her insistence that these were works of persuasion and that this should be made visible was one important lesson. In her thinking about intention and purpose of 'films of edification' I found echoes of my intentions and purpose. In her manner of collecting and sorting materials for her films I recognised some of my own collecting and sorting habits. So here I found a practitioner with whom, on certain levels, I could connect.

A few years ago organizers of film festivals recognised the emergence of a new genre, that of 'animated documentaries', and created a new category to accommodate these works. At first I was excited about this development, perhaps here I might find works similar to mine. It wasn't too fruitful a search. The majority of films that are described as animated documentaries are strongly narrative, often quite linear in their narrative structure. They are also strongly voco- or verbocentric, in that they privilege the voice and verbal expression over any other, including the visual[52]. Vococentric and verbocentric are terms brought into use by the sound theorist Michel Chion to describe in cinema how "the voice is isolated in the sound mix like a solo instrument - for which the other sounds (music and noise) are merely the accompaniment." In the majority of animated documentaries that I have seen, the scripted text/voice seems to have come first in the production process, followed by the images. I have found few that are without narration. In both form and content, those films designated as animated documentaries are often very close to the graphic novel. Some of them existed first as graphic novels, like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, an autobiographical

work that depicts her childhood in Iran during and after the Islamic Revolution. In 2007 Satrapi, co-directing with another comic artist, adapted it to animated film. Unlike the graphic novel, which is generally the work of one artist, animated documentaries are team work, calling for the combined input of a production studio. *Waltz with Bashir*[53], the first 'full-length feature' described as an animated documentary, was a major studio production filmed first in live action and then animated by a team of animators.

I started to wonder if the graphic novel was interesting to my work. Not only are drawings central to these works but they are ordered sequentially, as are mine, though through editing. Only, like the ani-docs, these visual works are chiefly narrative and linear, with clear beginning, middle and end. Frans Masereel's *The City*, is one exception[54]. Here, in this set of a hundred woodcuts, there is the sense of an artist working to convey an idea through image fragments that connect associatively. The order in which the images are viewed was never indicated by the artist. There is no text to lead the viewing, to connect the images, to drive the 'story'. Individual images in the series are frequently narrative, but together they do not add up to a linear narrative. They create a complex view of life and lives in the city.

Of the practices already mentioned - historiography and documentary, including animated documentary – most communicate narratively. So I was still looking for practices that were closer to mine in form, that worked associatively. I was looking for those practices in which the shape of the work was determined by the content or ideas of the work. I started to think that my films were perhaps like poems. Might it not be interesting to describe them as visual poems? There were certainly many similarities. In poems ideas are compressed into loaded words or fragments of phrases. They connect associatively. My films are composed in similar ways, with ideas compressed not into words and phrases but into sequences of images. Thinking of them as poems draws attention to a form in which shape and meaning are integrally connected. It draws attention to the density or opacity of the finished work. But there, again, lies a danger and the point at which I stop wanting to call my films visual poems. I want to make a work in which the form is determined by the ideas of the work, in which the ideas connect associatively, but I want it also to be discursive. To my mind the density and opacity of poetry is the antithesis of discursivity.

By now it must be becoming clear that I have seriously contradictory demands for my work. Discursiveness but no narrative, opacity but no hermeticism,

fictionalization but not without historical accuracy. It seems though that there is one form or approach that might allow for these contradictions. It is the film essay.

The avant-garde filmmaker and artist Hans Richter first used the term in an article in 1940 in which he described the film essay as evolving out of the documentary tradition but aiming to find a representation for intellectual content and images for mental concepts. As an approach, he suggested, it strives to make visible the invisible world of concepts, thoughts and ideas in ways conventional film does not. It is a form in which relations are not necessarily bound to reality but can be contradictory, irrational even fantastic[55]. The film essay has continued to be understood as a hybrid form that includes writing and images, fiction and documentary elements. It is, according to contemporary video essayist Ursula Biemann, a practice of organizing complexities, "a non-linear, non-logical movement of thought that draws on many different sources of knowledge"[56].

Finally it sounds like someone is describing my project. Perhaps here, in the film essay, is the form that can mediate between different cultural spaces and aesthetic forms. Perhaps this is the approach that accommodates various discursive levels of lived experience and constructed memories, researched information and personal associations, theoretical speculations and poetical forms. Perhaps this is a promising way of thinking about my work

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Postscript Off the Record : Mealie garden - Grenade - Paper airplanes

{Figure 37: Mealie: *Off the Record*. 2008.}
{Figure 38: Hand-grenade. *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Three drawings in this sequence. It was planned from the beginning as a run of images. I had found a number of photographs of gardens created by soldiers in World War I and wanted to use this idea of gardening in the midst of war. Since the film was about the presence of South Africans in France and Flanders I wanted to draw mealies (maize) growing in this garden.

Mealie-pap and mealies are the staple diet of the majority of South Africans and they are mentioned in an article in the War Illustrated of 1918 in which a journalist describes his visit to the barracks of colonial labour contingents on the

Front. He writes of "the Basuto's" - those "shiny-skinned fellows from our African Dominion" - who are "splendidly housed and plentifully fed, great ovens full of 'mealies' preparing for them". This rosy description seemed to be in shrill contrast to other descriptions of the living conditions of South African labour contingents in which their camps were likened to military prisons. Concealed from view behind corrugated iron and under the control of guards and military police to enforce their segregation from the local population, the men of the SANLC were hugely resentful of what they described as their 'special' treatment. Given the level of resentment of the men towards these living conditions - resentment that threatened to erupt into open defiance in 1918 and which led the South African government to recall the Contingent rather than deal with the cause of the men's frustrations - makes the article in the War Illustrated ring more than a little untrue.

So, it was going to be a drawing of a garden in war time, and the plants growing would be mealies. The first of the series of drawings was a fairly straight-forward reproduction of a hut covered in sail-cloth upon which a soldier had painted plant forms. In the animation, in front of the hut, mealie plants start growing up out of the soil. There is a nice, though unplanned, play in the drawing between the plants still growing and the painted plants on the walls of the hut - which read like shadows of the mealies ahead of time.

In the next drawing a mealie cob changes into a hand-grenade. The pin is removed and the grenade shoots out of frame. It seemed such an obvious transformation - from a maize cob to a hand grenade - that it hardly needed thinking about.

The third drawing shows the tops of the mealie plants and the grenade shooting into view. It explodes - and the shards become paper airplanes. The run of images continues into another drawing with one of the paper planes flying towards and then into a typewriter and emerging as a poster advertising a talk by Sol Plaatje.

One of the greatest pleasures in the process of drawing these films is working on a run of images like the above. I wish I could make it happen more often. It is a possibility for which I am always on the lookout. I like it because I get so immersed in the process of plotting how the changes will occur, how the one thing will become the other. It is more complicated than a sequence that happens within the 'borders' of a drawing. And the effect of a run of images transforming one into another is dynamic.

A whole series of ideas can be made to interrelate and to carry the viewer along on a wave of transformations.

Postings 21

Thinking about discursivity

The mealie (maize) to hand grenade sequence in *Off the Record* is fictional. By which I mean it is not to be taken literally. It is not something that happened. It does not relate to a particular event in the past. The elements – the mealie, the hand grenade – are markers, image-ideas intended to allude to the presence of black South African labourers on the Front in World War I, to patronising colonial attitudes towards them, and to the different set of living conditions to which they were subjected. Ideally these ideas are packed metaphorically into the images and transferred visually to the viewer who then unpacks the idea out of the image. Only, I don't think it does work like that. These ideas are not *contained* in the sequence of a mealie becoming a hand-grenade and exploding into a mass of paper airplanes. Without background information about the context and purpose of the film, about the article in the War Illustrated, I don't think these ideas can be deduced from the images.

To me, as the maker of the film, the metaphors are clear – the mealie for black South Africans, and the grenade exploding both for a sense of the violence of war and for the violent conditions imposed on blacks in South Africa at that time. The shrapnel as paper planes reflects a decision not to extend further the metaphor of physical violence but to switch 'registers' and to refer now to an intellectual response to those conditions. The paper planes become a poster advertising a public talk given by Solomon T. Plaatje, a man who can be located historically in the story of WWI but whose work of sustained resistance to the eroding of citizens rights to black South African covers a much broader period.

To a first-time viewer of the film some but certainly not all of these metaphors will be apparent. Taking into account that each viewer can only bring to the film that which they already know, each will make of the mealie-to-grenade-to-paper airplanes sequence something different. Depending on the personal history of the viewer the sequence may be perceived as a strange but (hopefully) poetic transformation of objects one into another, or as a meditation on South African intellectual resistance at the turn of the 20th century. I don't think any viewer, no matter how steeped they are

in South African history, would understand the degree to which it is a meditation on that history by watching the film alone. To reach that understanding of *Off the Record*, would require that the viewer take in the wall of documents, *Footnote*, and read some of the *Postscripts*. The film is the visual abstraction of these ideas. Alone it does not convey the reach of the project, it is too hermetic a medium. It is only together with the writings that lead towards it and reflect upon it, that the film becomes discursive.

Postings 22

Sound in sacred spaces

{Figure 39: Sint-Jozefskapel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 40: Kapel Ter Ruste. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

It started with the idea of recording the sound in my studio. It is spring and the door of my studio is open and the sounds from the world outside filter in. So I turned on the iPod and let it run while I worked further. Knowing that it was on and recording I became very aware of the sounds in the room too. The ticking of the computer keys, the squeak of my chair, a fly crossing the room.

The illusion of space in my films is fairly shallow. Objects move across the picture surface rather than into any depth. It is sound that can create the dimension of depth that I feel is lacking in the images. As I recorded the sounds of my studio I started to think that I could use these or similar spaces in the film. They wouldn't be space sounds that matched or mimicked the images, but they could refer to the images in other ways. As sounds of the space in which the drawings were made - my studio. Or sounds that connected to the content and purpose of the drawings – the idea of organised religion and my response to it. Suppose I record the sounds of religious spaces, empty of people, silent of activity. Religious spaces are, after all, spatial. Suppose that the soundspace on *Heir to the Evangelical Revival* (one of the *Salvation* films) was of 'silent' church chapels?

Then I started to think about the everyday sounds of sacralised spaces. I liked this idea because I wasn't interested in recording the sacred or creating a sense of sacredness. I wanted to go in the opposite direction and think about the existence of these sacred spaces in the everyday. My interest in religion is not in its content or dogma, not in the strange need that most people seem to have for it. My curiosity is with its political and historical importance, with its utopianism, but also with its

mundane aspects. Recording daily sounds filtering into these spaces might be an interesting way to approach these.

At this point my thoughts jumped away to a photograph that I have of my mother sitting on a platform at a disused station somewhere in the eastern Cape in South Africa, her legs dangling over onto the railway lines. She told me that just as my father had taken the photograph a train came belting through the station and she had to get up and out of the way in a hurry. I have that photograph framed next to my bed. It suddenly seemed important to me that I find that station and record the 'silence' there. To hear what it was that my mother heard as she sat there looking at my father taking the photograph, before the train came thundering through. I wanted to experience what she had experienced. What I really wanted to do was to record the absence of my mother. I wanted to make a sound memory to go with that photograph.

Now I started to wonder how much or how well I could use sounds - 'missing' sounds, 'silences', 'absences' - to assist my images. What if I were to record my voice in empty religious spaces - empty of worshippers or other visitors? I have written a monologue for the film *Heir* in which I consider my own atheism in the light of my forebears strong commitment to various religious movements. I could start to record sentences or phrases of that monologue in these spaces.

The next day I made a walk from home to a number of street chapels in the vicinity. Sint-Jozefs chapel is one in which I could enter and close the door behind me. Separating me from the holy statues, candles in plastic bottles, and metal candlestick holders, was a metal gate topped with a cross. In front of which was a bench for kneeling upon, and at the left side a small seat. I closed the door, sat down and listened. There was a pleasant ring to the space and so I made my first 'silent space' recording. Then I opened 'Religious walks for an Atheist', my walking book into which I had written the first part of my monologue, took a measured breath and began to speak the words.

I have been wondering about how to approach this monologue for a long while. Hearing my recorded voice makes me edgy. It sounds thin and a little too high-pitched. It comes over as both pretentiously English and flatly South African. This monologue is central to the film, to all the four films of the cycle *Salvation*. I wrote it one evening in a restaurant in Clermont-Ferrand. *Off the Record* was showing in 2009 in the Labo section and I had been invited, as author of a selected film, to be at the festival. Most evenings I went to the same restaurant to eat and to work on ideas for

the film. Even as I was writing it I wondered how I would ever be able to speak it. I haven't used any voice or dialogue in the films before, never mind my own. My practice has been to try to convey ideas entirely through drawing, adding a word or phrase in only when I needed it to sharpen the meaning of the image or sequence. I did consider writing the words into the film but I do not want viewers to have to read the film. I needed to find a voice, my own voice, to speak the monologue.

One afternoon last year I met Tunde Adefioye in Leuven. It was a chance meeting, we were both waiting for printing work to be done at a printer in Heverlee. Tunde is preparing a doctorate in bio-engineering, but it was poetry of which we spoke, more specifically, of a poetry initiative, Urban Woorden, that he has founded. We kept in touch and when I was needing advice on how to approach my monologue we met up again. I wanted to know what he thought of me working with a 'voice coach'. Or mechanically or digitally altering my voice. I am in awe of the work of Laurie Anderson and the manner in which she manipulates her voice as she tells stories on stage, filtering it in part through a system that makes her voice sound male. Maybe this kind of filtering would be interesting. Tunde quietly brushed off both approaches. Working with a 'coach' might lead me away from what I wanted, from a personal approach. Using filters would mask my voice, it could be a way of hiding. So we returned to my first idea of simply setting up a microphone in my studio and working it out myself. Tunde thought this the most promising approach. He offered to listen to the results, or to find others who would listen, and to offer his response.

So, a season later, I sat down in the Sint-Jozefs chapel in Vichte and turned on the voice memo of the iPod. This wasn't going to be a professional recording, I would probably need a different kind of microphone for that. But knowing it was an attempt only, helped. I started, hesitantly feeling the words: "I am a-the-ist… ag-nos-tic… a free-think-er…". That space did something to me. I couldn't say the words out loudly but heard myself whispering them. Some words came out trippingly and I needed to repeat them. Some words were really hard to say, like 'kaffir'. I am South African, this word is problematic, and I heard my voice drop as I mouthed it, hardly daring to speak it. In its original sense the word means heathen. It is a term taken from the Arabs, who had used *Kaffir* to mean someone who was not a believer, in their case, a non-Muslim. Europeans then applied the term to Africans, as unbelievers in terms of the Christian faith. It became a very derogative word, intended to slight and to humiliate.

It felt a little subversive to sit in that beautiful space, filled with objects placed there by believers, and to say what I was not. I had never intended this air of subversion. Even as I felt it I thought it a little childish, facing religious icons in a religious space and declaring my atheism. It wasn't my intention to create the impression that there was something traitorous in my words. That would imply that I felt there was a substance to religion, to belief, which I don't. But I also thought it was funny, me, long time agnostic/atheist/non-believer, whispering at plaster statues and plastic flowers that I didn't believe in them. And in the mix of thoughts and walks and drawings that had led up to this moment I realised that I was finding a way to intervene, to speak the words I had written. It was self-conscious, but that was okay. Whispering those sentiments in that space gave them a dynamic that simply would not be there if I was saying them in my studio.

Visiting these places or spaces had become a walking project that I have been recording in a book, 'Religious walks for an Atheist'. Keeping this walking journal had a number of purposes. I was training for a seven day walk that I would be doing later in 2011 on the old pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. I needed to train for this but the idea of getting fit didn't fire my imagination. I like walking though, so I decided to make a project of it. I started to keep a book in November 2010 in which I would plan and record walks. There were to be rules to this game. Each walk had to be more than an hour. These would be secular walks in a religious world, that would include churches, mosques, synagogues, free-mason lodges, but also religious routes and streets with names of religious people. I would be looking for traces of marginalised religions, absences of Jews, Moslems, dissenting groups, women. Through these walks I would educate myself on religious history in Europe and the UK. And as I walked I would return to my own memories of a Christian upbringing and would try to formulate why I don't like organized or any religion. I would write a poem on each walk using phrases, memories or words found on the way or taken from the different books that I would be carrying with me.

By the time of making the first recording in the chapel I had made 47 walks. The book had become thick with images and words that had been drawn, written or pasted in. The pages were bruised by the many notes, observations, and copies of information I had found on city walls or elsewhere on the walks. I had walked in Belgium, South Africa, the Netherlands and in the UK. There were walks in airports in

three countries in which I had searched out the 'multi-faith' rooms that are sometimes provided. I had written only two poems.

I thought listening back to the first recording of my voice was going to make me uncomfortable, but it wasn't too bad. Ok, at first it did sound a little dramatic, too secretive, too whispery, with too much intonation. I did like the space sound behind the voice – the sound of a small domed space.

Walk 53 was in the district of Schoonhoven in South Holland. Once I had left the outskirts of the town and was on the Grote Kerkvliet, an old path with canals on both sides that leads to the Jacobskerk in Cabauw, I recorded a larger piece of the monologue. And this time I did not whisper it. I said it out loud as I walked. My voice didn't scare me any longer, though at one point it did scare a bird out of her nest. It was a beautiful spring morning, a slight breeze blowing, birds everywhere, and as I walked I repeated the monologue again and again. It begun to sound like a chant, like the repetitious recital of a prayer. And even though I don't think I can use this recording - the sound of my walking boots crunching stones underfoot and the wind in the microphone will be too much of a distraction – there was something liberating about announcing my lack of belief to a herd of cows grazing in the fields.

Postings 23

Far from Kimberley[57]

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.

{Figure 41: The Red Caps Party I.}
{Figure 42: The Red Caps Party II.}

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 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.

{Figure 43: New Rush. *Mine.* 2013.}

Postings 24

***Agnes' Tales* and getting personal**

A number of years ago I was given a digital copy of a text entitled *Agnes' Tales*. At the time I was working on a different film and my interests were not with family history. I don't remember even opening the document, never mind reading it. Then, about two years ago, while searching through documents in my father's brown boxes, he and I came across a printed version of *Agnes' Tales*. The print was a little faded but I started to read and found it to be a really interesting account of the life of my great-great grandparents who came out to South Africa in the 1830s as Wesleyan[58] missionaries. Only on my return to Belgium did I realise that I'd had the *Tales* for years on my own computer.

Agnes was the daughter of the missionaries and around 1927, with the help of her own daughter, she recorded her memories of the lives of her parents and of her own childhood. The *Tales* begin with the arrival by ship of her father Richard Giddy to the Cape as a young Wesleyan evangelist in the 1830s with his wife and young family. It continues with 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.

My reluctance to read it when it was originally given to me might have had something to do with the title, which is a little awkward. It seems as though it should read: *Agnes's Tales*. And the use of *Tales* in the title sounds exaggerated, sentimental. Tales are something fictitious, as in fairy tales. When I was a child 'telling tales' was synonymous with lying. Agnes' story is more of a chronicle. It is revealing of her view on her world, of course, and that is a large part of its interest, but it also seems to be a fairly accurate account of many events - political, social, religious - that occurred in South Africa in those years. These are mentioned as background to more personal family reminiscences, but having checked them against accounts by others, it seems that Agnes had a pretty good memory.

In the same year that Agnes recounted these memories to her daughter, her brother Henry (my great-grandfather) penned his recollections and these were published in a Kimberley newspaper. His recollections were specifically of the early days on the Diamond Fields, 1871-73, when he and his brother Orlando were mining their claim in what was to become the Kimberley mine. These memoirs were solicited by a journalist who had been active on the Diamond Fields, George Beet, for a publication he was planning on the early days of the Fields. In one of the old photo albums in my father's collection there is a photograph of this George Beet visiting Lauriston, my great-grandfather's farm. It shows the two men, both with imposing white beards, sitting on a bench outside the farmhouse. George Beet's name and the date 1927 is written underneath. This corresponds to the date on Agnes' Tales and suggests that not only Henry's but also Agnes' reminiscences were motivated by the visit of Beet.

Because Agnes' Tales is so comprehensive, so filled with events and dates and names and journeys and references to objects that are in either my father's or my possession, I was drawn in and started wanting to know more of this family. Why did they leave England? What were they hoping to find in a place that was not yet mapped? What effect did they have as missionaries? Pages of questions, comments and notes started to fill my journals. I realised that *Agnes' Tales* offered a way of looking at South African history through the lens of one family. I requested a document search in the archives of the town museum in Kimberley on anything related to the Giddy family in the years that they were active in the town, and when some weeks later went there to see what they had found was handed a weighty pile of documents. Together with searches through my father's archive which turned up letters and the articles by my great-grandfather Henry, a diary by his brother, photographs, farm deeds, rumours of diamonds still in the possession of some of the family, one 'unchristian' death, attempts to find a family crest, places of origin in England, and lots more, I started to have a rich context in which to place *Agnes' Tales.*

Wanting to sort these collected materials in a way in which I could easily access them I started a new book into which I pasted the *Tales* onto the right hand side of the page and kept the other side free for related texts, family-tree notes, photographs of mission stations, and anything that added context to Agnes' account. I made notes into the texts. These collaged pages started to form a layered text. I was wanting to

form a ‘thick’ description - both figuratively and literally – both of images and writing, one that could lead to ideas for drawings.

{Figure 44: Agnes’ Book.}
{Figure 45: Agnes’ Book.}

It was about a year after first reading the *Tales* that I started to think that my next film could be based on this document and the collected materials building up in the Agnes book. It took another year before I realised that there were too many aspects to this story to make a single film and that it would work better as a cluster of films. I gave the project the title of *Salvation* to keep my attention on the religious elements of the story. Quite early on I decided that I would need to approach it – or at least parts of it - through my own dislike of organised religion and the evangelical impulse, and my own atheism.

Ideas started to form into four identifiable clusters that have since become four separate films within *Salvation*. I had thought in the beginning that the focus of the work would be on the effects that the missionaries had on the local population and, reciprocally, the effects that the local population had on the missionaries – relying to a degree on published works such as Jean and John Comaroff’s *On Revelation and Revolution*, a two volume publication on nonconformist missionaries in South Africa[59]. The serious side of me said that it should be a film about the political effects of these missionaries as ‘passive’ colonizers and that I should extrapolate outwards from Agnes’ story to larger events in South African history. Soon I found myself going steadily in the opposite direction. As I selected images to draw, and as I drew, I found myself returning more and more to personal memories and concerns.

For instance, I started the drawings of the two missionary wives and their seventeen children with the intention of concentrating on the things that I knew about these people – their names, dates of birth and so on[60]. Looking closely at the three portrait photographs of Sarah Jane that I had gave me information about the way the light falls on her face, the quality of fabric of her dress, the way she does her hair. But it told me nothing that I really wanted to know about her. I had only portrait photographs of one of the nineteen people or babies that I drew, so that I could learn nothing about the other eighteen from the photographs that I had appropriated to use. Rather than a process of excavation of information, then, drawing these women and babies was about projection onto the drawings of my desire to know more about them.

It was a means of creating an ‘arena’ in which I could think about their stories, and about my relationship to them. It was as though, while the drawings were being made, I could spend time with these distant family members.

This sense of spending time with (distant) family made me realise the extent to which I missed the chance to spend more time with my parents or my sisters. I started to suspect that what had started out as a work about these forebears was becoming a work about my own separation from family. Before I moved to Belgium, my one sister to Canada, the other to the UK (she has since returned to South Africa), and my parents to Knysna, we all lived in Johannesburg and could easily meet up on a weekend, at Christmas or on birthdays. I deeply regret the loss of that easy coming together. What must it have been like, then, for those people I was drawing to leave parents and siblings behind in the UK, knowing that, in all likelihood, they would never see them again. Making the drawings became about thinking of separation, almost of compensating for missing family. I don’t remember being too concerned at the time as to how the drawing and animation were recorded on film. I do remember that for those weeks that I spent making these drawings I was happily (re)visiting family.

A similar personalization occurred with another film in the cluster, *Orlando’s Book*. It began as a reflection on the contradictory experience of receiving a book of illustrations and poems of an idealised England, as Orlando did, while living on isolated mission stations, in the dry semi-desert of the Karoo, or with the fine dust of open pit mining on the Diamond Fields. Being brought up on English literature while living in the colonies or post-colonies was a fairly common experience. It was one that I understood since as a child growing up in South Africa I had internalised the plants and landscapes and seasons of England as if they were my own. The film became about the disjunctive qualities of these experiences – of literary memories and of memories of places that I had experienced.

While the first part of *Orlando’s Book* is about this particular book of English landscapes and the images inside, the second part has become about my personal experiences and memories. In this instance about memories of travelling with my parents through South Africa. It would take us two days to get to the coast from Johannesburg. On the way we would stop at one of those designated picnic places, with a row of pepper trees and a concrete table and benches, and eat cold roast chicken and ice-berg lettuce that my mother had packed in tin foil and Tupperware. Near the

table would be a concrete dustbin, frequently overflowing, and a stream of large ants leading to and from it. I hated putting my bare feet down on the sand because of the large ants so would sit on the bonnet of the car and eat lunch there. While visiting my father this year I photographed the picnic basket that my mother once made and that we always carried with us. I'm drawing those roadside picnics at present.

Something has been happening in these films that has not happened to the same extent in previous films. The revisiting of childhood experiences, the exploring of religious dissidence through walking and the keeping of a walking journal, the searches together with my father through his archives, have started to become purpose in themselves. The process has become the reason for the work. Whereas before everything was subordinate to the final work, now I am noticing that the finished film starts to function as the trace of the process. The balance seems to be shifting in interesting ways.

Postings 25

Walter

{Figure 46: Walter's diary.}

Walter Giddy was twenty years old when he enlisted in 1915 and was sent from the Eastern Cape to England for training. It was there that he started his diary and he wrote in it regularly until shortly before his death near Arras in northern France in April 1917. Twenty years ago I had gone with my parents to the little town of Fampoux outside of Arras to find his grave. None of his immediate family had ever been there. We found his gravestone in a row at the far end of the Point du Jour cemetery. Though his name is on the stone it is unlikely that he is buried underneath it. 'Known to be buried in this cemetery' is the message carved at the top of the stone. Similar messages are to be seen on the stones alongside his. It means that a number of bodies that could not be identified with certainty are buried in this last row. It isn't a very satisfying conclusion. It is better though than the message on some of the other stones alongside Walter's: 'Thought to be buried in this graveyard'. So, Walter lies there, somewhere.

In the summer of 2008 when *Off the Record* was showing at In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, my father, my son Yves and I went back to the graveyard (Yves

then the age of Walter when he enlisted and looking uncannily like him). After leaving the graveyard we wandered through the town of Fampoux trying to envision the battle in which Walter was killed. We had different written accounts of the battle of Fampoux, but there was little to help us reconstruct it. The signs of battle are outside of the town, in the numerous Commonwealth War Grave Commission cemeteries scattered around the countryside - Level Crossing cemetery, Sunken Road cemetery, Happy Valley cemetery.

According to a letter from his friend Sid Phillips who was with him at the time, Walter was killed instantly by flying shrapnel[61]:

> "Dear Gwen,
> I feel I must write and ask you to express to Walter Giddy's people my heart-felt sorrow at his death. I voice the opinion of everyone here that he was one of our best men. The day he was killed he was offered the job of looking after our over-coats in the Reserve Trenches while we went "over the top", but he refused as he wanted to "go over" with us. We were going through a village before the attack, when he fell dead from shrapnel. He was buried next day just outside the village and knowing him as I do both at College and here, I feel as if I have lost by best "pal" here.
> I rejoined the Regiment a few weeks ago after eight months in England, and he was just as cheerful as ever although a bit thinner, but this is not to be wondered at after spending a Winter out here.
> If I can do anything for his people or you I shall be only too pleased.
> My address is "D" Coy. 2nd S.A.I. France.
> Trusting that you are well, and with kind regards;
> I remain,
> Yours very truly
> S.G.Phillips. 1615"

Sid Phillips is one of the few friends with whom he had enlisted that Walter did not see killed in action. During the battle of Delville Wood Walter writes:

> Sunday 9th.
> 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 following day he takes the valuables off the body of his friend Fatty Roe.

> Monday 10th.
> Still hanging on, & the shells flying round, three more of our fellows wounded, out of our Platoon. Took Fatty Roe's valuables off him & handed them over to Sergeant Restall, (he was an Imperial Corporal in the Boer War, & says he remembers when a span of oxen were commandeered from Father).

The same must have been done of him for his diary was returned to the family. It might have been 'war-torn' but from the transcription that his sister made from it there was not much that was illegible.

Postings 26

The diary

{Figure 47: Frontispiece diary.}

It is called Walter's diary but the book that I drew in *Off the Record* was made by my grandmother, Kate Giddy. Walter's original dairy no longer exists. It was damaged and so a number of years after he was killed in Arras, in Northern France, his younger sister copied it over into a sturdier notebook. She painted a front page and bound the

book in a leather cover. It is this book, now in my father's possession, that is known as Walter's diary.

In recent years my father had read extracts of this diary to us and so when I was collecting materials for the film I remembered it and, very carefully as it is now quite fragile, made a copy of the book to bring back to Belgium. At first I wasn't sure how I might use it in the film. Walter was a young man of twenty when he volunteered to fight in World War I. He went from a farm in the Eastern Cape to Borden in the UK to train, then fought with the South African Infantry in Egypt and Northern France until 1917, when he was killed by shrapnel.

My dilemma was that I had no way of connecting to the experiences of Walter. His diary reads quite fluently, he is so very polite in the way he writes, always understating the dreadful events that he witnesses. I had a sense that he was writing it not to himself, as one might expect in a diary, but to his family, and that he was using a style of writing that he felt appropriate. Out of his writing emerges a sense of camaraderie that binds him and his friends. A male way of social functioning that I could appreciate but with which I couldn't really connect. And his experiences were traumatic, having school friends shot dead in the trench next to him, surviving the battle of Delville Wood in which hundreds of his Company were killed. How could I possibly relate to all of that.

All the while I was reading the diary I was forgetting that it was not Walter's handwriting that I was reading, but his sister's. I was looking *through* the writing at the story of Walter but forgetting that the diary was a copy that had been transcribed by my grandmother, and that I could look at her mediation as a way to connect to the diary.

Kate, who had graduated from art school, covered the new diary in leather which she embossed, not with Walter's initials but her own, KMG. Tucked in at the back of her book she included a number of documents that added context to the diary. There is a photograph of Walter sent back from Egypt, a young blond man in a swimming towel. There is a formal photo of him in uniform taken prior to his leaving for Europe. And there are a number of letters. One is from his commanding officer informing the family of his death. Another is one of condolence to the family from a school friend who served with him in the same regiment. There are newspaper clippings with news of his death, of a memorial service, an obituary by a friend. There is a poem on Delville Wood. 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.

By transcribing the diary it is no longer Walter’s work alone, it has become Kate’s work too. New meanings and readings are added into it. The writing over of the diary must have taken time, as would the binding in leather, the embossing and the painting of a frontispiece. I could understand it then as a means to hold onto his memory. As the creation of a space and of an extended time wherein Walter could be brought close again. I could understand it as act of imprinting upon memory. An act of possession. When I started to think about the diary in this way I felt that I recognised the gesture.

As my realisation of the layers embedded in the work grew I knew that I could use it in the film. There was the story of Walter at the heart of the work. Of the mediation of Kate in making her brother’s diary her own. Of my grandfather, Kate’s husband, inscribing a message to my father on the origins of the diary onto the painted front page. Of my father reading extracts from the diary, wanting us to know these stories. It became something compelling - the frontispiece, the cover, the words, the layers of historical traces - and I started wanting to make it my own.

→ 46 (genre)

Postings 27
Walking in sacred spaces

{Figure 48: detail Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

One of the game rules of my walks in sacred spaces is that I use the time to think back on my experiences with organised religion. Memories haven’t exactly streamed in. After 74 walks only two memories are recorded. I don’t have any bad memories about religious upbringing, I just never paid much attention to what I viewed as dull services, stories, and philosophies. It was, to my mind, an uninteresting subject. As young children my sister and I attended Sunday School at a little church that later became a synagogue, and I do remember singing a hymn there called ‘All things bright and beautiful’ which had one line - “the purple headed mountain” – that created a strong visual image in my mind that is still there. Later my parents sent us to an

Anglican private school at which we had a minimal religious upbringing to which I paid scant attention. When I was preparing for my 'confirmation' at age thirteen I was expected to attend a church service every Sunday and to have my presence registered in a little booklet that had been given me for that purpose. My mother would take me to the evening service at a small church in the neighbouring suburb of Fairmount. It wasn't our regular church and I no longer remember why we went there. Some way into the service I would have a coughing fit and have to go outside. This started to happen regularly and I ended up spending much of the services wandering around outside of the church. It was a little embarrassing having to make an exit while choking and spluttering but since the services were dull in the extreme, it was a relief to escape them and once out I never returned to my seat. Even now I have difficulty sitting through a recital, play or concert where, as soon as I realise that I am to keep quiet, I feel an itch growing in my throat that threatens to become a cough, and I have to wait, hardly able to breathe, until there is a pause in the proceedings or a bout of clapping and I can at last cough.

So, there are just two memories in my walking book. If religion has been so irrelevant to me then why does it matter enough to me now to make a film in which I examine missionaries, religious dissenters, Jewish histories, and the emigration of Huguenots? Why do I spend so much time wandering around old churches, planning walks that follow street names of saints, reading up on Lollards, Muggletonians, Diggers and other 'heretics'. Why do I buy books on 'Christianity in the Netherlands', or 'Martyrs and Mystics'? Why am I keeping a notebook called Dictionary of Dissent?

{Figure 49: detail Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

It started with *Agnes' Tales* and the growing realisation that more than a few of my forebears have been priests, missionaries or religious refugees. Agnes' maternal grandfather, Thomas Sephton, come out to South Africa in the 1820s in a party of settlers, led by his father Hezekiah Sephton, who identified themselves as Wesleyan. Hezekiah's wife, however, is described by Agnes as having been a converted Jewess. Their son Thomas, then eighteen, wanted to be a missionary and accompanied the Rev. Mr. Edwards as a catechist to a site beyond the present site of Kimberley to start Platberg, a mission for the Baralong. Agnes' father, Richard Giddy, came out in 1835

as a missionary. Since the Cape of Good Hope was already controlled by Anglicans and the Dutch Reformed Church, who brooked no competition, and Giddy was a Wesleyan, he was sent to evangelise beyond the borders of the Colony. Alfred Morris, great-grandfather to my father, was a priest rather than a missionary, ordained in the Anglican church just weeks before emigrating to South Africa and the Karoo town of Oudtshoorn where he built a church that is still in use today. Two centuries earlier, in the late 1600s, French and Flemish forebears fled to the Cape of Good Hope, then a Dutch colony, to avoid persecution in France and French-Flanders after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The farms that they were given still carry the names of towns not so far from where I now live – Fleurbaix, Bellingham (Balinghem), Courtrai.

It wasn't the religious convictions of these forebears that caught my interest. I'm really not concerned with issues of belief. Rather, it was the idea of dissent and discrimination that got me interested. Huguenots were followers of Calvin who was a heretic in the eyes of French Catholic authorities. In 1663 protestants in France were forbidden from burying their dead during day time. In 1681 they were forbidden from singing hymns on the way back from church. In 1685 they were forbidden from practising as lawyers. Once in South Africa the Huguenots were absorbed into the Dutch Reformed churches – churches that later discriminated against non-whites attending their religious services. Wesleyans were part of a large movement of non-Conformists who found fault with the teachings and practices of the Anglican church – the official religion of the United Kingdom since the 17th century. John Wesley was attacked by a crowd when he preached in the open air, the only option open to him and his followers since they were not allowed to preach inside churches.

{Figure 50: Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

In South Africa the non-Conformist missionaries brought literacy to the peoples of the interior and were instrumental in translating and printing the Bible in local languages. It was at Wesleyan and other non-Conformist mission stations that the first black newspapers were published. It wasn't long before there was a struggle for editorial control between the white missionaries and the black writers. Breakaway newspapers were the start of an intellectual movement that led to the founding of the African National Congress. Breakaway religious movements led to the formation of the African Independent Churches and were an attempt to escape white control and

constantly deferred aspirations for black converts and clerics within the non-Conformist missionary movements.

This year I have noted in my *Religious Walks for an Atheist* book that a bomb blast in Egypt on Christmas Eve killed twenty-one worshippers at a Coptic church, including three Muslims who were worshipping at a mosque across the street. Christians rioted and retaliated by damaging the mosque. Three walks later I have pasted in a report of a protest in Pakistan against any amendment of the blasphemy laws.

{Figure 51: Detail from Walking Book.}

In March on Walk 34 there is an extract from the Flemish newspaper De Standaard announcing the murder of Shabaz Bhatti, the only Christian in the Pakistani government. The Taliban took the credit for shooting this Roman Catholic minister who dared to suggest a reconsideration of the blasphemy laws. In April in the United States Pastor Terry Jones held a mock trial of the Qur'an, found it to be guilty of terrorist crimes, crimes against humanity, rape and torture of people of other faiths and the persecution of women and minorities. It was then placed in a metal fireproof tray, soaked with kerosene and set alight with an oven-lighter. The following day, in retaliation, United Nations workers in Afganistan were attacked and killed. Jones expressed no remorse.

Postings 28
Heir to the Evangelical Revival

I am atheist

agnostic

a free thinker

a heathen

a kaffir

apostate

a dissenter

I am not Anglican
though I was brought up as one

I am not Methodist or Wesleyan
though my grandmother's family was

I am not Roman Catholic
though I live among them in West Flanders

I am not Evangelical
not Baptist (never mind Anabaptist)
not Presbyterian, Pentecostal
nor one to the Plymouth Brethren
not Lutheran not Calvinist

Had I been born earlier I might have become a Cathar
an Albigensian, Humiliati, or New Apostle
a Lollard
perhaps even a Free Spirit

Since I am living in Flanders
I might have chosen to be a religious laywoman
a Beguine
no rules, no vows, no hierarchy

But I just don't care for ritual
or martyrdom
or starving myself like all those defiant Catherines:
of Genoa
of Siena
of Alexandria

Perhaps the Great Awakening
of the 18th century would have meant something to me
that return of emotion, heart, mysticism

and charismatic speakers

an antidote to the Enlightenment
and the bland sermons of the Latitudinarians

John Wesley was Awakened

his Holy Club had its detractors
so Puritan
so Methodical

but thousands were converted

Why do I tell you this?

Because
the Great Awakening
led to the Evangelical Revival
and evangelical means ‘spread the Word’

but when everyone at home is converted
then you have look further afield

and so
they became missionaries

my forebears crossed the Atlantic
to the southern tip of Africa
as Wesleyan missionaries

I am South African
because my forebears wanted to spread the Word

I am heir to the Evangelical Revival

Postings 29

Anorexia mirabilis

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) is the patron saint of fire and firefighters, nurses, bodily ills, miscarriage, sexual temptation and those ridiculed for their piety. During her ecstasies she was so transported from her surroundings, it is reported, that she would fall into fires without either her skin or clothes ever being touched by the flames. She became patron saint of sick people and illness because she had, supposedly, suffered much sickness in her own life. This not being too surprising since she was recorded as having hardly ever eaten, surviving on little else than the holy Eucharist. Her fasting was thought to be too extreme and she was ordered by the clergy to eat. Her response was that she was unable to keep food down. The fact that she was known to push a twig down her throat to induce vomiting probably didn’t help her condition.

Anorexia mirabilis or ‘the miraculously inspired loss of appetite’ is the name given to a pattern of behavior or a condition of fasting occurring amongst religious or spiritual women in Catholicism in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. These periods of fasting could last months with some women refusing all food except the holy

Eucharist. Women like Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, Catherine of Ricci, seemed to believe that they could live on the "delicious banquet of God" alone.

{Figure 52: Bulimia. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 53: Bulimia. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

February 4th 2011

I have drawn a twig flying out of frame. In the next drawing I will have it tickle the throat of one of the 'Catherines', so as to induce vomiting. Don't yet know how I will do the vomit. Perhaps it will be a flame, or hairs that build up into a ball. A little force-field or a cloud of hairs.

February 10th 2011

The bulimia drawing is finished. It is a strange image. I was working from two old anatomical drawings of a head showing the flesh and structure of both a closed and open mouth. The twig with petals flies in from previous drawing, the petals fall off but continue to circulate – creating a kind of force-field. Then the twig goes into the mouth and down the throat, twice, exiting eventually and followed by vomit – strands of hair that are pulled towards the force-field. They form a thick hairball.

Postings 30

Review-reflect

{Figure 54: detail Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

Mid-way through the Postings seems a good time to pause and review the process. Twenty-nine thought-pieces written and twenty-three to go. The following three pieces were written first as a series of letters to one of the recipients of the Postings, Nanda Janssen, who wrote me an extensive letter of response to the thought-pieces she had received. Her comments and questions prompted me to step back and review the purpose of the Postings and the way that the writing was developing. The following three thought-pieces, then, are based on three *Letters to Nanda.*

A good place to start this mid-process review, I think, is by setting out what I was hoping to do with the project. The idea grew out of an urge to produce a new written work based on my journal writings but synthesised into a different register.

My journal writings are notes to myself, a sort of inner monologue, and I wanted to test them in a different form, one that was addressed to a reader. I wanted to find a way to communicate these thoughts about my work to others.

The form that these writings could take came to me as I was re-reading Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate all the Brutes*. The structure of his book interested me. Lindqvist combines a narrative of his journey into the Sahara with his search for the European origins of the term 'exterminate all the Brutes', as well as with memories of dreams and of his childhood. He reaches back into European ideologies of supremacy and racism even as he tries physically to progress further into the desert. Each change of direction or change of thought is contained in a thought-piece that is numbered. It gave me the idea to divide up my writing into numbered and titled parts as a way of organizing the complexities of the notes in the journals. At first I was thinking of making as many parts as needed to cover the material, but that felt too open and I decided rather on weekly thought-pieces for a year long. That gave a fixed size to the undertaking and a sense of challenge which would be necessary as a motivating force.

{Figure 55: detail Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

As mentioned in the introduction to the Postings, these thought-pieces are the writing of my doctorate in the arts. This is the form in which I am presenting my ideas – the ideas that I have been considering, or that have been informing my work, for the last five years. *Bully Beef, Off the Record* and the *Salvation* cycle of films are the three works that make up the 'visual work' of the doctorate. There has to be a written component. I do not want to do it as a lengthy essay or series of essays, nor as chapters of a dissertation. I have been searching to find a way of writing that approximates the way the films are constructed – drawing by drawing, small idea by small idea. Thought-pieces allow for the same fluidity, for digression, for the accumulative construction of a written work.

Early on I felt a certain tension in deciding what should be written or covered in the thought-pieces and in what order. The idea was not to stick to one subject but to flow fluidly through and across subjects in a manner that replicated the way that one thinks – in uneven and digressive ways. I wanted to be able to pick up on different subjects that were of interest to me at the time of writing. But at the same time I did want to build up a series of texts that could form a publication and that could be read

from Postings 01 to Postings 52. I wanted them to make sense accumulatively. I wanted the reader to build up an understanding piece by piece. This meant that I couldn't launch into a discussion of something about which the reader had no introduction, but that I needed to build my arguments slowly, giving enough background to the reader to allow them to follow. The discussion on Miscast was one example where I needed a lot of introduction before I could explore my problems with the exhibition and the lessons I learnt from it.

{Figure 56: Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

I hoped that the readers would start to sense this kind of structure as the project moved on. I was tempted at times to quote Michael Ondaatje's words from *In the Skin of a Lion* that "the first sentence of every novel should read: 'Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human'".

Early on I decided that I would write as though the reader knows my films but has read nothing I have written. I wouldn't worry that some of it would have been heard before, because, at the end, the postings would have to form a publication that could be read by someone unfamiliar with my work. I did worry about overloading my readers and so I do try to vary the subjects and the complexity or denseness of them, as well as the length.

At the beginning it seemed clear that there would be different tones and tenses. My studio journal is written in the present tense and in an informal, relaxed and searching tone. What tense would I use in the Postings? I kept them in the present but looking back. It is a journey of sorts that I am wanting to relate. As far as the different tones go, I like that there can be a variety of tones, that there can be contradiction and uncertainty. It is where the fragmentary form of thought-pieces can be more fluid than the longer essay. It fits too with my thinking about the film cycle *Salvation* – that I would not try to make a work in which there was one point of view, one ideological standpoint, but that I would split the work into a cycle of shorter fragments in which I could vary my perspective – at times critical of the missionaries, at times reflective about my dislike of Christianity and religiosity, at times indulgent about family.

By writing thought-pieces I hoped to avoid what I most dislike in academic writing - the explaining about what I was aiming to do. As in 'first I'll show this, and then I will get to that etc'. I don't want this in my Postings. I want to aim for a more

literary prose or perspective. I don't want to explain. Like the writer W.G. Sebald who determined to make his point not in an assertive way but with implication and suggestion.

Postings 31
Writing Postings

{Figure 57: Moths to the light. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}

I had optimistically planned to spend one day a week writing the thought-pieces. But it hasn't worked out like that. Often I am working on one piece over a three day period. It can take me a while to decide on what I will write, but even that process of sorting and filtering out those subjects that I don't find a way to approach, is important. It's not that I am short of ideas, rather that there are too many and I have first to clear a way to one idea. I am finding that certain ideas or issues or subjects that I had thought would generate writing have turned out to be *cul de sacs* or too large to treat as thought-pieces.

There is a competition each day between drawing or writing. Drawing gets prioritised because this is the more difficult activity to get started and because it takes very long to build up a film out of drawings. I have to keep my focus on it. I can write anywhere, anytime, but I can only draw when a number of elements are brought together. Once the spark is lit and a drawing is under way then I really protect the process. So writing waits until the drawing is over.

One of the results that I am noticing in writing the pieces is that it is taking a load of expectation off the film/s. It had been that I was trying to include all my ideas in the films – that I wanted them to carry all the weight of my ideas. Now I start to find that I can 'out' the ideas in other ways – through the walking project, through the Postings. I've long had a frustration that I was too full of ideas, thoughts, opinion and reflection that I was trying to pack into the films, because that was the way that I addressed audience, that I 'published' my work. But, though the films could do much, they were becoming too compacted and dense with all the ideas I was trying to include. Finding another way of releasing these ideas, of building them into a different kind of medium or work, has meant that the films are being freed up from that load of expectation. The way that I conceive of the films is changing. No longer

the work, they are becoming one means of exploring ideas. They are still the driver of the process – everything I do aims towards making the films and arises out of the desire to make the films - but related works are starting to arise in other mediums. Conceiving of and writing the Postings has been instrumental in leading to this changed perception of the role of the films and the possibilities of other kinds of related work.

At times I have included in the Postings a piece of writing that had already appeared elsewhere, such as *Postings 05: Postscript – Sarah Jane and her ten children & The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy* which appeared earlier in the *Far from Kimberley* exhibition book. I sent this piece on the two 'family tree' drawings because in the following posting I wanted to consider the 'documentary' aspects of my work, and I wanted to show that this discussion came out of these drawings, out of thoughts I was having while making the drawings. It is important to me to show that practice - the making of drawings and films - leads to reflections on issues of, for instance, genre. Reflective thinking is prompted by the action of drawing and looking. I have learnt during these 29 weeks that I cannot write in an abstracted way but that my reflections have to be grounded in my practice. If I want to write about visual metaphor then I need to work it out by re-examining a sequence that I have drawn. Otherwise the subject is too large and difficult to grasp. 'Things vaguely apprehended' would be the title of many of the Postings otherwise. I had grand plans for covering many subjects but have come to realise that I can only attempt to grasp small aspects if I am to do it in a way that is honest. It took me a while to understand that I am not an art historian or art writer who can take a global view. I am (rather happily I have to say) locked into my own work and can only peer outwards from that position. But I am keenly interested in understanding how my work has been and is being influenced and it is this desire to better understand what it is that influences decisions I make that keeps me setting aside time to write.

Postings 32
Mental spaces

Earlier this summer I started a new book. This one is not a general notebook in which I make notes as I read. It is not quite a process journal, well, not like the others. It is not a walking book. It is not the orange book in which I think about writing and the

Postings. It is not the hard-covered 'Little Common Place Book' that I bought at Wiels in June, which I have sub-titled Book of Origins and which is a book for my next project. Nor is it the soft-covered Place of Origins book that is also for the next project. This new book is not like the large Agnes Book (nor for that matter a Meeding or Chase Book, though I have those too) in which I collect materials relating to a family of forebears. It isn't a drawing book. It is not my animation log book in which I note each and every frame that I photograph, as well as the f-stop, speed of the camera, the date, the title and number of seconds of an animation sequence. Nor is it the other kind of log book I keep in which I record all drawings that I make, exhibitions and festivals in which my work is shown, each Posting that is sent.

It wouldn't seem that I need another book. It used to be that the general notebook was adequate to my needs. It filled up fairly quickly with notes from reading, notes from meetings or seminars, ideas for exhibitions, the odd recipe or observation, and it was a useful resource. Twenty three are stacked away at arms' length, and the current edition, number 24, is on my desk. After making *Bully Beef*, though, I felt the need for a book in which I concentrated on the film I was making or had recently finished. This process journal wouldn't be a notebook about other people's ideas or about outside influences. Here I wanted to write about my thoughts on a project. I wanted a space in which I could talk to myself. In that sense the process journal is a diary, an interior monologue.

Then, about a year ago, after having written the *Postscripts*, I started to want a space in which I could think about writing. I began a new book, *Review Reflect*, that was to be not about the content of my writing, but about the form of that writing. Within this thinking space the idea of the *Postings* emerged.

The walking book, *Religious Walks for an Atheist*, came about as a motivation to get out and walk in anticipation of the short pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. It has, quite unexpectedly, changed the way that I am working. By creating a reason to get out of the studio and to explore environments that I might otherwise never visit, and by actively searching for traces of the sacred in the secular world, and traces of the atheist and the dissident in religious histories, it has allowed me to develop a very different way of researching content and collecting ideas for a film. The complication to that is that it has also opened up so many other possibilities for making work that I am in danger of losing sight of my original aims.

This new book which is titled *Heir to the Evangelical Revival* is an attempt to address a sense of creeping confusion as to what the film of that title is still about, for it has been spreading in all kinds of directions and I am battling to hold it together. So this latest book is about that film. Just that film, not about the others in the *Salvation* cycle. The intention with this book is to sort out what I already have and what I still need. To remember what I started out wanting to do, what I wanted to communicate and why I wanted to do it. It needs to take account of the possibilities that have arisen but to keep in view the original purpose and point of the film. It is needed to hold my attention on the work at hand and to prevent it from wandering off to the next project.

The problem that I seem to be facing is that I feel I have worked through the subject of this film and have come to understand what I sought to understand. In some ways the work seems done. But the film is not yet made. And the film can't happen after the event, after the understanding. The drawings need to arise out of my thinking about an issue. They need to encourage further thought, to lead to new ideas. Except that this thinking has been happening on the walks and in the pages of the walking book. But the walking book is a resource book, not a work that communicates to a public. That is what a film has the potential to do. So I might have worked through the issues of this film but I haven't created a form that is communicable. It is this problem that I want to address in the new book. Here I want to set out everything I have thought, written, drawn on *Heir* and see if I can work forwards, find a direction for the film again. Here I want to think about the film as both a 'manifesto' and a trace of the process.

Postings 33
Maria Theresa

At the Monastery of Oseira we had our 'credential' stamped by a monk who had paint-stained fingers. He was a painter, he told us, as he opened a drawer and pulled out a series of little portraits of Jesus. He asked if we were believers. There was a slight hesitation before one of our group said they were. All four of us were given a hand-painted picture of Jesus anyway. When the monk heard that I was from South Africa he wanted me to take a few extra, but I respectfully declined on the grounds that we were watching the weight of our backpacks. Before handing over the little paintings he

signed each one with a Christian cross and his initials, 'MT'. His name was Maria Theresa.

{Figure 58: Detail from Walking Book.}

As we walked up the hill away from the monastery I thought of a story that the artist Lauri Anderson tells in her spoken word album, "The Ugly One with the Jewels" about a visit to a convent in the Midwest where she had been invited to do a seminar on language[62]. She never gets to give the seminar, for every time that it is scheduled there is some reason found by the nuns to postpone it. Instead she spends her time walking the grounds. She describes the neatly laid-out cemetery as one of the saddest that she has seen with its hundreds of identical white crosses in rows that were labelled:
"Maria"
"Teresa"
"Maria Teresa"
"Teresa Maria"

Leaving an oak forest a day later we came across a fence upon which pilgrims had entwined sticks into the shape of crosses. I tucked Maria Theresa's rather disturbing portrait of a red-eyed Jesus into the fence behind one of the crosses, pleased to be able to leave it behind.

{Figure 59: Painted Jesus}

Postings 34
Drawing-animating

{Figure 60: Child.}

Moeders voor vrede/Mothers for Peace, a non-governmental organization that assists women in Afghanistan, recently invited a number of artists to make a work for an exhibition in Ieper in October of this year. The proceeds of any works sold are to be used to support the work of the foundation. I made them a drawing and, for the first time for many years, I made a drawing that did not come into being as an animation. The drawing of a baby swaddled in cloth and knitting is not an element of a larger

work. It is not part of a film. It went from the setting-up stage to the finishing-off stage quite bypassing any substantial processes of transformation along the way, and, in so doing, seemed to me to rather miss the point of making a drawing. There was no time for any extended 'conversation' with that drawing. There was no complex, not-quite-controllable, wrestling with the image over a period of weeks. It was too quickly 'done', too easily accomplished. My sense of dissatisfaction with the process reminded me that it is not the act of drawing alone that I like. It is the many and various acts involved in drawing-animating that make the process pleasurable.

When I am drawing-animating I am thinking more about what the drawing will do than about how it might look. If I make a drawing about a hallucinatory vision of Christ as a platter of food then I am interested in how this image will come about and how this idea will be revealed to a viewer. Drawing-animating is a game and there is so much more at stake in making one of these drawings. It has to drive the 'narrative' of the film in some way. It could drive it in ways that were not expected, but it has to contribute something to the 'story'. It has to allow for actions to take place within it's borders. Objects need to be drawn in ways that allow for them to be moved and transformed. And I need to consider all of these as I set up the parameters for a drawing. My aesthetic choices are influenced by these other factors.

'Christ as a platter of food' is an idea - or rather a set of words - in my mind to which I seek a starting point. This animated sequence is planned to go after the sequence of a pumping heart on the body of the anorexic girl and so I decide to start by drawing hearts – sheep hearts covered in bacon. Before the sheep heart appears I need a plate upon which to set it. It doesn't matter to the narrative of the animation what kind of plate this is, but I decide to draw a particular cut-glass plate that interests me. What I don't anticipate at the time of drawing the rather complicated patterns in the glass, is that the four hearts will largely obliterate these patterns. Despite that, it is still worth having reproduced patterns that will exist only for seconds as an image and which will never be visible in the finished drawing. Every moment of the image needs to be intense, compelling. Even if for only a few screen-seconds. Everything is seen by the viewer, no matter how briefly.

{Figure 61: detail Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 62: detail Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 63: Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

Had I wanted only a finished drawing of Christ as a platter of food and not an animation leading towards it, I would have been unlikely to have thought up the image that I now have. It is the multitude of little decisions about narrative and association, about flow of transformations, as well as about aesthetics, during the time playing with that idea of 'Christ as a platter of food', that has led to it. At each pause in the drawing, at each moment of sitting back and reflecting on the drawing so far, possibilities have emerged that could be exploited or rejected. The very slowness of the process of drawing-animating gives time for thought, for possibility, for constantly reconsidering the range of choices

Postings 35

Palimpsests

{Figure 64: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

William Kentridge has frequently had his film-related drawings described as palimpsests. Lilian Tone, curator at MOMA in New York, writes:

"Each of his film-related drawings represents the last in a series of states produced by successive marks and erasures that, operating on the limits of discernibility, are permanently on the verge of metamorphosis. The animations are painstakingly built by photographing each transitory state, as traces accumulate on the paper surface, each final drawing a palimpsest containing the memory of a sequence."[63]

Michael Smith, reviewer for the South African e-zine Artthrob, notes that "Kentridge's erasure of charcoal images from the paper surface left ghostly traces that suggested temporal shifts between present and past, event and memory. This further promoted one's sense that Kentridge's works were not so much traditional drawings as they were palimpsests, sites of repeated recursion upon which images were drawn and erased, though partially recorded and partially lost."[64]

Kentridge's own title for one of his films was '*Stereoscope (and palimpsests)*, though the bracketed words seem no longer to be used in references to the film. I have used the term to describe my own animation-drawings because it seems to offer a useful way of separating these kinds of drawings from non-animated drawings. Recently, though, I have been wondering about the aptness of this term in relation to

our drawings. On the surface it seems to productively describe a kind of drawing that is layered and that shows traces of earlier activity, of changed trajectories, of transformations. Activities that have been erased but that have not disappeared from view.

The archaeological understanding of the term *palimpsest* is that of a writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to allow for a second writing. In the early Middle Ages older manuscripts were frequently overwritten after the earlier writing had been washed off with milk and oat bran. The main reason given for this destruction of texts was the high cost of parchment or vellum. In time, though, faint remains of the former writing would reappear, to the extent that it could be read and deciphered. In the later Middle Ages a more rigorous practice of scraping the surface of the vellum with powdered pumice was developed that prevented the re-appearance of earlier writings. The most valuable palimpsests originate then from the earlier Middle Ages.

What is not often mentioned in descriptions of these early palimpsests is that many were washed or scraped away so as to destroy or hide texts that had fallen out of favour. Certain texts, such as those considered to be heretical, may have been dangerous to harbour and were erased and written over with texts that were thought to be more acceptable. Pagan writings were cleared to make way for the word of God. The re-emergence of the destroyed text beneath the newer writing meant that the more recent work was forced to co-exist with the very text that it sought to destroy. Because both were read together, the texts gained a proliferation of unintended meanings.

This idea of the palimpsest as a site of conflict I find interesting. But in this understanding neither my film-related drawings nor those of Kentridge can be called palimpsests. Our drawings are the work of a single person, so there is no conflict between points of view. Parts of the drawing are erased and redrawn, not because of any conflict within the drawing, not out of any destructive impulse to remove the traces of another's work, but in the service of narrative. The erasures and re-drawings are not discontinuous, they are all elements of one filmed sequence. Palimpsests are the product of a layering of texts over a period of time. But our drawings are made in one session – even though that session may extend over a few weeks. In a palimpsest the entire vellum is washed clean of the old writing before the new is applied. In our drawings only an aspect of the surface is animated and undergoes transformations.

Many parts remain unchanged from the first filmed frame until the last. The image is manipulated but never entirely destroyed.

At the centre of these understandings of the term palimpsest is the idea that it is about a relationship, willed or not, between different 'authors'. On these grounds then, I no longer think that it is such an apt term to describe my work.

{Figure 65: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 66: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

Postings 36

Walking to Santiago de Compostela : Day 1

{Figure 67: Walking book: Day 1.}
{Figure 68: Walking book: Day 1.}
{Figure 69: Walking book: Day 1.}
{Figure 70: Walking book: Day 1.}

Postings 37

Walking to Santiago de Compostela : Day 2

{Figure 71: Walking book: Day 2.}
{Figure 72: Walking book: Day 2.}

Postings 38

Walking to Santiago de Compostela : Day 3

{Figure 73: Walking book: Day 3.}
{Figure 74: Walking book: Day 3.}
{Figure 75: Walking book: Day 3.}

Postings 39

Walking to Santiago de Compostela : Day 4

{Figure 76: Walking book: Day 4.}

Postings 39

Walking to Santiago de Compostela : Day 5

{Figure 77: Walking book: Day 5.}
{Figure 78: Walking book: Day 5.}

Postings 41

Rules of the game

At a symposium in Ghent this week, *Not a day without a line. Artists' words and writings*[65], the British artist duo Carson & Miller gave a presentation on the collaborative games that they have developed. In such question and answer games as 'The Exquisite Fold' or 'A Game that we made up' the artists told of how they had set up rules to which they must adhere. Two of these rules were about answering truthfully, and answering without including a question that would in turn require an answer so that the dialogue would stop with the first answer. Rosie Miller noted that the setting of rules to their games - and the attempted adherence to these rules - established in the players a sense of commitment and integrity. That's really interesting, I thought. I set game rules to my walks. Not that I actually call them 'rules', the title that I put at the top of the second page of my walking book is 'Gameplay', but I think it amounts to much the same as that to which Carson & Miller are referring. The 'gameplay' for my walks was written into the front of the book before I started walking and, as far as is possible, I do adhere to the parameters that I have set. After listening to Carson & Miller's presentation yesterday I started to wonder if my motivation in setting these parameters had also to do with generating commitment and integrity.

Thinking back on it, by investing in a thick new notebook, by writing a title into the first page and thinking up a set of parameters or 'gameplay', I was setting up a project. I was pinning down an area of research. I was creating a space that would need to be filled. And there was a certain urgency in it. I had to learn to walk long distances. The three people with whom I was planning to walk to Santiago de Compostela were all seasoned walkers and one of them a marathon runner. I was definitely not as fit as they were. I also knew that unless I made a game of the training and turned it into a useful means of research for the film, I would be unlikely to see it through. In this sense, then, setting the 'gameplay' was about commitment.

For both Carson & Miller and myself setting the 'rules' is a means of defining what the game is to be. It is about separating it from other, possibly similar, activities. For Carson & Miller the rules set their exchanges apart from other kinds of dialogue. For me the 'gameplay' sets these walks apart from other kinds of walking. Walking from the station in Ghent to the art college where I give classes is not the same walk, even if it follows the same route, as a walk from the station on one of my deliberate walks. This latter walking isn't about getting to a destination, it is about being alert to signs of the sacred or the religious in the secular world. It is about looking and seeing city spaces or country spaces in a different way, and, importantly, it is about allowing the physical activity of walking to generate thinking about issues that are of relevance to the film on which I am working. So setting out the 'gameplay' has been a way of focusing my attention on this range of subjects.

Does it have to do with integrity? It's not a word that I would have thought to use. Setting out the 'gameplay' was a means of defining a project but it was also a means of generating possibility. What *could* happen on these walks was more my thinking than what *should* happen on the walks. If we understand integrity to mean internal consistency (rather than in its ethical sense of honesty or truthfulness as would be the case with Carson & Miller's games) then, yes, it does seem to be relevant. While there is no one to know if I do stay within the 'gameplay', I generally do. Walks are never under an hour and I am always on the lookout for religious traces and words of relevance. But on 104 walks I have 'composed' only two poems, have noted down few memories of being brought up Anglican, and have left nothing at any of the places that I have visited. While I did not steadily increase my backpack with books, I did note down the book that I was reading that was related to the subject, and often just whatever book I was reading.

While commitment and integrity may be part of the game, there is another element that I think is generated by playing within the 'rules'. Anticipation has become an important feature of my walks. Frequently I open a new walking page the night or morning before a walk and start to think about what I might look for in the city or place in which I intend to walk. This week I planned a walk in Kortrijk and, in advance, looked up information on the presence of Calvinists in the city in the sixteenth century. Based on a text I found, on the short-lived Calvinist republic of Kortrijk (1578-1580), I then walked a route through the town that took in places mentioned. In the *Onze Lieve Vrouw* church I made an audio recording noting that

Petrus Datheen, reformist preacher who had only previously been in Kortrijk clandestinely, preached here in July 1578 in the presence of the city councillors and the committee of Eighteen - the new city authority, and that he was afterwards treated to a feast in the city hall. I did another short recording on the market square where one Pieter Notebaert was sentenced to an hour at the shaming pole for having been in possession of two books by Luther. His books were subsequently burnt.

The sense of anticipation before a walk has also to do with not knowing what I may find. While in the *Onze Lieve Vrouw* church I saw a prayer register in which believers can write out their prayer. There was one that was particularly poignant: "O.L.V. God! I hope that I can keep this job! Very long! Good lucky my son, my husband, my family and I".

A huge part of this anticipation has also to do with making the entries in the walking book. The aesthetic pleasures of compiling the pages – of collaging writings in telegram style, of adding images found or taken on the walk, of making notes about the walk or copying wall texts onto the page, is a large part of the pleasure involved. Even when the walk is over there is still the anticipation of getting home and further constructing that page. And at some point after I started walking my son Michael picked up the book and began to add illustrations of his own. While many of these are related to walks others draw on anecdotes that we have shared. With his additions the walk book is enriched with the pleasures of collaboration.

Postings 42

Conflicting constructions

{Figure 79: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.}

It has been my concern ever since I wrote the monologue for *Heir to the Evangelical Revival* (Postings 28) that it would cause a conflict of structures in the film. I have never worked with a voiced part to a film. Communication has been through the images. Now I have a written piece that will be played, in some form or another, throughout the film. And what is said in this monologue is important to the film. The problem is that there are now two very different kinds of construction that need to be worked together. There is the voiced part that has a linear, narrative structure, and there are the images that connect in an associative, non-linear way.

There is no choice about dropping the monologue, or making it close to inaudible, for it goes to the heart of my intentions with this cycle of films that was prompted by reading *Agnes' Tales* and is about being both fascinated with this family of forebears and having strong reservations about the 19th century missionary project in which they were involved. Missionaries in southern Africa might have been passive colonists - in that they tried to have influence by persuasion and by example, rather than by the rifle - but by their very presence and interventions in local society, they were part of the European force of change in the sub-continent that radically reshaped lifestyles and belief systems. For me then, there is a push and pull fascination with the story of the Giddy family.

The monologue tells about my forebears as missionaries, but it starts with my lack of religious belief and my lack of affiliation to any religious 'school of thought'. I am not Anglican though I was brought up as one. I am not Wesleyan though my grandmother's family (the Giddy family) was. I am not Roman Catholic though I live amongst them in West Flanders. And then the monologue moves into speculation as to what religious affiliation I might have had, had I been born in an earlier epoch. Since there seems to have been little toleration of non-believers until very recent times, all Europeans in the early middle ages would have displayed affiliation to some or other religious order. The Roman Catholic church may have been the dominant religious power but it always had its dissenters. Long before Luther nailed his criticisms to the church door, the Cathars were a powerful intellectual force that threatened to break up the Catholic monopoly on Christian theological belief. Even after the Reformation and the Protestant split from the Catholics, believers on both sides continued to disagree on the fine or not so fine points of theology and religious practices. In the monologue, then, I speculate as to which of the heretics or dissenters movements I might have chosen to belong. With the long list of dissenters that I name I wanted to suggest that dissension, or non-conformism, is a very old religious 'tradition'. The monologue then tells of the Great Awakening in Protestantism - a return of the emotional and the mystic in religious belief. It represents the pendulum swinging away from the Enlightenment preference for rationalizing of religious belief towards a more romantic notion of an intense personal relationship with your god. It led to, amongst other new movements, the rise of Methodism or Wesleyanism and the spread of an evangelical impulse. The monologue ends with the decision of my forebears to evangelise in southern Africa and the realisation that I am South African by birth because of this

evangelical impulse. So that, like it or not, I am heir to this evangelical revival. It is this irritating little fact that I want to convey through the film, and without the spoken monologue it will be difficult to achieve.

{Figure 80: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.}
{Figure 81: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.}

If the images are created so as to relate to that audio, then I work in a way very different to my previous practice. In earlier films the drawings evolved in a fairly organic way. I would start off with an idea for a direction in which the drawing should go, but happily allow for deviations and other ideas to develop in the process of drawing. Even there, though, there was always a question of balancing the concept of the film with a free-wheeling way of drawing that could go in all directions. Those earlier films were about drawing before they were about anything else. In this new film the problem of balance is more acute.

Keeping the monologue in view means that each drawing is being planned to fit somewhere along that audio track. This requires pre-planning, and that tends not to allow for the kind of improvisation that I need when drawing. My perceived need to keep a relationship between what will be heard and what will be seen is working as a brake on the drawing. This lack of improvisational space means that I am not taking risks. It used to be that I would immerse myself in the drawing and then see how it all fitted together. That can't happen if I want the image and the voice to interact in any meaningful way. I am becoming a little too careful, and it is showing in the drawings.

Postings 43
Overstretch

There is a problem with the drawings. Or, to be more specific, with the animations. This was suggested to me last week, and the comments didn't come as much of a surprise. I've known it for a while.

It used to be that drawing was what I did. It was through drawing that I thought and through drawing that I communicated. *A Royal Hunger, Taste the World, Bully Beef* exist as drawn films. Everything was invested into the images for those five screen minutes. Sound was a polish added afterwards. Writing about the film seemed only necessary for festival or exhibition catalogues. It was the film – the drawings, the

animations – that counted. All energies went into trying to create a powerful visual work. Yet increasingly I was frustrated by what I saw as the limitations of this way of working. There seemed to be so many possibilities missed and so much interesting material lost along the way. While making *Off the Record* I started to record the processes out of which the films emerged. These writings in the process journals led to works like Postscripts and Footnote. Since then writings and processes of documentation have developed into a practice in themselves. The walking journals and the Postings now take up more of my time than drawing does. And sound is no longer the polish added afterwards for I am collaborating with sound artist Yannick Franck on this cycle of films, and we have been working together from an early stage in the process. The sound that he is starting to produce is having an effect on the way that I visualise the films.

Even as I gain really interesting new ways of working, I sense that I am losing something along the way. In earlier postings[66] I have mentioned the positive side of this changing balance where the writings free the films from having to carry the burden of all my ideas – something that I felt was making them too dense. But I have also mentioned that where much of my thinking for the film was previously done through drawing and animating, now much of this thinking happens on the walks and in the pages of the walking journal. So that the act of drawing has become less necessary as an arena in which to think and work through ideas relevant to the film. The downside of no longer having all my energies focused on the drawing is that the drawing-animating seems to have lost it edge. It is as though it has become a secondary activity. And it is showing. I find myself falling back on tricks that have worked in the past. I have become too concerned with the finished drawing rather than with the transformations that happen within it. The level of intensity that is needed to make surprising sequences, dramatic transformations seems, a little worryingly, to be missing.

Postings 44

Radiant presence

{Figure 82: *Far from Kimberley* exhibition.}

There was a book on the shelf of which I seemed to be unaware. Then, as I was reading a part of *Agnes' Tales*[67], I realised it was there. It wasn't that I remembered it being there, more like I suddenly knew it was there and I walked straight to it and took it down. It is an old book, quite heavy. Leather covered and ornately embossed with gold lettering and floral patterning. "Pictures of English Landscape" is the title. Pasted inside the front cover is a bright blue certificate which reads: "This Prize is presented to The Boy Most Liked by his School Fellows". The recipient's name, Orlando Giddy, is written in by hand. The date is 1860.

Orlando Giddy is the son of the missionary, Richard Giddy, who had come out to the Cape in 1835. Richard Giddy married twice and fathered seventeen children. Orlando was the eldest son of the second marriage. After finishing school he returned to his family in Colesburg. His sister, Agnes, writes:

"One morning Lan, then in the Bank, went to the market. A gentleman walked up to him and asked him if he could tell him where Lan Giddy lived. The gentleman was Mr Theo Schreiner and he had been Second Master at Shaw College Grahamstown where Lan had been educated and was greatly surprised to discover that the young man before him was none other than the boy whom he had taught there and who had gained a special prize as being the best loved boy in the College."

When making *Off the Record* and foraging through documents in my father's archive, I found a typed copy of *Agnes' Tales*. On my return to Deerlijk I realised I had received a digital copy of the Tales years before but had no more than glanced at it. It was only in making *Off the Record* that I began to see the potential for examining South African and colonial history through the lens of family narratives. Now I printed out a copy of the *Tales* and read it, and in it was the reference to the prize that was presented to Orlando. I fetched this book that I was hardly aware of having in my possession and on opening it recognised the certificate and Orlando's name on it. I must have looked through the book when I received it - though I have no recollection of receiving it. I probably read the certificate. But because I didn't know who Orlando was, because the elements didn't connect in any narrative way, I had disregarded the information.

The *Agnes' Tales* in my possession is a facsimile. Orlando's book is an object, and one that has been handed and handled from one generation to another. Few objects survive from one era into the next, and even fewer are those that can be traced back to the person who gave, or received, or attributed value to them. That I have a book in

my possession that was handed out at a school ceremony in Grahamstown in 1860, that was paged through by different members of the Giddy family in Colesburg, and that was handed down to my grandmother now pleases me enormously. Like letters that are handled by sender and recipient, books are marked by the hands that have held them. Their covers and pages carry traces of their readers.

This material connection with earlier readers has lent the book a 'radiant presence' – to borrow a term from Amy Elias[68]. But this presence is not something inherent in the book itself. Rather it is imaginatively projected onto it. In *Refiguring History: New thoughts on an old discipline*[69] Keith Jenkins suggests that the past does not exist 'meaningfully' prior to the efforts of historians to impose upon it a structure or a form. I think that this is of relevance too to material traces from the past. Two years ago the book had no presence and no intensity, it was lost on the shelf as the *Tales* were lost in the computer. It has gained 'meaning' because it has been connected to other objects, stories and people. Around it an imaginative network of ideas and reflections has evolved, and this in turn has been leading to the invention of new narratives.

Postings 45
Memories of place

{Figure 83: Locust. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}

Orlando's book had gained a degree of intensity that prompted me to start a set of drawing-animations. As I worked on these drawings, my train of thought moved beyond reflections on historical representations of place towards more personal memories of places of my childhood, and generated another set of drawing-animations. The film *Orlando's Book* now combines historical reflection with personal reconstruction of memories of my childhood.

Pictures of English Landscapes seems an odd gift for a boy growing up on mission stations in the mountains and semi-deserts of the southern African interior. Nothing could have seemed more removed from his personal experience of dry and dusty Colesburg than these engravings of a idealised and picturesque England.

It wasn't as though much had really changed by the time that I grew up in South Africa over a hundred years later. Most of the books we read as children were

written, published and illustrated in the UK. South African children may never have visited the United Kingdom but, if they read books, they knew British plants, knew British countryside, knew British seasons. Which meant that our earliest literary memories were of other places, for we never saw our place illustrated in books. All stories took place elsewhere. This was not an experience unique to English-speaking South African children, but was shared by many readers living in places that had been colonised by the British. In a recent BBC World radio programme a writer recalled how he grew up in the warm climates of the Caribbean on a diet of stories set in Britain. He 'knew' snow and daffodils though he had never left the Caribbean. There were few, if any, books that reflected his own experiences of place.

The first set of drawings that I made for the film were of the cover and of one of the engravings in the book. More than a year later I made a second set of animations. On a large sheet of paper I drew a number of typewriters. On the paper that emerged from these old machines, I drew isolated elements from the engravings – a haystack, a woman pumping water into an urn, a chick that grows into a crowing rooster. I liked the idea of the typewriters generating these images. It was about reproductions, about published illustrations.

{Figure 84: Typewriters. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}

The idea was to contrast these illustrations of English countryside with images of those places in which Orlando had lived. But though I could try to imagine it, I couldn't know what Orlando had known or seen. It seemed more interesting, then, to think about those places and plants and insects that I had known. So I started to draw plants that grew in our garden when I was a child. I revisited memories of road trips that we had done as a family in the 60s and 70s - of cold roast chicken picnics under pepper trees along the national roads, of the road through the Karoo that stretched out to the horizon in a straight line.

For a long while I thought the film should divide into two parts - one for literary memories of place, the other for memories of experienced places. And that these images should be structured differently. Where the images from the book were animated on one master drawing, with the full drawing visible in the last animation of the sequence, the images generated from my own memories of places, plants and

insects should flow from one into another as a visual stream-of-consciousness. Different sound-spheres on the two parts would emphasize this split.

{Figure 85: Moths. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.}

Then I realised that remembering those plants I had once known, those insects I had caught, those picnic places along the national roads, required a certain amount of effort. I had to work hard to reconstitute these memories. Walking to Santiago de Compostela this summer, my sister and I spent many hours remembering all the plants in my mother's garden. A list of which I kept in my walking journal. Realising that memory is created in the present, I started to wonder if there could be a clear divide between memories of landscapes read about and viewed in books, and memories of outdoor spaces in which one walks or through which one passes. I find it difficult to distinguish now, for instance, between photographs of windmills that I collected so that I could draw them in the film, and windmills that I actually saw in the veld in South Africa. In recollection they intermingle.

So perhaps the film needn't be divided into two clear parts - literary and experienced memories of place - for I suspect it is more complex than that. By the time that the film is finished it will no doubt have gone through another series of evolutions, and that with which I end up, will be something quite different to that which I anticipated at the outset. In some ways it is a problem that the films take so long to emerge as finished works. They become so very complex as more and more ideas are generated around the initial idea. In other ways, though, this slow excavation and sedimentation of ideas, this thinking through drawing, gives rise to a 'thick' work that can't too easily be disentangled.

Postings 46
Making history

In 2009 I gave a talk to a group of historians at Kadoc, the Documentation Centre for Religion, Culture and Society at the university of Leuven, that was entitled 'Drawing History: Dilettantism or seriously historical?' It was announced as follows: "Wendy Morris would like to present her latest film, *Off the Record*, to historians and other researchers and to put to them an argument for an imaginative take on history. After

which she is hoping to prompt a discussion on the merits and shortcomings of visual, as opposed to written, history".

It was a subject that had been occupying my thoughts for some time. To what extent could my films be considered serious history-making? Could they be located within historiographical discourses? Although there is a small body of literature on the views of historians as to the merits or shortcomings of history on film, these tend to concentrate on narrative film and films that are visualizations of written histories. I was not so interested in history *on* film as I was in considering the merits and shortcomings of non-narrative, associative and drawn film as a form of history-making.

On this evening in May I thought I would see if I could get a reaction out of the historians grouped around the research and documentation centre Kadoc. Perhaps they would have objections to my contention that there could be different orders of history, that a short, animated and imaginative take on history could still be viewed as seriously historical in intention.

As it turned out the audience was very polite, though the director of Kadoc left soon after I started talking and a Catholic priest slept soundly through the entire presentation. Where I had expected some resistance to my suggestion that *Off the Record* emerged out of an imaginative historical practice, I received only interested comments and questions. And while a positive response is always flattering I had been quietly hoping for some resistance to my argument that this might be imaginative but was still serious history-work.

On reflection later, I realized this was probably the wrong angle from which to approach these issues, for I was setting up 'historians' as keepers of the field who set the 'professional' standard against which I could or should measure my own practices. Following cultural analyst Ann Rigney, it was more productive to do away with such hierarchical divisions as 'true' history and 'secondary mutant forms' in favour of a consideration of the border areas between.

In her essay 'Being an improper historian' Rigney suggests that rather than continuing the "search for some thematic or methodological essence of history 'proper' it would be better to accept variation as an inherent part of historical practice and turn our attention to the ways in which different historical practices, both within the academy and *extra muros*, relate to each other and to other cultural practices." The challenge at the present time, Rigney suggests, "is to find a fruitful way of imagining

the border-crossings between adjacent territories rather than to reinforce the security wall between 'true' history and mutant secondary forms." [70]

With Rigney's advice in mind, I am going to try to do something more productive than defending my working practices against those of an imagined 'historian'. When *Off the Record* was shown at In Flanders Fields Museum in 2008 it ran simultaneous to the exhibition *Man-Culture-War*, a temporary exhibition researched and mounted by the historians and exhibition-makers of the museum. In the following few thought-pieces I am going to review *Off the Record* in the light of this other exhibition, for both were about recovering the marginalized histories of many of the men who fought or laboured in Flanders or Northern France in the First World War. Research for both productions was into the same archives. We studied the same photographs, read the same texts, looked at the same objects. Yet we made very different works. The museum presented a large exhibition accompanied by a substantial publication of images and essays by historical analysts. I presented a short drawn film and a catalogue. It is to these differences that I want to pay attention.

Postings 47

Research – Play – Humour

{Figure 86: *Off the Record*. 2008.}

Off the Record was made as part of a residency at In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper, Belgium. This history museum of the First World War invites a contemporary artist each year to make and present a work within the museum. In 2008 the museum was also creating a temporary exhibition, *Man-Culture-War*, that was to examine the presence of the many nationalities, or ethnic groupings within nationalities, who fought or laboured in Flanders during the First World War[71]. The role of Indian, Moroccan and Sikh troops, and Chinese, Vietnamese and South African labour contingents - to mention a few amongst many - has been given little attention in histories of the Great War. The museum researchers intended to recover and communicate the presence and contributions of these men through this exhibition. As a South African artist and one with a post-colonial bias they invited me to take up my residency simultaneous to the *Man-War-Culture* exhibition to which my work could be related.

So, over a period of two years, the museum historians and I worked to prepare our individual 'productions'. In May of 2008 the IFFM presented a large exhibition and a substantial publication[72] of historiographical essays. In July of the same year I presented the exhibition *Off the Record* that included a five minute drawn film, drawings from the film, and an exhibition catalogue. These two 'productions' that started out with the same imperative of recovering marginalized histories developed into two very different works. I want to try to compare the production processes so as to gain a better understanding of the kind of history-work that is *Off the Record.*

In an attempt to simplify these processes I am going to divide research from making - though in my case they can happen simultaneously for I start drawing at an early stage and keep reading and collecting up to the last drawing. In terms of research, I think that the museum historians and I worked in similar ways. We read many of the same documents and examined many of the same images and objects. We shared information. We sought to understand contexts, recover stories and make connections.

As historians of an internationally recognized museum these researchers had a (self)expectation of being thorough. The purpose of the exhibition was to recover as much as possible of this history and to put it on record as both an exhibition and a publication. They needed to become 'experts' in this field. They needed to be able to speak with authority. The same thoroughness was not a prerequisite for my work. And yet, although I would typify my research practices as are more organic, eclectic and digressive, as well as smaller in scale, my intention was to be well enough informed so as to be able to make a work that would add to historical understandings of the role of black South Africans in World War I.

Man-Culture-War was concerned exclusively with those troops or labour contingents who were present in Flanders. But in this the researchers were inclusive, every group who had been present was to be addressed and, as far as possible, in equal measure. For *Off the Record* my early focus was on only those men who served as labourers – Chinese, South African - and this was soon narrowed down to the South African Native Labour Contingent alone. At a later stage the diary of my great uncle Walter who fought in Northern France came to be included too. Increasingly the research leaned towards understanding the particular South African political context that led black men to volunteer as labourers for service in Europe. It was to be a work

that fitted their presence on the Western Front into the wider historical context of black struggle against discrimination in their home country.

There was, simultaneously, another level of research in which we were both engaged, a level that is not a prerequisite for writers of history. Since the end-works were to be an exhibition and a film we were also foraging in the archives for visual ideas - for photographs, items of material culture, poems, diaries, anecdotes, and audio and video recordings. I was looking for ideas and images that could be prompts to drawings and animations and that could be used metaphorically or associatively in the film. The museum researcher-curators were looking for those images and objects of material culture with which they could construct an exhibition 'narrative'.

In the next stage - moving now from research to making - the curators set out to form a narrative with the materials they had assembled. In *Man-Culture-War* these materials would not be altered in any way - beyond copies of images being enlarged, for instance - but would be set into relationships with each other and with texts to create a complex environment that was intended to both fascinate and inform.

My process of making is very different. At the point that I start drawing I move away from any attempt to convey explicit meaning or narrative. In my work it is not a question of arranging information and images so that the 'story' can be revealed to the viewer or that specific knowledge can be transmitted. The drawings and animations are not intended, or indeed able, to speak directly of the insights gained in the research. Here there is another kind of activity under way, one in which the research is put to one side and a process of fictionalization begins to take over. In this process there is a fracturing of times, an anachronistic mixing of events and an enmeshing of fragments that are seemingly unrelated.

In *Off the Record* there is a sequence of a whip that becomes a rifle that becomes a spade. Neither of these three objects are specific to World War I, by which I mean I did not find them in WWI archives. And already here is a difference with the material objects that are used by the museum to build their exhibition. There the value of their objects is in their 'authenticity' – their supposedly unmediated relation to a particular past. The whip, spade and rifle that I draw are not specific WWI objects but their function in the film is to allude to specific conditions of the First World War. Flogging was a punishment reserved for foreign troops – who, lest we forget, were all volunteers. Guns were forbidden to black South Africans serving on the Front. Spades and pick-axes were the tools of the labour contingents. So their function is metaphoric

(and this is something I have written on in *Postings 21: Thinking about discursivity*). Once the decision to use these three objects is made, then their 'meaningfulness' is put aside and a process of forming and transforming begins. The whip becomes the rifle becomes the spade in as fluid and rhythmic a manner as possible. This process of forming and transforming can best be described as a form of play – albeit a form of play that is grounded in the earlier research.

So, in thinking of the ways in which my work differs from that of the museum historians I would suggest that playfulness is one important aspect. I don't think that playfulness is something highly prized by most historians. To even suggest that it could be an aspect of 'serious' history-work would probably be considered offensive to many. It is one of the elements, I think, that can separate an artist's approach from those of other history-makers.

Playfulness does not necessarily mean that a subject is treated lightly. Because I embrace playfulness does not imply that I am playing with the past. When I transform a maize cob into a hand-grenade that explodes into paper airplanes there is playfulness in the transformations, but underlying these is a serious assertion about discrepancies in the historical record.

There are some aesthetic or literary forms that we continue to associate with pleasure, lack of seriousness, or with playfulness. Animation is one of them. Comic books are another. While many, most perhaps, do not deal with serious historical issues there are those that have brilliantly done so. Think of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*[73], a work in comic-book form about the Holocaust, in which people are drawn as mice, pigs or cats and the artist and his father are the main characters. Think of William Kentridge's animation film *History of the Main Complaint*[74], an examination of white guilt and responsibility in South Africa after apartheid that has a Kentridge-like figure as all the white characters. However dark or serious the content of these works is, there is an element of play in both *Maus* and *History of the Main Complaint*, something that I would suggest is integrally tied to the medium of comic or animation film in which their work finds form. And there is something else present in these highly imaginative works that is tied to the medium and is, like playfulness, not readily considered to be an element of serious history – humour.

Humour is a difficult, almost taboo, subject to talk about in the context of one's own work. One can write of the humour of others but there are few who will go so far as to write about humour in their own work. It is a positive aspect to be attributed to

another, it seems, but not something to be awarded or assumed for oneself. Nevertheless, I want to mention it because I think it is present and because I think it is another of those elements that separates my approach from that of the museum historian-curators. The humour that I detect in my work is not something explicitly intended but is a consequence of the unexpected transformations that can be created in this kind of animation. There is a trajectory in *Off the Record* of a rugby ball that lifts up out of frame, that enters the next shot, now smaller, to sail between the rugby posts, and that transforms into an eye that blinks. It wasn't a desire to be humorous that motivated this sequence but a decision to connect a number of elements – a photograph of Walter as a soldier, an entry in his diary when he tells of playing rugby matches with Australian and New Zealand troops, and a lens to suggest my own mediation of these events. And yet, the strange juxtapositions, the illogical outcomes, the playful composition of various elements and the game of suggestion and denial of expectation could be described as humorous.

Postings 48
Archaeological time

In *Off the Record* time is fractured and entangled. The time of Walter Giddy and Sol Plaatje and Isaac Wauchope and Kate is intermingled. The work is wilfully anachronistic. My hot-water flask is co-existent with Kate's hand-painted front page of Walter's diary, which is co-existent with the poem, *Load your Pen*, that Isaac Wauchope – alias IWW Citashe – wrote in the 1880s. Walter made entries into his diary from 1915 until 1917. Kate painted the frontispiece of the transcribed diary in the early 1920s. Wauchope died with the sinking of the SS Mendi in 1917. The plate in which the young oak tree grows was salvaged from the wreck of that ship in the 1990s. Acorns were taken to the Cape of Good Hope by Huguenot refugees in the 17th c. Young oak trees were bought back from Franschhoek in the Cape to be planted at Delville Wood Memorial in France in the 1920s. Rather than chronological, historical time, the time in *Off the Record* is archaeological. It is a time of sedimentation, one in which events are layered over each other, in which drawings are layered one over another, in which objects emerge and submerge. There is a relentless forward pull of the animation that is countered by a backward pull, by the drag of imperfectly

removed traces of past actions. There is no beginning and no end. The film is shown in loop. There is the long time of making the film and the short time of watching it.

Postings 49

Implicit-Explicit

{Figure 87: Musket. Bully Beef. 2006.}
{Figure 88: Martini-Henry. Bully Beef. 2006.}

In *Bully Beef* there is a film-within-a-film. It is called *Progress in the Colonies, a technological account.* It is about the revolution of the rifle.

First there is a musket gun. Muzzle-loaded and with a smooth-bored flintlock, muskets were produced by European and African gunsmiths alike. Its range was no more than a few metres and it took at least a minute to reload after each shot. In dry weather three shots out of ten could fail and in wet weather it could cease to function altogether. With the introduction of the percussion cap the failure rate was reduced to five shots out of a thousand. In the film the gun is loaded and fired. The bullet tears through a cabbage – an object that has the approximate size and shape of a human head and is used in films to create the sound of flesh being punched. On the screen: "Reload: one minute".

Now there is a drawing of a Martini-Henry rifle. This new rifle was swift, accurate and insensitive to damp and jolts. The paper cartridge had been replaced by the brass cartridge and this not only protected the gunpowder during transport but kept the smoke fumes in when the shot was fired. It meant that the position of the shooter was not given away. The brass cartridge also hurled the bullet further. In the film the cartridge is loaded, the rifle is fired, and the bullet hits a stack of Corned Beef cans, causing the one to spin. "Reload: five seconds".

With the aid of these new weapons Europeans became militarily superior to Africans.

On screen a jewellery box opens and releases the ditty: "Whatever happens, we have got The Maxim gun, and they have not" [75]. This is followed by an animation of a Maxim gun with cartridges being sucked into the machine, bullets firing out, and empty shells dropping down. This automatic rifle could fire eleven bullets a second.

By the end of the 1890s, according to the Swedish writer Sven Lindqvist, "the revolution of the rifle was complete. All European infantrymen could now fire lying

down without being spotted, in all weathers, fifteen shots in as many seconds at targets of up to a distance of a thousand yards.[76]''

There follows an image of another weapon, a Kalashnikov or AK47. The bayonet is removed from its sheath and fixed on to end of the rifle. This is the weapon of resistance to colonial rule. It is an emblem on the flag of Mozambique. It is also the favoured weapon of militia's and dictatorial regimes.

The last image in the film-within-a-film is of a prosthetic limb that is transformed into an amputated hand.

Progress in the Colonies borrows heavily from the work of Sven Lindqvist. In *Exterminate all the Brutes*, in a chapter entitled 'Gods of Arms', the writer argues that it was Europe's technological progress – not intellectual or biological superiority - that led to its military superiority and won them Africa. This contention is at the heart of *Progress*. My film-within-a-film, through a relatively spare set of images, is a visual adaption of the history of the rifle.

At this point I need to digress a little in order to approach the point I want to make…

{Figure 89: Maxim. Bully Beef. 2006.}
{Figure 90: AK-47. Bully Beef. 2006.}

Bully Beef was the first of the films I made within this doctorate in the arts. The task I had set myself was to find a more personal and positioned relationship to the contested histories with which I was wanting to engage. My concerns were that in previous films, such as *A Royal Hunger* (2002) and *Taste the World* (2005), I had been critical of European colonial and neo-colonial attitudes towards Africa without questioning or making visible my own position in those histories. All the while that I was making these films, and delivering this criticism, I was keenly aware that my own history as a South African of settler origins put me in a rather delicate position as a critic of colonial and neo-colonial attitudes of another country. I felt that this position needed to be examined and that my films needed to engage more rigorously with my personal relationship to and role in these histories.

I started off by studying how other South African artists were approaching apartheid history. I was particularly interested in the work of those who revealed a personal sense of responsibility, even a sense of complicity, in this history. Artists such as William Kentridge - who has created colonial characters in his early cycle of

films on South Africa that resemble his grandfather and himself - and Merryn Singer - who has made watercolours, painted in her own blood, of the notorious Vlakplaas where activists were tortured and murdered. These artists exposed something of themselves in making these works. They admitted to an involvement in, even a complicity with, the creation and maintenance of apartheid in South Africa. There were other artists who felt compelled to make work following the revelations of abuse made to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, but who felt distanced from these events. Artists like Jo Ractliffe, in her *Vlakplaas, Drive-by shooting* series, made work about her inability to connect by using a malfunctioning toy camera to photograph a farmhouse that could only be glimpsed at from the road some distance away. Another approach of artists towards the revelations of the TRC was that of an empathetic commiseration with the victims. I was less interested in this last approach for there is much debate about whether one can empathize with the pain of another.

The early years of this research were spent in considering these different modes of positioning towards the revelations of the TRC. My writing journals (not process journals for there were none as yet) were filled with notes about the work of South African artists in these post-apartheid years. It was an analytical form of research that at that point I assumed would result in a series of papers or chapters in a dissertation. While making *Bully Beef* I did write a paper that I presented at MOMA in New York[77], and then published in an edited volume in South Africa[78].

Noticeable in hindsight is that none of the insights gained in this research seemed to filter through into the film. *Bully Beef* could have been made before I started out on this project. It is a film made from a distance but not one about distance. It is a form of colonial critique but not about personal implication in those colonial histories. I remain outside of the frame. It is a film in which the research relies heavily on the work of historians - on their mediated reports, their narratives and their interpretations of events. Not that I wasn't pleased with *Bully Beef*. I was and still am. But the constellations of images and ideas that I created in the film was beginning to seem like a regurgitation of the material and ideas of others. I wanted something with greater personal investment. A work that was less based on research already defined, resolved and decided. A work that was more of an exploration.

I started my first process journal as I finished *Bully Beef*. The first entries are a description of the film, sequence by sequence, as an aid to the final editing. On the facing pages there are notes reminding myself why I made each drawing and what I

had intended with each. It was the beginning of a new practice of writing, in the studio, about the making of the films. Prior to keeping the process journal my activities seemed to have been two-track: reading-writing and drawing-animating-filmmaking. With the introduction of this journal they began to merge. Here I started to write, frequently only in short notations, about the way I worked, about my thoughts while working. Notes on the structuring of the film followed on from notes on the implications of using a certain image, which followed on from a note about my intentions with an animation. Ideological decisions and historical information connected with thoughts about form. The more that I started to make these ideas explicit through writing, the more that I became aware of, could separate, and could articulate, the different aspects of making the films. The more I wrote in the process journal, the more I seemed to think consciously about the decisions I was making.

With the benefit of hindsight, I think that it is the discursive space created within the process journal that narrowed the gap between the reading-writing research and the making of the films. What started out as two seemingly separate activities began, during the making of *Off the Record* and even more noticeably in the making of the *Salvation* films, to merge into a more complex, interwoven and practice-based kind of research

Postings 50
Journeyings

It was with *Off the Record* that I started to visit my past. The film was to be about those men from outside of Europe who laboured and fought in Flanders in World War I, and it largely turned out to be about that, but it also became the first film in which I used documents out of a family archive to connect to this history. Through this usage my conception of an ‘experience’ of history began to change and it led gradually to a very different approach in my work. *Off the Record* was, in this sense, a transitional work.

At the outset of making the film my notes were about seeking a way into this ‘story’. How was I to connect to the experiences of these men. How was I to make a work about something so distant to myself. Very much in my mind was a quote by historian Susan Crane, written into my notebook years before but one to which I have frequently returned. She asks: “How does history become ‘personal’ – only when it is

survived, or only when private lives become public knowledge? What constitutes an 'experience' of history – 'being there', being told about it (telling it), being taught it (teaching it), reading about it, writing it? Or does history become 'personal' when an individual cares about it?"[79]

It was this last one, that history becomes personal when one cares about it, that was my justification for making a work about these men and this war. And what I cared about was what other historians in South Africa since the 1990s were caring about – the recovery of histories and stories that had been marginalized by the previous three hundred and fifty year focus on heroic white history, to the exclusion of all else. When the film was finished my focus was still largely on this aspect of the work. The contribution of black South Africans in World War I had been neglected. They had never received proper recognition and had been denied the medals that were awarded to all labourers after the War. In the essay and in the contextual information in the catalogue of the exhibition at IFFM, this political aspect of *Off the Record* is dominant. Even the title refers to this aspect of the film.

But there was something else happening in the making of that film that was really important, the significance of which I only came to realize after the film was finished. It was all due to the diary of Walter. When I first thought to use it in the film it was for the narrative it contained. It was a personal document about war experiences. But as work on the film progressed this understanding of it changed, and even more so after the film was finished and I was writing the catalogue essay and then presenting *Off the Record* at a number of seminars. The diary came to be interesting in other ways. It was an object from the past that had survived into the present. It existed physically. It bore traces of people I had not known but who featured in stories my father had told of his family. It was a physical link with my past. I started to feel emotionally connected, through the diary and later other objects, to a period that existed 'behind' me. Not to history as something already written, distant, and separate, but to the past as a period connected to myself but stretching backwards. And it came to feel spatial, a place to which I could journey or visit.

These objects started to accumulate. Walter's diary led to *Agnes' Tales*, which led to Orlando's book, which led to a little book of signatures called *Ghosts of my Friends*, and so on and so on. There was no stopping the flow once the boxes and suitcases were taken down from the shelves. And as they accumulated and I was surrounding myself with these fragments of narratives, I found that I could journey

ever further backwards and still feel connected. I had a strong sense of continuity between my life and those of my forebears. I followed my history back through the non-conformist missionaries to the United Kingdom, and investigated their Evangelical Revival. I crossed to the continent, and to two centuries earlier, and traced my Protestant roots back to the Calvinists and Huguenots, and then to the dissenters who had been opposing Roman Catholicism from the twelve century. It no longer felt like disconnected history. This was my history. I was there.

Postings 51

Complicit

{Figure 91: Lizard. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}
{Figure 92: Lizard. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.}

The idea that 'this was my history, I was there', had certain repercussions. It meant that I was implicated in those histories. There was no standing outside of them, and there was no option of directing criticism from afar. In South Africa the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found, in their final report, that all those in the country who had not opposed the creation and maintenance of white minority rule were complicit with the apartheid system. Mark Sanders, in his book *Complicities: the intellectual and apartheid*, argues that even those who had opposed the system were implicated in it[80]. Complicity was a problem not exclusively for supporters of the apartheid regime and its policies but also for its opponents. Intellectuals, Sanders suggests, cannot avoid some degree of complicity in that which they oppose, and intellectual responsibility can only be achieved with acknowledgment of this complicity. Sanders does go on to suggest that complicity, or the recognition of complicity, can be enabling.

The extent to which 'I was there' in South African history surprised me when I finally got to researching the rest of my family of settlers. I had known about the Wesleyan missionaries and the 1820 Settlers who emigrated from Britain and, based on that information, I had grown up believing that my origins were English and my family's presence in South Africa stretched back to the early nineteenth century. I started making films about these people and their objects. *Orlando's Book* is about a sense of (literary) connection to England. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival* is a response to the religiosity of a line of English forebears stretching back to the Reformation.

Then as documents from the archive accumulated, I found that there were other windows opening onto other family lines, and that we had been in South Africa far longer than I had thought. We had been there from the start of European settlement in the mid seventeenth century. We were there in the group of Dutch soldiers who defended the outpost at the Cape of Good Hope. We were amongst the first free burghers who farmed in the foothills of Table Mountain. We were the Huguenots who fled France via Zeeland to find safe haven in the Cape. We were soldiers and economic migrants from Prussia, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands. We were religious refugees from France and French-Flanders. We were evangelists from the United Kingdom. And, I discovered, we were also slaves. Two ancestors were the daughters of slave women from Angola and Guinea, the names of whom are lost. One of them is known to have been shipped to the Cape from Angola with two hundred other enslaved children.

At first I was concerned that I could be indulging in family narratives that would not only be of no interest to anyone else, but would lack any critical edge. Then, as my understanding of the breadth of my historical involvement in the entire South African historical saga deepened and I realised the extent of my historical complicity, I began to feel that the work I could now make had a different kind of critical potential. If I have been slaver, enslaved, refugee and colonizer, then I am able to make work that explores these histories from any of these different perspectives. Looking outwards from these implicated histories offered not a clearer view but rather the opposite, one that was muddier, more complex, less certain, possibly less comfortable. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival* started out as a fairly straightforward expression of irritation that I was the descendant of so many religious and proselytizing emigrant forebears, but as I worked on it, I realised that I was actually fascinated by the history of religious dissenters. I enjoyed a new-found connection to the iconoclasts of the 16th century, to the mumbling Lollards and the fleeing Huguenots of the 17th century, even as I continued to abhor religious theology and the intolerance to which it invariably seemed to lead. I enjoyed being in churches but I strenuously avoided any kind of religious service. The film was not intended to be that confused or contradictory. It had seemed fairly clear cut when I set out, but as it progressed I discovered things about myself that I had perhaps not wanted to admit previously. This new push and pull between contradictory emotions or thoughts was

so much more interesting than having an opinion at the start and still having it at the end.

Postings 52

Endnote

The Last Post. It does not feel the end of anything, more like a beginning. Writing the thought-pieces has not drained me of ideas but set my mind racing with possibilities for new work - not work that is unrelated to what I have been doing but that extends ideas already generated.

There came a moment, around October, when I felt that I had written myself dry. Until then I had been writing about older work or experiences, working from notes in the process journal or other journals, and rethinking, reformulating, and reflecting. The intention with Postings was that they were 'second-level' writings that arose from a sediment of notes already existing. There came a stage, though, when I felt I had explored much of that material, had thoroughly stirred that sediment, and needed to explore something else. Coupled with that was the effect of the five day walk to Santiago de Compostela. This was part of my work but was simply too recent to include in writings. At that point I posted five days of walking the Camino. These weren't thought-pieces but pages from my walking journal – 'first-level reflections' – but it gave me time to gather my thoughts.

Now, in late December, my mind feels light and clear. So many issues about which I was uncertain have been opened up for examination and the effect has been cathartic. I have learned that there are many subjects on which I cannot write. But I've also learnt that if I ground my writing in my own experience and I keep a certain self-reflexivity at the fore, I can write about many things. Subjects that seemed so crucial to investigate in January now seem less urgent. At the end of fifty-two thought-pieces, for instance, I am less concerned with being able to describe or define my work. I have come to realise that the work is rich and complex and yes, it is a bit like this and a bit like that, but it no longer seems to matter quite as much as it once did. In the course of this year, and due in large measure to the writings, the work has taken on even more complex and diverse forms, and I start to revel in this indeterminacy and i possibility. I have come to realise that my work can be discursive in its entirety – films, drawings and writings working together - and yet the desire to be discursive is less compelling

than it once was. The sustained reflection through writing has prompted a greatly diversified kind of exploration. Far from the writing being explanation of what I have made, it has become a means of suggestion, a means of generating ideas for new kinds of work.

It remains for me to express my deep appreciation to my five readers, to Hilde Van Gelder, Johan Wagemans, Nanda Janssen, Paul Willemsen and John Morris. Your support, your comments, the way that some of you have incorporated my work into your work, has been more than I could ever have hoped. Knowing (hoping) that you would be reading the thought-pieces was strongly motivating. I was aware that not all the thought-pieces would be of the same interest to you all and I did try to vary the subjects in an effort to direct them towards one or other of you. Had there been only one reader the thought-pieces would have been a little different. In form they would have been more like personal letters addressing one specific reader. In content they would have been angled much more towards your own interests, for amongst you there are a range of professional disciplines and practices – art history, theory and curating, architecture and experimental short film, and experimental psychology. But addressed to one reader their broader communicability would have been less. Knowing who my readers were has kept me aware of this issue of communicability and the need to formulate my ideas as clearly as possible.

And so I address the last six envelopes, print off the last thought-piece and tuck it neatly into the envelopes, ready for posting. In a day or so my copy will arrive back in my studio and join the other fifty-one post-marked but unopened little brown envelopes to complete the *Postings* project.

December 31st 2011

Summary

Postings
Drawing on the Past.
Implicit:Explicit:Complicit

The *Postings* are a set of thought-pieces about an artistic practice and a doctoral project that is entitled *Drawing on the Past. Implicit:Explicit:Complicit*.

There are four simultaneous lines of research in this project. The first is the desire to find an engaged position from which to 'speak' about the past. The second is an attempt to characterize the nature of these short animated films. The third is to articulate methodologies and decision-making in this particular artistic practice. The fourth is to investigate writing as an integral part of that practice. The *Postings* explore all four lines of research.

The first line of research is the one that was set out at the start of the doctoral project. The task I had set myself was to find a more personal and positioned relationship to the contested histories with which I was wanting to engage. My concern was that I was standing outside of the frame and criticizing European colonial and neo-colonial attitudes towards Africa, without questioning or making visible my own position in those histories. I was keenly aware that my own history as a South African of settler origins put me in a rather delicate position as a critic of colonial and neo-colonial attitudes of another country. I felt that this position needed to be examined and that my films needed to engage more rigorously with my personal relationship to and role in these histories. There followed an investigation into the work of other South African artists and curators and the manners in which they positioned themselves to apartheid histories. Postings 12-18 explore issues of approach to contested histories through the examination of an image from the 'colonial archive' and a controversial exhibition in South Africa. Postings 49-51 examines the shift in my work from standing outside of the frame of these histories, to finding a place, and a sense of implication, within those histories. Through a diary that belonged to a great uncle, and later through other objects that were in the family archive (Postings 23-29, 36-40, 44-45), I started to feel emotionally and intellectually connected to a period that existed 'behind' me. Not to a history as something already

written, distant, and separate, but to the past as a period connected to myself but stretching backwards. No longer did I feel disconnected and outside of the frame. This was my history.

The second line of research relates to genre and characterizing the nature of my work. Much of the search during this period has been directed towards determining what kind of investigation my films are, and what kind of discourse I enter by making the films. The search has been to locate my work with that of other, similar, practitioners, who may or may not be visual artists. I needed to explore what it was that I have been borrowing from particular genres or disciplines. Postings 05-06 & 19 investigate to what extent the films are documentary, history, fiction, visual poem or film essay. Postings 46-48 go further into considering the extent to which my work is a form of history-making and compares my methodologies with those of other kinds of historians. I have come to realize, through this research, that my films are not a mutant form of history making and I do not necessarily have to strive for the ideals of professional historians. I have come to realize the special qualities of these short animated filmed works that can incorporate fictional elements, that can be playful, personal, can mix up times, can be poetic, nostalgic or sharply critical. I have realized too that the films are not the 'work' alone, and cannot be discursive on their own. Through experiments with different means of exhibiting contextual information around the films - source material, process journal notes on aspects of the films, even audio stories – I have been finding ways of enlarging the audience's experience of the film (Postings O2 & 21). If the work is to be discursive then, I have learnt, it can only be so with the writings included. I have come to conceive of my work as these many aspects together: writings, films, drawings, contextual information, and documentation of process.

The third line of research is about articulating methodologies and decision-making in this particular artistic practice. It is about making tacit knowledge explicit. There are many elements involved in making a drawing, animating a sequence, editing a film, adding sound or exhibiting a film that are seldom articulated. The research has been an attempt to better understand and communicate the complexities of these processes (Postings 03-04, 07-11, 22, 34-35, 4-43).

The fourth line of research has been to investigate writing as an integral part of this artistic practice. The *Postings* emerge out of experiments with different kinds of writing. The introduction of a process journal early on in the research process

encouraged a form of note making on issues of relevance to the making of the films – most especially in regard to the interrelationship of form and meaning. Within these process journals there was an accumulation of small insights into studio process. The *Postings*, the *Postscripts*, and other works, were written by dredging these notes and making the connections between them. Because these writings are based on the process journal and studio experience, they are intimately connected to practice. It took seven years to get writing to a point where it was a part of this practice rather than an explanation of finished work. Writing now runs alongside and intertwines with drawing and the other activities that are part of the process of making a film. It has become an essential component of my practice.

The title '*Drawing on the Past'* should be self-evident. I chose to mention 'past' rather than 'history' for the former seems undefined and open for exploration, whereas the latter has connotations of being already written and distant. *Implicit:Explicit* seems beautifully to sum up the process that has occurred throughout the research period – the sustained articulation of tacit knowledge. '*Complicit*' carries the sense of implication and connectedness for which I aimed from the start.

Illustration credits

21rozendaal, actuele kunst, Enschede / Thijs de Lange

Figure 2: P02: *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Figure 3: P02: detail *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Figure 82: P44: *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Koen Blomme

Figure 10: P06: Knitting. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 11: P07: Grinning Orientals. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 19: P09: Sinking of the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 21: P09: Letter from the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Jef Byttebier

Figure 8: P05: Sarah Jane and her ten children. *Kin*. 2013.

Figure 9: P05: The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy (Stand-in). *Kin*. 2013.

Figure 29: P12: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

Figure 30: P12: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

Figure 31: P13: Gasman. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

Figure 43: P23: New Rush. *Mine*. 2013.

Figure 87: P49: Musket. Bully Beef. 2006.

Figure 88: P49: Martini-Henry. Bully Beef. 2006.

Figure 89: P49: Maxim. Bully Beef. 2006.

Figure 90: P49: AK-47. Bully Beef. 2006.

Julie Delbeke

Figure 86: P47: *Off the Record*. 2008.

Illustrations

Figure 1: P02: *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Figure 2: P02: *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

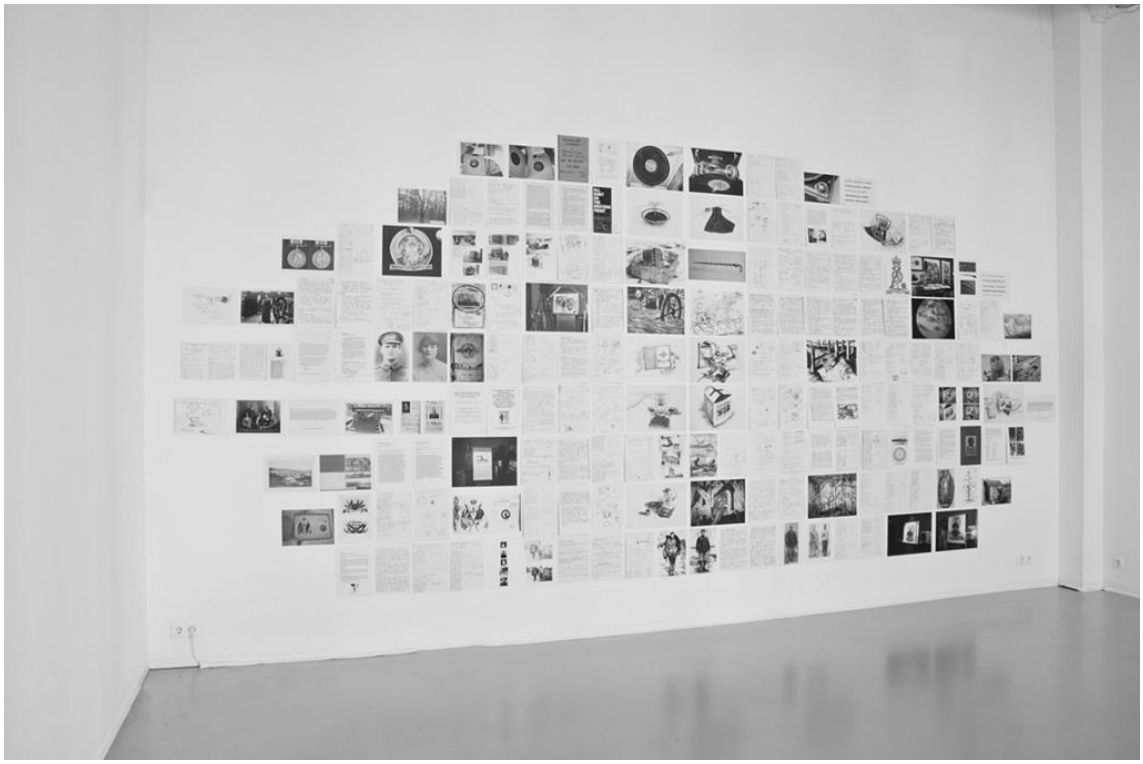


Figure 3: P02: detail *Footnote*. *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Figure 4: P03: Statue of Jules Jacques in Diksmuide.

Figure 5: P03: Statue of Jules Jacques in Diksmuide.

Figure 6: P03: Banquet invitation. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

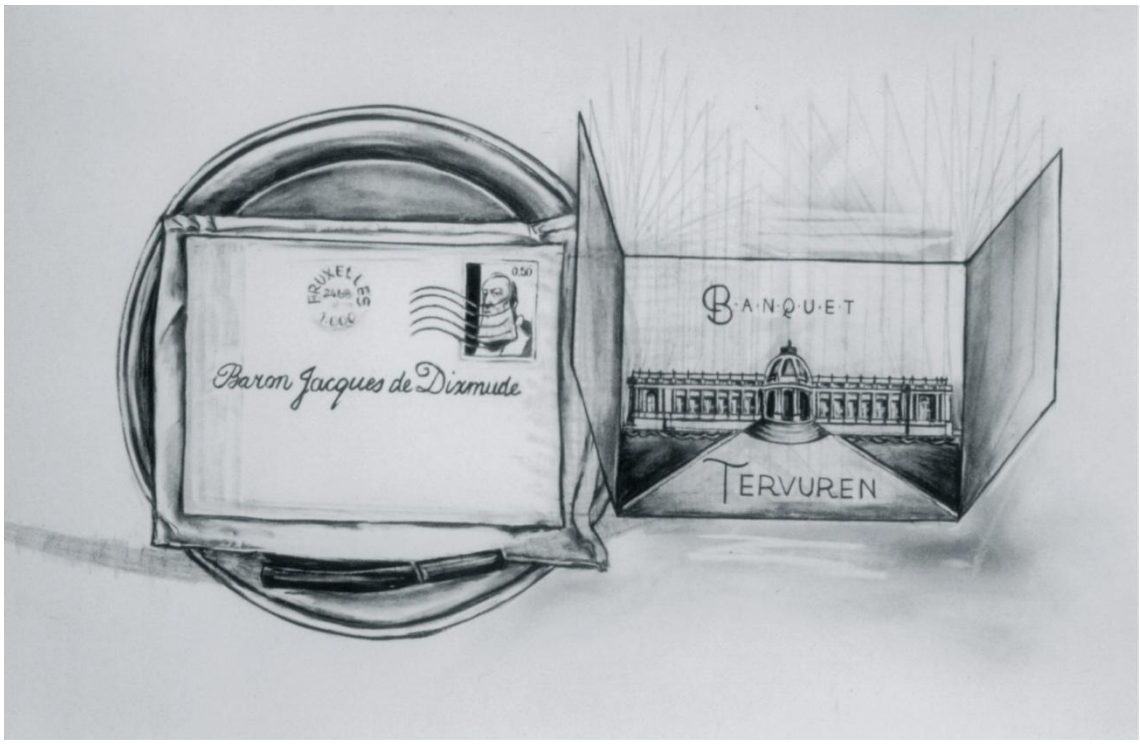


Figure 7: P04: Pictures of English Landscape. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

Figure 8: P05: Sarah Jane and her ten children. *Kin*. 2013.

Figure 9: P05: The Unfortunate Mrs. Giddy (Stand-in). *Kin*. 2013.

Figure 10: P06: Knitting. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure11: P07: Grinning Orientals. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 12: P08: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

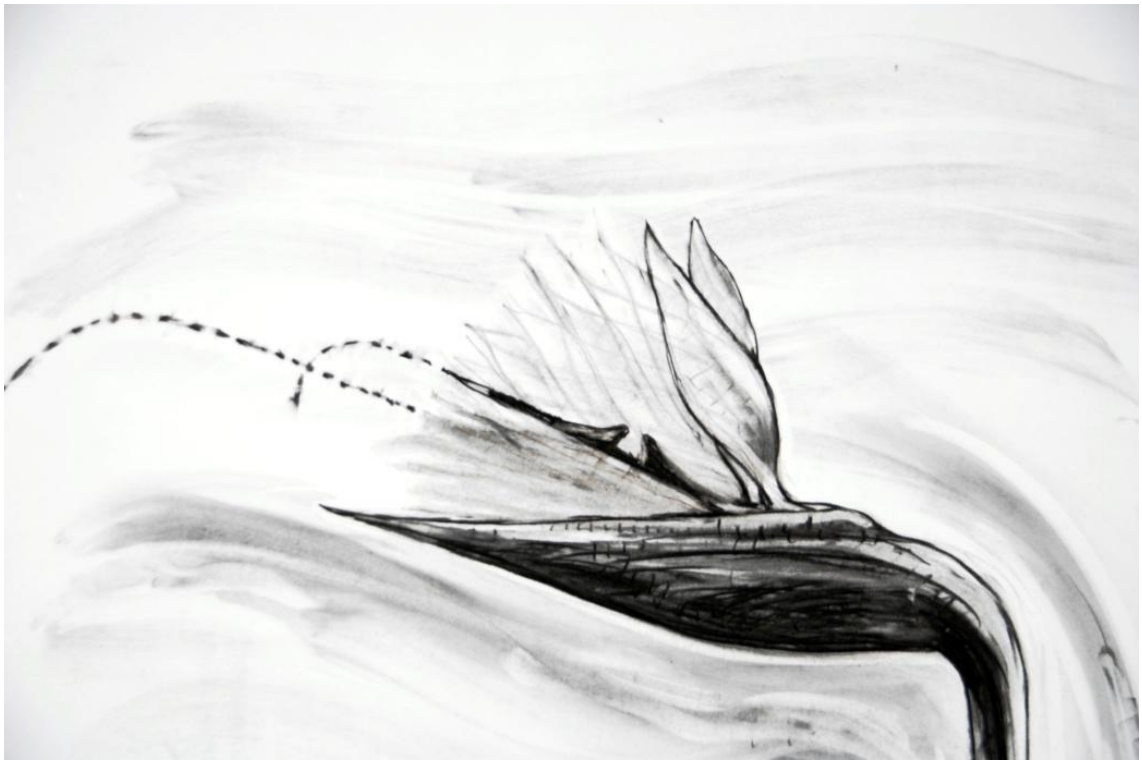


Figure 13: P08: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

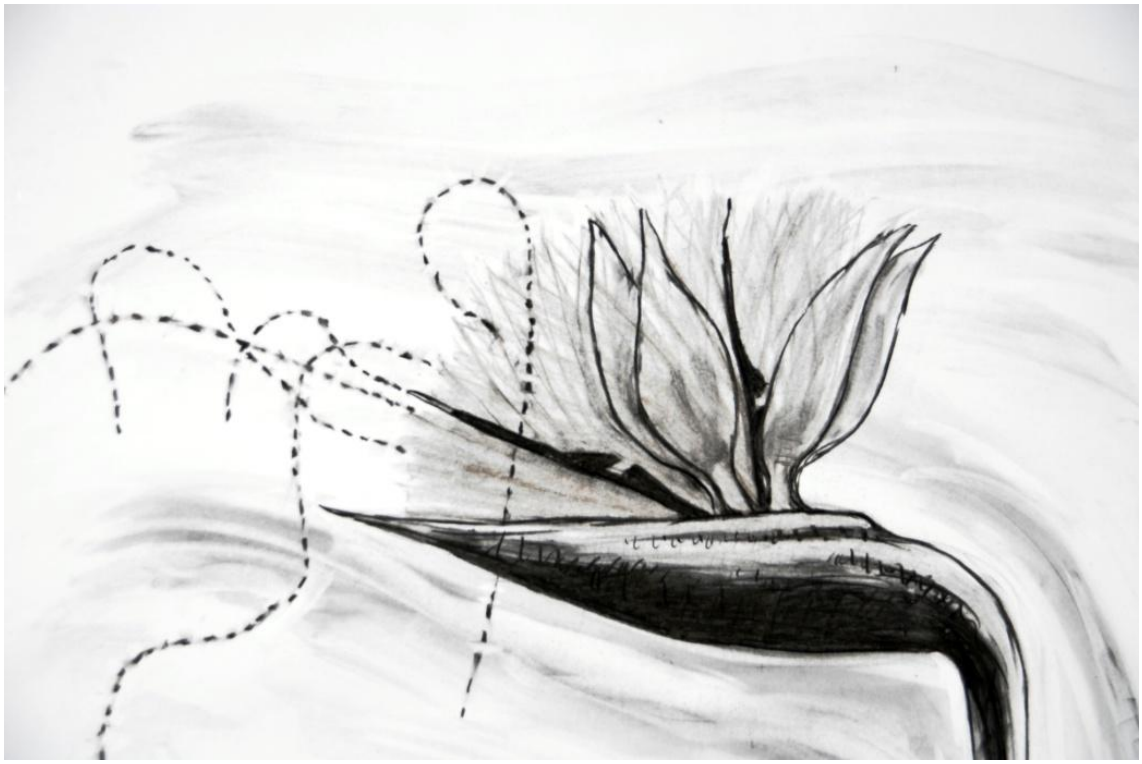


Figure 14: P08: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

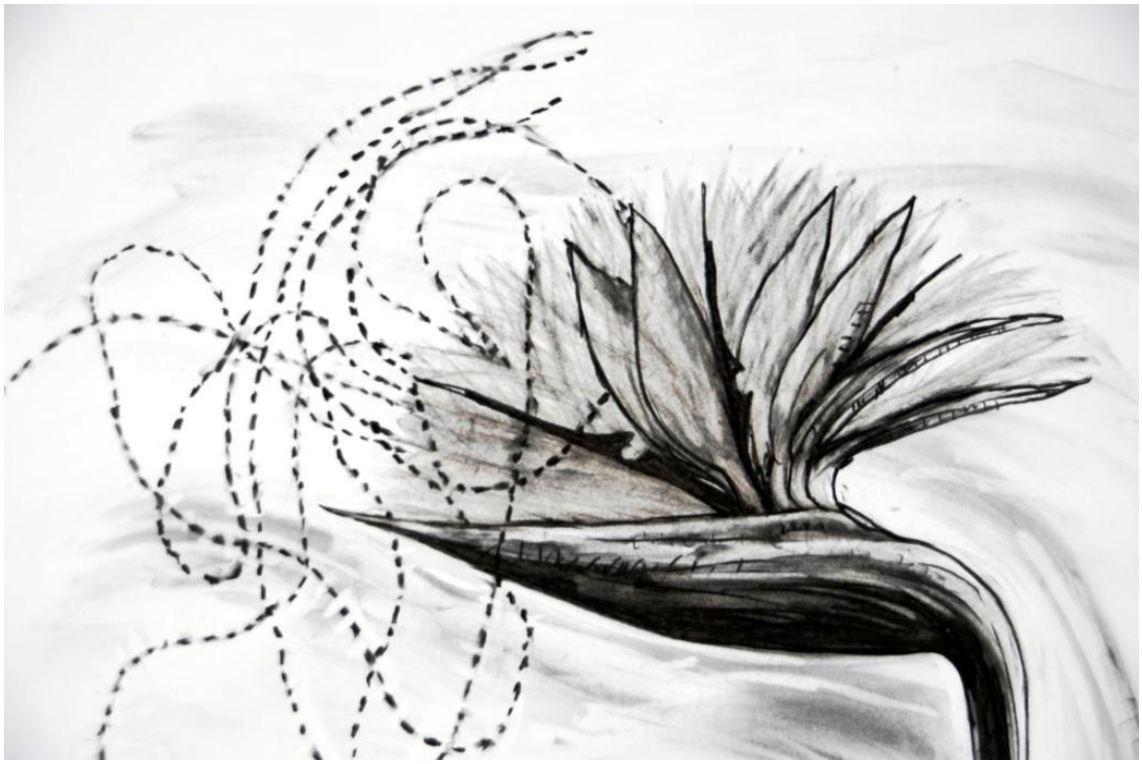


Figure 15: P08: Strelitzia. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

Figure 16: P08: detail of Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

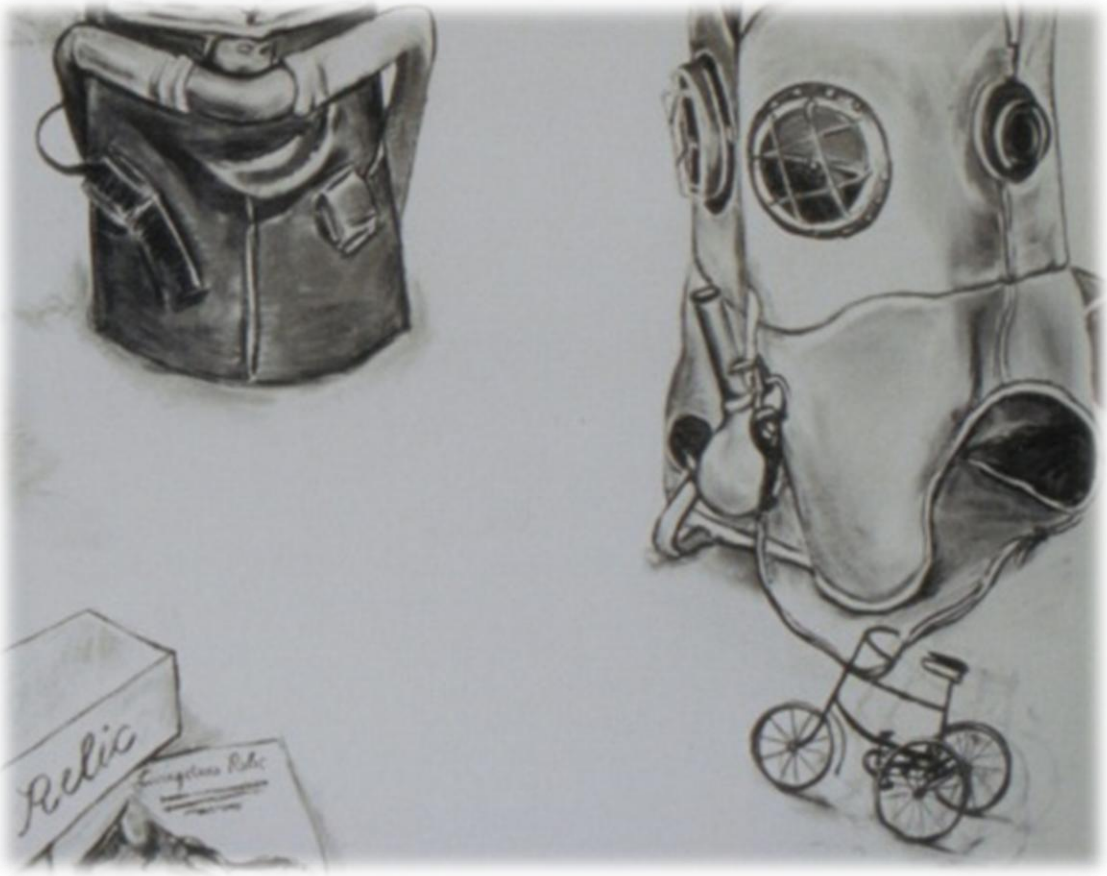


Figure 17: P08: detail of Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

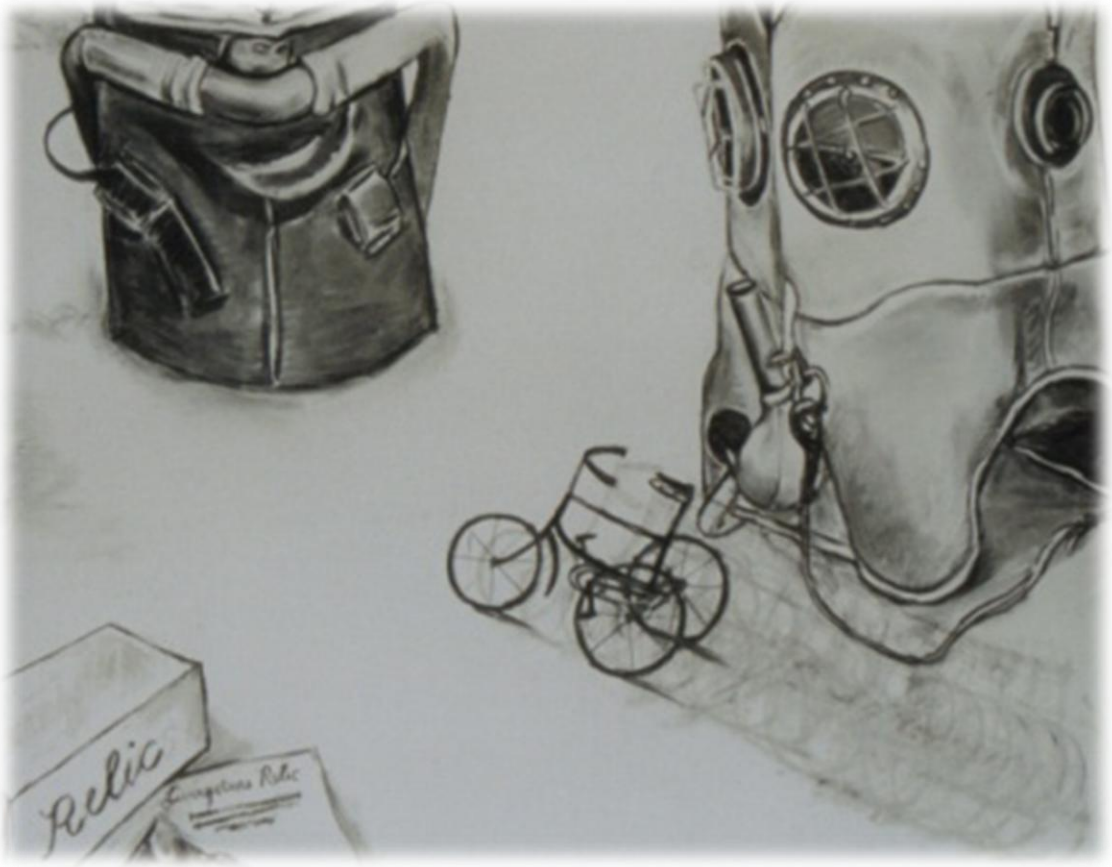


Figure 18: P08: detail of Banquet. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

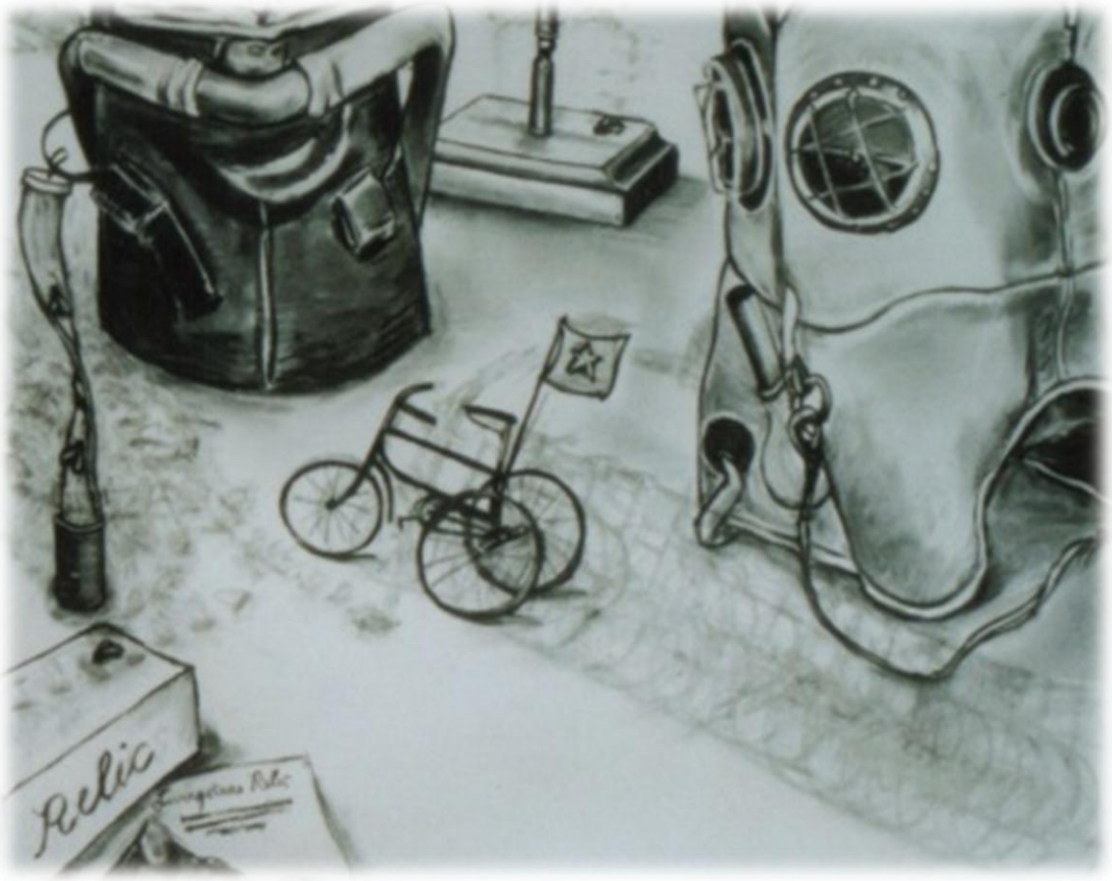


Figure 19: P09: Sinking of the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 20: P09: Bridge. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 21: P09: Letter from the SS Mendi. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 22: P11: Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.

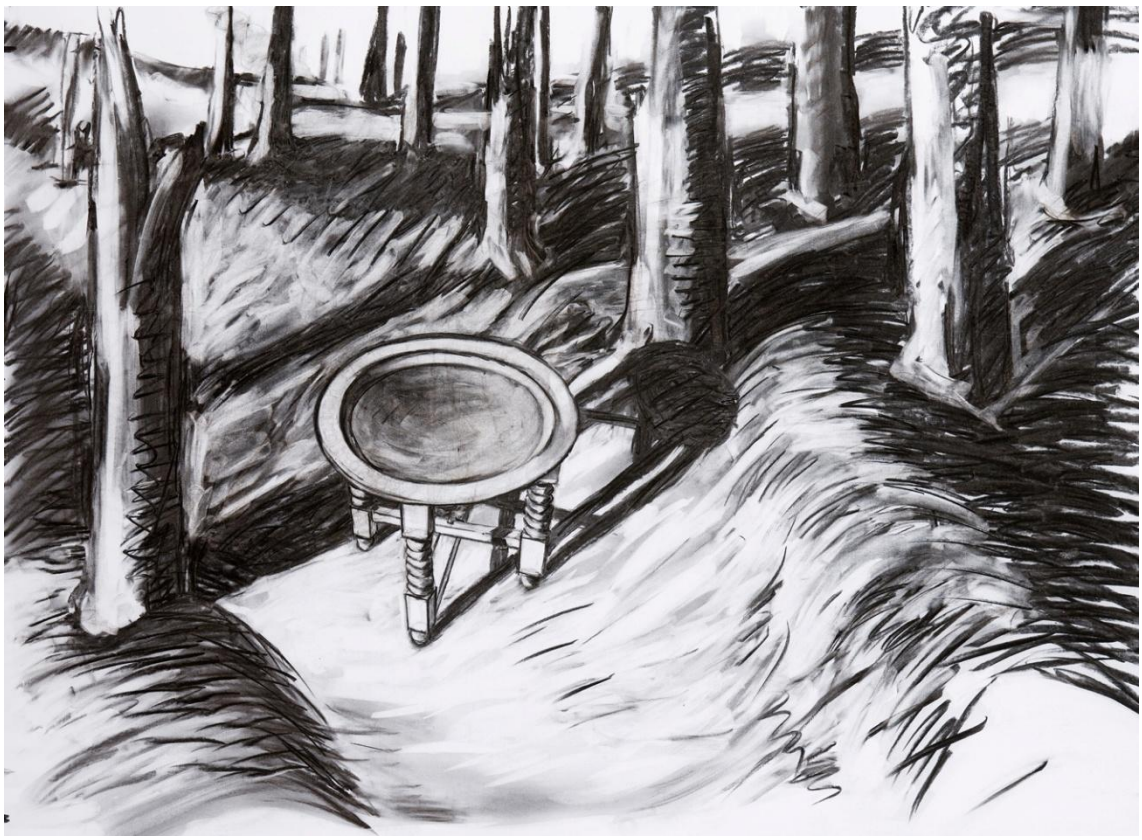


Figure 23: P11: detail Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.

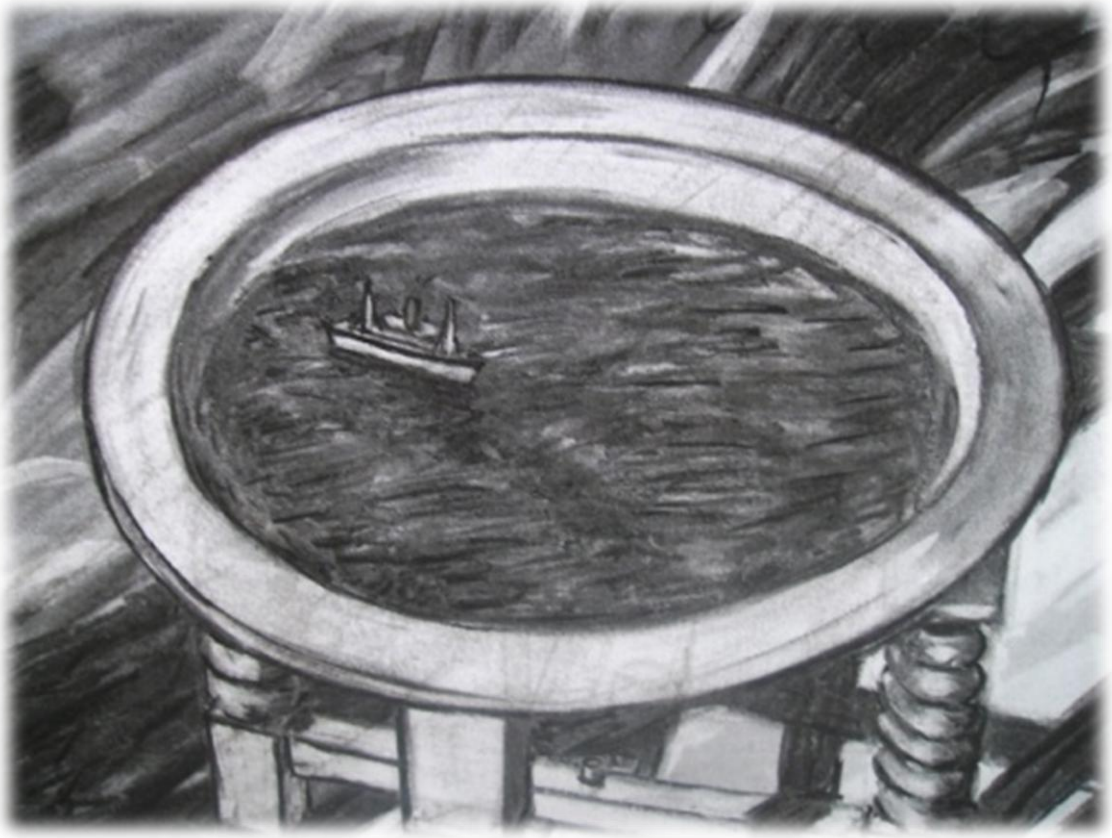


Figure 24: P11: detail Katie's tray. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 25: P11: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 26: P11: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 27: P11: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 28: P11: detail Eye. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 29: P12: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

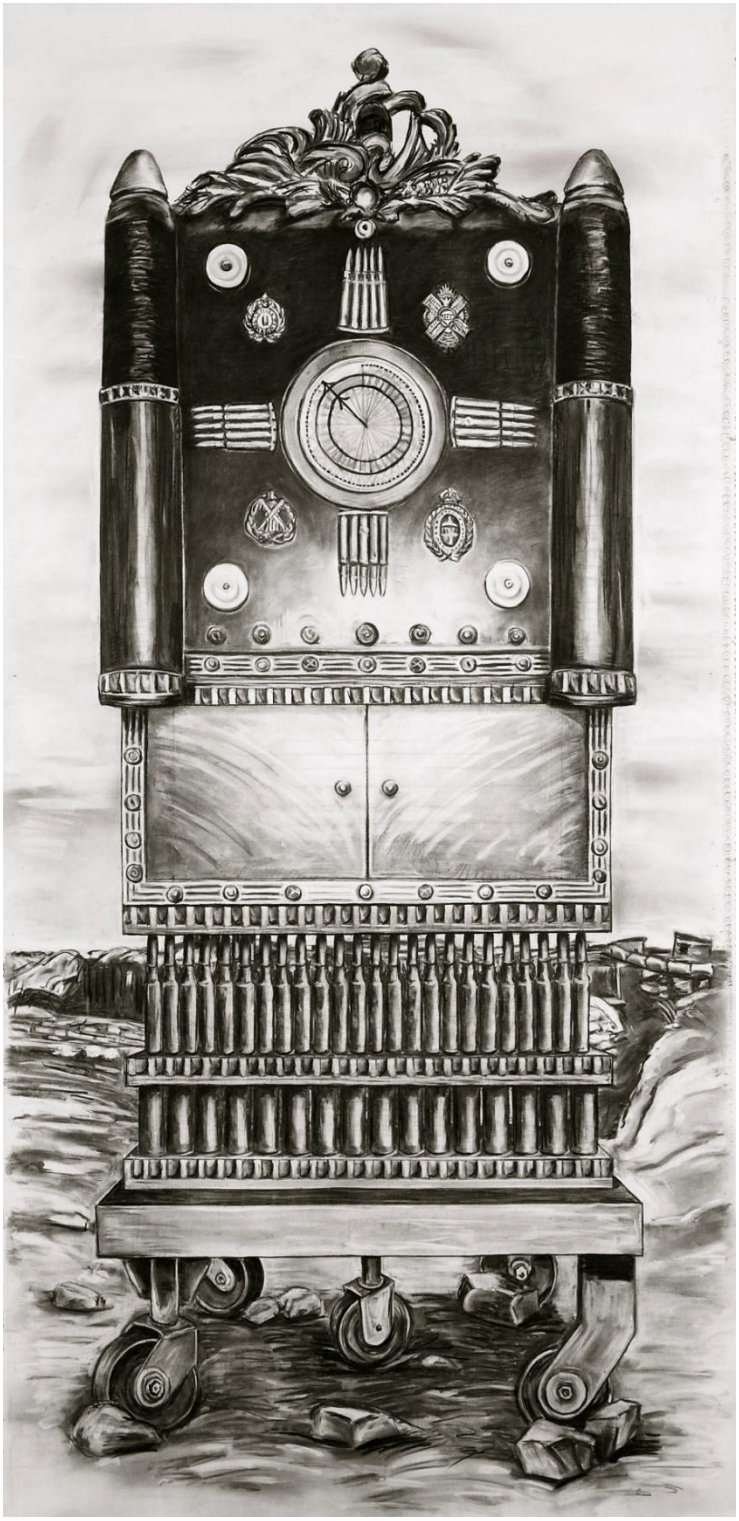


Figure 30: P12: Monument I. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

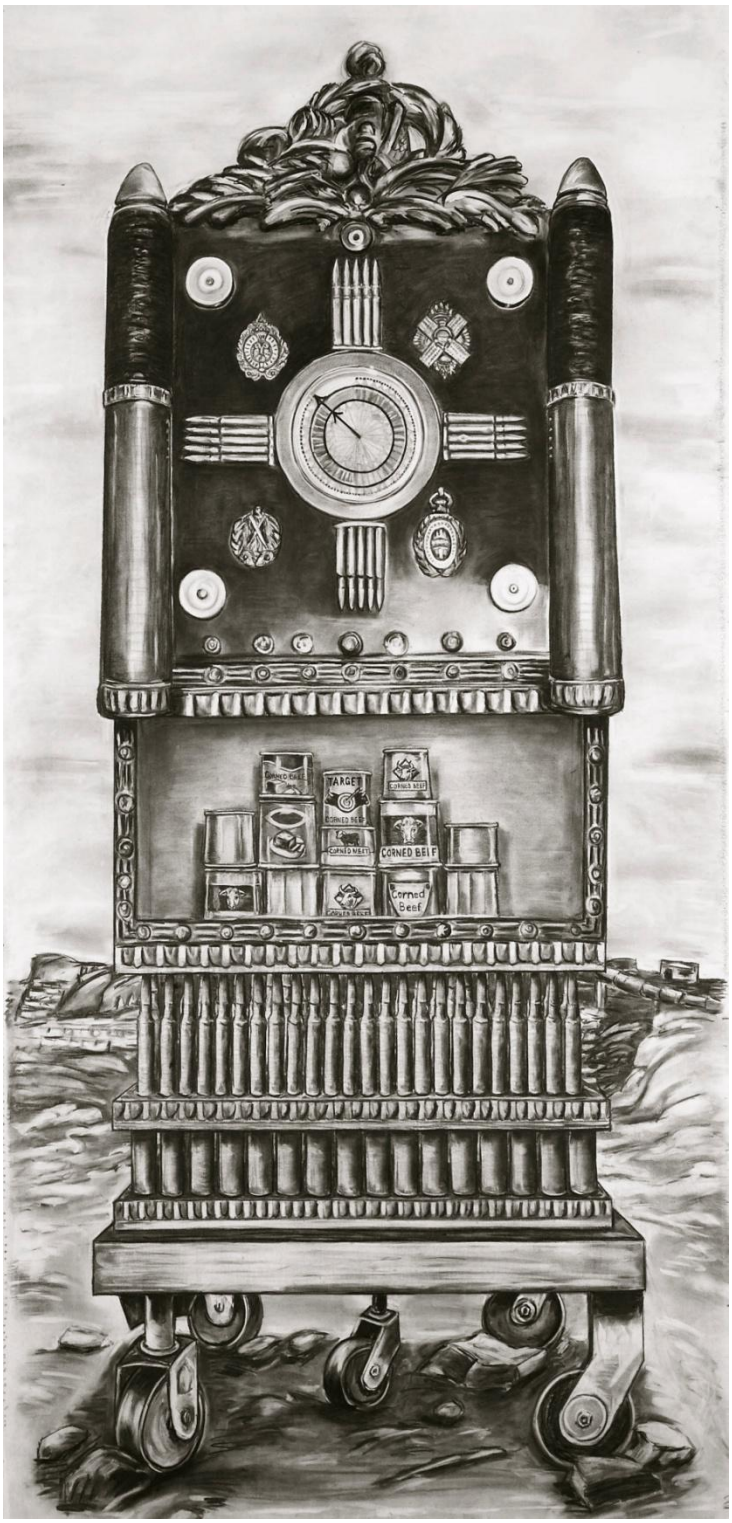


Figure 31: P13: Gasman. *Bully Beef*. 2006.

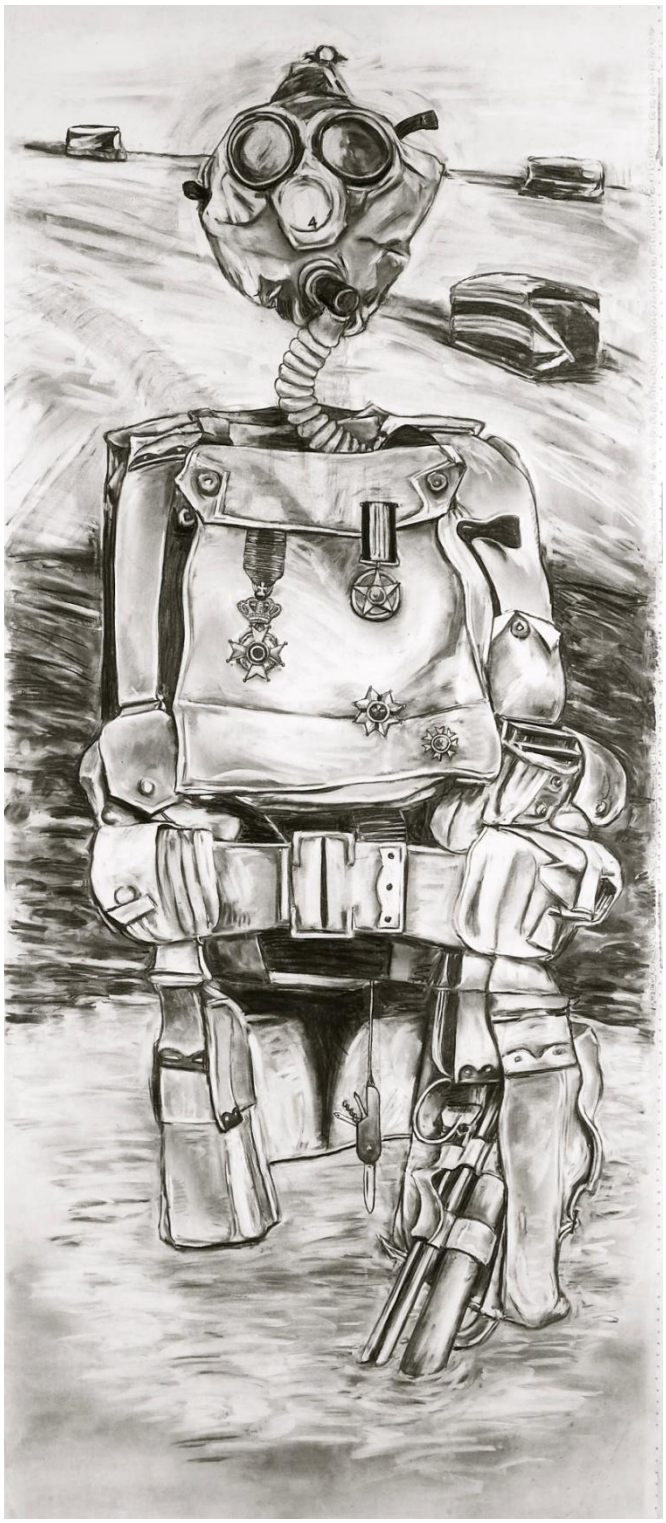


Figure 32: P13: The Hanging Tree.

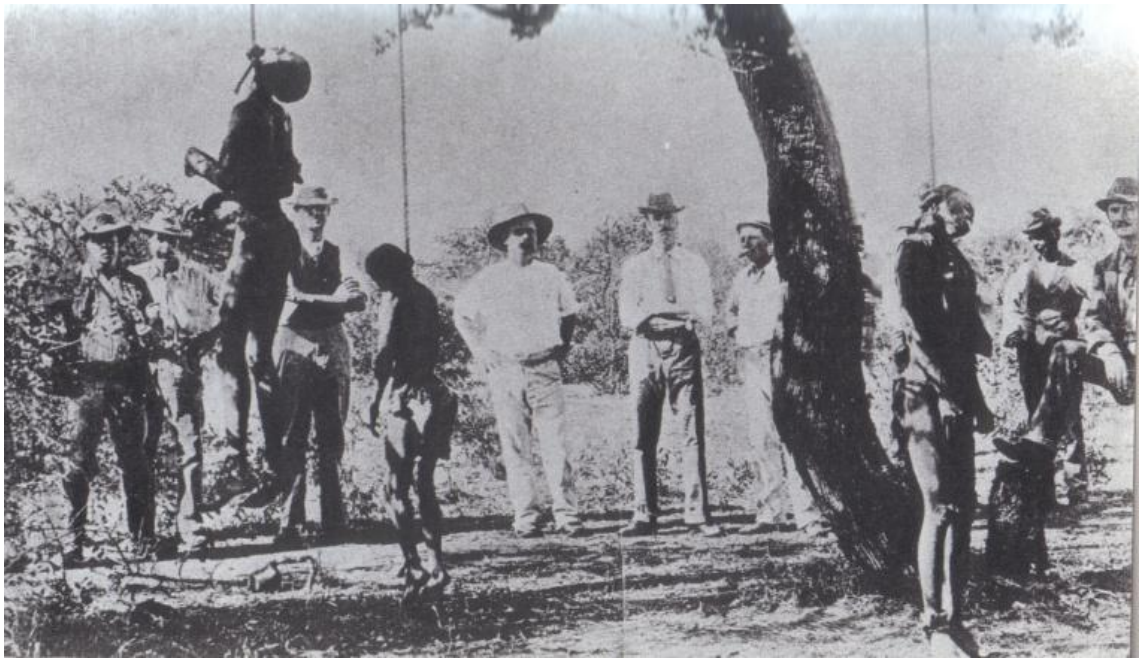


Figure 33: P14: From a photograph.

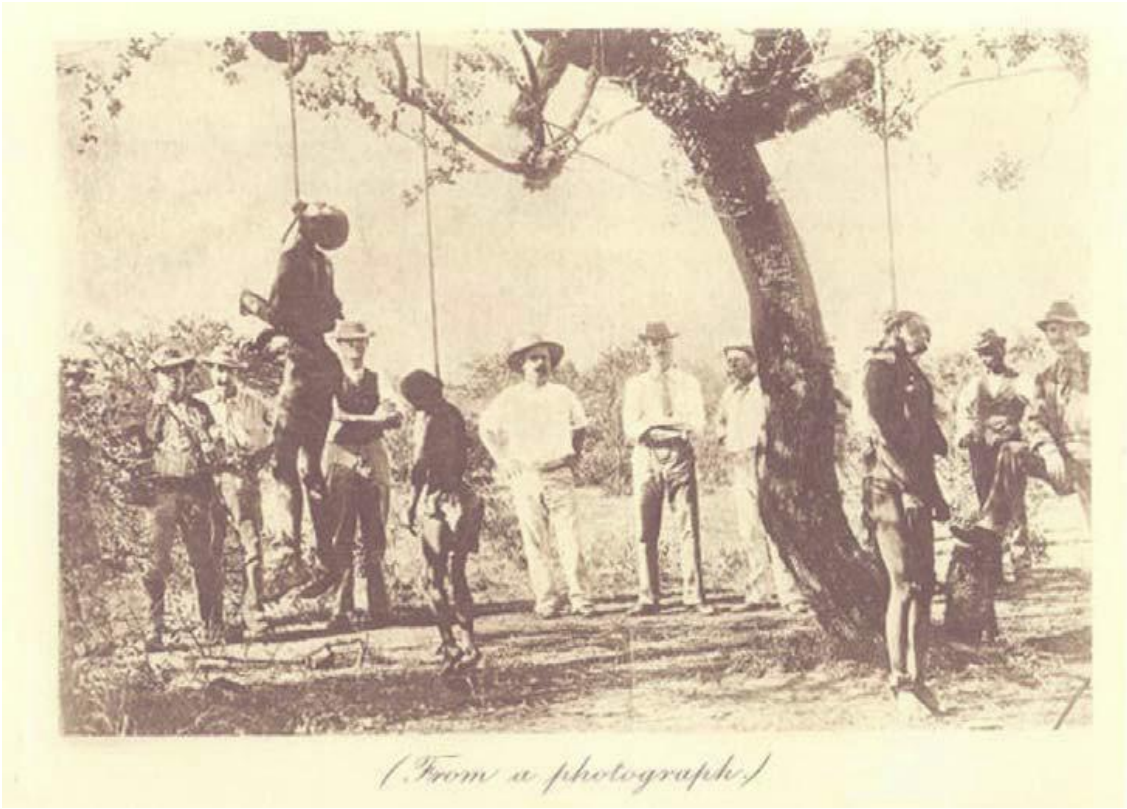


Figure 34: P18: Target Corned Meat. *A Royal Hunger*. 2002.

Figure 35: P18: Target Corned Meat. *A Royal Hunger*. 2002.

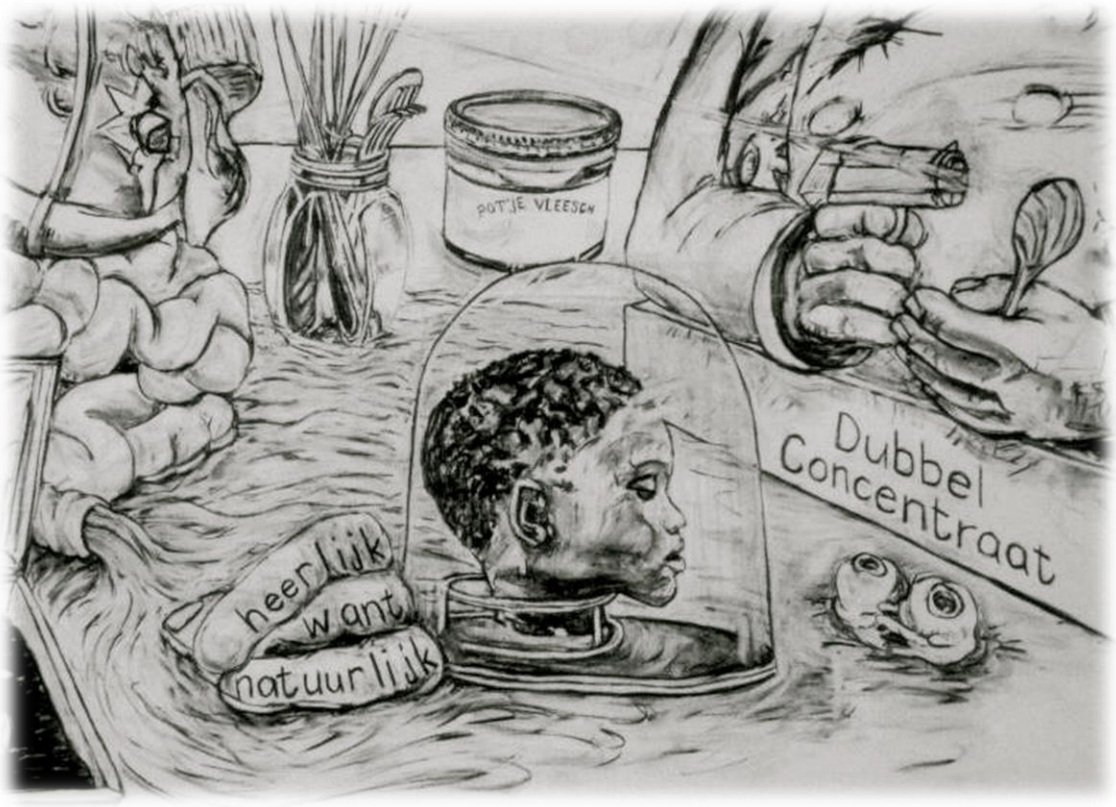


Figure 36: P18: Cover of Southern African Review of Books.

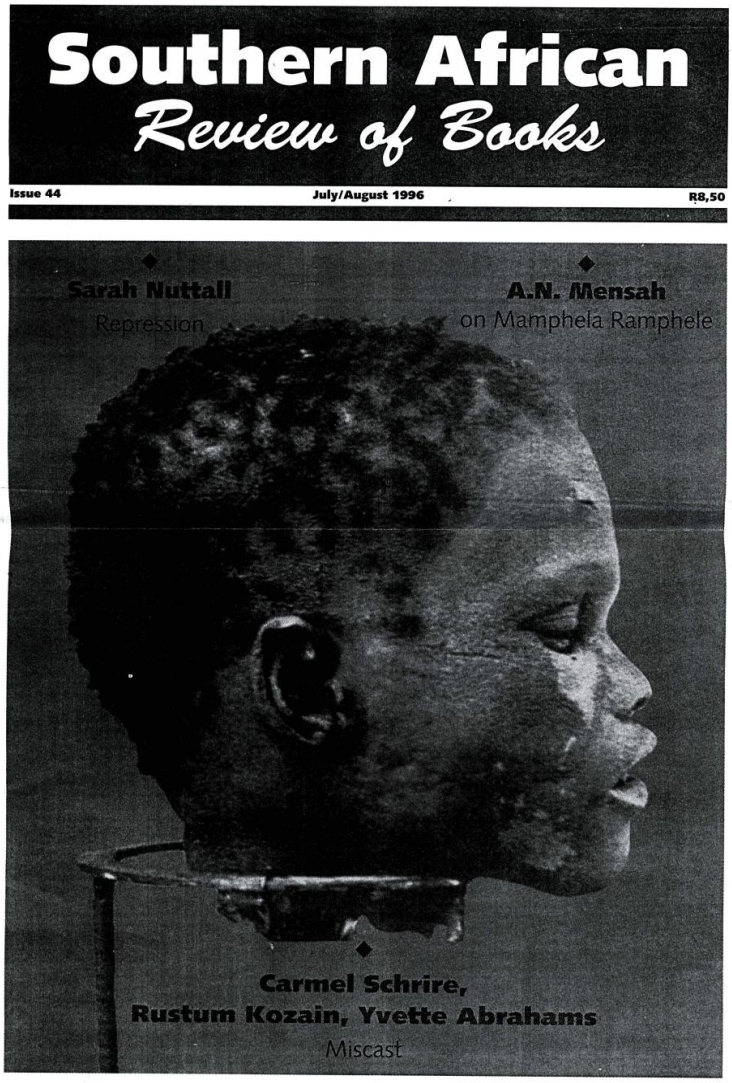


Figure 37: P20: Mealie: *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 38: P20: Hand-grenade. *Off the Record*. 2008.

Figure 39: P22: Sint-Jozefskapel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 40: P22: Kapel Ter Ruste. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

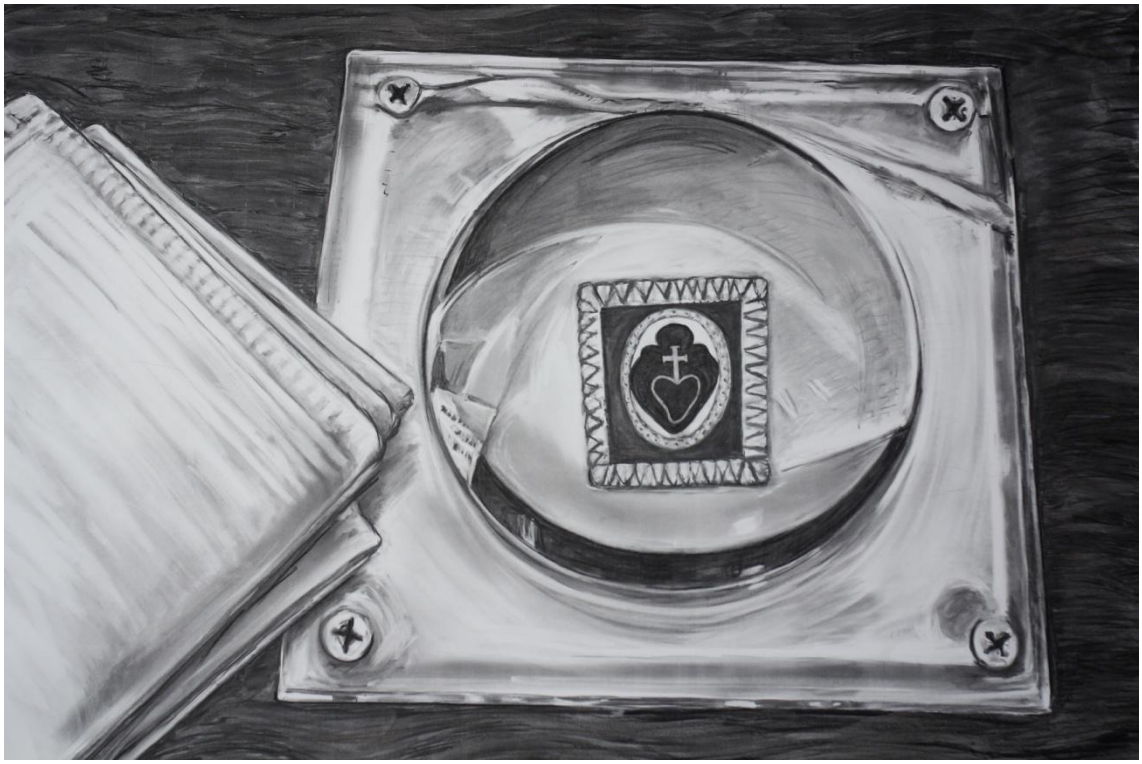


Figure 41: P23: The Red Caps Party I.

Figure 42: P23: The Red Caps Party II.

Figure 43: P23: New Rush. *Mine.* 2013.

Figure 44: P24: Agnes' Book

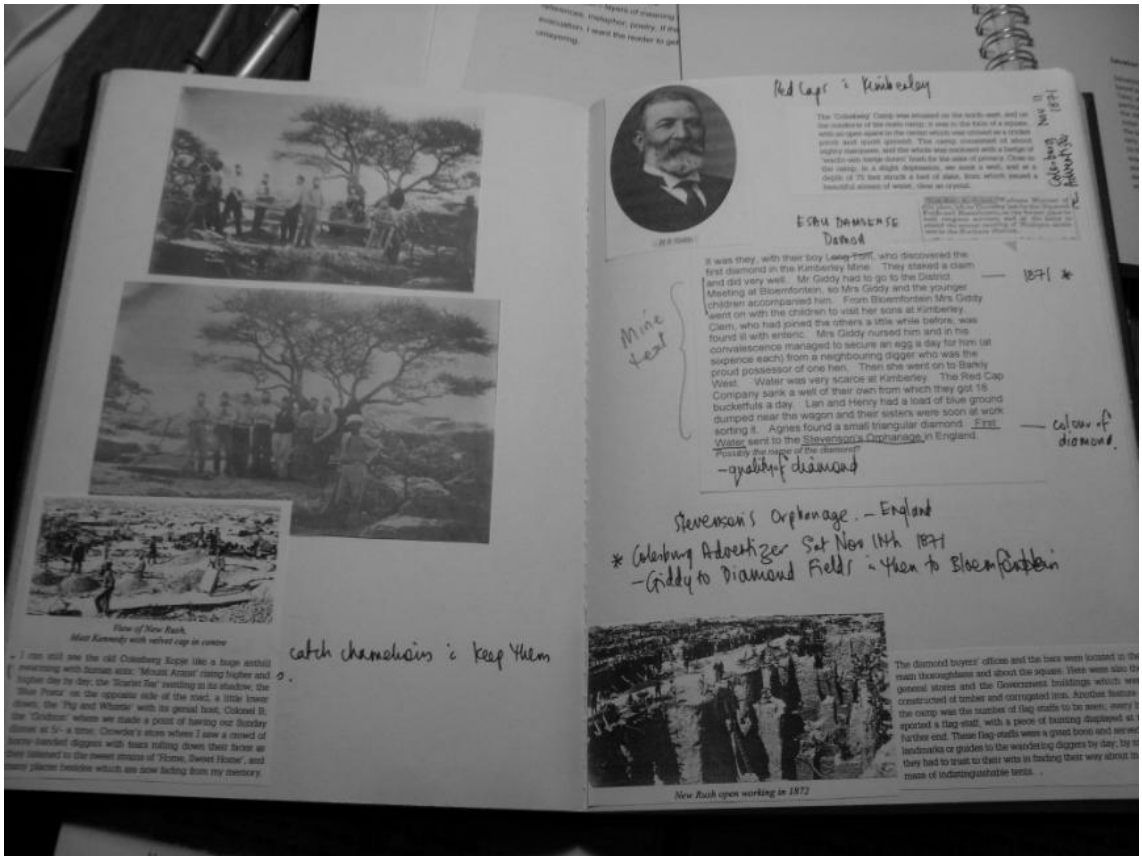


Figure 45: P24: Agnes' Book

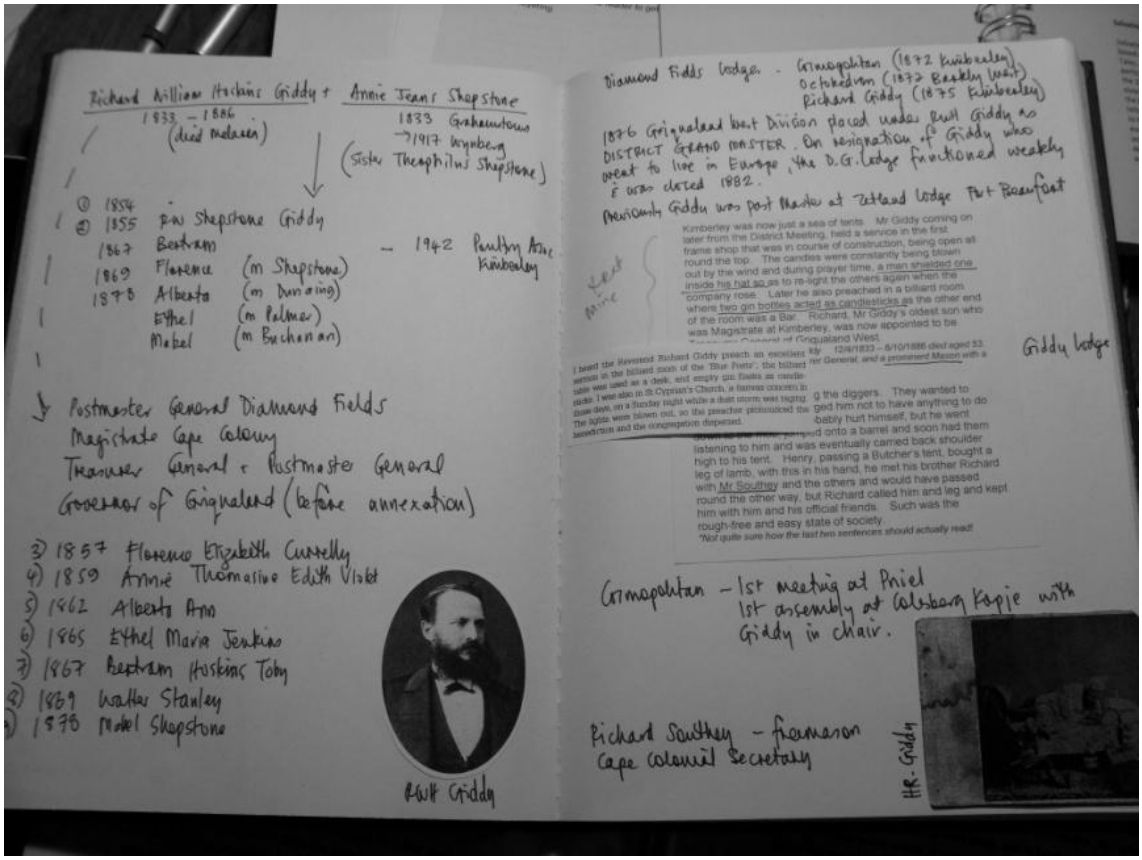


Figure 46: P25: Walter's diary.

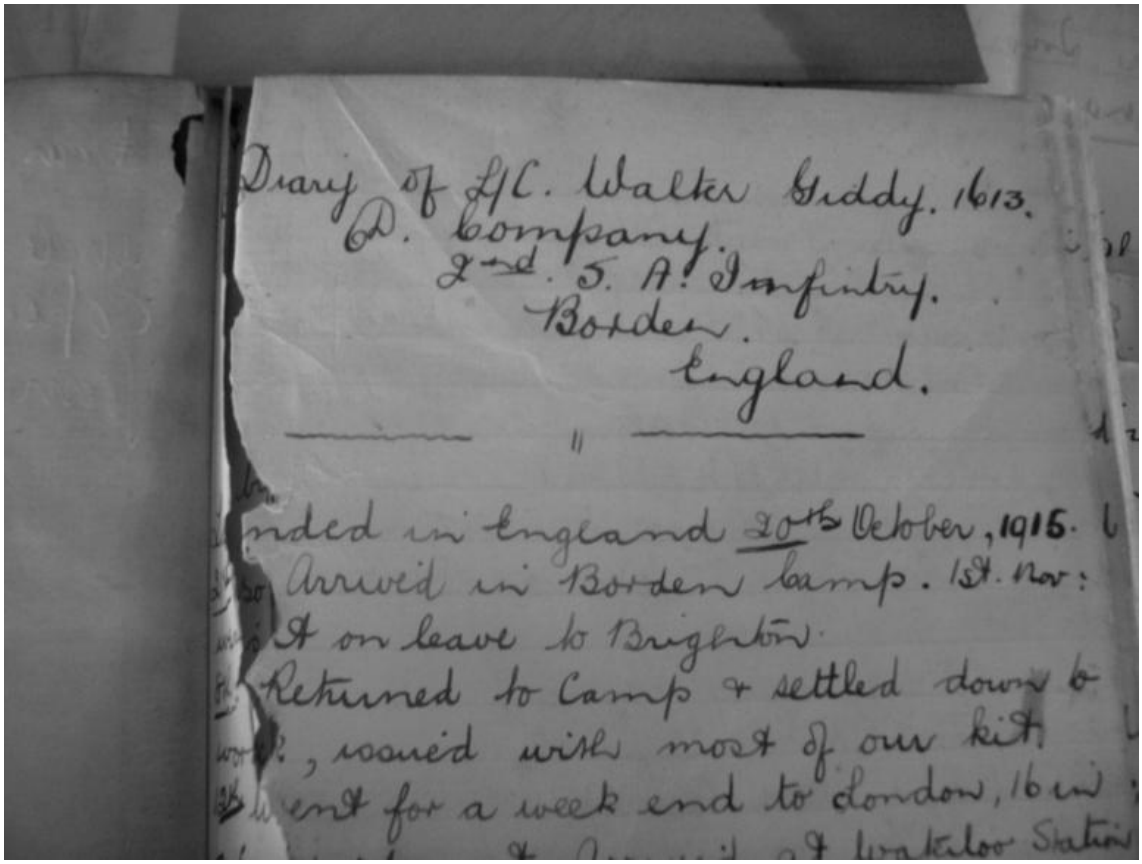


Figure 47: P26: Frontispiece diary.

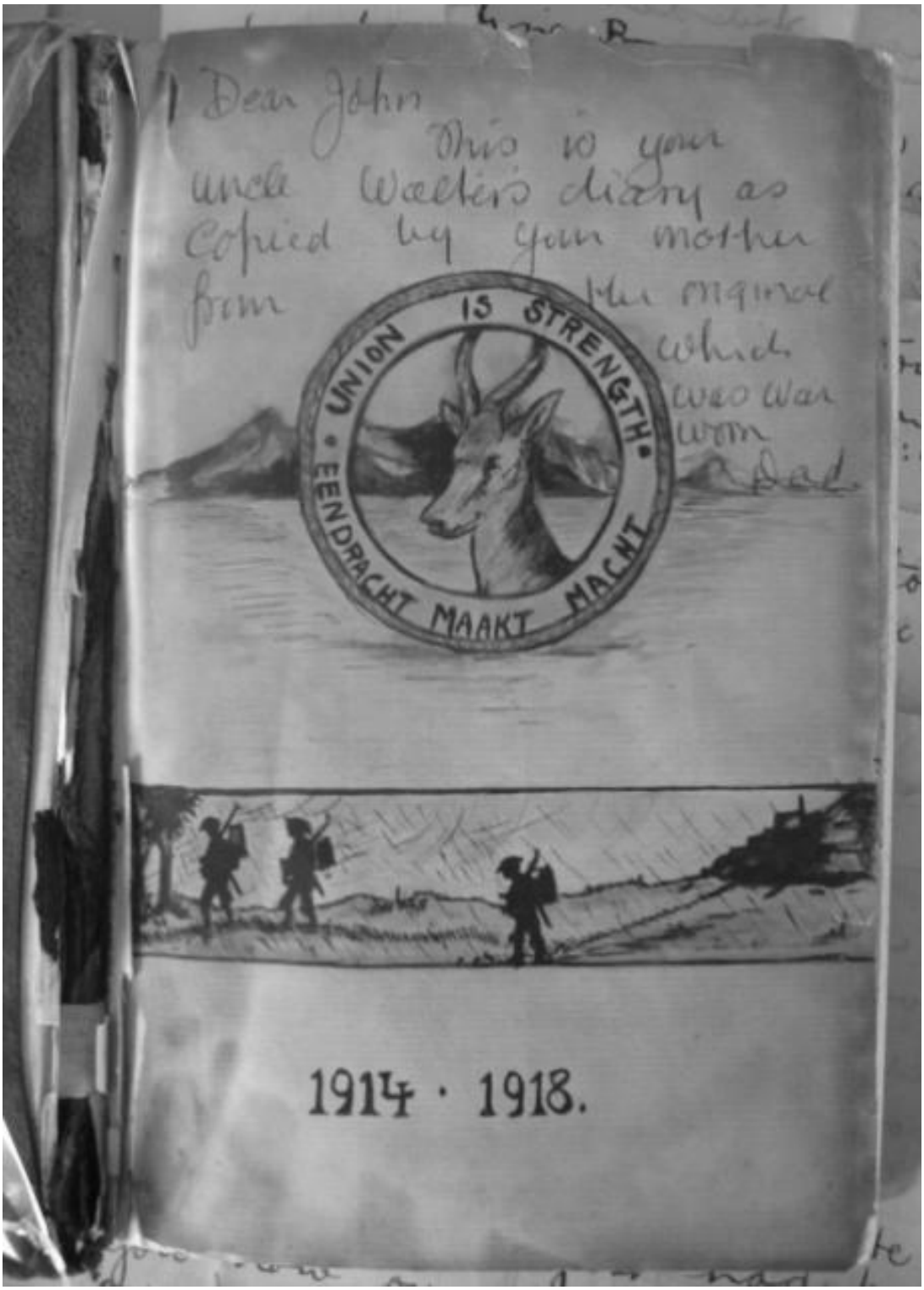


Figure 48: P27: detail Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

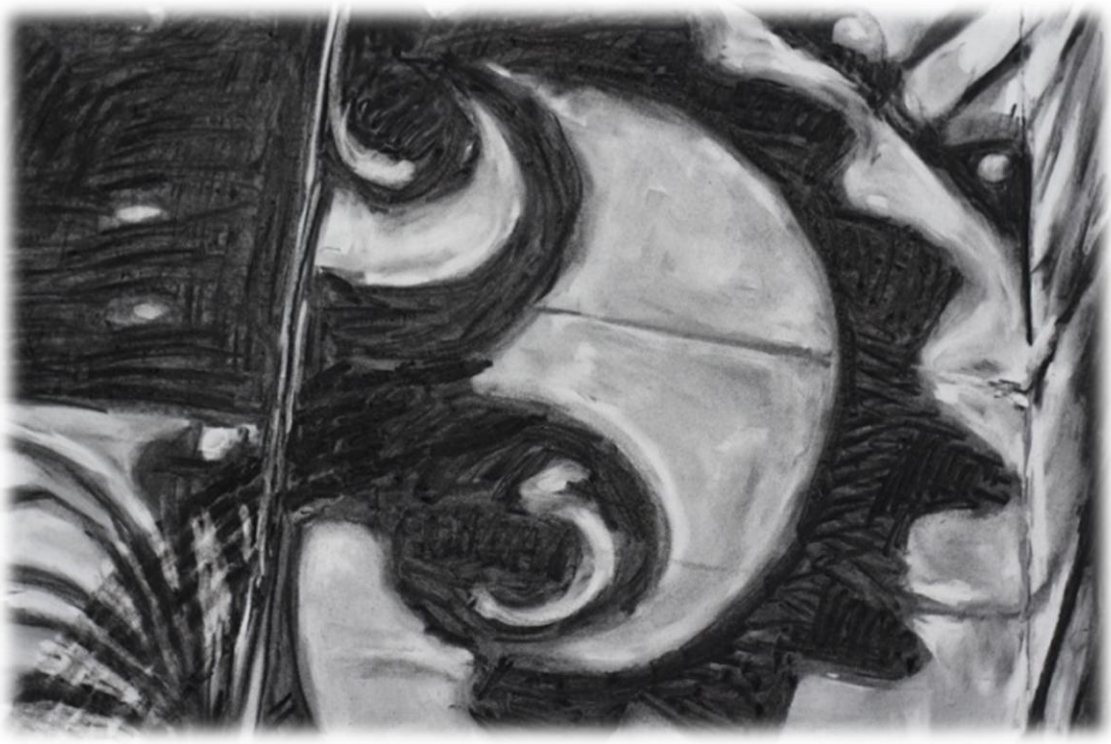
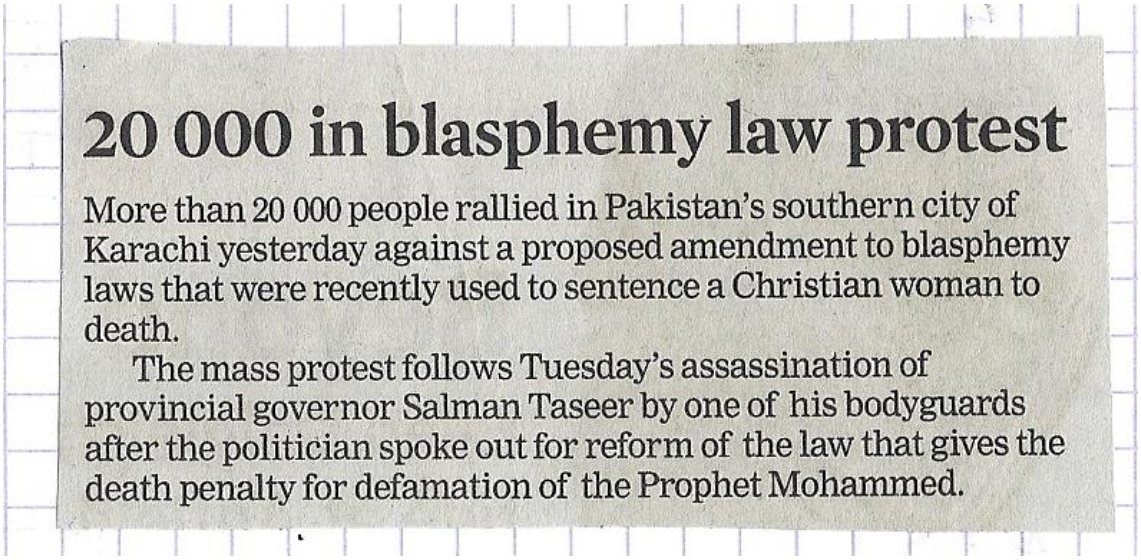


Figure 49: P27: detail Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 50: P27: Spiked Angel. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 51: P27: Detail from Walking Book.



20 000 in blasphemy law protest

More than 20 000 people rallied in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi yesterday against a proposed amendment to blasphemy laws that were recently used to sentence a Christian woman to death.

The mass protest follows Tuesday's assassination of provincial governor Salman Taseer by one of his bodyguards after the politician spoke out for reform of the law that gives the death penalty for defamation of the Prophet Mohammed.

Figure 52: P29: Bulimia. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 53: P29: detail Bulimia. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

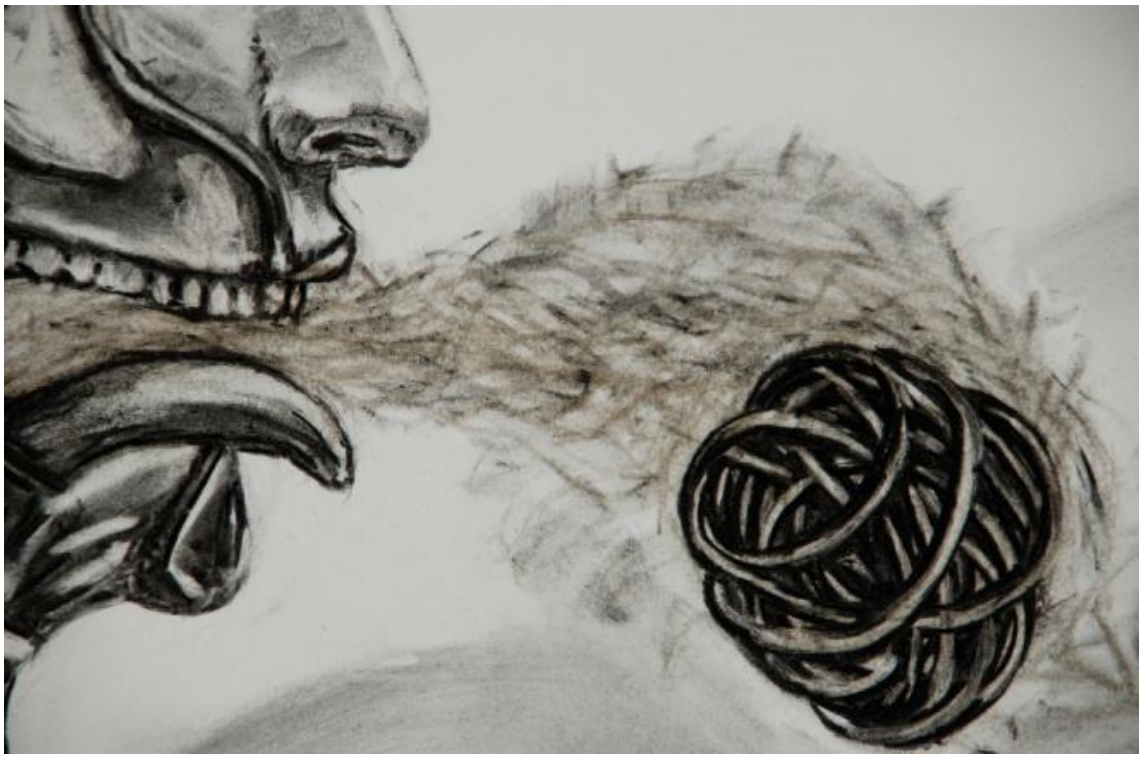


Figure 54: P30: detail Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 55: P30: detail Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 56: P30: Bullhorns. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 57: P31: Moths to the light. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

Figure 58: P33: Detail from Walking Book.

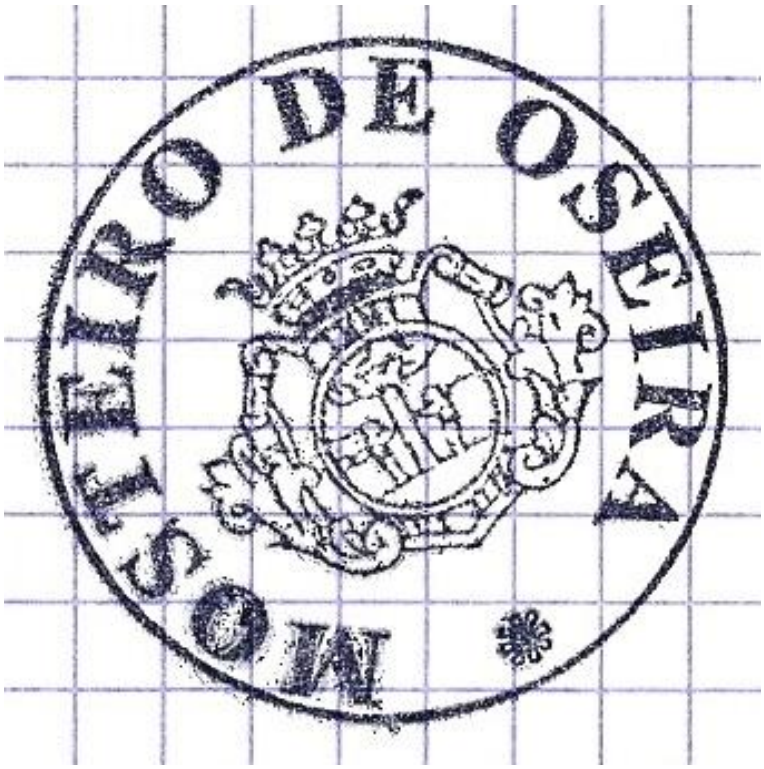


Figure 59: P33: Painted Jesus.

Figure 60: P34: Child.

Figure 61: P34: detail Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 62: P34: detail Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 63: P34: Christ on a platter of food. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 64: P35: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

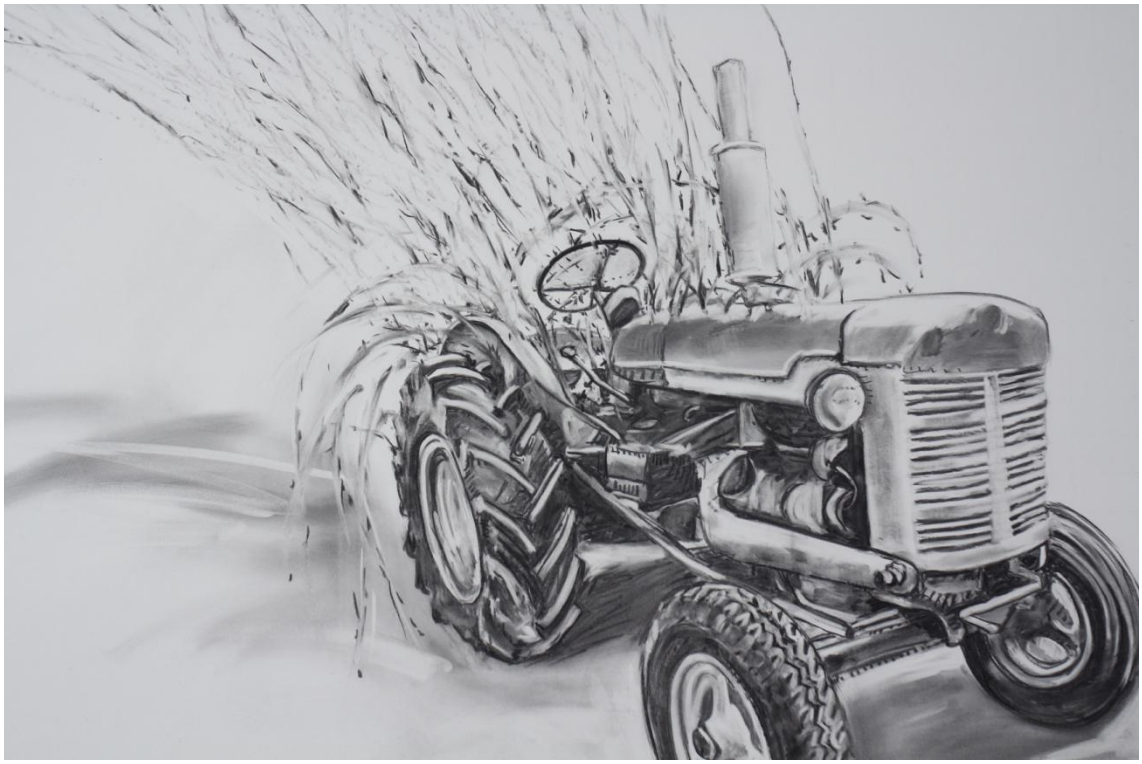


Figure 65: P35: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

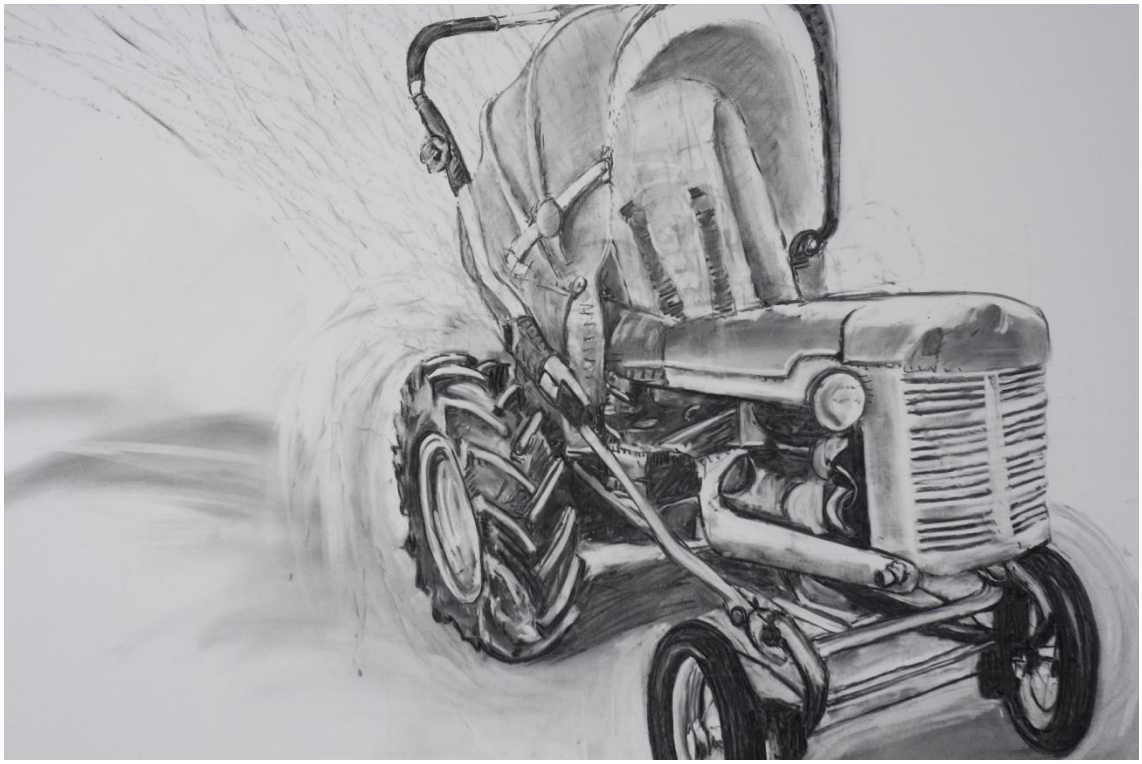


Figure 66: P35: Tractorpram. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 67: P36: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 1.

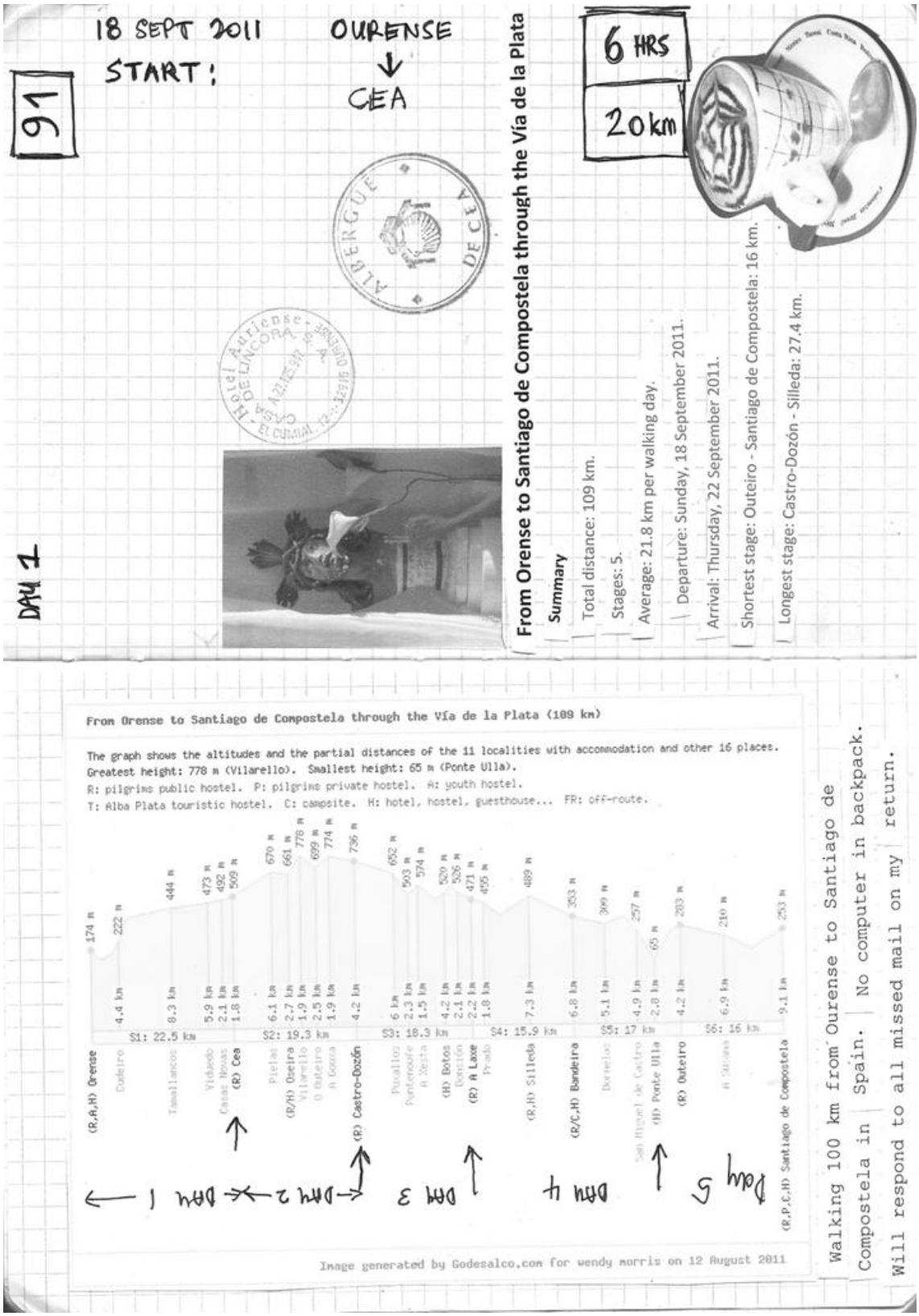


Figure 68: P36: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 1.

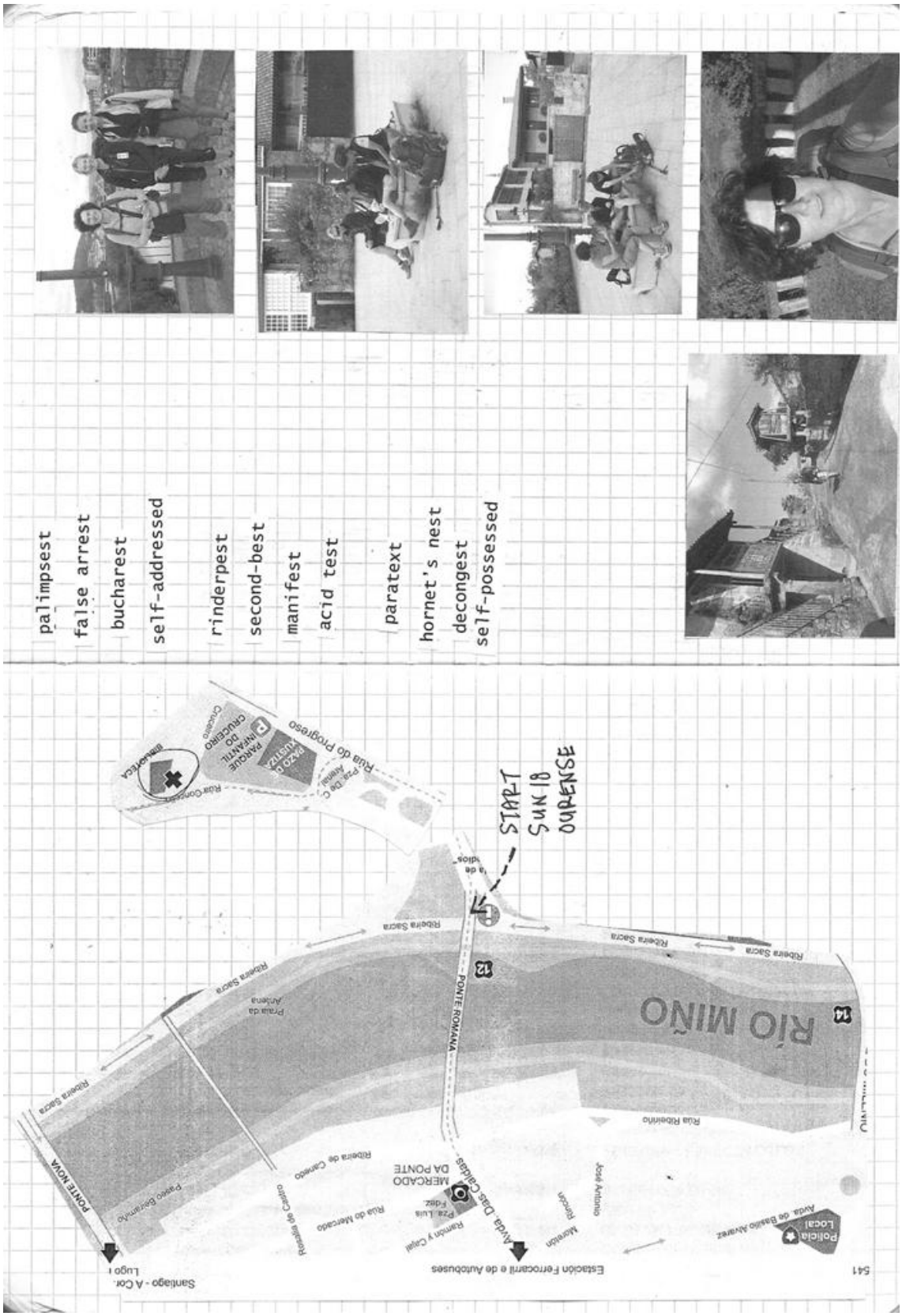


Figure 69: P36: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 1.

Figure 70: P36: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 1.

Figure 71: P37: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 2.

Figure 72: P37: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 2.

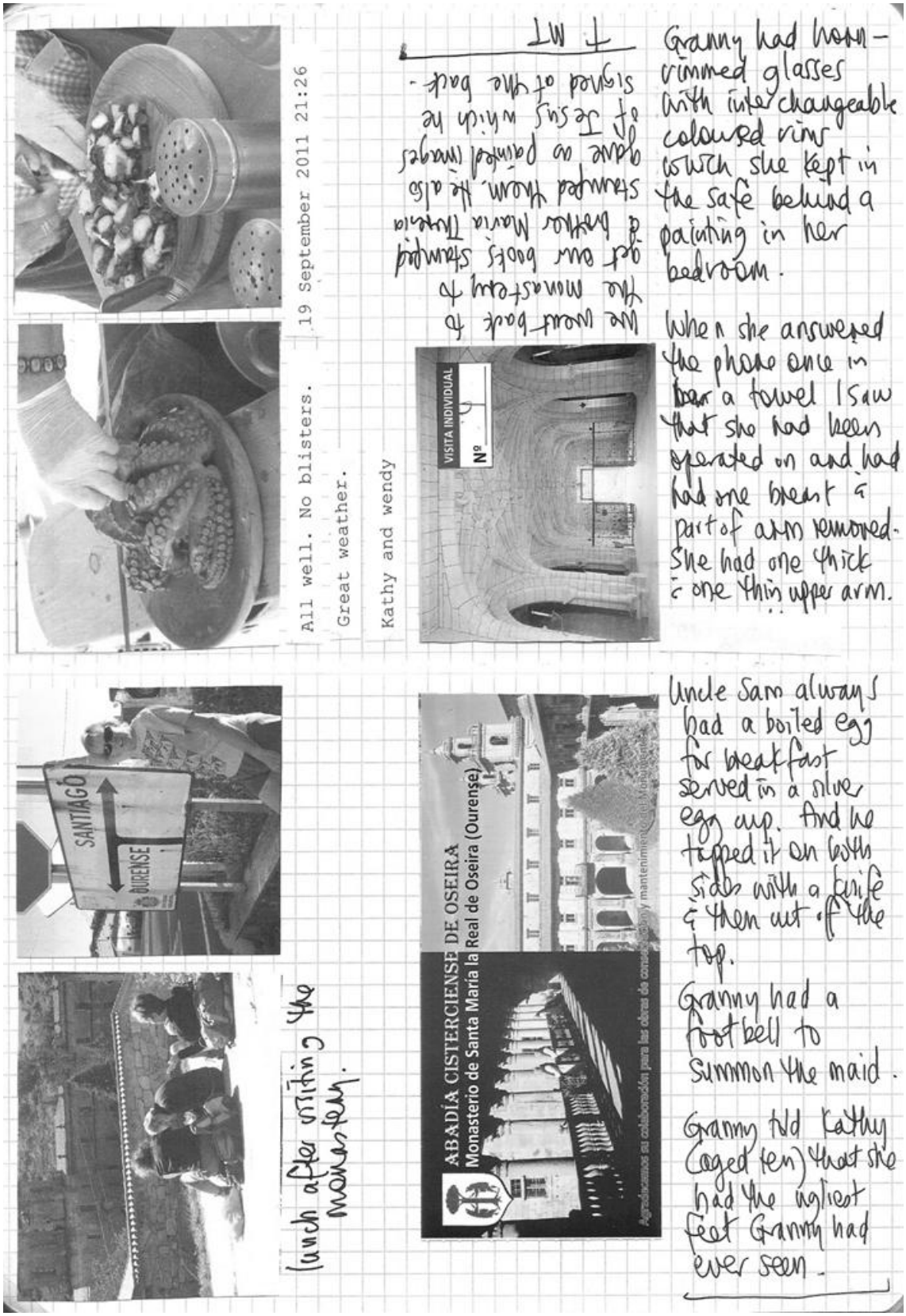


Figure 73: P38: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 3.

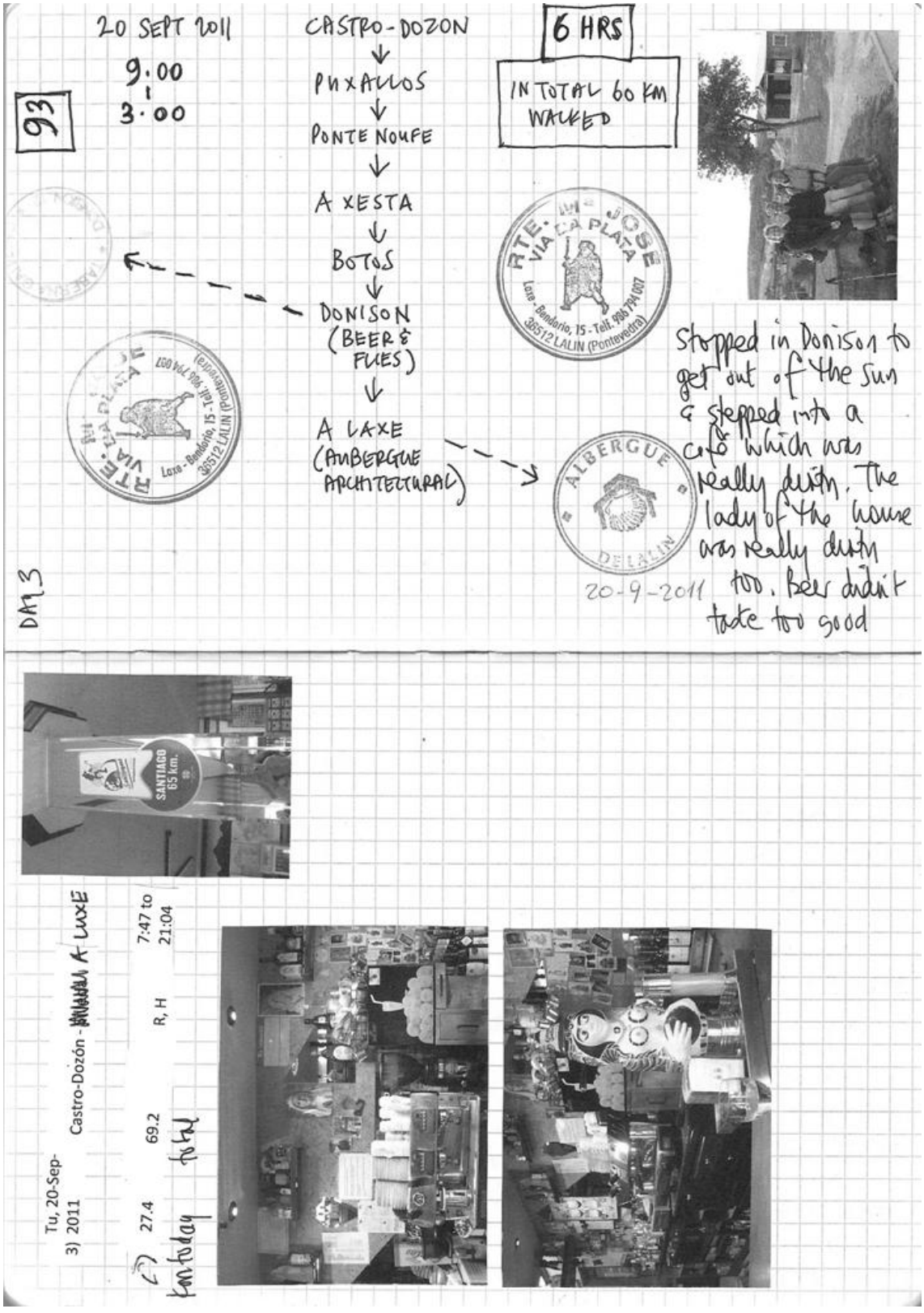


Figure 74: P38: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 3.

Figure 75: P38: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 3.

Figure 76: P39: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 4.

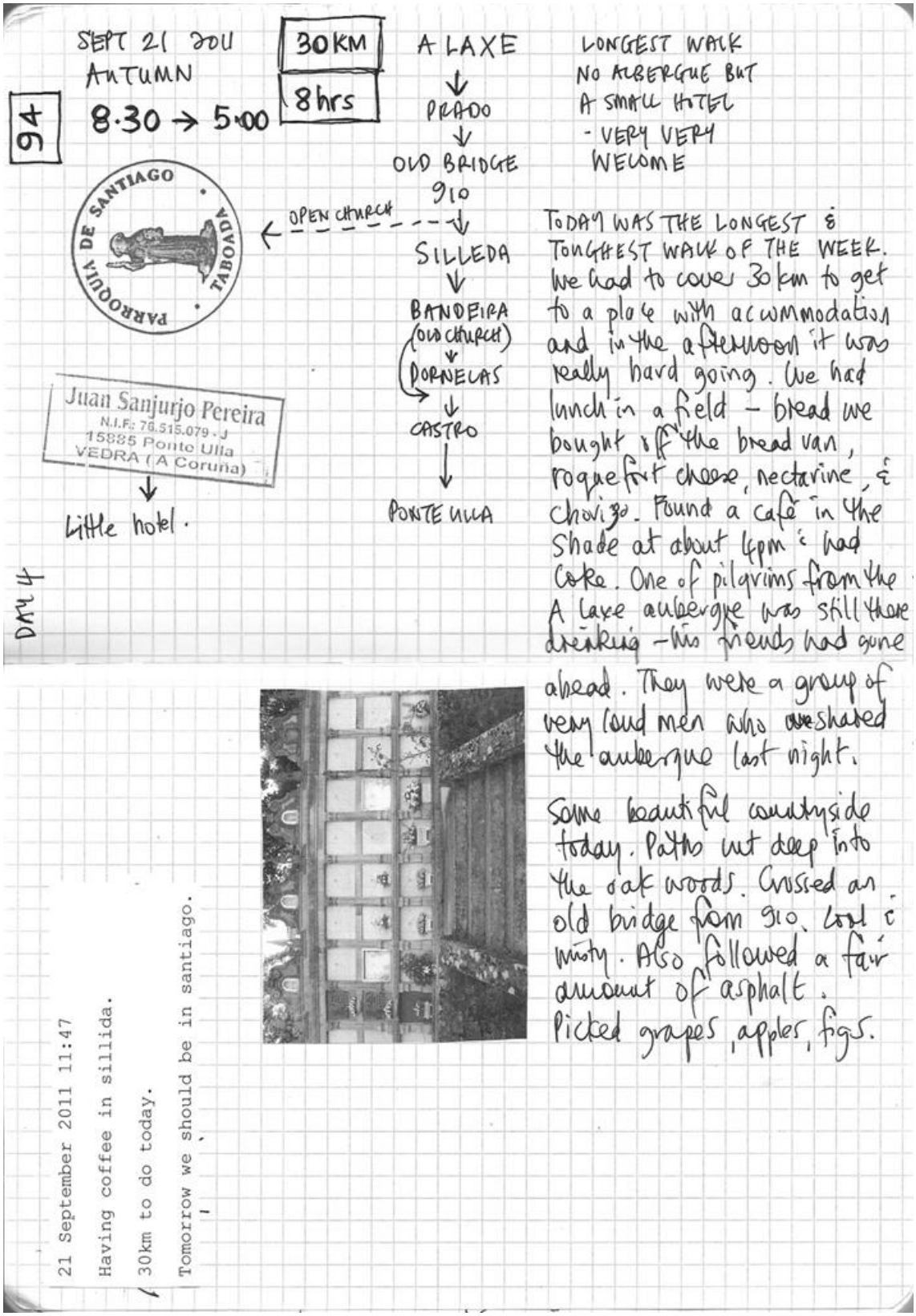


Figure 77: P40: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 5.

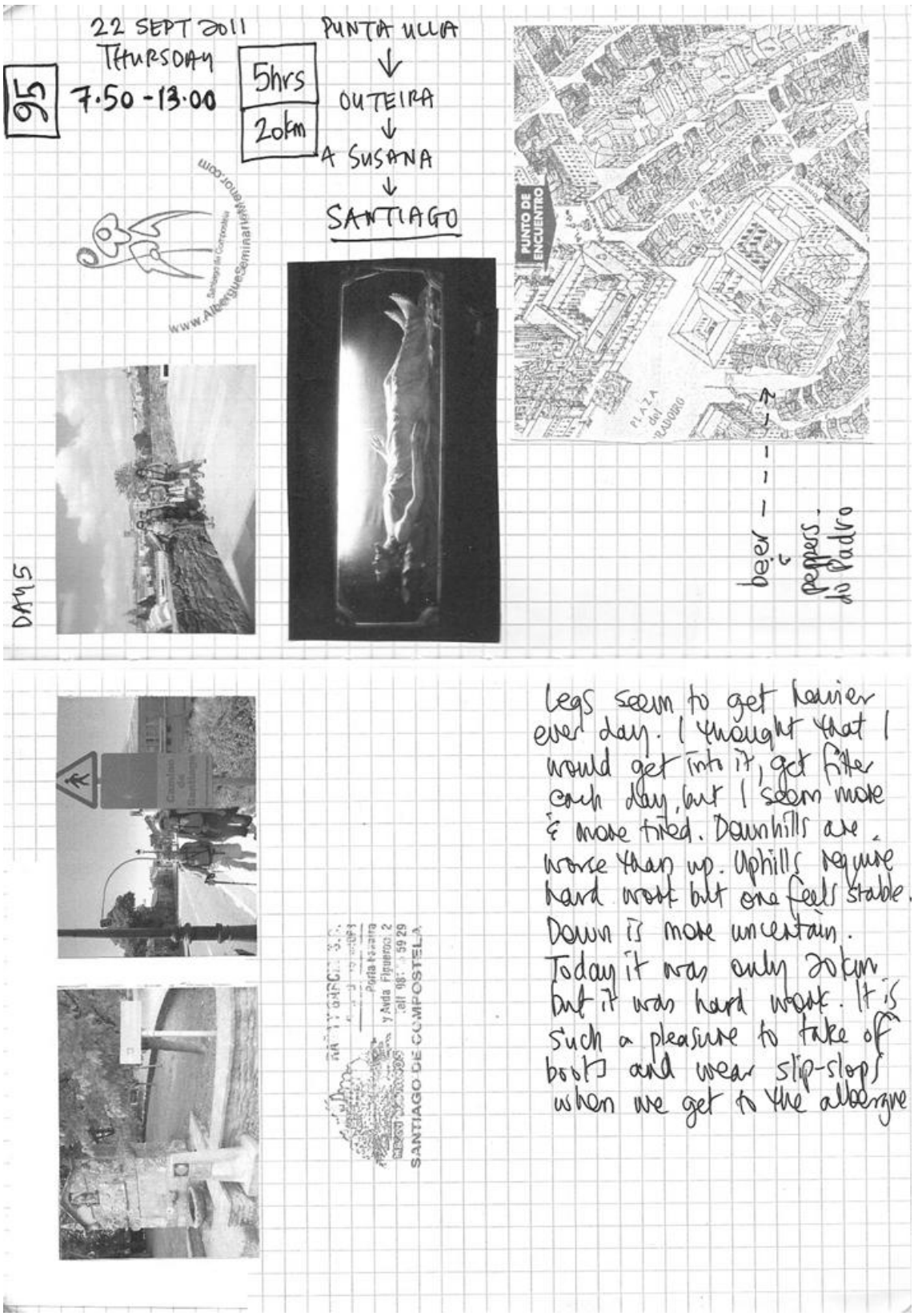
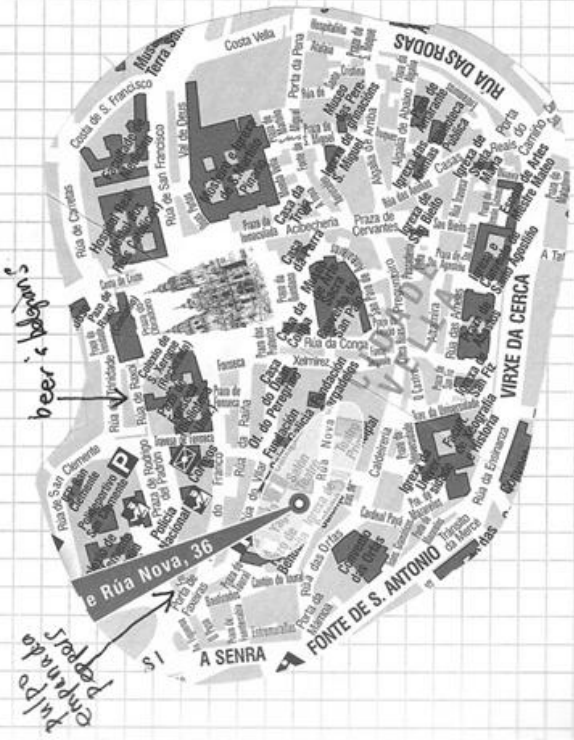


Figure 78: P40: Walking to Santiago de Compostela: Day 5.

We arrived in Santiago along quite a nice route. Countryside almost to the city. Then a long stone road down towards the city. Shells cut into the stone doorways. Long steep climb up into the centre. Green doorways, window frames, stone houses. Down again, up again to the Seminaire Menor Albergue. At least beds for 300 here and like a dormitory from the ~~2~~early 20th c. Smells of Dettol. Single beds, about twenty in a room. SNORING.



Went to find the Cathedral once we had ditched our boots & had a shower. For the first time saw many other pilgrims - all in different states of weariness and limping. Had wine & peppers and then stood in queue to get 'compostela'. Declared that I had done it for cultural reasons and got compostela for that. Maureen ~~the~~ chose religious & got a different one. Then we found a restaurant in an alley & had supper. Tomorrow we will explore Cathedral and more.

Zimbabwean lady of about 70 walked from French border to Burgos (300 km) - had stress fractures - rested - continued later to Santiago.

The Apostle Saint James

The Apostle St. James was one of the three most intimate friends among the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour (the anointed by God). It is highly probable that he was related to Jesus Christ, because his mother was a relative of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ's mother.

James was a very vehement, spirited and enthusiastic man who became a very courageous messenger of the Word of Jesus Christ. Thus transmitting to all whom he encountered the most important news for humanity: "Death has been defeated, Jesus Christ has been resurrected". Preaching this he arrived from Jerusalem to this land, the end of the world. He then went back to the Holy Land and it was there that he was captured and executed under the reign of King Agripa I.

In order to offer him an honourable burial, his disciples brought his remains back to what today is known as the city of Santiago de Compostela.

His Shrine was a stronger voice than were all of his preaching during his lifetime. His life was a testimony of service to the announcement of the Christian message that allowed the seed of faith to grow. It is for this reason that approaching St. James means to approach God; it is a general characteristic of every pilgrim and of the Way. This is how a fellow pilgrim came to understand his pilgrimage:

Figure 79: P42: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.

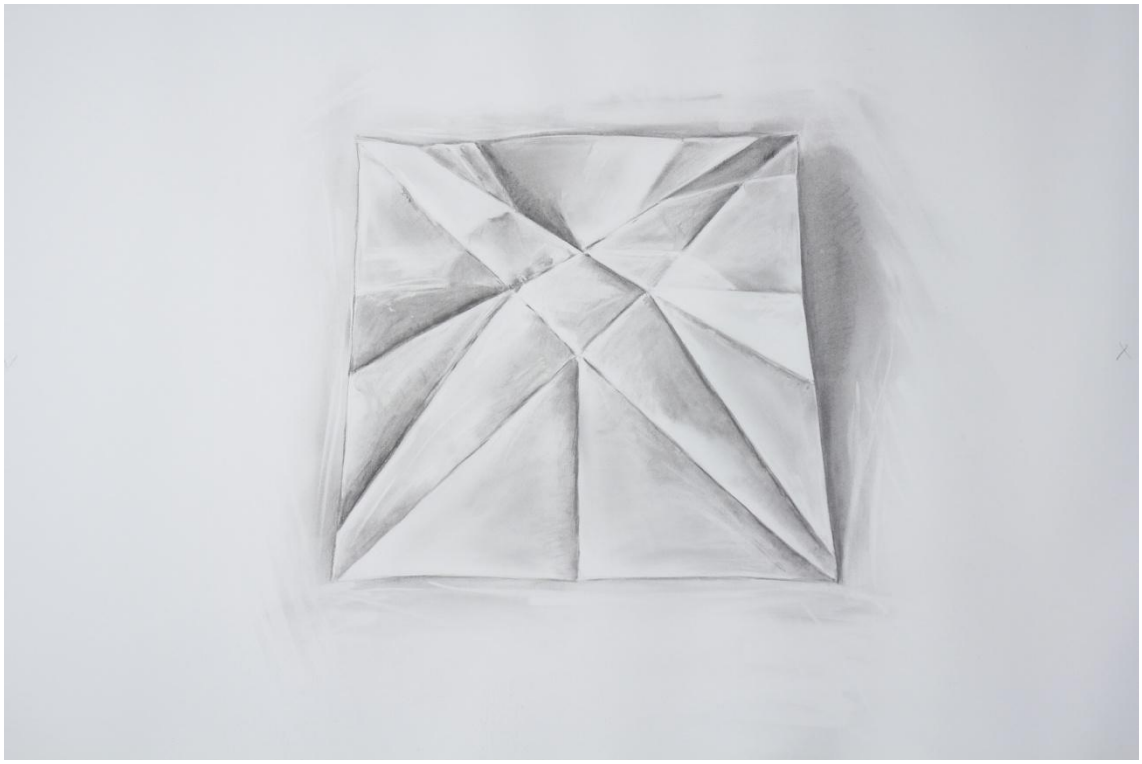


Figure 80: P42: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.

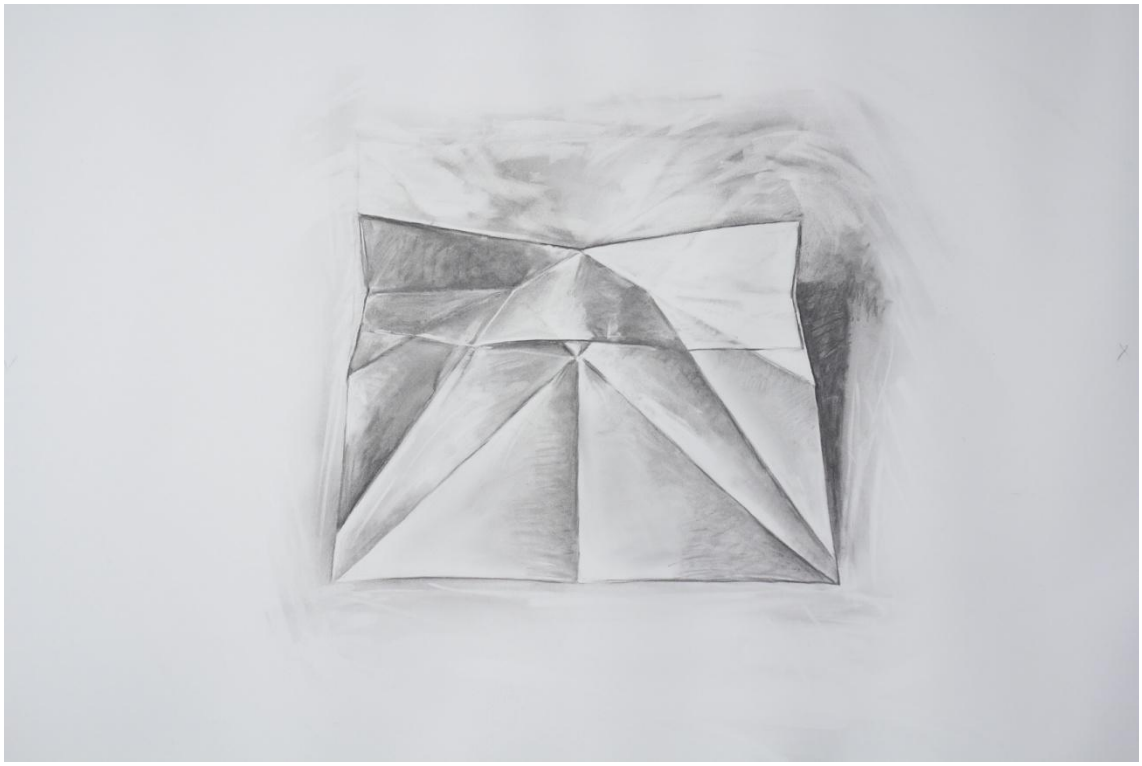


Figure 81: P42: Veil: Heir to the Evangelical Revival. 2013.

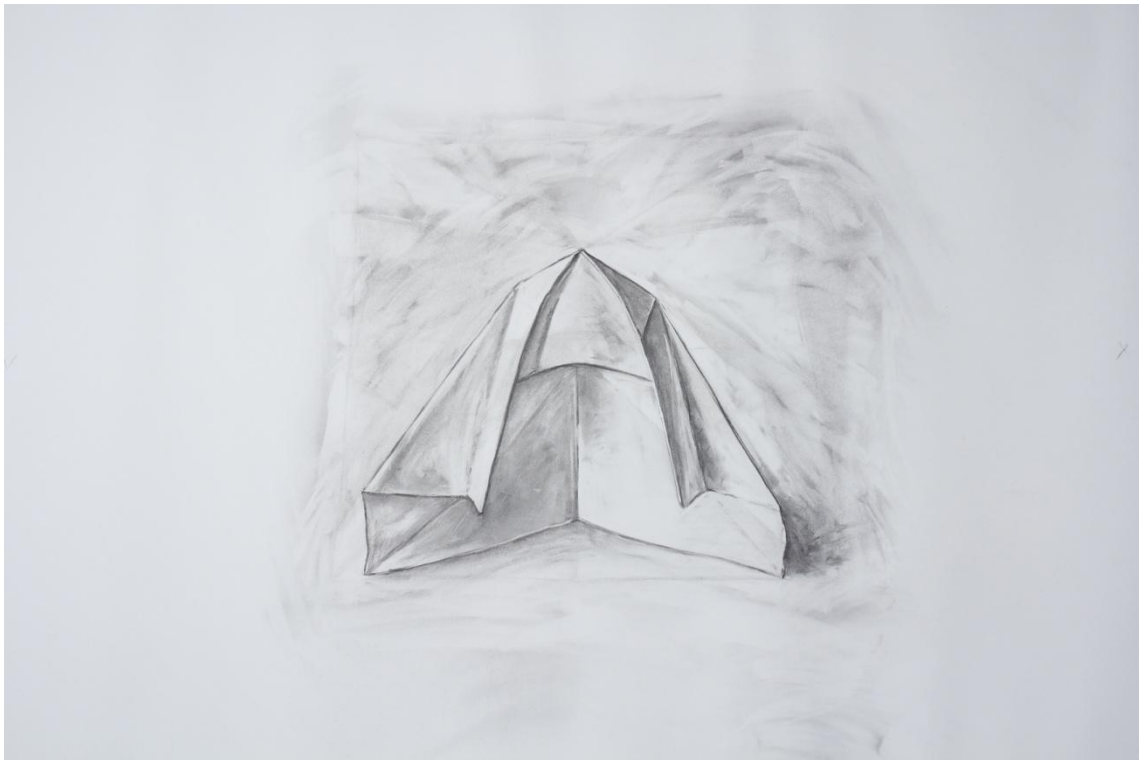


Figure 82: P44: *Far from Kimberley* exhibition, 21Rozendaal, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Figure 83: P45: Locust. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

Figure 84: P45: Typewriters. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

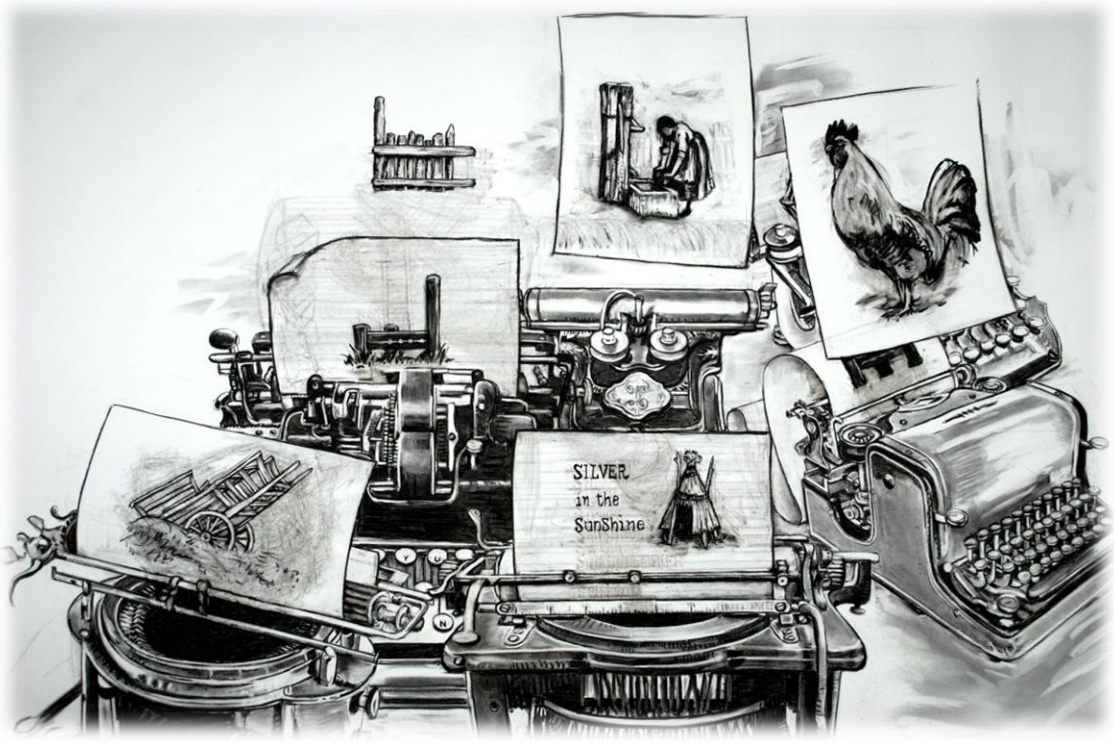


Figure 85: P45: Moths. *Orlando's Book*. 2013.

Figure 86: P47: *Off the Record*. 2008.

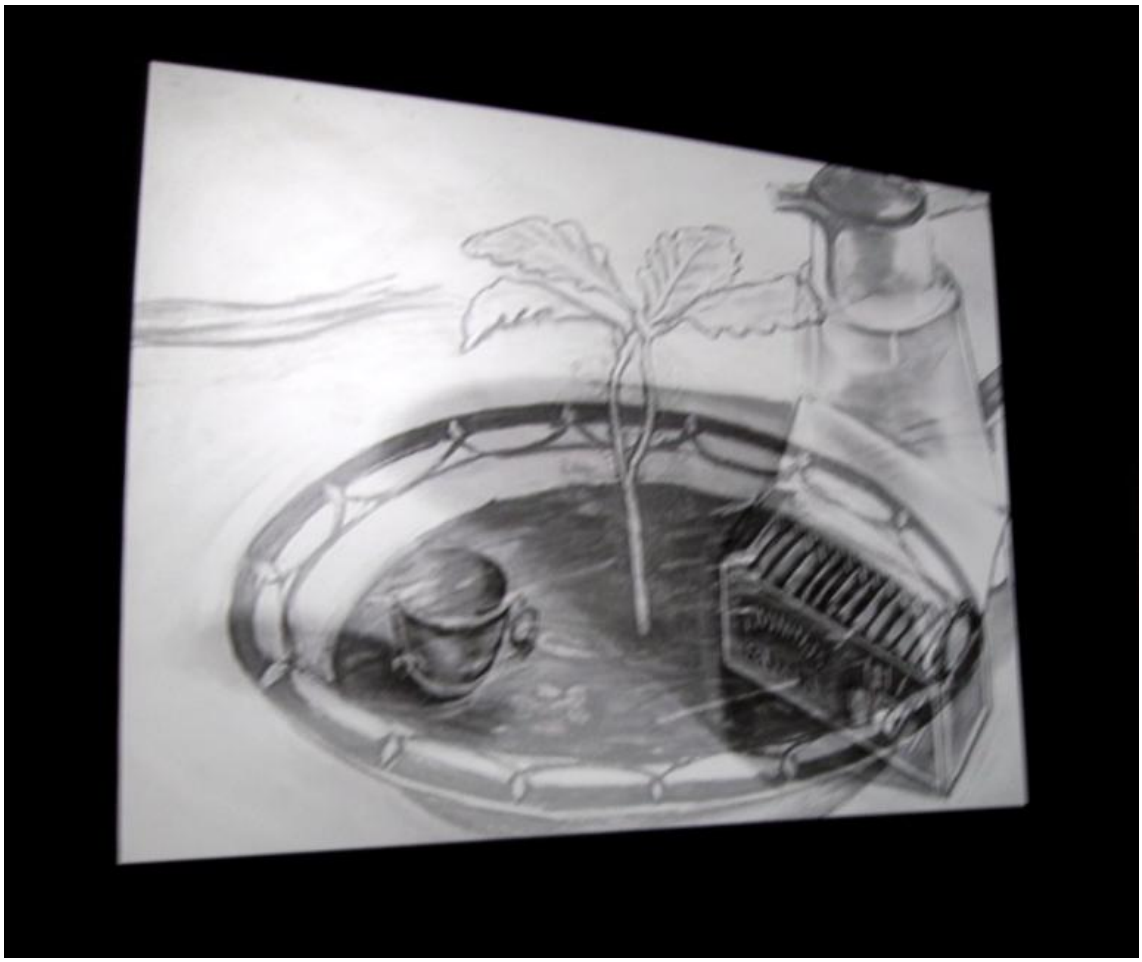


Figure 87: P49: Musket. Bully Beef. 2006.

Figure 88: P49: Martini-Henry. Bully Beef. 2006.

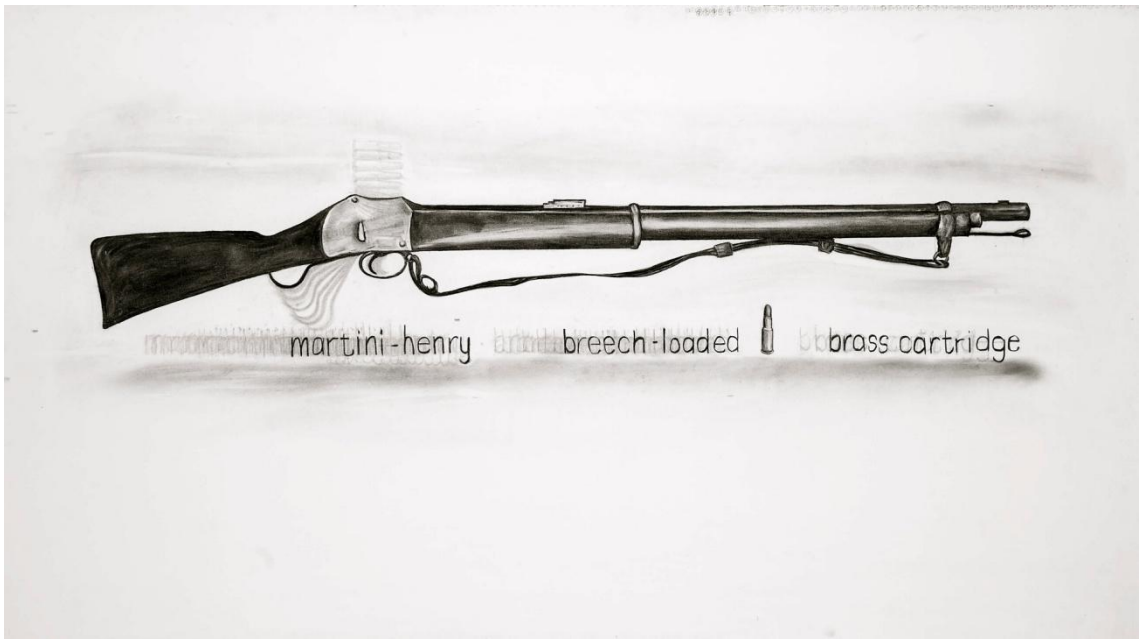


Figure 89: P49: Maxim. Bully Beef. 2006.

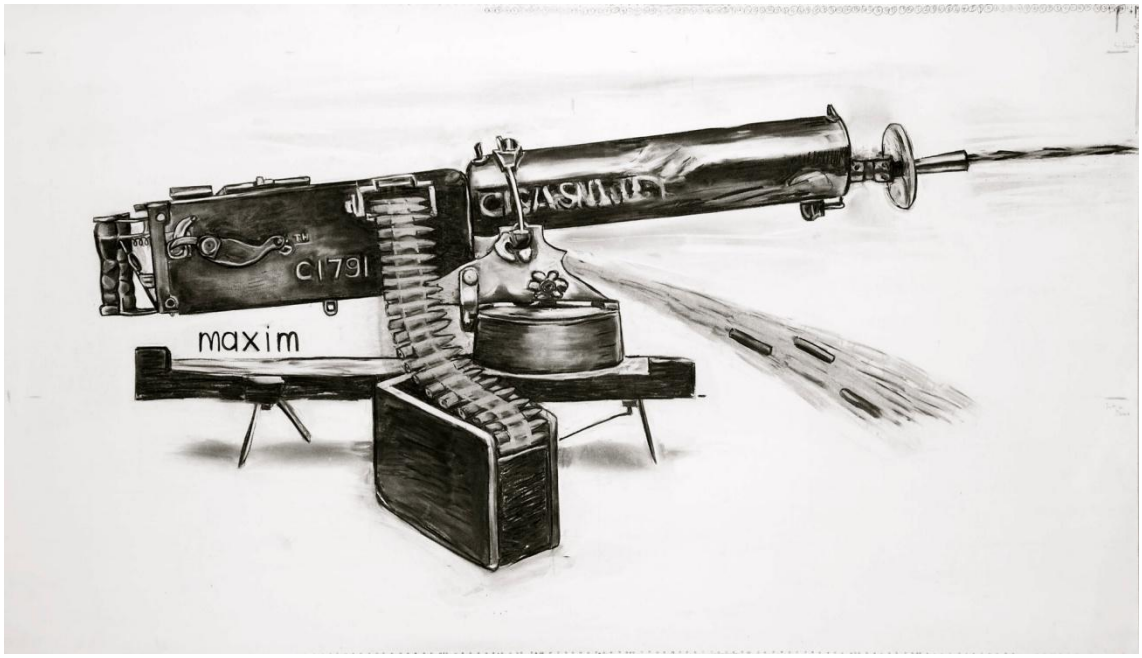
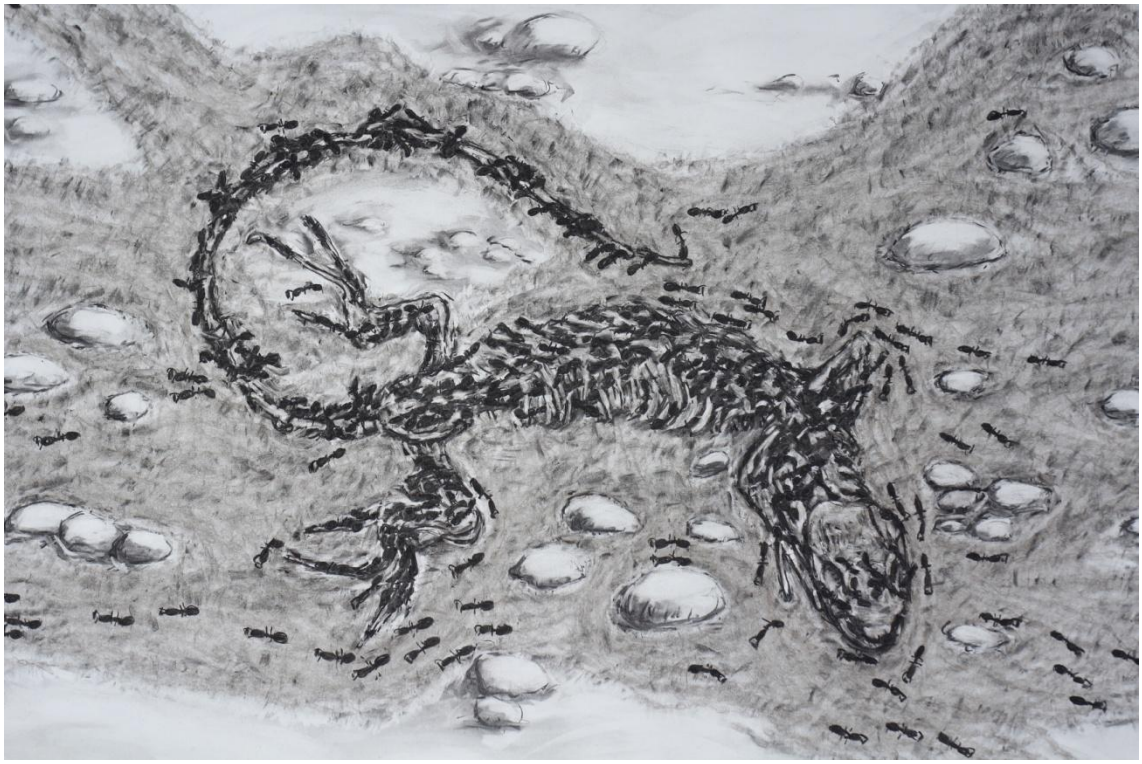


Figure 90: P49: AK-47. Bully Beef. 2006.

Figure 91: P51: Lizard. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.

Figure 92: P51: Lizard. *Heir to the Evangelical Revival*. 2013.



Endnotes

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Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505576. Accessed: 12/08/2008 16:11.

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[5] Adam Hochschild. 2000. *King Leopold's Ghost*. *A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa.* London: Papermac. p228.

[6] Hochschild p228.

[7] Edmund Morel started the Congo Reform Association which worked from 1903 until 1912 to expose and improve conditions in the Congo.

[8] The first site that comes up on the Google search engine is the 'Exiled Belgian Royalist' and it gives a glowing account of the achievements of Jules Jacques:
belgieroyalist.blogspot.com/2010/11/**baron-jules-jacques**.html. Accessed 23/12/2010.

[9] In a personal conversation with the artist.

[10] *Agnes' Tales* is an unpublished narrative of a missionary family in South Africa in the mid 19th century. Written by Agnes, the sister of my great-grandfather, 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 fathering seventeen children.

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Comaroff John and Jean. 1997. *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2 : The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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[13] Jack. C. Ellis & Betsy. A. McLane. 2005. *A New History of Documentary Film*. Continuum International Publishing Group: New York.

[14] This series of thought–pieces on looking were developed further into an article that has been published in a special issue of i-Perception edited by Johan Wagemans.
Morris W, 2011, "Layers of Looking" *i-Perception* **2**(6) 577–591.
URL: http://i-perception.perceptionweb.com/journal/I/volume/2/article/i0443aap for the article and http://i-perception.perceptionweb.com/journal/I/theme/1 for the special issue.

[15] Rebecca Fortnum. 2006. What is visual intelligence and how do artists use it? Catalogue essay for exhibition *Inspiration to Order*. University Art Gallery, College of Arts, California State University, Stanislaus.

[16] The SS Mendi sank in the English Channel on the morning of the 21st of February 1917. The ship was carrying a contingent of the South African Native Labour Corps and had left Plymouth the previous evening, heading for Le Havre. At five-thirty in the morning it was rammed by an allied steamer, the SS Darro, that was travelling at full speed in thick fog. Within twenty minutes the Mendi had sunk. The Darro remained in the vicinity for half an hour and then left, at no time assisting survivors in the water. Another ship, an escort of the Mendi, did manage to rescue some men but over 600 SANLC and crew of the ship drowned.

[17] Chion Michel. 1994. Audio-vision: Sound on screen. Edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman. Columbia University Press: New York.

[18] The Audiovisual Contract was a collaboration between composer Carl Van Eyndhoven, experimental psychologist prof.dr. Gery d'Ydewalle and myself. See Parallellepipeda Boek. Cahiers van het IvOK 17. (ed) Edith Doove. ACCO:Leuven. 2010.

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[20] Hochschild, A. 2000. *King Leopold's ghost: a story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa*. London: MacMillan:166.

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[23] Mieke Bal in Van Alphen, E, 1999. Colonialism as Historical Trauma, in *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art.* Brenda Atkinson & Candice Breitz (eds). Chalkham House Press: Johannesburg:273.

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[26] Liz Stanley. Encountering the Imperial and Colonial Past through Olive Schreiner's Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland. *Women's Writing* Volume 7, Number 2, 2000.
Photograph reproduced from Stanley, Liz and Dampier, Helen (2008) "She Wrote Peter Halkett": Fictive and Factive Devices in Olive Schreiner's Letters and Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland. In: *Narrative and Fiction: an Interdisciplinary Approach.* University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, pp. 61-69. This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/4828/

[27] Olive Schreiner. 2008. *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. Gloucestershire: Dodo Press. Pp.15-16.

[28] "As to the photograph's provenance, it seems that Cronwright-Schreiner had found a copy of the photograph displayed in a "hairdresser's" in Kimberley where he had bought it. The evidence for

this is in Cronwright's own hand opposite the frontispiece of his copy of the Dutch first edition". Walters, P.S. and Fogg, W.J.M. (2007) Olive Schreiner in Rhodesia: an episode in a biography. *English in Africa*, 34 (2). pp. 93-109.

[29] Gregg, Lyndall. 1957. *Memories of Olive Schreiner*. London: W & R Chambers. pp. 41-42, in Walters, P.S. and Fogg, W.J.M. (2007) Olive Schreiner in Rhodesia: an episode in a biography. *English in Africa*, 34 (2).

[30] With thanks to my cousin David Morris, archaeologist at the McGregor Museum, Kimberley, South Africa, for his help in locating the origins of this photograph.

[31] Susan Sontag. 2003. *Regarding the pain of others*. Picador: New York.

[32] Sidney Littlefield Kasfir. Cast, Miscast: the curator's dilemma. *African Arts*. Winter 1997:1-9.

[33] Quoted in Paul Lane's Breaking the Mould? Exhibiting Khoisan in Southern African museums. *Anthropology Today* Vol. 12 (5), October 1996:3-10.

[34] Okwui Enwezor. Reframing the Black Subject: Ideology and Fantasy in Contemporary South African Representation. *Third Text* 40, Autumn 1997:33.

[35] Yvette Abrahams: "Instead she offered to add the recording of our protests to the exhibition. I could not believe what Skotnes had just said. Our deepest emotions were to be turned into instant art. The response to our attempt at empowerment was to immediately disempower us by, yet again, making us part of the objects on exhibition. "Miscast: Three Views on the Exhibition, in *Southern African Review of Books*, Issue 44. July/August 1996. Accessed online 05:04:1999. http://www.uni-ulm.de/-rturrell/anthro4html/Miscast.html.

[36] Ernst Van Alphen, 1999. Colonialism as Historical Trauma, in *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art.* Brenda Atkinson & Candice Breitz (eds). Chalkham House Press: Johannesburg:272.

[37] Pippa Skotnes, 1996. Introduction to catalogue. *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen.* Pippa Skotnes, ed. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press:17.

[38] Paul Lane, 1996. Breaking the Mould? Exhibiting Khoisan in Southern African museums. *Anthropology Today* Vol. 12 (5), October 1996:3-10.

[39] Carmel Shrire, *Southern African Review of Books*, Issue 44. July/August 1996. Accessed online 05:04:1999. http://www.uni-ulm.de/-rturrell/anthro4html/Miscast.html

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[42] Ernst Van Alphen, 1999. Colonialism as Historical Trauma, in *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art.* Brenda Atkinson & Candice Breitz (eds). Chalkham House Press: Johannesburg:272.

[43] Yvette Abrahams. *Southern African Review of Books*, Issue 44, July/August 1996.

[44] Paul Lane. ibid.

[45] Much later I found the head reproduced in the catalogue of the Miscast exhibition with the following accreditation: *Trophy head reproduced from Fester, C. 1914. Rassenanatomische Untersuchungen an 17 Hottentottenkoepfen. In Zeitschrift fur Morphologie und Anthropologie, vol.16:95–156. Photograph courtesy Rob Gordon*. Still no mention of who the unfortunate man may have been.

[46] The attitude is changing slowly, not so much, I suspect, through any change of heart of the museum directors and staff but due rather to outside pressure on the institution.

[47] Yvette Abrahams, *Southern African Review of Books*, Issue 44. July/August 1996. Accessed online 05:04:1999. http://www.uni-ulm.de/-rturrell/anthro4html/Miscast.html

[48] Alan Kirkeldy, Discussion list: 'Trophy Heads'. H-NET List for African History. Posted: Sat 25 Nov 1995. URL: http://www.h-net.org/~africa/threads/trophyheads.html.

[49] How real is the reality in documentary film? Jill Godmilow, in conversation with Ann-Louise Shapiro. History and Theory, Vol 36(4). Wesleyan University Press. 1997. Accessed online 6/11/2008. http://www.nd.edu/_jgodmilo/reality.html.

[50] By this outset I refer to the beginning of this doctoral project.

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[52] Vococentric and verbocentric are terms that the sound theorist Michel Chion uses to describe the privileging of voice over other sounds in cinema.

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[57] *Far from Kimberley* is the title of an exhibition held at 21rozendaal in Enschede, the Netherlands, in 2010. This thought-piece is my introduction to the exhibition.
Wendy Morris. 2010. *Far from Kimberley. Visitor's Guide*. (ed) Nanda Janssens. 21rozendaal, actuele kunst. Enschede, The Netherlands. 23 May – 12 September 2010.

[58] Wesleyans are followers of John Wesley who was the founder of what is now more commonly called Methodism, a group within Protestant Christianity.

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Comaroff John and Jean. 1997. *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2 : The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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