Eugène Marais Collection

This collection includes the original hand-written and typed manuscripts of The soul of the ape, as well as the manuscript of Nag - his drama, written just before his untimely death by suicide. There are also some letters from Marais to his son (1916 – 1923), and correspondence between his son and the editor of an overseas journal regarding the alleged plagiarism of Marais’ book Burgers van die berge (1952).

Another interesting item in the collection is Marais’ sketch- and note-book, containing notes, ideas for articles and pencil sketches (inter alia of a young lady called Suzanne), which realised during his sojourn in London at the time of the Anglo Boer War, 1899 – 1902.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Afrikaans, with some translated English versions and some English correspondence.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Literature and biographical research on Eugène Marais.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Books, diary and manuscript documents.</td>
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NAG - ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPH EUGÈNE MARAIS MANUSCRIPT

Description:
The Special Collections Department of the Library and Information Centre has acquired an important part of literary Africana: the autographed manuscript of this famous Afrikaans author’s last play “Nag: ‘n Drama in Vier Bedrywe”. Marais wrote the play on 162 unlined, small pages in a thick, clothbound “exercise book”, mainly on one side of each page. There are in addition a further 13 handwritten pages of notes at the end of the book. The manuscript has editorial corrections throughout in green ink and many corrections and deletions by Marais himself. The title of the play has been rubber stamped on a preliminary page and beneath this is Marais’ autograph signature. A few of the pages at the end of the volume have some burns on the lower edges, probably caused by
a cigarette. (See image below.) These may be indicative of Marais’ state of mind, not long before his untimely death by suicide.

A loose note in the book, probably written by the publisher, indicates that this book was found after Marais’ death amongst his unpublished writings. It was published by Van Schaik in 1937 (the year after Marais’ death) as a “spiritual bequest” by the author. The play is set during the Boer War. This work is discussed at length (7 pages) in the scarce book "Eugène N. Marais - Sy Bydrae Tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde" by Francois G. Marais Du Toit (1940).

**Marais’ Work**

Marais, probably best known for "The Soul of the White Ant", “The Soul of the Ape” and his poem "Winternag", was also a journalist and editor of "Land en Volk". He only wrote two dramas: "Die Swart Verraad" published in 1933 and "Nag". "Outa Hendrik" of the Waterberg inspired him to write "Dwaalstories", an important contribution towards Afrikaans short stories. His books on baboons and the white ant are ground-breaking research into the behaviour of animals. Marais’ extremely perceptive study of animal behaviour has earned him the title of father of Ethology.

**Marais’ Life**

Marais tragically lost his young wife in 1895, nine days after the birth of their only son. Between 1896 and 1902 Eugene Marais obtained his Law degree in London. His London diary, as well as some of his correspondence in later years to his son, is also part of the University of Johannesburg’s Eugene Marais Collection.

His manuscripts are exceedingly scarce. However, the Special Collections Department of the University of Johannesburg is the proud owner of three - "Die siel van die mier", "The Soul of the Ape" and "Nag".

**How did UJ obtain it?**

All the mentioned items were auctioned in 1978. In 1990 the former Rand Afrikaans University dealt with Perskor to exchange "The Soul of the Ape" for four paintings by well-known South African artists to the value of R9400. The correspondence, diary and the manuscript of "Die siel van die mier" were added to the collection by the kind offices of Prof Gerrit Viljoen in 1991. UJ won the Internet bid on "Nag" on the 3rd of May 2012. The seller resides in Johannesburg and made the acquisition of this prized manuscript more special by personally delivering it to the Library staff.