
CHANGING REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BOEREDOGTER TROPE IN SELECTED AFRIKAANS FILMS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

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This article, based on selected Afrikaans films on the South African War (also known as the Anglo-Boer War) explores an aspect that has been overlooked namely, the *Boeredogter* [Boer daughter] trope. The article aims to establish whether the *Boeredogter* trope in selected Afrikaans-language films changed between the 1930s and the 2000s, and what influenced these changes. The Afrikaans films were chosen because they focus on the South African War – an important event in Afrikaner history. The South African War led to feminist tropes (such as the twin tropes of the *Volksmoeder* [mother of the nation] and the *Boeredogter*) in Afrikaner nationalism. Data was collected through watching and transcribing the verbatim of the following selected Afrikaans-language films, namely: *Sarie Marais* (1931), *Sarie Marais* (1949), *Voor sononder* (1962), and two episodes of the television series *Donkerland* (2013). The data were analysed through content analysis within the framework of Feminist theory and interpreted using the Afrikaner feminist lens. The article found that the *Boeredogter* trope has changed over time, reflecting the evolving values, gender roles, and morals of Afrikaner society. This study has practical applications in understanding the representation of Afrikaner women in media and the evolution of gender roles and values in Afrikaner society. It can also inform media producers and creators on how to portray Afrikaner women in a more nuanced and accurate manner.

Keywords: Afrikaner nationalism, *Boeredogter* trope, gender, South African War (Anglo- Boer War), unmarried women, *Volksmoeder* trope

Veranderde voorstellings van die Boeredogtertroop in geselekteerde Afrikaanse films oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog

Die artikel, gebaseer op geselekteerde Afrikaanstalige films oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog (ook bekend as die Anglo-Boereoorlog), ondersoek 'n aspek wat geïgnoreer word, naamlik die Boeredogter-troop. Die doel van die artikel was om na te gaan of die Boeredogter-troop in geselekteerde Afrikaanse films van die 1930's tot die 2000's verander het, en wat hierdie veranderinge beïnvloed het. Dié

Afrikaanse films is gekies omdat dit fokus op die Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog – ’n belangrike gebeurtenis in die Afrikanergeskiedenis. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog het gelei tot feministiese trope (soos die tweelingtrope van die Volksmoeder en die Boeredogter). Data is ingesamel deur na die volgende geselekteerde Afrikaanse films te kyk en dit te transkribeer, naamlik: *Sarie Marais* (1931), *Sarie Marais* (1949), *Voor sononder* (1962) en twee episodes van die televisiereeks *Donkerland* (2013). Die data is deur middel van inhoudsanalise binne die raamwerk van feminisme ontleed en op grond van Afrikaner-feminisme geïnterpreteer. Die artikel het bevind dat die Boeredogtertrope mettertyd verander het, wat die ontwikkelende waardes, geslagsrolle en sedes van die Afrikanersamelewing weerspieël. Dit lei tot ’n beter begrip van die verteenwoordiging van Afrikanervroue in die media en die evolusie van genderrolle en -waardes in die Afrikanersamelewing. Dit het ook praktiese waarde, want dit kan mediaprodusente en -skeppers inlig oor hoe om Afrikanervroue op ’n meer genuanseerde en akkurate wyse uit te beeld.

Slutelwoorde: Afrikanernasionalisme, Boeredogtertrope, gender, ongetroude vroue, Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog (Anglo-Boereoorlog), volksmoedertrope

Introduction

Feminist theory

Women have been placed in the domestic sphere or have been ignored due to the patriarchal system.¹ However, feminists have argued against this by stating that women should be regarded as equal to men and be included as possible objects of investigation.² This was partially due to the four waves of feminism, which gave women more freedom, as discussed later. This also has led to the feminist theory,³ which places women as equal to men to break away from the inequality between men and women.

There are countless works on gender and nationalism (e.g. A McClintock, 1995; N Yuval-Davis, 1997; I Blom, K Hagemann and C Hall, 2000; JP Kaufman and

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- 1 This article is based on the researcher’s PhD, “The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism in Afrikaans-language films and television: changing representations circa 1930s – 2000s” (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria), 2023. The author would also like to acknowledge the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies at the University of Pretoria for funding this research.
 - 2 E Grosz, What is feminist theory, in C Pateman & E Grosz (eds), *Feminist challenges: Social and political theory* (Routledge, 2013), p 190.
 - 3 Jane Flax states that feminist theory is not united or homogenous. J Flax, Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory, *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 12(4), 1987, p 622.

KP Williams, 2011; Tamar, 2011; Mulholland et al, 2018). However, most of these works concentrate more on feminism (e.g. F Anthias & N Yuval-Davis, 1989; A McClintock, 1995; S Walby, 1992, JS Albanese, 2006, C Enloe, 2014). Some authors have written on masculinity and nationalism – a topic that has received scant attention (e.g. T Nagel, 1998; Mosse, 1999; Sloodmaeckers, 2019).

Despite numerous works on gender and nationalism, there remains a gap in the literature on unmarried women and their role in nationalism. The current study aims to fill this gap by analysing the representation of the *Boeredogter*⁴ trope in selected Afrikaans-language films on the South African War to see its relationship to Afrikaner nationalism and gender roles. These films include *Sarie Marais* (Joseph Albrecht, 1931), *Sarie Marais* (Francis Coley, 1949), *Voor sonder [Before sunset]* (Emil Nofal, 1962), and two episodes of the television series *Donkerland [Dark continent]* (Deon Opperman, 2013). The fact that this article only focuses on Afrikaans films on the South African War, means that this study may not be representative of all films or media representations of the *Boeredogter* trope. For example, the *Boeredogter*, Sanna, in *Torn Allegiance* (Alan Nathanson, 1984), an English film on the South African War, is excluded from this article.⁵ The reason why the author only analysed Afrikaans films is because most of the local films on the South African War are in Afrikaans.⁶ The South African War played (and to some extent still plays) an important role in Afrikaner nationalism, as seen below. The South African War also led to feminist tropes (such as the *Volkmoeder* and the *Boeredogter*) in Afrikaner nationalism. The article will aim to see whether the *Boeredogter* trope in these selected Afrikaans-language films changed from the 1930s to the 2000s, and to what extent it occurred. The article argues that the *Boeredogter* trope changed to some degree due to historical events like the four waves of feminism.

Afrikaner feminism: The “Volkmoeder” and “Boeredogter” tropes

There are various types of feminist movements⁷ and one that has become well-known is Afrikaner feminism. In Afrikaner nationalism, Afrikaner men

4 The article’s analysis of the Boeredogter trope impacts our understanding of Afrikaner nationalism and gender roles and could inform strategies for promoting gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms in South African society, especially in Afrikaner circles.

5 Refer to D Verkerk, “The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism...”, (PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria), 2023 for more information on Sanna from *Torn Allegiance*.

6 This excludes *Torn Allegiance*.

7 Some types of feminists include black, liberal, Marxist and socialist feminism, and radical feminism.

are portrayed as active agents of Afrikaner history, while Afrikaner women are portrayed as the *Volksmoeder*.⁸ For Elsabé Brink, the *Volksmoeder* was a figurehead, a figure of speech, and an idealised figure of Afrikaner womanhood.⁹ According to Lidia Rauch, the *Volksmoeder* is dutiful, Christian, hard-working, selfless and submissive, while limiting her sexuality to keep the ‘volk’ white.¹⁰ For McClintock, the *Volksmoeder* trope is paradoxical as it recognises the power of (white) womanhood while at the same time, “it contains that power within an iconography of domestic service. By defining women as victims, their activism could be overlooked, and their disempowerment ratified”.¹¹ For Christi van der Westhuizen, the image of the *volksmoeder*

Discursively, morphed from *kragdadigheid* [forcefulness] and *veglustigheid* [combateness] to actively recruiting subjects for Afrikaner nationalism in the ‘feminine’ spheres of whites only welfare and in politics; to self-sacrifice and domestic cloistering for God, volk and family during Afrikaner nationalist dominance.¹²

The idea of the *Volksmoeder* emerged during the South African War. Afrikaner women became emblems of Afrikaner virtues and culture after the South African War as Boer¹³ women went from supporters of the war and farmers’ wives to figures of lamenting mothers with dying infants in their arms.¹⁴

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- 8 DC Allen, ‘Volksmoeder’: Mother of a rugby playing nation, *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 23(2), 2001, p 1; J Fiske, Child of the state, mother of the nation: Aboriginal women and the ideology of motherhood, *Culture* 13(1), 1993, p 18.
 - 9 E Brink, The ‘Volksmoeder’ – a figurine as figurehead, in A Grundlingh & S Huigen (eds), *Reshaping remembrance critical essays on Afrikaans places of memory* (Amsterdam, 2001), p 6; K Geldenhuys, Constructing motherhood: The volksmoeder in nationalist South Africa, *Polity*, <https://www.polity.org.za/article/constructing-motherhood-the-volksmoeder-in-nationalist-south-africa-2012-11-19>, viewed 2021-07-27.
 - 10 L Rauch, “Building an inclusive South African society: The position of young, white Afrikaans speaking women” (MA thesis, University of Cape Town), 2020, p 22.
 - 11 A McClintock, “No longer in a future heaven”: women and nationalism in South Africa, *Transition* 51, 1991, p 109.
 - 12 C van der Westhuizen, “Identities at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality and class in a liberalising, democratising South Africa: The reconstitution of ‘the Afrikaner woman’” (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town), 2013, p 29.
 - 13 The term ‘boer’ refers to Dutch/Afrikaans word for farmer – meaning people (Afrikaners, Africans, English-speaking white South Africans) who farm with cattle or crops. However, in this article the term Boer refers to Afrikaans-speakers (also known as Afrikaners) who live in South Africa. Neither Boers nor Afrikaners are homogenous groups. Thus, the article does not refer to all Afrikaners and Boers when the latter terms are used.
 - 14 R van der Merwe, Moulding volksmoeders or volks enemies? Female students at the University of Pretoria, 1920–1970, *Historia* 56(1), 2011, p 83; J Fiske, Child of the state, mother of the nation..., *Culture* 13(1), 1993, p 18.

Many feminists agree that the idea of the *Volksmoeder* trope was created by Afrikaner men (for Afrikaner men) to manipulate Afrikaner women in a way that suited men by confining women “to their ‘proper place’” of submission to the male-dominated national cause and to highlight their reproductive function.¹⁵ According to McClintock, Afrikaner men were “seen to embody the political and economic agency of the Volk, while women were the (unpaid) keepers of tradition and the volk’s moral and spiritual mission.”¹⁶

Even literature on Afrikaner feminism is dominated by Afrikaner men. Christina Landman agrees that most of the works on Afrikaner women have become synonymous with men, and the way female sacrifice has been focusing exclusively on the smaller circle of the family or in its extreme form only within the boundaries of the nation.¹⁷ According to Rauch, this is because (Afrikaner) men distributed a cultural patriarchal order which distributed power unevenly between Afrikaner men and women during, and naturally before, apartheid.¹⁸ Brink notes:

One of the means by which men in male-dominated societies control women is by giving them a well-defined but circumscribed position within society, to which some status, honour and respectability are attached. The parameters of this position, within which may be found the notion of ‘ideal womanhood’, may evade exact definition but yet be widely acknowledged and accepted.¹⁹

Sylvia Walby notes that nationalist movements have often developed from men’s experiences instead of women’s.²⁰ Cynthia Enloe agrees that the term ‘nationalism’ has typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation, and masculinised hope.²¹

15 I Heinemann and AM Stern, Gender and far-right nationalism: Historical and international dimensions. Introduction, *Journal of Modern European History* 20(3), 2022, p 320; R van der Merwe, Moulding *volksmoeders* or volks enemies?..., *Historia* 56(1), 2011, p 81; L Vincent, Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(1), 2000, p 61.

16 M Sikhumbuzo & T Monson, Nationalism and feminism: Anne McClintock’s reading of South Africa, *Alternation* 8(2), 2001, p 21.

17 C Landman, *The piety of Afrikaans women: Diaries of guilt* (Pretoria, 1994), p vii.

18 L Rauch, “Building an inclusive South African society...”, p 22.

19 E Brink, Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/man-made-women-gender-class-and-ideology-volksmoeder-elsabe-brink>, viewed 2023-12-19.

20 S Walby, Woman and nation..., *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 33(1–2), 1992, p 87.

21 C Enloe, *Bananas, beaches and bases making feminist sense of international politics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2014), p 93.

In the Afrikaner nationalist discourse, women have been framed first as *Boeredogters* or unmarried Afrikaner girls who transform into *Volksmoeders* after marriage. The *Boeredogter* trope was also the result of the South African War because young children and adolescents died in the British concentration camps.²² Of the approximately 28,000 Boer civilians who died in roughly 40 British concentration camps, 80% were children under the age of 16.²³ Therefore, the *Boeredogter* trope was also included in the symbolic expression of the *Volksmoeder* trope – because both of them were the result of the South African War.²⁴

For Keyan Tomaselli and Mikki van Zyl, the *Boeredogter* trope is an icon for the idea of a young girl – she represents severe cultural traumas and symbolizes alienation, but later repurifies the Afrikaner-dominated capital.²⁵ Tomaselli further notes that the *Boeredogter* indicates the “strategic need for Afrikaner nationalists to secure their interests on this new ideological and economic battleground”.²⁶ According to André Petit, the *Boeredogter* is the bridge between capital and culture because she reflects the clash between old Afrikaner values and the realities of the rapidly changing political and economic landscape of South Africa.²⁷

There are countless works on gender and Afrikaner nationalism. Most of these works focus on the *Volksmoeder* trope (e.g. McClintock, 1995; Brink, 1999; Kruger, 1999; Vincent, 2000; Du Toit, 2003; Van der Merwe, 2011; Van Der Westhuizen, 2018). A few authors have studied Afrikaner men and their role in Afrikaner nationalism (e.g. Grundlingh, 1994; Swart, 1998 and 2001; Du Pisani, 2001 and 2004). Another neglected topic is the *Boeredogter* trope. The few scholars who have focused on the *Boeredogter* trope include Robert Greig (1980), Tomaselli (1989), Tomaselli and Van Zyl (1992), Charl Blygnaut (2013), Danielle Britz (2017), André Ricardo Lapa Petit (2017), and Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren and Wanda

22 C Blygnaut, “Rebellie sonder gewere”: vroue se gebruik van kultuur as versetmiddel teen die agtergrond van die Ossewa-Brandwag se dualistiese karakter, *South African Journal of Cultural History* 30(2), 2016, p 120.

23 F Pretorius, Concentration camps in the South African War? Here are the real facts, <https://theconversation.com/concentration-camps-in-the-south-african-war-here-are-the-real-facts-112006>, viewed 2024-03-01.

24 C Blygnaut, “Rebellie sonder gewere”.... *South African Journal of Cultural History* 30(2), 2016, p 120.

25 KG Tomaselli and M van Zyl, Themes, myths and cultural indicators, in J Blygnaut & M Botha (eds), *Movies, Moguls, Mavericks: South African Cinema 1979–1991* (Cape Town, 1992), p 419.

26 KG Tomaselli, Imagining Africa: Gorillas, actors and characters, <https://rozenbergquarterly.com/imagining-africa-gorillas-actors-and-characters/?print=print>, viewed 2023-11-12.

27 AR Petit, “Once upon a time in the veld: South African Westerns in context” (MA thesis, University of Cape Town), 2015, p 24.

Verster (2018).²⁸ Of these authors, only Greig, Tomaselli, Van Zyl, Petit, Jansen van Vuuren and Verster briefly investigated the portrayal of the *Boeredogter* in Afrikaansfilms. However, none of them focused on the changes in the *Boeredogter* trope in Afrikaans films on the South African War, from the 1930s to the 2000s.

Methods

To achieve the aim of this study, it was decided to analyse selected Afrikaans films on the South African War. Robert Rosenstone argues that films are just as important as written sources because films go

...beyond (as theorists argue, all historians do) *constituting* its facts, that is, creating facts by picking out certain traces of the past (people, events, moments) and highlighting them as important and worthy of inclusion in a narrative, and instead indulges in *inventing* facts, that is, making up traces of the past which are then highlighted as important and worthy of inclusion.²⁹

Lauren Ball shares Rosenstone's opinion on films. According to Ball, historical films "bring the 'past to life' and help viewers relate better to the characters or events of that past."³⁰ Ball further notes, "Narratives within film can be powerful motivators and allow filmmakers and historians to more fully engage with their audience".³¹ According to Robert Burgoyne, historical films have been recognised for their ability to establish an emotional connection to the past – a connection that can awaken a powerful sense of national belonging of a probing sense of

28 RJ Greig, An approach to Afrikaans film, *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 1(1), 1980, pp 14–23; KG Tomaselli, Class and ideology: reflections in South African cinema, *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 1(1), 1980, pp 1–13; KG Tomaselli and M van Zyl, Themes., in J Blignaut & M Botha (eds), *Movies...*, pp 395–422; C Blignaut, Doing gender is unavoidable: Women's participation in the core activities of the Ossewa-Brandwag, 1938–1943, *Historia* 58(2), 2013, pp 1–18; D Britz, "Bosbok Ses Films: Exploring postheroic narratives" (MA thesis, University of Pretoria), 2017; AR Petit, "Once upon a time in the veld..." (MA thesis, University of Cape Town), 2015; A Jansen van Vuuren & W Verster, From rural naïveté to urban discontent: Framing post-apartheid South African film identities, *Journal of African Cinemas* 10(1–2), 2018, pp 111–129.

29 RA Rosenstone, *History on film/film on history* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2006), p 8, Rosenstone's emphasis in brackets.

30 L Ball, The historical value of film, <https://unm-historiography.github.io/metahistory/essays/thematic/film.html#:~:text=Films%20about%20history%20bring%20the,fully%20engage%20with%20their%20audience>, viewed 2023-12-05.

31 L Ball, The historical value..., <https://unm-historiography.github.io/metahistory/essays/thematic/film.html#:~:text=Films%20about%20history%20bring%20the,fully%20engage%20with%20their%20audience>, viewed 2023-12-05.

national self-scrutiny.³² John O'Connor agrees with Ball when he notes that films provide new experiences because they make use of soundtracks which improve the audience's experience.³³

Hayden White warns historians that they must be careful to read visual media (such as films) in the same way as written sources.³⁴ According to White, it is because it is difficult to 'translate' written sources into films.³⁵ Certain information gets lost or is misplaced to fit into the narrative. This article takes heed of White's warning but agrees with Rosenstone and others that historical films like Afrikaans films on the South African War can be considered as sources of information, especially about their contexts of production and reception. This approach to film acknowledges that films are products of their larger social, political, and ideological contexts and thus reflect the values and visions of the dominant class(es). Film productions require significant financial outlay and therefore remain largely within the economic control of the dominant class(es). Given the political, social, cultural, and economic dominance of the Afrikaner elite from 1948 onwards, it is fair to say that Afrikaner values and ideologies would be strongly reflected in especially Afrikaans films. Given this, one can argue that films function as propaganda at its most basic level.

Historical films³⁶ are excellent propaganda. Firstly, films influence people's emotions due to the sounds and visuals. Leo Rosten agrees that films change viewers' opinions about things like American foreign policy, socialised medicine or monogamy.³⁷ Anli le Roux notes that these films influence their audience's psychological and emotional levels, and they act as a popular form of mass communication as hostilities between nations progress because "ethnic and cultural tensions are exploited, nationalism is exaggerated, and external threats are emphasized in propaganda films, which permeate various institutions like religion,

32 R Burgoyne, *The Hollywood historical film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp 1–2.

33 JE O'Connor, History in images/Images in history: Reflections on the importance of film and television study for an understanding of the past, *The American Historical Review* 93(5), 1988, p 1203.

34 H White, Historiography and historiophoty, *The American Historical Review* 93(5), 1988, p 1193.

35 H White, Historiography..., *The American Historical Review* 93(5), 1988, p 1196.

36 Films are not the only mass media that can be used as propaganda – books, television, music, newspapers, radio and the Internet can also be used to get the message (anything from a specific topic to general ideology) through to the audience, but "films as opposed to literature, the plastic arts, music, and the other performing arts – has a unique power as a tool for propaganda". JG James, Film and propaganda: the lessons of the Nazi film industry, *Reason Papers* 35(1), 2013, p 203.

37 LC Rosten, Movies and propaganda, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254, 1947, p 118.

politics, and economics, supporting and opposing globalization”.³⁸ According to Stuart Hall, films (which also include propaganda films) yield encoded messages in the form of meaningful discourses, which makes the audience believe what they see on screen is the truth.³⁹ This means that whether or not people like it, they would receive the message which the media generated.⁴⁰

Governments or leaders may benefit as they can use film to manipulate people’s emotions for their purposes. Politicians have recognised the influence of films and utilised them to sway voters and win over undecided individuals.⁴¹ Estabraq Y Mohammed, and Amirhossein Vafa, state that, “Propaganda films often aim to promote ethnic and cultural tensions, undermine political opponents, boost national pride, and depict the homeland as a vulnerable victim of hostile foreign forces”.⁴²

Their messages can also reach wider audiences. The Union government used propaganda films such as the *African Mirror* newsreels (and other short films), to influence their citizens, to change their citizens’ opinions concerning South Africa.⁴³ Therefore, these films were carefully crafted and scripted to ensure that they had a strong impact on viewers.⁴⁴ The National Party also used films to promote their cause through the subsidy scheme, which was introduced in 1956. The subsidy scheme allowed the National Party to control which films could be released and which could not. To receive a subsidy a film had to provide light entertainment, escapism, and deal with Afrikaner reality and beliefs.⁴⁵ This meant that the government gave more funds to Afrikaans than English (or even African-language films) to benefit the Afrikaans medium local film industry.⁴⁶

37 A Vafa & YE Mohammed, Propaganda and ideological representation of women in *The Secret of Women* (2014) and *Maleficent* (2014), *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 5(2), 2024, p 144.

39 S Hall, Encoding/decoding, in MG Durham & DM Kellner (eds), *Media and cultural studies keywords*, (Oxford and Victoria, 2006), p 165.

40 N Reeves, The power of film propaganda – myth or reality? *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13(2), 1993, p 182.

41 A Vafa, & YE Mohammed, Propaganda..., *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 5(2), 2024, p 146.

42 A Vafa, & YE Mohammed, Propaganda..., *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 5(2), 2024, p 146.

43 A le Roux, The Union of South Africa propaganda campaigns during the World War II, *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*, 2012, p 3.

44 A le Roux, The Union of South Africa..., *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*, 2012, p 3.

45 M Botha, *South African cinema 1896–2010* (Bristol, 2012), p 51.

46 M Botha, The struggle for a South African film audience; *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*, 2004, p 1.

There are some Afrikaans films (selected for this study) that can be considered propaganda because they focus on important events in Afrikaner history such as the South African War. Even though the Boers fought to the bitter end, they still lost the war because of the overwhelming numbers of the British army, and Britain's military tactics (the concentration camp system and scorched earth policy) which broke the Boers' morale and destroyed their food supplies.⁴⁷ Furthermore, many Boers lost loved ones as a result of the camp system.⁴⁸ The scorched-earth policy led to the establishment of concentration camps for Africans⁴⁹ and Boer civilians, who mostly consisted of women and children. This policy destroyed the Boers' food supplies, and many Boer women and children perished in the camps. Thus, the Boers had no choice but to surrender and sign the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902 in Melrose House, Pretoria.⁵⁰

This left certain sectors of the Boer community bitter, especially those who fought to the very bitter end, as many had lost their loved ones in concentration camps, which they believed the British deliberately created to kill the Afrikaner volk [nation]⁵¹ (which was not the case).⁵² According to Albert Grundlingh, this bitterness united Afrikaners because it showed them that other Afrikaners also suffered as a result of the war.⁵³ This bitterness was transferred to the next generation through folksongs (like *Sarie Marais*), poems (*Winternag* [Winter night]) by Eugène Marais, and mythological symbols (like the *Volksmoeder* and *Boeredogter* tropes). As a result, some Afrikaners mythologised Boer heroes and heroines who could lead the Afrikaner volk to victory in other challenging circumstances.⁵⁴ Some of these heroes included Jacobus Herculaas (Koos) de

47 F Pretorius, The Second Anglo-Boer War: An overview, *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 30(2), 2000, p 123.

48 F Pretorius, The Second Anglo-Boer War..., *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 30(2), 2000, p 123.

49 Africans (or black people) also lost their homes because of the scorched earth policy and loved ones on battlefields and in African concentration camps. African participation and camps are outside the scope of this study. Refer to the following works for more information on African participation in the South African War: P Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899–1902* (Cambridge, 1983); and S Kessler, *The Black concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902)* (Bloemfontein, 2012).

50 F Pretorius, The Second Anglo-Boer War..., *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 30(2), 2000, p 123.

51 An additional term related to the construct of Afrikaner nationalism is the construction of the Afrikaner volk [nation or people], which is often used in nationalist rhetoric.

52 A Grundlingh, Die Anglo-Boereoorlog in die bewussyn van 20ste eeuse Afrikaners, in F Pretorius (red), *Ver-skroei-de aarde* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2001), p 244.

53 A Grundlingh, Die Anglo-Boereoorlog..., in F Pretorius (red), *Ver-skroei-de aarde*, p 244.

54 D Verkerk, "The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism...", 2023, p 61.

la Rey, Daniël Johannes Stephanus “Danie” Theron, Gideon Scheepers, and Christiaan Rudolf de Wet⁵⁵.

Afrikaner nationalists used this bitterness to promote their ideology that the Afrikaner volk could overcome anything, and films, especially those on the South African War, were an effective means of disseminating these ideas and generating ideological consensus and a shared identity forged in tragedy. For example, Afrikaner nationalists used mainly Afrikaans films to promote Afrikaner nationalism when they engaged in real-life discourse. Where earlier films portrayed the Afrikaners as backward the post-1948 films showed them as heroes. This is depicted in one of the first talkies (or short featurette) in Afrikaans, *Sarie Marais* (1931) by Joseph Albrecht. In *Sarie Marais* Jan, a Boer prisoner of war, is showcased as the leader of the other Boer prisoners whereas the British soldier is shown as a comic figure. The film makes fun of his khaki clothes and his accent. His Britishness is highlighted by his (lower class) accent when he says “‘Eard the news mate?” dropping the “h”.⁵⁶ This reflects the bitterness earlier Afrikaners’ felt towards the British for what they had done to their ancestors.⁵⁷

Films and series on the South African War also boosted Afrikaners’ morale by showing them that if their ancestors could overcome their difficulties in the past, then so could they in the present. For example, *Sarie Marais* (1931) depicted Sarie and Jan, her beloved, reunited after the war. Jan was held in a Boer prisoner-of-war camp in Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, while Sarie stayed behind in the Transvaal. After the war, Jan returns to the Transvaal where he reunites with Sarie with a kiss.⁵⁸ Jan overcame his hardships and his longing for Sarie, which enabled him to reunite with her.

It was not only earlier Afrikaners’ whose morale needed to be boosted.⁵⁹ The 1994 elections left some Afrikaners deflated because they believed that no one could safeguard them now that the nationalist Afrikaner government, the National Party,

55 Koos de la Rey, Daniel Theron, Gideon Scheepers, and Christiaan de Wet were all Boer leaders who fought for the Afrikaner cause by helping the Boers obtain victories in certain battles or sieges.

56 J Maingard, *South African national cinema* (Oxford, 2007), p 46; *Sarie Marais*, directed by F Coley (Unifilms, 1949).

57 D Verkerk, “The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism...”, 2023, p 95.

58 A Jansen van Vuuren, “Van Kavalier tot verraaiër, zombie tot legoman: Mites en die ideologiese uitbeelding van die held in geselekteerde rolprente en dramareekse oor die Anglo-Boereoorlog” (PhD thesis, University of Pretoria), 2015, p 78.

59 D Verkerk, “The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism...”, 2023, p 99.

lost its political power. Furthermore, some Afrikaner youths were tired of being blamed for apartheid, a system that was created long before many were born.⁶⁰ Some post-1994 Afrikaans films and television series on the South African War play on these Afrikaners' emotions.⁶¹ For example, *Donkerland* shows that Afrikaners will overcome these difficulties by referring to Jacob Daniël du Toit's (Totius), an Afrikaner poet's poem "Vergeet en vergewe" [Forgive and forget] (1915)⁶² at the end of episode five. The poem is about a small thorn tree that gets trampled by an ox wagon. The tree recovers at the end of the poem.⁶³ The tree represents Afrikaners' determination to recover from the effects of the South African War (the ox wagon) because like the tree they too rose from the ashes of war.⁶⁴ The poem was played at the end of episode five to show Afrikaners that, like the tree, they will also stand up from the ashes by adapting to their new circumstances.⁶⁵

Case studies

The following Afrikaans films on the South African War were chosen as they deal with the *Boeredogter* trope – these include *Sarie Marais*, a film about a Boer hero, Jan, who longs to be with his girl, Sarie in the Transvaal. In this film, Sarie is mostly obedient and silent. She is also shown as passive, while she waits for Jan, her man, to return.⁶⁶ The 1949 remake of *Sarie Marais* (Francis Coley, 1949) showcases Sarie and Johann, who cannot be together because her uncle does not want her to marry a coward.⁶⁷ Sarie is shown as a passive person who simply accepts her circumstances.⁶⁸

60 A Jansen van Vuuren, "Van Kavalier tot verraaiër...", p 38.

61 A Jansen van Vuuren, "Van Kavalier tot verraaiër...", p 130.

62 SJ du Toit (Totius), *Vergewe en vergeet*, in SJ du Toit, *Trekkerswee* (Kaapstad, 1915).

63 M Keuris, Deon Opperman's *Donkerland*: The rise and fall of Afrikaner nationalism, *Acta Academica* 41(3), 2009, p 6.

64 M Keuris, Deon Opperman's *Donkerland*..., *Acta Academica* 41(3), 2009, p 6.

65 D Verkerk, Fees van die Ongenooïdes (Katinka Heyns, 2008) en *Donkerland* (Jozua Malherbe, 2013) as Afrikanernostalgie in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika, *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans* 30, 2023.

66 *Sarie Marais*, directed by J Albrecht (African Film Production, 1931, 1962).

67 A coward is someone who lacks the courage to do something and who puts their own needs before their nation. In Afrikaner nationalism, a coward is considered a *verraaiër* [traitor]. There are Afrikaners who would never talk about *verraaiërs* because they betrayed their volk. D Verkerk, "The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism...", p 113; A Blake, *Boereverraaiër teregstellings tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2010), p 15.

68 *Sarie Marais*, directed by F Coley (Unifilms, 1949).

Voor sononder (Emil Nofal, 1962) deals with how the aftermath of the South African War affected the citizens of the fictional town Vlakpoort. Martie is a heroine who is willing to help her friends, Flip Lourens and Daan le Roux, save the town from Coert Bester (the traitor and the villain, as he supports the British) and his minions.⁶⁹ *Donkerland* (Deon Opperman, 2013), an Afrikaans television series, tells the story of seven generations of the De Witt family and their African farm workers on the farm Donkerland, against the background of the changing socio-political landscape of South Africa over 158 years (from the Great Trek in 1838 to the New South Africa in 1996).⁷⁰ Anna is not afraid to stand up for her volk, yet she loses all her privileges when she chooses her English fiancé, John Walsh, over her brother, Klein [small] Piet.

The portrayal of the *Boeredogter* trope in selected Afrikaans films

Boeredogters, need (and to some extent still need) to have certain traits if they want to become *Volksmoeders*, and that is sexual and racial purity, *ordentlik*, and obedient towards the patriarch (i.e., their father, brother, uncle, or husband). These traits are not always static as they are influenced by historical events. First, Afrikaner girls had to be racially and sexually pure to be considered a *Boeredogter*. It was expected that Afrikaner girls marry a white Afrikaner man to ensure cultural and racial purity. Race in Afrikaner nationalism is important. In Afrikaner nationalist ideology, there is a notion that there is an unadulterated, genuine, original race that must be protected from lesser races who are seen as infected (who in this case are *uitlanders* [outsiders or foreigners]).⁷¹ In this regard, the original race is the Afrikaner volk, a race that Saul Dubow notes was considered a natural, pure and integrated entity.⁷² For the creators of Afrikaner nationalism, it was important to keep the Afrikaner volk racially pure.

Therefore, *Boeredogters* had to marry *Boereseuns* [Boer boys or idealised unmarried Afrikaner men] because intermarriage between Afrikaners and ‘others’ (i.e., *uitlanders*) was detrimental to civilisation.⁷³ This was especially

69 *Voor sononder*, directed by E Nofal (Jamie Uys Film Productions, 1962).

70 IMDb, *Donkerland*, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2908240/>, viewed 2024-03-01; M Keuris, Deon Opperman’s *Donkerland* ..., *Acta Academica* 41(3), 2009, p 1; VC Milton, Histories of becoming: *Donkerland* re-members South Africa, *Communicatio* 40(4), 2014, p 323.

71 N Falkof, The myth of white purity and narratives that fed racism in South Africa, <https://theconversation.com/the-myth-of-white-purity-and-narratives-that-fed-racism-in-south-africa-59330>, viewed 2023-15-07.

72 S Dubow, Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the conceptualization of ‘Race’, *The Journal of African History* 33(2), 1992, p 221.

73 L Vincent, Bread and honour..., *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(1), 2000, p 73.

the case during the 1930s when poor white Afrikaners lived close to Africans⁷⁴ who lived in the cities.⁷⁵ Tomaselli writes that the *uitlander* is perceived to be a threat to Afrikanerdom, an urbanised Afrikaner or some other form of *uitlander* or foreigner.⁷⁶

According to Tomaselli and Van Zyl, the *uitlander* threatened the Afrikaner ‘nuclear family’ because there is now a third person in the relationship between the *Boereseun* and *Boeredogter*, namely the *uitlander* who sways the *Boeredogter* away from the idyllic Eden.⁷⁷ Greig notes that the *uitlander* is dark and sexy, while the *Boeredogter* is portrayed as blonde, chaste and linked to traditional values.⁷⁸ Thus, the *Boeredogter* breaks away from her community, either by rejecting the Boer way of life or due to the lure of the *uitlander*.⁷⁹ This image of the heroine being maimed either physically or psychologically by the *uitlander*, depicts what Tomaselli refers to as the trauma linked to the status of the *Boeredogter*, as it leads to their degradation.⁸⁰ To redeem herself she needs to suffer the consequences of her selfish act against the volk by either dying from an unnatural death, suicide, or unwanted pregnancy.⁸¹ Only once she redeems herself can she be regarded as a *Volksmoeder*.⁸²

The National Party, which was strongly influenced by their Calvinist values and profound desire for Afrikaners to remain a distinct racial and cultural group, was afraid that Afrikaners would mix with *uitlanders* (who in this case are Africans) or even marry them.⁸³ The National Party saw themselves as heeding God’s call to ensure the survival of the Afrikaner volk on the African continent and to guard white purity.⁸⁴ Therefore, the National Party promulgated the *Prohibition*

74 Africans in this case can be regarded as *uitlanders* as they were not allowed to be part of the Afrikaner volk. Africans moved to the cities for job opportunities during the 1930s as the Great Depression also influenced them.

75 L Vincent, Bread and honour..., *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26(1), 2000, p 73.

76 KG Tomaselli, Class and ideology..., *Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 1(1), 1980, p 7.

77 D Britz, “Bosbok Ses Films...”, pp 9–10.

78 RJ Greig, An approach..., *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 1(1), 1980, p 18.

79 AR Petit, “Once upon a time in the veld...”, p 24.

80 KG Tomaselli, Class and ideology..., *Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 1(1), 1980, p 9; D Britz, “Bosbok Ses Films...”, p 35.

81 AR Petit, “Once upon a time in the veld...”, p 24.

82 D Britz, “Bosbok Ses Films...”, p 35.

83 M Galloway, Be careful what you wish for – Fellows’ seminar by Susanne Klausen, 2022-02-06, <https://stias.ac.za/2023/02/be-careful-what-you-wish-for/>, viewed 2023-07-17.

84 M Galloway, Be careful what you wish for..., <https://stias.ac.za/2023/02/be-careful-what-you-wish-for/>, viewed 2023-07-17.

of *Mixed Marriages Act*, 55 of 1949 and *Immorality Act*, 23 of 1950 to prevent sexual relations and marriages between whites and Africans.⁸⁵ The National Party also portrayed the *uitlander* as “threatening”. According to Jonathan Hyslop, “By portraying white women as sexually threatened by black men, Afrikaner males claimed the role of protectors of women, thereby reasserting their patriarchal control”.⁸⁶ None of this is of course to suggest that there was not a range of ‘deeper’ psychological anxieties amongst Afrikaner men with which such claims connected. But it is to suggest that there was also a level of gender interests at play which makes much political behaviour of the period more comprehensible.⁸⁷ Therefore, the two Sarie women and Martie ended up with *Boere-seuns*. Sarie (1931) with Jan and Sarie (1949), marries Chris, who died during a skirmish in the war. According to Tomaselli and Van Zyl, *Boeredogters* and *Boere-seuns* symbolise the preservation of the mythical values of the Edenic farm (ideologised world).⁸⁸ The fact that the three *Boeredogters* end up with *Boere-seuns* could be a form of encouragement for young unmarried Afrikaner women to marry white Afrikaner men to keep the Afrikaner volk pure.

Afrikaners’ perception of *uitlanders* started to change during the 1960s as most Afrikaners became urbanised. These Afrikaners no longer considered *uitlanders* a threat. This is seen with Martie (*Voor sononder*), who was engaged to the *uitlander* Coert Bester. Coert became an *uitlander* after he betrayed the Afrikaner volk when siding with the British forces during the South African War. Given that the National Party was still in power during the 1960s, meant that this Party still valued its conservative ways, hence through applying the apartheid laws they sought to keep the Afrikaner volk sexually pure.

Unmarried Afrikaner women were not allowed to have sexual relationships outside the Afrikaner circle. Unmarried Afrikaners who mixed with other races were shunned by the volk and its overarching National Party. Shunning was a tool that the National Party used as both a punishment and a deterrent. “The regime welcomed the impact of public exposure on countless ‘race traitors’ –

85 SM Klausen, “Reclaiming the white daughter’s purity”: Afrikaner nationalism, racialized sexuality, and the 1975 abortion and sterilization act in apartheid South Africa, *Journal of women’s history* 22(3), 2010, p 41.

86 J Hyslop, White working-class women and the invention of apartheid: ‘Purified’ Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against ‘mixed’ marriages, 1934–9, *The Journal of African History* 36(1), 1995, p 60.

87 J Hyslop, White working-class women..., *The Journal of African History* 36(1), 1995, p 60.

88 KG Tomaselli & M van Zyl, Themes..., in J Blynnaut & M Botha (eds), *Movies...*, p 419.

stigmatisation, ostracization, even social death – and for years greeted reports of their suicides with a shrug.”⁸⁹

According to Christi van der Westhuizen, the National Party’s aim “was for ‘White South Africa’, to be spatially crafted by segregating people based on race”.⁹⁰ That is why in *Voor sononder* Martie leaves Coert when she finds out about his betrayal and duly notes, “Verraad word nooit vergewe nie” [Betrayal is never forgiven].⁹¹ This demonstrates that Martie still values Afrikaners’ traditions and thus ends up with Lourens (the *Boereseun*).

The 1994 elections replaced the conservative National Party, with a more transformative government, the African National Congress. Therefore, Anna (*Donkerland*) is swayed by the *uitlander*, namely her English fiancé, John Walsh, when she accepts his marriage proposal. Even though John is an English-speaking white South African, he remains an outsider. However, mixed relationships remain fraught with controversy, especially among nationalist and conservative Afrikaners. This is depicted in *Donkerland*, when John arrives to fetch Anna at the end of the South African War. Klein Piet, her brother, does not want her to leave so he aims his rifle at John, but Anna stops him by aiming her rifle at him. This upsets Klein Piet as Anna is willing to turn against her flesh. Consequently, Anna must suffer because she chose a *uitlander* above her family. As a result, Klein Piet bans Anna from the farm Donkerland. However, Anna redeems herself by the end of the series as she is the one who tells the audience the history of Donkerland. Therefore, these *Boeredogters*, “symbolize a mythic ideal of Afrikaner society, an atemporal “never never land” of plenty unblemished by the *volksvreemde* [alien] interference that underlines the ideological basis of Afrikaner nationalism”.⁹²

According to the mythical frameworks explained above, *Boeredogters* also had to be sexually pure. Therefore, neither of the two Sarie women participated in a sexual relationship with their partner. Sarie (1931) and Jan were never depicted as having a sexual relationship in the film. As mentioned, Jan was imprisoned in Ceylon, while Sarie was in the Transvaal. Even if Sarie and Jan lived in the same place, they would not necessarily have had sex. Sarie (1949), never had a sexual relationship with Johann nor her husband, Chris, as both men died.

89 M Galloway, Be careful what you wish for..., <https://stias.ac.za/2023/02/be-careful-what-you-wish-for/>, viewed 2023-07-17.

90 C van der Westhuizen, Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa: Inward migration and enclave nationalism, *HTS: Theological Studies* 72(4), 2016, p 1.

91 *Voor sononder*, 00:44:33.

92 Petit, “Once upon a time in the veld...”, p 25.

Premarital sex was taboo, especially during the period when these films were produced (the 1930s to 1940s), due to religious⁹³ and cultural beliefs, “was built on an established religious ethic: sexual abstinence until marriage”.⁹⁴ Women who wanted to engage in premarital sex would pay a heavy price. They were not allowed to study or occupy a decent position, meet a suitable husband, and they also faced shame and stigma.⁹⁵ Therefore, unmarried women had to avoid tarnishing their bodies. *Sarie* (1949) avoids being shunned by protecting herself from Johann’s sexual gaze. While Johann is on his way to *Sarie*’s home, he sees her swimming naked in the pool. The fact that *Sarie* swims naked shows that some unmarried Afrikaner women wanted physical freedom. This is the result of the first wave of feminism which helped women to gain the right to vote. Yet, *Sarie* still needed to abstain from having sexual relationships with others like Johann. Instead of leaving *Sarie*, Johann asks her questions, which makes her feel uncomfortable, so she swims away from him. *Sarie* also tells him that she will scream if he does not leave, so he departs. After their encounter at the pool, *Sarie* comes across Johann again. He asks her if she wants to go for a ‘swim’ again in a rather sensual tone which indicates that the relationship between *Sarie* and Johann is no longer just a friendship but something stronger.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s to 1980s changed the Afrikaners’ world. Where previous generations considered premarital sex unacceptable, those from the 1960s to 1970s believed it to be the norm. The sexual revolution originated because of feminist arguments that women also enjoyed sexual pleasures, just as men.⁹⁶ Feminists argued that women should also enjoy the same sexual freedom as everyone else in the nation.⁹⁷

93 The Bible states that sex before marriage is a sin. In one of the verses, it states “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” Hebrews 13:4.

94 E Thwaites, The impact of Christian purity culture is still being felt – including in Britain, <https://theconversation.com/the-impact-of-christian-purity-culture-is-still-being-felt-including-in-britain-182907>, viewed 2023-03-01.

95 J Fernández-Villaverde, J Greenwood & N Guner, From shame to game in one hundred years: An economic model of the rise in premarital sex and its de-stigmatization, *Journal of the European Economic Association* 12(1), 2014, p 1.

96 PBS, The Pill and the Sexual Revolution, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/pill-and-sexual-revolution/>, viewed 2023-21-12.

97 PBS, The Pill..., <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/pill-and-sexual-revolution/>, viewed 2023-21-12.

This was due to the era of the hippy counterculture movements originating in the 1960s,⁹⁸ with the slogan “make love not war”.⁹⁹ This counterculture movement led to ideas of sexual freedom and free love¹⁰⁰ which resulted in the invention of the contraceptive PILL. The PILL allowed unmarried women to participate in sexual intercourse without any fear of having children.¹⁰¹ As a result, more unmarried women engaged in premarital sexual relationships. Jesús Fernández-Villaverde, Jeremy Greenwood, and Nezih Guner noted, the “number of women practising premarital sex raised from 16% to 64% during the 1960s.”¹⁰²

Despite the National Party’s efforts to ‘protect’ Afrikaner circles from the sexual revolution, through media censorship and preventing the establishment of television broadcasts in South Africa, there were still Afrikaners who moved away from their conservative way by writing about sex. They are known as the Sestigters [Sixtiers], a group of Afrikaner writers.¹⁰³ Some of the Sestigters include authors like Etienne LeRoux, Jan Rabie, Ingrid Jonker, and Breyten Breytenbach, who wrote about forbidden topics such as sexuality and racial tolerance, and who dared to question established religion.¹⁰⁴ Their controversial works challenged apartheid stereotypes of Afrikaners and their history.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the National Party banned some of their books.

This did not necessarily prevent unmarried Afrikaner men and women from joining the sexual revolution (e.g. Grundlingh).¹⁰⁶ This can be seen in *Voor sonder* with Martie swimming naked. Lourens was on his way to Martie’s parents’ home to tell them that their son, Stefaans, died in the South African War when he came across Martie swimming naked. This shows the influence movements such as the first and second waves of feminism, had on Afrikaans society and that of the

98 K du Pisani, Shifting sexual morality? Changing views on homosexuality in Afrikaner society during the 1960s, *Historia* 57(2), 2012, p 217.

99 K du Pisani, Shifting sexual morality?, *Historia* 57(2), 2012, p 217.

100 K du Pisani, Shifting sexual morality?, *Historia* 57(2), 2012, p 217.

101 A Montagu, The Pill, the sexual revolution, and the schools, *The Phi Delta Kappan* 49(9), 1968, p 482.

102 J Fernández-Villaverde, J Greenwood & N Guner, From shame to game in one hundred years..., *Journal of the European Economic Association* 12(1), 2014, p 33.

103 K du Pisani, Shifting sexual morality?, *Historia* 57(2), 2012, p 217.

104 R Nel, “Myths of rebellion: Afrikaner and countercultural discourse” (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010), p 74; B Nasson, Apartheid South Africa in 1968: Not quite business as usual, in N Farik (ed), *1968 revisited: 40 years of protest movements* (Brussels, 2008), p 44.

105 B Nasson, Apartheid South Africa in 1968: ..., in N Farik (ed), *1968 revisited...*, p 44.

106 A Grundlingh, ‘Are we Afrikaners getting too rich?’ Cornucopia and change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21(2–3), 2008, pp 143–165.

counterculture on Afrikaner women, giving them the freedom to swim naked in pools in front of people, for example.

Despite this freedom, there were unmarried Afrikaner women who still lived according to the conservative ways of the National Party. Sex was still a taboo topic within certain Afrikaner circles during the 1960s because shame and stigma would follow anyone who transgressed social limits.¹⁰⁷ Even though Martie could enjoy some freedom, she still had to live according to the patriarchal system and the National Party's rule. When Martie sees Lourens at her house she slaps him in the face, which upsets her father. As the supposedly unsullied daughters of the Afrikaner nation, unmarried Afrikaner women's sexuality was under the strict control of the patriarch (i.e., the father) of the family and it was expected to lay dormant until awakened by the call of conjugal patriarchy.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Martie's father protects her dignity by chiding her because she swam naked in front of a man.

The 1994 elections marked the end of apartheid and the National Party. Some Afrikaners found it difficult to deal with the "new" South Africa, because they felt unwelcome in their own country, despite the new government's efforts to include them. As a result, some Afrikaners either left the country, while others established or moved to towns such as Orania, Northern Cape, and Kleinfontein, Pretoria, which became Afrikaner enclaves.¹⁰⁹ These Afrikaners believed that they needed a *Boeredogter* who could help them deal with their new circumstances by motivating them in their time of need. *Donkerland* plays on this fear by giving the audience a *Boeredogter* who would sacrifice her life for her volk, namely Anna. Anna is willing to stay behind to take care of the men although she could live away from the war front. When John offers her a chance to live with his parents, Anna decides to stay as she can help to take care of the men's needs.

Even though the National Party lost its power, Afrikaners still do not talk about sex.¹¹⁰ To make the series, *Sex in Afrikaans* (ShowMax, 2022) – a controversial series on sex in Afrikaner culture, the producer, Riaan van Heerden found it difficult

107 G Zietsman, Sex in Afrikaans, <https://www.news24.com/life/arts-and-entertainment/tv/reviews/sex-in-afrikaans-20220217>, viewed 2023-29-12.

108 SM Klausen, "Reclaiming the white daughter's purity" ..., *Journal of women's history* 22(3), 2010, p 43.

109 D Verkerk, "The South African War and Afrikaner nationalism..." , p 42. Refer to D Verkerk, *Fees van die Ongenooides...*, *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans* 30, 2023 for more information on how *Donkerland* played on these Afrikaners' feelings.

110 G Zietsman, Sex in Afrikaans, <https://www.news24.com/life/arts-and-entertainment/tv/reviews/sex-in-afrikaans-20220217>, viewed 2023-29-12.

to find Afrikaners who were willing to talk about their sex lives on television. Afrikaners of the 1990s to 2000s still have this fear that the Afrikaner volk would judge them if they talked about sex.¹¹¹ Therefore, Anna is sexually pure because she does not have a sexual relationship with a man, not even her fiancé.

The second trait is *ordentlikheid*. Unmarried Afrikaner women from the 1930s to 2000 were trained to be *ordentlik* from a young age. Although the term *ordentlik* is a basic word, scholars find it difficult to define as there are no real definitions for the term. Moreover, the term *ordentlikheid* is difficult to translate, apart from respectability.¹¹²

Christi van der Westhuizen notes that its meanings include presentability, good manners, decency, politeness and humility with a Calvinist tenor.¹¹³ It also refers to qualities such as modesty, chastity, calmness, and serenity.¹¹⁴ According to Van der Westhuizen, *ordentlikheid* in the Afrikaner nationalist discourse spoke to girls' femininity, heterosexuality, whiteness and middle-class status.¹¹⁵ In some Afrikaner circles, *ordentlikheid* played a vital role because they promoted a "mode of whitening, as well as serving as a 'generator of Afrikaner identity'".¹¹⁶ Van der Westhuizen notes that *ordentlikheid* "is both normative and analytical. The term acts normatively as a productive dynamo set on recruiting subjects for a political project of white, bourgeois, hetero-masculinity power, historically bolstered by Afrikaner nationalism".¹¹⁷ Additionally, *ordentlikheid* is seen as the glue that holds together the intersections of specific versions of gender, sexuality, class, and race.¹¹⁸ Many Afrikaner households consider *ordentlikheid* "as a mode of identification

111 R Engelbrecht, 'I thought I'd heard and seen it all': Rian van Heerden on 'Sex in Afrikaans', <https://www.citizen.co.za/entertainment/tv-i-thought-i-d-heard-and-seen-it-all-rian-van-heerden-on-sex-in-afrikaans/>, viewed 2023-29-29.

112 C van der Westhuizen, Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa remains stuck in whiteness, <https://theconversation.com/afrikaner-identity-in-post-apartheid-south-africa-remains-stuck-in-whiteness-87471>, viewed 2023-02-02.

113 C van der Westhuizen, Afrikaner identity..., <https://theconversation.com/afrikaner-identity-in-post-apartheid-south-africa-remains-stuck-in-whiteness-87471>, viewed 2023-02-02.

114 Y Woest, "Better a barefoot than none": Influences of Nationalist ideologies on girlhood in the history classroom, *Yesterday and Today* 26, p 97.

115 Y Woest, "Better a barefoot than none"..., *Yesterday and Today* 26, 2021, p 96.

116 Y Woest, "Better a barefoot than none"..., *Yesterday and Today* 26, 2021, p 97.

117 C van der Westhuizen, "Identities..." p 6.

118 C van der Westhuizen, Afrikaner identity..., <https://theconversation.com/afrikaner-identity-in-post-apartheid-south-africa-remains-stuck-in-whiteness-87471>, viewed 2023-02-02.

that works as a panacea to Afrikaner woes as they struggle to cleanse themselves of the stain of apartheid and adapt to changing historical conditions".¹¹⁹

Afrikaners had to have the above-mentioned qualities at their disposal if they wanted to be *ordentlik*. From this perspective, the two Sarie Marais women can be considered *ordentlik*. Sarie (1931) behaves *ordentlik* as she dresses properly. Sarie (1949) swims away from Johann's sexual gaze. Afrikaner women from the 1930s to 1940s like the two Sarie Marais women, had to be *ordentlik* implying wearing modest clothes that covered most of their bodies, which the two Sarie Marais women did. The first wave of feminism gave women like the two Sarie women some freedom, for example, Sarie (1949) swims naked, which is not part of *ordentlikheid*. However, she realises that her behaviour is *onordentlik* [improper] when she swims away from Johann.

The second wave of feminism, along with the counterculture movement and the sexual revolution, changed the way women dressed as it gave them more freedom. The second wave developed when women rebelled against the assigned gender roles, such as women's relegation to the home.¹²⁰ Women also argued for a say over their bodies because, as they pointed out, they cannot be "fully liberated and free to control their lives without complete control over their reproductive futures".¹²¹ This led to the creation of the miniskirt – a short skirt that was popular during the 1960s. The miniskirt became the symbol of the second wave of feminism.¹²² The miniskirt showed women that times were changing and that they were active and visible. The miniskirt also liberated women from the cinched, waspish waist and bell skirts of the 1950s.¹²³

Afrikaner nationalists were against unmarried Afrikaner women wearing short clothes, especially the miniskirt. The National Party considered miniskirts

119 C van der Westhuizen, Afrikaner identity..., <https://theconversation.com/afrikaner-identity-in-post-apartheid-south-africa-remains-stuck-in-whiteness-87471>, viewed 2023-02-02.

120 S Orefice, The contraceptive pill was a revolution for women and men, <https://theconversation.com/the-contraceptive-pill-was-a-revolution-for-women-and-men-37193>, viewed 2023-11-05; E Pretorius, Communicating feminism to the community: The continuing relevance of feminism fifty years after 9 August 1956, *Communitas* 11, 2006, p 4; L Napikoski, The women's movement and feminist activism in the 1960s, <https://www.thoughtco.com/1960s-feminist-activities-3529000>, viewed 2022-13-05.

121 J Pierceson, *Sexual minorities and politics: An introduction* (Lanham, 2015), p 49.

122 H Hall, How Mary Quant's mini skirt liberated women, <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/mary-quant-mini-skirt-liberated-women-a3764166.html>, viewed 2023-30-12.

123 H Hall, How Mary..., <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/mary-quant-mini-skirt-liberated-women-a3764166.html>, viewed 2023-30-12.

“reprehensible” and “shameless”.¹²⁴ Afrikaner girls who wore miniskirts gave the image that they were temptresses and ‘cheap’ as it exposed certain body parts that were not allowed to be seen by men. Therefore, the National Party placed pressure on cultural organisations not to sell these “sexually suggestive clothing”.¹²⁵ Martie’s dress covers her whole body to make sure that she would not be shunned from the volk and to show Afrikaner women that they must wear modest clothes.

Although Martie’s clothes are *ordentlik*, her behaviour is not *ordentlik* according to Afrikaner Nationalism ideology. When Martie rides a horse, she rides it like a man with her legs on either side of the horse. Martie is also not afraid to voice her opinion. For example, she goes into a bar where women are not allowed, to tell Coert to leave her family and friends alone. Martie is also not afraid to slap Lourens in front of her parents. Her father finds her behaviour *onordentlik*, so he puts her in her place by telling her that “dit is nie nodig om soos ’n tierwyfie aan te gaan nie” [it is unnecessary to behave like a wildcat (literally, a tigress)].¹²⁶ By comparing Martie to a tigress, her father is ascribing animal violence to her, which in his view is unbecoming of women. Martie eventually apologises to Lourens for her behaviour. However, she still does not agree with his behaviour at the pool because after she apologises, she calls him *stout* [naughty] because he could have just asked her for directions and left. This represents the way that some Afrikaner women, specifically those who lived during the 1960s (when *Voor sononder* was released), rebelled against *odentlikheid* despite living under strict rules.

Even though the National Party lost its power in 1994, unmarried Afrikaner women of the 1990s to 2000s were still expected to be *ordentlik*. Anna is *ordentlik* as she stands up for the Afrikaner volk by telling John Walsh that the Afrikaners would fight until the bitter end. Unlike previous generations of unmarried Afrikaner women, women of the 1990s to 2000s have become owners of the *Boeredogter* image. As Elsabé Brink notes the *Volksmoeder* “spirit survived as the characteristics of the *Volksmoeder* and idealised womanhood were reshaped, repackaged and disseminated in a more sophisticated mould”.¹²⁷ Anna stands up for her fiancé by aiming a rifle at her brother, which upsets him. This is not something Afrikaner women of the previous decade would do as it was not *ordentlik*. Just like Martie,

124 A Grundlingh, ‘Are we Afrikaners getting too rich?’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21(2–3), 2008, p 153.

125 A Grundlingh, ‘Are we Afrikaners getting too rich?’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21(2–3), 2008, p 153.

126 *Voor sononder*, directed by E Nofal (Jamie Uys Film Productions, 1962), 00:17:55.

127 E Brink, The ‘*Volksmoeder*’, in A Grundlingh & S Huigen (eds), *Reshaping remembrance*, p 11.

Anna was also scolded for her behaviour when her brother banned her from the farm Donkerland.

The third trait is the role of the patriarch, who is the most important figure in especially some Afrikaner households. Feminists have defined the term ‘patriarch’ as a system where a man controls the family and is, therefore, the most important in a society, group, or household.¹²⁸ Sylvia Walby explains that the patriarchal system “is a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”.¹²⁹ In such a system, women and children are understood to be under the authority of their fathers, brothers, husbands, and even sons.¹³⁰ It was the patriarch’s duty to protect their daughters’ purity through monitoring nearly all aspects of their lives.¹³¹ For instance, fathers, in Southern American states, were expected to go to the shops with their daughters to show them what is appropriate to wear and what not.¹³²

Unmarried Afrikaner women of the 1930s to 1960s were subordinates under the patriarchal system. This was visible during the Great Trek when each trek group was structured as a family presided over by a single dominant man.¹³³ The patriarch, in the Afrikaner discourse, is second only to God and, hence, *sy woord is wet* [his word is law].

The patriarch in *Sarie Marais* (1949), is Oom Hendrik who became the patriarch of the Marais family after Sarie’s father dies. It was Oom Hendrik’s duty to protect Sarie from men he regarded unfit to marry her, in other words, Johann. Therefore, Oom Hendrik lies to Sarie by telling her that Johann died of a fever.

The patriarch in *Voor sononder* is Martie’s father and in *Donkerland* it is Klein Piet who took care of the farm Donkerland after their father was killed during a battle. No one is allowed to question the patriarch because he is second to God.

128 ST Kgatla, The piety of Afrikaner women’: In conversation with Prof. Christina Landman on the piety of Afrikaner women, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(1), 2019, p 3.

129 S Walby, Theorising patriarchy, *Sociology* 23(2), 1989, p 214.

130 V Jagarnath, South Africa: Student movement splinters as patriarchy muscles out diversity, <https://theconversation.com/south-africa-student-movement-splinters-as-patriarchy-muscles-out-diversity-57855>, viewed 2022-04-12.

131 E Gish, Producing high priests and princesses: The father-daughter relationship in the Christian sexual purity movement, *Religions* 7(3), 2016, p 8.

132 E Gish, Producing high priests and princesses..., *Religions* 7(3), 2016, p 8.

133 A McClintock, Family feuds: Gender, nationalism and the family, *Feminist Review* 44(1), 1993, p 69.

For Afrikaner women, worshipping God entailed obedience to men and being silent in public. Sarie (1949) never questions Oom Hendrik when he deceives her by telling her that Johann died.

Even Martie lives under her father's rule which meant that he was allowed to scold her if she behaved improperly. According to Hendrik van Coller and Anthea van Jaarsveld, this worship of the father figure (or in this case the uncle) as the patriarch touches on the concept of the woman as a 'Serving Martha' within the patriarchal system.¹³⁴

According to S Thias Kgatla, Afrikaner men used this status to silence Afrikaner women.¹³⁵ As a result, Afrikaner women were marginalised, because they were portrayed as passive subjects who were expected to stay behind and take care of the farm and family. Sarie (1931) is portrayed as a passive object who just waits for her beloved to return. She does not take up the weapon and fight in the war; she just sits and reads a love letter, while Jan goes to battle.

This was also the case with *Sarie Marais* (1949), where Sarie stayed behind as was expected of a Boer woman, making her vulnerable to British military tactics (the scorched earth policy). Martie is not portrayed as a passive object. She is willing to help Lourens and Le Roux defeat Coert. Even Anna refuses to be passive and is not afraid to stand up to her brother – the patriarch. She is willing to point a rifle at her brother. The second wave of feminism gave unmarried women the opportunity to rebel against the patriarchal system, which explains Anna's behaviour. However, Anna pays the price for this as she is not allowed on Donkerland anymore.

Conclusion

Future research could explore the trope's representation in other media and its broader relationship to Afrikaner nationalism and gender roles. Using the *Boeredogter* trope in this article has a practical application to help scholars understand the representation of Afrikaner women in media and the evolution of gender roles and values in Afrikaner society, which can inform media producers and creators on how to portray Afrikaner women in a more nuanced and accurate manner.

134 HP van Coller & A van Jaarsveld, The indigenous Afrikaans film: Representation as a nationalistic endeavour, *Literator* 39(1), 2018, p 11.

135 ST Kgatla, 'The piety of Afrikaner women' ..., *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(1), 2019, p 3.

The *Boeredogter* trope in selected Afrikaans films changes over time, but only to some extent. The *Boeredogter* of the 1930s to 1940s had to be racially pure even though they enjoyed some freedom like the franchise. The National Party was in power, and being a conservative party believed that they needed to keep the Afrikaner volk pure. In both *Sarie Marais* films (1931 and 1949) the girls end up with *Boereseuns*. *Sarie* (1931) ends up with Jan which the film portrays as the typical *Boereseun*. *Sarie* (1949) also marries an Afrikaner (Boer) man, namely Chris who fought in the South African War.

By the 1960s, Afrikaners no longer considered the cities backwards. Therefore, many Afrikaners started to move to the cities where they came across the *uitlanders* who Tomaselli and Van Zyl considered a threat to the Afrikaner volk. The *uitlander* of the 1960s was Coert who tries to sway Martie away from the *Boereseun*, Lourens. As a result, Martie succeeds in her duty to keep the Afrikaner volk pure as she connects with an Afrikaner man who fought for his nation in the war.

When the National Party lost their political power in 1994, it allowed unmarried Afrikaner women to mingle with *uitlanders*. Anna is swayed by the *uitlander* and as a result, she loses the place for which she would sacrifice her life. As a result, Anna fails her volk as she contaminates their blood when she ends up with an *uitlander*.

Unmarried Afrikaner women of the 1930s to 1940s lived under strict rules, especially when it came to premarital sex. In those years sex was a taboo topic. Unmarried Afrikaner girls who participated in sexual intercourse before marriage faced shame and stigma. It was expected that *Sarie* (1931) and Jan never had sexual intercourse before they were married, as it was considered a sin. Unmarried Afrikaner women had to be virgins, otherwise they might lose the opportunity to study or find a “good” husband. This means that some Afrikaner girls would not even know what sex was or would feel uncomfortable with sexual topics or advances. For example, *Sarie* (1949) is uncomfortable when Johann makes a sexual comment about going for a swim. Therefore, *Sarie* runs away from him.

The sexual revolution changed how sex was regarded. Premarital sex was no longer a taboo. The Pill allowed women to have sex before marriage, enabling more women to have premarital sexual relationships. Even though unmarried Afrikaner women had premarital sex, the National Party still considered it a taboo. Therefore, Martie never sleeps with Lourens or Daan. Yet sex remained a conservative topic even after the National Party lost its power in the 1994 elections. There are still

Afrikaner households who never talk about sex, as depicted by Anna and John having no sexual relationships.

Afrikaner girls of the 1930s to 2000s had to be *ordentlik* by behaving properly and wearing modest clothes. The two Sarie Marais girls were *ordentlik* as they wore modest clothes, were kind, polite and knew their place in the Afrikaner society. Sarie (1931) appeared decent while she waited for Jan. Sarie (1949) obeyed her uncle's command.

Even though unmarried Afrikaner women could wear miniskirts, it was not encouraged as the National Party considered the miniskirt “shameless” and believed Afrikaner women who wore it were cheap. Consequently, Martie is dressed in modest clothes covering her entire body as was Anna. However, both women rebelled against the patriarchal system, an act that was considered *onordentlik*. Martie slapped Lourens in front of her father, but her father scolded her for her behaviour as it was considered rude to slap guests. Anna was prepared to go against her brother but then lost Donkerland.

Even though unmarried Afrikaners could enjoy some freedom, they still had to obey the patriarchs. They include Oom Hendrik, Martie's father, and Klein Piet whose opinions Sarie, Martie and Anna valued. They could also never question him as seen with Sarie (1949) and Martie who were put in their place when they rebelled against the patriarch. Sarie never questions Oom Hendrik's lie and always goes to him for advice. Martie may not agree with her father's opinion, but she does not question him even though he punishes her for something she did not do. In this regard, Martie and Sarie can be considered *Boeredogters*.

This study aimed to fill the gap when it comes to the Boeredogter – a topic few authors have focused on by analysing the traits of the Boeredogter and how they are portrayed in the selected Afrikaans films.