Afrikaner identity formations in Willem Boshoff's *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) and Jan van der Merwe's *Wag* (2000)

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This article explores the ways in which the South African conceptual artists Willem Boshoff in *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* and Jan van der Merwe in *Wag* [*Waiting*] address complexities of Afrikaner identity informed by unequal power relations during the colonial era of the country. Both the installations take the Anglo-Boer War [Second Freedom War] (1899-1902) as central point of departure. The theoretical framework for the reading and interpretation of the chosen installations is postcolonial critique on the ways in which colonialism and nationalism informed and influenced the displacement, search and repositioning of identity as portrayed in the selected art installations. We argue that Van der Merwe and Boshoff deal with their personal, collective, and historical identity issues in the chosen conceptual art installations through artistic representations of their subjective selves. Inherently, these representations are informed by their individual as well as collective and historical memories of the past.
Key words: Van der Merwe, Boshoff, postcolonial critique, Afrikaners, identity.

Formasies van Afrikaneridentiteit in Willem Boshoff se *32 000 Darling Little Nuisnances* (2003) en Jan van der Merwe se *Wag* (2000)
Hierdie artikel ondersoek die wyses waarop die Suid-Afrikaanse konseptuele kunstenaars Willem Boshoff in *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* [*32 000 Skattige Klein Lasposte*] en Jan van der Merwe in *Wag* kompleksiteite van Afrikaneridentiteit aanspreek soos beïnvloed deur ongelyke magsverhoudinge gedurende die koloniale era van die land. Albei die installasies neem die Anglo-Boereoorlog [Tweede Vryheidsoorlog] (1899-1902) as sentrale vertrekpunt. Die teoretiese raamwerk vir die lees en interpretasies van die gekose installasies is postkoloniale kritiek op die wyses waarop kolonialisme en nasionalisme ontheemding [ontworteling], asook die soeke en herposisionering van identiteit beïnvloed het soos wat dit in die gekose kunsinstallasies uitgebeeld word. Ons argumenteer dat Van der Merwe en Boshoff verskillend omgaan met hul persoonlike, kollektiewe en historiese identiteitskwessies in die gekose kunsinstallasies deur die artistieke representasies van hul subjektiewe self. Hierdie representasies is inherent beïnvloed deur hulle persoonlike, sowel as kollektiewe en historiese herinneringe aan die verlede.
Sleutelwoorde: Van der Merwe, Boshoff, postkoloniale kritiek, Afrikaners, identiteit.

This article focuses on the way in which Willem Boshoff (b.1951) and Jan van der Merwe (born 1953), two white Afrikaner male artists, aesthetically concretize views of Afrikaner identity and concomitant historical Afrikaner memories of unequal power relations between British colonizers and Afrikaners during the colonial era in South Africa. For this purpose we chose Boshoff's language-based conceptual installation *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) and Jan van der Merwe's *Wag [Waiting]* (2000). Aesthetic concretization is the way in which the artists conceptually and visually express their artistic interpretations of their personal, as well as collective Afrikaner identities based upon historical memories of power and identity. Both the installations take the Anglo-Boer War[1] (11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902) – a seminal event in Afrikaner history – as central point of departure. The term *Boer* was used to refer to Afrikaners because they were mostly farmers. Our methodological approach consists of a postcolonial theoretical framework for the comparative reading and interpretation

of the two chosen art installations. We focus on the ways in which colonialism and nationalism informed and influenced the search and repositioning of identity as portrayed in the selected conceptual art installations. The article argues that the exposé of the memories of Afrikaners of British cultural and political domination, with the Anglo-Boer War as historical narrative as a source, offers a framework for the reading and interpretation of the chosen installations dealing with the formation of the artists identities.

The article sets off with introductory remarks on the colonial history of South Africa followed by a brief overview of the Anglo-Boer War. Thereafter a theoretical exposition of identity from a postcolonial perspective as situated within the South African colonial context is given. The influence of memories of unequal power relations due to colonialism and nationalism on the construction of identity is taken into account. The theoretical framework is followed by a descriptive reading of the aesthetic form elements of each installation. Accordingly, the selected installations are comparatively read and interpreted as informed by the memories of the historical narrative of Afrikaner identity during the colonial era of the country from a postcolonial perspective. The article closes with a summary and conclusion of the main arguments as drawn from the interpretation of the selected installations.

Introductory remarks on the colonial history of South Africa (1652-1899)

The first European settlers in South Africa were Jan van Riebeeck and his personnel from a Dutch company, the *Generale Vereenigde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) in 1652. The company's goal was to establish a refreshment post at the Cape of Good Hope to provide their ships with fresh food and water on the way to India. Soon the need for farmers to produce food made it necessary for the Company to release servants to become full-time farmers, called free burghers. This freemen consisted of Dutch and Low Germans, Scandinavians, French and even a few English (De Klerk, 1975: 8-9). Within ten years of the founding of the Cape slaves were imported from *inter alia* Angola, Guinee, Batavia and Ceylon to serve the free burghers (De Villiers, 2012:44). In 1688 the French Huguenots, composed mostly of families who fled their country to retain their protestant belief also arrived in the Cape (Giliomee, 2003: 1-5). These first free men – the first burghers – can rightly be said to have formed the nucleus of what would in time become the Afrikaners (De Klerk, 1976: 8-9). These former Europeans soon became attached to their new life style and country, never looked back and decided to stay. Consequently Katzen (1982: 213) states that since the early eighteenth century white settlers in the Cape changed from an European to an African based self-assertive community with no knowledge of any other fatherland. Afrikaners were characterised by their Calvinism. In the Netherlands the Reformed Church, based on the Calvinist doctrine, was, although not the state church, the dominant church which set itself against the Roman Catholic Church. At the Cape, the Dutch Reformed Church was for more than a century the only church. The state kept a close watch on the church, both in the Netherlands and at the Cape. It remunerated some church employees and owned the church buildings. In the Netherlands it instructed the church not to criticise the government. At the Cape, ministers – as paid officials of the Company – were expected to be obedient and respectful towards it (Giliomee, 2003: 4,5; De Klerk, 1975: xiv).

In 1806, the British took possession of the Cape and it became a colony of the British Empire[2] (Thompson 2006: 51-63). The burghers were now British subjects. British colonialism and especially the arrival of the British settlers in 1820 enhanced the Christian religion (De Klerk, 1975: 15-20). As more Europeans, imported slaves, and immigrants gradually inhabited

the country, the borders of the original Cape of Good Hope expanded to the north, south, and east (Giliomee, 2003: 10, 42-43). White Afrikaners, the hybrid descendants from Europeans, slaves and the indigenous Khoikhoi, were mostly farmers on the borders and outskirts of the Cape of Good Hope (Thompson 2006: 33, 44). These farmers were often in battles over land and stock-theft with indigenous people and convinced that the British government in the Cape did not provide them with adequate protection. To add insult to injury, English was declared the official language in the Cape Colony in all government documents, courts, schools, and churches. During the period 1834-1848 organized groups of Afrikaners, consisting of families, friends, and neighbours migrated from the Cape colony in what was known in history as the Great Trek, to flee from British imperial power. They called themselves *Voortrekkers*. Approximately 9% of the Afrikaner population left the Cape (Welsh & Spence, 2007: 284; Marschall, 2010: 179). They settled in broadly three regions, *Natalia*, the *Trans-Oranje Vrijstaat*, and the *Transvaal*. In 1852 and 1854, the Transvaal and the *Oranje Vrijstaat* respectively declared themselves as independent Afrikaner Republics, while the Cape and Natal[3] remained part of the British colony. The Transvaal was renamed as the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) and the Free State as the *Republic of the Oranje Vrijstaat* (Giliomee, 2012:222).

After the discovery of diamonds (1871) and gold (1886) in the two independent Republics, foreign money and investments flowed in. Transport systems developed and the mining industries expanded (Dubow 2007: 56-57). The British Empire followed an aggressive policy to recolonize the two Republics in what McLeod (2000: 67) refers to as the period of “high imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”. This aggressive colonization policy formed part of several European states’ “scramble for empire”, specifically in Africa, either to enlarge their interests in the diamond and gold industries, or to maintain their monopoly on the sea route to India (McLeod 2000, 67-69). The independent Afrikaner Republics fiercely resisted these colonization attempts, which resulted in the First Freedom War (1880-1881) and the Second Freedom War (1899-1902), the latter generally known as the Anglo-Boer War. These wars were the first anti-colonial freedom wars on African soil during colonial expansion (Pretorius 1999, 408; Kapp 2002, 276). The First Freedom War ended in defeat for the British Empire, while the Boer Republics lost the Anglo-Boer War. The two former colonies, the Cape Province and Natal was eventually, with the two former republics, incorporated in 1910 as four provinces of the Union of South Africa as a united colony of the British Empire (Worden 1994:32; Giliomee 2003:171-175, 235). Weber (1999) is of the opinion that,

> The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was more than the first major military clash of the 20th century. ...The might of the globe-girdling British Empire, backed by international finance, against a small pioneering nation of independent-minded farmers, ranchers and merchants in Southern Africa who lived by the Bible and the rifle, its legacy continues to resonate today. The Boers’ recourse to irregular warfare and Britain’s response in herding a hundred thousand women and children into concentration camps foreshadowed the horrors of guerrilla warfare and mass detention of innocents that have become emblematic of the 20th century.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)

The Afrikaners fought a bitter and protracted war for their freedom and independence. They adopted a guerrilla style of war mainly because of the vast distances and big territory on which the war was fought. Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), the Commander of the British forces, initiated the “scorched earth policy”. This policy entailed the burning down of Boer homesteads and farms to prevent the Boer forces from resupplying at their homes (Kapp 2002: 273-281; Pretorius 1999: 404-411; Spies 2001). Following Kitchener’s policy many women, children, and black people

were forcibly moved to concentration camps (Spies, 2001: 203-285). This policy drew sharp criticism in a speech in the British Parliament on 18 February 1901, by David Lloyd George, a member of British parliament who would later serve as his country's prime minister during the First World War (1914-1918). Lloyd George accused the British authorities of pursuing "a policy of extermination" against women and children. He said that although it was not a direct policy, it was one that was having that effect. Lloyd George further quoted from a letter by a British officer, who wrote that the British troops "moved from valley to valley, lifting cattle and sheep, burning and looting, and turning out women and children to weep in despair beside the ruin of their once beautiful homesteads" (Pakenham, 1979: 539-540). Lloyd George further commented: "It is a war not against men, but against women and children" (cf. Weber, 1999). The poor diet, inadequate hygiene, and medical care led to endemic contagious diseases and resulted in the deaths of thousands of Boer women and children under the age of 16. This led Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908), leader of the British Liberal opposition party, to ask in the British Parliament, "When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa" (Spies 2001: 1).

The Afrikaners lost the war and the Republics were subjected to British rule. Afrikaners suffered important losses, their farms, and earthly possessions, their freedom and self-determination. After the War, they were morally and financially bankrupt. On 31 May 1902, the peace treaty at Vereeniging between the Republics and the British Empire was signed. The two Republics, with the Cape and Natal, were absorbed into the British Empire (Thompson 2006: 140). In 1910, the country was united into one colony of the British Empire, and known as the British Union of South Africa, consisting of four provinces, The Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and the Transvaal (Worden 1994: 32).

Theoretical exploration of memories and postcolonial perspectives on colonial Afrikaner identity

Identity formations in South African have been rooted in socio-political, cultural, religious, and race relationships since the arrival of the first colonials in 1652 and increasingly so during the British colonial era (1806-1961) of the country. The role of the Christian religion in the awakening of national identities and cultures and the establishing of nationalistic formations in Western history are well known, as stipulated by Smith (2004), Hastings (1997), and Grosby (2002). Hastings argues that,

> The Bible provided ... the original model of the nation. Without it and its Christian interpretation and implementation, it is arguable that nations and nationalism, as we know them could never have existed (Hastings 1997: 4).

In congruence, Conversi (2007: 20) states that in Western history the Bible and other printed religious literature played a key role in the awakening of nationalistic feelings determined by Jewish-Christian values. These values spread to colonized countries and continents where the Christian religion was unknown, as stated by Smith that during the Anglo-Saxon period, the "biblical and providentialist reading of history provided the framework for a sense of English ethnic chosenness long before the Reformation, as well as a foundation myth" (Smith 2004: 117). Smith (2004: 4-5) accordingly states that the foundation for nationalism and national identities is to be found in the "sense of the sacred and the binding commitments of religion". Therefore, the source of nationalism and national identities belongs in the sphere of religion in which ethnicity, language and the nation state are embedded. In the development and establishing of

nationalism and national identities, analogies are often drawn with the history of the chosen people of Israel in the Old Testament (Smith 2004: 7; 78-85; 243-245).

With regard to the formation of identities, Parekh (2008: 9) distinguishes three dimensions of a person's identity, namely a personal or autobiographical identity, a social or collective identity, and a natural or essential identity. In a person's autobiographical identity the uniqueness of a person as an individual is recognized and supported by a personal and subjective sense of the self. A social or collective identity incorporates an individual's association with other like-minded individuals within a particular group sharing the same worldviews, nationality, culture, language, and race. The natural or essential dimension of identity is a person's essential nature as a human being with specific biological and genetic characteristics. These three dimensions are inseparable. MacIntyre (1984: 219) adds a fourth dimension, namely an historical identity. The historical identity includes the sharing of individuals' historical experiences and reference framework, and the sharing of the same language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality. MacIntyre's fourth dimension therefore connects partly with Parekh's second dimension, because the "possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide" (MacIntyre 1984: 219). The conclusion drawn from this connection between the social and the historical identity is that that Parekh emphasizes the diachronic social connection. MacIntyre in his turn emphasizes the synchronic dimension that allows for development over time as well as the influence of different historical factors on the formation and content of relationships.

The inquiry into collective memory and how it is socially structured started with the work done by Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945)[4]. He distinguished three types of memory, namely *autobiographical, historical* and *collective.* Autobiographical memory is personal or individual, while historical memory is known through historical records. Collective memory refers to the active past that informs our identities and stands in contrast to the "dead" past of historical memories (cf. Climo & Cattell, 2002: 4). For Halbwachs (1980: 78) general history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up. The need to write the history of a period, a society, or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it. Therefore, history is neither the whole nor even all that remains of the past. In addition to written history – Halbwachs (1980: 64) argued – there is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have seemingly disappeared. If this were not the case, Halbwachs stated, we have no right to speak of a "collective memory".

According to Halbwachs (1980: 80) collective memory is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive. He (Halbwachs, 1992: 38) points out that people normally acquire their memories in society and that it is in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories. For him memory is a matter of how minds work together in society and how their operations are structured by social arrangements (cf. Olick & Robbins 1998: 109). Halbwachs (1980: 84, 72) states that the groups to which he belongs vary at different periods in his life and it is "from their viewpoint that I consider the past". From this it is clear that Halbwachs holds the view that individuals belong to many different social groups, and that a collective memory inheres in each. Therefore collective memory is multiple, not static. An on-going, dynamic process that must allow for lapses of memory, the passing of generations, and the personal developments of individuals characterises maturity of collective memory (Crane 1997: 1376-7). Halbwachs (1980: 55) elaborates:

> Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of the groups who preserved them and by serving the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of social milieus where they occurred, while retaining only the group's chronological and spatial outline of them.

Connerton (2007: 37) sums it up by stating that it is because the same group is interested in those [shared] memories, and is able to evoke them, that they are assembled together in peoples' minds. Within this context groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised by a kind of mapping. Members of a group situate what they recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. Halbwachs insisted that these mental spaces always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy, and that no collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework. In this way Halbwachs explicitly rejected the separation of the following two questions: "How does the individual preserve and rediscover memories?" and, "How do societies preserve and rediscover memories?" He demonstrated that the idea of an individual memory, absolutely separate from social memory, is an abstraction almost devoid of meaning. He also held that collective memory is always selective. This entails that various groups of people's collective memories with regard to the same event differ to some or other degree from those of others. This leads to different kinds of behaviour (cf. Connerton 2007: 36).

Stolton (2007: 6-7) in his turn draws attention to the fact that history writing is an important part of a nation state's collective memory [and identity]. He argues that history is not simply a product of the past, but often an answer to demands of the present. Bellah *et al.* state in congruence that,

> Communities ... have a history – in an important sense are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory', one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative (Bellah *et al.,* 1985: 153).

In this article – following Crane (1997) – it is argued that historical memory, always appearing in the form of an historical narrative, is one form of the content of collective memory. However, collective memory is also the framework in which historical remembering occurs (cf. Crane 1997: 1373). One should, however, keep in mind that history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering in the much longer span of a collective history. Sontag (2003: 103) holds that there is simply too much injustice in the world and that too much remembering embitters. Therefore collective memory constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is mirrored (cf. Adam 2000: 88). But personal identities – in the same way as collective memories – are seen as ongoing processes of construction in narrative form. Therefore emphasis is placed on the role of the family within which a person grows up as part of a specific community in shaping the way that the past is constructed (cf. Olick and Robbins 1998: 122-123; Connerton 2007: 18-19).

Contrary to MacIntyre's (1984: 219) remarks that an historical identity and a social identity coincide, the Neo-Marxist theorists hold that collective memory embraces individuals as members of a community, a nation or a society. The Neo-Marxists also reflect on the relationship between individuals within that specific community, nation or society, as well as between individuals and the state (cf. McEwan 2003: 740).

From a postcolonial perspective, the concepts hybridity, diaspora, and liminality emphasize the search for new identities due to imperial colonialism and the complexity of relationships

between the dominant self [Western, civilized, Christian, male and of pure blood] and its binary opposite, the other [barbaric, uncivilized, black or of mixed blood, female (JanMohamed 1995: 20; Marschall 2004: 34). White Afrikaners were hybrid descendants of Europeans, slaves, and the indigenous Khoikhoi. Their acculturation with the African continent and their process of becoming sociologically indigenous or "going native" found expression in the term "Afrikaners" by which the colonists came to call themselves (Leatt *et. al.* 1986: 70; cf. Steyn 2001: xxiv). By the end of the eighteenth century the term *Afrikaner* was generally used as a synonym for *Boer, vryburgher, burgher, Hollander* and *Christian* (Thompson 2006: 55; Giliomee 2003: xix, 51). The Afrikaners (or Boers) were convinced that the British colonizers would never view them as their equals, and believed that they would always be viewed as white outcasts of the British Empire (Giliomee 2003: 149-150), or in postcolonial terms the Other[5]. This had a direct influence on the way they perceived themselves. Prior to British colonisation they embraced their own foundation myth and saw themselves as indispensable to maintaining the Cape settlement. They also regarded themselves as the defenders of the country, the Christian religion, and of civilised culture (cf. Giliomee 2003: 6-7). After British conquest they were seen as backward, unimportant and inferior to British supremacy. British people called the Afrikaans language *Kitchen Dutch,* a minor and bad dialect of Dutch (Kapp 2009: 110). Apart from calling Afrikaans *Kitchen Dutch,* they also called it a *Hotnots'* language (Scholtz 1980, 49-55) – *Hotnot* being an abusive name for the indigenous KhoiKhoi. Being different and considered white outcasts of the British Empire, in the imperial view of Afrikaners were, however, still of a higher order than the indigenous black people, the KhoiKhoi and slaves, due to colonial discourses on race purity and superiority rooted in the Manichean binary opposition between light and darkness (JanMohamed 2006: 19). Indigenous people and unfamiliar animals on the African continent were scientifically studied, described and documented (Said 1995: 90; Coombes 2003: 240). Attributes such as "barbaric, uncivilized, black or of mixed blood, and irrational" were stereotypically ascribed by the colonial self to anyone who was different in nationality, spoke a different language, or was culturally of a different origin. Accordingly, the colonial gaze (and inherently the construction of the binary self and other), as framed by a racially biased, ethnocentric perspective, left no room for individuality. One way of establishing colonialism as a race-based nationalistic ideology, was to ignore and negate the pre-colonial history of the country so that it could be manipulated for colonial interests and purposes (Dubow 2006: 5; Loomba 2005: 20). According to Worden (1994: 5), the reason for this negation was to justify the claim of the country's minerals and land in a white capitalist dominated environment. To come to terms with these past experiences and memories remains important and has emerged as the grand narrative of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (McEwan 2003: 740; cf. Connerton 2007: 1). Individuals and nations are seeking to overcome their traumatic legacies and the influence thereoff on identity formation *inter alia* through the creation of collective memories and material spaces of national memory-archives. This must be understood in the light of Adam's (2000: 88) argument that collective memory constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is mirrored.

According to Van der Merwe (1995: 179) Afrikaners in the 1830s were described as "a serious and religious people with strong sentiment of genuine piety" and "there are certainly no people in the world who are as truly God-fearing as the Afrikaner". They also came to perceive themselves as the heirs to European political institutions. These inherited political institutions became the Western benchmark of a so-called civilised modern state. While white racial groups had the political power to benefit their particular interest, the other could not claim any rights according to their values or interests. Typical of a Western imperial perspective, the white people

believed themselves to be ordained by God to be the norm against which other groups were measured as the other, thus deviations from the norm (Smith 2004: 9; Conversi 2007: 20).

Since the late nineteenth century, Afrikaners identified with British colonialism and imperialism and built their apartheid policy (1948-1994) on these colonial identity principles as stated by Joe Slovo (1926-1995), former leader of the South African Communist Party [SACP]. In his posthumous *Unfinished Biography* (1997) he accused the British colonial era of the country of establishing the roots of apartheid, specifically referring to the last half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries:

> If any one group is to blame for the modern foundation of apartheid, it is the non-Afrikaner upper strata, which dominated the seat of power for more than 75 years before 1948. I am not arguing for one Landlord one bullet, but we must get our history straight (Slovo, 1997: 22; see also Arnold, 2005: 331-332; Dubow 2006: 11-12; De Klerk 1991: 68; Welsh 2010).

The perception that only white Afrikaners were responsible for racial discrimination and apartheid and that the white English speaking people were "innocent victims" who gained by apartheid against their will, is misplaced, as stated by Arnold (2005: 330-333), Worden (1994: 66) and Dubow (2006).

> Thus, although the English-speaking establishment and its institutions were in reality often highly conservative during the apartheid era, these became indelibly associated with "liberalism". ... Indeed, English-speaking South Africans have long managed the trick of defining everyone else in the country as racially or ethnically "other" – while blithely assuming their own identity to be somehow "normal" and therefore not suitable for deep investigation. In a post-apartheid and post-colonial world, this position is becoming less and less tenable (Dubow 2006: 11-12).

White Afrikaners became the so-called elite group in 1948 when the National Party (NP) government came into power and when the country became a republic in 1961. Alter (1994: 3) identifies four general characteristics during the transition from apartheid to democracy that the new governing power has to deal with. The first is a consciousness of the uniqueness of a group, especially towards ethnicity, language, and religious homogeneity. The second is an emphasis on shared socio-cultural frameworks and historical memory. In this article, specific reference is made to the Afrikaners' memories of the colonial era of the country and the Anglo-Boer War. Thirdly, Alter identifies a shared mission and fourthly a collective disrespect and adversial relations that may lead to racism, anti-Semitism and or xenophobia, against other cultural groups that are different.

The initial main objective of the NP government was to enhance Afrikaners to become equal to the British in all spheres of society. This objective of the NP gradually shifted from the advancing of Afrikaner interests to keeping the minority white Afrikaans and English population of the country in power, serving their socio-political interests (Arnold 2005: 331, 726; Giliomee 2003: 477-478). Parallel with the historical narrative of the Afrikaners as a Christian and "chosen" people, is the narrative of apartheid when this theological viewpoint was practically and forcefully exerted to justify the apartheid ideology. Slabbert (1999: 18) accused the NP government of "ritualised irrationality" in trying to keep apartheid in place. However, it seems as though the NP during 1970-1980 focussed more on the "national" in their so-called Christian-national policy underlining apartheid. With the focus on "national", Degenaar (1978: 2) correctly states that apartheid was a nationalistic race-based ideology. According to Du Pisani (2012: 348) and Lambert (2012: 540-546) quite a number of the English speaking communities joined the Afrikaners in support of the NP, the reasons being Afrikaners' identification with colonial values and their sharing of Afrikaners' fear of black nationalism.

Descriptive reading of the aesthetic form elements of each installation

Jan van der Merwe's art installation *Wag* [*Waiting*] (2000) consists of found objects that the artist covered with rust. It consists of a Victorian cast iron single bed, a wardrobe, and clothes. The bed is covered with a blanket made from rusted metal. A rusted pillow and under it a rusted dress are placed on the blanket. The wardrobe is open on all four sides and covered with barbed wire. Two dresses hang in the wardrobe. A bridal veil hangs over the bed's edge. The setting of the installation in the gallery allows no specific frontal perspective, because viewers can walk between and around the objects to be viewed from different angles and perspectives.

Figure 1
Van der Merwe, J., 2000. *Wag [Waiting].* Found objects, rusted metal, clothes, wardrobe, dresses, bridal veil, Victorian cast iron single bed, barbed wire. Bed: 125x200 cm; wardrobe 200x100x500cm (Pretoria Art Gallery Collection).

The language-based art installation *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003) by Willem Boshoff consists of 1 400 nametags of transparent film. On 1 142 of the tags Afrikaans names and surnames are printed. Beneath each name and surname, the artist printed an age between a few months and sixteen years old. On 258 tags, the artist printed only the words baby and child [*baba, kind*] in Afrikaans and in an indigenous language without a specific age beneath the words. The tags are glued at the tilted top [ceiling] of the installation, upside down, and back to front, therefore illegible. At the back of the installation, Boshoff staged enlarged official portraits of the British kings and queens from 1899 to the present, in full colour and in formal apparel: Victoria, Edward VII, George V, George VI and Elizabeth II. Underneath each portrait is a formal label containing information regarding the years of their reign and their birthdates and – in the case of the first four – where they were buried. On three of the photographs, those of Victoria, Edward VII and George V, the kings and queen look directly into the camera lens, and therefore directly into the eyes of the viewers. Only Queen Elizabeth II has a slight smile, looking at her right hand side. On the floor in front of the photographs Boshoff placed large mirror strips. The images of the royal monarchs with their labels, as well as the names on the tags are reflected in the mirror. Because of the reflection, the names on the tags are perfectly readable. However, the reflections of the royals and their labels are now upside down and back to front, therefore it appears to be indecipherable and nonsense.

Figure 2
Boshoff, W., *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* (2003). Plastic glued on polystyrene, paper and mirror, nametags with print on it, enlarged portraits. 300 x 840 x 200 cm (Courtesy of the artist).

Comparative reading and interpretation of the chosen art installations

As stated, both Van der Merwe and Boshoff focus in their installations on memories of collective and historical identity issues informed by one of the most traumatic experiences of the white Afrikaners, namely the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) with its scorched earth policy and British concentration camps for Boer women and children. They utilized readymades such as mirror strips and nametags in which memories, history and identity complexities are embedded. Boshoff utilized officially issued photographs that he enlarged to give a realistic representation of the British monarchy. They seem proud and fully aware of their importance, heritage [they were born royals], and power in formal, official royal apparel. Although they are all middle aged, their images are timeless as though they are not confined to any specific time in history. It seems as though they have been here from the beginning of the earth and as though they would be here until eternity. Van der Merwe also worked with the notion of time in *Wag* in which an ambivalence and dialectic tension exist between the evanescence of memories on the one hand and the preserving of identity and memories on the other. These issues come to the fore in the artist's covering of the objects with rust as a metal indicating perseverance and evanescence (cf. Kruger & Van der Merwe 2011: 158).

The 32 000 in Boshoff's title refers to the approximately 32 000 children under the age of 16 who died in all the concentration camps of the War on South African soil. The words *Darling Little Nuisances* are a pun Boshoff made on a statement by Queen Victoria (1819-1901) who was the reigning queen during the first part of the Anglo-Boer War. The artist stated that on a visit to Buckingham Palace he got hold of a pamphlet on the royal family. According to this pamphlet, Queen Victoria – when the War began – said: "Children are such darling little things, but they can be a terrible nuisance" (Siebrits 2007: 86). In this way the 32 000 children

are linked to the well-known statement by Queen Victoria who is said to have been robustly practical about the tiresomeness of small children. Van der Merwe's title *Wag* [*Waiting*] tells the narrative of a bride who is waiting on her soldier groom during the war as also represented by the personal items in the installation in the form of a bridal dress and a veil, placed on a bed. *Wag* deals with war as a physical, quantitatively measurable power struggle characterized by a clear distinction between the victor [the British colonials] and the vanquished [the Boers]. Both Boshoff and Van der Merwe represent the personal influence of British colonialism on families. Boshoff's *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* consists of the names of 1 142 children who died at the Free State Bethulie concentration camp 60 kilometres from Boshoff's grandfather's (1880-1928) family farm. The artist points out that fourteen children on the list of names of the 1 142 children that died in the Bethulie camp situated nearby Colesberg were Boshoffs. Two of them bear the names of the artist, Willem Hendrik Boshoff. One was ten years of age and one six months (Boshoff, 2009). Furthermore, both his grandmothers were in British concentration camps. Boshoff is therefore linked to the historical memories of the War by personal, family ties as well as by being a member of the Afrikaner community. He shares the collective memory of the mourning of the unnecessary and untimely death of these children in both these ways. Van der Merwe's *Wag* [*Wait*] also deals with the influence of loss on identity formation within a homely and family context. He utilizes household appliances such as furniture, combined with personal items in the form of dresses and a bridal veil.

At first glance the portraits of the Royalties in *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* are the focus point because of their size and the use of full colour in contrast to the children's names and ages at death which are inscribed in black ink on sober white strips. In this installation, the depiction of the British monarchs reflects their position of power in the age of colonialism: big, proud, powerful, in full colour, and formal apparel, with labels which affirm their identities, and as focus points. The photograph of George VI with the crown on his head and a sword [symbols of power and imperialism] in his hand is in profile, which gives the impression of aloofness and indifference. Only queen Elizabeth II has a smile, and she is not looking into the camera lens, but to her right hand side. Nevertheless, she is also in full apparel with a crown on her head, and looks proud and aloof. This portrayal brings to the fore the European colonial belief in their own cultural superiority, with right to govern and divine duties to civilise the non-European world. In contrast to the representation of the European Self, the names of the children printed on small strips and glued on the top of the installation, upside down and back to front in black and white, reflect their marginalised position as powerless objects, as the *other*. This marginalised position is emphasised by the title of the work, *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances*. Although the word *darling* is a term of endearment, the word nuisance means something or someone annoying or obnoxious; that which is offensive or irritating; a pest. However, the artist, by the crafty way in which he uses the mirror in front of the installation, reverses the power relationship, thus giving the children the focus position and in this way doing away with the inferiority that was forced upon them. In Van der Merwe's *Wag,* the superiority of the British is implicit in the barbed wire around the wardrobe. This barbed wire attached around the wardrobe in which the women and children clothing is imprisoned symbolizes the British concentration camps for Boer women and children and their marginalised position. *Wag* therefore deals with white Afrikaner women and children's otherness in a binary opposition to the British self – women and carefree children.

On the other hand, *Wag* also portrays white Afrikaners' keeping of the so-called superior Western social codes and conventions. In this regard, we consider the wedding dress, veil, and Victorian cast-iron bed in *Wag* as symbols of Western imperial and white social codes and conventions with which the Afrikaners ideologically identified. This identification with

Western social codes and convention is however, not represented in Boshoff's *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances.* According to Adam (2000: 88) collective memory constitutes the accepted perceptions of past events in which the collective identity of a nation is mirrored. The fact that the white Afrikaners had lost everything of importance during this war, namely lives, freedom and their farms, could have played an important part in the forming of a collective Afrikaner national identity based *inter alia* on the Afrikaner's collective memory of the Anglo-Boer War. Boshoff (*in* Siebrits 2007: 27), for instance recounts that his grandmother refused to speak about the war because the people she knew were still so shocked by what had happened to their communities. The collective memories of this war may be one of the reasons for Afrikaners' upholding of, and fighting for power that culminated in the apartheid policy. This must not be read as an excuse for what Afrikaners did during apartheid, nor is it a justification of this ideology. Rather it should be read as a perspective on the reasons for the upholding of apartheid as an inhuman ideology that caused much pain and suffering to the people of this country.

Having said that, the collective identity of the Afrikaner has changed dramatically since 1994 when they lost their position of power. Many Afrikaners today struggle with the material spaces of national memory-archive and associated metaphorical spaces of belonging and identity in contemporary South Africa (cf. McEwan 2003: 740). They find themselves on a border between a Eurocentric and an African collective identity due to their feelings of disillusionment and guilt about the immorality of apartheid as exposed by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee, as well as their uncertainty as a political minority (Rankin & Mentis 2005: 46; Webb & Kriel 2000: 43). Engelbrecht (2007: 38, 30) postulates that the term *Afrikaner* as well as Afrikaans as language is currently controversial because of its apartheid baggage. The term *Afrikaner*[6] has lost its hegemonic unitary force as Afrikaans is still viewed as the language of the oppressor It therefore seems as though personal, collective, and historical identity issues are still critically present in a postapartheid South Africa as racial complexities are complicated by the radical political power shift from white to black in a democratic South Africa. Black people are not only in the majority, but they also have the political power in the country (Le Cordeur 2011: ii). On the other hand, whiteness continuous to preserve an inherited privileged hegemonic status, which is still evident in the economical and education sectors (cf. Lopez 2005: 6), but is currently under scrutiny. Especially white Afrikaners experience alienation and enmity because of their past hegemonic and political power identity (Engelbrecht 2007: 39-40

Conclusion

This article dealt with the historical memories of the Anglo-Boer War and the influence it had on the formation of Afrikaners' personal, collective and historical identities as aesthetically represented in two art installations, *32 000 Darling Little Nuisances* and *Wag* by Afrikaner male artists Willem Boshoff and Jan van der Merwe respectively. It appears that in memories of social, cultural and political oppression there is on the one hand power agents as the dominators and gainers, and on the other hand the oppressed and "deviations" from the norm as the marginalised victims of the system. Such unequal power relations have an influence on the identity formations of both the so-called superior norm as the other from which advantages and rights are withheld. From the reading and interpretation of the installations according to postcolonial critique on colonialism and informed by historical memories, it seems that historical memories of the Anglo-Boer War have played an important and directional role in the formation of Afrikaners' personal, social and historical identities as represented by the work of the two artists in question.

Notes

1 The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) is in history also known as the *Second Freedom War* [die *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*], the *Anglo-Boer/ South African War* [die *Anglo-Boer/Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog*], and *The South African War [*die *Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog*]. The name of this War constantly changed according to political developments. During the centenary of this War in 2000, the ANC government changed the name to the *Anglo-Boer South African War,* a clumsy composite of names that had little chance of being generally accepted. (Grundlingh 2007: 198). Because of the Afrikaner identity context of this article, we used the name the *Anglo-Boer War.* Grundlingh (2007: 198) remarks that the name the *Anglo-Boer War*, proved difficult to dislodge in the public mind. Most scholars, though, preferred the term 'South African War' to indicte that all groupings in the country were affected. Not all authors regard the name as important, as indicated by Nasson (2000: 149, 185; cf. also Nasson 2002: 813-814): "The Anglo-Boer War, or Boer War or South African War of 1899-1902 (readers may take their pick) commenced just over a century ago ... The war was also a peculiar one for dominant white society, involving the disagreeable spectatcle of 'white on white' violence in the midst of a curious black majority", hence the Anglo-Boer War.

2 In 1795, the region was under British rule for a short period. From 1803-1806 the Cape was again under Dutch rule, then known as the Batavian Republic (Giliomee 2003; Thompson 2006).

3 After the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838 – a combat between the *Voortrekkers* and the Zulu tribe – the *Voortrekkers,* who won the battle, declared the Republic of *Natalia* in 1839. However, in 1943 the British recolonized this Republic (Giliomee 2003).

4 Halbwachs' landmark work on social memory is *Social frameworks of memory,* published in 1925 as well as a collection of posthumously published fragments, *The collective memory*, which survived Halbwachs' internment and death at Buchenwald. The latter appeared in English in 1950 (Olick & Robbins 1998: 106; Crane 1997: 1376).

5 Lacan (1986) distinguishes between the *other* and the *Other.* The *other* refers to the colonized subjects and the *Other* to the *Grande autre,* whose view and perspective defines and determines the subject's identity. Lacan explains the difference between the *other* and the *Other* according to Jung's mirror phase: a child looking into the mirror and for the first time realizes that it is a separate and different person as its mother/father. In this case, the child is the *other* and the parent is the *Other* (Ashcroft *et al.* 1999: 170-71).

6 Some Afrikaners, in their attempt to rid themselves of this baggage, are of the opinion that the term *Afrikaner[s]* should be replaced with the term *Afrikaanse*[*s*] to include white, coloured and black Afrikaans speaking people (Welsh & Spence 2007: 295). Up to now, this proposal has not been very successful.

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