



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Department of Communication

Herero-Nama genocide as historical fiction: A New Historical analysis of *Mama Namibia*, *The Scattering*, and *The Lie of the Land*

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## **DEDICATION**

To Mr and Mrs Hango, here is to your generous hospitality -

## ABSTRACT

During its colonial rule in Namibia, Germany committed what is widely considered to be the first genocide of the twentieth century—the genocide of the Herero and Nama people. Although the said genocide took place over a hundred years ago, its profound consequences are still significant and relevant today. In the years that followed the end of German colonial rule in Namibia, there has been a noted colonial amnesia over what happened to the Herero and Nama people, and their narratives have remained on the periphery of the grand narrative of the nation. The recent publication of the three selected novels speaks to the relevance of the subject matter and creates new opportunities for engaging with this period of Namibian colonial history. This study explores the literary representation of the Herero-Nama genocide in the three selected novels in order to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses. Using the New Historical perspective, the study analyses the literary representation of the genocide, examines the reflection of contemporary discourses on land and reparation, and explores intertextuality in the three novels. The study shows that the novels enhance the understanding of history by relating it in a literary form and adding faces to the atrocities, wherein they offer a platform to revise what has been recorded and shared, thereby enhancing historiography by presenting alternative histories. Furthermore, the novels reflect contemporary discourses circulating in the culture in which the novels emerged, in particular, land and reparation discourses, wherein their engagement with these discourses has a bearing on the shape and direction of the discourses. The study recommends coalescing New Historical framework with other frameworks in future studies for a greater understanding of the novels.

**Keywords:** *Bearing witness, Genocide, Grand narrative, Herero-Nama genocide, Intertextuality, New Historicism, Representation, Holocaust*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Namibia has a long history of colonial resistance and liberation struggle for its independence. Following the scramble for Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Namibia became a German colony in 1884 and became known as German South West Africa. The German colonial rule in Namibia lasted for at least three decades before Namibia became a League of Nations mandate under the administration of South Africa following the end of World War I. Within the three decades of German colonial rule in Namibia, the world witnessed one of the horrific crimes ever committed in what is widely believed to be the first genocide of the twentieth century—the annihilation of Herero and Nama people by the Germans (Cooper, 2007; Jones, 2006; Melber, 2017, Niezen, 2018). However, various scholars note that despite the magnitude of this massacre, it has failed to feature prominently in the nation's grand narrative (Krishnamurthy, 2018; Melber, 2005b; Zuern, 2012). The consequences of colonialism in Namibia and specifically these egregious crimes against Herero and Nama people are still felt today. The continued demands for reparation by descendants of the victims of this genocide and the accompanying continued refusal by the German government to honour this obligation have characterised discourse around these historical crimes. The displacement of people from their ancestral land and its consequences still feature prominently in land discourse today. While there abounds a wealth of textual and material records on the history of German colonial rule in Namibia in general and the genocide in particular, one could hardly say the same about literary works. However, over the past few years a number of works of fiction have emerged, including the three novels selected for this study— *Mama Namibia* (2013) by Mari Serebrov, *The Scattering* (2016) by Lauri Kubuitsile and *The Lie of the Land* (2017) by Jasper Utley. The novels, all of which were written by non-Namibian authors, were published after the centenary commemoration since the beginning of the Herero-German war and amidst heightened demands for reparation for the genocide. These publications have been followed by a growing interest in genocidal studies, including UNAM Press' publication of *The Genocidal Gaze* (2018) by Elizabeth Baer as well as the publication of the first volume of *Research in African Genocide* (2018) by the Africa Institute for Culture, Peace, Dialogue and Tolerance Studies. In writing on the status of research in African genocide, Vambe (2018, p.1) observes that "African studies lag behind in theorising genocide." With specific reference to the Herero-Nama genocide, as noted by several scholars (Krishnamurthy, 2018; Melber, 2005b; Zuern, 2012), the main concern has been and continues to be its exclusion from the nation's grand narrative. This has necessitated the dire need

for the excavation of hidden histories and occluded narratives. However, with the emerging literary works on genocide, there also emerge critical concerns, such as questions regarding the authority and legitimacy of “outsider” authors (Krishnamurthy, 2018) to write on the subject, or even with “insider” authors, concerns over the trivialisation of genocidal violence as a product of Africa’s civil war (Vambe, 2018). This study, thus, seeks to seize the opportunities for academic enquiry into these new developments in African genocide, focusing on the Namibia genocide.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The German colonial rule in Namibia, and in particular Germany’s engagement in war with Herero and Nama people is a contentious period of Namibian history that is still “simmering under the surface” (Krishnamurthy, 2018)—demands for reparation intensified over the years while calls for expropriation of land and claims over ancestral land have also dominated land discourse in the country. The publication of the three novels selected for this study, and the subsequent publication of *The Genocidal Gaze*, and *Research in African Genocide* indicate the relevance of the subject matter today. Hence, at this stage, where research in African genocide is described as lagging behind, there is a need to engage emerging literature from multiple perspectives in order to build knowledge in this field. While there is a number of studies that have engaged the literary representations of African genocide from trauma and postcolonial perspectives (Krishnamurthy, 2018; O’Neill, 2012; Samuel, 2009). There is a need to explore intertextuality in the novels and other non-literary academic texts as well as to examine the novels’ potential contribution to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with history. The New Historical perspective, as one of the available perspectives, allows the researcher to take the literary works and situate them into their socio-political and cultural contexts so as to understand their representations of genocide and their contribution in intertextuality with non-literary texts.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study is to explore the literary representation of the Herero-Nama genocide in the three selected novels in order to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1 Analyse the literary representation of the genocide in the three novels.
- 2 Examine the texts for the reflection of contemporary discourses on land and reparation.
- 3 Explore intertextuality in the three novels and other non-literary academic texts about the same period from a New Historical perspective.

#### 1.4 The significance of the research

This study uses a theoretical framework (New Historicism) that brings together literary and non-literary texts. The novels selected for this study deal with an important historical era in Namibian history, yet it does not feature prominently in the nation's grand narrative (Krishnamurthy, 2018; Melber, 2005b; Zuern, 2012). Therefore, the study is significant in advancing efforts to engage with the excavation of hidden histories and give voice to occluded narratives of Namibian history, especially as it pertains to the Herero-Nama genocide. By studying the three novels, the study adds to the continuing generation of knowledge within the fields of Namibian Literature and history and how they speak to each other. By juxtaposing literary and non-literary texts on Namibian history, it is hoped that the study will stimulate interest in learning Namibian history and using literature—be it by production or consumption—to do so. In essence, therefore, the study is significant to the field of literary studies and criticism in Namibia through its contribution from a New Historical perspective.

#### 1.5 The delimitation of the research

This research was limited to three novels—*Mama Namibia* by Mari Serebrov (2013), *The Scattering* by Lauri Kubuitsile (2016) and *The Lie of the Land* by Jasper Utley (2017)— and the chosen theoretical framework, New Historicism. The three novels were chosen because of their relative similarities in terms of subject matter, themes, narrative approach, and time of publication, making them ideal for examining together. For the purpose of exploring the contribution of the three novels in intertextuality with other non-literary academic texts, the study focused on *The Genocidal Gaze* (2018) by Elizabeth R. Baer, *The Kaiser's Holocaust* (2010) by David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, as well as *Words cannot be found: German colonial rule in Namibia - An annotated reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (2003) by Jeremy Silvester, and Jan-Bart Gewald.

#### 1.6 Definition of technical terms

**Bearing witness** - An attempt to document and to make known a wrong that is bound to be concealed, denied, or forgotten

**Genocide** - An intentional destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group

**Grand narrative** - A narrative that claims to explain various events in history, gives meaning by connecting disperse events and phenomena by appealing to some kind of universal knowledge or schema

**Herero-Nama genocide** - The genocide perpetrated against Herero and Nama people by the Germans between 1904 and 1908

**Intertextuality** - The understanding that texts, whether they are literary or non-literary, exist in an ecosystem of interdependence of texts and thus lack independence of meaning, thus rejecting the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, and acknowledging the New Historical principle that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole or function as a closed system

**New Historicism** - A literary theory that combines history and literature, whereby literary criticism turns towards history and historiography turns towards literary methods

**Representation**- The rendering of non-fictional ordinary life into fictive descriptions

**Holocaust** – The killing of a very large number of people

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the undertaken study. Since the main research objective of the study is to explore the literary representation of the Herero-Nama genocide in the three selected novels in order to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses, this review focuses on two main subjects. The first main subject is historical fiction, in which both factuality and prevailing discourses in fiction are discussed. The second main subject is genocide, under which the main subtopics discussed include bearing witness, genocide representation, Rwandan genocide, and Herero-Nama genocide. The chapter concludes with a summary of the discussion.

#### **2.2 Historical fiction**

Before embarking on examining historical fiction, it is important to establish a clear understanding of what historical fiction entails. Although there are essentially varying understandings of what historical fiction is from different perspectives, the generic definition offered in Rodwell's examination of this genre is that historical fiction refers to fiction set in the past (Rodwell, 2013). Set in the past in this sense means the time and place, and in most cases characters are based on factual equivalences from the past. Historical fiction is one genre that weaves historical facts, names, and dates into a story as part of the setting to present human motives, their problems, and consequences of their actions (Lukacs, 1962). Although many kinds of works of fiction may incorporate elements of history, Shaw (1983) argues that in historical fiction (in particular the historical novel), history is foregrounded, whereby the events, characters, setting, and language are taken to be historical. However, some critics and institutions tend to define historical fiction beyond this generic understanding. For example, according to the Historical Novel Society (n.d.), for a novel to be deemed historical based on their standards, such novel must have been written at least fifty years after the events it describes or has been written by someone who was not alive at the time of such events. As such, a historical novel based on the Historical Novel Society is one that is a product of (or based on) research and imagination rather than experience. Although literary theories such as New Historicism attempt to reveal the historicity of a literary text (fiction) and the textuality (literariness) on of history (Montrose, 1986; Oppermann, n.d.), history and fiction may differ from each other in various ways. One such way is the level at which they seek the truth

and the focus of their search. According to Dalton (as cited in Rodwell, 2013), the historian focuses on the historical events whereas the fiction writer focuses on the people (characters) participating in such those events. Therefore, the primary goal of the historian is to record or describe what happened and why it happened as opposed to the creative writer whose primary goal is to try to recreate the experience of what it was like. Hence, Dalton argues that the purpose of writing and reading historical fiction is not so much to learn about history as it is to experience it. Thus, historical fiction supposed to take its reader into the past and make them experience such pastness (Rodwell, 2013; Peabody, 1989). Furthermore, some scholars, such as Guthrie (1954), believe that an insufficient amount of history is generally taught and known. Hence, good historical novels can fill up this gap and recreate people, problems, passions, conflicts and social directions for the people, in a way that would otherwise not be practicable in nonfiction treatment. Concurring with Guthrie is Givoni (2011), whose understanding of testimony as a discursive product of witnessing helps to illuminate the role of fiction in bearing witness. For Givoni, rather than being exclusive of each other, testimony and witnessing are mutually inclusive, whereby testimony, whether of attestation or artistic nature, supposed to succeed where eye-witnessing fails. Thus, the primary purpose of testimony in this intertwining of witnessing and testimony, Givoni argues, is “to index the enormity of political violence, the silencing of its victims, and their ineffable trauma by laying bare the limits of empirical representation and constative speech” (p.4). In a similar argument, Melber (2005) posits that while trauma of the genocide continues to live on among the descendants of the genocide victims, there is a typical amnesia or indifference among those who supposed to account for the crimes. Hence, the potentials that historical fiction can add to the discourse are high. Historical novel is considered an important tool in memory shaping. As Eliassen (2018) asserts, a compelling presentation of historical events based on the author’s selected memories or impressions can shape remembrance and last in collective memory in more enduring ways than scholarly histories. Therefore, although scholarly history is important, Mallon (1998) insists that there are two occasions when historical fiction may be even more important, that is “when the facts have been lost to time and when a time has been lost to the facts” (par. 4).

### **2.3 Historical fiction and factuality**

One of the questions that come to mind when engaging with historical fiction is how much fiction adheres to historical facts, and consequently whether one can understand the past through fiction. How historical facts and truths can be intermingled with creative and imaginative art to yield a work of historical fiction is an aspect that needs to be examined in order to understand the place of a historical novel in memory and remembrance shaping. The very notion of “historical facts,” however, is itself questionable, especially from the perspective of New Historicism, where history

is deemed subjective and non-linear, (Taghizadeh, 2011, p. 286). Although they seem to acknowledge the New Historicists' understanding of the nature of history as being mostly relative, Groce and Groce (2005) assert that historical accuracy is an integral defining aspect of historical fiction, and any digression from such accuracy, for example, by means of anachronism, may jeopardise the credibility of a work as a historical work. These dynamics present a challenge both in the creation and reception of historical fiction since finding answers to questions of adherence to conventional history, that is, history in categorically non-fiction sense, as well the limit to which history can be manipulated for creative enterprise may not be a simple endeavour to undertake. In light of this, the question of historical fiction's (or its writer's) accountability to historical facts presents a conundrum, particularly within New Historical framework where history instead of forming a backdrop for the foregrounding of literature (as in the old historicism), history participates on equal basis with literary texts within the socio-cultural continuum (Purdue University, n.d.). To understand the interplay between facts and fiction, it is important to view it through the distinction between truth and reality as suggested by Perroomian (2003). According to Perroomian's interpretation of literary representation of the Armenian genocide, such artistic depiction conveys "a truth about the crime of genocide that may be different from the actual reality" (2003, p. 281). Perroomian makes a distinction between truth and reality by arguing that while what is presented in a literary work might not be exactly what happened, it is nonetheless not a falsity but a truth about what happened. The responsibility of an artist, Perroomian seems to suggest, is to give a stroke of brush to the facts of the events in order to transform them into creative truths without distorting the truth about what actually happened. A similar distinction is made Mathis (2015), who distinguishes between truth and fact (which can be equated to Perroomian's reality) in terms of their treatment in fiction. Like Perroomian, Mathis concludes that fiction generates truth that is independent of fact (or in Perroomian's diction, reality). As such, according to Mathis, the responsibility of the writer is to ensure that fiction serves its purpose as a repository of meanings and resonances. The irrefutable truth depicted in fiction and poetry serves to elucidate the historical reality through digesting the unthinkable atrocity down into the realm of human understanding. Like Jan Kubas says, in his testimony in the *Blue Book*<sup>1</sup>, that "Words cannot be found to relate what happened" (Silvester & Gewald, 2003, p. 117), atrocities are usually hard to grasp (through historical accounts); hence, the contextualisation offered by artistic literature renders such events more graspable whilst generating the truth that is more authenticable than

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<sup>1</sup> The Blue Book (1918) was an official British publication of eye-witness testimonies (by observers and survivors of the Namibian genocide) on war atrocities that took place during the German colonial period in Namibia. The publication served as a prime source material presenting an early African perspective on the particular features of colonial genocide.

historical reality itself, through the stories and characters it creates (Perroomian, 2003). For this reason, Brehl (2005, p. 145) suggests that the “relevant contexts of the contemporary publications on the events of the years 1904-1908 should be sought less in the real events than in the socio-cultural knowledge, the socio-cultural and discursive framings which determine perception and representation,” which is essentially inclusive of artistic literature.

## **2.4 Historical fiction and prevailing discourses**

When discussing the definitions of historical fiction, the common characteristic that emerges is the genre’s link to the historical aspects (historical events, time, characters, languages and practices) it represents. However, all these aspects may be separated from the author’s own background, in terms of time and place. The Historical Novel Society (n.d.), for example, requires, as some of its criteria for a novel to be deemed historical, that it must have been written at least fifty years after the occurrence of the events it describes or has been written by someone who was not alive at the time of the occurrence of such events. However, both in studying historical fiction as expounded by Groce and Groce (2005) and in applying New Historical analysis to literary works as discussed by Purdue University (n.d.), there is an emphasis on examining the time and context in which the work was produced and from which the author is situated. In their guide to *Authenticating historical fiction*, Groce and Groce (2005) assert that authors are products of their socio-cultural milieu, which include their experiences, education, culture, and the times in which they live. Hence, like what Berkhofer observed, historical fiction could be influenced by the author’s background and experiences (as cited in Groce & Groce, 2005). Groce and Groce further cite Galda and Cullinan’s argument that history varies to some degree from generation to generation of historians since each generation tends reinterpret the past based on the concerns of the present circumstances. Therefore, while the chosen texts for this study may, for example, fit perfectly within the description of a historical novel by the Historical Novel Society (having been written at least a century after the events they present and written by writers who were not alive during that period), they nonetheless demonstrate a separation between context of the setting and the context of production, including that of the author. This very fact, thus, necessitates the presence in the texts of contemporary discourses circulating within the milieu of the production of these three texts, discourses such as those pertaining to recourse and reparations for the genocide as well as the discourse of restoration of ancestral land. It has been noted that in the advancement of claims of victimhood in the genocide case and hence entitlement for reparations, the absence of living witnesses has played a major role. This is to say that because there are no living witnesses to the genocide crimes of 1904-1908 on which demands for reparations are based, the Herero and Nama claimants and the advocates who have supported their cause had to rely on imaginative

assumptions in advancing their claims (Niezen, 2018). Niezen identifies two central features of the effort to introduce colonial violence into the politics of the present. First, the typical way to express and establish justice involves claimants' participation in the experience of mass violence. When such condition fails, in this case due to the lack of living witnesses to the crimes owing to the intervening period, it necessitates the shifting of emphasis of justice campaign from victim narratives of suffering "to symbolic, historical, and heritage-based representation of genocide and political abuse" (p.549). This shift, no doubt gives credence to the arguments of Perroomian (2003) and Vambe (2018) that genocidal crimes have effects that extend beyond their immediate victims to the entire human race, and thus infuse every participant in this cultural memory with legitimacy to bear witness to such crimes. Without such extension of the realm of victimhood and shifting to heritage-based representation, today, when nearly all first-hand witnesses of the Nama and Herero genocide are gone, the genocide would have no discursive relevance. Yet, because of material markers of genocide, including literary materials, a linkage across generations has been forged in a campaign that sees testimony supplanted by heritage as the central source of connection with the sympathetic public audiences (Niezen, 2018).

## **2.5 Genocide**

According to the United Nations (n.d.), the word genocide was coined in 1944 by Raphaël Lemkin, a Polish lawyer, in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin (1947) explains the etymology of the word genocide as a hybrid made up from the "Greek *genes* meaning race, nation or tribe; and the Latin *cide* meaning killing" (p. 147). Lemkin, United Nations (UN) observes, developed the term genocide primarily to characterise and describe the Nazi policies of systematic murder of Jewish people during the Holocaust, but also other similar previous instances in history. Lemkin did not only name the hitherto nameless crime (i.e., genocide), but he situated it within in a global-historical context and campaigned for intervention and remedial action (Jones, 2006; United Nations, n.d.; Harris, 2013). Two years (in 1946) after the coinage of this term, the UN General Assembly recognised genocide for the first time as a crime under international law. Two years later (in 1948), genocide was codified as an independent crime under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (United Nations, n.d.). Article II of the said convention defines genocide as an "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such" by means of one or a combination of the following acts: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, n.d.). Some of the genocide cases across the globe as

noted in Jones (2006) include the genocide of indigenous peoples in different parts of the world (in which category Jones included the Herero and Nama genocide, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, Stalin's terror, Cambodia and Khmer Rouge, Bosnia and Kosovo, and the Rwandan genocide.)

## **2.6 Bearing witness of genocide**

A few scholars have attempted to provide a comprehensive definition of bearing witness. Valent (n.d., p. 3), for example, defines witness bearing as "a means of revealing extreme traumatic situations in order either to save them through religious belief or to prevent them from continuation or repetition through social conscience and political action." Bearing witness takes different forms, all which contribute towards memorialisation. These forms include articles, books, films, museums, and memorials that attest to the horror of the traumatic event. Valent emphasises that in the context of genocide the demand to bear witness passes on to subsequent generations. Givoni (2011, p.3), on the other hand, defines bearing witness as "an attempt to document and to make known a wrong that is bound to be concealed, denied, or forgotten, so as to infuse the cause of its victims with the power of facts." This definition makes a number of assumptions: It acknowledges that an event has taken place that constitutes a wrong, in this case the wrong is genocide. However, based on historical experience or on the prevailing observations, such wrong is likely to be concealed, denied or forgotten. Hence, to give credence to the victims' cause, such event requires documenting and publicising. Indeed, many genocidal acts have been characterised by vivid memory of atrocities in the consciousness of the victims and total indifference or amnesia on the part of the perpetrators (Brice, 2006; Kössler, 2015; Krishnamurthy, 2018). Denial of the atrocities committed has also been a route that some perpetrators had taken. For example, it took the German government and parliament over a century to officially designate the mass killing of Herero and Nama people in German Southwest Africa from 1904 to 1908 as genocide, only referring to it as such in 2015 (Niezen, 2018; Von Hammerstein, 2016). Documenting and publicising genocide as bearing witness, therefore, take various modes, including historical records, testimonial records, and literary representations. All these modes attempt, as Givoni explains, to infuse the cause of victims with facts to ensure that the experience and memory of the victims is brought to the consciousness of the living generations. Using various approaches, various scholars have studied these different forms of bearing witness of different occurrences of genocide, arriving at varying conclusions. These studies shall be the main focus of the subsequent sections.

## 2.7 Authorial legitimacy in bearing witness

One of the key concerns in witness bearing is the question of authorial legitimacy of a particular person who has not experienced a traumatic event to bear witness of such event. Indeed, this concern—authority and legitimacy to write about genocide—has emerged as an issue of concern from the reviewed resources. Thus, it warrants a discussion here to understand how different scholars understood this concern. In her analysis of *Mama Namibia* and *The Scattering*, Krishnamurthy (2018) questions the ability of an “outsider” writer (who has not experienced the genocide) to fully capture the pain of the victims of the genocide, as the victims themselves would, and how such author navigates the politics of remembrance and temptations to hide unpleasant and difficult truths. What can be deduced from this concern is the inference of difference in the ability of writers to resist the temptations of self-censorship based on the position of a writer as an insider or outsider. By inference, an insider writer, unlike an outsider, is better positioned, by virtue of their having been directly affected by the events, to defy the politics of remembrance, resist self-censorship, and thus presents authentically captured experiences of the victims of the atrocities. Vambe (2018), on the other hand, has a different argument on authorial legitimacy. Vambe argues that whether or not an author is a survivor of genocide is immaterial because everyone bears witness to genocide “through cultural memory they have immortalized in the permanent archive” (p.10). Vambe’s arguments seem to propel enquiries into literature on genocide towards New Historical assumptions. For example, he cautions against uncritical privileging of testimonies of “survivors and witnesses of genocide as possessing the only ‘authentic’ narratives of genocide over what the uses of metaphor in fiction that imaginatively represent genocide might make us know” (2018, p. 5). This argument acknowledges the New Historical assumption of intertextuality between literary and non-literary texts. Vambe also questions the unproductive juxtaposing of history and fiction as though they represent the fact/fancy binary, counter-arguing such practice by citing Hayden White who held that “history is no less a form of fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation” (2018, p. 6). This argument echoes New Historical assumption of the historicity of text and textuality of history.

In his analysis of Edgar Hilsenrath’s novel *The Story of the Last Thought* (1989) based on the Armenian genocide, Perroomian (2003) argues that as an outsider (neither an Armenian nor a survivor of the Armenian genocide), Hilsenrath had a detached stand from the event he describes, yet “he succeeds in building up the inner reality of the genocide and its impact upon the victims and the victimizers” (p. 281). This observation appears to challenge the reservations of scholars such as Krishnamurthy (2018) over an outsider’s ability to fully capture the pain of the victims of the genocide. However, in this context it can be argued that being a survivor of a similar experience

(the Jewish Holocaust), Hilsenrath may not be considered an outsider (to genocide experience). Hence, Perroomian, whilst questioning the ability of someone who has not experienced the world of genocide to paint an accurate and powerful picture of mass destruction, attributes Hilsenrath's successful portrayal of the Armenian genocide to Hilsenrath's own experience as a survivor the Holocaust. The idea of ascribing authorial legitimacy to and only to those who have been there or those who themselves experienced the events may prove problematic for any attempt to represent, for example the Herero-Nama genocide, where there may be no survivors living anymore. This being the case, it is to be expected that any emerging representation of the genocide shall be second-hand narrative, for example, by descendants of the victims or any other outsider further removed from the genocide. Therefore, claiming authorial legitimacy through participation in cultural memory, as suggested by Vambe (2018), appears to be the only way to fill such vacuum. Perroomian enriches this point of view by arguing that the genocidal crime does not stop exclusively with the target group, but it permeates the entire human race. Therefore, if it affects the entire human race, such crime essentially affects both the victim and the victimiser. While the degrees to which people identify with a particular genocide vary, the outsider writer, by virtue of being part of the human race, participates in the cultural memory as understood by Vambe. It appears, hence, that an author trying to bear witness to atrocities to which he is considered an outsider faces potential rejection of his account as a legitimate representation of the events. Therefore, for such work (an account of bearing witness) to stand a chance of serious consideration as a legitimate contribution to the immortalisation of memory and remembrance, it takes an understanding of a non-victim writer as a participant in cultural memory, as a member of the human race that is wholly implicated in and affected by the act of genocide.

## **2.8 Studies on genocide literary representation**

Writing on the status of research in African genocide in the first publication of *Research in African Genocide*, Vambe (2018, p.1) observes that "African studies lag behind in theorising genocide". In recognition of the role of literary work to both complement and compete with other disciplines (such as history) in representing African realities, research on genocide in Africa finds relevance and authority to debate representations of genocide (Vambe, 2018). This section of literature review focuses of the various studies and analyses conducted on literary representation of genocide, particularly those focusing on the novel genre. Studies on the novels based on the Herero and Nama genocide take centre stage in this review. This is, however, complemented by a review of studies on literary representation of the Rwandan genocide, one of the most prominent genocides in Africa.

### 2.8.1 Rwandan genocide

The Rwandan genocide refers to the mass killings that consumed Rwanda from April to July 1994, which left at least one million people (predominantly Tutsis, but also tens of thousands of their sympathising Hutus) savagely murdered (Jones, 2006). A couple of studies analysed the literary representation of the Rwandan genocide, including theses and other scholarly publications. The theses reviewed include, a doctoral thesis by O'Neill (2012) and a Master's thesis by Samuel (2009), both whose approaches include a focus on trauma theory. O'Neill employed insights from postcolonial theory, trauma theory, and national identity to explore the role of literary representation of the Rwandan genocide "in recovering a productive sense of Rwandan identity for Western readers" (2012, p. iii). O'Neill concludes that the narratives, which were written primarily for the Western audience, contextualise the genocide, and thereby educate Western readers on the long history and complex culture of Rwanda. In their contextualisation of the genocide, the texts emphasise the impact of colonialism and neocolonialism on Rwanda. In so doing, argues O'Neill, these texts refute the pervasive narrative of framing the genocide as tribal conflict. This pervasive framing of genocide, particularly by the West, leads to the dismissal of Rwanda as just another African nation troubled by conflicts. Jones (2006, p. 234) has also noted that "foreign observers tended to view the Rwandan conflict as an expression of ancient tribal hatreds." The same concern—the trivialisation of African genocide as simply a matter of African civil wars—has also been noted by Vambe (2018). Hence, these texts undercut this Western narrative "by revealing the colonial role in the genocide, and by tracking the social and political shifts which spurred division between Rwandan citizens" (O'Neill, 2012, p. 306). Trivialisation of atrocities, however, is neither a recent concern nor is it only a concern in African genocide. In an analysis of Hollywood popular representations (filmic depictions) of the Holocaust (which may also speak to representations of the same in novels) in 1996, Doneson (1996, p. 71) reflects on whether films, such as *Holocaust*, with its commercial rendition of "the Final Solution", trivialise the atrocities or whether they serve to establish and immortalise an element of memory for the many who might still be uninformed on the subject. Doneson, however, likens and equates popular representations of genocide to memorialisation of the same through monuments and museums, both which serve to educate and touch film viewers and monument and museum visitors alike. Hence, despite the commercial aspect of popular representations, Doneson argues that such representations, because of their less intricate concepts and structure than documentaries, have more successful impact in enlightening the uninformed public and provide it with a unique memory of the events. Nevertheless, with regard to memory, Kopf (2012, pp. 67-68) questions whose memory is being considered out of the various possible memories, for example, memory of the author, victim,

perpetrator, witness, bystander. Kopf links memory and remembrance to the question of authorial legitimacy. As such, a shift is noted in the question of legitimacy, from it being a concern of the ability of the author to capture authentic experience of the victims to whose memory or remembrance an outsider writer engages. Thus, Kopf asks, "Can the outcome [of a writing project] qualify as memory or remembrance when the writing subject is an outsider to the processes, events and experiences remembered in and through her or his writing?" (p. 68).

In another study, Samuel (2009) examines representations of the Rwandan genocide in selected literary and filmic narratives. Focusing on the narrative devices used, Samuel explores the different ways in which such devices were used to enable readers and viewers to bear witness to the genocide through the devices' conveyance of trauma to the reader and viewer. The narrative devices examined include language, discourse, image, structure and perspectives in written narratives, as well as the framing of the genocide on screen in films. Samuel concludes that narrative features and devices were used to provide readers and viewers access to the trauma and thereby bear witness to the trauma of the genocide. The narratives achieve this, according to Samuel, by emphasising the human dimension of the genocide, thus forging an emotional connection between reader and character. Noting the conventional understanding of genocide through the binary of victim and perpetrator, Samuel concludes that the narratives use a multitude of different characters with humanising qualities to problematise this binary perspective typical of historiography, thereby eliciting new insights.

Unlike in the case of the Herero-Nama genocide, in the Rwandan genocide there has been an organised attempt to produce literary works as an imaginative response to the genocide and its aftermath through a project called "Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember," organised by the directors of Fest' Africa in 1998 (Dauge-Roth, 2010; Ephgrave, 2015). The project sanctioned ten African writers to interview victims of the genocide in order to produce creative works. Owing to its recentness compared to the Herero-Nama genocide, the Rwandan genocide has been marked by an emergence of varying literature bearing witness to this catastrophe, testimonies of survivors, infusing the cause of survivors with facts that forge social recognition of both personal and collective trauma that haunts genocide victims so that their loss and suffering can no longer be ignored (Dauge-Roth, 2010). Following Fest' Africa's project, those survivor testimonies were complemented with more creative representations by authors who have not directly witnessed the genocide. In the analysis of the products of "Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember" project, Dauge-Roth examines the possibilities and the limits of the literary representations of the genocide to forge a social recognition for the personal and collective trauma, which is so vividly present in the consciousness of the victims. The unprecedented visibility created by the artistic outputs of the

project functions “both as one of the major symbolic memorials to the millions who died anonymously and a site of commemoration fraught with political and judicial implications” (Dauge-Roth, 2010, p. 34). Dauge-Roth describes the environment in which witness-bearing accounts emerge as one that not only characterised by the victims’ desire to share their experience but also those who would rather silence the legacy and responsibilities ensuing from the genocide. Hence, Dauge-Roth traces authors’ various narrative strategies, which demonstrate a desire to set the plight of genocide victims into public consciousness for its political recognition. In the analysis of these narratives, Dauge-Roth highlights the presence in these written works of self-consciousness over the authors’ own legitimacy to tell the stories of a traumatic past that they themselves have not directly experienced. Since these authors by means of producing these works acknowledge giving voice to the dead and the survivors, questioning the problematic status of their own voice and its relationship to this traumatic past creates an interesting irony. To answer, then, what it means for these narratives to acknowledge some degree of inadequacy in their witness bearing, Dauge-Roth argues:

[T]he questioning of their authorial voice and the inability of their text to represent the genocide is, paradoxically, what allows these writers to testify by engaging in a virulent criticism of acts of commemoration that are, inevitably, also invitations to forget. (2010, p. 34)

Hence in light of this argument, Dauge-Roth concludes that the attempt by this literary project to testify to personal and collective traumatic experiences demonstrates a conjunction between aesthetics of dismembering and ethics of re-membling, demonstrated by the works’ self-reflexivity.

### **2.8.2 Herero and Nama genocide**

For many years, the Armenian genocide, which took place between 1915 and 1923 was considered to be the first genocide of the twentieth century (Jones, 2006). However, following the revival of interest in and research into Germany’s response to the Herero and Nama uprising during the first decade of the 20th century, it is now acknowledged that such response amounts to genocide, and thus it is now widely considered to be the first genocide of the 20th century (Cooper, 2007; Melber, 2005; Jones, 2006; Melber, 2017; Reynolds, 2008). Melber (2005) notes that the “Whitaker Report”, already in the 1980s, listed the German war against the Herero people as the first genocide of the 20th century. Following Germany’s occupation of Namibia and proclaiming it German South West Africa from 1884, a series of events took place. The colonial German policies of deception and violence dispossessed and pushed the indigenous populations into narrow portions of their

traditional land-holdings (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). The result of this was the 1904 Herero uprising led by Chief Samuel Maharero against the Germans, killing about 120 Germans (Jones, 2006; Melber, 2017). This resistance infuriated the German leadership, which responded with brutal actions that would have far-reaching consequences until today. Following his appointment as the new commander-in-chief to German South West Africa in 1904, replacing Theodor Leutwein, Lt.-Gen. Lothar von Trotha led a campaign that went after the Herero people for taking up arms against their colonial oppressors. In August 1904, the German colonial force, *Schutztruppe*, was deployed to butcher the Herero protestors at the battle of Waterberg (Nielsen, 2017). Those who survived the massacre fled to some excruciating environment of the Omaheke desert. Soon after the battle of Waterberg, von Trotha issued his notorious extermination order (Jones, 2006; Melber, 2017; Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010), in which he declared that:

Any Herero found inside the German frontier, with or without a gun or cattle, will be executed. I shall spare neither women nor children. I shall give the order to drive them away and fire on them. Such are my words to the Herero people. (Melber, 2017, p. 28-29)

Unlike the attack led by Samuel Maharero on German farmers, which spared the missionaries, women and children, von Trotha's extermination order did not spare anyone (Melber, 2017). This observation on the target of the Herero rebellion is supported by documentary evidence of the instructions of Herero chiefs on the war, which state, for example, that:

We decided that we should wage war in a humane manner and would kill only the German men who were soldiers, or who would become soldiers ... We met at secret councils and there our chiefs decided that we should spare the lives of all German women and children. The missionaries, too, were to be spared ... (Silvester & Gewald, 2003, p. 100)

The German extermination order, on the other hand, says women and children would be driven back to their people, or they would be shot. However, one wonders which people of theirs would they be driven to if the other group (men and adults) would be shot dead as well. Melber notes that many of these women and children perished in the Omaheke desert due to thirst and hunger while trying to cross into the Bechuanaland. Within the following four years, as a direct result of von Trotha's explicit and publicised extermination order as executed by the colonial military, it was estimated that about seventy-five percent of the Herero population perished (Dyck, 2014, p. 153). The total number of those who perished during this genocide is estimated to be "close to 100,000 Herero and 20,000 Nama, mainly women and children" (Shigwedha, 2016, p. 197). A number of Herero and Nama women captured during the war perished at Shark Island concentration camps, due to torture, exhaustion and starvation (Melber, 2017). Like many other atrocities, the Herero-

Nama genocide has been denied or ignored by the German government. Only on 10 July 2015, after more than a century has passed since these atrocities were committed, the German government and parliament officially referred to the said killings as tantamount to Genocide (Niezen, 2018; Von Hammerstein, 2016). Notwithstanding such acknowledgement, the German government is yet to yield to the demands for reparations to the descendants of the genocide victims.

### **2.8.2.1 Historiography of the genocide**

Despite the highly acknowledged deficiency of the Herero-Nama genocide from the grand narrative (see pages 1 & 21), there are ample historical records of that period and its events. However, questions ought to be asked as to the representativeness of such history: who wrote it and whose agenda does it advance. What is also important in this context is to look at the historiography that emanates from or reflect the voices of the victims of the genocide. Such records are to be found, for example, in the letters of the fallen leader of the Nama people, Captain Hendrik Witbooi, and other resources, though not written by members of the victimised group but do record the testimonies of the victims, such as the *Blue Book*. Such historiography could also be augmented by the legacy of oral history and tradition of both the Herero and Nama communities. However, according to the findings in the study on the songs of the Herero in Botswana by Alnaes (1989), these songs focus on praising historical victories of wealthy and successful leaders more than they describe the horrors that the Herero and other communities experienced during the war. With the already limited written tradition of the Herero and Nama communities at the time, the rarity of such element in the oral heritage of these communities leaves much of historiography of the period to be dominated by the perpetrators. In addition to the low literacy level of the indigenous people as one factor, Silvester and Gewald (2003) also note that the colonial production of documentary archives also tended to deliberately exclude indigenous accounts of events at the time. Silvester and Gewald cite the Hendrik Witbooi papers as the only archival documents to have been published that present an African perspective on the German colonial period. This demonstrate, as Orwell (1944) argued, that the recording of history is not determined by facts and evidence, but it is shaped by the result of the battlefield, where the victors get to record the history. Hence, the perspectives of the losers at the battlefield, and in this context colonised communities, are missing from the dominant historiography of the period, and not only because of the education level of such communities at the time, but also because of deliberate attempt to omit or distort such perspectives. Such deliberate attempts were demonstrated in 1926, a few years following the publication of the *Blue Book* (1918), which, in an unprecedented manner at the time, published the perspective of the victims of German colonial regime in German South West Africa (GSWA). This official British *Blue Book*, published in 1918, recorded testimonies of more than forty eye-witnesses

giving accounts (based on experiences and observations) of the events of the atrocities, now officially recognised as genocide, that took place during the German colonial period in Namibia. Although such publication favoured the perspectives of the hitherto unrecorded voices of the victims (and their sympathisers) of the German atrocities, caution is to be exercised as this project was commissioned and conducted by another colonial power, Britain, who at the time defeated Germany in World War I (WWI). This publication then is yet another affirmation of Orwell's assertion that "history is written by the winners" (1944, par. 4). The agenda that the British pushed with its publication is that of Britain's imperial interests than that of the witnesses. As Orwell notes, versions of any warring parties on the same event would lack resemblance to one another, and which of them finally gets into the history books is that which represents the perspective of the victor at the battlefield rather than that which commands factuality and evidence. In light of this observation, one would then question the authenticity of the testimonies presented in the *Blue Book*, and how free they are of the tempering of the British.

One such scholar who takes a critical look into the *Blue Book's* representation of the genocide is Nielsen (2017), who explores how British officials in London and southern Africa acted on and perceived the conflict in GSWA as the conflict went on and also in the wake of ensuing situation following WWI. Nielsen sheds light upon the colonially contentious region (southern Africa) and what necessitated the British on the eve of peace negotiations at Versailles to revisit atrocities they had been silent about for nearly a decade. In his examination, Nielsen investigates the contemporary perception of the genocide by British officials. Nielsen concludes that British officials were far more interested in retaining stability than in the well-being of Africans in the German territory at the time of the genocide. This brings into questions the purity and authenticity of voices and testimonies of the genocide victims presented in the *Blue Book*, and whether such testimonies have not been tempered with to suit the agenda of the British. This publication by the British as part of the Union of South Africa was subsequently banned from the public domain and subjected to destruction (Silvester & Gewald, 2003). Since the *Blue Book* represented a critical account of the German colonial period in GSWA, its removal from circulation was a noted "active attempt ... to ensure that the words which relate what happened from an African perspective would also no longer be found and preserved in a written form" (Silvester & Gewald, 2003, p.xiii)

It is critical to note that in direct response to the *Blue Book* (1919), Germany released a counter-publication, the *White Book*, following the fallout of the Treaty of Versailles (Silvester & Gewald, 2003). The *White Book* served to present a counter narrative that refutes claims made in the *Blue Book*, attempts to expose atrocities committed by Britain in its colonies and seeks to accuse Britain of hypocrisy in an effort to undermine the credibility of the testimonies presented in the *Blue Book*.

The counter-narrative of the Germans as symbolised by the *White Book* (and the banning of the *Blue Book*) is indicative of German's long-held penchant of denial and subversive legitimisation of the genocide. This proclivity is demonstrated by the arguments put across in the *White Book* as discussed by Silvester and Gewald (2003): rather than providing hard evidence to the contrary of what has been alleged, Germany resorted to, among other attempts, questioning testimonies because they were predominantly obtained from natives rather than whites. They also questioned why the British had not been critical of German colonialism at the time that the atrocities were, allegedly, taking place and further accusing Britain of similar atrocities in its colonies. These kinds of arguments, rather than providing evidence that atrocities never took place, question Britain's moral qualifications to speak against such atrocities. Rather than acknowledging the wrong, the *White Book* seems to justify and legitimise the atrocities by referring to similar acts by another imperialist whilst suggesting that if they were not criticised at the time such events took place, then they cannot be questioned thereafter.

After questioning the authenticity of the testimonies in the *Blue Book*, as demonstrated by the German counter-narrative or as critically analysed by Nielsen (2017), the conclusion that can be made is that there is no denying that the testimonies exposed to the world demonstrated the atrocities suffered by the people of GSWA at the hands of colonial Germany. Whilst the British undeniably may have had ulterior motives (which were of imperial interest rather than the interest of indigenous people of GSWA) to publish the *Blue Book*, Germany's attempt to deny the occurrence of the atrocities and refute the credibility of testimonies demonstrates the European colonial power play that had no interest at heart for the well-being of Africans.

#### **2.8.2.2 Genocide and the grand narrative**

A review of a number of resources on the Herero-Nama genocide reveals a consensus on the conspicuous absence of the genocide from the grand narrative. The grand narrative in this context is understood in light of Ferguson (2013), who describes it as the privileged accounts of world affairs, contemporary and historical, which serve at the heart of dominant public debate and shapes national and global policies.

To understand the place or significance of the Herero-Nama genocide within the historical national narrative of Namibia, one has to look at how different scholars have situated it across different studies. One such scholar who puts it into perspective is Niezen (2018, p.554), who identifies three historical narratives vying for the dominance of the state narrative in Namibia. These narratives are the armed struggle led by South West People's Organisation (SWAPO) (henceforth referred to as the liberation struggle narrative), the German-descendant narrative of conquest and survival in a

harsh land (henceforth referred to as the German-descendants narrative), and the narrative of survival, resilience and marginalisation of Ovaherero and Nama (henceforth referred to as anti-colonial resistance narrative). The genocide narrative forms part of the anti-colonial resistance narrative. The apparent separation of the anti-colonial resistance narrative from the liberation struggle narrative raises questions because these are in fact time-separated struggles for the same cause. Niezen describes the liberation struggle narrative as being state-sanctioned and one to which the peace and stability prevalent in Namibia today is attributed. This is evidently observable in the actions of the government, for example, bestowing veteran status to the participants in the liberation struggle and the granting of special opportunities to their children, the “struggle kids.” Hence, liberation struggle narrative serves as the privileged account of national affairs, contemporary and historical, which sits at the heart of dominant public debate and shapes national policies. Though its cause was the same as that of the liberation struggle only separated by time, the anti-colonial resistance narrative does not enjoy the same privilege as the liberation struggle; rather, it is continually marginalised and relegated to the fringes of *petit recit*, where it competes with the German-descendants narrative over the terms of an alternative to the dominant narrative (Niezen, 2018). Within the German-descendants narrative of conquest and survival, Niezen observes a secondary narrative subsumed therein, which articulates military heroism, on the one hand, and denies genocide on the other. Hence, the anti-colonial resistance narrative (i.e., the Herero-Nama genocide) not only suffers exclusion from the grand narrative due to the privileging of the liberation struggle narrative, but also due to trivialisation and denial emanating from the German-descendants narrative.

Niezen (2018), therefore, logically concludes that the standing claims based on the mass killings in GSWA made by the descendants of victims of the genocide faced two central challenges to such public recognition. One was the unavailability of immediate witnesses to the genocide due to the lengthy intervening period between the commission of the genocide and the submission of claims to collective victimhood. This absence of living survivors of the genocide means efforts to commemorate this catastrophe involves various forms of what Niezen called “speaking for the dead, through intergenerational testimony and memorialisation” (p.562). The second obstacle emanates from the favouring of the liberation struggle narrative as the dominant historical narrative of the state, which foregrounds the heroism of the liberation struggle while it backgrounds the anti-colonial resistance and remains apathetic about the Ovaherero and Nama and their claims against Germany. Of course, this was further compounded by the continued denials of the genocide by the perpetrators, which is directly linked to the state’s dismissive view of the anti-colonial resistance. Hence, Niezen argues that among the things that allowed Germany’s

resistance to acknowledge and recognise these colonial violence as genocide is Namibia's own response to the genocide, whereby the government has chosen to give preference to the liberation struggle narrative "as the central reference point of national identity," mostly to the ignorance and dismissal of the anti-colonial resistance narrative (2018, p.548).

The persistent efforts, without living witnesses, to bring distant wrongs into the present have borne fruit through framing these colonial atrocities in terms of their enduring legacy in heritage (Niezen, 2018). In addition to representations, one of the ways in which an event such as the Herero-Nama genocide can be mainstreamed into the grand narrative is through academic scholarship, by investigating, critiquing, and revisiting all resources available on this particular event. In one such attempt, von Hammerstein (2016) investigates diverse German, Herero and related African written and oral testimonies to explore various perspectives, agendas and the significance such witness accounts have to contemporary understanding of the Herero genocide. In conducting her study, von Hammerstein, like many other scholars, acknowledges the dearth of research work on the formerly silenced voices of Herero people. Similar to what Givoni (2011) posits in his definition of bearing witness, von Hammerstein also argues that the recognition and documentation of multiple perspectives on an event are necessary to its adequate remembrance and acknowledgement. Multiple accounts on an event provide a crucial resource in the preservation of varying perspectives. While in historiography much of the history is written and mediated by the victor, witness testimonies provide a rare voice of the victims. However, just as authenticity and impartiality of the historian can be questioned, von Hammerstein cautions that eyewitness accounts should be subjected to the same kind of scrutiny because such accounts are essentially subjective constructions and not necessarily accounts of objective truths. Von Hammerstein seems to suggest that testimonies and their influence are not static, but are rather determined and mediated by such factors as time, aim, and audience. Hence von Hammerstein concludes that the "diverse genres—eyewitness testimony, scholarly analysis and literary representation—bear witness at different times with different underlying aims, and address different audiences" (2016, p.280). Using ideas from Didier Fassin's and Giorgio Agamben's works, von Hammerstein shows how different hierarchical levels of witnesses provide foundation for the existence of their respective subsequent levels. These levels include the *superstes* (a witness who has lived through the event as a direct victim), *testis* (one who has not lived through the experience, but observed it), *histor* (one who testifies on the basis of what he has heard, not what he has seen), and the fourth level, known as *auctor*, denotes someone who takes an initiative and starts some activity, for example, an authority that validates the testimony by using it in the context of a public initiative (Von Hammerstein, 2016, pp. 269-70). It, therefore, appears that the *superstes'* experience

provides a foundation from which the *testis* can bear witness. Subsequently, the combination of what both the *superstes* and *testis* bring to witness bearing provides the foundation for the *histors*, which von Hammerstein identifies to include Herero descendants and international historical and literary scholars and authors. Among what *superstes* and *testis* bring to witness bearing include, as von Hammerstein observes, “representing diverse perspectives as preserved in individual and collective memory, archives and literary and historical texts” (p.280). The multiple perspectives ranging from the *superstes*’ to the *histor* inform the *auctor*’s decision or initiative as far as validating and denouncing such testimony is concerned. The success of the initiatives/actions goals (for example, official recognition, reparation, mainstreaming into the grand narrative through national commemorations) of the *auctor* (for example, political activists or members of a particular authority) is dependent more on the testimonies other than the accounts of the perpetrators. The belated official recognition of the Herero-Nama genocide by the German government is a point in case. In terms of the Herero genocide, von Hammerstein asserts that such accounts of *histores* have thus informed both the scholarly and non-scholarly audience about and enhanced its awareness of the genocide.

### **2.8.2.3 Narratives of survivors and witnesses**

When searching for literature that recorded the voices and testimonies of survivors of the genocide, two studies emerge as the main sources of crucial information. These include the British *Blue Book* of 1918 (reprinted with annotation in 2003), and Alnaes’s investigation of songs of Herero in Botswana (1989). The *Blue Book* of 1918 was a compilation (by the Union of South Africa) of testimonies by witnesses in GSWA giving evidence of atrocities committed by colonial Germany against indigenous people of GSWA, which was aimed to be used as a diplomatic tool to dispossess Germany of its colony. In her article, Alnaes (1989) attempts to present the perceptions of the Herero refugees in Botswana of their experiences during the flight from the Germans and the cross into Botswana as expressed through oral traditions. Alnaes identifies key characteristics and features that are reminiscent of their experience. She observes that the themes of both men’s and women’s songs are representative of a broad range of experiences, which include the genocide, “the flight across the desert and the fate of children who were orphaned by the war” (p. 273). These songs express praising of bravery during the war, as demonstrated by a song composed for Samuel Maharero, depicting his heroism for preventing his people from being shot and tried to rescue survivors.

Alnaes (1989) also conducted interviews with survivors, who, at the time were already old aged in their eighties and nineties, about the atrocities and escape across the desert into Botswana. Their testimonies, Alnaes observes, were imbued with a melancholic sense that portrays the hollowness

that resulted from witnessing unimaginable and most barbaric crimes. Among their testimonies, they recounted their experiences helplessly leaving behind their slaughtered people without giving them a humane burial; suffering from the thirst that propelled them across long stretches of land in search for water, only to be slaughtered while drinking from a bloody waterhole; feeling the extreme hunger that turned them into animalistic raw-meat eaters. Analysing the syntactic content of their testimonies, Alnaes notes a vivid memory of haste and urgency with a frequent recurrence of phrases that demonstrate such haste.

Alnaes, however, demonstrates a sceptical view of the survivors' testimonies. She notes that "Many informants mentioned that women were asked to leave their babies behind to die and to suckle their men," then she soon after goes on to comment that no one could refer to an actual incident (1989, p. 275). Thus, Alnaes, seem to caution that these were recounting and recollecting of past event some of which, though claimed, could not be substantiated. That is to say, survivor testimonies are not hard facts, but could also be questioned. Furthermore, although this community's songs contained elements of the genocide, Alnaes's findings show that genocide was perhaps not the dominant theme or characteristic feature. Rather, these songs were dominantly characterised by praising wealthy and successful leaders (not necessarily connected with the genocide events). An oral heritage that describes the horrors that the indigenous communities experienced during the war can, it seems, can rarely be found.

#### **2.8.2.4 Literary representation of the Herero-Nama genocide**

While there is a recent eruption of literary representation of the genocide in the form of novels in Namibia, these are not the first of their kind. A number of literary works have been published in the past, particularly in Germany. It is important, therefore, to revisit these works and understand their representation as analysed by various scholars. It is tempting to assume that these earlier works provide fodder for contemporary publications, but the accuracy of such assumptions can only be determined through a critical review of studies conducted on such works. Within the collection of literary works on the Herero-Nama genocide, a number of novels stand out: these are *Peter Moor's Journey to South West Africa* (1906, translated into English in 1908) by Gustav Frenssen, and *Morenga* (1978) by Uwe Timm, *Die schweigenden Feuer* (translates to *The Silent Fire*) (1994) by Giseler W. Hoffman—the only Namibian, though of German descent, author among the four novelists—and *Herero* (2003) by Gerhard Seyfrieds. The forthcoming discussion focuses on reviewing studies on and analyses of these novels with a critical interest in what they represented, how they were studied, and what findings were arrived at, whilst establishing departure points for studying the more recent publications. Among the studies and analyses to be covered during this review, the main ones include Brehl (2005), who, in a chapter on "Strategies of exclusion: The

genocide of the Herero in German colonial discourse”, analyses both Frenssen’s and Timm’s novels. In tracing the evolution of the imperial gaze into the genocidal gaze, Baer (2018) also studies the same novels as Brehl. In *The Genocidal Gaze* (2018), Baer attempts to establish linkage between Herero genocide and the Holocaust (the Jewish Holocaust). *The Genocidal Gaze* strives to demonstrate these deadly linkages between imperialism and genocide, between the genocide of the Herero and Nama people and that of the Jewish people, and between German colonialism in Africa and that in Eastern Europe during the Third Reich. The approach it takes involves undertaking a careful reading of colonial texts and texts written in the post-Holocaust era, with an eye on the depiction of the ideas of race branding or racial hierarchies, which Baer believes gives rise to the genocidal gaze. Baer defines the concept of genocidal gaze to mean “the attitude of German imperialists toward the indigenous people of German Southwest Africa that is then perpetuated by the Nazis” (p. 6). Described by Baer as an offshoot of the imperial gaze, the genocidal gaze involves the colonialist attitude to privilege the coloniser and denigrate the colonised. The continuity and evolution of the former into the latter gaze is thus understood as such that while the imperial gaze aims to control or enslave the colonised, the genocidal gaze takes it to the extreme of desiring not just their control but their total extermination. As it will be discussed further in the following subsection, both Baer (2018) and Brehl (2005) reveal how the likes of Frenssen tried to legitimise the genocide in his novel framing it as a moral and divine obligation of the Germans to purge the land off those who are incapable. The genocidal gaze cast the indigenous people in the position of being subhuman and expendable, a perspective that in turn is used to legitimise the genocide. Thus, Baer concludes, the use of this trope both explains and demonstrates the continuity between imperialism and genocide, between the genocide of the Herero and Nama and that of the victims of the Holocaust. Another source that will be reviewed under this section is Reynolds (2008), who undertakes a comparative analysis of the three novels with the exception of Frenssen’s.

### ***Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa***

Described by The Advocate of Peace (1908, p.248) as “a scathing arraignment of the iniquity and loathsomeness of war”, *Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa* (hereafter referred to as *PMJSWA*) recounts a journey of a young German conscript (Peter Moor), who volunteered with others to journey to South West Africa to help quell an uprising by the natives against the German occupation. In this novel Frenssen (1908) uses a fictionalised memoir of Peter Moor to present (bear witness to) the adventures and atrocities in GSWA during the German-Herero war. Like the recent emergence of substantial representations of the genocide, a number of publications on the same subject had been noted in the past, which include *PMJSWA*, *Morenga* and others. Brehl (2005) notes that many of these earlier publications were written by authors who belonged to the

colonial background as officers of the colonial army, farmers and employee settlers. However, Brehl further observes that the manner in which such publications were interpreted, as “apologetic propaganda ... leads to a misleading delimitation of the legitimising constructions from the discourse generally accessible in a society” (p.144). Brehl, thus, argues that the texts, rather than portraying facts, contribute to the construction of reality; hence, the context of the publications on the genocide should be sought more from the socio-cultural knowledge (the socio-cultural and discursive framings out of which the literary work emerges and in which it is received) than from the real events. Therefore, in the analysis of *PMJSWA*, Brehl rather than focusing on historical events in GSWA during the German war with Herero and Nama, his main resources for establishing the framework of legitimisation for this genocide included “the stories that are told about this event, as well as the knowledge of a universal ‘history’ in which the event is classified [and] according to which it is interpreted” (p.145). Brehl notes that Frenssen developed two aspects in *PMJSWA*. Firstly, he shifts the events of the German-Herero war and its legitimisation from the colonial context to the generalised notion of cultural evolution rooted in both Eurocentric historical mythology and in the construction of a collective German identity. Secondly, Frenssen employs the point of view of a young soldier, with limited insight into military strategy and unaware of the scope of these events from the point of view of (world) politics, taking part in the campaign to suppress the natives’ uprising (Brehl, 2005). Both Baer (2018) and Brehl (2005) cite the same passage in *PMJSWA* of a conversation between the protagonist and his commanding Lieutenant as the primary carrier of the main message of the novel:

These blacks have deserved death before God and man, not because they have murdered two hundred farmers and have revolted against us, but because they have built no houses and dug no wells ... What we sang the day before yesterday in the service, ‘We come to pray before God the just,’ I understood in this way: God has let us conquer here because we are the nobler and more advanced people. That is not saying much in comparison with this black nation, but we must see to it that we become better and braver before all nations of the earth. To the nobler and more vigorous belongs the world. That is the justice of God. (Frenssen, 1908, pp. 233-34)

Brehl concludes that the meaning of the novel is condensed in this short passage as it incorporates strands of the discourse used to justify the atrocities. While the actual, concrete, contemporary historical context takes the mass killings of Herero as an act of retaliation for the murdered farmers, *PMJSWA* rejects such argument, instead presenting an argument that the killings are justified through the eyes of God and man as the appropriate punishment to the black people for failing to “contribute anything to the development of mankind and to the advance of the process of history”

(Brehl, 2005, p.149). Such argument, according to Baer (2018) is grounded in the perception towards the Herero and Nama that was fraught “with a racist hierarchy, privileging German imperialists and dehumanizing indigenous people” (p. 7). The imperialists, thus, considered Herero and Nama people as lacking civilisation, history, or meaningful religion, as such perceived them as primitive and barbaric tribes that presented an unnecessary obstacle to German settlement. The logic to be found in *PMJSWA* and other colonial texts is thus one that portrays the killing of natives as a contribution to the moral maturation of the people rather than portraying it as a moral, ethical or even a legal problem. This has led to the stylising of genocidal crime as a contribution to the necessary shaping of the future of humanity with an element of moral maturation (Brehl, 2005). Similarly, Baer points to imperial Germany’s ambition to build a “New Germany” in Africa that provides a living space (*Lebensraum*) to maintain their racial purity and doing so by utilising the land they perceived to have lain fallow. This perception thus justifies the shift from viewing the Herero and Nama people as subhuman to viewing them as expendable, who can simply be exterminated (Baer, 2018). This argument forms the basis of Baer’s work *the Genocidal Gaze*, in which she analyses *PMJSWA* in order to trace the evolution of an imperial gaze into a genocidal gaze.

Following such argument and stylisation, the perpetrators as depicted in colonial texts view their actions as carrying out a duty that is meaningful, morally justified, difficult and for which they should be praised rather than being viewed as perpetrators of criminal acts. Thus, Brehl emphasises that Frenssen’s novel legitimises the genocide events as exemplary in the development of a universal process of history by portraying the annihilation of Herero and Nama people “as an acceleration of the inevitable death of the peoples at the edge of history” that is both necessary and justified (p. 149-50). While Brehl concludes that *PMJSWA* inverts and rejects the argument that the German campaign on the Herero and Nama people was an act of retaliation and rather advances the argument that German acted out their moral and divine responsibility, Baer, on the other hand concludes that the same novel demonstrates the evolution of an imperial gaze into a genocidal gaze, valorising this deadly gaze as a tool of the German colonial military. Thus, both emphasise the novel’s apparent intent and desire to legitimise the genocidal behaviour, by depicting German as the nobler race and focusing on the challenges (such as, typhoid, dysentery, the lack of water and food, and the unforgiving terrains of GSWA) German soldiers faced in their mission to fulfill their divine mission. All this is done to the exclusion of any such empathy towards the suffering indigenous people, whose indiscriminate killing is seen as “a philanthropic act of mercy” (Brehl, 2005, p. 150).

### ***Morenga, Die schweigenden Feuer, and Herero***

While *PMJSWA* was originally published (1906) while the atrocities were still undergoing (recorded to have lasted between 1904 and 1908), *Morenga, Die schweigenden Feuer*, and *Herero* are other major novels on the same subject that were published much later post-Holocaust (1978, 1994, and 2003, respectively). The timing of these novels (which is after the Holocaust) is likely to have had an effect on the novels' approaches to genocide representation, one of which (*Morenga*) is described by Baer (2018) as a critique of the genocidal gaze, while Reynolds (2008) opines that it may be the first work of fiction about the Herero-Nama genocide "that deserves the designation 'postcolonial'" (p. 243).

In *Morenga*, Timm follows the Nama rebellion through the eyes of the German veterinarian Gottschalk up to its suppression, which ended in the killing of the eponymous Nama leader, Jacob Morenga in 1907 (Goethe Institut, 2003). It portrays imperial Germany's attempt to disempower the indigenous people by means of destroying their traditional tribal structures, strangle them economically by expropriating their land and livestock in order to force them into labour. Like its precursor *PMJSWA*, *Morenga* is also noted for its lack of an indigenous perspective, choosing instead to portray the eponymous character through German and British eyes (Goethe Institut, 2003). Other scholars, however, see this strategy as Timm's cautious decision to avoid "narrative othering" (Winterfeldt & Vale, 2011, p. 89) and a respectful gesture to refrain from imagining "that for which he has so little knowledge" (Baer, 2018, p. 67). This omission of indigenous perspective in literary works, Baer suggests, necessitates the need to reclaim authentic African voices through works of people such as Hendrik Witbooi to allow newer consideration of the Eurocentric literary representation of the genocide. The assertions by different scholars on narrative perspective challenge one to critically examine the use of indigenous protagonists in recent publications, such as *Mama Namibia* and *The Scattering*, both having been written by non-indigenous authors. While *PMJSWA* typifies a genocidal gaze, *Morenga* is said to critique the genocidal gaze. There is a noted similarity in literary representations of this genocide, especially pertaining to the eventual surrendering to being imperial accomplices even for the characters who may have been intended to take the middle ground. Comparing *Morenga* to *Herero* by Seyfried—which is also noted as offering only "occasional point of view of Herero tribesmen" despite its title (Schürer, 2004, p. 126)—Goethe Institut notes that protagonists in both novels (veterinarian Gottschalk in *Morenga* and cartographer Ettmann in *Herero*) consider the indigenous people at a lower level of development and are attracted by the opportunity to flee an overpopulated Germany and find a living space in GSWA, where they would establish a farm and a more independent livelihood. However, over time as war wears on, they become disillusioned and begin to see the structures of

indigenous cultures shattered by imperialism. Their depiction portrayed sensitivity to civilian cruelties by the military and their scepticism toward German colonialism and racism at the beginning. Despite the two protagonists being sensitive to the cruelties of the military and becoming interested in the culture and language of the colonised people who are belittled by the majority of Germans, they eventually also degenerated into becoming accomplices and instrumental in aiding imperialism and the genocide (Goethe Institut, 2003). The critical question to be asked for such change of heart is its moral justification. Goethe seems to suggest that the justification gleaned from the two characters is the fear of insecurity that comes with their close relations with the indigenous people.

Despite the scant perspective of the victims of the events described, *Morenga* is as mentioned above still considered a critique of the violence of the genocidal gaze (Baer, 2018). Employing insights from the theory of intertextuality, Baer argues that Timm harnesses intertextuality in *Morenga* to revisit actions of imperial Germany in GSWA and critique such events and to portray the gradations of the protagonist's disillusionment with the colonialism. Hence, through innumerable citations, Timm interwove various texts to expose the reader to the power wielded by words and stories to shape reality.

At the onset of his comparative analysis of the three novels (*Morenga*, *Die Schweigenden Feuer*, and *Herero*), Reynolds (2008) questions "Why do German novels about the colonial era reproduce so many of the historical records upon which they base their fictions?" (p. 241). He then presupposes that by foregrounding such historical documentation essentially makes such narratives stories about documents. However, after a critical analysis of the novels, Reynolds arrives at the understanding that while all these works demonstrate an obvious reliance on historical records, the authors adopt approaches that use these records in a manner that is different from making them a strict source of information. Rather, historical records are employed variously as recurring motifs that drive the narratives, whereby writers use the same records to question their role in constructing a factual representation of the events. In understanding *Morenga*, Reynolds concludes that Timm offered a hitherto unprecedented critical reflection on Germany's colonial crimes in GSWA, suggesting that *Morenga* thus qualifies to be classified as part of postcolonial literature. Reynolds thus concurs with Baer (2018) who concludes that *Morenga* is a critique against the genocidal gaze, which contrasts with *PMJSWA*, which can be classified as part of colonial literature. Like Brehl (2005) and Baer (2018), Reynolds also notes the limited perspective of the indigenous people in *Morenga*. However, unlike Frenssen and Seyfried, Timm undertakes to deconstruct the written-oral dichotomy, which within the colonial discourse is used to associate the written form with Europe and orality with Africa. Timm does this by portraying white settlers'

reliance “on gossip exchanged at the general store, conversations among soldiers in the field, even contemporary song, in the absence of official printed communication; meanwhile, Africans often express themselves through the letters they write to their German adversaries” (Reynolds, 2008, p. 243). The effect of this reversal, Reynolds notes, is a disruption of the authoritative voice traditionally associated with the colonisers. Timm’s reversal of this dichotomy is not a mere fictional play with the roles only to be found in a fictional world, but his inclusion of a letter by the Nama captain, Hendrik Witbooi, to a German district representative demonstrates revisionist intent, which earns the novels its critical acclaim as a postcolonial novel. While colonial literature would normally depict the notion of irretrievable otherness based on linguistic difference that colonisers so often attribute to the colonised as being unable to comprehend European languages, such notion is debunked by the inclusion of Witbooi’s letter. Moreover, Witbooi masters German, which again undermines the Germans’ mastery over the Nama people. Furthermore, Reynolds concludes that *Morenga* demonstrates that rather than being stories about documents, these narratives help generate a history that is subject to continuous re-telling and re-evaluation. Hence, fiction provides a revisionist approach and critical counterpoint to documented history, which can serve both to complement and challenge aspects of that history.

Despite the title, *Herero* also has a limited appearance of Herero characters (Reynolds, 2008). While some sections are occasionally narrated from the perspective of Herero chiefs as they organise and strategise, the Herero perspective is predominantly presented through German characters. Reynolds observes that unlike *Morenga*, *Herero* rarely challenges colonial notions; rather, it appears to reinforce them. *Herero* emphasises mysticism of the Herero over politics by portraying Herero culture as hopelessly superstitious through reference to religious beliefs and cultural practices. Reynolds interprets such references as suggesting that the defeat of the Herero by the Germans was a result of their reliance on “ancestor-worship rather than enlightenment-driven rational knowledge or Christian belief” (2008, p. 248), an idea that reinforces colonial notions of civilisation and salvation missions. Whilst Winterfeldt and Vale (2011) note that Timm’s narrative strategy avoids othering, Reynolds notes Seyfried’s frequent othering of the Herero in his novel through frequent “interjection of their language into the narration” (p. 248). Unlike *Morenga*, which depicts African characters’ mastery of German language and the German protagonist Gottschalk’s struggle to speak Nama, *Herero* depicts examples of linguistic othering where the African characters unsuccessfully attempt to speak German. Reynolds, thus, concludes that rather than being critical of and challenge German colonial history, *Herero* reinforces colonialist tropes.

Hoffmann’s *Die schweigenden Feuer*, offers a different approach, daring, where other resist to imagine an African perspective from which to recount the genocide era. Of the four, therefore, this

is the only novel that predominantly assumes an African perspective in its recounting of events, using a Herero protagonist, Himeezembi, through whose eyes readers witness the historical events (Reynolds, 2008). By beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, this novel's tale focuses on internal African events in a manner not noted in other novels, which better contextualises the events and demonstrates Hoffmann's fidelity to Herero experience. Diverging from the traditional portrayal of history as a universal constant, *Die schweigenden Feuer* suggests that history is a creation of lived memory, subject to varying strategies of representation (Reynolds, 2008). Unlike Seyfried's othering strategies, Hoffmann gives voice to the colonised subject and renders Himeezembi's narration in eloquent German, only rarely interspersed with Herero terms, achieving to present a sophisticated picture of the Herero culture than a simplistic one (Reynolds, 2008).

Two key elements emerge from the foregoing review of analyses of novels about the Herero-Nama genocide as the main focus of the scholars' analyses. These are the ideological position of the work and the narration perspective that helps to shape it. Each novel is interpreted to either critique or valorise the German genocide on Herero and Nama people. While the colonial novel of Frenssen is understood by these scholars as portraying an intent and desire to legitimise the genocidal behaviour, by depicting German as the nobler race and focusing on the challenges faced by German soldiers, a revisionist shift is noted in Timm's novel. Timm's novel *Morenga* emerges from the scholars' critical analyses as a postcolonial critique of the colonial notions, delegitimising the genocide. The one characteristic common to all novels (with the exception of *Die schweigenden Feuer*) in their representation of the genocide is their limited perspective of the victims. Scholars, however, opine varyingly on the manifestation of this narrative point of view. For example, Winterfeldt and Vale (2011, p. 89) interpret it as a conscious strategy to avoid "narrative othering", whereas Baer (2018) interprets it as a respectful gesture to refrain from imagining what the author has little knowledge about. These interpretative justifications are advanced while at the same time praises are given to Hoffmann, who uses an indigenous perspective in his novel. What lacks in these seemingly contradictory opinions is the explanation of what possibly could have given Hoffmann confidence and audacity to offer an indigenous perspective that may not be available to other authors. The assumptions posited by the different scholars challenge one to critically examine the use of indigenous protagonists in recent publications, such as *Mama Namibia* and *The Scattering*, both having been written by a non-indigenous authors. The effect that such perspective has in these recent publications is explored in this study. As noted earlier, Reynolds (2008) began his analysis with the critical question of whether historical fiction on the genocide, which is heavily reliant on the study of documents, is simply stories about documents. While Reynolds answers this question, it would still be important to subject the more recent works to the same question as a

matter of critical analysis of their fidelity to recorded history of the events they represent and to what extent they venture away from such documents (and to what effect). This being the case, one is compelled to ask what could be made of the more recent publications, coming from what could be termed as a milieu of revisionism. Do they perpetuate the same that which *PMJSWA* is said to perpetuate, or do they turn to the previously ignored resources, such as the Witbooi's papers, that return the gaze (African gaze) as suggested in Baer (2018)? What significance does such shift or perpetuation have to understanding and engaging with this historical period?

#### **2.8.2.5 Critiques on the selected novels**

While the critiques and studies on the three novels are not yet available in a great number, the few that are there are still worth reviewing to get the perspective and understanding of the earliest critics of these books.

##### ***The Scattering and Mama Namibia***

In a searching critique, Krishnamurthy (2018) uses Trauma theory, juxtaposed with Post-colonial theory to analyse *The Scattering* and *Mama Namibia* and the treatment of trauma and resilience therein. The analysis focuses on the individual trauma as experienced by individual characters, particularly the protagonists, the collective trauma experienced by the community, as well as the role played (both as a victim of trauma and an instrument of resilience) by the topography of the geographical setting of the German-Herero war. The analysis provides insights into the role of these historical novels (and writers) in defining suppressed and occluded histories that have been relegated to the background as the latter liberation struggle superseded them as the dominant historical narrative of the nation. The exclusion of the German-Herero war from the grand narrative of the nation and the indifference on the part of the Germans have bred a desire in the consciousness of post-colonial writers to retell these stories. Thus, in her analysis, Krishnamurthy examines the mutual yearning in both books to bring to the fore lost histories and the trauma that such retelling evokes (2018). As an expression of individual trauma, Krishnamurthy observes, both narratives build stories of survival in a harsh landscape around their female protagonists, which contrasts with the effects of trauma on the Herero man, who perceived it as an emasculation of his dignity and selfhood. However, similar to what has been noted by Dauge-Roth (2010) in the literary works on Rwandan genocide, Krishnamurthy observes a demonstration of self-censorship on the part of the two writers in their failure to subject their female protagonists to "any significant, debilitating trauma" (2018, p.45). Krishnamurthy attributes this self-censorship to the fact that the writers are outsiders, far removed from the experience of the war they depict. Therefore, any attempt by an outsider to excavate occluded narratives, Krishnamurthy argues, runs the risk of

falling prey to politics of remembrance and temptations to hide unpleasant and difficult truths. Hence, she opines that there is a critical need for insiders, in this case the Herero and Nama people, to write their own stories to fully express their pain. Like other scholars, Krishnamurthy has expressed concern over authorial legitimacy of writers who have not experienced the events (as discussed in section 2.7). However, in this particular case of the Herero-Nama genocide, while expression from the victims of the genocide would have been likely the most preferable accounts of bearing witness to this event, the period that has passed since the commission of these atrocities have made it unlikely that such witness bearing can still be provided. To make use of the terms adapted by von Hammerstein (2016), it can thus be argued that the potential unavailability of *superstites* (victims) and *testes* (observers of the event) from the Herero and Nama communities makes any aspiration for literary representation of the events from such perspectives hard, if not impossible, to realise. The aspirations can thus perhaps be directed toward the descendants of the victims to tell their stories. However, such descendants, in terms of hierarchical classification of witnesses employed by von Hammerstein, fall under *histores* (those who testify on the basis of what they have heard, not what they have experienced or seen). Authors of the two novels, however, also fall under this category, which—it could be argued—makes their representation no less legitimate than that of the descendants of the victims. Having argued thus, the scepticism over authorial legitimacy and ability to convey the full pain of the victims by any writer who has not experienced an event seems to be an inevitable observation when the texts are approached from a Trauma theoretical perspective. Therefore, since these texts come from a socio-political context that is characterised by demands for recognition and restitution on the one hand and denial and refusal on the other, it would perhaps be more productive to approach them from a perspective that will attempt to locate its place and establish its significance not only within the socio-political context of their setting but also of their production and reception. Such approach should also be able to relate the narratives' significance to the *auctores* (that is, people or entities that take initiatives or start some activity, for example, an authority that validates the testimony by using it in the context of a public initiative).

### ***The Lie of the Land***

Despite the imaginative nature of historical fiction, its portrayal of historical events can still provoke emotional reactions to those affected. In her review of *The Lie of the Land* (TLOTL), Nekomba (2017, par. 4) expresses a discomfort with recounting of past experiences of atrocious nature, “especially when the fictional characters are calling your people ‘savages’ and ‘heathens’ – and as much as you want to be on the protagonist’s side, he sadly allows this way of thinking at first.” It appears, then, in this review of the novel that it is not only the historical authenticity and accuracy that matter

most to the people but also what image the narrative conjures up in a reader's mind. While the author may have attempted to use the language and words that would have been used during the time depicted, which is an attempt at authentic representation, such language evokes emotions in the reader as though the words were being uttered in reality.

In an article on the same book, Krishnamurthy (unpublished) uses "witness bearing" and adopts the concept of "othering" from Post-colonial theory and Feminist criticism to examine *TLOTL* with the aim of revealing the inherent ambivalence in the novel. Krishnamurthy traces the transformation of the narrator, Samuel, from being a neutral observant working undercover for the British Intelligence and witnessing as the violent events take place around him to deliberately stepping in and taking sides as he rescues a Nama girl, Leah, from the Germans. The analysis explains how the narrator's journey and his newly found mission of restoring Leah to her family in Kuiseb exposes the brutality of the German regime in South West Africa. However, despite this essentially primary narrative of the novel, Krishnamurthy suggests re-reading the same narrative against the grain, in other words, by applying a contrapuntal reading to it. A contrapuntal reading or analysis, according to Said (1993), entails a simultaneous interpretation of a text's different perspectives and to understand how the text interacts with itself as well as with its various contexts. A contrapuntal reading of a text such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), for example, involves simultaneously reading it from perspectives of both the coloniser and the colonised, as has been demonstrated by Achebe's *An image of Africa: racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (1977) and Said's *Two Visions in Heart of Darkness* (1993b). Hence, by looking contrapuntally at the journey of Samuel, Krishnamurthy suggests, one discovers that despite Samuel's desire to help Leah, he at the same time subconsciously colludes with the colonial forces as shown in the use of his language. By way of contrasting, Krishnamurthy proceeds to conclude that while the narrator's journey reveals the brutality of the German colonial forces, through Leah, "the novel engages with the representation of trauma in the individual and the community" (p. 6).

## **2.9 Research gap**

The recent publication of historical novels based on the Herero-Nama genocide has added new material to the body of Namibian literature and Namibian history, specifically on the Namibian genocide. These new additions and the fresh opportunities and discursive dynamics that they bring to the fields of Namibian Literature and history have not yet been thoroughly researched. A number of studies on the literary representations of genocide, such as those reviewed in this study, including the critiques on the selected novels, focused on postcolonial and trauma theories. However, these newly emerged novels have not been thoroughly investigated, thus creating a

research gap in this academic area and an opportunity to respond to calls for research in African genocide. This study has, accordingly, sought to contribute to the filling of such research gap by using the New Historical perspective.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a review of literature related to the undertaken study. Two main subjects, namely, historical fiction and genocide, formed the basis of this literature review. Within the sections of the subject of historical fiction, historical fiction was defined and described to form an understanding of what it entails since the novels selected for the study fall under this category. The general importance of historical fiction in complementing history was noted. It was noted that on occasions, historical fiction may be even more important, for example, “when the facts have been lost to time, and when time has been lost to the facts” (Mallon, 1998 par. 4). Two key features of historical fiction were discussed. These were how historical fiction relates to facts and how it relates to contemporary discourses. With regard to the former, it was established that a distinction is made between truth and reality, which is to say while fiction may not be the reality, it also does not equal falsity. The responsibility rests with the writer to transform facts of an event into creative truths without distorting the truth about what actually happened.

In the second section of this chapter, the concept of genocide was defined based on the definition adopted by the United Nations. Under this subject, several subtopics were covered, including the concept of witness bearing and legitimacy of witness bearing. Then primary focus was dedicated to the review of the studies conducted on the literary representation of the Rwandan genocide as well as Herero and Nama genocide. Adopting the definition of witness bearing offered by Givoni (2011), it was understood that witness bearing serves to infuse the cause of victims with facts to ensure the experience and memory of the victims is brought to the consciousness of the living generations. One of the key concerns in witness bearing noted across works of different scholars, however, is the question of authorial legitimacy of a particular person who has not experienced a traumatic event to bear witness to such event. Finally, the review focused on studies on the novels based on the Herero-Nama genocide. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A theoretical framework can be understood as a blueprint for a study to be undertaken (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Grant and Osanloo, then, describe the functionality of a theoretical framework as being to serve as a guide to the researcher, and also to provide the necessary structure and definition on how the researcher approaches the research philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically. A theoretical framework relies on a formal theory, which is constructed by using an already established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships. Hence, a theoretical framework consists of the selected theory that guides the researcher's thinking in terms of how to understand and conduct the study based the concepts and definitions from that particular theory. This study used New Historicism as its theoretical framework. This theoretical framework was used to formulate the research objectives as presented in chapter one and was further used to guide the textual analysis approach used in analysing the three novels. This chapter, therefore, presents the historical background of New Historicism as a literary theory, its major scholars as well as its key assumptions. Since New Historicism provides the theoretical framework through which this study was conducted, this chapter also outlines how New Historicism is applied in this research.

#### **3.2 Historical background of New Historicism**

New Historicism, also known as Cultural Poetics, is one of the theoretical approaches found under the umbrella field of "cultural studies", which houses other theoretical approaches such as postcolonialism and American multiculturalism (Dobie, 2002). These approaches, Dobie observes, are all concerned with the social and cultural forces that create or threaten a community. New Historicism can be best understood in its stark contrast with Formalism and New Criticism, which insist on a close reading of a text and disregarding of anything outside the text (such as biographical or contextual information). New Historicism therefore emerged as an ethical reaction against textual isolation in literary studies based on the understanding of the reciprocal relationship between history and literature (discourse) (Fry, 2009). Fry notes that this relationship entails that history dictates what literature (discourse) talks about during a certain epoch or historical period. Literature is therefore understood to possess a certain agency to circulate power and discursive effects that affect history. Pecora (1989) describes New Historicism as representing an effort to establish a methodology in literary studies that could avoid the tendency of both Formalist and

Marxist critics to reduce the aesthetic object to a representation of “a mirror or expression of a timeless human nature,” and “an ideological mediation of changing, but historically determined, social conflicts,” respectively (p. 243).

New Historicism, therefore came about as a result of its proponents’ reaction against earlier theorists who detached and isolated works of literature from their historical context in order to emphasise a close reading that exclusively concentrates on the words on the page (Delahoyde, n.d.). Contrary to Formalist beliefs, therefore, New Historicists challenge the notion that literary works independently transcend their time, positing rather that literary works are always socially and politically implicated within their historical context. New Historicism is a literary theory that emphasises an interpretation of literature based on the analysis of cultural, historical, social, political, economic and moral interaction of the periods in which the literary work emerges (Balkaya, 2014). The focus of a New Historical approach, notes Delahoyde, is geared toward the understanding of the political function of literature within the concept of power, and the complex means by which cultures produce and reproduce themselves. New Historicism is based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the historical context in which the text was written and the historical context in which the text is read or interpreted. This consideration of the socio-political and cultural contexts of the two periods is particularly important in the study of historical fiction, where the production and reception of a literary work is immensely separated from the events that the work describes or represents. Hence this theoretical approach examines both the place and time setting within the story as well as the time period in which the story was written (Delahoyde, n.d.). As such, Delahoyde argues that having some sense of the time and place in which the characters lived (that is, the understanding of the real world time and place setting within the story) aids in the understanding and interpretation of the characters’ lives. Similarly, understanding the cultural norms and events that prevailed during the writing of such work helps in discerning the purpose of the author with the work and how such work was shaped by such events. Kar (1995, p. 75) calls New Historicism a “conflation of history and literature,” whereby literary criticism turns towards history and historiography turns towards literary methods. New Historicists drew their inspiration from the works Michel Foucault and poststructuralists, who emphasised “that ‘history’ itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history” (Habib, 2005, p. 761).

Stephen Greenblatt, an American critic, coined the term “new historicism,” and his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (1980) is usually considered as the beginning of New Historicism (Barry, 2009). Greenblatt first used the term “the new historicism” in his introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982), a collection of essays

which, by this designation portrayed a new strategy to literary studies (Marquez, n.d. & Greenblatt, 2005). Greenblatt argues that prior historicism was monological with a main goal of detecting a singular political vision held by a population or its literate class. New Historicism thus breaks both from this method of historical interpretation and from earlier formalist criticism. Greenblatt and other New Historicists focused their studies on works of English Renaissance writers, such as William Shakespeare, as well as on Romantic writers, and started sharing their works with the public through the academic journal *Representations*, which was founded in 1983 (Williams, 2003). Other leading scholars of New Historicism include, Louis Montrose, Catherine Gallagher, and Jerome McGann. The focus of New Historicist works have been, as Montrose (1989, p. 17) notes, “upon a refiguring of the socio-cultural field within which canonical Renaissance literary and dramatic works were originally produced” and resituating them in relationship to their contemporary social institutions as well as other non-discursive practices. This resituating and refiguring of the relationship between the textual and the contextual, observes Montrose, problematised and rejected some of the hitherto prevalent alternative conceptions of literature, for example, as an autonomous aesthetic object (Formalism), a collection of inert discursive records of “real events” (traditional historicism), or as a superstructural reflexion of an economic base (Marxism). Hence, the rise of New Historicism, according to Habib (2005) came as a reaction against Formalism’s view of the literary text as somehow autonomous and Marxism’s views that connected texts to the economic infrastructure. Contrary to Formalist and Marxist understandings, New Historicists see the literary text “as a kind of discourse situated within a complex body of cultural discourses—religious, political, economic, aesthetic—which both shaped it and, in their turn, were shaped by it” (Habib, 2005, p. 761). New historicism, however, also borrows from Foucault’s works the concept of power and knowledge; hence, in its interpretation of literature, New Historicism seeks to identify “an expression of or reaction to the power-structures of the surrounding society” (New World Encyclopedia contributors, 2015).

While New Historicism arose in the 1980s, its precursor historicism, from which it evolved, began toward the end of the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth century (Habib, 2005). In fact, in addition to its rise being in reaction against Formalism and Marxism, New Historicism also came about as a reaction against “old” Historicism’s presuppositions of the objectivity and non-textuality of history (Bennett & Royle, 2004). Historicism had formulated powerful historical modes of analysis that would later have a wide-ranging profound impact on historicist thinking; as a result, Habib observes, many literary historians insisted on viewing literary texts as fundamentally informed by their historical milieu (2005). Although New Historicism purports to be different from its precursor (“traditional” or “old” historicism) by virtue of its

supposed “new” approach to historicism, Habib notes that much of what New Historicism espouses “is not radically new, but represents a return to certain foci of analysis as developed by previous traditions of historicism” (2005, p. 760). For example, New Historicism still follows typical features of “traditional” historicism such as the insistence that all works of art, and all literary texts cannot be analysed in isolation but must be situated within a historical perspective, and secondly, the recognition that societies and cultures separated in time have differing values and beliefs, hence the need to understand the context of the product of each society or culture (Habib, 2005). The difference in the approaches of the two versions of historicism, according to Taghizadeh (2011), lies in the fact that earlier historicists regarded history as an objective discourse whilst New Historicists view it as a subjective one as inspired by the works Foucault and Poststructuralism (Habib, 2005). From an “old” historicist perspective, a linear, unified, and “consistent worldview of any given society or historical situation can be formulated,” but for New Historicists, history is subjective, non-linear, and has no definite goal in its movement (Taghizadeh, 2011, p. 286). Because of its subjective approach to history, New Historicism’s models of investigations take into account the time and place of the phenomenon investigated. New Historicism, therefore, considers a discourse that is to be found within a literary text as interconnected to all other kinds of discourses such as that of history and culture, making the socio-cultural and historical context surrounding the work important in its understanding. Generally, therefore, a New Historical study of fiction pays close attention to the text for showing the reflection of social rules and standards in it. Or as Taghizadeh (2011) summarises it, a New Historicist approach to a literary work “searches for how the text reflects a certain historical situation; that is, how a certain series of past happenings is narrated in language situations and how the reader reconstructs them in the act of reading” (p. 286). In New Historicism, literary texts and contemporary non-literary texts (also known as co-texts) are taken up together. Thus, New Historicism entails a parallel reading of literary texts and non-literary texts of the same period (Barry, 2009). Barry also notes that New Historicists explore “issues of state power and how it is maintained, patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonisation with its accompanying mindset” as they are portrayed in both the literary text and co-text (p. 173). In other words, this theoretical framework underscores the historicity of text and the textuality of history (Montrose, 1986). By taking a parallel reading of a literary work with its co-texts, New Historicism seeks to reconnect a literary text with the time period in which it was produced and identify it with the socio-political movements of the time (Purdue University, n.d.). Hence, New Historicism assumes every literary work to be a product of the historical context in which it was created.

### 3.3 Methodology and key assumptions of New Historicism

According to Bressler (2011), New Historicism holds that texts constitute one of the elements that help shape a culture, and hence they are social documents that both reflect and also respond to their historical situation. This historical situation, Bressler asserts, is characterised by a complex network of usually competing discourses that helped fashion it and to which the text is a response. Such a text then “becomes a battleground of competing ideas among the author, society, customs, institutions, and social practices that are eventually negotiated by the author and the reader and influenced by each negotiator’s episteme” (p. 191). Hence, by removing history from the background and situating it side by side with the text (literary work) in the interpretative process and examine the intricacies of the discourses in both the text and history, it helps to successfully negotiate the meaning of the text. New Historicism assumes that meaning evolves from the interactions of variously interwoven social discourses, essentially destabilising the discursive hierarchy (the foregrounding of literary text and backgrounding of history) observed by alternative approaches (Bressler, 2011). As such, in a New Historical approach all discourses become necessary and should form part of the process of textual analysis.

One of the theories that influenced New Historicism is Marxism. Based on Marxist critic Georg Lukács’ reflectionism theory, a text reflects the society that has produced it, and an analysis of its characters and their relationships reveals class conflict, the socioeconomic system, or the politics of the time and place (Dobie, 2012). Marxism assumes that society is characterised by class conflict, whereby the dominant class seeks to control the views of the people through different means, one of which is the arts. Louis Althusser, another Marxist critic, asserts that “the working class is manipulated to accept the ideology of the dominant class, a process he called interpellation” (Dobie, 2012, p. 86). One way in which such manipulation is effected is through the use of art to reinforce capitalistic ideology. Borrowing from Marxism, New Historicism recognises that power deeply affects literature as it does history, selectively ratifying some discourses and narratives whilst unjustly stifling, repressing and subordinating others (Bressler, 2011). In its analysis and interpretation of literature, New Historicism therefore attempts to salvage and account for these stifled and hidden narratives. Bressler notes that when unearthed, “these seemingly trivial stories and mini narratives have a surprisingly significant impact, impeding the creation of an overarching historical narrative” (p. 192). A New Historical analysis focuses on single moments in history that may have influenced a literary text, as depicted by the themes within the text. It also tries to understand how such moments in history may have been influenced by a literary text as demonstrated by the texts potential to shape the reader’s understanding of the historical moment.

Hence, Bressler notes, this new approach ensured that history has become an essential element in the interpretative process unlike previously when it simply represented background information.

New Historicism makes several key assumptions that are commonly contrasted with earlier historicism as well as Formalism. In their reaction against earlier historicism, New Historicists rejected the belief that “anyone can ever know exactly what happened at a given time and place” (Dobie, 2002, p. 164). Rather, what can be perceived, argue New Historicists, “is what has been handed down in artefacts and stories,” which essentially makes history a compromised or polluted narrative, as opposed to accurate account of what precisely happened. Hence, history should therefore be considered as a subjective account of past events told usually from the perspective of the person of power whilst excluding the perspective of those who are powerless. Dobie, also notes that history is not only subjectively recorded but also subjectively read or interpreted since one’s interpretation is shaped by their own values, experiences and knowledge. However, although “history is written by the winner,” as Orwell (1944) once noted, Dobie notes that losers or those who lack political power to have their stories and voices shared in the mainstream publication (official publication) alongside the winners’, turn to alternative avenues where they can circulate their stories as separate discourses (that is, alternative ways of seeing and talking about the world). Parvini (2018) also concurs with Dobie, noting that New Historicist thinking assumes that it is possible to produce narratives that explore what has been left out or barely glimpsed upon in dominant historical accounts. Such narratives, which may act as counter-histories can be produced through engagement with anecdotes that depict the lived experiences of people. Because of this, New Historicism emphasises the necessity of aggregating all the stories and recognising all the voices. Based on these dynamics, history, instead of representing an empirically verifiable series of events, becomes a text (the textuality of history). Thus, New Historicism proceeds beyond the historian question of what exactly happened. A New Historicist looks at what the interpretation of events says about the interpreter, and how what happened points to social conflicts. With this trajectory, New Historicism further assumes that literature acts as a form of historical interpretation, and the author, an interpreter of a historical period. With the revised assumptions, Dobie notes that the questions to the reader are not anymore whether the characters in a literary work were based on real people or whether the events recounted in the text recreate experiences from the author’s life, but rather how the text reveals and comments on the disparate discourses of the culture it depicts.

By reacting against New Criticism and bringing external elements (context) back to the interpretation of literature, New Historicism thus offers a number of key assumptions. New Historicist scholars Veenser (1989, p. xi) and Gina Hens-Piazza (as cited in Martens, 2016, pp. 9-10)

have attempted to summarise some of these key assumptions in their respective works. Their key assumptions can be conflated and presented as follows:

- All expressive acts are embedded in a network of material practices. Literature is integrally tied to other material realities that make up a social context. Hence, the socio-political context of a literary work is critical to its interpretation and understanding.
- Language is context and history is textual; the realisation of language in a literary text constitutes historicity. Therefore, literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of the current times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. As such, every act of unmasking, critiquing, and opposing uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes.
- Literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably, and neither commands power over the other; literature is thus de-centered. History and text influence each other; hence, studying history reveals more about the text and vice-versa. Thus, literature should be viewed on par with other types of texts, and the privileging of literature or its composition over and above other social practices is rejected.
- Truth is provisional and human nature, a myth. Thus, New Historicism rejects the notion of history being objective and unified because no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths, nor expresses inalterable human nature.

### **3.4 New Historicism and intertextuality**

In its assumptions, New Historicism acknowledges and explores the significance of intertextuality in the interpretation of literature. Intertextuality entails the understanding that texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, exist in an ecosystem of interdependence of texts and thus lack independence of meaning (Allen, 2011). Works are in this way regarded as products of other works; in other words, texts are created by other texts, whose meaning may transcend or become independent of the authors' intentions (Haberer, 2007). While reading any text, the reader thus enters into a network of textual relations that have generated that specific text. Any attempt to interpret or discover a meaning (or meanings) of a text that assumes intertextuality as a characteristic of texts should involve tracing such textual relations. Based on its assumptions that literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably and that all expressive acts are embedded in a network of material practices, indeed, New Historicism is one approach that assumes intertextuality as a characteristic of texts. Hence, its practice (application) should involve tracing

textual relations. Reading, therefore, essentially “becomes a process of moving between texts” (Allen, 2011, p. 1). Textual relations are forged through both explicit reference to other texts and implicit relations through association (whether thematic or contextual). Allen, therefore, argues that meaning finds presence between a text and all the other texts to which it both refers and relates, an understanding that necessitates a shift away from the understanding of a text as autonomous to understanding it as a part of a network of textual relations. Through this understanding, asserts Allen, a literary work becomes not just a text but an *intertext*. To say a text is intertextual is therefore to dislocate its meaning from within itself and locate it between texts. Baer (2018) argues that intertextuality challenges the viability of originality and stability in literary texts, rather urging the reader to trace references, allusions and relations to other texts. Based on this, Baer sees intertextuality not just as a defining feature of texts but also as a critiquing strategy that can be used in the “revision and appropriation of older texts to suit new situations and meanings,” enabling the reader to see ways in which the author morphed earlier texts and creating new ones (p.116). In her analysis of Uwe Timm’s *Morenga*, Baer observes that Timm uses intertextuality—manifested by, among others, references to books his characters read—“as one of several vehicles for conveying his critique of the violence of the genocidal gaze as well as for revealing the gradations of Gottschalk’s disillusionment with the colonial project” (p. 82).

### **3.5 Application of New Historicism**

As a theoretical framework for this study, New Historicism was used to guide the methodology and textual analysis in this research. Hence, New Historicism was used to formulate the research objectives and subsequently to guide the textual analysis approach. From the core tenets of New Historicism, three main focus areas were used on which the three research objectives were based. These focus areas are: 1. the representation of events, 2. reflection and co-influence of contemporary discourses, and 3. intertextuality of literary and non-literary texts. With these three focus areas, and following the formulated research objectives, a textual analysis strategy that guided the analysis and discussion in this study was developed. Accordingly, application of New Historicism in this study, therefore, guided the analysis of the texts to focus on (a) the representation of the genocide events, (b) the reflection of contemporary discourses circulating in the culture from which the selected novels emerged, and (c) the contribution of the novels in intertextuality with other non-literary texts.

In order to unlock the meaning in a text using a New Historical approach, the researcher needed to investigate the life of the author, the social rules and prescriptions expressed in the text, and all reflections of a historical situation (Bressler, 2011). Bressler further argues that the use of

anecdotes (original, well preserved messages, unaltered by ideologies of publishers and other institutions of preservation, for example, personal diaries, letters) reveal counter narratives and alternative histories of an incident presented by voices that usually go unheard in a monolithic interpretation of history. Such anecdotes in the matter of the Herero and Nama genocide can be found in the form of letters of former Herero and Nama chiefs and other various indigenous witness accounts as presented in Silvester and Gewald (2003). Bressler (2011) and Dobie (2002) provide guidelines for the application of New Historicism to a literary text, which have been followed in this study. The focus of a New Historicist approach is to discover and demonstrate how a text reveals and comments on the various discourses of the culture it depicts (Dobie, 2002). In order to accomplish the objectives of the study as framed within the three main areas of focus mentioned above, there are key elements crucial to any New Historical analysis suggested by Bressler and Dobie. They include the analysis of the author's biography, the external world of the text (the socio-cultural context in which the book was written), and the internal world of the text (that is, the socio-cultural environment depicted in the story or in which the story is set). The results of examining these elements illuminate the three main focus areas, which are framed to accomplish the objectives of the study. New Historicist methods, according to Elliott and Stokes (2002, p. 9), "use the text to investigate the wider social order, whether in a text's capitulation to dominant ideology or in its engagement of the conditions of its own production." In all these topics, thus, close attention is paid to issues of power structure in place, questioning inequalities and pointing out social forces that build community and that destroy it. In accordance with the analytical elements stipulated in both Bressler (2011) and Dobie (2002), this study in its analysis of the three novels thus pursued the following lines of enquiry, which elucidate the research objectives.

### **3.5.1 The author's biography**

According to Dobie (2002), in applying a New Historical approach to text interpretation, the author's biography becomes important as it provides insights into the writer's concerns about personal experiences and concerns about society in general, affecting how he represents people and times in the text. This study, therefore, analysed the available information pertaining to the three authors' lives and times. These included their nationalities, their connection to Namibia, their lines of work, and their previous writings, preceding the books selected for this study. In asking these questions about each author, the researcher attempted to establish the public role that the writer assumed, the issues that were important to the writer, the general political stance of the writer, the social class of the writer (or that of her family), the significant people in the writer's life, the texts that affected the writer's thinking, as well as the formative experiences that shaped the writer's life. Establishing some of these aspects about the author helps to elucidate the meanings

in the text by linking the author's life experiences, background and perspective to the representation of the events in the text. This biographical information help to explain why the author presents the position that she presents or comments on the events the way she does.

### **3.5.2 The world of the author**

Since the selected books are historical novels, there is a clear distinction between the authors' world and the world in their texts. From a New Historicist's perspective, it is important that both worlds are analysed in order to understand the representation of the events in the text. This section focused on the world in which authors lived and wrote, that is, the external world of the text. This is based on a New Historicism assumption that a work is marked by the time and place in which it was produced (Dobie, 2002). The line between the author's biography and the world of the author is a blurry one; however, while the author's biography comprises mostly of events that have direct connection with the author's life, the world of the author represents the environment in which the author lived. Both lines of enquiry, however, speak to situations that existed during the author's lifetime—whether directly or indirectly connected to such author—that can be analysed for their possible agency in the realisation of a literary work. Both the biography of the author and the world of the author, therefore, correspond with the research objective that seeks to examine the reflection of contemporary discourses circulating in the culture from which the selected novels emerged. In analysing the world of the author, the researcher attempted to frame and contextualise the texts within the socio-political and cultural forces that were prevailing when the texts were produced, focusing on issues and tastes of the day as forces that impinge on what the texts mean. The analysis of the author's world involves understanding the discursive practices surrounding the issues represented in the texts. Understanding the context, hence, aids in interpreting whether (and how) the text reinforces or challenges the dominant discourses in the socio-political environment from which it emerged. This analysis also helps reveal the complexity of the period. In the analysis, therefore, the researcher paid careful attention to voices, present and past, dominant as well as suppressed. The examination of the world of the author involved identify major events or discourses and controversies of the time, particularly those that pertain to the central subject of the three books—the Herero-Nama genocide. The analysis, as such, examined what groups represented the power bases in these discourses and controversies, the major figures of the period and their source of power and influence, and those who resented or opposed their power and influence. With particular focus on the reflection of contemporary genocide discourses that circulated in the culture in which the novels emerged, the study searched within the texts for the reflection of the discourse of reparation for the genocide, the land discourse (ancestral land and land appropriation), as well as the Herero-Nama-German war and the national liberation

discourse. Following New Historicist's interest in examining the power structures in place, questioning inequalities, and pointing out social forces that build or destroy community, the discovery of the reflection of contemporary discourses was analysed in terms of whether (and how) the texts challenge or support (uphold) the different power structures and their sentiments thereof. In addition to examining how the world of the author influenced the text through the discovery of reflection of contemporary discourses, the understanding of how the texts challenge or support the power structures shows how the texts also shape contemporary discourses.

### **3.5.3 The world in the text**

While the two previous lines of enquiry involve the world (or environment) external to the text, this line of enquiry deals with the world that is internal to the text—that is, the world within the text. The world in the text entails the time and place setting of the story, and in case of the three novels studied, this entails German South West Africa during the Herero-German war of 1904-1908. This line of enquiry speaks to the New Historicist assumption that a literary work reflects the time and place in which it was set (Bressler, 2011; Dobie, 2002). Hence, the analysis of the world in the text involved an attempt to understand the internal world of the text itself by analysing discourses that generated the narrative. To effect this, the researcher examined major events and controversies of the period represented, the resistance to and repercussions of such resistance, as well as its source. Examining such events helped to determine and understand who and what represented the power bases in such controversies the sources of power and influence. The examination further helped determine and understand who resented and opposed the power and influence of the dominant group. This line of enquiry, therefore, corresponds with the research objective on analysing the representation of the genocide events. As a methodological practice of New Historicism, the analysis of the world in the text was done with the concurrent reading and analysis of the historical records of the period to the effect that the analysis then helped to discover how history shaped and is being shaped by the text. Also critical to this line of analysis was the determination of whether (and how) the text supports or challenges the dominant discourses examined from that period and those of later periods, particularly those that prevailed in the world of the author as similarly discussed in the previous section. In analysing the depiction of the world in the text, the researcher paid particular attention to the literary representation of the genocide in the three novels, focusing on the point of view chosen for each narrative, the tone of voice employed in each narrative, the scope of the narrative (that is, the coverage of the historical epoch), and the establishment of causality leading to the genocidal war. Additionally, analysis also focused on the narration of key aspects of the genocide, including narration of battlefield actions, and experiences in concentration camps.

#### **3.5.4 Synthesis of the analyses**

While each line of enquiry provides a different perspective from which a text can be understood, their amalgamation is what forms the basis of a New Historicist analysis that enriches an understanding of a text. In the same vein, it was also essential in addressing the third research objective, which was to explore the contribution of the novels in intertextuality with other non-literary texts. Following the disparate analyses of the three areas of influence to the meaning of a text, that is, the author's biography, the world of the author and the world in the text, it was imperative that these analyses were synthesised in order to understand their contribution to the overall meaning and essence of the text. The synthesis of contributions from each line of enquiry enabled conclusions to be made on various aspects of each text's representations: the purposes of the text and its position toward the power structures it depicts; the social and ideological understandings on which the text depends; the text's role in supporting or denouncing the ideology (values, beliefs, and/practices) it depicts; the text's relation to other literary and non-literary works of the same era; the text's representation of the experience of the people who have traditionally been overlooked, marginalised or misrepresented; the ideological stance of the culture depicted by the text and that of the author. For a New Historical study, it is important to be attentive to power structures that are in place as depicted by a text and synthesise the different analyses to allow the researcher to question inequalities and point out social forces that build community and also that destroy it (Dobie, 2002). Ultimately, synthesising all these analyses in all three texts enabled the intended exploration of intertextuality in the three novels and other non-literary academic texts. This was made possible by examining critical differences between the narratives and the non-literary texts about the same events and establishing new dimensions on history and genocide that the novels offer. Such determinations informed the validation of the textuality of history and the historicity of the literary texts and the conclusions on the enhancement to the understanding of the genocide and its ramifications.

#### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed New Historicism, which provides the theoretical framework used in this study. In this chapter, therefore, the researcher provided a historical background of New Historicism as a literary theory, its assumptions and methodology. The chapter also discussed in greater details how the theoretical framework was applied to the study. New Historicism is a practice that emerged in the late twentieth century as a reaction against the then ubiquitous practice of New Criticism. While New Criticism isolated the text from any external factors, socio-cultural context and author's background, New Historicists brought back these elements to the

study of literary works, emphasising in its assumptions the role that context, and in particular historical context, plays in shaping literary works and vice-versa. Also improving on traditional historicism, New Historicism holds that history, rather than being an objective recording of unchanging facts, is subjective and textual. The methodology of New Historicism, thus, involves studying the biography of the author, the socio-cultural context from which a work emerges, and the world that the work represents or depicts. In light of these assumptions and methodology, this chapter has therefore outlined the application of this theoretical framework to the study by analysing the biography of the author, the world of the author, and the world in the text. Synthesising these analyses allowed conclusions to be made about the novels and the subject they represent. The next chapter complements this chapter by providing further details on methodological aspects of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology of this study. It spells out the methodology aspects such as the research design, research instruments, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The chapter begins by presenting the research design of the study, which is essentially the operating model that shows how the study was approached. The chapter then specifies the research instrument used and how it was used as well as the method of data analysis employed and how it was employed. The chapter concludes by shedding light on the ethical considerations of the study.

#### **4.2 Research design**

A research design provides “an operating model or blueprint for a research project” (Griffie, 2012, p. 44). It typically spells out aspects such as the method of data collection, data collection instruments and how they were used, and the means for data analysis (Heigham & Croker, 2009). This study followed a qualitative, desktop research design whereby three recent novels set in the then German South West Africa during the Herero-Nama-German war were the focus of the study. The study used no respondents and involved no fieldwork; rather, the study concentrated on a literary analysis of the three chosen texts. The three texts were selected because of their close similarities: the books, which are all novels, were all written by non-Namibian authors and they are all set in Namibia during the Herero-Nama-German war and deal with the representation of events of that period. The books, thus, could be easily studied together to provide a deeper understanding on the representation of the genocide. From the chosen texts, the representation of the genocide and its related discourses were critically examined under the theoretical framework of New Historicism. In order to build knowledge and a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, works by historians, and literary critics from different sources, including books, journals, internet and different publications were widely reviewed, acknowledged and referenced. Therefore, a qualitative approach to research, which Gass and Mackey (2005) describe as appropriate for studies based on descriptive data that do not make regular use of statistical procedures, was deemed appropriate for this study. A qualitative approach is suitable for this research since the research involves only qualitative data, that is, the analysis and description of texts.

As mentioned above, the research methods chapter also outlines the method of data collection, data collection instruments and how they were used, and the means for data analysis. These aspects will be discussed in subsequent sections.

### **4.3 Research instruments**

Griffiee (2012) defines a data collection instrument as a “means, either physical or nonphysical, by which data is produced” (p. 128). He describes data as the essence of research, and as such, an appropriate instrument for collecting data is important for producing quantitative or qualitative data to be analysed and interpreted. Data for this study was available in the form of the narratives of the three selected novels. However, to aid the extraction of the appropriate data to be analysed from these narratives, a research instrument in the form of a text analysis approach was adopted based on the research objectives and methodological assumptions of the theoretical framework. The text analysis approach entails the outline of the units of analysis as suggested by Bressler (2011) and Dobie (2002) and the focus areas of the study as informed by the research objectives.

### **4.4 Data analysis**

According to Griffiee (2012), raw data is less useful in and of itself. Hence, for it to be valuable for research purpose data needs to be analysed and interpreted. “Analysis refers to the process by which a large amount of raw data is reduced; interpretation refers to the assigning of meaning to the reduced data” (Griffiee, 2012, p. 129). In light of the qualitative research design chosen for this research, a qualitative approach to data analysis and interpretation was also employed. A qualitative approach to data analysis, specifically textual (literary) analysis was, therefore, deemed suitable for this research. Textual analysis, according to Belsey (2013, p. 160), is an essential data analysis tool to research in cultural criticism, which includes English, and “any other discipline that focuses on texts, or seeks to understand the inscription of culture in its artefacts.” A topical method of data analysis was followed in this study, which involved analysing the literary representation of the genocide, examining the reflection of contemporary discourses, and synthesising the two in order to describe the contribution of the three novels in intertextuality with other non-literary, academic texts from and about the same periods.

### **4.5 Ethical issues**

There were no ethical issues expected to arise from this research. However, the study abided by the institutional statement of academic honesty and integrity as stipulated by Namibia University of Science and Technology. An ethical clearance certificate to this effect was obtained from the institution (see the appendix).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the methodology by which the study was carried out. The research design, instrument of data collection as well as the method of data analysis were specified and described. The chapter described and explained in detail the research instrument adopted to extract relevant data from the narratives and how the instrument was used and how the data was analysed. Lastly, the chapter concluded with a look at the ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter deals with the presentation of data, its analysis and discussion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of *Mama Namibia*, *The Scattering*, and *The Lie of the Land* (Henceforth, *MN*, *TS*, and *TLOTL*, respectively) and the discussion of the findings. As indicated in chapter four, the analysis and discussion follow the principles of New Historicism. Hence, in section 5.5 of this chapter, the researcher analyses the available biographical information of the three authors in order to trace patterns of linkage to the subject matter of their respective texts. This is followed by the analysis and discussion of the external world of the text, that is, the socio-political and cultural environment in which the texts were produced and how it is reflected in the texts. Then section 5.7 presents the analysis and discussion of the internal world of the texts, that is, the world in which the narratives are set (the discourse that generates the narratives). In the last section of the chapter, the preceding analyses are synthesised in order to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses.

#### 5.2 Summary of *Mama Namibia*

*MN* portrays the conditions and experiences of the Herero people during the German colonial rule in GSWA, with primary focus on the Herero-German war of 1904. The narrative follows the life of Jahohora, a young Herero girl who, having dreamt of growing into a proud Herero woman, finds herself languishing in the Omaheke desert after she escapes the fights that left scores of Herero people dead. Jahohora is forced to endure tragic moments and adopt extreme strategies to survive the unforgiving conditions of the veldt and escape the searching eyes of the German soldiers as she searches for her lost family. The novel narrates the events that led to the annihilation of the Herero people and how the Herero nation lost its people, cattle and land as survivors of the massacre flee across the Omaheke desert into Bechuanaland. The novel also follows the life of Kov, a young Jewish doctor in the German army, offering the inner workings of the German army. Kov and Jahohora see their paths cross, whereby the former aids the latter's survival quest by offering her some provision.

#### 5.3 Summary of *The Lie of the Land*

Published by the University of Namibia Press, *TLOTL* is a historical novel set in GSWA during the war between the Germans and the Herero and Nama people, which led to the killing of thousands of

Herero and Nama people by the Germans. The narrative follows the protagonist Sam, a British secret agent sent out to GSWA under the guise of a German language researcher, who supposed to collect native languages. As a language researcher and covertly a British agent, Sam is at first portrayed as a neutral observer but eventually forced to take sides. Following the battle of Waterberg in 1904, the German General Lotha von Trotha issued his notorious extermination order aimed at wiping out the Herero population. As the war between Germany and the Herero (who have been joined by their former nemesis, the Nama people, in their fight against colonialism) rages on, Sam encounters Leah (a Nama lady) with whom he falls in love. Sam rescues Leah from being hung by the German soldiers, but following the ensuing turbulence, Sam loses Leah, who is taken to the notorious concentration camp at Shark Island. The latter part of the novel dwells on Sam's effort to rescue Leah from Shark Island.

#### **5.4 Summary of *The Scattering***

Tjipuka and Ruhapo is a young Herero couple, whose newly found family has just been blessed with its first child, Saul. Unfortunately, this young family has to face the looming war between the Herero and Germans. The couple sees its dreams and aspirations for a fulfilling and prosperous life thrown into a balance as the war tears them apart, both spatially and emotionally. The narrative follows these two characters as they battle against all odds to overcome the separation and hardship the war has brought unto them. Tjipuka sees her numerous attempts to escape to freedom curtailed and brought back to captivity and suffers in the concentration camps, where she witnesses the deaths of those close to her, including her son, Saul. Though Tjipuka finally finds freedom from physical captivity and re-unites with her husband, she realises that her husband's inner being has been severely damaged by the circumstances, and they can no longer reconnect as they had before the war.

#### **5.5 Biographical analysis of the authors**

Although no comprehensive biographies of the three authors could be found, the available information can yield important ideas to address some of the important analytical aspects about the authors when undertaking a New Historicist analysis. As outlined by Dobie (2012, p. 190), these aspects include the public role the author assumed, issues that were important to the author, her general political stance, social class the author's family belonged to, significant people in the author's life, texts that might have affected the author's thinking, as well as the formative experiences in the his life.

Although not all of the above-mentioned aspects about the authors could be established because of the limited access to their biographies, a number of issues can be noted that might have affected the three authors' thinking and fuelled their desires to write on the subject of the genocide. A look at the life of Jaspar Utleý, for example, reveals a number of significant social forces that resulted in his writing of *TLOTL*, a story of a British agent sent into GSWA to determine if Germany had plans to move into British territory, and how he encountered and fell in love with a Nama lady. According to his biographical information on African Books Collective (n.d.) and Penguin (n.d.), Utleý is a British resident who worked in Namibia from 1990 to 1995 as the first director of the British Council in the country. While working in Namibia, Utleý worked within the creative industry, publishing his earlier books such as *Ngoma and Click*, and writing and recording over 30 stories for the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (African Books Collective, n.d.). While living in Namibia, Utleý would have been exposed early post-independence discourses on the German colonial history in Namibia and issues of the genocide. The Herero community started its demand for corrective justice immediately after Namibia's independence in 1990, which culminated in a handing in of the first petition for reparation demands at the German embassy in Windhoek by members of the Herero community in 1995 during a visit of the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl (Harring, 2002). Of course, Utleý's tenure in Namibia with the British Council ended in 1995, but his interest in creative works continued as has the presence of the genocide discourse on national and international platforms, which has since transformed into different approaches, including legal effort at international level in an attempt to coerce the German government to acknowledge and honour its colonial responsibilities. With the spread of reparation case to international courts and its discussion in international media and the academia, Utleý would have been in close following with discussions, having already been acquainted with the country's history and dynamics when he lived in the country. Utleý, hence, was able to re-create that earlier time because he carried in his memory a strong sense of the history of Namibia (coupled with that of Britain where he was born), its land, its people, and its tensions. The protagonist in *TLOTL*, Sam, could be interpreted as Utleý's mouth piece, not just as a literary character, but perhaps as representative of Utleý's opinion on the subject. There are certain commonalities between Utleý and Sam, for instance, both are British, and both have interest in language; Utleý was posted to Namibia under the British Council as a language expert, and his character Sam was also posted to GSWA by the British intelligence as a linguistic researcher.

Lauri Kubuitsile is an American-born author and currently a citizen and resident of Botswana, where she immigrated in 1989 (Kubuitsile, n.d.). The connections of Botswana to the Herero and Nama genocide are quite obvious since history and literary works have established in great details how a

significant number of the Herero population fled to Botswana (Bechuanaland) during the conflicts with the German colonial regime. A significant number of Herero community lives in Botswana and forms part of the history of the two countries. As a citizen of Botswana and resident of Mahalapye, noted by Alnaes (1989) as one of the main areas where most of the Herero settled, therefore, Kubuitsile would have encountered the historical background that informs the transnational existence of the Herero communities. In 2004, the Herero communities from both Namibia and Botswana commemorated the genocide in Tsau, Botswana (Kuteeue, 2004). In one of the interviews Kubuitsile notes how she learnt about Shark Island—where one of the three infamous German concentration camps was located—through reading a novel by Jane Katjavivi (Nekomba, 2016). Having first-hand contact with the Herero in Mahalapye and reading about the horrific history that defines them clearly compelled Kubuitsile to compose an imaginative narrative on the events of this history. The narrative also serves to create a platform for Kubuitsile to speak against wars as she, for example, does through Riette, who says the following as she tends to Tjipuka's injuries:

Over and over they do it. Men fight, men make war that destroys everything, and women carry the wounds, they clean it up. They rub it away, and they go on. On and on. And yet men pound their chests and say we are the winners. What? What? What do they win? (p. 187).

Mari Serebrov is an American author, born in Illinois. Unlike with Utley and Kubuitsile, there is an abundance of first-hand information on what inspired Serebrov to write *MN*. With master's degrees in journalism and history, Serebrov would be well-equipped in historical writing, in this particular context, historical fiction. However, as could be learnt from the author's notes section in *MN* and from different interviews given by the author, the novel was borne out the author's encounter with Namibian history as related to her by a descendant of the genocide victims, Kapombo Katjivena (Haushona-Kavamba, 2013). In an interview with Haushona-Kavamba, Serebrov professed her fascination with history from an early age, which led her to direct school plays based on the American Revolution. Such experience would have shaped Serebrov's understanding of history in general and how to engage with history in literary representation in particular. It is also worth noting the intervening events that took place after Serebrov met Katjivena (1999) till the publication of the novel (2013) also had a bearing on Serebrov's conception of the novel. These events include Serebrov's work on her master's in history (2002), the return to Namibia of skulls of the genocide victims taken to Germany for racial studies, and the admission by Germany of the genocide—through its then minister of development aid, Heidemarie Wiecezorek-Zeul—(2004).

Despite their varied sources of inspiration/influence, one common desire the authors share is the intent to put a face behind the suffering to create human emotional connection with the experiences of the victims of the genocide. This desire is borne out of the shared understanding that statistics and a faceless presentation of facts have no significant bearing on human emotions at the level that individualised narratives do. Their representations of the genocide speak to their general political stance as revisionists who seek to have the unjust actions committed acknowledged, internalised and denounced to prevent their repetition in future. It has been established that historical texts and narratives on the subject matter have affected and shaped the authors' thoughts and conception of their narratives.

### **5.6 External world of the texts**

One of the peculiarities of a historical novel is that the world from which the novel emerges (the world of the author or the external world of the text) is different and usually far separated in time from the world the novel depicts (the internal world of the text). This is because of its characteristic feature of foregrounding history, whereby the events, characters, settings, and language in the text are predominantly historical (Shaw, 1983). Some critics and institutions even go as far as defining time boundary between the production of a historical novel and the events it describes. For example, the Historical Novel Society (n.d.), delimits the designation of historical novel to a book written at least fifty years after the events it describes or has been written by someone who was not alive at the time of such events, thereby essentially confining historical novel descriptor to those novels based solely on research rather than personal experience. As New Historicists would have it, this understanding of historical novel, however, does not preclude the influence of the socio-political and cultural environment of the author's world (the world from which the novel emerges) on the novel. All three novels were published at least a century after the occurrence of the events, the Herero and Nama genocide, they describe, which makes them perfect examples of historical novels by Historical Novel Society's standards. One hundred years down the line, however, the contemporary socio-political environment of the Namibian society is still haunted by the repercussions of the colonial time, and in particular the effects of atrocities committed by the German colonial empire in Namibia, then GSWA. Evidence of these effects is to be found in the presence of discourses that are directly linked to colonial policies and actions to which indigenous people of Namibia, particularly in this context, the Herero and Nama people were subjected. Among the discourses circulating in the culture (society) in which the novels emerged include land discourse (including ancestral land rights claim), reparation discourse, the colonial resistance (Herero-Nama and German war) and SWAPO-led liberation struggle discourses. The analysis and discussion under this section focus on how those discourses shaped and are shaped by these texts.

As stated by Krishnamurthy and Vale (2018), “Literature does not exist in a vacuum but reflects its social, historical, political, economic and cultural milieu and also documents change” (p. 2). Any representation of the past is shaped by their current context; hence, as contemporary historical novels, the selected texts necessarily comment not only on the nineteenth-century genocide, but also on contemporary concerns stemming from such genocide. Therefore, as Montrose (1991) (as cited in Baker, 2011, p. 5) maintains, the “reciprocal historical pressures by which the past has shaped the present and the present reshapes the past promotes a continuous dialogue between a poetics and a politics of culture.” While the historical aspects or references of historical novels may be obvious, it requires critical examination to establish and understand the social, political and cultural aspects of the same text, and how the literal and the literary come together to shape the course of history as much as they derive from it.

#### **5.6.1 Power structures and their sources**

Since texts, in terms of New Historicist understanding, mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations, they possess some political agency, hence considered as the vehicles of politics. Politics is the agency through which power is mediated, and in this way, as vehicles of politics, literary texts become useful objects of study as they carry the same potential for power and subversion as generally exist in society. In examining the three texts, therefore, it is important to look at its engagement with the power structures within the society from which they emerge. The privileging of the experience of the liberation war over the earlier movements of primary anti-colonial resistance by the hegemonic post-independence narrative of Namibia noted by Kössler (2015) (as cited in Krishnamurthy, 2018) breeds alternative narratives of discourse subversive to the dominant narrative. The three selected texts, therefore, are products of the discourses (both the grand narrative, for which they seek to subvert, and the little narratives, which they aim to propagate) that shaped them. However, they also demonstrate a reciprocal effect by which they also shape the same discourses, and hence participate in the shift of power structures within society. By excavating the narratives that have been obscured by the hegemonic narrative, the texts redefine the grand narrative of the nation as it should be, and therefore, also redefine the national identity. The texts, even within themselves demonstrate a pattern of revisionism, with each one building upon the one that comes before it. *MN*, being the earliest (2013) of the three, builds upon the historiography and earlier literary representations, such as, *Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa*. It maintains a German perspective in the form of Kov, but introduces the Herero perspective imbued with not only the suffering endured but also a strong emphasis on culture and tradition. Thereafter comes *TS* (2016), which dispenses with the German viewpoint almost entirely, but maintains the Herero viewpoint (and introduces a South African Boer’s perspective to bring about

parallels between the two events—The Anglo-Boer war and the German-Herero war). While *TS* also portrays the expansive extent of the atrocities and suffering, unlike *MN*, it stops short of engaging deeper with the cultural aspect, focusing rather on love matters (between Tjipuka and Ruhapo). *TLOTL*, being the latest (2017) of the three, builds upon its two predecessors, incorporating the hitherto neglected perspective of the Nama. Although Utley could not match *MN*'s level of details of the culture of the colonised, he, nevertheless, borrows the narrative style of juxtaposing the coloniser's viewpoint with the colonised's, but also at the same time follows in Kubuitsile's depiction of a love story. All three texts, however, speak to the same ideological stance on the genocide, which includes an acknowledgement of a permeating colonial amnesia as posited by Kössler and recognition of the need to re-evaluate, correct and retell history from all perspectives.

In *TLOTL*, Utley, through his protagonist, tries to give a balanced view of the perspectives of both sides. This he does by portraying the complexity of humanity by depicting both the cruelty of the German soldiers as well as a tinge of their human frailty (p. 81-2). Sam describes David (a German Jewish soldier) as "a man finding himself lost in the darkness who had given up searching for a light" (p.82). Both Utley and Serebrov, whose narratives depict dynamics within the German colonial military (a microcosm of the German society) because of their inclusion of German viewpoint characters, demonstrate a certain degree of disillusionment with the German mission. This characteristic, however, is mostly only associated with the liberal (in this case, mostly the Jewish characters) members of the military, for example, David and Kov. Yet, the manner in which the events of the war turned out and the extent of destruction, seems to have exceeded these characters' expectations, exposing their frailty and demonstrating the atrocities' severity that shakes the perpetrator. As David suggests in his relating of their actions to Sam, the war had turned out to be an extermination exercise characterised by sweeping and cleansing missions. The target was no more warriors as some German soldiers had expected as they journeyed to GSWA, but it had become everyone, which David says, "Because that is what we do. Our orders are to find and then to shoot them on sight" (p. 81). The war had thus turned out to be an execution of General von Trotha's ethnic extermination order. By demonstrating the repugnance of members of the German military, the texts emphasise the genocidal nature of the atrocities that have transcended the level of ordinary colonial war.

By engaging the German colonial history in contemporary Namibia, the novels bring the past into the present and generate a discourse that intermingles with other related discourses in society related to the same events, i.e., reparations and land discourses. In their efforts to recover what of history has been lost through misrepresentation, suppression and exclusion, the narratives become a kind of alternate history to which people could turn to for what is not accessible in conventional

historiography. Hence, in as much as the narratives find their origin in historiography, the discourses they generate help to shape history in a way that historiography alone could not. The narrative style, particularly in Utley's and Serebrov's novels, where the colonial and anti-colonial viewpoints run parallel nearly for the entirety of the texts, allows the reader to use the literary works to map the interplay of both traditional and subversive discourses circulating in the society in which the narratives are set. Alluding to Berlin's (the power house's) apparent disquiet (from the parliament but not the Kaiser) about von Trotha's extermination policy (p. 149), the author brings to the consciousness of the reader, not only the power struggle between the parliament and the ruler but also the acknowledgement of the atrocities by the parliament.

### **5.6.2 Anti-colonial resistance and the national liberation struggle narratives**

The Namibian literary landscape is thematically characterised and shaped by the colonial (subjugation) past, and hence its preoccupation with themes related to politics and struggle for liberation. However, looking at the literature inventoried by different scholars, one notes that there is a dearth of literature that engages with the experiences or themes of the German colonial period in Namibia. For example, *Writing Namibia: Literature in Transition* (2018) edited by Krishnamurthy and Vale, one of the latest and comprehensive anthology on Namibian writing post-independence, identifies the following as the most prominent themes emerging from Namibian literary works written both before and after independence: history (its re-interpretation and re-evaluation); home, exile and the liberation struggle; gender issues; nationalism and identity; and critique of a post-independence society (p. 7). Despite the presence of an aspect of history among the identified themes, there is barely any mention or discussion of any work related to the Herero and Nama genocide. Even the chapter that discusses Otjiherero literature (Chapter 6) does not make reference to any piece of work that speaks to this event. The bare mention of or reference to this period is made when the author summarises the novel *Owatjiri ehari koutoni* by Maharero (2011), which is said to have come from a community (Gam) that descended from the escapees of the von Trotha's extermination order. At the time of publication of *Writing Namibia*, all three novels selected in this study had already been published. The lack of their inclusion or that of any other related texts, therefore, speaks to the silence that the three respective authors of the studied texts have sort to address. Looking at the external world of the texts, it is one that has been characterised by the yearning for the elevation of the narrative of anti-colonial resistance on par with the privileged national liberation struggle. It is one that has been characterised by silences (or faint voices of the concerned communities—Herero and Nama people) that require institutional ratification by the government as the agency of national discourse for their voicing. It has been observed that following the closure of the Shark Island concentration camp in 1908, a new phase

began, where GSWA was portrayed as a paradise or new living space for German settlers, and the atrocities that led to it began to slowly fade away (SuperAngelofglory, 2014). This new dispensation prevailed because the narrative that was being advanced was that of the victors. This, to an extent and with the common understanding that history is written by the victor, explains the reasons for the foregrounding of the liberation struggle and backgrounding of the colonial resistance in the national grand narrative: The colonial resistance ended in colonialist victory (annihilation of Herero and Nama people), whereas the liberation struggle ended in the Namibian victory, who then began to advance the narrative of their struggle.

All three authors, without making ostensible representation of current events, delve into the long forgotten (ignored) past to reconstruct and re-enact the events and experiences that have in many ways shaped the socio-cultural and political characteristics of Namibia today. The impact of this effort to excavate occluded narratives and histories is that it brings them to the current audience (the general populace and authorities alike) who may be acquainted with the current discourses on land and reparation, but may not get the emotional connection to the events from the conventional history as would be achieved from creative works. All three novels (with the exception of *MN*, which to some extent crosses over to the period of South African rule) focus solely on the period of the German colonial rule in Namibia. They, therefore, put the events of the period in the spotlight, bringing them to the contemporary audience and contextualising the discourses presently circulating within the society. Survivors of the liberation struggle have sought to tell the stories of the ordinary refugee or soldier in exile through autobiographies separate from the dominant account of events. Such works, for example, *Mukwahepo* (2013), *The Price of Freedom* (1997), *Making a Difference* (2012) and others ensure that the little stories are told and previously silent voices are heard. However, due to the generational gap, such form of narratives may not be possible in the context of earlier colonial resistance/genocide. Hence, the resort to salvaging fragments of history and memories to reconstruct the events and experiences through historical fiction. Similar to autobiographies of liberation struggle refugees, these reconstructions of genocide serve to represent the experience of the people who have traditionally been overlooked, marginalised or misrepresented. Through such reconstruction, it can be hoped that society, and in particular the two respective governments (of Namibia and Germany) can be awakened from the amnesia that has befallen the German government since the shutting down of concentration camps and perpetuated by the post-independence government that has favoured the liberation struggle narrative at the expense of the colonial resistance narrative (Khan, 2012; Kössler, 2015).

In *MN*, after re-uniting, Jahohora and Ramata take Jahohora's children and grandchildren to the site of their parents' grave to memorialise it as a proper burial place (p. 303). This calls attention to

the scattered graves of Herero and Nama people who perished, particularly in the three concentration camps, and never received proper burial and recognition. So much has been done to identify memorialise unmarked grave sites, re-bury and build monuments of fallen heroes of liberation struggle, but the same cannot be said of the genocide victims. Instead, what has been memorialised from that period is the “German lives that were lost at the Waterberg” (p. 304). Like their narratives, which are voicelessly buried beneath the dominant narrative of the colonialists, the remains of the victims of the concentrations camps lie in unmarked mounds along the coastal desert, which contrast sharply with the marked and well-tended cemeteries of the Germans (p. 326). The voices, the heroism and history of the victims have thus been suppressed and occluded. Hence, in the same way that the protagonist Jahohora relates to her grandsons the story of the Herero people, it shall be the same way that hidden narratives be excavated and given voice. From the title of her novel, it also appears that Serebrov seeks to express the national significance of the genocide and how colonial resistance that was for the most part localised to the communities (i.e., Herero and Nama) that were in close contact with the Germans eventually bred into nationalism and struggle for total freedom of the nation. The title could have easily been *Mama Herero*, for example, but Jahohora embodies the love and hope for the future that not only the Herero grandmothers but grandmothers of other ethnic groups, too, passed on to their children and grandchildren during the days of subjugation and exploitation. Hence, Jahohora is depicted as *mama Namibia*, for her miraculous survival signifies the survival of the nation at large. The first-person point-of-view used in all novels provides a direct link between the view-point characters and the reader, creating a near-autobiographical experience such as that to be found in the autobiographies of the liberation struggle heroes. It provides for powerful emotions and intimate connections as the protagonists reveal their thoughts, desires and fears to the reader.

### **5.6.3 Reflection of the land discourse in the texts**

The land discourse has dominated the national discourses since Namibia’s independence in 1990. The texts begin long way back in the past when indigenous communities started to lose their land (which they traditionally considered a God-given communal property) to the German settlers through dubious agreements as noted by Silvester and Gewald (2003). Since independence, Namibia has held two national land conferences (the latest of which took place after the publication of the three novels) aimed at addressing the land issue. The first land conference, held in 1991, acknowledged that much of Namibia’s farming areas was expropriated by the German and South African colonial regimes and exclusively apportioned to white settlers, while confining black farmers to reserves, leading to inequitable land distribution and ownership in post-independence Namibia (Ministry of Land Reform, 2018). The conference, however, could not find a durable

solution to the issue of ancestral land claims, resolving rather that “given the complexities in redressing ancestral land claims, restitution of such claims in full is impossible” (Republic of Namibia, 2018, p. 5). As a result, the same concern continues to plague the government and has since remained within public discourse on land. Accordingly, the question of ancestral land claims formed part of the deliberations of the second land conference, held in October 2018, which resolved to establish a presidential commission of inquiry on ancestral land, which subsequently has been established (Iileka, 2019). All three texts make explicit references to unfair land dispossession and expropriation by the German colonial regime, justifying the perennial demands for land redistribution and ancestral land repossession. In *TLOTL*, Morrison, a fellow British who received Sam in Walfish Bay, tells Sam that “The natives have had their lands taken away from them. Just like the Highland Clearances. The Germans have been none too gentle about it and have stirred up a lot of resentment” (p. 16-17). Furthermore a deliberate reference is made to the erstwhile sacred ancestral place of the Herero people that has been expropriated by the Germans. “We were riding past Okahandja, the former centre of the now lost Ovaherero world, where the sacred fire had been extinguished and the graves of their ancestors had been violated” (p. 84, 68).

As in *TLOTL*, the Herero’s loss of land is emphasised in *TS*. Kubuitsile portrays the Herero people as a people who have survived at the mercy and goodwill of the chiefs of the Batawana, some of whom (described as good) promised to protect the Herero if they went to them (p. 33). The text shows that the Herero have long fought to reclaim their ancestral land lost to the settlers: “Ruhapo thought he and Tjipuka might move back to the south, to his family’s land near Gobabis. He would have again what was taken from him, what was taken from his father” (p. 39). This passage suggests that what was dispossessed from the genocide victims was essentially also dispossessed from their descendants. “They had fought hard so that everything would be returned, so that justice for the people would prevail” (p. 39). In their reflection of contemporary discourse, the texts bring to the consciousness of the reader (general populace) historical events linked to issues dominating public debate. In *TS*, as Tjipuka and Ludwig drive past Gobabis, through Tjipuka’s point of view, Kubuitsile reminds the reader of the vast swathes of previously communal land now privately in possession of the German settlers who have taken it from the Herero, the kind of land possession that still resonates with today’s land distribution debates.

They passed farms named Paradies and Der Himmel auf Erden. Large areas, once range for the herds of cattle owned by the Herero, were now farms owned by single German families ... This land had been for Ruhapo and his father and the Herero who had lived there, but that was only a story now. A tale to tell at the fire. (p. 215.)

In all of these narratives, land takes the centre stage, showing how the land both divided and united the native peoples. Utley describes how the Herero and Nama—historically arch-enemies—teamed up to fight the Germans over the land (p. 102). Leah is taken by a Gainin (San) family after her family was killed over land, but the Gainin family got killed by a white farmer for trespassing on his land. Then Leah found a new family, in the white farmer, who adopted her “like he would adopt an animal having killed its parents” (p. 103). This new master treated Leah better than did his Herero mistress, who constantly beat Leah. However, when he attempted to sexually abuse Leah, she escaped and found a new Herero family, which the German troops hang as Leah finds a new saviour in Sam. Leah’s tale represents a microcosm of coloniality and the vicious cycle of violence, slavery and war over land. Luther von Trotha’s extermination order was the ultimate act in the displacement of the Herero people from their ancestral land. The persistent foregrounding of such action not only brings it to the consciousness of the reader, but it places it within the contemporary discourse of ancestral lands and land appropriation. The texts emphasise how the Herero people were actively removed and barred from residing on the land where their ancestors have lived for many years. The texts, therefore, give credence to claims of and demands for restorative justice in terms of repossessing ancestral land to those who have lost it due to unfair policies and laws in pre-independence era.

#### **5.6.4 The texts and the sentiments of the victims**

All three works’ presentations appear to support the sentiments of the victims (their descendants) rather than challenge them. This is demonstrated by the tone of the presentation, which is sympathetic to the suffering of the colonised people and critical of both the actions and logic (justification) of the coloniser. Through the protagonist Sam, Utley displays sympathy by stressing the natives’ innocence and believing their accounts (p. 46). “They didn’t look capable of killing anyone” (p. 47). Even the German parson, who refers to Herero people as murderers and thieves, acknowledges a certain degree of wrongdoing perpetrated against the Herero by Germans. He says “many of the natives have had their land cattle stolen from them by settlers and unscrupulous traders” (p. 55). The parson appears to attempt to give a balanced judgment of the situation. Kubuitsile also uses similar strategies to present a critique that condemns the atrocities that took place whilst supporting the sentiments of the aggrieved communities. For example, Tjipuka expresses the unpredictability and incomprehensibility of human actions (i.e., war and genocide) (p. 170.), which represents a critical interrogation of human actions. *TS* not only condemns the actions of the coloniser, but also brings into perspective potential suffering of certain groups (in this case women and minority groups, such as Berg Damara), which to a certain degree underwent double colonisation: their colonisation by the Germans and also abuse of women by their fellow

tribesmen as well as exploitation of Berg Damara by the Herero. Kubuitsile comments on this phenomenon by means of a subtle juxtaposing of Germans' rape of Herero women with Wauzeza's attempted rape on Tjipuka, as well as the slavery (servitude) of Damara by Herero, and that of the native populace by the Germans (p. 30). "Under other circumstances, before all of this, Peter [Berg Damara] would not think of speaking to Tjipuka, a Herero from a royal family, but now all that was gone" (p. 189). Through the voices, such as that of Joseph in *TS*, the text's position with regard to the victims' sentiments becomes more complex. Joseph, who had been sent by the German mission to get an education in South Africa, for example, says:

In a way I feel like a traitor that I was not there. The mission sent me to study in the Cape Colony. They've been good to me. I don't know sometimes what to think. I see and hear everything, horrible stories about how the German soldiers behaved. But I know, too, the kindness individual Germans have shown me and my mother. (p. 141)

This kind of dilemma seems to signify the present day government in its position towards reparation demands. While on the one hand it acknowledges the atrocities committed against the grieving communities, its reliance on and acceptance of development aids from Germany (which the German government has viewed as a viable alternative to reparations) makes it problematic to pronounce its position. This explains the government's limited recognition of the genocide narrative and places of importance to the affected communities. While the authors bring into perspective the role (complicity) that some Herero and Nama people played (as represented by character such as Phillemon in *TLOTL*, and Joseph in *TS*) in aiding the Germans to fulfill their mission, the ultimate comment that the authors make is that these people were either forced by circumstances or tricked into these positions (with the exception of Wauzeza and other mercenaries who traded in persons (p. 153)).

## **5.7 The internal world of the texts**

The internal world of the texts entails the time and place setting of the narratives, which in this case is GSWA, during the Herero and Nama genocide that took place between 1904 and 1908. The focus of this section is thus on how the events in GSWA during the genocide are imaginatively represented in the three novels.

### **5.7.1 Literary representation of the genocide in the three novels**

Unlike a majority of previous publications that were written from the perspective (viewpoint) of the coloniser (e.g., *Peter Moor's Journey to South West Africa*, *Morenga*, and *Herero*), all three novels include a substantial degree of the victims' viewpoint. While *TLOTL* is generally narrated

from the viewpoint of Sam, his position is quite ambiguous. As a spy, Sam appears to other characters as a German and working for the good of Germany. However, due to the dramatic irony at play, the reader knows Sam's covert intentions and allegiances. Based on that and also on his tone in the narration of characters and events, Sam appears more to represent the viewpoint of the victims (which is both critical and cynical towards German actions). Furthermore, by closely associating Sam with Leah, Utley further pushes his protagonist towards the victims' side. Through this association, a substantial perspective of the oppressed is being represented. By this approach, it appears that Utley avoids speaking from a perspective that he perhaps feels he has limited authority or knowledge to represent. However, due to a greater urge and need to represent the perspective of oppressed, Utley employs the strategy of close association of a victim character with the protagonist. In *TS*, Kubuitsile represents the events from the perspectives of victim characters, Tjipuka and Ruhapo, thus presenting the events in GSWA entirely from Herero characters. Similarly, Serebrov also makes use of double points of view, narrating the story from the viewpoint of Kov (a Jewish German military doctor) and Jahohora (a Herero girl). Like Sam, Kov's position is also ambiguous; how he appears to the German soldiers is different from how he appears to the reader, who knows his back-story and thoughts. This new approach from the three authors in itself is a significant shift from that of some of the preceding novels (e.g., *PMJSWA*, *Herero*) that advanced the perspective of Germany (Reynolds, 2008). The shift represents an attempt to re-evaluate and re-tell the narratives of the African history. While they narrate the same events (the genocide), their foci differ. While *TLOTL* explores the shifting nature of the oppressor and the oppressed, *TS* depicts the indomitability and resilience of human kind in the face of worst torturous treatment. Viewed in light of the Herero community of today, *TS* demonstrates the tenacity and resilience of the Herero people, whose population, as a result of the genocide, was reduced by eighty percent (Silvester & Gewald, 2003). *TLOTL* is built on the backdrop of an espionage assignment, whereas *TS* is built on the backdrop of a love story. *MN*, on the other hand, emphasises the essence of culture and traditions of the Herero people and how such structures were disbanded by the genocidal war that besieged them. In spite of its depiction of the destructive force of racial atrocities, the novel also depicts the perseverance and resilience that has ensured the survival of the victimised communities. By juxtaposing the savagery of the colonial forces with the compassion of few individuals (such as Kov, and Herr Jurgen), the text depicts how small noble acts of humanity may have triumphed over the larger act of evil (extermination order). *MN* is built on the backdrop of a cultural heritage. This is demonstrated by how Serebrov goes at length to establish the cultural and traditional foundation of the Herero people, and subsequently, how the war causes such foundation to disintegrate. Through the voice of Kov, Serebrov notes this about the purpose of

tradition: "It ties us irrevocably to the past and to our ancestors...it reaches forward connecting us to the future and to our descendants ... It's a cycle that holds us together as a people" (p. 66).

As noted in Beck, Nelson-Faulkner, and Pierce (2000), historical fiction offers a wonderful opportunity to see how different sides of the same story can be told. Through the comparison of the multiple perspectives taken by various authors, one can see how the author's point of view influences the telling of history. From the analysis of the perspectives used by the three selected authors, it becomes clear how the perspectives they have chosen render their stories more sympathetic to the plight of the Herero and Nama people because of the authors' explicit attempts to present the victims experience from their very own perspectives. Not only do the authors provide the perspective of the victims, they also provide a critical voice (as exemplified by Sam and Kov) that challenges and debunks the coloniser's rhetoric, thus providing a platform for "a continuous dialogue between a poetics and a politics of culture re-evaluating and re-telling of history" (Montrose, 1991 as cited in Baker, 2011, p. 5).

As a critical voice and voice of reason, Sam assumes a cynical and sarcastic tone of voice towards the Germans throughout the narrative. For example, after he noticed that *Reichskommissar* Goring's room was full of many dead things (mostly animal heads), he says he subsequently expected a stuffed head of a Hottentot (p. 4). At this early stage of Sam's mission, his views of the Germans already emerge as cynical. In this thought, Sam juxtaposes an African with animals, which would not be farfetched since the Germans considered Africans as half-animals. As the narrative progresses, Sam continues to portray his sarcasm, for example, "Saving Africa from its wildlife" (p. 5), "heroic capture" (p. 47), "have fun" (p. 69, 71), "good sport" (p. 82), "civilising mission" (p. 128), "a tiny pimple on the arse of Africa" (p. 129), "German efficiency" (p. 140), "happy morning among the dead" (p. 143), "our brave fellows" (p. 160). These instances of sarcasm directed at the actions and ideologies of the colonisers serve to ridicule and even criticise them. Of course, Sam being a British agent, the question one wants to ask is whether his predisposition against the Germans is based on his sense of the wrongdoing in the Germans' actions or on his British allegiance, in which case he may not necessarily see so much wrongdoing than an advancement of an enemy (colonial competitor). As one reads *TLOTL*, therefore, one might wonder whether the author's intention is to depict the suffering of the Herero and Nama people during the events represented or to project a positive image of the British in relation to their view of the events, the same thing, some would have argued (Silvester & Gewald, 2003), the British did with the *Blue Book*. Although it served as a major source material presenting an early African perspective on the German colonial atrocities in Namibia, the *Blue Book* represented the kind of power play between the two colonial empires. The motive behind its construction had more to do with what the British could benefit from it than what

the indigenous people of Namibia could. This has been proven by its subsequent removal from circulation and destruction of its copies in order to achieve reconciliation between German and Afrikaner settler communities, without consideration the indigenous people for whose cause it supposed to advance (Silvester & Gewald, 2003). Similarly to Utley, Kubuitsile also subtly depicts Britain in a positive light in comparison to Germany in the way they practised colonialism: “We have seen the Germans’ way of making peace—we want none of it. We’re going to the British ... We will have land and the British are not greedy like the Germans” (p. 127-8). This appears to suggest that the victims had a favourable view of the British.

### 5.7.2 Scope of the narratives

In terms of the scope of the narratives, it is important to consider where each narrative begins and ends within the historical epoch they represent, in other words, what it covers and what it leaves out. All three texts nearly cover the same period with slight differences on where each begins and ends. Utley begins his novel close to the time Germany sent in troops to GSWA to quell the Herero uprising, only going back to the preceding period through back-stories. In the exposition, Utley provides background information about the situation in GSWA from Sam’s perspective, through his encounter with Heinrich Goring, the first imperial commissioner to GSWA. *TS* and *MN* begin slightly before the outbreak of the uprising. Kubuitsile establishes the peace and calm that prevailed before the conflicts, highlighting the love, aspirations, hopes and dreams that Tjipuka and Ruhapo shared from a tender age. *TS* begins in early 1894 to mid 1908; hence, it includes both a pre-war depiction and post-war depiction. The exposition in *TS* allows the reader to see the kind of dreams that the people had, which the war would eventually disrupt and shatter. Similarly, Serebrov also begins her narrative from the early period of peace and calm, allowing the reader to see the kind of socio-cultural structures that were in place and, from their eventual destruction, be able to realise the severity of the 1904 to 1908 events on the social and cultural structures of the oppressed communities. *MN* begins in the late 1890s before the outbreak of the Rinderpest epidemic. It allows the author to establish the cultural context (the way of life of the Herero people) prior to the destructive encounter with the German extermination policy. This orientation helps put into perspective the magnitude of the atrocities that followed. Both *TLOTL* and *TS* end before the closure of the concentration camps, with both ending in a rather unhappy conclusion—the death of Leah and the disappearance of Tjipuka. The texts, thus, provide a comprehensive coverage of the German colonial period in GSWA in general, and the 1904-1908 genocide, in particular. With the scope of the narratives beginning before the ultimate war (the battle of Waterberg), the texts provided adequate information to establish causality leading to the war. In terms of establishing of what led to the conflicts, all three authors are unanimous in their framing of causality.

Acknowledging the existence of intertribal conflicts, mainly between Herero and Nama people, who for decades had fought one another over the land before the Germans arrived, and after the Germans arrived, the authors establish that the conflicts that led to the genocide began with the natives' growing frustration over the settlers' intrusion, into and dispossession of their land. This physical and psychological invasion of their space, led to the uprising of the Herero. This general infiltration was aggravated by other violations, including the desecration of the ancestors' graves, the apportioning of land to German settlers by Maharero, and the rape and murder of Herero women (Kubuitsile, p. 25). Despite this being the primary cause of the conflicts (as depicted from the perspective of the victims), the authors also demonstrate that the narrative of causality as it has been filtered through to the German public has been framed in favour of Germany and to paint a negative image of the natives. For example, Utey shows this when David, one of the German soldiers deployed to GSWA to quell the uprising, mutters to the protagonist Sam about the atrocities the natives inflicted on Germans. He says, "Everyone in Germany had heard stories of how the natives in the Protectorate were killing settlers and taking their land" (p. 28). The injustices committed against the natives were either belittled or inverted and projected to the settlers when information was relayed to the German (and international) public in order to justify offensive or more explicit actions in the colony. In the same text, for example, David says according to the stories relayed to the German public from the colony, natives "were killing German settlers and taking their land" (p. 28), and the natives' defence of their sovereignty and possession is framed as an act of intrusion. This is, for example, demonstrated by Sam's conviction that the Herero (or their chief) had brought this horror unto themselves by arguing that "the biggest error the Chief had made since firing that first shot long ago in Okahandja" (p. 68). Similarly, in *TS*, though told from the viewpoint of Ruhapo, there is an element of self-blame that would suggest that the Herero people were to be blamed for the war. This is suggested through Ruhapo's remorseful contemplation of how his and other Herero's pride led them to convince Maharero to rise up against the German (pp. 167, 272). Kubuitsile seems to suggest that if it were not for this rebellion, the genocidal war may have not taken place. This idea is, however, merely portrayed at a personal level with regard to Ruhapo than community level, showing how his decisions might have led to the destruction and perish of his family, thereby rendering the text more as a love story and its tribulations than a community outcry against atrocities. From this, it thus becomes clear that the colonial narrative sought to pin the blame for conflicts in colonies to the natives, by blaming their resistance to colonisation and their defence for their territory as savagery. These texts (in a post-colonial fashion) have thus sought to re-evaluate the colonial narrative and present the victims perspective on causality.

### 5.7.3 Culture and tradition

The scope and perspective of the narratives have played a major role in how the authors engaged with cultural and traditional aspects of the indigenous communities. The incorporation of cultural elements as alluded to in the previous section aids in contextualising the magnitude of the atrocities. It also serves to highlight the cultural incompatibilities and their bearing on the colonial conflicts. With its limited indigenous perspective, *TLOTL* rarely engages with cultural aspects of Nama. The cultural background of Leah is nearly non-existent. What the reader learns are bits and pieces of information about where Leah came from as she relates them to Sam. All the reader learns about Leah is that she was brought up by a Gainin (San) family after her parents were killed over land, before she went on from one master-servant relationship to another (p. 103). *TS*, on the other hand, engages with the Herero tradition to an extent greater than *TLOTL* could. Through the viewpoints of Tjipuka and Ruhapo, Kubuitsile comments on some cultural aspects, in one case demonstrating the developing shift from traditional practice of getting a wife, for example. When Ruhapo teases Tjipuka that one day she will be his wife, Tjipuka retorts thus, “What do you know about wives? Your uncle will pick one for you, and you will say nothing” (p. 21). Ruhapo shows determination and sees it through that he marries Tjipuka, and only her (p. 61), shifting away from another cultural practice, polygamy. There were a lot of forces that would have influenced Ruhapo and the cultural shift he represented. The Christian education, which he received at the mission school at Otjimbingwe, coupled with his love for Tjipuka were some of those forces. The influence of European contact on the cultural systems and in shaping new identities (bestowing of Christian names) becomes evident in earlier engagement with cultural aspects. Of the three texts, *MN* offers the most cultural background to contextualise the subject of genocide. Serebrov introduces both the matrilineal and patrilineal clans of the main Herero character, Jahohora, a huge community yet at the end of the scourge, only Jahohora and her brother Ramata survive the genocide in their family, demonstrating the severity and efficiency of the German extermination strategies. Using a child as the main character who comes of age, Serebrov was able to enrol the reader into the same class of cultural studies with Jahohora and learn the cultural ways of the Herero people as Jahohora does. Starting from the legend of the beginning of the world to cultural practices from child birth, initiation, marital arrangements and death rituals, Serebrov provides a rich cultural background. Through the characterisation of Jahohora, Serebrov succeeds in creating a microcosm of the Herero community. What characterises Jahohora characterises the community at large. The traditional rites that she goes through and the cultural expectations she is subjected to represent the cultural foundation of the Herero community. Her suffering by losing her family to the war and enduring the life in the desert represents the loss and hardship that the community suffered. By the end of

the narrative and after all the destruction, it becomes clear how the coloniser succeeded not only in dispossessing the indigenous people of their land but also in displacing them of their culture and identity. With her relatives either killed or forced to flee, Jahohora can no longer follow the traditional custom of marrying in her mother's clan or marrying the man who has promised her to her parents. Hence, Kukuri tells her: "The Herero are too small in number to us to hold on to the old ways of marriage ... [You, survivors] must marry outside your clan if we are to be strong again" (p. 297). The genocide therefore necessitated the cultural shift from the old to the new ways.

#### **5.7.4 Power structures and their sources**

In the external world of the texts, it was argued in section 5.6.1 that the texts represent the power structures found in the contemporary society from which the works emerged. Likewise, in the internal world of the texts, the authors represent a world that is at least one century in the past, a world that had its particular power structures. In this section, therefore, it is important to analyse how these power structures are presented and how they have affected and been affected by the events described in the texts. The examination of power structure would seek to understand how foreigners would come into a land and exert control over the land's native inhabitants. In *TLOTL*, Utey presents a number of structures that symbolise the existence of power and which could be understood to exist as sources of power and influence. These structures are physically represented in the forms of cathedral, fort, court, prison (p. 32), and they are important structures through which respective institutions generate their power to bring about subjugation. As one of the very first institutions to be brought to the African people preceding colonialism, religion or the church represents an institution through which the German colonialists have exercised power. To relinquish its religious and moral responsibility of averting destructive intentions of the Germans, the church preaches the gospel of saving natives' souls rather than their lives, whereas for Germans it preaches the gospel of saving both the souls and lives (p. 37). Utey shows this when he presents a scene in which a reverend praises the German violent actions as though they were by God's order. "The Reverend Max Schimdt held a service. He gave thanks to the divine assistance given to the German forces and prayed for the souls of those who had died for their country. German souls, that is" (p. 76). The irony demonstrated in this statement is that German soldiers died for their country, ignoring the lives of those who truly died for their country—the Herero. The church, thus, serves to legitimise and give credence to imperial actions of committing atrocities in the name of both a supposed divine call and loyalty to the nation. The service is followed by the genocidal proclamation, a juxtaposition that demonstrates the church's complicity in the atrocities. The above mentioned structures are aligned with the three powerful elements of persuasion (p. 100): General von Trotha, God, gallant troops (military). Utey represents Berlin as the metropolitan

source of power and pivotal to the power structures in place. Authority is traced back to Berlin and its power to influence cause of action is constantly emphasised. Berlin is referenced as the powerhouse for research activities, among which Dr Eugen Fischer's work on human skulls to prove that Herero people are inferior to the German race is included. Such research work when ratified by the power house or metropolis, that is, Berlin, serves to further the discourse of racial superiority of the colonisers. In his works, Dr Bofinger also aspires to such institutional ratification as demonstrated by his enthusiasm about his arrangement with Berlin (p. 139).

There existed in GSWA power structures of their own before the contamination of the German intrusion. All three texts allude to some extent to the existence of African (internal) slavery, with the Herero owning Damara (and Nama) slaves (Utley, p. 34, 89). Like the Germans who had the church as an institution of power through which natives could be subdued and controlled, the natives also had an equivalent institution—the association with the ancestors. This association did not have edifices to symbolise its strength, but its physical symbol was represented in the holy fire. While the Germans exercised their power through the empire, the story demonstrates that the indigenous tribes exercised their power through chieftainship. The texts, therefore, show that to exert control over a people requires one system (in this case the colonial one) to belittle and delegitimise the power structures in place, while manipulating the people into believing that the European, the German system was the only proper way of establishing power structures. Hence, they sought to demonise belief in and association with ancestors, while promoting Christianity as the means to divinity. The fear of the ancestors and their power was greatly revered and used to hold the community together (Kubuitsile, p. 23-24). Hence, the desecration of the ancestors' graves stirred the community into revenge—making it part of causality of the battles in Okahandja (Kubuitsile, p. 25). Kubuitsile shows that, to the Herero, the ancestors were sacred beings that held the community and its beliefs together. As such, their graves represented a sacred shrine. On the contrary, the Germans saw the skulls of the Herero's ancestors as commodities that could be traded for a price (p. 25).

While they may have not disbanded the chieftaincy, the Germans sought to alter its structure (imposing a hitherto unheard of paramount chief over different sub-tribes), while introducing them to a new powerful and authoritative form of engagement—protection treaties. The colonisers used manipulative treaties to legitimise their actions by making the traditional leaders such as Samuel Maharero and Hendrik Witbooi sign treaties and agreements, which essentially make them acknowledge the German rule. Through such treaties Germans expropriated land from indigenous people and claim that the chief, Samuel Maharero, had signed a paper that gave the Germans the right to do it (to take land and cattle of Ovaherero) (Utley, p. 19). The cattle represented the most

valuable possession and thus commanded as the main source of power for Herero individuals and families. Hence, characters like Ruhapo aspire to have cattle, in addition to children. These provide a source of power and influence in the community: “I’ll get as rich as the richest German settler. I will have the most beautiful cows in the whole Hereroland. People will come to me, the master cattleman...We’ll have children, lots and lots of children” (p. 23). These dreams and aspirations would be shattered and destroyed by the war (p. 59).

The same power structures reflected in *TLOTL* and *TS* are also reflected in *MN*, wherein Serebrov demonstrates the shifting power structures taking place at the time (time setting of the novel). The customary power structures involve a strong connection with the ancestors as the interceders between the people and their God (*Njambi Karunga*) (p. 5), recognition of headmen and chiefs, and then the keepers of the holy fire (*omuriromurangere*) and other clan elders. However, with the arrival of the German settlers, such power structures begin to crumble; the chain of command does not begin with the chief and cascade down to the subjects anymore. Rather, the white man imposes himself as the ultimate source of authority and subject to no black man as it has been demonstrated in their dominance of the handling of the cattle sickness situation (pp. 15-23). Using their instruments of exercising power, such as the church, the white man was able to disband the customary power structures by demonising indigenous customary practices such as polygamy (p. 30). Both Serebrov and Kubuitsile depict a shift in traditional marital practices towards Christian practices. The role of church (religion/Christianity) in the subjugation and violation of indigenous people has both been exposed and challenged. The justification of actions of the coloniser has been associated with a fallacious claim to divine responsibility. In *MN*, a German soldier claims that “it’s by divine right that we’re ridding South West Africa of these half-humans. As the superior race, we have a duty to conquer this land and people it with hardy German stock” (p. 216). Similarly, the fallen colonial soldiers are depicted as martyrs due to the perceived divine war in which they perished. This is demonstrated, for example, in the words of a German major at the burial of soldiers: “These men have purified their souls through the blood they shed today. They shall reign in heaven with the saints. But here on earth, they will be remembered as heroes who answered the call of God and country” (p. 231). A religious service is performed by a chaplain at the gathering right after General von Trotha pronouncing his extermination order, essentially legitimising what he had pronounced with the seal of faith. In his message, the chaplain states that, “Savage by nature, the Herero have rebelled against the civilising authorities God has set over them ... Now God has given us the sword, which we are to use to punish the enemy...” (p. 275). This institutional ratification of the atrocities challenges the integrity of the church, not only at the time of the events, but also in contemporary African society. It brings one to question the kind of gospel that

African preachers, such as Kukuri and Fredrich in *MN* would be expected to preach, whether or not they would be expected to continue the German narrative by which the natives' rights to exist can only be justified by their usefulness to Germany.

By presenting the ever shifting nature of the coloniser's actions, the narratives place the ideology of *lebensraum* (living space) at the root of these atrocities. The shifting nature of the German actions here means the justification of their actions that evolved from a civilising mission to avenging the deaths of German soldier, and eventually to fulfilling a divine responsibility of purging the land of undesirable beings (racial war). At the centre of all these, however, is the desire to satisfy the German quest for *lebensraum*, to create a living space for German's superior race.

#### **5.7.5 Recreation of experiences on the warfront and flight across the desert**

One of the critical and most defining moments of the Herero-Nama and German war was battle of Waterberg, in which German troops launched the vicious attack on the Herero, followed by von Trotha's notorious extermination proclamation order and the subsequent arduous flight of the Herero across the Omaheke desert to Bechuanaland. Due to the scarcity of the victims' narratives (perspectives) in literature and historiography, the pain (and essence) of these events may have not been captured in conventional history inspired by the colonial narrative. The revisionist nature of the three texts, therefore, presents an opportunity for re-imagining and re-presenting the same history from the formerly suppressed perspective with human faces behind the tales. As such, it is important to analyse such presentation in order to understand the authors' imaginations of the experience of the victims and how their imaginations capture the essence of the moment they represent.

It is important to note that the nature of the violence that unfolded as the German military launched the attack on the Herero, virtually everywhere where the Herero could find themselves became a battlefield since Germans were not fighting warriors/combatants any more, but everyone. In their depiction of battlefield and subsequent events, the authors establish grounds for claim to genocide, emphasising actions that correspond with those outlined in United Nations definition of genocide. Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as an "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such" (United Nations, n.d.) by means of one or a combination of the following acts: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, n.d.). From their

descriptions, all authors establish an understanding that the Herero were but tired of fighting and had made an active attempt to move away from the Germans when the German army set out to unleash the onslaught on them. In *TLOTL*, this is noted when a Herero local guide for the German army, Philemon, explains to Sam that his compatriots are not expecting a battle; “They have had enough of fighting and came here to get away from the Germans ... The great chief is expecting to negotiate a peace treaty” (p. 67). Kubuitsile and Serebrov also take the same approach and communicate the same understanding. Ruhapo takes his family (Tjipuka and Saul) to Ohamakari to get away from the Germans, while in *MN* Jahohora’s father also takes his family, wife’s family and animal to Okavaka Mountains to move away from the Germans. Due to this, the Herero community finds itself under attack that mismatches its defence capability. Despite the superior number of the Herero, Sam describes their incapability on the battlefield scenes thus: “the Ovaherero seemed to have been acting only in defence, giving way before cannons and machine guns. They died where they stood. No one would bother to bury them; the jackals and vultures would take care of them” (p. 72).

In *TS*, the battle is described as extremely chaotic and pitiful, where one baby’s cry (Saul’s) cannot be heard. Dead bodies lie strewn on the ground, over which Tjipuka stumbles as she tries to run away. She comes across her gutted mother-in-law’s body (p. 41). The sight of the violation of a surrendering woman being tortured and raped by soldiers depicts the gruesomeness of the atrocities perpetrated by German soldiers (p. 42). After raping the woman, one soldier holds her by the back of her head and slashes her across the neck. In another instance that captures the level of chaos and confusion, Kubuitsile offers a poignant scene, where a Herero woman searches for her son among the dead, amid the confusion: “A tall woman, her dress stained with blood down the front, walked through the crowd. ‘Frederick!’ she called. ‘Frederick!’ She checked behind bushes. She looked into the distance. ‘Have you seen my son Frederick?’ she asked Tjipuka” (p. 46). This chaotic situation contrasts the calmness at the beginning of the novel, which established the relative peace that prevailed, a relative peace in which people had dreams for a better and brighter future. That relative peace would eventually be disturbed and dreams shuttered as demonstrated by the events following the battle of Ohamakari.

In the wake of the imminent war between Germans and Herero, Serebrov divides the Herero into three groups: those who join Maharero to defend themselves against the Germans if no peace treaty is brokered, those who try to seek refuge away from the Germans (for example, at Okavaka mountains) and from the war targets, and those who decide to remain at home because they believe they mean no harm and they pose no threat to the Germans. In the end, however, the Germans make no distinction in applying their annihilation policy, demonstrating that theirs was

not a colonial but a racial war intended at exterminating the Herero people. The same is also acknowledged and noted in the BBC documentary on the genocide, where it is noted that in the same manner that von Trotha indiscriminately declared war against all Herero people, including children women and elderly, the Herero of Otjimbingue were also dragged into war despite their declaration of peace (SuperAngelofglory, 2014). Serebrov paints a gruesome picture of what a lone small girl, Jahohora, had to face in the desert in the wake of the chaos and carnage that follows the battle of the Waterberg. The horrific images of Jahohora encountering body after body of dead Herero and a hysterical woman holding on to her dead baby demonstrate a truly appalling and horrific experience (pp. 160-1). The war has dehumanised the people and turned them into animals, eating raw meat (p. 165). The experience reduces Jahohora's life to a life of death as she continues to dwell amongst the dead (dead bodies): "Once, I would have screamed. Not now. I've seen too many bodies to be frightened by death. It is my life" (p. 166). Presumed dead when she lies among the dead, Jahohora starts to use the dead bodies as a repelling or defence tactic. She takes advantage of the stench of rotting bodies as a repellent against soldiers (p. 177). Furthermore, Serebrov emphasises the extremes to which people had to go to ensure survival by depicting Jahohora's daring decision to induce sores upon her skin to repel rapist soldiers (p. 202). This demonstrates the logic of a desperate mind of a young girl who, at her tender age, is forced to endure conditions under which even older people and warriors perished. This depiction paints a horrifying image of the severity of the situation, hardly describable in conventional history textbooks. Her survival defies her tender age and defines her resilience. There is, however, a hint to the assistance of ancestors in Jahohora's survival as demonstrated by her encounter with a kudu that leads her to a berry bush and a waterhole (p. 162). The daring actions of Jahohora make sense in this context because she has witnessed first-hand as soldiers rape a half-dead woman whilst Jahohora lays feigning death close to the soldiers' camp. The narratives, thus, show that soldiers could stop to nothing, even in the most hideous and most disgusting situations, to sexually violate women. The same is also noted in *TLOT*, where Utley recreates a filthy image of the Shark Island, filled with corpses, amputated heads, sickly and deathly people, yet one of the first things that greets Sam is an offer to have a go at the women offered by one of the soldiers who had just had his go at them (p. 134). In a similar way, too, Serebrov paints an equally filthy and uninhabitable environment of the camps, yet this did not stop the soldiers from raping the prisoners.

The perspective of the victims helps to recreate and represent the kind of suffering endured and sacrifices made by the victims during the protracted defence against the Germans and during their flight across the desert. One such sacrifice highlighted in *MN* is the sacrificing of babies to save the warriors. In her encounter with Mama Uaporimana and two other women in the desert, Jahohora

learns that during the fights at the Waterberg, due to the prolonged period of lack of food and enough water, in order to sustain their warriors, breastfeeding mothers resorted to providing milk to the men at the expense of their babies, who ended up dying (pp. 185-6).

In their representations, all three authors lay particular emphasis on the suffering and violation of women, children and elderly—the non-combatants (Leah, Tjipuka and Saul, Jahohora and her Mama as well as cousin Tuaekua Ehi and her daughter, and all the elderly encountered in the forest), which further demonstrates that rather than an ordinary colonial war, this was an onslaught on a particular race. Like Kubuitsile writes, “this was not a battlefield—women and children were there, and the Germans showed no distinction. They killed everyone. Women shot through, the children on their backs killed with the same bullet that killed their mothers” (p. 53.) These become the first signs that this was genocide in a making, only to be formalised by von Trotha’s proclamation. Another element that is emphasised in the texts that is critical to the genocidal nature of this war is the deprivation of access to water, by blocking or manning the waterholes and poisoning those that cannot be manned (Kubuitsile, pp. 46, 49, 58), forcing people to die of thirst in the desert. This deprivation equates to what UN’s definition of genocide describes as deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. Even as the people try to flee their land into Bechuanaland, the exterminators (with the help of traitors) pursue them using “cleansing patrols” (Utlely, p. 81), and in case of Tjipuka and her group, their escape attempts are foiled at least three times, the intent of which is to kill them, either directly or through the concentration camps (pp. 116, 126, 209).

#### **5.7.6 Portrayal of experiences in concentration camps**

Apart from the overwhelming number of deaths that took place during the fight at the Waterberg and during the flight across the Omaheke desert, a large number of Herero and Nama people perished in concentration camps due to diseases, exhaustion, and hunger. All three authors took liberty to recreate the experiences in concentration camps. Each text has its own particular way of representing the experiences in the concentration camps. Both Utlely and Kubuitsile only depict the experiences at the Shark Island concentration camp. Serebrov, on the other hand, makes reference to experiences in all three main concentration camps (in Windhoek, Swakopmund, and Luderitz). Utlely offers this representation from the viewpoint of an observer, Sam, as he attempts to rescue Leah from Shark Island, whereas Kubuitsile does so from the viewpoint of Tjipuka as a prisoner at the camp.

Sam, upon his first arrival at Shark Island, describes a working gang of Herero prisoners, which included several women, as a sorry lot of unfit- and unhealthy-looking beings. “All of them were

wearing only filthy rags though they were shivering in the morning chill . . . I could see fresh weeping scars on their bony backs where a whip or sjambok had been employed” (pp. 133-4). They were not war prisoners, but slaves, Sam realises. Soldiers raped the women, or as Wilhelm, one of such soldiers, calls it, they had their “morning fun” on the women prisoners. Wilhelm says to Sam about the women, “You can have what you like and it doesn’t cost a pfennig” (p. 134). The running of the camp is portrayed such that there is total disregard of the slaves, be it their well-being or rights. They are only as useful as they can work under any conditions. “We have orders not to bother too much with keeping any of this lot alive, especially if they can’t work. There’s plenty more where they came from” (p. 134). The practice, hence, is to work them to death. To demonstrate this, Utley, shows a scene of an army sergeant who, without remorse, shoots an old woman in a leg, smiling as other soldiers take photographs and applauding him (p. 136). In this scene, Sam also describes women as appearing half-naked and “reduced to the status of animals in a slaughter’s yard.” In this representation the colonialists, thus, do not only view indigenous people as sub-humans and equivalent to animals, but they also treat them as such, and in some instances, even worse than animals. To the colonisers, the Herero and Nama people amount to nothing, as exemplified by one soldier’s response to Sam’s concern about the danger of the use of explosives on the Island: “Very dangerous but no one has been hurt. Except some of the prisoners ... Several of them were blown to pieces when a charge went off before it was ready. It certainly saved us the job of burying them” (p. 137). The audacity of the statement and lack of remorse for the horrific loss of lives underscore the colonisers’ view of the prisoners. To state that “no one was hurt” implies that those who were hurt and killed are nothing, because they are not Germans. The portrayal of the experience in the concentration camps not only depicts the overworking of slaves and disregard of their health and well-being, but their subjection to other demeaning and horrifying tasks, such as, the handling of skulls of their fellow slain and deceased people. “A skeletal Ovaherero woman ... was sitting next to a shelter improvised out of sacking and driftwood. She was holding a shard of broken glass in her right hand with which she was scraping away at a [human head]” (p. 135), which Wilhelm says it could be the skull of her own husband. All this takes place whilst photographers take picture to make postcards, highly demanded in Germany. The skulls were, of course, the objects of German racial scientific research. As shown through a conversation between the protagonist and Dr Bofinger, Herero and Nama serve as a source of “endless supply of subjects” for the tests of Dr Bofinger’s experiments on a cure for scurvy. These are dangerous experiments, considered “too dangerous” and bearing devastating effects to be conducted on white subjects, hence, they can only be performed on Africans, who do not enjoy the protection of their rights and dignity. Clearly, this shows that the way the oppressor saw indigenous people (as non-humans, savages) was used

to justify the Germans' actions, including expropriation of land and animals, extermination of people, and using them as objects for experiments. It was, therefore, necessary to Germany that this colonial narrative of classifying blacks as sub-humans received colonial institutional ratification.

Similarly, Kubuitsile also re-enacts experiences at the Shark Island concentration camp through the viewpoint of Tjipuka who is interned at the same camp. While the portrayals in the two texts resemble each other in that they both depict the horrible conditions of the camp, Tjipuka's experience appears more powerful being a prisoner in the camp herself as opposed to Sam who describes what he observes. One of the miserable moments for Tjipuka is when she loses her son Saul, and wouldn't be allowed to give him a dignified burial. The death rate is described as high as upto six deaths a day: "Each morning before leaving for the dockyards, the dead needed to be collected ... the bodies were carted off to the desert to be buried in unmarked graves. Every day at the camp started with death" (p. 180). Serebrov, however, offers multiple viewpoints in representing the experiences in different camps. Using the perspectives of her two view point characters, Kov and Jahohora, Serebrov places Kov in the Windhoek camp as an observer/doctor and in the Swakopmund camp as a researcher and doctor, whose aspirations were to minimise the suffering and save the lives of the prisoners. Serebrov also represents the camp experiences through Jahohora's encounters with camp escapees, and one of these escapees, whom Jahohora meets in the veld, tells Jahohora that "What's worse is that the men in the camps have to watch the soldiers lie with their wives and sisters and daughters. There is nothing they can do to stop it" (p. 197.) This corroborates what Sam observed when he arrived at Shark Island for the first time, whereby he was informed he could have sexual encounters with the women as much as he liked at no cost.

#### **5.7.7 Intertextuality and the recreation of past experiences**

Intertextuality entails the understanding that texts, be they literary or non-literary, exist in an ecosystem of interdependence of texts and thus lack independence of meaning (Allen, 2011). At its core, the concept of intertextuality speaks to the interrelatedness of texts; it entails that as much as it might appear to be, there is hardly a text that is uniquely original in itself (Baer, 2018). Hence, proponents of this concept argue that texts are formations of references to and quotations from a plethora of other various texts. With this understanding, it becomes apparent that intertextuality in historical fiction is a given and cannot be disputed since historical fiction, in addition to its imaginative quality, is a culmination of research work. It is evident from the discussion of the theoretical framework that New Historicism is highly intertextual in nature, having at its core a belief that texts keep referring to one another and are related to one another either comparatively or subversively. In discussing this concept within the context of these three historical novels,

therefore, rather than trying to demonstrate the presence of intertextuality within the texts, the focus is on elucidating how intertextuality functions within the texts.

Intertextuality is not just a concept, but as Baer (2018) notes, it functions as a literary device, wherein authors deploy it as a strategy to relook at preceding texts and use it as a departure point to critique, correct or reinforce their ideas to realign with current discourses. The same phenomenon can be observed in the three texts, with the authors revising earlier texts (fiction and non-fiction) and re-situating them in the contemporary world in which they find new relevance. In addition to certain allusions to various texts and concepts, there are various explicitly noted references to certain texts that have formed part of the representation in these texts. One of these fictional works referenced by both Utley and Serebrov is Gustav Frenssen's *Peter Moor's Journey to Southwest Africa* (1908) (*PMJSWA*), an early twentieth century German novel based on experiences of German soldiers in South West Africa. Frenssen's novel presents a German colonial viewpoint, which valorised the heroism of German soldiers. In their analyses of *PMJSWA*, Brehl (2005) and Baer (2018) emphasise the novel's apparent intent and desire to legitimise genocidal behaviour, by depicting German as the nobler race and focusing on the challenges (such as, typhoid, dysentery, the lack of water and food, and the unforgiving terrain of GSWA) German soldiers faced in their quest to fulfill a "divine mission." The justification of genocidal killings in *PMJSWA* as a fulfillment of a "divine mission," Baer argues, is grounded in the perception of the Herero and Nama that was fraught "with a racist hierarchy, privileging German imperialists and dehumanizing indigenous people" (p. 7). The imperialists, thus, considered Herero and Nama people as lacking civilisation, history, or meaningful religion; as such, they perceived them as primitive and barbaric tribes that presented an unnecessary obstacle to German settlement. The logic to be found in *PMJSWA* and other colonial texts is thus one that portrays the killing of natives as a contribution to the moral maturation of the people rather than portraying it as a moral, ethical or even legal problem. This has led to stylising of genocidal crime to appear as a contribution to the necessary shaping of a future humanity with an element of moral maturation (Brehl, 2005).

Based on the preceding analyses, it becomes noticeable how the texts have sought to revise such representation as to be found in *PMJSWA* and present an alternative narrative. The alternative narrative that, contrary to Frenssen's narrative (which legitimises genocidal behaviour, depicts German as the nobler race while Herero and Nama lack civilisation), denounces genocidal behaviour, depicts Africans as human of equal nobility with any other race. The texts go further to refute the notion of lack of civilisation among the Africans compared to Europeans, instead depicting the higher moral scruples among the Herero and Nama communities than Germans, for example, in how they conduct war. The texts further emphasise the rich cultural heritage that

underlies their civilisation. In their revisionist critiques, the authors assign prominent role to the African viewpoint within the narratives, but most importantly situating such viewpoint in direct opposition with the hitherto dominant (and to some extent unchallenged) colonial and Eurocentric perspectives.

The authors, however, not only challenge or critique these biased viewpoints, but also incorporate and make use of well-researched resources, such as, *Words Cannot Be Found — German Colonial Rule in Namibia: Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (2003) by Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, and *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide* (2010) by David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen. In addition to these works, the authors also tapped into the oral traditions of the communities, in particular the Herero oral tradition, with Kubuitsile, for example, making use of Kristen Alnaes' work on the oral tradition and history of the Herero in Botswana, while Serebrov, whose story is based on oral narrative of a Herero woman survivor of the genocide, also exploring the rich oral tradition of the Herero people. The authors, therefore, use elements from these sources to enrich their imaginations and allow them to make representations that in a credible manner speak to the events of the time period depicted. By borrowing from these texts and traditions, the novelists were able to illuminate their acts of storytelling and make the reader aware of their being part of a network of writers.

#### **5.7.8 Assessment of effects of the war**

In assessing the impact of the war on the two warring sides, it would be tempting for a historical novel writer to refer to historically documented figures. Yet the authors appear to resist from quantitative assessment of the effect of the war, instead making use of a qualitative assessment approach. One explanation for this, at least for *TS* and *MN*, could be that the narrators (victims), from whose point of the narratives are told (Tjipuka, Ruhapo, Jahohora) would have not been in position to record the number of casualties and damage to properties or loss of their most valued possession, cattle, owing to their level of literacy and, of course, capability to do so in a war situation. Nevertheless, by means of qualitative assessment of the effects, the authors were able to portray a picture that shows the devastating effect of the war on the Herero and Nama people and some degree of discomfoting effects on the Germans. In *TLOT*, Sam's estimation of the size of the Herero community that were within the target of the German military as it approached Waterberg was about fifty thousand (p. 66). After the peak of the fight, David tells Sam that there were still about twenty thousand Herero still on their ancestral land, suggesting that by the end of the fight, more than half of Herero were either killed or driven into the desert (p. 81). Thereafter, the General ordered that those remaining on the ancestral land be found and dealt with in what David refers to as "Cleansing Patrols" (p. 81). For the victims (the Herero, and the Nama who had

joined them later out of solidarity), the deaths of soldiers and civilian were incalculable, both literally and literary—the number of deaths was overwhelming, but also nobody could care to count since they could not be buried or accounted for. They could only be estimated. Kubuitsile highlights the disruption of family unit and peace, and expropriation of what they had, land and cattle. As noted in preceding sections, *TS* focuses, to a larger extent, on the personal experience (love and thoughts) and how that is disrupted by the events outside (p. 39). Furthermore, the text emphasises how difficult it became for people to reconcile and reconnect with their previous selves before the scattering, before the traumatic experience. Ruhapo and Tjipuka, who had passionate love for each other, can no longer connect as they had before the genocide (pp. 238, 283). Displacement of people from their ancestral land to foreign lands is one conspicuous and enduring effect of the war. *TS* shows that despite the warm reception of the Herero in Tsau, Botswana, there was always anxiety. The Herero have run away from the white oppressor only to become servants of fellow blacks in Botswana. The source of livelihood and power for the Herero was determined by the herd of cattle one had, but they were dispossessed of their cattle by German settlers and those that might have escaped this thievery would have been killed by poisoned waterholes or left behind as people fled. Thus, a Herero without cattle would have no choice in a foreign land but to work for another man. This, Kubuitsile demonstrates with Ruhapo, an erstwhile proud master cattleman, who now has to work for the Mogalakwes and rebuild his herd from scratch to earn his freedom. “Every birth [of a new calf] was a step towards freedom” (p. 249). Without freedom, there is no respect, as demonstrated by the kind of engagement between Ruhapo and Mogalakwe. Mogalakwe asks Ruhapo how many cattle he has, a question considered disrespectful to ask a man (p. 251). “Mogalakwe did not see Ruhapo as an equal. He was a servant, Mogalakwe the master” (p. 251). Mogalakwe does not only show Ruhapo the disrespect based on social standing, but also xenophobic disrespect based on his origin. “I doubt Kgosi Mathiba will be willing to give Mbanderu land. He wishes you would go back to your home now” (p. 252). Kubuitsile emphasises that the Germans intended to exterminate all of the Herero people: “The Germans had nearly accomplished what they set to do, to kill all of the Herero. These few people were all that was left, and what was left in them could hardly be described as life” (p. 48). People had lost people, animals, land, and thus livelihood. These losses meant they had nothing to pass on to their posterity. This fact is what would justify their descendants’ claim of victimhood.

As for the Germans, the defeat and flight of the indigenous tribes meant they now had all land to themselves. Much of what they rued as described by Uteley was the suffering of soldiers from natural ailments and bites (p. 79). Another effect noted on the German side was the financial and economic impact on the settlers in particular and the empire in general. As Germans would realise

midway into their genocide that total extermination would mean no slaves to work for Germany to build its colony and save it huge sums of money (p. 78). This realisation led to the hunting down of surviving victims and interning them into concentration camps as both prisoners and slaves. Thus, the necessity of a Herero or Nama life has been reduced to a bare minimum—only necessary as far as it serves the German will.

## **5.8 Synthesis of the analyses**

Having analysed the contents of the novels in the previous sections of this chapter, it is now time to turn to more in-depth discussion of the findings of the analyses, by synthesising what has been presented under authors' biographical information, as well as external and internal worlds of the texts. To do this, the researcher looked at the contribution of the three novels in intertextuality with other non-literary academic texts from and about the same periods, critical differences between the narratives and the non-literary texts about the same events, new dimensions on history and genocide offered by the novels, status of the previously repressed voices, and enhancement to the understanding of the genocide and its ramifications.

### **5.8.1 Contribution of the three novels and intertextuality with other texts**

As discussed in the analyses above, it has been established that these novels serve to foreground the narratives of the previously silenced voices in order to excavate occluded histories and narratives. To do this, the authors used different resources to re-enact the experiences of the victims during the genocide. The authors tapped into intertextuality, using products of the dominant narrative (that is, historiography and other literary works) to create a new narrative from a different perspective, hence, providing an opportunity to re-evaluate and re-tell the tale of the genocide, in other words, giving the second side to the story. Bressler (2011) suggests that one should look at how the purposes of the text agree or disagree with, repeat, conflict with other literary works of the same era. In looking at these particular three texts, the purpose of the texts as established disagrees with (or at least debunks) some of the notions popularised and engendered by the dominant (European) narrative. The texts offer opportunities to critique such notions and discredit preconceived ideas about Africans. One of the strategies the authors have used, not present in other sources of history, is the use of one European voice (usually a German soldier or hardliner) who reasons in the manner particular to the European (colonial) narrative, and challenge such character's reasoning with an African viewpoint (revising voice), which in most cases opposes the former's notions and offers an alternative narrative (re-telling the same idea) from the perspective of the victims. In fact, the very writing of historical novel (because of its reliance on research) is to take from what is already available both in literary and non-literary material

production. These resources form part of the re-examination of different intertextual materials. Generally, the three texts use a similar style in presenting a critique of the dominant narrative that has been transmitted through historiographical texts and literary texts, such as *PMJSWA*. With a slight exception of *TS*, which basically has a progressive narrative of Tjipuka and Ruhapo, both *MN* and *TLOTL* present double-perspective narratives, which pair the conventional account with the revisionary narrative. In comparison with other texts from the same era, the three texts differ from others in terms of perspective and their close association with contemporary discourses that originated from the genocide and other colonial actions.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that the texts studied fit in the literary context of the same period because of what they re-enforce of what has already been established by other resources, and challenge or enrich what has been suppressed. Since they are based on research, the three texts have been influenced by other texts as the basis for further research in order to verify, confirm or refute the accounts of what has been published. However, the texts also influence other texts in terms of how accounts, new narratives about this colonial period and its repercussions are to be written. Since the texts are produced under the social understanding of justice and recognition, the novels aid in awakening the dark memories of the Second Reich within both the consciousness of the German government (to do justice in addressing the demands of descendants of the genocide victims) and Namibian government (to bring about this narrative into the grand narrative of the nation). In such a context, therefore, these texts become powerful social and political documents, testifying or bearing witness to social wrongs that cry out for attention and change.

Because of critical differences between the narratives and the non-literary texts about the same events, the novels provide new dimensions on history and genocide. With intertextuality at the centre of any literary work in general (based on New Historicism beliefs) and at the centre of a historical novel in particular, it then becomes important to look at the new dimensions on history and genocide the novels provide. The most critical question one asks at this point, therefore, is one that was raised by Reynolds (2008) when he reflectively questioned whether historical fiction is stories about documents. Accordingly, the follow-up question is whether the novels allow the reader to interrogate real issues from literature rather than from historical account. One difference that can be noted between historiography and literature is the amount of details that literature provides to create a semblance of what actually happened, with emotions and feelings involved. This is different from historiography, which stops short of emotional connection. For example, while history simply tells of how the German *Schutztruppe* attacked the Herero at Ohamakari, the literary works attempt to re-create that moment, add a face to it and allow the reader to imagine

what it was like by emotionally connecting with the character. In other words, a historical text teaches its reader what happened, while a literary work teaches the reader how what happened actually happened and what it felt like. In one of the conversations in *TLOTL*, for example, Phillemon (a Herero guide for the German army) tells Sam that the Herero “are not expecting a battle...They have had enough of fighting and came here to get away from the Germans. The land now belongs to them. The great chief is expecting to negotiate a peace treaty” (p. 67, 68). Furthermore, in the same novel, Utley shows the civilised manner in which the Nama horsemen conduct war (focusing only on combatants) and contrasts it with the savage conduct of the Germans (p. 70). This depiction of the Nama (and or natives in general) as civilised in their conduct reflects Hendrik Witbooi’s opinion on the conduct of the Germans towards civilians. In his letter to the English Magistrate in 1892, Witbooi denounced the German manner of punishing people, which included beating them to death for debt, stretching “persons on their backs and flogs them on the stomach and even between the legs, be they male or female” (Silvester & Gewald, 2003, p. 44). He noted that even the native people, who were considered by whites as barbaric savages, “stupid and unintelligent people ... have never yet punished a human being in such a cruel and improper way” (p. 44). In *TS*, Kubuitsile tries to recreate the nature of chaos that broke out in the wake of the Battle of Waterberg. She describes a scene where a Herero woman searches for her son among the dead (p. 46). To help re-imagine the experience of the concentration camps, Serebrov places Kov in the Windhoek camp as an observer and doctor and in the Swakopmund camp as a researcher and doctor. Kov’s revulsion against the conditions in the camps and his attempt to help the victims reveal the extent of the suffering. Historiography, on the other hand would only report the end result of an event and what led to that event, without specifying the details of people’s reactions and feelings. The three novels attempt to imagine and recreate people’s reactions and feelings and present them creatively, which virtually situates reader into the moment of the actions.

Like Reynolds (2008) observed about *Morenga*, the three texts also exude post-colonial leanings in their portrayal and criticism of colonialism and also on the apparent mission to re-evaluate and re-tell history. They comment on post-colonial concerns, such as double colonisation of women. The role (double standard) of the church (missionaries) in colonisation of the indigenous people as portrayed in the texts includes an attempt to educate the African natives on the German ways (Utley, p. 6), which emphasised (instilled a sense of) inferiority of Africans and their practices and the superiority of the German people and their culture. This altering of the mind-set of the people is portrayed as necessary in ensuring that people were subjected to the colonisation of body and soul (Utley, p. 30), assisting in instilling order and subordination in their mind-set (Utley, p. 32). Unlike history texts books, which are primarily intended to record and transmit history, these novel

capture attention and stimulate curiosity about the past through their artistic representation of the events. Hence, they invite critical reflection on contemporary issues (such as land and reparation discourses) and provoke discussion about new possibilities going forward in the context of what happened.

Another dimension to the literary representation and the engagement with the Herero and Nama genocide is the element of catharsis. Catharsis refers to the purification of strong emotions such as pity and fear through engagement with art (Childs & Fowler, 2006). One of the expected effects of an acknowledgement of and apology for the genocide sought by the Herero and Nama people from the German government is to find closure. Closure in the real world can be likened to catharsis in the fictional or literary world. Literary texts on genocides, therefore, offer an alternative means to closure, through catharsis. The authors manage this experience, by exposing the readers to the tragic experiences of the characters, such as Jahohora, Leah, Tjipuka, and others, and thereafter offer redemption for these characters. While the texts offer no alternative to apology, their very production and their inclusion of a critical voice (e.g., Sam, Kov) offer an alternative acknowledgement of the atrocities. Utley even goes further and attempts to provide an alternative retribution and restoration of justice through the killing of the German commander Hartmann (p. 178). Literary representation, therefore, adds the dimension that allows the text to engage the reader's emotions, as opposed to conventional history text that simply engages the reader's knowledge. It is one thing what Göring character thinks of the protection treaty that he signed with the Herero chief (Serebrov, pp. 54-5) and quite another to read about a treaty in a history book. While a history text book notes that protection treaties were signed and what they purportedly entailed, novelists, such as Serebrov and Utley, take artistic liberty to delve into the mind of characters who orchestrated these treaties, such as Göring and Eppenstein and present to the reader what they would have thought of their treaties.

In employing the perspective of the victims in their texts, the novelists take an active role to re-tell the story that has been told mainly from one perspective, that of the perpetrator. The authors implicitly acknowledge possible gaps and misrepresentations in how the genocide has been represented. Serebrov, for example, hints at how German mainstream media may have misrepresented certain events to paint a bad picture of the victims and to create justification grounds for their action. Having suffered the first casualties in the division that travelled with Kov, the soldiers discovered that their casualties may have resulted from their own men due to panic. However, when one officer asks what to tell the men (that is, in reporting it going forward) the captain orders thus: "The truth. The Herero killed these men in cold blood" (p.210). It is hypothetical and imaginative; however, this is the author re-writing and re-telling what has been

historicised. The author thus points to the mediation of historical events. Knowing the truth yet unable to report it to the men, Kov instead expresses it in his letter to Hanna: “They didn’t die as heroes in the heat of battle ... Instead, their lives were snuffed out by their comrades, who panicked in the strangeness of this land” (p. 211). Serebrov, therefore, demonstrates the generation of historical account of events that is mediated by the dominant group and, at the same time, offers a possible source of alternative histories in anecdotes, in this case, letters. What is noted here is evidence of what Parvini (2018) noted, that it is possible to produce narratives that explore what has been left out or barely glimpsed upon in dominant historical accounts. Such narratives, which may act as counter-histories can be produced through engagement with anecdotes that depict the lived experiences of people.

Utleý’s use of a non-indigenous protagonist is a critical strategy that achieves several aspects in portraying a well-rounded representation. Being a British spy, Sam allows the readers to see the political dynamics and power structures at play in the region. As an undercover, Sam also has the ability to engage different German officers, as he has with the likes of Hartmann, David and Dr Bofinger. Conversations with these characters allowed the author to elicit the views and perspectives of such characters on the war and the indigenous people. As it has been suggested by some scholars (Winterfeldt & Vale, 2011; Baer, 2018) in relation to other historical fiction authors, Utleý may have avoided an indigenous protagonist for fear of assuming a perspective for which he may not have full understanding or the so-called authorial legitimacy. However, his juxtaposing of Leah with the protagonist, making her a kind of quasi-protagonist, shows his intent to provide a perspective of the indigenous people. This has been aided by other minor associations of indigenous characters (such as, Thomas, Phillemon and the *strandloper*) with the protagonist. These associations enabled the author to provide a perspective of the Herero and Nama people, without subjecting himself to often questionable act of assuming the perspective of the indigenous. Sam also epitomises the *Blue Book*, in that he has come to be a judge in what he himself has participated. The *Blue Book* demonstrates the reactionary behaviour of the British that was based on their interest colonial dominance in the region rather than the actual suffering of the Herero and Nama people, as has been argued in the *White Book* (Germany’s own response to the *Blue Book*). According to Gewald and Silvester (2003), the *White Book* argued that Britain has committed similar acts in its war with the Boer, where it set up concentration camps. Kubuitsile also comments at these similarities in *TS* interconnecting the two wars, with the paths of victims (Riette and Tjipuka) from both wars crossing in exile. For long they watched in silence as Germany committed its atrocities, until it became politically expedient for them, that is, when they reacted. Such motive is also expressed by Fred Cornell (another British spy in *TLOT*), who, although rightly acknowledges

that the Germans' abhorrent treatment of the Herero and Nama people "shouldn't be a secret, the whole world should know about it" (p. 148), undercuts such acknowledgement with the ulterior motive:

I'm in this country on behalf of you know who to report on German atrocities during the war and publicise them via the press down south. The aim, of course, is to reduce sympathy for them among the Boers. (p. 149)

Hence, it becomes clear that the primary motive of speaking out against the acts of atrocities had little to do with the victims, but a ploy in the power struggle toolkit of the colonialists. The same can be discerned from Sam's characterisation, having participated in the Anglo-Boer war, he comes to GSWA as supposedly a neutral being, who watches on as his fellow colonialists murder indigenous people, even aiding their cause by acting as a translator. Only when he has personal interest (his fancy for Leah), coupled with his anti-Germanic stance, does he stand up and take side, rather than as a matter of principle and regard for human rights and freedom. Sam's bond with Leah has grown beyond what either of them might have thought it would. Its portrayal shows that they have developed genuine love for each other; while Leah demonstrates this by giving Sam her necklace, Sam has performed a series of actions that proves his true love for Leah, including running away from the German military and going to extremes to find and rescue her, and most of all by paying diamonds to Cornell to buy his support in the rescue efforts. It is a pity that this humanising act, this bond, does not do much to influence events at a larger scale; its inception and conclusion represented an influence at a personal level (journey).

Another strategy employed by Uteley and Serebrov to re-evaluate and re-tell history by presenting character dialogues between characters (German soldiers) in favour of the atrocities and those critical of the atrocities (i.e., Sam and Kov, respectively, and other characters with similar viewpoints). The purpose of these dialogues appears to be to debunk the logic used in justifying colonial actions, by subjecting such logic to critical debate and offer alternative logic and narratives. In one such dialogue in *MN* (pp. 218-9), Gerd, one of the German soldiers asks, "But how can you justify their [Herero's] cruelty?" This question was informed by the promoted understanding at the time that the Herero people were savages, who murder and mutilate the German settlers. Contrary to that, however, Daniel, another soldier, replies thus: "What cruelty? They spared the women and children, escorting them safely to Windhuk" (p. 218) The author suggests that this is information that would have not been known to the general German public due to biased reporting that solely focused on establishing a pretext for waging war against the Herero people. This is demonstrated by Kov's surprised reaction to this new piece of information: "What are you talking about? The newspapers back home were filled with stories about how they were murdering children and then

slaughtering their mothers” (p. 219). Hence, in these kinds of dialogue the author exposes the kind of bias that has long been exploited by colonialist to further its cause and, at the same time, creating a platform for re-evaluating and retelling such history.

### **5.8.2 Status of the previously repressed voices**

In their article on historical fiction genre, Beck et al. (2000) state that much of the information found in textbooks focuses on powerful members of society and issues that matter to them, but fails to touch on the everyday issues of the ordinary person. Such omission has often, therefore, become an inviting gap for many historical fiction writers to fill as exemplified by the three writers selected in this study. Cushman (as cited in Beck et al., 2000) argues that what is important to a historical fiction writer is to understand what life was like for an average person, his experiences, troubles and joys, and then present what has been learnt through somebody else’s eyes using the writer’s imagination. Following in Cushman’s suggestion, the three texts attempt to present the life of an ordinary Herero or Nama living in GSWA during the genocide and present such imaginative experience through someone’s eyes (Leah, Tjipuka, Jahohora, and others). These are no kings or bishops but ordinary people who represent repressed voices, and the stories they tell are stories of an ordinary person. Thus, the three books are essentially books about oppressed people. Beck et al. (2000) posit that “Books about oppressed peoples open up opportunities for discussion about whose stories get to be told and whose voices are missing” (p. 553). Accordingly, the three books open up opportunities to review how the events of the Herero and Nama genocide have been told, and these new works contribute to the understanding of such events. Although Utey avoids a Herero or Nama point-of-view character for the narration of his novel, his neutral point-of-view character and its close association with a Nama character, Leah, has helped to advance, even just so mildly, the voicing of the previously repressed voices. Among the characteristics of the indigenous people that Utey brings to the fore are some of which the colonial perspective has perpetually denied and suppressed—their humanity and civilisation. This he portrays by showing that, although Leah dies as a direct result of the actions of Sam’s compatriots, her family and community still recognise Sam’s benevolence towards Leah and save his life from the sickness that has attacked him. As Sam prepares to leave Leah’s people, the “villagers gathered round and pressed small gifts” of different sorts into his hands, and then the *strandloper* offers him a ride in his cart back to Walfish Bay (p. 174). As opposed to the painting of Africans by colonialists as savage and uncivilised people, Utey continually depicts actions of the indigenous people that contradict such notions, thus recognising and foregrounding the previously repressed voices and perspectives. Although the native people of GSWA were generally oppressed relative to the German settlers, one learns from reading the texts that within the group of the oppressed, there were also others who

were domestically oppressed (e.g., women relative to men, and Berg Damara relative to Herero and Nama). In *TS*, Kubuitsile, hence, goes even further to these most oppressed people, who as a result of European colonisation essentially have become double oppressed. For example, the juxtaposing of Germans' rape of Herero women and Wauzeza's attempted rape of Tjipuka, and also the juxtaposing of the slavery of natives to Germans and the servitude of Berg Damara to Herero (p. 30) subtly expose these experiences and give sound to these doubly repressed voices. The narrator says, "Under other circumstances, before all of this, Peter would not think of speaking to Tjipuka, a Herero from a royal family, but now all that was gone" (p. 189). Thus, in history or dominant texts, Peter would not find voice and space to speak out his concerns. However, Kubuitsile attempts to give voice to such character to state his experience. Peter states thus, "...where would I run to? I was a slave to the Nama, to the Herero before, now I'm a slave to the whites" (p. 207). Through Peter, Kubuitsile voices the little stories of the hidden history of the Damara, who, it appears, have suffered a chain of slavery. Berg Damara were considered beneath Herero, and did jobs considered lowly for a Herero chief's daughter (p. 239). *MN* appears to function retrospectively in relation to its narrative. The publication of the text appears to fulfil the wish of one old woman character in the story who says to Jahohora, "Child, you must listen to me. You must save yourself. For your family. And for our people. Someone must live to tell our story" (p. 168). To this woman, the survival of the Herero is not only important to ensure its continued existence but also to guarantee that their perspective of what has transpired is carried to posterity. Hence, it would be remiss to such aspirations if voices of survivors are silenced in favour of the dominant narrative. These three publications, therefore, represent a significant effort in the recovery and foregrounding of suppressed voices. They open up opportunities for discussion about the stories told about this historical event and the voices represented.

### **5.8.3 Enhancement of the understanding of the genocide and its ramifications**

In the writing and reading of historical fiction, there is some intent and desire to enhance the understanding of history. As assumed by New Historicists, history is neither linear nor objective. Accordingly, history on Herero and Nama genocide is neither linear nor has it been told objectively. Therefore, there is a need to search for other sites from which genocide can be understood as it may have happened. Historical fiction provides one such important cultural site. *TLOT*, for example, comes after the other two novels, which predominantly features a Herero perspective. What Utley does is recognise the absence in the earlier publications of the perspective of the Namas, who, in terms of social class were ranked below Herero. Utley puts a Nama lady in the spotlight in what not only challenges the dominant colonial narrative that excludes voices of the victims, but also reacts to the exclusion of Nama voices in preceding narratives. The three novels

add an extra layer to the history recorded in history books as the novelists paint pictures with words to present a vivid image of life on the battlefield, in the desert and in the death camps. Their narratives are not simply records of what happened as would be found in history text books, but their narratives portray characters experiencing atrocities and voicing their pain and feelings as close as possible to how direct victims would have expressed. As noted by Norton (1987) historical fiction is not just dates, accomplishments, and battles; rather it is about making the past become alive by portraying people, both ordinary and famous, “who lived during certain times and who, through their actions and beliefs, influenced the course of history” (as cited in Beck et al., 2000, p. 446). The authors’ presentation of the oppressor’s and the oppressed’s actions and reactions enhances the reader’s understanding of dynamics of the events and offer a fresh view informed by multiple perspectives. Utley, for example, presents an irony where the Herero spare missionaries and women from any harm related to the fights (pp. 36, 53) then comparatively presents the Germans’ indiscriminate killing of Herero elderly (p. 45). This depiction critically challenges the colonial notions of savagery associated with the oppressed and civilisation associated with the oppressor. Therefore, by situating characters, such as Leah, Jahohora, Tjipuka, Ruhapo, and others, in the moment of the actions, the texts make the lives of other people—on which the characters are based—more accessible by presenting their lived-through experience, thereby enhancing understanding not only of the genocide and its ramifications, but also of human nature and historical patterns.

While historical records may fail to show the perspectives of the different classes of victimisers on the one hand and those of different classes of the victims on the other, the selected novels reveal these nuanced differences. Historiography tends to present a binary of victim and victimiser, but imaginative writing, on the other hand, through its extensive characterisation, presents different perspectives from each side of the binary, consequently devolving the binary into a continuum. In such continuum, the victimiser constitutes varying degrees of influence, ranging from the rulers and decision makers to the actual implementers of decisions, in this case, the soldiers. Hence, when one considers Perroomian (2003), who argues that a genocidal crime does not stop exclusively with the target group, but it permeates the entire human race and, thus, affects both the victim and the victimiser, one notices how such ramification has been captured in the novels. For example, in *TLOT*, Utley shows how the victimiser also becomes a victim when Wilhelm, a guard at Shark Island, says, “I sometimes think the top brass don’t realise that we guards are also in prison” (p. 159). Similarly, Utley also depicts David’s, (the Jewish soldier’s) disillusionment with the act of killing by portraying his distress and disorientation following the “cleansing operation”. David relates thus to Sam:

Once we found a group that we said we would spare if they surrendered. We guessed that they were hiding in the bush, hoping that we would go away. Our commander called out again and one by one they came out of the bush, as scared as hell ... It took only a few second and they were soon all dead. (p. 81)

Sam describes David as “a man finding himself in the darkness who had given up searching for a light” (p. 82). Thus, in these examples Utley delineate two ranks of the victimiser paradigm, those who make decisions (i.e., “top brass” and “commanders”) and those who implement those decisions (i.e., Wilhelm and David). Hence, Wilhelm and David, to a certain degree become victimised as much as they victimise. Furthermore, unlike history textbooks, which rely on an attempt to record facts as they happened, imaginative narratives rely on human emotions and experience to enhance understanding and empathy. Kubuitsile exploits this, for instance, by depicting the scene of Ruhapo discovering the bodies of his parents and relatives on the battleground ground:

The animals had already taken most of her body. Dug it apart, fighting for her organs. But her face was there. His mother’s face, contorted in pain ... Ruhapo went further and found his father, the old man’s head cut clean from his body ... (p. 55).

The author further portrays the severity of the shattered dreams and ruined lives by emphasising Ruhapo’s all-consuming love for Tjipuka that defies the traditional customs of polygamy that prevailed at the time (p. 61). Such enhancement, however, can only be realised by the reader if the reader adopts “an aesthetic stance that is focused on the lived-through experience of the text, rather than adopting an efferent stance in which [the reader] concentrates on what facts are to be learned through the reading” (Rosenblatt, 1978, as cited in Beck et al., 2000, p. 448). Rather than being constrained by facts, the novelist’s main preoccupation becomes a mastery of presenting what it was like to live at that time and how issues viewed at community or national level played out in individual lives, what they really meant in defining individuals’ lives.

#### **5.8.4 On the textuality of history and the historicity of the literary texts**

One of the tenets of New Historicism is the belief in the textuality of history and historicity of text, as famously propounded by Montrose (1986). Like Montrose, White (1978) (as cited in Vambe, 2018, p. 6) acknowledges this assumption by arguing that “history is no less a form of fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation.” Hence, as part of a New Historical analysis, it is important, as suggested by Dobie (2012), to look at how the texts suggest that history is neither linear nor does it necessarily proceed in an orderly positive direction. Historical fiction, such as that of the three books studied, is evidently and admittedly based on research of the historical period

depicted. The purpose of such literary works becomes an additional to the resources on which its research is based; that is, to fill the gaps left by such resources, to evaluate the content of such resources in order to reinforce or challenge what has been presented. The three novels studied follow the historical events as presented in different historiographical resources, adding the human experience dimension to them. They essentially become an extension of historical accounts presented in historical text books, but their narratives also become history unto themselves. On the other hand, the very existence of gaps and omission in historical accounts, which authors such as Uteley, Kubuitsile and Serebrov attempt to fill, speaks to the subjectivity and incompleteness of history. The texts, therefore, not only reveal this subjectivity and incompleteness but also suggest that history does not necessarily proceed in an orderly and positive direction. And this they demonstrate by presenting multi-perspective alternative histories. It is, however, important to note that just like history, literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of the current times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. Hence, Veesser (1989) notes that in terms of New Historicist thinking, “every act of unmasking, critiquing, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes” (p. xi). It can, therefore, be argued that the socio-political context in which the researcher is situated has had a bearing on the reading and interpretation of the texts. A BBC documentary on the genocide speaks of how propaganda campaign was used in Germany (Right wing) to construct an enemy that did not exist: the barbaric savages, who rape white women and kill their children, hence, used it as a pretext to take over the colony completely (SuperAngelofglory, 2014). Such propaganda is, of course, reflected in the texts as exemplified, for example, in *MN*, where an officer is directed to relay information implicating Herero in the killing of German soldiers despite it having been established that the said soldiers were victims of mistaken target due to panic (p.210). Such propaganda and misrepresentation as reflected by Serebrov was taken as historical facts, hence the ensuing genocide. This, therefore, demonstrates that history is textual and is no less a form of fiction than fiction is a form of history. Contrary to such historical propaganda, the novels do not depict this savagery; rather, they portray both Herero and Nama as peaceful communities who only acted in rebellion against their mistreatment by the oppressor. For example, even during the time of war, they spared missionaries, women and children. The actions of the Germans in the stories, on the other hand, for example, the killing of the elderly, who were left behind by fleeing compatriots, and the shooting of babies and their mothers demonstrate the savagery for which they, through their propaganda, blamed on the indigenous people.

## 5.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analyses of *MN*, *TS*, and *TLOTL* and the discussion of the findings. The discussion followed the principles of New Historicism, in which first the researcher analysed the biographical background of the three authors in order to establish points of linkage between the authors' lives and what they write about. This was followed by the analysis and discussion of the external world of the texts, that is, the socio-political and cultural environment in which the texts were produced and how it is reflected in the texts. He then analysed and discussed the internal world of the texts, that is, the world in which the narratives are set (the discourse that generates the narratives). In the last section of the chapter, the preceding analyses were synthesised in order to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the excavation of occluded narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses. The analysis suggests that ultimately there are only two ends one would seek to further or achieve with historical fiction on genocide such as this. One of them is to discredit claims of its occurrence and grounds for its recognition and restorative justice or to reinforce claims of its occurrence and grounds for its recognition and restorative justice. The analysis and discussion presented in this chapter showed that the texts examined in this study seek to reinforce the occurrence of the Herero-Nama genocide and grounds for its recognition and restorative justice. The next chapter draws conclusions from the preceding chapter, and based on the conclusions, offers some recommendations.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the analysis of the three selected novels and discussion of the findings from the analysis. This chapter summarises the foregoing discussion in order to draw conclusions from it based on the objectives of the study. In drawing conclusions, the researcher examined how the genocide is represented in the three texts; what contemporary discourses are reflected and how they are reflected in the texts; how intertextuality is employed in the texts; and how all these aspects explain the contribution of historical fiction to the expression of repressed narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses. Finally, based on the findings of the analysis and the conclusions drawn from it, recommendations are made for further engagement with literary representation of Namibian history.

#### 6.2 Conclusions

The analysis of the three texts shows that the chosen texts assume a common understanding: acknowledging the omission and exclusion of a historical perspective of the victims of the genocide both in the historiography and literary representation on the subject matter. Hence, in their representations they share a common characteristic desire both to revise and retell history, and in so doing, generate alternative histories that not only enrich the reader's understanding of history on these events, but also subvert the dominant narrative that suppresses and excludes the narratives of the victims. All this is demonstrated by the authors' assumption of the victims' perspective and adoption of a revisionist approach, which challenge the Eurocentric voice that dominates historiography and earlier literary representations, such as *PMJSWA*. This deliberate approach demonstrates the authors' intent to challenge hegemonic discourse and support the cause of the victims by bringing their concerns and sentiments within the general populace's access and commenting on the events in a way historiography could not. On the one hand historical fiction re-presents what has already been rendered in historical resources from which its research is based. On the other hand, however, it offers a medium and forum for revising what has been recorded and shared, thereby adding value to historiography.

In the analysis of the literary representation of the genocide in the three novels, the study discovered that the novels add value to history by relating a history that is already known through historical records and adding a face to the atrocities. Hence, rather than having events related in a vacuum as a series of causes and effects, the authors place characters in the midst of the atrocities,

wherein the characters express their feelings, emotions and pain in a way that would form an emotional connection with the reader. In doing this, the authors were able to challenge the hegemonic narrative by presenting events, which are predominantly presented from the hegemonic perspective, from the perspective of the victims, who were previously suppressed or excluded from the dominant narrative. By assuming this position, authors were able to present a subversive and critical voice against the logic and notions strongly held as true within the dominant narrative, for example, notions that have to do with causality, culture and civilisation.

From the analysis, it has also been concluded that the novels are filled with reflections of contemporary discourses circulating in the culture in which the novels emerged. The three prominent discourses reflected in the texts include the land discourse (in particular claims to ancestral land rights), reparation discourse, as well as the genocide discourse in general. First of all, by foregrounding this era of Namibian history (the German colonial rule in Namibia, and the genocide, in particular), the texts engage with the genocide discourse. The genocide discourse has been characterised by the fight for the proper and official acknowledgement and recognition of the genocide by the Herero and Nama communities on the one hand, and the denial and ignorance of it by the German government on the other hand. The efforts of the Herero and Nama communities have also not been aided by central government due to political dynamics in the country, in which the hegemonic post-independence narrative of Namibia, as noted by Kössler (2015), privileges the experience of the liberation war over the earlier instances of anti-colonial resistance. These political dynamics have also spelt challenges within the other two related discourses, land and reparation. Niezen (2018) describes the liberation struggle narrative as being state-sanctioned and one to which the peace and stability prevalent in Namibia today is attributed. The belittling of the primary anti-colonial resistance relative to the latter struggle for liberation has also translated into limited support from central government for reparation demands. By situating ordinary Herero and Nama characters in the midst of the atrocities, and thus putting a face to the suffering, the texts engage with the reparation discourse by rekindling the sense of suffering endured. This ensures enhanced emotional engagement and consequently solidifies grounds for restitutive demands. The German government has often argued (and to an extent assented to by the Namibian government) that the development aid from Germany to Namibia would equate to and suffice for any reparation claims. The counter-argument by the Herero and Nama communities has been that development aids are provided for the whole country and not specifically to the benefit of the communities who have been victimised in the genocide and still find themselves under challenges (such as lack of land) as a result of the German colonial actions. This argument appears to make sense when compared, for example, with how victims of the liberation struggle (i.e., veterans and “struggle kids”) receive

special benefits from the government. Therefore, by emphasising the suffering endured by these communities through literary representation that puts a face to the suffering, the texts are not only influenced by the discourse but also potentially influence the direction of the discourse on reparation. In their representations, the narratives become compelling political and social documents testifying to social wrongs that cry out for acknowledgement and recognition by means of apology and restitution.

Similarly, the texts accentuate the loss of ancestral land by indigenous communities to the German settlers. Since Namibia attained its independence in 1990, issues of land have dominated public discourse as demonstrated by the first (1991) and second (2018) national land conferences, both which, among other things, sought to find a solution to ancestral land rights claims. While the first conference failed to find an answer to the question of ancestral land rights claims, citing the complexity of the issue, the second conference, which came after the publication of all three novels, made practical effort towards finding a solution by resolving to establish a presidential commission of inquiry on ancestral land, which has since been established. Therefore, the texts become part of this discourse as they engage historical issues of how indigenous people lived prior to land expropriation, how they lost their land and what it spelt for them.

Central to all these representations is the harnessing of the power of intertextuality in order to engage with historical records, oral narratives and contemporary discourses in order to revise, evaluate and correct history by presenting the historical narratives from the perspective that is traditionally silenced. The authors use previous writings, studies and critiques as literary and social milieus in which they frame their narratives. The study hence concludes that by using New Historicism to explore the literary representation of the Herero-Nama genocide in the three selected novels, the researcher was able to explain the contribution of historical fiction to the revelation of hidden narratives and engaging with Namibian history and related discourses.

While the study concludes that the general disposition of the texts supports the sentiments of the victims of the genocide and participates in the effort to document alternative histories and bring to the fore suppressed voices, certain questions can be asked about how the texts present and accomplish such disposition. Coincidentally, in all three narratives the rescue and survival of the victim (Leah, Tjipuka, Jahohora) comes from the intervention of the very same people who participate in the colonial project, that is, Sam, Ludwig, and Kov and the Jurgens, respectively. This depiction of the coloniser as both the killer and the saviour makes the underlying motive and message ambiguous and suspicious. Hence, for example, Krishnamurthy (2018, p. 45) in her analysis of *MN* and *TS*, concludes that the resilience of the two female protagonists “is offered as a panacea

to the wrongs done by the German colonisers.” The coloniser is depicted as all-powerful, responsible for both death and survival. In this sense, the texts appear to reinforce the issue of power (white hegemony), whereby whites or Europeans act as agents of the victims. Notably, this picture as portrayed by the narratives themselves also appears to be replicated in real life if one looks at the fact that the novels were written by white authors purporting to represent the voices of black victims. The theoretical framework used in the study, however, has shown to be limited in interrogate some of these concerns productively. Hence, recommendation for further engagement with the texts is given in the following section.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

To say much of the history on the genocide is not recorded would be inaccurate, since much, especially within the academic sphere has been published on the subject as demonstrated by the number of resources cited in the literature review. However, academic publications are tailored to and mostly accessible by those within the academia. Yet, for the purpose of socio-political impact, literary works command greater impact than academic works because of their accessibility to a wider populace, not only physically but also intellectually. This study, hence, recommends for the strengthening of the creative production to run in parallel with academic production when engaging with the history of the people. While the study attempted to interrogate the three novels exhaustively, the New Historical approach has proven to be limited in providing tools for interpretation that would have enriched the researcher’s understanding and interpretation of the novels further. Hence, based on the patterns and themes that emerged during research that could not be sufficiently addressed within the New Historical framework, the researcher would like to recommend coalescing New Historicism with other frameworks to gain a greater understanding of the novels. For example, while the New Historical approach has revealed ambiguity and suspicion in characterisation and assignment of roles in the narratives (e.g., the portrayal of white males rescuing black females in all three texts) that appear to emanate from the position that the authors write from, Subaltern theory could be used to analyse this particular aspect of the texts further and provide significant insights into the novels. Similarly, other issues that emerged from the analysis of the three novels yet do not get sufficient interpretation include the question of authorial legitimacy, particularly in bearing witness to genocide and the issue of agency vis-a-vis speaking for the other in representing the voices of the victims. Therefore, adding the Subaltern theory to the interpretative tools of the three novels can enhance the analysis of the pervasive issue of speaking for others, which characterises these writings as this would allow the researcher to critically examine whether the subaltern—assuming that genocide victims can be grouped as part of the subaltern—are speaking for themselves in those texts or they are being spoken for, consequently

being represented rather than representing themselves. Using the Subaltern theoretical framework can also provide the researcher with insights to explore the ways in which the texts either create or undermine the necessary conditions for the subaltern to speak, in other words, for the victims to tell their stories and be heard and ratified.

Furthermore, through the analysis of the novels, the study revealed patterns of postcolonial characteristics within the texts as demonstrated by their assumption of a position that is critical of the colonial oppressor's actions and narrative and sympathetic to the oppressed. When viewed against the characterisation and assignment of roles of white characters as both killers and saviours as noted above, these patterns create an ambivalence, which the researchers argues could be better analysed through the Postcolonial framework for a deeper understanding. In addition to patterns of postcolonial characteristics, the study also revealed the reflection of the land discourse in the three novels as established by their emphasis on the expropriation of land from indigenous people by the Germans. Using the Marxist theoretical framework could extend the interpretation of the novels to gain more insights on how such action disempowered previous owners of the land and turned them into labourers (proletariats) of the new landowners (bourgeoisie). The Marxist theoretical framework in conjunction with Subaltern and Postcolonial theoretical frameworks could further extend and enrich the interpretation of how the contemporary hegemonic narrative relates to the colonial legacy of class distinction and post-independence class distinction. Hence, the researcher recommends coalescing the three theoretical frameworks with New Historicism.

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## APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1: Ethical clearance certificate



#### FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)

#### DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: S010/2019  
Student no.: 212107437

Date Issued: 13 August 2019

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#### RESEARCH TOPIC

Title: Herero-Nama genocide as historical fiction: A New Historical analysis of *Mama Namibia, The Scattering, and The Lie of the Land*

Researcher (s): Mr. Festus U Abiatar  
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Dear Mr Abiatar,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to your supervisor or F-REC as applicable in writing. Should there be any uncertainty in this regard, you have to consult with the F-REC.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,



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