

INVESTIGATING THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES IN NAMIBIAN  
POST-INDEPENDENCE POETRY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main focus of this thesis was to examine how social issues are conceived and articulated in a representative selection of Namibian post-independence poetry written in English. Couched on and guided by socio-historicism and postcolonialism, this qualitative study elucidated the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors that militate against Namibia's total liberation as depicted in the selected poems. The study found that the Namibian post-independence experiences and concerns such as; continued poverty, unemployment, corruption among Namibians, as portrayed in the selected poetry are the most prevalent themes that the poets address. The study contends that the poets portray independence as a total failure, politically, economically and culturally. Thus, the poets use poetry as a platform to protest against the prevailing status quo. While poetry on socio-political protest portrays how government has failed to deliver on most of its promises because of neo-colonialism and corruption, poetry also socio-culturally protests how independence has compromised the dignity and identity that come with being black. The study has established, through the selected poetry, that identity and culture are central to the attainment of true independence. Finally, poetry on the socio-economic front protests and presents the suffering of the ordinary black Namibian due to unemployment and poverty in the post-independent epoch. Overall, it emerges that post-independence poets are disillusioned by the fruits of independence.

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Above all, I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof T. C. Smit for her teaching and mentorship. I have benefited greatly and have retained the knowledge of poetry and research that she readily shared with me.

## DEDICATION

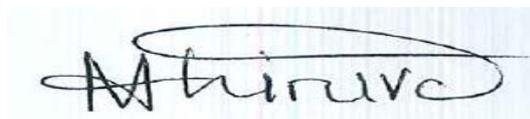
This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Sarah, to whom I am chiefly indebted for her passion to see me succeed.

## DECLARATION

I, Mercy C. Mushonga hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any institution of higher education.

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Mercy, C. Mushonga

30 January 2018

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Date

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Poetry is a mirror that reflects the image and social patterns of a society with all its good values and all its ills in a decaying political, economic and social landscape. As such, it is given impetus, shape, direction and even areas of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. By virtue of its nature and style, poetry can be regarded as a powerful vehicle through which writers convey their deepest and most distilled thoughts. Thus, through poetry, poets present their pure and raw thoughts and feelings about any society. Poetry can, therefore, be regarded as a launch pad to a deeper understanding of the socio-political, socio-economic as well as socio-cultural issues embodied by any given society. In the light of the foregoing, this study explored how socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues were represented in the selected Namibian poetry written in English.

This chapter introduces the study by presenting orientation of the study in section 1.2. Section 1.3 discusses the problem statement while section 1.4 lists the research questions that informed this study. The significance of the study is highlighted and explained in section 1.5. Limitations of the study are presented in section 1.6. The chapter is concluded with a summary and a layout of all the chapters in sections 1.7 and 1.8.

### **1.2 Orientation of the study**

The attainment of independence in many African countries provoked freedom in other fields of national endeavour, such as literature and art (Alemu, 2010). This freedom has seen many African writers, such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Okot p' Bitek and Memory Chirere, carry an enduring propensity for social, political and economic

commitment. Their texts mostly reflect the socio-political events in their societies. To this end, Alemu (2010) further argues that African writers write their literary works as a way of responding to the socio-economic crises on the continent. It implies that literature captures social, political, economic and cultural events in the society.

The freedom to pen poetry, drama, novels and short stories has resulted in many African writers using literature as a peaceful weapon to struggle against the injustices that prevail in their respective countries. As creative members of the society, the African writers' primary role has not only been to discuss aesthetics in their literary works, but also to recreate and interpret the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues of the time. Among the social issues that the post-independence writer has been vigilant of, are issues of injustice, corruption, immorality, abuse of positions and the economy, underperformance by leaders in various sectors of society, the low status of the female gender and the challenge of HIV and AIDS (Makaudze, 2009). In all such cases Wa Thiongo (1982) opines that the writer should cast light upon all that is happening and reveal all that lies hidden or is concealed by darkness. This means that the task of the writer becomes similar to that of a philosopher who carves out morals and values that are ideal and that should govern people in moulding a humane society. Makaudze (2009) reiterates that the writer suggests the checks and balances that should govern human contact. This implies that the writer, writing in a post-independence era, cannot afford the luxury of writing about trivial or peripheral issues, but should tackle the big social and political issues of the time. In that sense, literature becomes a voice for the voiceless and plays a pivotal role in moulding and redirecting the actions of a society.

Malaba (2015) remarks that, just like in most African countries, Namibia's proclamation of independence drew the attention of many disgruntled poets in different anthologies to "express the ongoing need to fight for equality, freedom and an end to exploitation in

political, economic and domestic spheres” (p. 55). This remark by Malaba (2015) confirms that poetry, as a sub-genre of literature, reflects the concerns of poets regarding the political and social conditions of the Namibian society. By virtue of its use of powerful words and rich imagery, poetry has the ability to x-ray the deepest thoughts of Namibian poets and their society. At the same time, it captures some of the tragic aspects of Namibian independence with great power and beauty. Poetry can therefore, be regarded as a platform to air poets’ views, as they act as spokespeople of their societies. The role of poets, therefore, becomes central because they “speak to and speak out for the strength and determination of the people in the struggle for total liberation” (Wa Thiongo, 1993, p. 118) within the political, social and cultural sphere.

This study, therefore, was predicated on the growing trend by post-independence Namibian poets to project images of disillusionment in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres in their anthologies. The theme of disillusionment in post-independent Namibia seems to permeate a large corpus of their poetry. Thus, it has been Kavevangua Kahengua (2002; 2012), Joseph Molapong (2005; 2015) and Axaro Thaniseb’s (2011) preoccupation to protest through poetry against the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural imbalances of their society. It is, therefore, against this background that this study investigated socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes as depicted by post-independence Namibian poets who write about Namibia in English.

### **1.3. Statement of the problem**

Several scholars (Ashikuti, 2012; Malaba, 2000, 2015; Melber, 2004) have studied poetry in Namibia. Their studies analysed poetry from a perspective different from what this study takes. For example, Malaba (2006) analysed Kavevangua Kahengua’s anthology, *Dreams*. Ashikuti (2011) also analysed Thaniseb’s poetry in *Searching for the Rain: An Anthology of*

*Verse*. In both studies, Ashikuti (2011) and Malaba (2006) observed some of the struggles of the masses in a post-independent epoch. However, they did not employ any specific theory to analyse the poems. This study employs the postcolonial theory and the socio-historic critical approach in an attempt to situate and give full insights into an understanding of socio-political and socio-economic issues addressed in Namibian poetry, written in English by Namibian poets.

Furthermore, Malaba (2015) analysed six anthologies of Namibian poetry dating from 1982 until 2005, and discussed the role of poetry as a means of raising the political consciousness of participants in political propaganda and aesthetics. On the other hand, Melber (2004) addressed the issue of aesthetic merit for the people in exile in an essay 'The Namibian Literature of Combat' in the anthology, *It is No More a Cry*. IKhaxas (2005) also analysed a collection of women's poetry from a feminist perspective and looked at women's oppression. Missing from the prevailing literature on poetry is the portrayal of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues from the perspective of three different post-independence Namibian poets who write in English. This study, therefore, examined socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes as depicted by Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb's poetry of Namibia.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the most prevalent issues that the three poets address in the different anthologies?
- How do the poets portray socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural issues in their poetry?

- How may poetry be regarded as an integral part of the struggle for freedom, equality and justice?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

There seems to be scanty literature on the literary representations of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes in Namibian poetry. According to Ngugi (2012, p. 60), “literature acts as a mirror in which human experiences can be viewed. It stretches the mind, deepens one’s experience and heightens awareness of the surroundings. Through literature, communities get to understand themselves better.”

Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge creation and dissemination of post-independence literature in Namibia. The study also intended to encourage further exploration of the selected themes in other Namibian literary works and other genres.

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The study is limited to the examination of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in post-independence poetry anthologies by Kahengua (2002, 2012), Molapong (2005, 2015) and Thaniseb (2011) who all wrote in English. Conducting a study based on poems written in English only, may be a limitation as there are anthologies written in Namibian indigenous languages as well. It is possible that these anthologies would support or even contradict the findings from those poems written in English. Therefore, the findings of this research may not be generalised to other anthologies addressing similar themes in Namibia.

Another limitation of this research is that the research findings are based on poetry only, which is just a sub-genre of literature. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to Namibian literature in general.

## **1.7 Layout of chapters**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction which orients the study and spells out the gap in existing literature through the statement of the research problem. Moreover, this chapter defines the research questions that motivated the study. Finally, the chapter explained the significance of the study as well as the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 reviews extant literature on poetry and other literary studies set in Namibia and other parts of Africa which deal with socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes in the pre- and post-independence epoch. These concepts discussed in chapter 2 are important; since they form a solid foundation on which arguments raised in chapter 4 are rooted. Furthermore, the chapter explicates the theories that guided and formed the boundaries of this study. The thoughts and praxis as well as the applicability of postcolonialism and socio-historicism to the study are discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology which covers the research design, the population of the study, as well as the sample and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 is a critical analysis and interpretation of the selected post-independence poetry anthologies by the three poets, Kavevangua Kahengua, Joseph Molapong and Axaro Thaniseb. The analysis of these poets' works is aimed at socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes that are portrayed in Namibian post-independence poetry.

Chapter 5 gives the conclusion, which highlights the main arguments of the research, and presents summative conclusions on the major findings of the study. The chapter also provides recommendations for future research on Namibian poetry.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the study and it also presented its orientation by indicating the major thrust of the study, which is the exploration and explication of social issues that are addressed in post-independence poetry, specifically in the following anthologies, *Dreams and Invoking Voices: An Anthology of Poems* by Kavevangua Kahengua , *Come Talk your Heart and The Scars on my Skin* by Joseph Molapong, as well as *Searching for the Rain: An anthology of Verse* by Axaro Thaniseb. The chapter further illustrated the problem statement, research questions and the significance as well as the limitations of the study.

The next chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks employed and the literature that was reviewed for this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that were utilised to situate and guide this study. It also reviews extant literature on the post-independence socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues as they find expression in literary works.

The review of the related literature provides an overview of the major trends in literature with the view to identify gaps that require further research. Furthermore, the literature reviewed will provide a springboard upon which the arguments raised in the research were anchored.

### **2.2. Theoretical stance**

In this study, a two-dimensional approach is adopted as a literary tool of analysis. The researcher fuses postcolonial theory with the socio-historical critical approach. The two literary tools are useful as they offer the fullest insight towards an understanding of the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues portrayed in the selected poetry.

#### **2.2.1. Socio-historical approach**

The socio-historical school of literary theory, also known as new historicism, was pioneered in the 1980s by Stephen Greenblatt (Sharma, 2014). It is an approach to literary criticism and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius (Greenblatt, 2006). Thus, the approach provides an understanding of a literary work by investigating the social, cultural and intellectual contexts that produced it. The context includes the artist's biography and milieu. Digging into the context is an interesting reference

point which allows an investigation of the Namibian context, as well as the poets Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb's biographies in relation to their poetry on socio-political and socio-economic and socio-cultural issues.

According to Sharma (2014), socio-historicism is also concerned with the political function of literature and with the concept of power, the intricate means by which cultures produce and reproduce themselves. Thus, a socio-historical perspective is essential as it allows the socio-political themes in the poetry under study to be explored. It also provides an understanding of the background against which the poems were written. This understanding of the background gives a large canvas for the description, interpretation and evaluation of the poems. Spencer (1998) remarks that literature is a product of history; thus, a good piece of art should reflect and shape the history that has produced it. African literature bears the influence of history, culture and the society from which it comes. As such, the approach on which this research is based has been influenced by history and social circumstances of the Namibian post-independence era.

In that sense, this research assumes that literature does not develop from a social vacuum. That is why reference is made to the post-independence period and the role of the artist in transforming society at any stage of history. The underlying assumption for the reader is to see this study as a narrative on its own, informed by the fundamental grand narrative of Namibia's history.

### **2.2.2. Postcolonial theory**

Fanon (1968) and Said (1978) are some of the notable classical theoreticians who had laid the foundation for the postcolonial theory. The postcolonial theory is a multifaceted field of study which yields itself to various interpretations. As a literary and critical approach, it examines many issues in societies that had been subjected to colonialism and attained liberation from

their former colonisers, for example, nationalism, the question of identity, gender and many other issues. On the other hand, postcolonialism looks at the progress of these countries years after they have attained their independence, focusing on the inheritance the newly independent countries were bequeathed (Young, 2001).

The current study is mainly guided by the postcolonial theory, because it is a discourse that utilises fluid concepts, techniques and terminologies (Gandhi, 1998). Accordingly, Gandhi (1998) argues that the unbroken term 'postcolonialism' is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequence: colonialism and neo-colonialism. Even though colonialism has officially ended, Gandhi (1998) remarks that the word 'postcolonial' does not mean 'after colonialism' because that would suppose an end to the process of imperialism, and that would be to misread present realities. To support the view that colonialism continues in the post-independence African society as neo-colonialism, Said (1978), a prominent proponent of postcolonial theories, states that;

Colonialism in the formal sense is over, but I am very interested in neocolonialism, I am very interested in the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank ... I care very much about the structures of dependency and impoverishment that exist, well certainly in my part of the world and in all parts. (p.2)

From the above statement, Said (1978) implies that the history of colonialism will live to haunt the newly liberated nations, even after independence has been won. In the same sense, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) note that the term neocolonialism suggests that, although African countries have technically achieved independence, the ex-colonial powers and newly emerging superpowers, such as the United States, continue to play a decisive role through international monetary bodies, through the fixing of prices on world markets, multinational corporations and cartels and a variety of educational and cultural institutions.

Therefore, neocolonialism becomes more sinister and more difficult to detect and resist than the older, overt colonialism. This continued dominance of the West serves as proof that political liberation did not bring economic liberation, and without economic liberation there can be no political liberation (Young, 2001).

There are schools of thought, such as Ashcroft, et al. (1998), that argue that postcolonialism should only refer to the period after independence. Although the argument sounds useful and reasonable, Slemon (1997) is of the opinion that referring to the period after independence does not cater for the multifaceted nature of postcolonialism as a theory, as well as the heterogeneity of the term. To this extent, Slemon (1997) explicates that the 'post-' in postcolonialism is something slightly different from the 'post-' in a compound word like post-independent. He says it has an extended meaning and it has interrogative and subversive tendencies, therefore his 'post-' suggests the prefix 'anti-' (Slemon, 1997).

As a theory, Olatunji (2010) adds that postcolonialism also encapsulates the totality of practices which characterise third world societies from the inception of colonialism to the present. This fluid and shifting quality allows it to move easily from pre-independence to post-independence, and to the present without difficulty. Atwell (2006) concurs, stating that postcolonial theory captures contemporary reality well, because it is neither bound to, nor before or after, one epoch. This characteristic of the postcolonial theory made it suitable to this study, which is situated in the post-independence epoch but will, at one point, refer to the themes addressed in the pre-independence poems.

According to Olatunji (2010), postcolonialism does not only deal with the challenges and problems that arise for the newly independent nation states on a political and economic level,

but it also engages with the nuances found in these societies, such as issues surrounding identity, culture and family. In postcolonial societies, identities are made and remade, negotiated and renegotiated (Olatunji, 2010). Thus, the official end of apartheid and colonialism forces one to recognise the changes in identities as portrayed by Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb.

In the light of these tenets, this study develops a postcolonial critical framework for a number of reasons. Firstly, postcolonial theory privileges fluidity and ambivalence, so that it is well suited to accommodate all social, political, economic and cultural issues that are projected in the selected poems. It is the expansiveness of the postcolonial theory that has allowed the researcher to analyse the selected poems by using insights from this broad-spectrum theory. More and more, the post-independence literature in Namibia is largely influenced by the social and political events of the society. Thus, only a naive critic would dismiss a postcolonial reading in the analysis of socio-political issues in literature.

The two literary lenses discussed above, therefore, complement each other for the examination of socio-political and socio-economic issues that are portrayed in the selected, post-independence poetry for the study.

## **2.3. Reviewed literature**

### **2.3.1 Socio-political and economic issues in literature**

A number of scholars, such as Emmanuel, Aondover and Christopher (2013), Kehinde (2004), Mazrui (2002), Melber (2004), Mupondi (2013) and Tembo (2012) have noted the commitment of African writers to articulate the socio-economic and socio-political concerns, such as poverty, inequality, corruption, unemployment amongst others, in their societies.

Emmanuel et al. (2013), as well as Malaba (2015) and Melber (2004), argue that most African writers do not seem to believe in the notion of 'arts for art's sake'. Rather, they look at art as a tool that can influence people's perceptions about politics and how to effect a political change. Kehinde (2004) also comments that literary artists, through their works, can offer critical appraisals of existing political situations in order to mould or redirect the actions of a society. Thus, when writing, literary artists are influenced by the socio-political issues of the historical period during which they write.

Bhat (2014), Emmanuel, et al., (2013) and Olatunji (2010) observe that early African writers had dwelt on addressing the basic problems of African colonialism. They sought to correct the misrepresentation of Africans in the literary works of colonialists. With the attainment of independence by most African countries, however, attention was shifted to issues such as dictatorship, bad governance and corruption. African writers have equally shown that poetry can also be a veritable political tool. Poets such as Okot P' Bitek, Ofeimumun Odia, Kavevangua Kahengua, Joseph Molapong and Axaro Thaniseb, have indeed proven the pen to be mightier than the sword. This study, therefore, illuminates the meeting point between the selected poetry and social and economic issues, as well as political activity.

Mazrui (2002) proposes a very insightful and pertinent classification of African literature which is, by and large, based on the major trends that are prevalent in African literature. Mazrui (2002) designates that African literature has been a meeting point between African creativity and African political activity at large. Mazrui (2002) also observes that literature which includes poetry, is sometimes mere political observation and recording by the artist;

The politics come in sometimes directly as protest. Here then you have art being invoked as a method of registering political grievance and asserting militant objection.

But there are occasions when the political component in African literature is merely an exercise in political observation and recording. (Mazrui, p. 9).

Based on the above stance, Mazrui (2002) reaches the conclusion that the most persistent socio-political themes in literature can be summarised as follows: i) protest against alien control, colonial or neo-colonial; ii) protest against the cultural arrogance of alien rulers; iii) protest against racial prejudice; iv) literature of detached observation of culture contact and the process of cultural change; v) literature against the current generation of Africans. Although Mazrui's (2002) is generalised to literature, this study pays attention to poetry, a sub-genre of literature. Mazrui's (2002) categorisation will, therefore, guide the discussion in this chapter in order to bring to the fore the social, political, economic as well as the cultural issues that are addressed in African literature, for example poetry. In order to acquire a full understanding of these socio-political issues embedded in literary works, it is important to define and shed light on the term independence first, to confirm whether the socio-political issues discussed in the selected poems conform with the way various scholars perceive the concept of independence.

### **2.3.2. Defining independence**

Mazrui (2010), Melber (2005) and Puckrein (1995) argue that independence is a milestone which entails the political freedom, human rights dispensation, reconciliation, democracy, better living conditions and economic independence of citizens. Fanon (1968) also posits that total independence implies commitment to making the freed man in every sense a free man and citizen. Therefore, an independent citizen is one who is politically, economically and culturally disentangled.

However, a number of African literary works seem to reveal that in post-independence Africa, people are still yearning for independence as it has failed to deliver the objectives that

spurred the quest for it. Thus, in the various authors' views, independence has been a source of disillusionment. Macheka (2014) echoes these sentiments by asserting that independence has not been "a fulfilment of expectations but a nightmare, an illusion that generated a false sense of arrival" (p. 15). This statement implies that African independence has not been able to bring fundamental changes to the lives of ordinary citizens. Instead, it has brought disgruntlement and discontentment among citizens, thus, steering African authors to vent post-independence problems through the various genres of literature (Macheka, 2014).

There appears to be a major problem in the independent African society. The problem is noted in Nyamubaya's (1986) view that independence came, but freedom was not there. This means that independence in the African context is nominal (Tembo, 2012). It is against this background that the present study problematises political independence and unravels the socio-economic and socio-political socio-cultural factors leading to the failure to attain what Babu (1981, p. 6) refers to as the "complete and authentic liberation of Africa" as reflected in the poetry under exegesis. The central problem is summarised in the very first sentence in Babu's (1981, p. 1) book,

A situation is rapidly developing in Africa which is strongly reminiscent of the pre-independence era, when the masses were demanding change at any price. The masses then were demanding change of government, change of political and social direction, change in their status and self-respect, change in their economic well-being; they demanded change for the better. Now they are doing the same.

The central problem is that political independence has failed to bring the expected changes to the life conditions of ordinary Africans, to the extent that poets present a human condition which is defined by a quest and struggle for equality, justice and freedom (total independence). Furthermore, it is pertinent to note here that, as the poets write, it seems they

are largely concerned with fighting the socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic status quo in the society. Mazrui (2002) is of the opinion that when post-independence poets write, it is a form of protest motivated by the meaninglessness of independence in Africa.

An example can be drawn from the poem 'A Mysterious Marriage' by Nyamubaya (1986) which captures the general mood of the poems that are concerned with the shortcomings of political independence. The poem reflects on the idea that the war of liberation did not bring true independence to the people. The poet shows that, despite the celebrations and hope that gripped the nation after independence, Nyamubaya (1986) is saddened by the fact that freedom has not come.

Independence came

But freedom was not there (Nyamubaya, 1986, p. 13).

The poet describes independence as "fruitless and barren." Muponde (2000) remarks that Nyamubaya (1986) is exposing the painful betrayal and termination of the socio-economic aspirations of the people in the post-independent society.

Drawing an example from Namibia, in Ashikuti's (2012) analysis of a post-independence poem 'A black man's burden' by Thaniseb Axaro, she notes the disappointment resulting from broken promises, lost dreams and a realisation of the mismatch between what was hoped and fought for and what eventually became of independence. The poem says;

In 1988, he went to war with the enthusiasm

Of the young, the restless and the innocent

To liberate his country, He said

He returned in 1992, with little more

Schooling than his comrades (from the frontline)

To develop his people, He said

He builds a house-on the hill next to the evil white man  
He so much scorns - the world he so dearly  
Embraces (Thaniseb, 2011, p. 13).

In the above poem it becomes evident that even in Namibia, independence brought disillusionment, which triggered poets to express and articulate their feelings about independence through poetry.

Against this backdrop, the present study analyses how the Namibian poets, Kahengua (2002, 2012), Molapong (2005, 2014) and Thaniseb (2011), address socio-political and socio-economic issues in the post-independent Namibian context through poetry.

### **2.3.3. Literature and disillusionment in post-independence Africa**

In his classification of African literature, Mazrui (2002) comes up with the strand 'protest against Africa' as one of the reasons why poets and writers write their works of art. In this strand 'protest against Africa', the theme of disillusionment emerges as one of the reasons why artists protest through literature about the prevailing socio-political issues of a society. The current study, therefore, looks at how this disillusionment is portrayed and problematised in the selected poetry.

Mazruse (2010) defines disillusionment as a feeling of disappointment and disgruntlement because of unfulfilled expectations. A number of scholars (Alemu, 2010; Ashikuti, 2012; Bhat, 2014; Karamiamidabi & Sokhanvar, 2014; Macheka, 2014; Victor, 2014) have observed that the theme of disillusionment cuts across a number of literary works. According to Bhat (2014), post-independence African works reflect the writers' disillusion with reality. Alemu (2010) alludes that African writers depict an undistorted image of a post-colonial African state, with all its complexity of problems. In the same sense, Tembo (2012) remarks that the failure by most African governments to fulfil pro-independence promises in the post-independence era has led to disappointment and disgruntlement among many writers. Alemu

(2010) adds that post-independence governments were not able to fulfil the social, political and economic needs which were anticipated during the colonial era. These scenarios left writers with the task of communicating their disillusionment to the masses through their literary works. Against this background, the theme of disillusionment as a strand of socio-political issues, was unpacked in Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb's poetry.

Macheka (2014) comments that the coming of independence to Africa was marked by euphoria and great expectations. Moreover, it was envisaged as a new era that would bring and deliver human rights dispensation to all the citizens. As such, its impending arrival gave birth to a new sense of hope and aspiration for the masses. Alemu (2010) observes that such a hope, however, gave place to despair soon after Africa attained independence. Alemu (2010) further explains that the change of guard did not help to bring about the change that Africa had longed for. Instead, the new indigenous, African ruling classes involved themselves in practices that were not different from those of the earlier colonisers. Corruption, snobbery and other evil practices left the people only disappointed. Sensing all this, authors like Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah, had to relook their roles as authors. They soon turned towards a mode of writing where they could express their anger and disappointment. This anger and disappointment replaced the earlier promises of nationhood and self-assertion in their earlier novels (Victor, 2014).

Regarding various post-independence literary works, Macheka (2014) comments that the celebratory mood of independence among the masses evaporating just after independence is evident because of unfulfilled promises. In the literary works, the government is portrayed as failing to meet the immediate desires of the people, which results in the crisis of its legitimacy. That is, the citizens become disillusioned and fed up with a government which

fails to provide the basic, social services (Macheka, 2014). The political system of those governments is depicted in the literary works as a fertile ground for corruption, nepotism and internal instability, as well as conflict. As such, Mazrui (2002) surmises that Achebe's *A Man of the People* sets the tone of political disenchantment and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* registers the disillusionment that engulfs independent Ghana at the time of writing. The literary giant, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, also registers the masses' disillusionment in his works *Petals of Blood* (1988), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1984), *Devil on the Cross* (1987) and *Matigari* (1989).

Griffiths (2000) states that the period between the mid- to late -1960s which has often been called disillusion, set in for a great deal of West African writing, reflecting the sense of dismay with which the writers confronted the corruption and division in the new post-independence regimes. This scenario proves that the role African writers play in their respective communities, and in the continent as well, is not only that of literary artists, but also of political activists who speak on behalf of their people, reflecting the crisis in their country to the rest of the world (Alemu, 2010).

Karamiamidabi and Sokhanvar (2014) add that the people of Africa had hoped that political independence would solve all social problems and create a fuller life for everyone, but the reverse has happened in the continent. Instead of peace and stability, the continent is plunged into an endless period of political and economic crisis (Karamiamidabi and Sokhanvar, 2014). Faced with the new realities of power and politics in Africa, the writers have had to reprise their role in society, as the preoccupation with the past had to give way to concerns with the pressing problems of the present (Victor, 2014).

In the above discussion, it has been noted that bad leadership appears to be one of the main issues that has triggered disillusion among many writers; thus, it is worthwhile to discuss the disillusionment that has resulted because of bad leadership as projected by different scholars in Africa.

### **2.3.3.1 Disillusionment as a result of bad leadership in literature**

According to Victor (2014), several poets and novelists have projected post-independence disillusionment from the dimension of civilian dictatorship, as reflected in a number of their post-independence literary works. In consensus with this notion is Mazrui (2002) who asserts that poets register discontent with the failure of leaders to nurture a truly independent nation which is characterised by equality, justice and freedom. In Mazrui's (2002) point of view, the writers' pre-occupation is to free the nation from imperialism and any form of foreign domination. In wa Thiongo's (1981) words, the role of the writer in a neocolonial state is to, "speak for, speak to, speak out for the strength and determination of the people in their struggle for total liberation" (p.118). Tembo (2012) buttresses the same point by commenting that post-independence writers tackle neo-colonialism head-on. By and large, literature written in the postcolonial epoch is an expression of grievances to the ruling elite. According to wa Thiongo (1986), the writer is writing against neo-colonialism. wa Thiongo (1986) also notes that the African writer has gone through three stages, namely the age of the anti-colonial struggle, the age of independence and the age of neocolonialism. He observes the following of Africa's independence;

It was independence with the ruler holding a begging bowl and the ruled holding a shrinking belly. It was independence with a question mark. The age of independence had produced a new class and a new leadership that often was not very different from the old one. (wa Thiongo, 1986)

The above observation by wa Thiong'o (1986) confirms that African leaders, with a bias for the dictatorial, have long made independence a huge "nightmare" for the African people (Victor, 2014). In the same vein, wa Thiong'o (1986) remarks that in many countries in Africa power was actually handed over to the wrong people at independence. In his critical assessment, Fanon (1967, p. 181) reveals a woeful disappointment, occasioned by the immediate postcolonial leaders in Africa.

The people who for years had seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generously embodied the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people, in what touches bread, law and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers for their returns which constitute the natural bourgeoisie.

As such, the African masses, who had expected to witness the gradual unfolding of a bright future promised by their leaders, became disappointed. Victor (2014) remarks that so many promises were made and yet so little was realised. Another writer (Vine 1997, p.187) is of the opinion that one major reason for this ugly scenario, was that the "so called African" leaders "had other plans". In the Kantian conflict between duty and self-interest, reason dictates, choosing obligation over advantage (Kant, 1980). But rather than allow their self-interest to be compatible with those of the masses and to be morally defensible, the post-independence elite chose to service their greedy instincts. In the final analysis, the masses found out painfully, "that the iniquitous fact of exploitation could wear a black face" (Fanon, 1970, p. 145). This vesting of political power in the wrong hands after independence, to the detriment of the African people, is a reminder of the premonition of the retiring white District Officer,

John Thompson in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1982). According to wa Thiongo, although colonialism was coming to an end in Kenya, the colonial status quo would continue. While this statement was implied in Thompson's discussion with Margery, his wife, on the eve of independence celebrations, it becomes an artistic representation of the behaviour of the ruling elite in post-independence Kenya, in particular, and Africa in general. Independence, wa Thiongo (1982) emphasises, has only brought about a negative change as foreign capitalists are replaced by local capitalists.

In a critical, literary analysis of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Kortenaar (1993), asserts that *Anthills of the Savannah* is a fictional working out of Achebe's concern about the trouble in Nigeria where the leaders have placed their own interest before those of the nation. Kortenaar's (1993) assertion also applies to Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* (1992), Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969), wa Thiong'O's *A Grain of Wheat* (1982) and *Petals of Blood* (1988). In Zeleza's (1992) fictitious country in *Smouldering Charcoal*, the president is the soul administrator and his iron grip on the country does not improve the living conditions of the local people of Njala. Years after independence, the local people of Njala have no access to the basic necessities of life, like good roads and pipe-borne water. As the water in their rivers has been polluted by industrial waste, the people resort to trekking long distances to neighbouring villages to fetch water from the wells. Victor (2014) asserts that the wretched people of Njala are the equivalent of the political economists' fourth world, because their lives have not been improved by their country's independence but they have been exploited as ruthlessly by their countrymen as they were by the foreign imperial masters. Dryborn (2000, p. 21) also argues that "decolonization did not effect emancipation and equality, nor did it provide new wealth or peace to people. Instead, suffering and misery continued everywhere in an altered form, at the hands of different agencies". The local land lords kept on protecting the interests of their old masters in exchange for compensation. Thus,

the welfare of the general population has seen very little improvement. This postcolonial deterioration is what Davidson (2000) terms “the black man’s burden”. According to Davidson (2000), the black man’s burden is a result of the double process of colonisation and decolonisation, which, he says, are inextricably intermeshed.

Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) are literary texts set in post-independence Africa where African leaders’ fondness for exploitation, oppression and unparalleled tyranny has mocked people’s pre-independence dreams and aspirations (Victor, 2014). The literary works contend that the beautiful dreams and aspirations of independence were “brutally raped and subverted by the wrong leaders” (Victor 2014, p. 78), who took charge after the exit of the colonialists, thereby turning the continent into a monstrous concentration camp.

On the other hand, *A Man of the People* by Achebe (1966) suggests that the legacy of colonialism is apparent in post-colonial African leadership. *A Man of the People* ironically presents ‘a man of the people’ who detaches himself from society and seeks to meet individual interests. Achebe (1966) argues that the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added on to these. Chief Nanga, who has come to power through rigged elections and oppressing his opponent, Odili, is a reflection of independent African societies which are characterised by rigged elections (Macheka, 2014). According to Bhat (2014), Chief Nanga is very inventive when it comes to rhetoric. To him, it is the end that justifies the means. In the novel, the government ministers use bribery, force and thuggery, as well as finance, to enable Nanga and his kind to return to power unopposed. For example Chief Nanga comes to bribe Odili to step down by offering him a scholarship to study overseas, garnished with a personal cash gift of two hundred and fifty pounds sterling.

Through such behaviour, Achebe (1966) portrays a post-colonial African society that has come to accept institutionalised corruption and nepotism (Macheka 2014). Achebe is suggesting this in his text '*A Man of the People*', for nepotism is cheered at public meetings.

Nanga offers Odili a privilege:

By the way Odili, I think you are wasting your talent here, want you to come to take up a strategic post in civil service. We should not leave everything to the highlands tribes, our people must press for their own share of the national cake (Achebe, 1966)

Armah's (1969) *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is characterised by the selfishness of leaders who took over from the colonial government. The abuse of leadership is mainly seen in Koomson and his government. Armah's (1969) *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* tends to attack not only politicians, but also all those who hold influential positions in society. For Armah (1969), the most terrible thing is to watch a black man trying by all means to be the dark ghost of a European (Macheka 2014). Africans themselves help to facilitate the abuse of their fellow black men. According to Armah (1969), Africa is cursed by its own leaders. In the novel, Koomson has succeeded by taking the path of corruption. He destroys his people's destiny for the sake of a luxurious life; he drives stolen, posh cars and owns luxurious properties. Koomson's character endorses Obiechina's (1976, p. 117) assertion that after independence new, African, 'black whites' assumed power and turned out to be even more corrupt than the previous white rulers. Through these works, it is learnt that the 'intelligentsia', who are in power, have allocated all social and material comforts to themselves and closed doors to further entry into their class (Macheka, 2014). Moreover, in these works, the ruling class is portrayed as abusing power at political, economic, social and religious levels. The highest echelons of the society are presented as misinterpreting the concept of power as they take it as having direct influence and control on people and

resources (Macheka, 2014). From the above discussion it can be observed that post-independence authors register the black people's quest for a government and community, based on collectivity and not on the voice of the individual.

As a result of the issues raised above, Victor (2014) points out that African writers had to shift their preoccupation from recalling the past to their concern with the pressing problems of the present. In that sense Mazuruse (2010), notes that African writers in the post-independence period have preoccupied themselves with attacking the venal, corrupt, irresponsible, hypocritical and visionless leaders of most post-independent nations in Africa. In other words, as creative members of their society, their primary concern has been to alert their respective communities by recreating and interpreting the socio-political condition of the time. That is why African writers are often referred to as committed writers.

Against this background, post-independence Namibian poets problematise post-independence leadership. It is this very disillusionment which motivates protest poetry, as Mazrui (2002) terms it. The general feeling of these poets and other writers is that the trouble with Africa is simply and squarely the failure of its leadership which practises capitalist imperialism. It is this capitalist imperialism which the writers seek to expose and disapprove of, as they align themselves with the oppressed people in their struggle to realise visions of a new future which is free from foreign domination.

In the Namibian context, Malaba (2015) analysed selected poems from two anthologies: *It is No More a Cry - Namibian Poetry in Exile and Essays on Literature in Resistance and Nation building*, (Melber 2004) and *Through the Flames: Poems from the Liberation Struggle*, (Patermann & Mbumba, 2004) which highlight the ongoing need to fight equality, freedom and an end to exploitation in the economic and domestic spheres. Malaba (2015) asserts that the defeat of South African forces did not lead to an end to exploitation; instead,

the new ruling elite seemed determined to preserve political privileges, rather than to pursue the original goals of the revolution.

### **2.3.3.2. Literature and cultural issues**

Ashcroft et al (1989) argue that literature offers one of the most important ways in which perceptions of the postcolonial period, as well as the day-to-day realities experienced by colonised people, are expressed. In their point of view, Ashcroft, et al (1989) assert that colonialism has played a major role in shaping the lives of a large number of people living in the world. To that end, Dizayi (2015) argues that colonialism was not only a power control, but it was also a culture control by the coloniser, to which the colonised people were tied. According to Karamiamidabi and Sokhanvar (2014, p. 753) “the conspicuous results of this domination were the glorification of the first world hegemony and the debilitation of the natives’ culture and tradition.” Dizayi (2015) further adds that, although independence came later and brought about a political change, many nations remained colonies, and to make matters worse, there appeared to be a dilemma and cultural crisis. Thus, the masses were in confusion about their culture and identity. As such, Mashige (2004) observes that identity and culture have become the major socio-political issues occupying the centre stage in literary, political, social and economic discourses. Dizayi (2015) also concurs by noting that the foremost themes of postcolonial literature are varied, but they mainly depict the struggles of native people to establish their own identification.

Dizayi (2015) adds that the postcolonial novel depicts the problematic situation of immigrants which he says, was one of the results of the colonial politics and one of the aftermaths of independence. McCarthy, et al. (2012) buttress this point by pointing out that one of the principal preoccupations of post-independence writers is the theme of hybridity and ambivalence towards the received tradition, values and identity from immigrants.

Aasante-Darko (2000) also comments that the literary works depict the racist experiences, displacement and diasporas. Works such as *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* and Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoner* are typical examples. In these literary works, immigrants are pictured as searching for meaning and identity; thus, the current study also unpacks the identity crisis discussed in the selected poems.

In a similar vein, Aasante-Darko (2000) observes that one of the socio-political issues raised by post-independence authors is negritudism. Egar (2009) comments that negritudism is mainly concerned with the celebration of a black identity, and has provided a great impetus to African literature. As a result of the erosion of the black identity in most Africans, literary artists have chosen literature as a platform to create awareness on negritudism. Ngara (1990) opines that much of the poetry written after independence was preoccupied with the problem of colour: the beauty of the black race, the courage of black people and the warmth and humanity of the black race. Bernard Dadie's poem 'I thank you God' is a typical negritude poem as evident in the following extract

I thank you God for creating me black  
White is a colour for special occasions  
Black the colour for everyday (Ngara, 1990, p. 26).

Leopold Sedar Senghor and Okot p' Bitek are also some of the notable poets who have shown a deep commitment to negritudism (Ngara, 1990). While Mazrui (2002) views Okot p'Bitek as a latter-day voice of negritude, wa Thiong'o (1973) argues that Okot p'Bitek is writing against the colonial aftermath in the African cultural values. This is evident in p'Bitek (1967) where he shows that he is saddened by the native ruling class that inherited and apes the ways of the colonial middle-class. The end result is that this aping costs the African dignity and creative potential. wa Thiong'o (1973) observes that, in *Song of Lawino* (1967), Lawino is addressing the Ocols, members of the native ruling class that received colonial

education in colonial schools and universities. What disappoints Lawino is the fact that the native ruling class is blindly aping the western bourgeoisie in dress behaviour, and in the general conducting of the affairs of the state. In *Song of Lawino*, Lawino tells Ocol:

Listen Ocol, my old friend,  
The ways of your ancestors  
Are good,  
Their customs are solid  
And not hollow  
They are not thin, not easily breakable  
They cannot be blown away  
By the winds  
Because their roots reach deep into this soil (p'Bitek, 1967, p. 18)

In the above lines p'Bitek emphasises rootedness, which, to him, helps nurture true independence. His view is that aping the ways of former colonisers stifles the African cultural heritage. wa Thiongo (1973) observes that p'Bitek is protesting against the Ocols of the neocolonial Africa who are not interested in reconstructing and developing the broken ends and bruised roots of the African civilisation through the only path that would make this possible: a total immersion and involvement in the rural and urban masses. In *Song of Lawino* (1967) p'Bitek compares the European and African ways of life, and dismisses European culture (which is aped by the native bourgeoisie) as useless. Furthermore, wa Thiongo (1973) observes that *Song of Lawino* (1967) belongs to a new mood of self-questioning and self-examination, to find out "where things went wrong". Lawino observes that the conflicting political parties represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and hence the disillusionment suggested by the following lines:

I do not understand  
The meaning of Uhuru  
I do not understand  
Why all the bitterness  
And the cruelty  
And the cowardice,  
The fear,  
The daily fear  
Eat the hearts

Of political leaders!  
Is it the money?  
Is it the competition for position? (p' Bitek, 1967, p. 21)

p' Bitek (1967) challenges the myth that African culture is inferior to western culture. His anger is necessitated by the knowledge that the native ruling class does not revitalise the culture of the formerly colonised. Instead of promoting and supporting indigenous cultures, the ruling class apes the western bourgeoisie. p' Bitek's (1967) argument is that aping others has costed the Africans their dignity and creative potential. In a critical analysis of p' Bitek's (1967) views in *Song of Lawino*, Dathorne (1976) observes that Okot p'Bitek is a traditionalist. However, Tembo (2012) disagrees and argues that Dathorne's (1976) analysis is simplistic. Instead, Tembo (2012) contends that p'Bitek (1967) is an artist who values rootedness which provides the leverage to full creative potential in the present as well as the future. In fact, p'Bitek criticises the native ruling class for failing to put their cultural values at the centre. At the end of the poem, *Song of Lawino*, Lawino wishes that her husband would draw inspiration from the ancestors. p'Bitek's (1967) message is that, in order for the native ruling class to be functional in their society, they should not ape western cultures (Tembo, 2012). In this regard, Weil (2001) argues that to be rooted is the most important and least recognised need of the human soul. Evidently, p'Bitek (1967) is conscious of the fact that heterogeneity and cooperation among different peoples of the world breeds resistance and freedom. This notion is cemented by Furusa (2000, p. 34) who rightly observes that "real independence and development can occur through a systematic reorganisation and reinstatement of the cultural life of the people concerned." Thus, solace can be found only when black people go back to their social and cultural roots to redeem all those values that characterised black people's humanist approach to life, typified in the notion of 'ubuntu'. According to Mashige (2004) the concept 'ubuntu' is a central component of what ideally

should be a way of life for black people. It is a practice that is informed by, and predicated on humanist values such as empathy, sharing, respect for the other, humanness, gentleness, hospitality and mutual acceptance in human interaction. Ubuntu recognises that one's humanity is inextricably bound to the other's humanity. Furthermore, it forms the essence of what a black society should be, by informing the manner in which blacks should behave, their world view, their belief systems and their social conduct. Against this background, the current study illuminates the cultural issues discussed by the three poets under study.

On a different note, Malaba (2015) explains how poetry underscores the vulnerability of women as one of the cultural issues portrayed in literature. He remarks that their position is located at the base of the pyramid in the Namibian society. Malaba (2015) also notes that women's exploitation goes beyond the economic sphere to that of sexual abuse at the hands of their male partners. This is evident in Christi Warner's poem 'Her Wish' in (Molapong, Christi & Volker, 2005, p. 40) and in the domestic violence found in 'Battered paintings for sale' (Kgobetsi, 2000, p. 54)

The poem 'An African Woman' by Victoria Hasheela (2008, as cited by Ruppel, 2008, p.5) details the anguish caused by male chauvinism masquerading as a cultural norm, and bears testimony to the importance of poetry in the struggle for social justice in Namibia.

I am an African woman  
A victim of culture  
I have no rights  
I do whatever he says

I am the first wife  
I thought I'd be the only one  
But after one year  
There were two of us

The poem depicts how injustice is entrenched through the manner in which women are socialised to accept structural inequality in society, denied a sense of agency, conditioned

into accepting male authority unquestioningly and reduced to the level of goods and chattels in the Namibian context.

### **2.3.3.3. African literature that discusses colonialism**

According to Alemu (2012), African literary artists do not raise the same issues in every historical period. That is to mean that the preoccupation of the writers varies from one historical period to the other as they focus on the socio-political realities of the continent. Alemu (2012) further notes that the experience of colonisation and the challenges of the post-colonial world have urged African literary artists to embark on a new chapter of writing in English, with a strong commitment to reflect the socio-economic and socio-political realities of the continent in the history of African literature. As such, pre-independence, African literature reflects the quest for freedom from the colonisers.

Ngara (1990) observes that a number of early African texts appear to put literature to the service of humanity where it works as a weapon that helps to reject the forces of colonialism and their attendant ideologies. Colonialism has been one of the key factors that triggered the creativity of the black African. Thus, literature has been used by African writers as a weapon to fight foreign domination and to reflect the evil that is perpetuated by the invader. Furthermore, it shows disapproval of colonial domination and the subsequent dehumanisation and enslavement of the colonised subjects. To use Fanon's words (1968, p. 240), it is a "literature of combat." This implies that this is literature which inspires people to fight for their independence and sovereignty. In other words, this literature urges the colonised people to disentangle themselves from the yoke of colonialism through struggle.

In the Namibian context, Melber (2004) posits that poetry is born out of the ambition of the poets to articulate their thoughts and to stimulate their fellow Namibians. In the same vein, Malaba (2015) regards poetry as a tool for social justice. According to Tembo (2012), it is

poetry which restores the hope and optimism upon which a struggle can be waged to free the colonised from colonial rule. In the context of colonialism, literature helps to promote, and is aligned with revolutionary consciousness. According to Ngara (1985), in the literary sphere, the revolution inspired a rich and profound creativity which has given birth to a number of works in Africa. The works bemoan the debilitating effects of colonialism on the African subject. Amuta (1989) notes that every historical epoch writes its own poetry or expresses itself in the appropriate idiom in the poetry of its most committed and sensitive minds. Consequently, the colonial experience provides the subject matter of the poetry which is inspired by this very epoch (wa Thiongo, 1981). The poets aim to “evoke, to awaken in the observer, listener or reader emotions and impulses to action or opposition,” (Hauser, 1981) in wa Thiongo 1981, p. 6). The contributors to the anthology, *And Now the Poets Speak*, are concerned with reawakening the spirit of resistance against colonial domination. In this anthology, poetry under the sections, ‘The Colonial Scourge’ and ‘The Black Man’s Burden’ attest to the plight of the Black man at the hands of the oppressor. Thus, poets are active members in transforming their society from colonial domination to freedom.

wa Thiongo (1973) observes that during the anti-colonial struggle new song-poems were created to express defiance and people’s collective aspirations. Malaba (2015) also points out that the South West Africa’s Organisation (SWAPO) consciously promoted the writing of poetry as a means of raising the level of political consciousness of its members. In agreement to this notion, Melber (2004) also notes that poems are an inseparable part of SWAPO’s ideological and propagandistic campaign and a mirror of the people’s aims and desires within the struggle.

The Namibian poet, Nguno Wakolele, has put poetry to the service of the colonised people in Namibia. In the poem ‘We are leaving you,’ Nguno Wakolele focuses on the goal of the liberation struggle as the following extract indicates

But don't be afraid - my fatherland  
We are coming back again  
To free you from all the evils  
Bringing you a new life and to build a new nation

Yes, we are coming back again  
And everybody will be satisfied and happy,  
To see the fruits of our actions. To see his  
Brother and sisters in a free Namibia (Melber, 2004 p. 44)

The poem, 'It is no more a cry,' is another typical protest poem against the colonial regime. The poem articulates the failure of the colonial regime to respect the dignity and humanity of the black people in South West Africa, as Namibia was known prior to independence. The poem says

Time and again you we tell  
So friendly and peacefully  
To regard us the same as you  
But no human response  
So satanic you stare us  
Like we have no souls  
Like we have no bloodstream

When we cry for human recognition  
Blood and oxygen is taken away from us  
Like we are flies  
The hell out of us is beaten  
Like you do to a beast

Now we stop our pleadings  
It's no more a cry  
This time not for black dignity  
But a struggle for national liberation  
A battle against exploitation it is  
You racist watch  
Listen to the drillings  
A march to last ever  
No matter for thousand years  
Even for a millennium  
It's a march to victory

We fear not your beatings  
Neither your brutal bombardments  
For you cannot smash our strength  
We are so united and strong  
Your flesh and heart we shall bear (Melber, 2004, p. 46)

The poem suggests that this lack of respect drove many to strive for political power. Malaba (2015) notes that the violence and oppression it reveals justifies the liberation struggle as a war that sought to restore the dignity of black people.

In the same sense, the Angolan poet, Neto (1974), has put poetry to the service of the colonised people in Angola. Tembo (2012) contends that Agostinho Neto is an example of a poet who uses his art to expose and reject the injustices of the colonial system. Amuta (1989) observes that a keen awareness of the exploitative essence of colonialism pervades Neto's poetry. Moreover, Amuta (1989) and Nazombe (1989) in Ngara and Morrison (1989) attest to the idea that Neto is a poet, committed to the struggle against colonialism. In the light of the foregoing, Amuta (1989) observes that Neto's poetry occupies a prominent position in this active deployment of art in service of the struggle. Thus, Neto is informed by the historical experience of the masses and his task is to reflect on the plight of the masses and society to regain their strength and fight for freedom. Tembo (2012) observes that while Neto discusses the plight of the colonised in *Sacred Hope*, he does not sink the colonised into pessimism. Instead, hope prevails and it is on the basis of hope that people can wage a struggle for their own liberation meaningfully. Nazombe (1989) in Ngara and Morrison (1989) quotes part of the introduction to 'Sacred Hope' and the quotation confirms the fact that poetry was put to the service of the struggle:

By the end of the decade poetry had become the principal means by which writers sought to establish links with the people. They were writing for the people; making of the despair and suffering of the people in the villages and the *musseques* the material of poetry; rediscovering a land and customs which had been deformed and distorted by the colonial oppressor; and creating a modern national literature which gave voice to the people's aspirations (p. 50).

It is increasingly becoming clear that colonial rule gave birth to revolutionary poetry which is an inevitable weapon to challenge and dismantle colonial domination, as well as to replace it with the freedom of the masses from the painful grip of the colonial masters. In the context of foreign domination, literature is fashioned to be part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggle. Indeed, “anti-imperialist resurgence was reflected in literature” (Wa Thiongo, 1986, p. 14). In the context of colonialism, the poet is on the side of the colonised and hence “... pitches his tent with the people in their struggle for justice and humane existence” (Amuta, 1989, p. 177). Moreover, he establishes that poetry is an indispensable tool in the fight for freedom in Africa, and also notes that the struggle for justice and freedom is the prime measure of good poetry. Amuta (1989, p. 177) wisely observes the following of poetry and poets in the context of colonial rule:

In the African world, this historical necessity, in which the poet as a man of culture devotes his art and life to the pursuit of justice and freedom, has become part of the very legitimacy of the poetic undertaking. To be a significant poet in Africa at a time like this is to stand up and be counted in the struggle against foreign domination and class and racial injustice.

Therefore, poetry is employed to reject colonial values and, hence, provides a voice to the dominated, marginalised and bifurcated Africans. In historical experiences, such as colonialism, poets cannot afford to be neutral. They align with the colonised masses in their struggle for social justice and freedom.

Amuta (1989, p. 177) is more to the point when he says

In situations requiring direct involved heroic intervention in defence or pursuit of progressive values, poets have often found themselves fighting on the side of the people. This is why poets as diverse in nationality and outlook as Christopher

Caudwell, John Cornford, Louis Aragon, Christopher Okibgo, Maxim Gorky and Dennis Brutus have dedicated their art and sometimes their lives to the pursuit of freedom.

In other words, the poets use their creative talents to challenge the oppressive ruling class and instill strength and hope in the oppressed which are necessary to the fight for freedom from bondage.

This section has established that poetry is an indispensable tool to resist colonial rule in different parts of the world. It has been argued that in Namibia, poets protest against foreign domination and the poem 'It is no more a cry' among numerous other poems, attest to this.

#### **2.3.3.4. Other social issues in literature**

One of the issues projected in literature is the poverty of the black people. Malaba (2000) observes the plight of the poor who battle to survive on the margins of the postcolonial Namibian society in Kavevangua Kahengua's poetry.

Similarly, Gerald Tjonzongoro's 'Namibian contract worker' catalogues the misery of living in "deplorable conditions" and the grinding poverty of those forced by the South West Africa Native Labour Agency into working for the Tsumeb corporation, mining copper that was exported to America and Britain. The poem foregrounds how Namibia's resources are used to develop the imperialist's businesses, rather than the local economy (Paterman & Mbumba, 2004).

In a colonial and post-colonial, Namibian context the legacy of inequality is explored in literature. Malaba (2015) observes that colour compounds the discrimination of blacks by whites. It even becomes a double yoke to a black woman who first suffers oppression from

the patriarchy. In Christi Warner's 'The image on a picture' the persona laments the exploitation of her mother and her grandmother,

Yeah, mama's eyes swam with care  
Hiding exhaustion and pain  
Her rough hands, ballooned feet, unfolded the story of a cleaner  
A cleaner for three miesies in town

Rewarding? Yeah, apparently. Rewarding her just enough  
Just enough for grandma and me  
Just enough for our monthly roof  
Just enough to warm a feast for our hungry insides (Kgobetsi, 2000, p. 48)

The poem underscores the structural inequality that is rife in the society in which white women exploit black women by paying them the wages that barely meet their basic requirements.

#### **2.4. The socio-historical context in Namibia**

The study also observes that all literature can be understood within their particular environments and that a fair appreciation of any kind of literature is preceded by a comprehension of the circumstances surrounding its birth, including the history of the writer. Since the referent society of the poems is Namibia and its people, and because of the fact that the poets deal with the socio-economic and socio-political realities of the people of Namibia, it seems appropriate to provide some background information about the referent society of the poems, before moving on to the task of critical examination. The key texts are set in Namibia and the main concern is with the extent to which the works are impacted upon by the setting. A brief summary of the socio-political histories of Namibia is included here in order to contextualise the writers and their texts and to enable an assessment of how the socio-political history informs their literary works.

According to Melber (2005), the history of Namibia has passed through several distinct stages from being colonised in the late nineteenth century to its independence on 21 March

1990. Namibia had first become a German colony before it was colonised by South Africa. South Africa brought with it the policy of apartheid to Namibia, a system which separated people on racial and ethnic bases (Mtota, 2015). Apartheid did not only divide whites from blacks, but also blacks from other blacks (Melber, 2005). Blacks were required to live in their respective economically unviable 'homelands', while whites lived in those areas where the wealth of the country resided. Mtota (2015) further explains that, during this period, conditions for the black people continued to stagnate as unemployment rose and the subsistence needs of the working class were cheapened. The 'homelands' remained unproductive, which strengthened the power of the colonial state over black workers (Mutota, 2015). They became cheap labour reservoirs where a surplus labouring population was contained, but was always on hand for industry. During the apartheid system, there was a rigorous implementation of pass laws which were repressive. Mtota (2015) explains that, to ensure a steady flow of labour to the mines, factories and farms, a migrant labour system was established. Black workers were herded into compounds or hostels in black townships and denied any say or control over their meagre existence. Further legislation dictated the terms of black exploitation in industries at this time. All strikes by black workers were declared illegal and blacks were excluded from the definition 'employee' and banned from joining trade unions (Mtota, 2015).

Namibia eventually attained its independence in 1990 after a protracted and bitter armed struggle (Melber 2005). However, the fundamental challenges that faced Namibia did not disappear. The legacy of apartheid remained as the unemployment rate was reported to have reached 51% in 2014 (Jauch, 2010). In Melber's (2005) view, unemployment has been a direct contributing factor to poverty, and has become one of the most burning social issues demanding attention and combined efforts to contribute to its solution.

Melber (2005) also notes that Namibia ranks in the top category of countries with the deepest social divides, and further explains that the socio-economical divides are along both regional-ethnic, as well as class structures. Furthermore, geographical disparities were exacerbated by the legacy of a migrant labour system, which during the 20<sup>th</sup> century promoted the rural-urban bias and the further marginalisation of whole regions (Melber, 2005).

Jauch (2010) remarks that the UNDP's human development report of 2009 indicates that Namibia is the country with the highest levels of income inequality in the world. Melber (2005) also states that the alternative, economic data and statistics gathered since Independence confirm that the luxury of a small elite contrasts with the abject poverty of the majority of the people.

On a different socio-economic note, Jauch (2010) also observes that the demographic composition of Namibia's population is currently undergoing dramatic changes due to the escalating AIDS-related mortality rates. This historical context is essential to the analysis of the selected poems as the poets' thoughts are largely influenced by their context.

## **2.5. Biographies of the selected poets**

Since the current study makes use of the socio-historical approach which helps relate some of the selected literary works to the background of their authors, their childhood, education and even careers, as well as the social and political forces shaping their lives and writing (Wild, 1993), it is imperative to dig deep into the biographies of the poets under study, namely Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb.

### **2.5.1. Molapong**

Keamogetsi Joseph Molapong was born in 1959 in Windhoek. He spent his entire life in Katutura in what used to be known as the township or location. At that time, Katutura was a

former labour camp for the white capital city of Windhoek. Molapong was born at a time when the white government removed black residents from the more central city areas to the remote outskirts in order to accomplish, not only segregation between white and black, but also to ensure a further separation of the different language groups of the black population.

In the preface of his anthology, *Come talk your heart* Molapong (2005) says

The day I was born  
Bullets and tear gas  
Welcomed me into this world  
Hand grenades and landmines  
Were the only toys I knew (p. xii)

He lived half his life under apartheid, “under vicious occupying South African forces”, and the other half in independent Namibia. He says, apartheid hurt him, angered him, scarred him and sharpened his sense of what is just and what is not. During his teenage years, Molapong and his peers led school boycotts and demonstrations. In an interview with Molapong, he reveals that he was a teenager at the height of a resistance that called for all persons to prepare to combat oppression in whatever way they could. On the other hand, he also reveals that in the post independent Namibia he is faced with the challenges of reconciliation and neocolonialism (Molapong, 2005).

Krishnamurthy (2014) on the back cover of the anthology *The scars on my skin* by Molapong (2014) comments that Molapong is political in his writings as he holds up the mirror to society to reflect all the ugliness of racism and discrimination. Krishnamurthy (2014) in Molapong (2014) further explains that, when Molapong gazes upon a new political dispensation in Namibia, he does not only criticise the politics of his country, but also attacks the nouveaux riches, corruption and poverty in the post-independent Namibia through poetry.

### **2.5.2. Kahengua**

Kavevangua Kahengua was born and grew up in Masakana, a ghetto area in a less-developed village, called Zowa, in Central Botswana. He grew up as a hardworking young man, courageous to defy any obstacles he encountered. In an interview, Kahengua reveals that, as a young boy he had to work hard to pay for his primary and secondary education. During school holidays, he would take menial jobs in the nearby mines to earn and save money for his education.

In his interview, Kahengua also reveals that he learnt about his roots and history through his grandmother, and he seems to have been affected by the historical accounts of their ancestors. He reveals that he is a descendant of the Ovaherero who fled Namibia during the Herero-German war in 1904-1907. Some Ovaherero, including Kahengua's grandmother managed to escape and seek refuge in Botswana, where he was later born. However, he chose to come back to Namibia, his "motherland," in 1993. As a result of this tragic phase in his history, observes that Kahengua is keen to present the theme of exile throughout his poetry where he captures the anguish, horrors of war, dispossession and the quest for belonging (Malaba, 2012). Kahengua is also a committed and thought-provoking poet, who captures and draws attention to the growing problems of the Namibian society (Malaba, 2012).

### **2.5.3. Thaniseb**

Axaro Werner Thaniseb was born in a small mining town, called Uis, and grew up under the apartheid system. In his preface to the anthology, *Searching for the Rain*, he describes his childhood as a miserable childhood because of the apartheid system under which he grew up and the Bantu education system which he received (Thaniseb, 2011). He furthermore describes the education system as characterised by "fanatical whip-bearing primary school teachers, self-righteous high school teachers and an abundance of relentless bullying" from

other children at a boarding school that he attended (Thaniseb, 2011, p. v). In an interview, Thaniseb talks a great deal about Catholicism which was introduced to him by “over-bearing priests” at a tender age. He says the catholic boarding school he attended taught him to examine his conscience and to confess sins all the time. Just like Molapong, Thaniseb reveals in an interview that he was part of the lads who were jailed in 1988 at Avis after participating in an uprising against oppression. Thaniseb says most teenagers at that time had hunger for independence.

In a foreword to his anthology, *Searching for the Rain: An anthology of Verse*, Krishnamurthy (2011) in Thaniseb (2011) describes Thaniseb as a “political animal” (p. i), who expresses anger at the injustice meted out to him. He depicts various moods in his poetry and he says he draws his inspiration from his surroundings and the events that happen in the day-to-day life.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter dealt with the review of relevant literature related to the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-issues that are addressed in literature. The chapter first defined the term ‘independence’ from the perspective of different scholars. The theme of disillusionment, as it is portrayed in literary works, was also reviewed. A review of cultural issues that emerge in post-independence literature was also done. In addition, the chapter discussed the two theoretical frameworks which guided the study. It has been observed that postcolonialism and socio historicism are the appropriate theories for the study in as far as they give vivid insights into the study.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology that was used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In order to answer the research questions that motivated this study, a suitable research strategy was implemented. In section 3.2 the research technique is highlighted, and a justification of the use of the desk approach employed in this research project is also provided. Section 3.3 discusses the population of the study while 3.4 explains the sample and the sampling techniques that were employed in this study.

The procedure that was followed in carrying out the study is explained in section 3.5 and the method of analysing data is summarised in section 3.6. This chapter concludes with the ethical considerations and a summary of the chapter in sections 3.7 and 3.8

#### **3.2 Research approach and design**

The present study adopted a qualitative approach to analyse the representation of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes in post-independence poetry in Namibia in a desktop study. The study strove to present a thorough exposition of selected poetry, which was its primary source. The selected poems were analysed to determine how Namibian poets view and expose identified socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural issues.

Khotari (2004) defines a research design as a plan, a roadmap and blueprint strategy of investigation, conceived to obtain answers to research questions. Christensen, Burke and Turner (2011) also describe a research design as an outline, plan or strategy that one intends to utilise to seek an answer to a research problem.

### 3.2.1 Qualitative approach

There are various definitions of qualitative research by different scholars. Punch (2003, p. 4) defines qualitative research as “empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers” while, on the contrary, quantitative research is “empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers.” Punch (2003) emphasises that qualitative research investigates social phenomena which are not quantifiable. Jupp (2006, p. 24) also defines qualitative research as “research that investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measurement.” What is apparent from the above definitions is that qualitative research deals with words and not quantities. Furthermore, qualitative research is concerned with meanings and the interpretation of social phenomena. In this study the researcher critically interpreted Namibian poetry by thematising socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues as they find expression in post-independence poems. Furthermore, this study did not rely on a quantitative presentation of the research findings, but the researcher interpreted the meaning of the data collected by means of content analysis to establish how poets address socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in their poetry.

Jupp (2006) also notes that the nature of qualitative research is such that it emphasises depth, detail and interpretation. Furthermore, it is often small-scale or at a micro-level. This entails that the sample in a qualitative study is small. Bui (2014) observes that a small sample gives the researcher the time and opportunity for an extensive interaction with the text being studied. This was especially important in this research because it allowed the researcher to apply the postcolonial theory, which calls for a wide array of issues to be investigated. In addition, qualitative research allows the researcher “... to investigate the topic in depth, to interpret the outcomes based on the participants’, not the researcher’s, perspectives” (Bui, 2014, p. 15) which were also appropriate for this research, since all the themes raised and analysed were addressed in the poems under study. Moreover, there was a need for an in-

depth analysis of post-independence poetry to gather the socio-political and socio-economic, socio-cultural issues the poets addressed, which could not be achieved through quantitative research. Furthermore, digging deep into concepts enabled a complete understanding of the social issues addressed in the selected post-independence Namibian poems.

Since the data obtained through qualitative study are taken from the perspective of participants and not of the researcher, they are therefore, reliable and valid (Amora, 2010). The results in this study were obtained from the poems under study and can therefore, be regarded as objective, reliable and valid.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) also add that in qualitative research, numerous forms of data are collected and examined from various angles, to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multifaceted situation. Thus, qualitative research allows for triangulation in collecting data by means of different procedures and enables a robust and holistic understanding of the social and cultural phenomena. This was pertinent to this study as it did not solely rely on poems and secondary data. For a richer analysis, the researcher conducted interviews with the poets in order to establish their biographies in relation to the social themes in their poetry. All data collected were consequently triangulated to validate and enhance a deeper understanding of the raised themes.

### **3.2.2 Desktop study**

This research was conducted as a desktop research study because the researcher used the anthologies, *Dreams* by Kahengua (2002), *Invoking Voices: An Anthology of Poems* by Kahengua (2012), *Come Talk your Heart* by Molapong (2005), *The Scars on my Skin* by Molapong (2014) and *Searching for the Rain: An Anthology of Verse* by Thaniseb (2011) to study socio-political and socio-economic issues.

According to the Education and training unit (n.d, p. 1), desktop research refers to seeking facts, general information on a topic, historical background, or study results that have been published or that exist in public documents. In other words, in desktop research, data can be collected without fieldwork. In this study, a literary analysis of Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb's poetry was carried out. The researcher also read and analysed various relevant published sources which were available, to draw conclusions. This includes accessing sources in libraries, the internet, websites and newspaper archives. However, according to Johnston (2014) desktop research could also include speaking to someone at a trade association or conducting interviews with experts. In this desktop study, the three selected poets were interviewed in order to establish their biographies and their stance on the social themes that they raise in their poetry. Often, a literary work is enriched by a thorough understanding of the history of its writer. As Ousmane (n. d, p.1) argues, man is himself/herself art. In a way, this means every writer is his novel, play or poem.

### **3.2.2.1 Poetry anthologies**

For the purposes of this research, the primary sources of data were four poetry anthologies namely Kahengua's *Dreams* (2002), *Invoking Voices: An Anthology of Poems* by Kahengua (2012), Molapong's *Come Talk your Heart* (2005) and *The Scars on my Skin* (2014) as well as Thaniseb's *Searching for the Rain: An Anthology of Verse* (2011). These primary sources gave first-hand information, provided by the author and not by the researcher (Bui, 2014).

### **3.2.2.2 Secondary sources**

While the selected poetry anthologies, as well as key informants referred to above, were the primary sources of data for the research, the study also relied on secondary sources. Secondary sources in the form of critical works were crucial to the study. Haralambos and Holborn (1990, p. 720) observe that secondary sources "consist of data which already exist."

In this study, secondary sources consisted of critical works which were related to the present inquiry. These included books, journals, theses and newspapers. Secondary sources were invaluable to the present researcher because ideas in secondary sources were insightful. The arguments raised in this thesis were sustained and concretised by ideas raised by different scholars in order to authenticate and validate the arguments raised.

Critical works on African literature also sustained and validated the arguments raised in the present study. Works by such African scholarly giants as Chinua Achebe (1987), Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981,1986), Okot p'Bitek (1967, 1973), Frantz Fanon (1968), Ali A. Mazrui (2002), among many others, provided important insights to the present study. Relevant works from authors in other African states were employed mainly because many of these African countries have undergone similar historical processes of colonialism, liberation struggle, independence and betrayal of promises of the struggle, as Namibia. Hence, the similarity of information or lack of it, between what Namibian poets portray and these other sources, enabled the researcher to study in-depth how the selected poets comment on social issues in the Namibian context.

Furthermore, the study utilised other relevant secondary sources which supplemented the analysis and provided a historical background, especially of the theories that were employed in the analysis. To interpret and situate the findings, the study employed a socio-historical perspective and a postcolonial reading.

Journals were also important sources of data for the research. The researcher referred to several journal articles on literary studies to substantiate arguments raised in the thesis. Furthermore, reference was also made to other literary genres, such as novelistic discourses and short stories, to enrich and widen the scope of the study. It is pertinent to indicate that

secondary sources in the form of critical works allowed the researcher to present an informed critique of the works.

### **3.3 Population**

Neuman (2011, p. 241) defines a research population as “the abstract idea of a large group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and to which results are generalised”. Creswell (2012, p. 142) concurs and adds that a research population is “a group of individuals who have the same characteristics”.

The population of this study comprises all the post-independence poems written in English by black Namibian poets in Namibia that address socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in the Namibian context.

### **3.4 Sample**

Neuman (2011, p. 243) defines a research sample as “[a] small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool and generalises to the population”. In this study, a small set of poems from Namibian poetry was selected. Purposive sampling was used to select anthologies from the population described above. Khotari (2004) states that in purposive sampling, “items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher, his choice concerning items remains supreme” (p. 59). The present study, therefore, purposively sampled *The scars on my skin* and *Come Talk your Heart* by Joseph Kaemogotsi Molapong, *Dreams* and *Invoking Voices* by Kavevangua Kahengua and *Searching for the Rain* by Thaniseb Axaro in order to investigate specifically their commenting on socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in Namibia.

### 3.5 Procedure

The research process commenced with a review of articles in credible journals. Interviews with the three poets, Kahengua, Molapong and Thaniseb, were also conducted to establish their biographies and their stance to the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues they address in their poems. This study relied on a theoretical framework as basis of its analysis, and gathering theoretical sources relevant to the work of art was also part of the first phase. Thereafter, the researcher carried out an in-depth analysis of the purposively selected poems where the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural themes were analysed and organised under emerging themes. The analysis was supported and concretised by the secondary sources that commented on social themes in literature. Finally, an informed critique of the themes and how they are depicted in the selected poems was made.

### 3.6 Data analysis

The content analysis method was used to analyse the data collected through studying the anthologies, *The Scars on my Skin* and *Come Talk your Heart* by Joseph Kaemogotsi Molapong, *Dreams and Invoking Voices* by Kavevangua Kahengua and *Searching for the Rain* by Thaniseb Axaro, focusing on the social themes addressed in the poems. According to Hudson (2005, p.131), “research in literature and literary criticism as currently practised, confine themselves to textual/content analysis scarcely ever mentioning or using numbers”. Hudson (2005) further notes that literary research is not quantitative because “numbers are employed to convey dates, values and amounts, but are little questioned in relation to emphasis, style or content” (p. 131). The analysis in this study did not employ any statistical evidence, thus content analysis was appropriate.

According to Krippendorff (2013) “content analysis” first appeared in *Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language* in the 1961 edition. This means that the term is one of the more

recent methods of data analysis. According to the *Webster dictionary of the English language* (1961) as cited in Krippendorff (2013, p. 36), content analysis is an “analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes, in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effects.” Krippendorff (2013, p. 40) further defines content analysis as “... a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author’s or user’s perspective”. In this study, content analysis was employed as the analysis was confined to the critical reading of the poems under study. It offered the researcher an opportunity for a close encounter with the poems and a thorough examination of the details (Griffin, 2014). Thus, the employment of content analysis in this instance became plausible, as it provided the various standpoints and visions of the poets in relation to the socio-political and socio-economic themes in their poetry.

Neuman (2011) identifies one of the major weaknesses of content analysis as not being able to provide one single interpretation for a single text. This means that the poems in the current study, may be interpreted differently by a different researcher. Neuman (2011) contends that content analysis “... cannot determine the truthfulness of an assertion or evaluate the aesthetic qualities of literature. It reveals the content in text, but cannot interpret the content’s significance”. Although content analysis has been criticised for providing more than one interpretation of a single text, it has its strengths, such as that it can show the researcher how different people from different cultural backgrounds understand and receive the message communicated in the text. The content analysis method also assists in clarifying the message communicated in the text by linking it with the same situations that are taking place in real life, such as poverty, the challenge of HIV and AIDS, immorality and many others.

### **3.7. Research ethics**

The importance of ethical considerations has been highlighted in several studies where the treatment of research participants, relationship between society and science, as well as professional issues, are the centre of focus (Christensen, Burke & Turner, 2011). Christensen, et al. (2011) point out that the category of professional issues includes the problem of research misconduct such as fabricating, falsifying in reviewing research, or in reporting research results and plagiarism. The researcher of this study guarded against fabrication of information, falsifying evidence as well as plagiarism by citing and quoting correctly, as well as acknowledging and referencing all the sources that were consulted. The researcher also obtained ethical clearance from the University of Namibia and adhered to its ethical code.

To evade personal biases in the analysis, the researcher reported different perspectives in the analysis of the selected poems, as well as contrary findings, as they were revealed in the poems under study. The researcher was also objective in analysing socio-political, socio-economic and socio-economic issues by focusing on the truth discovered by the research in the selected anthologies, and not by what the researcher personally believed to be true. Information was presented as it was obtained from the selected anthologies. Moreover, the researcher guarded against ridicule and stereotyping of the poets.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the methodology that was employed in obtaining data for the research. As discussed, the research was qualitative in nature and the primary sources of data were the selected anthologies. Critical works constituted secondary sources of data for the present research and were used to concretise the arguments raised in the study. The

researcher also indicated the procedure that was followed in collecting data, as well as the analysis of the data. Finally, ethical issues arising in this research study were discussed.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a critical interrogation of social issues portrayed in the selected poetry anthologies namely, *Come Talk your Heart* (Molapong, 2005), *The Scars on my Skin* (Molapong, 2014), *Dreams* (Kahengua, 2002), *Invoking Voices* (Kahengua, 2012) and *Searching for the Rain: An Anthology of Verse* (Thaniseb, 2011). It is the contention of this chapter that socio-political, economic and cultural issues are the pervasive preoccupations of the poets whose poetry is under study. The chapter does not intend to discuss each poem in the selected anthologies, only those that are addressing the social issues.

As indicated in chapter 3, the study relies on purposive sampling. Accordingly, the poetry has been classified according to thematic concerns namely i) leadership and black elites, ii) poverty iii) culture and identity iv) exile and return v) reconciliation, vi) the portrayal of women. The critique that is made here, draws insights from chapter 2 where seminal authors, such as Mazrui (2002), wa Thiong'o (1986; 1993; 1998), Fanon (1969; 1970) and Babu's (1981) perceptions on Africa's post-independence literary themes were reviewed. The analysis in this chapter utilises the principles of socio-historicism, as well as the theoretical principles of postcolonialism (see § 2.2).

The major questions which guided the analysis were:

- What are the most prevalent social issues that the three poets address in the different anthologies?

- How do the poets portray socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in their poetry?
- How could poetry be regarded as an integral part of the struggle for freedom, equality and justice?

## **4.2 Socio-political themes**

### **4.2.1 Leadership and black elites**

This section is committed to an analysis of how leaders in post-independent Namibia are presented in the selected poetry. It is important to note that while Namibian poetry deals with a wide range of issues, we observe that protest against leadership is by far the most dominant subject of post-independence poetry. The poets contest the political, economic and social oppression orchestrated by the leadership. In the selected poetry, it appears that Namibian leaders are blamed for the condition of Namibian people, which borders on entrapment and intense suffering. The poets maintain that there is a serious crisis of leadership in Namibia, which has resulted in neocolonialism taking centre stage despite the attainment of political independence. The poets are, therefore, “writing against neocolonialism”, to use wa Thiong'o's (1986, p. 4) words in a book by the same title. The poetry discussed in this section is more concerned with “fighting internal oppression” (Babu, 1981 p. 61). In the different anthologies under study, the poets seem to observe that the end of the war resulted in new struggles among various sectors of the society caused by the leaders. It is the mismanagement from the leadership that has brought catastrophes such as corruption, poverty and unemployment just to mention but a few, in the Namibian society.

Although all three poets project their disappointment regarding the post-independence leadership in Namibia, Molapong has the largest corpus of poetry which handles the subject

of Namibian leadership and the Namibian condition in both of his anthologies *Come Talk your Heart* and *The Scars on my Skin* (Mopalong, 2005, 2014). In these anthologies, the poet's authorial gaze is cast on leadership, among many other issues, in a number of poems. Some of the poems which deal with leadership in Molapong's anthologies are 'Fake money', 'Let's go to parliament', 'From deep within', 'Confusion', 'Opinion', 'We who decided to stay' and 'The black people I Know'. Before discussing individual poems it is noteworthy to discuss the titles of Molapong's anthologies.

The title *The scars on my Skin* suggests a heightened sense of disillusionment by the poet, as well as his psychological pain and anger towards the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in the Namibian context. These scars that the poet bears are confirmed in his biographical history which reveals that Molapong was born during the apartheid war and grew up under an apartheid system. He expresses his pain and bitterness in his poem 'Afrikan child'. He says;

The day I was born  
Bullets and tear gas  
Welcomed me into this world  
Hand grenades and landmines  
Were the only toys I knew

I am not a computer child  
Neither is my life fictitious  
I am just a victim  
Like all the Afrikan children. (Molapong, 2005, p. 54)

The above extract is highly ironical as the poet uses a bitter tone to express the situation he was brought up under. Instead of enjoying his childhood playing with normal toys and computers which other children play with, Molapong is ironically only exposed to dangerous and harmful "toys," such as "hand grenades and land mines". The poet uses personification to paint a picture of the chaos that he was born under, "Bullets and tear gas/ welcomed me into this world". The personification used by the poet is powerful as it creates a clear picture in

the reader's mind of the war situation that received him. The use of irony and personification thus helps the poet to express the pain within him that he is nursing. The poet seems to be nursing the effects that the apartheid war had on him. His poetry also confirms that apartheid hurt him, it also angered him personally and scarred him to the extent that he still bears scars on his soul. As if that was not enough, an independent Namibia presents the poet with new challenges which leave him with more 'scars on his skin' as presented in his anthologies. The underlying meaning of the title *The Scars on my Skin* is that in the post-independent Namibian epoch the people have been hurt politically, socially, economically and culturally; hence, they are nursing 'wounds' caused largely by the ruling elite. This is evident in the poems 'Fake money', 'Let's go to parliament', 'Watch them', and 'From deep within'.

The poem 'From deep within' is written in the first person. It is apparent that the poet is writing in his own voice and is addressing the reader directly about the social issues happening in post-independent Namibia. The poet uses a bitter tone to bring out his scars that emanate from those socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural woes prevailing in the Namibian society.

I am hurt by reality  
The hopeless faces I have seen  
Asking for explanations  
Answers to their plight  
The cry of a community  
Forgotten by fat politicians  
Evicted by soulless farmers  
Who love to show their fake muscles  
Shamed by courts benched with the fortunate

My pain is raw, untamed and blue  
What has happened to reason, humanity?  
Why is everybody so quiet, tired?  
Where are the political parties?  
Where are souls, persons?  
What is happening? Say something  
Write some songs for us  
Create some fruitful noise  
Shout! Shout for the voiceless

They cannot talk they are hurt  
Deep in their souls, they feel forgotten

Where are you hiding?  
What are you protecting?  
Stop the mockery, colour hate  
Ease the pain, the timeless pain  
Before it turns into new energies  
Actions of resistance, riots, turmoil  
Defeat will come the victims will triumph

The pain is deep  
Larger than a single community  
Revolutions are instigated by ignorance  
When people cry together  
A revolution is to start (Molapong, 2005, p. 24)

The title of the poem 'From deep within' immediately gives us a direct clue to the inner thoughts of the poet. The opening three lines "I am hurt", "the hopeless faces I have seen", and "asking for explanations" direct the reader's thoughts to the "scars" that the poet bears. The lines herald a serious sense of disillusionment that is deeply embedded, not only in the poet, but in all Namibian citizens. The poet is quick to point out that the pain that he and the majority of people experience is perpetrated and perpetuated by the "fat politicians" who have accumulated all the wealth for themselves at the expense of the rest of the Namibians. The adjective "fat" creates a vivid picture of how greedy these politicians are and even more, how rich they have become because of stealing from people, thus leaving the rest of the citizens "hopeless." This scenario can be confirmed by Macheke (2014) who already observed in the text *The Beautiful ones are not yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah the 'intelligentsia', who are in power have allocated all social and material comforts to themselves and closed doors to further entry into their class. (See § 2.3.3.1) This is the situation that instilled pain in Molapong "from deep within". To display his pain clearly, the poet uses visual imagery in line one, stanza 2, he says "my pain is raw, untamed and blue". This personification helps to paint a clear picture of the extent to which the poet is

heartbroken by the way the “fat politicians” have ruined the fruits of true independence. A pain that is “raw” and “blue” is a pain that is intense and strong. Thus, Molapong successfully brings out leadership as one of the socio-political factors that has “scarred” most Namibians living in the post-independence epoch.

The alliterative repetition of ‘c’ and ‘f’ used in the first stanza in “The cry of a community/ Forgotten by fat politicians/ Who love to show their fake muscles/ shamed by courts benched with the fortunate” creates a light-hearted tone because of the sing-song rhythm that is brought out in the reading but at the same time, the tone becomes ironical as it reinforces the persona’s fury that has been caused by the ruling elite in post-independent Namibia.

Nevertheless, even in his mood of hopelessness, as the poem develops in stanza two, the poet refuses to be a passive recipient of the unfair actions of the politicians. He repeats a series of ponderous rhetorical questions “why is everybody so quiet, tired? Where are the political parties? Where are our souls, persons?”, “what is happening? Say something”. By asking these questions that have no answers Molapong is challenging the readers to reflect on the unfair socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural situation in the independent Namibian society. The poet is wondering why people should sit back in the face of all the evils going on. By repeating a series of unanswered questions, the poet emphasizes the degree of the pain in his heart. His pain emanates from the fact that the government has “forgotten” them (Macheka, 2014). Hence, he begins to protest through poetry. He instigates an uprising through this poem, “shout! Shout for the voiceless”. Due to the pain that is deep within him, Molapong uses his poetry as a platform for the struggle for total liberation. He realises that independence did not bring total freedom to the people, therefore, he concludes his poem by saying “A revolution is to start”, thus showing that there is an ongoing need to fight for social justice, freedom and equality.

On the other hand, the title of the second anthology under study *Come talk your heart*, by Molapong suggests a sense of agency. The title suggests that the Namibian social status is in a precarious condition and it requires the citizens to take action. It demands speaking out against the evils of betrayal, self-aggrandizement, injustice, and lack of commitment to the alleviation of the suffering of the poor by the “bureaucrats”. The title *Come talk your heart* is about a people who have resolved to participate actively in reclaiming their liberty. The poet is conscious of the fact that people’s liberty is only realisable after having waged a struggle against bad governance. Molapong’s view aligns with Mazrui’s (2002) standpoint which regards poetry as a means of protest against bad leadership and neo-colonial rule. In Mazrui’s (2002) point of view, the writers’ pre-occupation is to free the nation from imperialism (see § 2.3.3.1).

In the poem, ‘Lets go to parliament’, Molapong employs a directive speech act as a resolve to take an active step and invites the masses to come with him to parliament to demonstrate against those ‘honourable’ members who are preoccupied with enriching themselves, yet forgetting the masses. Molapong does not hold icons sacred, and portrays Namibian leadership as both part of the problem and the solution to the Namibian condition. Molapong challenges the people to guard against, and resist, leaders who aim at pushing them to the periphery by creating the impression that they are invincible. By using contractions, he creates a conversational tone which indicates solidarity with the repressed masses.

He says

Let’s go, don’t walk  
Run to parliament  
Meet with the MPs  
Let’s invade parliament  
Exhibit our interest. (Molapong, 2014, p. 45)

In principle, it is an MP who is supposed to go to the people and find out their problem, but in this poem we can see Molapong is inviting people men and women to “run” to parliament.

This may be a good testimony of the political system in Namibia, where the people have to look for the government to solve their problems, and not the government knowing the plight of the people. After being elected, they never return to the people (Tembo, 2012). Their own, new luxuries make them forget the people who have elected them as their representatives.

Molapong says

Comrades are sleeping  
They are lost in the purest of greed (p. 45)

Molapong employs a harsh tone throughout the poem in order to evoke a sense of protest among the masses. He says

Let's blow up the parliament  
That is haunting the MPs  
Camouflaged Memes and puppets (p. 45)

The speaker does not have any kind words for the ruling elite. He metaphorically refers to them as “puppets” for he thinks that they are efficient tools of repression who have managed to perpetuate the legacy of the colonialists, thereby giving birth to neocolonialism and at the same time, relegating the masses to the periphery of society. The speaker also juxtaposes the supposedly highly respected parliamentary women “Memes” with “puppets” to insinuate that these “Memes” are not any better than the “puppets” they are also aiding in betraying the goals of independence. In the Namibian idiom the word ‘meme’ is a respectful address to women who are older or of a higher status. Molapong, however, uses this word in a sardonic way to show that the respect they claim is not earned. Thus, the persona’s choice of words used to describe them is apt “camouflaged Memes and puppets” as it powerfully illustrates their fakeness. In addition, the persona ridicules the women in parliament by describing them as “blooming memes”. This description by the persona is possibly derived from the common saying ‘blooming idiot’. The “memes” in parliament seem to be blossoming, but at the same time are ironically doing nothing productive in parliament. Instead, they are pre-occupied in adorning themselves in “expensive gear” and driving expensive cars, while the majority of

the Namibians are groveling in poverty. Consequently, Molapong wants radical action against them. He calls his fellow citizens to blow down the parliament. Molapong shows that people cannot afford to be mere spectators in the face of various ills bedeviling their society. To Molapong, inaction is not an option in the context of a leader who is rather destructive, destabilising and disturbing of the Namibian socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural status.

To emphasise his commitment to fight for true liberation through poetry, the persona repeats his call seventeen times throughout the poem starting with the word “let’s... ”. Let’s go, don’t wait/ Let’s go, don’t walk / Let’s invade parliament/ Let’s sing to them of or thirst/ Let’s screen for them the movies/ Let’s draw our hopelessness/ Let’s creatively write them off/ Let’s recite poetry of failure/ Let’s colonise parliament/ Let’s create a new parliament/ Let’s blow up the parliament/ Let’s instill a sense of reality/ Let’s dissipate their phantom castles/ Let’s blowtorch their greed, lust/ Let’s go, don’t stop/ Let’s speak in unison / Let’s persist with our art/ Let’s not give up yet/ Let’s move the parliament. This repetition underlines his determination to revolt against the greedy and selfish, arrogant, indolent nature of the ‘honourable’ members. The persona also repeats his call using short powerful verbs (directives) “Run, Meet, Sprint, Wake, Haste” in order to motivate the public to rise against the injustices perpetrated by the ruling government. In the poem, the persona expresses his need for action that is aggravated by the self-enrichment tendencies of the MPs who deck out themselves in expensive clothes and are sleeping and “dreaming of shares” while the masses suffer.

In Molapong’s view, one of the tools for waging a struggle against injustices, is writing. In the third stanza of the poem, he says

Let’s creatively write them off  
Let’s recite poetry of a failure (p. 45)

By writing this way, Molapong shows that poetry can be a means of revolting against the socio-political status prevailing in a society. Molapong, thus, seeks to expose the leaders through poetry.

In the poem which shares the same title as the anthology 'Come talk your heart', the persona invites all Namibian citizens to use poetry as a medium of speaking against all the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural injustices they suffer. Molapong, through his poetry, takes the responsibility of shaping the minds and social awareness of the members of the Namibian community, to ensure the emergence of a society that does not sit back and watch unfair practices in silence. It gives them an opportunity to speak out and protest for total freedom and justice. He says

I call upon my brothers and sisters  
Come and recite your poem (Molapong, 2005, p. 36)

Molapong (2005), through this poem, shows that in the process of writing, writers concern themselves with addressing all unfavourable conditions of people as they try to challenge political, economic, social behaviours that are detrimental to the development of a post-independent society. In other words, poetry is an important tool of emancipation, as it may create awareness of the injustices prevailing in the society. Through poetry, the ordinary Namibian citizen is afforded the opportunity to name the nameless and speak the unspeakable, thereby evolving themselves from the peripheral zone of society to the centre, where they can claim positions of power. Thus he says

When your heart bleeds, tell me just that  
If I have done wrong, remind me of my deeds  
Fear not what your mind thinks (p. 36)

Molapong (2005) does not only urge the brothers and sisters to speak out their minds only with a soft voice, but he advises them to raise their voices without any fear or hesitation. He says

Come recite your poems to me  
I say, come don't hesitate now  
Raise your voices and your mind (p. 36)

This call is quite significant as it aims to empower the ordinary citizens to use their voices to fight for freedom and justice. Thus, the persona shows a quest for total liberation in the sense that he resolves to engage in positive action until the problems affecting them in post-independent society are addressed.

Kavevangua Kahengua and Axaro Thaniseb also tackle the issue of leaders and black elites in their poetry. They largely portray them as hypocrites who preach the gospel they do not practice. Hypocrisy of the ruling Namibian elite, therefore, becomes one primary, underlying, socio-political theme that cuts across all the selected anthologies.

#### **4.2.2 The hypocrisy of leaders**

After the new postcolonial governments had come to power, it emerged that the leaders maintained their connections with the outgoing colonisers, thus, the legacy of colonialism was perpetuated. Thaniseb's (2011) poem 'Black man's burden' is a thought-provoking metaphor for post-independent Namibia, which employs a satiric tone to show that despite going to war to fight to eradicate the white ruler, the new ruling elite comes back and continues to live in the shadow of the former colonisers. He says;

In 1988, he went to war with the enthusiasm  
Of the young, the restless and the innocent  
To liberate his country, He said.  
He returned in 1992, with little more  
Schooling than his comrades (from the frontline)  
To develop his people, He said.  
He builds a house – on the hill next to the evil white man

He so much scorns – the world he so dearly embraces  
Lifting his glass into the boerewors<sup>1</sup> and klipdrift<sup>2</sup> polluted air (Thaniseb, 2011, p. 13)

Of interest, from the above extract, is the paradox brought out by the persona about the black man who comes back from war to fight against the white man but, upon arrival, the black man begins to emulate the white man's lifestyle that he "so much scorns". The persona repeats the phrase "He said" in the first stanza in order to express his frustration with the betrayal of promises that were initially made by the people who went into exile. "To liberate his country, He said./ To develop his people, He said" The persona allows the reader to get into contact with the original plan of these black elites at the time they went to war, and repeats the same words they said at that time. The persona is exposing the black elites as people who just talk things they do not mean. Here, the poet seems to be ridiculing these black elites who come back from war and contradict their very own words just upon arrival. It is ironic to see how the black man begins to eat and enjoy the white man's food and even drink their expensive wines, "Lifting his glass into the boerewors and klipdrift". The poet shows that the new black leadership is contradictory and not genuine in behaviour as they do not push to empower the majority of blacks. Instead, they push themselves into houses and offices formerly occupied by colonialists and capitalists, and have inherited the structures without any modification. The closer to the white man their efforts are, the more successful they think they are. This way, wa Thiong'o's (1986) observation is vindicated, that the leaders are devoid of inventiveness; they remember what they have seen or read in European textbooks and try to imitate that (p. 97). Again, according to Fanon, (1968 p. 124) independence becomes an era in which the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added to them.

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<sup>1</sup> A typical delicacy of white Namibians

<sup>2</sup> South African brandy traditionally drunk by white Namibians

Thaniseb (2011) adopts a prose-narrative style of writing his poem in order to describe and dramatise how the black ruling elite behave as they imitate the lifestyle of their former colonial master.

Lifting his glass into the boerewors and klipdrift polluted air  
*(His teeth flashing in the afternoon sun, the monstrous  
Belly rolling with each burst of laughter)*  
To the salute of gesuind<sup>3</sup> to his neighbor!  
The struggle is over, He beams (p. 13)

To paint a vivid picture of the ruling black man's happiness and exorbitant luxury life, Thaniseb narrates the black man's actions in bracketed italics as he (the black man) wines and dines. The black man flashes his teeth while bursting out laughing and his "monstrous belly" responds to the laughing. The persona expresses the size of the ruling black man's belly in a metaphor, "monstrous belly" to paint a vivid picture of how huge their bellies have become because of wealth. The "monstrous belly" becomes a symbol of affluence. Noteworthy is the fact that the politicians' big bellies are also captured by Molapong in some of his poems such as 'The black people I know' in stanza 2, line 12 "Big Bellied Black Brother, Bad breathed Bullies" and in the poem 'In search of questions' stanza 8 line 1 where he asks "who are you with big bellies and emptiness?" The reference to the politicians' big bellies by the poets in different poems emphasizes the level of their greed and affluence. The poet also code-switches and uses the word "gesuind," a German word which means cheers to illustrate how the colonial legacy has been retained and maintained by these black elites.

In the second stanza of the poem 'The black man's burden', Thaniseb (2011) also captures, in a striking manner, the diseases of affluence caused by personal lifestyles that the "modern black man" ends up catching.

And at intervals,

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<sup>3</sup> A derivative of the German word, Gesundheit

Complains of all ills of a modern black man;  
Ulcers...  
Stress...  
Hypertension...  
Gout (p. 13)

Thaniseb (2011) lists the diseases of affluence that the bourgeoisie end up contracting in a slanted list-like manner that shows that the list of these diseases is a never ending list. In this excerpt we learn that the ruling black elite have got different kinds of burdens from the rest of the citizens in the post-independent Namibia. Their burdens (ruling elite) are the ones caused by an excessively exorbitant life, in contrast to the burdens caused by poverty and unemployment experienced by the majority. As an illustration - gout is a disease caused by an excessive intake of high-purine foods such as alcoholic beverages, seafood and meat. Thus, contracting gout is a sign of affluence.

In the same thought provoking poem, Thaniseb (2011) also casts his authorial gaze on the extent of exploitation by capturing expropriation of the Namibian land by the ruling elite. He says

Shooting the breeze about share, quotas,  
Property investments and land expropriation  
For hobby farming<sup>4</sup>  
And,  
Of late -  
Black elite Empowerment (p. 13)

The poet bemoans the ruling elite who plunder Namibian resources doing “hobby farming” while in the meantime some citizens live in shacks. He blames this land expropriation for the poor human condition in the post-independence dispensation, and argues that independence only empowered the black elite, leaving out the rest of the voiceless masses to exist in poverty “in the place of mice and men.” (p. 14) Thaniseb skillfully adopts the saying “mice and men: from a novella ‘*Of mice and men*’ written by author John Steinbeck, published in

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<sup>4</sup> A phrase typically used by affluent white farmers in Namibia

1937. The novel tells the story of George Milton and Lennie Small, two displaced migrant ranch workers, who move from place to place in search of new job opportunities. Reference to this novel helps the reader to view the situation in post-independence from a universal perspective.

The poet is saddened by the fact that the black elite only “descends from the hill top” where they reside when the masses begin to complain. He says

He laments about his ungrateful comrades  
Turned reactionaries at the edge of the city,  
Behind the hill.  
On such days, at intervals, he descends the hill  
To that place,  
At the edge of the city,  
Behind the hill,  
To pay homage – the place he once  
Called home,  
To remind his comrades about  
The long bitter struggle and the evil white man on the top of the hill  
And yet to collect from his investment,  
A shebeen  
In the place of mice and men  
And, at intervals, on such days deemed revolutionary,  
To raise his plump, empty fist in unison with them,  
The voiceless masses grimacing in the African sun (p. 13)

In the above stanza, Thaniseb is satirising the hypocrisy of the ruling black elite who use propaganda to oppress their fellow black man. He brings to them strategic rhetoric which pacifies the masses. He quotes the black ruling elite saying

**POWER TO THE PEOPLE! ALUTA CONTINUA!**

The graphological deviation presented in the form of capital letters and exclamation marks draws attention to the falsehood contained in the message. Thaniseb is against this manipulative rhetoric which entrenches the leadership’s privileged positions, while the general populace wallow in poverty. Thaniseb (2011) says

His sloven utterances pregnant with

## Doubleblespeak and euphemism (p. 13)

Here, Thaniseb is writing against pacifist propaganda and sees it as a threat to the realisation of genuine freedom (Tembo, 2012). The word choice “pregnant” has a powerful connotative meaning, as it symbolises the high degree of lies that the black elite brings to people which will later be born as the new truth. Their talk is full of euphemism in order to deceive the poor masses. Thaniseb is therefore, writing against greedy leaders who do not serve the needs of their people, but instead use the people as a means to an end. Thaniseb’s stance dovetails Tembo (2012) who views greed as a factor that militates against equal distribution of resources to the extent that leaders amass wealth, while in the process impoverishing the people who ironically voted them into power (see§ 2.3.3.1). The poet is saddened by the fact that independence has failed to bear significant meaning for the people because the milk and honey promised is not tangible.

In the poem, ‘Fake money’, Molapong laments the lack of quality leadership necessary to nurture and preside over true independence, characterised by freedom, equality and justice. The hypocrisy of leadership is further enunciated in this poem. The title ‘Fake money’ already conjures up a sense of falseness, two-facedness and pretense in the reader’s mind. The reader is transported to a world of appearance versus reality where the ruling elite masquerades as very responsible and democratic, but in actual fact they are only interested in fattening their pockets. Upon reading the first stanza the reader immediately realises that the socio-political and socio-economic situation in Namibia is in turmoil because of the ruling elite. Molapong writes

They eat the economy  
And talk of democracy  
As if their lives meant  
Anything to the poor  
And sleeping masses

They insult one another  
And expect us to laugh  
At the nonsense they talk  
Our time and resources  
Wasted by the hour  
They talk about respect  
Whilst we die of thirst  
Some others die of floods  
Still they hike their perks  
Claiming to curb inflation

They keep on complaining  
Of high crime and poverty  
Still they build high walls  
To protect their scrambles  
Of lust, greed and gifts

They smile like beasts  
Dogs armed with rabies  
Grinning at the slightest  
Sight of the untouchables  
Significant number of votes

They have learned with time  
To fake empathy, show sympathy  
And keep away from the pain  
Whilst we endure their laws  
Games they play against us

They...they have  
Their skies of no limits

We...we have  
The measurements  
To dig our own graves  
we cannot afford. (Molapong, 2014, p. 18)

In the opening line Molapong (2014) uses a direct or literal translation from the Setswana language and he says “They eat the economy”. This direct translation creates a clear image of how the ruling elite have affected and destroyed the Namibian economy at the expense of the majority. Moreover, the image of filling their bellies while others suffer is projected. He decries their fakeness brought out by the fact that they preach the gospel they do not practise. “They talk of democracy and yet their focus is on self-enrichment”. Here, Molapong seems to

be fed up and tired of the socio-economic and socio-political situation in Namibia. He uses a simile to liken the ruling elite's smile to that of a beast, just to show that these leaders are not genuine, but dangerous. The animal metaphor used in stanza 5 line 2 to describe the ruling elite in "dogs armed with rabies" intensifies the impression that the ruling elite are heartless people who have messed up the socio-political and socio-economic status of the country because of their greediness and their ambitions, which are like "skies are of no limits." However, what is of interest to note is that the dogs have "rabies". Rabies in dogs is usually marked by an inability to move parts of the body, confusion, loss of consciousness and eventually death. The fact that the black elites are equated "dogs with rabies" suggests that these black elites are not necessarily armed, hence they can be challenged. To underpin the politicians' hypocrisy "the "dogs armed with rabies" do not smile but 'grin' at "the slightest sight of the untouchables" in order to gain a "significant number of votes from them at the time of elections. Molapong refers to the masses as "untouchables" a word which immediately conjures up the image of the untouchables in India, a certain social group of people whose status is regarded as lower than that of animals. Their status is confined to menial, despised jobs and they are shunned by the rest of society. In Molapong's view, the greedy behaviour of the ruling black elite has relegated the status of the post-independence Namibian masses to untouchability.

The juxtaposed repetition and contrast that is brought out in "They ... they have" and "We ... we have" underscores the alienation between the black elite and the poor and the poet identifies himself with the poor. Molapong arouses the reader's increasing attention by appealing to their pathos, "we have the measurements to dig our own graves". At this stage Molapong's sense of hopelessness has heightened, as he shows that the black *nouveaux riches* leave no beam of light to the poor. It appears that the situation in Namibia will not

improve in the foreseeable future. Thus, it can be said that the hypocrisy of leaders is one socio-political factor that is apparent in the selected post-independence poetry.

### **4.3 Socio-economic issues**

#### **4.3.1 Poverty**

In the poem 'Rumbling stomach', Kahengua (2002) notes that while the war was won and the nation freed from colonial bondage, independence has failed to improve the condition of the formerly colonised significantly. He says;

The mood flies high  
Like quelea birds  
Soldiers march down  
Independence Avenue  
It's March twenty-first  
Thuds come faintly to my ears  
As if I were deaf

The mood flies high  
The day is dull  
A wintry halo  
Surrounds my body  
As I wave down passing cars  
With my hungry hand  
From vantage point  
Where great names meet  
You name them:

Corner of Robert Mugabe  
And Sam Nujoma  
Corner of Laurent Kabila  
And Nelson Mandela  
Corner of Hage GeinGob  
And Julius Kambarage Nyerere

Eyes shy like those of trapped hyena  
Peep at me  
Yes, trapped in their wealth perhaps some day  
Some job will come my way  
Isn't being positive  
A fantasy  
Have you ever missed your breath  
For a few moments?

Well, I have been without mine  
For as long as I can recall (Kahengua, 2002, p. 52)

The first reading of this poem leaves the reader with the realisation that the socio-political and socio-economic status in Namibia is dire for the ordinary Namibian citizen right on the very day that independence is attained the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1990. The poem reflects that, although the rest of the nation is celebrating the attainment of independence, the persona does not engage in any euphoria because he is unemployed and he is hungry. Kahengua uses a somber tone throughout the poem to depict the nihilism that engulfs the Namibian society post-independence. The title of the poem 'Rumbling stomach' pre-guides the reader into the idea that things are not well in post-independent Namibia. The stomach is rumbling with hunger when in contrast, "the mood is flying high like quelea birds, soldiers are marching down Independence Avenue" on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. This paradox immediately reveals the imbalance that came with independence. While there are people celebrating the dawn of independence, some people are crying foul as they feel cheated by the arrival of independence. What is more saddening is the fact that the persona can hardly hear the celebrations "thuds come faintly to my ears/ as if I were deaf."

The poet uses repetition to begin stanzas 1 and 2. He repeats "The mood flies high", in both stanzas to underpin the euphoria that prevailed just after independence. However, what is striking in both stanzas is the way the poet immediately reveals that although the mood is high, "the day is dull" to him. He seems to not have seen the meaning of independence yet. This confirms Macheka's (2014, p. 15) observation that to most people, independence was not a fulfilment of expectations but "an illusion which generated a false sense of arrival" (see § 2.3.2). Thus, "A wintry halo surrounds [the poet's] body" on a day that he is expected to be celebrating with others. The way the poet ironically refers to "Independence Avenue" in line 4 stanza 1, is interesting. The soldiers marching in Independence Avenue are meant to

symbolise total freedom, equality and justice for everyone but alas, the persona is wallowing in misery on the very day of independence when others are engaged in celebrations. What the poet is projecting in this poem is that neocolonialism has set in soon after independence and it is ravaging society. Kahengua acknowledges that people were quite happy to achieve political independence. They celebrated everywhere as they anticipated that it would right all the wrongs of a colonialist society and empower the people in many respects. The poet reveals that little did the people know that they had achieved an “independence with a question mark” (wa Thiongo 1986, p. 7). Kahengua is saddened by the failure of independence to bring genuine freedom characterised by abundance of food and employment, among other things. He is concerned that, despite attaining political independence, the people’s lives have not been meaningfully transformed. The poet is concerned with the stasis that grips society, a stasis that, to a very large extent, would suggest that the people are still under colonial rule, for they still live like refugees.

To depict the abject poverty that the masses live in the post-independent Namibian society, Kahengua reflects ‘From within’ the polarised nature of independent Namibia, as confirmed by Melber (2005) who notes that Namibia ranks in the top category of countries with the deepest social divides (see § 2.4) The dichotomy between the ordinary citizens and the elite is most visible in the poem. The poet observes that while the elite is living a comfortable and luxurious life, underlying that comfort and luxury is the impoverishment of the majority. The poem comprises 4 stanzas. The first 2 stanzas chronicle the high living standards of the rich, while the last 2 stanzas catalogue the “misery and want of living in deplorable conditions and the grinding poverty” of the ordinary masses who live in Katutura (Malaba, 2015, p. 56). The first 2 stanzas read;

Down Nelson Mandela Avenue,  
In Klein /Ae//Gams,  
The affluent are privileged

To live in the privacy of hills,  
Among the rocks,  
Like rock rabbits  
Amid the silence of a cemetery.  
“BEWARE OF THE DOG”  
Snarls at me.  
From behind the fortress of walls,  
Dogs bark at the sound of feet  
Of the presumed poor intruder  
The clack of the electrified fence  
Makes me an outright alien  
Here, down Nelson Mandela Avenue,  
In Klein /Ae//Gams,  
The chosen occupy large spaces  
In accordance with the master plan,  
As laid down to promote  
The postcolonial continuum.

Here, down Nelson Mandela Avenue,  
In Klein /Ae// Gams,  
The rich discard tidbits  
Amounting to full plates  
That tantalise the watering mouths  
Of the poor.  
Here, housing is a status symbol.  
Here, streets are as wide  
As highways,  
Yet happiness is concealed in the privacy  
Of mansions – one wonders  
What sins have their owners committed  
To possess such riches?!  
Or whose labour have they exploited? (Kahengua, 2012, p. 5)

The above stanzas capture the deluxe life that the new ruling elite leads. In the opening stanza, Kahengua uses stark imagery “To live in the privacy of hills/ Among the rocks/ like rock rabbits’ Amid the silence of a cemetery” to highlight his sense of alienation in the affluent suburb which he deliberately gives a hybrid name, “Klein/Ae//Gams” of which blends the German Suburban name ‘Klein Windhoek’ with the KhoeKhoegowab name ‘/Ae//Gams’. This hybrid brings to the fore the mixed nature of the Namibian, postcolonial dispensation. Kahengua shows that the former colonisers were part of the new socio-political and socio-economic order, and they occupied many strategic positions in post independent

Namibia. He describes them, together with the self-centered black elites, as the “chosen” who enjoy the “privacy of the hills,” safely secured with “electrified fence’ and dogs as the last line of defence against their own people. However, contrary to the segregation of the past which was based on race, the new dividing line is wealth, as presented in the poem.

Kahengua (2012) repeats “Nelson Mandela Avenue” 3 times within the first 2 stanzas. Mentioning “Nelson Mandela Avenue” appears to be ironic as it conjures up symbols of imprisonment, rather than liberation. The alliteration in “amid the silence of a cemetery” highlights the lack of life which characterises this affluent area. The poet does not seem to envy this life as he alienates himself from it. He concludes the second stanza with a series of mind blowing rhetorical questions. He says

One wonders  
What sins have their owners committed  
To possess such riches?!  
Or whose labour have they exploited? (p. 5)

The rhetorical questions clearly hint that the elite’s wealth was not acquired innocently. In fact, the poet is exposing the fact that there is a new form of colonialism where some black elites exploit fellow blacks, and this is neocolonialism. In such a society, the bourgeoisie is “preoccupied with filling their pockets as rapidly as possible, [and in the process] the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation” (Fanon 1968, p. 165).

The first 2 stanzas of the poem ‘From within’ depicting bourgeoisie life, sharply contrast with the final 2 stanzas of the same poem which capture township life “Katutura Ke tu” which is characterised by deprivation and poor living standards.

Down Bethlehem Avenue, significant  
In Katutura Ke tu – Our beloved Katutura,  
In the midst of poverty, (Kahengua, 2012, p. 5)

The poet's identification with the "basic" shelter of the poor, rather than with the "mansions" of the "affluent" is significant. He calls the township "Our beloved Katutura" to suggest that he is part of the masses who live there. Traditionally, Katutura has been the home of blacks while Klein Windhoek has been set aside for whites. Thus, the poet proves that he and the masses are yet to attain "true independence," as the separation is still evident.

Despite the deprivation that exists in this black designated location, ironically people seem happy:

Adults chat animatedly,  
Children play cheerfully,  
Though days and nights are insecure (p. 5)

Here, Kahengua's wry humour points to the paradox of the relatively relaxed existence of those who have "nothing" as opposed to the imprisonment of better-offs who live "in the silence of a cemetery". The prevailing insecurity validates the grandiose security that is the hallmark of Southern African Suburban bliss.

Down Bethlehem Avenue,  
In Katutura Ke tu,  
People like ants are huddled  
In small places  
Here, shelter is a basic need.  
Streets are as narrow  
As elephant trails  
People here lick plates filled with nothing,  
Yet their spirits are visibly exuberant  
Against the odds,  
The young are hopeful (p. 5)

In the above excerpt, Kahengua successfully captures the various forms of challenges that the blacks who live in Katutura experience. Challenges such as over crowdedness, hunger and narrow streets are validating the fact that African independence has not been able to bring fundamental changes to the lives of ordinary citizens. Despite this heart-rending situation, where "People lick plates filled with nothing," Kahengua shows that the people living in this

area do not seem to question the status quo, as “their spirits are visibly exuberant” against these odds. This is a saddening situation as it may suggest that nobody will revolt against the prevailing socio-economic and socio-political situation. Thus, true independence will continue to remain an unachievable dream to many poor blacks.

The theme of poverty, as one of the rife socio-economic and socio-political factors is also underpinned in the poem ‘City of Shacks’ by Kahengua (2002). In this poem, Kahengua reflects that the post-independent Namibian society is characterised by indecent accommodation set aside for the poor. The choice of word “city” by the poet is apt, as it shows that the people who live in shacks are numerous in post-independent Namibia. The title of the poem ‘City of shacks’ also reinforces the poor conditions in post-independent Namibia.

The poem is visually striking, as the poet accompanies the poem with a photograph of the dilapidated shacks, which features prominently in the right-hand corner of the page. The poet ridicules the post-independent Namibia by capturing a human condition which is defined by abject poverty. What invites the poet’s scorn is the sad reality that in the same society there are a privileged few (petite-bourgeoisie) who live very luxurious lives.

Kahengua deliberately composes this poem into 2 stanzas only, just to underscore the nothingness and the futility of life in this ‘city of shacks’. He writes

In the city of shacks  
There is a heart  
There is a community  
A pauper can visit  
Another pauper  
And ask for nothing.

In the city of shacks  
There’s a community  
There’s no material world  
To inherit  
There’s a language

And culture of nature. (Kahengua 2002, p. 9)



Image 1. From the anthology *Dreams*: Poem 'City of Shacks' p. 9

One of the things which can be noted in this poem is how the people who are relegated to shacks, try to retain some dignity amidst their squalor. The poet uses a symbol of a “heart” to symbolise the humanity that prevails in this “city of shacks”. Although the people who live in shacks have nothing material in possession, they are the ones who still have a good conscience and good manners. They live according to African values, such as co-operation and rootedness, as opposed to the affluent who are callous and only obsessed with their material wealth. In this process, they have abandoned their culture.

“Forgive my hopelessness” is another striking poem which was written in 1997 by Kahengua, seven years after the Namibian independence. In this poem, the poet employs a despondent tone to capture a poverty-stricken community, named single quarters which was built for migrant workers by the South African colonial government. Seven years after Independence, the persona is still an inhabitant of that place and he is hopeless about his future. He says

Forgive my hopelessness  
I the dweller of the single quarters

Where a single room is haven for the masses  
When I look left or right I see streams of urine  
The steaming stench choking babies

Forgive my hopelessness  
I the dweller of the single quarters  
For stories of hope are successes  
Of the daily struggles (Kahengua, 2002, p. 25)

In the above extract, the poet reflects the squalid conditions under which the ordinary black man lives and the lack of hope that prevails in such a community. The alliterative repetition in “The steaming stench choking babies” reinforces how deplorable those living conditions are. The portrayal of such living conditions by Kahengua aligns with Mupondi’s (2014) findings on Chirere’s (2006) short stories where post-independent Zimbabweans are depicted living in squatter camps. (See § 2.3.3.4). Mupondi (2014) notes that to the squatters, independence does not have much significance as it does not enable them to have decent accommodation, clean water and healthy sanitary conditions. The pathetic situation of the people depicted in the literary works, generally reflects the unrelieved suffering of the masses after Independence (Mupondi, 2014).

From the foregoing discussion, it therefore goes without saying that poverty is one of the major socio-economic and socio-political themes that is prevalent in the selected poets’ poetry.

#### **4.3.2 Unemployment**

One of the socio-economic issues that cut across the poetry under study is unemployment. In the poem ‘Rumbling stomach’, Kahengua (2002, p. 52) depicts the persona as failing to secure a job in Namibia after independence. He says “perhaps someday/Some job will come my way”. The problem of unemployment is brought out as affecting mostly the youth. This is evident in the poems ‘Unemployed youth’, ‘The horizon is calling,’ by Molapong (2005) and

'The angry young man' by Thaniseb (2011). In the poem, 'The horizon is calling', Molapong (2005) shows how low self-esteem bedevils the youth who are hopeless, helpless, despised and stigmatised, because they are trapped in a system that cannot offer them employment, as is evident in the following excerpt:

I asked before and I will ask again  
Who said I am lazy, useless  
Foolish, a parasite, criminal?  
Were we not born into laziness?  
A laziness so defined it hurts . . . (Molapong, 2005, p. 12).

The poet depicts the post-independent Namibian society which is ravaged by unemployment and underemployment; thus, he regrets the fruits of independence which have largely not yet reached even the youth. The series of rhetorical questions "Who said I am lazy, useless? /Foolish, a parasite, criminal? /Were we not born into laziness?" that the persona ask above extract underscore the bitterness of the youth who are labelled as lazy in the independent Namibian community, yet in actual fact they cannot secure jobs.

In the poem 'Unemployed youth', Molapong's disappointment in the prevailing socio-economic situation is heartfelt, as he captures a devastating scenario under which the post-independent black Namibian youth live. He says,

I am just another Black face  
Filling an empty space  
In my dirty township  
Blessed with friendship  
Some say I am a fool  
But I am not a tool  
To grab a knife  
And stop another life  
Although unemployed  
And my life destroyed  
In fact I have been a damage  
That is why I lost my image  
I have been down to dust  
Now I feel a strong must  
To pick my heavy bud  
For the people talk bad

My community is poor  
Still I am positively sure  
They have plenty of love  
Coming straight from above  
I am on the edge  
But my little life I'll pledge  
To ease the pain  
Like a nice cold rain (Molapong, 2005, p. 9)



Image 2. From the anthology *Come talk your heart*: Poem 'Unemployed youth' p. 9

The poem is accompanied by a photograph of two young men standing idle at a traffic light probably hoping for a job one day. The photograph is visually striking as it builds a real picture in the reader's mind of what is prevailing in the post-independent Namibian society. The picture cements and concretises reality, as it allows the reader to relate to what is happening on the ground. In order to foreground the hopelessness that has struck the post independent youth due to unemployment, Molapong (2005, p. 9) also skillfully employs imagery in line 1 and 2 "I am just another Black face/filling another empty space." The images of "black" and "empty" immediately conjure up bleakness and futility in the reader's mind, because the "township" that the youth comes from has no jobs to offer. However, what

is significant to note is the capital letter that the poet uses on the word “Black” to underscore his pride in being black despite the challenges that come with ‘blackness’.

The rhyming couplets that comprise the whole poem create a light-hearted tone and gives a sing-song rhythm to the poem, but at the same time foreground the struggles of the youth due to unemployment. Molapong laments that the youth’s dignity in independent Namibia has been stripped off and “destroyed” by the continuation of unemployment.

The poem ‘The angry young man’ by Thaniseb (2011) also skillfully underpins the problem of unemployment in the post-independent Namibia, especially to the youth. It says;

He stumbles past  
the carnival in celebration of New Year’s Eve,  
armed with the *school-leaving certificate* ... ungraded  
in a soiled brown envelope ...  
    worn to the edges and adorned here and there  
    with patches of sweat and odour of a lesser fancy.  
    He pauses momentarily;  
    his unpractised eyes sweep gingerly  
over the mass of soiled, flapping paper  
    pinned to the weathered noticeboard,  
his mind tripping over consonants and  
vowels, punctuation and diction:  
    with his lips twisted in a tortured grimace  
    (his hand tighten on the envelope),  
he slowly turns and trudges away  
    on his battered *tekkies*  
of make and shape long lost ...  
    into the chattering lunch hour traffic.  
*With no space for expression in the transition*  
*trudging his way through the misty our future* (Thaniseb, 2011, p. 33)

The above stanza, which looks like chopped prose to form a verse, captures vividly how the youth struggle as they search for employment without success. The young man’s condition is depicted in a pathetic and heart-rending way by the poet. The young man smells of sweat and his “tekkies” are now old and torn because of trekking in search of employment. The stanza is concluded with a sense of hopelessness as the young man trudges his way through the “misty” future. Through this poem, Thaniseb reveals that he is disheartened by the

employment problems. Thaniseb's observation dovetails Melber's (2005) remark that post independent Namibia has a high employment rate and is the major cause of poverty in Namibia. (See § 2.4)

The presence of street kids is a symptom of larger social, political and economic problems in post-independence Namibia. The last stanza of the poem 'The angry young man' by Thaniseb says

At the entrance to Nice Restaurant with a state banquette,  
Of all sorts of pleasantries in progress,  
... on independence day,  
stands a young lad with empty eyes  
and the smell of all the failed promises  
clinging to his scarecrow body,  
reaching out a weathered, practiced hand  
'please Meneer, a one dollar for bread.'  
'please Ausie, your leftovers for a homeless boy.'  
Nee man, voetsek, Namibia is free. Get a job. Where are your parents?'  
Grunt the immaculately dressed couple coldly (Thaniseb, 2011, p. 33)

The poem addresses the flipside of the post-independent Namibian society which is full of social injustices represented by beggars and prostitutes. The paradox of the "scarecrow body" of the "homeless boy" and the "immaculately dressed couple" conjures up images of an unbalanced, independent Namibian society. On one extreme end of the post-independent Namibian society is an empty-eyed hungry young beggar who can hardly afford decent clothing but at the other extreme end, are people who celebrate independence in fancy restaurants wearing expensive clothes eating more than their hearts can desire. Worrisome is the fact that these affluent people, who are truly enjoying the fruits of independence, shun the street children and see them as unsightly lazy people who tarnish the image of the city. When the homeless boy asks for food, the couple insults the boy in Afrikaans, a colonial language, "nee man, voetsek". The use of the colonial language proves that the people are reverting back to colonialism even after attaining independence. Thus, the independence which was

attained in Namibia can be described as “fruitless and barren” for the ordinary Namibians. (Nyamubaya, 1986).

### **4.3.3 Images of exile and return**

The theme of exile and return is a recurring socio-political theme in the poetry under study. It is interesting to note that Kavevangua Kahengua lived in exile during apartheid while Thaniseb and Molapong remained in Namibia to witness apartheid. The three poets, therefore, capture the effects of exile in different ways. While Molapong and Thaniseb depict their bitterness towards the returnees, Kahengua pre-occupies himself with the quest for belonging as he pays tribute to his Namibian and Tswana heritage.

In the poem, “We who decided to stay” Molapong shifts attention to the tension between the “returnees” and those who remained in Namibia during the apartheid era. The poet employs a bitter tone throughout the poem to reveal the pain caused by this division. The poet castigates those who had gone into exile as “sellouts”. Ironically, those who had gone into exile are said to have “detained” those who had remained in the country. The poet’s choice of words is striking as the word “detained” heralds the idea that most of the people who did not go into exile have not won freedom in post-independent Namibia.

The poem also challenges the misappropriation of bravery by those who were in exile. Conversely, Molapong proudly decrees the heroic struggles of those who stayed at home and took on the might of the South African forces, at great personal risk.

The poet shamelessly converses the terms so that the “true patriots” are those who “stayed / Fighting the regime from within,” while the “Cowards [are those] who ran into exile.” The poem dismisses the notion that those who left Namibia during the struggle for freedom suffered the fight against apartheid and applauds the sacrifices of those who remained to face danger and humiliation at home. He says

We have come upon reality  
Stripped to the bone, naked  
Lives promised a great future  
For our votes their choices  
Promises, camouflaged in lies  
We have seen the truth hidden  
From the lives of many people  
Who are trapped in the game  
Of constitutional democracy  
A concept enjoyed by the patriots  
Cowards who ran into exile  
Fighting their struggle, abroad  
At institutions of ideologies  
While the true fighters stayed  
Fighting the regime from within  
Using mothers, fathers, children  
To shield our dignity and humanity  
Our children at strange schools  
Our fathers at dangerous work places  
Our mothers humiliated in dirty kitchens  
Yes, we who decided to stay

As their freedom brought them home  
Today we who decided to stay  
Our lives are shackled in poverty  
The mandate we gave to the patriots  
The democratic powers we entrusted  
Into the hands of the comrades  
Is wasted, forgotten, yes lost  
They are watching us decay  
As they bite on our loyalty  
Biting on our solidarity  
We have come upon reality  
Smashed, bleeding, isolated  
And with it the people of the struggle  
We, who decided to stay, true patriots  
Sell-outs as we happen to be called  
The experience of the regime Apartheid  
Is unfolding itself in independence  
We, who decided to stay, are exiled  
Yes, exile brought new definitions for  
Democracy, Patriotism, Exile, Government  
Today, we who decided to stay  
Are left out in the cold, detained (Molapong, 2005, p. 70)

A sad note runs through this poem as it unambiguously reflects the rift that has developed among those who once fought the same enemy. But the collective “We” of those who

consciously chose to fight the evil system of apartheid from within the country feel cheated by “promises, camouflaged in lies.” They are shocked by the breach of trust, the betrayal of “The mandate we gave to the patriots” and stunned that, from the outset, they seem to have been destined to live “shacked in poverty.” The use of the word “shacked” reminds the reader of the indecent accommodation that is widespread in post-independent Namibia. Molapong uses graphological deviation to explain how exile brought new definitions to “Democracy, Patriotism, Exile, Government”. The use of capital letters by the poet shows that these terms are being abused in the post-independent dispensation. Tragically, there seems to be no difference between life before and after independence.

#### **4.3.3.1 Socio-cultural effects of the exiled**

On the other hand, the poetry of Kavengua Kahengua who was born in exile, presents the burden of being born in exile. A cursory reading of Kahengua’s poetry presents a society which quests for a sense of belonging. Like other exiles, his community has to contemplate which land is “home”. The poem, ‘Lost companion’, captures the poet’s dilemma regarding which place to call home as can be seen in the following extract;

He pointed westward  
I advised west is darkness and death  
A hungry lion, Kgalagadi awaits its prey  
We engaged in a tug of war  
Each savouring the power of being in the light.  
I countered. Let us not follow  
The conventional patterns of the lost ones,  
When the Herero perished  
In the Kgalagadi sands  
The callous German guns in pursuit  
Let’s retrack and retrace  
Our footprints eastward  
Where refuge is. (Kahengua, 2002, p. 65)

In the “tug of war” within himself about which land is home, Kahengua regards the west (Namibia) as representing “darkness and death” because of the Ovaherero genocide. At the

same time, he associates “eastwards” (Botswana) with comfort and security because it is the place where his descendants sought refuge and thus it became his place of birth. These circumstances seem to place the poet in a confused state as he appears to be conscious of the effects of rootlessness. Kahengua (2002), therefore reveals the importance of belonging to one’s own roots through the poem ‘Coming home’ which reflects a yearning to rediscover his lost heritage and laying claim to his birth-right.

A Namibian child in ‘diaspora’  
I am coming home  
Call me not a returnee  
For am not Omukwendata  
Who has returned from the graves  
Call me he who comes home  
I have come to be nourished  
On the breast of my culture  
Bear with me, when I speak  
The Namibian languages  
For I wish to straighten my stammer

Nurture me into a songbird, for I aspire  
To sing the melodies of the holy fire  
Across the deserts, over the mountains  
And along the shores

I have come for a sense of origin  
When time has come to rest,  
I want to rest in your arms, mother Namibia (p. 38)

Although Botswana offered him refuge, Kahengua decides to settle in Namibia where he can be “nourished on the breast of his culture.” According to him, the reclamation of his true culture is a tool that can empower him towards the reconstruction and articulation of new forms of identity

By virtue of being born in a foreign land, Kahengua (2002) also captures the tensions faced by exiled communities in terms of their linguistic identity. The generational conflict is sharply foregrounded in the poem ‘Woman breastfeeds’ where the mother uses an adopted

tongue, Setswana, in order to quieten her child, who only responds positively when addressed in the ancestral language.

The baby cries  
She rocks her  
The baby cries  
She lulls her  
She vainly breastfeeds her  
The baby cries  
She kisses her  
The baby pursues her lips  
She says *didimala* – be quiet, in Setswana  
The baby cries  
Grandma intervenes:  
Why don't you *say mwina?* – be quiet, Otjiherero  
Are you possessed by foreign spirits?  
Why do you breastfeed her on a foreign language?  
Even your milk has turned foreign!  
Should we mourn the death of our language?  
Is this the commemoration of the death of our language?  
She says *mwina*  
The baby breastfeeds (p. 33)

In this poem the linguistic tension between the home language, Otjiherero, and the host language, Setswana, is captured. The “Grandma” asks a series of rhetorical questions as she condemns her daughter for trying to quieten her child in a foreign language. These rhetoric questions allow the daughter and the readers to deepen their thoughts with regards to the importance of one’s language which is inextricably conjoined with culture. According to the “Grandma,” using a foreign language to lull the baby is a sign of a loss of cultural identity. The grandmother is, therefore, presented as the custodian of her culture, who fiercely fights to preserve the community’s linguistic heritage, to ensure cultural survival.

Despite his awareness on the importance of his language heritage, Kahengua further reveals the dilemma that exiled communities are caught up in through one of his shortest poem ‘Languages’ He says;

I would like to learn

Languages  
But I abhor them  
Because none  
Is mine (Kahengua, 2002, p. 7)

In this poem, Kahengua handles his linguistic heritage ambivalently. He reveals his linguistic alienation as he fails to identify with any of the languages. He “abhors” all the languages because he thinks that none of them are his. Kahengua’s linguistic dilemma points to his identity crisis. From the foregoing it can be noted that in the post-independent Namibian society some people are still nursing the side effects of the colonial system, socially and culturally.

#### **4.4 Other socio-cultural themes**

Whilst the previous section looked at manifestations of socio-cultural issues on exiled communities in Kahengua’s post-independence poems, this section provides a textual analysis of the poets’ portrayal of socio-cultural themes that are conveyed in post-independence poems. The analysis seeks to unravel how poets handle the important issue of culture in the context of identity issues and the position of women in post-independent Namibia.

##### **4.4.1 Black consciousness and identity**

The issue of identity is one of the socio-cultural issues that is addressed by the selected post-independence poets under discussion. Among the three poets being studied, Molapong has a considerable number of poems that advocate for black consciousness. Molapong can be described as a black consciousness poet whose poetic oeuvre stresses the importance of having a strong sense of identity as a black person. In the poet’s view, black consciousness encourages a new awareness amongst the oppressed, of a common identity that will lead to

renewed political commitment and socio-cultural reclamation as proved in the poem 'Introduction' which says

I was born Black  
Through a strong Black woman  
In a Black community  
For the Black people  
Who love being Black

As a Black child  
I grew up in a Black township  
Which is called Katutura  
A Black word meaning  
We the Black nation  
Of this Black continent  
Will never stay where  
We don't feel Black  
The way Black people felt  
For they were Black

Each line in my poem  
Is from a Black point of view  
And being Black, my friend  
Is part of my natural being  
In order to relate to me  
You will have to accept the fact  
That I am a Black man (Molapong, 2005, p. 2)

This poem epitomises the concept of negritudism. The word "Black" is used in sixteen of the poem's twenty-two lines, just to buttress the poet's pride in being black, and his determination to rise and attain his envisaged self. The poet seems to be aware of the fact that black consciousness is a conception of identity which in turn is intermeshed with culture. Stylistically, it is important to note that the poem is not punctuated up to the last line. This infuses the poem with a sense of flow and movement meant to heighten its conscientising effect on the reader about the importance of being black. Noteworthy, is the graphological deviation which the poet employs by writing the word "Black" with a capital letter throughout the poem. The intention is to imbue the word "black" with a new sense of equality and dignity, aimed at empowering blacks to feel proud of themselves as full human beings.

Through the poem 'Black enough', Molapong reveals that apartheid sought to deny any pride in being black, but ironically this project of erasure resulted in a reinforcement of identity.

Am I not Black enough?  
To be kicked out of restaurants  
Called names and wished away  
I am accepted too much, wrong  
Cannot accept this courtesy

Love me less, please  
Hate me more and raw  
Want me dead, badly  
But don't dare my life  
Displace me with your laws  
Hurt me with your economies  
Inject me with legal entities  
Hang me, poison me, and bomb me  
I am back, this time I am Black

I want to become Blacker  
So, I will work harder everyday  
Spice my wounds with your every insult  
My Blackness can take more pain (Molapong, 2005, p. 46)

In these stanzas the poet reveals that he is willing to rehabilitate notions of being black, which had been powerful in mobilising resistance against fears of humiliation under successive apartheid governments. Molapong realises that blackness, identity and culture are inextricably intermeshed. Consequently, culture increasingly becomes central to the broader struggle for liberation. He is of the opinion that the struggle is no longer just about political and economic liberation, but a struggle for cultural reclamation of black dignity. Molapong regards blackness as a tool for emancipation.

In the poem 'Black being' Molapong articulates his disappointment at the slow erosion of his own blackness. He laments that his pigments, his blackness, have lessened since apartheid. He is hurt, as he would have wanted the number and intensity to have increased.

Hey, look at me  
See, open your eyes  
Touch me, pinch me, curse me

Still I will remain black, not bad  
I am back this time I am black

Shall I turn over my skin?  
Better still, take off my colour  
Take your horoscope, I mean microscope  
Or rather take your negro-scope  
And count my pigments, Blackness  
Does the number match with the previous  
Numbers counted during operation Apartheid?

Hey, they don't? I am disappointed, hurt  
How come? I wanted the number to have increased  
Multiplied into millions of pure pigments  
I can see, I can feel, I knew it all along  
Independence has not been good to me (Molapong, 2005, p. 35)

Molapong laments the inevitable erosion of his own black identity, once consolidated in service of the resistance in the extract. He blames this erasure of blackness on the attainment of independence in Namibia. Molapong employs a light and humorous tone when he uses malapropism to mourn his “blackness” which he thinks is fading away. He says “Take your horoscope, I mean microscope/ Or rather take your negro-scope/ And count my pigments, Blackness.” The words “horoscope”, “microscope” and negro-scope add a drumbeat rhythm to the reading of the poem, but at the same point communicates the idea that the coming of independence has contributed to the erasure of identity. In Molapong’s view, the post-independent Namibian society is characterised by a people who emulate and mimic western values, thereby compromising the dignity and pride that come with being black.

In the poem ‘Confusion’ Molapong lambasts the members of the newly empowered black elite living in post-independent Namibia, who increasingly model themselves on western cultural and political patterns. He sees the youth as:

The children drown into themselves  
Dressed in oversized insulting jeans  
They parade their craziness in the city  
Cooking and frying their small brains  
Lost to the ecstasy of the new cult, pizza! (Molapong, 2005, p. 39)

Molapong is challenging the youth not to accept Western values and tastes blindly. He ridicules the youth who are “Dressed in over-sized insulting jeans” and are “Lost to the ecstasy of a new cult, Pizza!” Molapong laments the forsaking of one’s roots and culture. In Molapong’s view, mimicking the western values and culture has far-reaching social, economic and political implications, all of which have the effect of lowering the individual’s self-esteem. Molapong’s view point dovetails with, and reinforces Mashige’s (2004) assertion that the abandonment of African values in favour of the mimicry of alien ones results in moral and spiritual decay which is symbolically representative of the dearth of black cultural values, as is evident in the following extract from the poem ‘Confusion’ (see § 2.3.3.2).

The people spit into their own mouths  
Disgusted, they make love to the silent alien  
Women fighting amongst the dead and gossip  
Imprisoning their freedom in cold seclusion  
To hell with your talk of a feminine world

Men eat from tables of incest and lust indulging  
In senseless activities of hurt  
Like sick dogs they walk around naked  
Wanting to rape and tear apart freedom  
Fundamental rights of the human race

The taste of power has blinded the hearts  
Of our leaders, who come back, resting  
Against our solidarity, a respect we lost  
They became pregnant, still to deliver  
Their hair and breath, turned to ash (Molapong, 2005, p. 39)

Thaniseb (2011) also displays his consciousness about the importance of being black and the pride that comes along with blackness in the poem ‘I am I’. He says

If you ask me who I am,  
I will show you the scars of yesteryear  
*Carved deeply across my black back*

I am too dark, they say – I am the son of the soil,  
I say.  
Look at my eyes ... there is a soul of a man. (p. 28)

From the above extract, Thaniseb reveals that he is proud of being black and he is not shy to pronounce it because that blackness in him is the quality that defines him and gives him a sense of identity. Thaniseb (2011) employs graphological deviation in the italicised line “*Carved deeply across my black back*” to draw attention to his “blackness” which he thinks is deeply entrenched in him and no one can ever take it away from him.

Kahengua also reveals the importance of the indigenous cultures in the poem ‘Leave me alone’

When I adorn my body  
In Victorian dress  
In which I strut  
Like a giraffe  
I am an object of admiration

I want my life  
My culture to flow  
With originality  
Like a river

Leave me alone  
Leave me alone

The wisdom of the common people  
Is greater than the wisdom  
Of the high profiled individuals

I am Himba  
I am Epupa (Kahengua, 2002, p. 29)

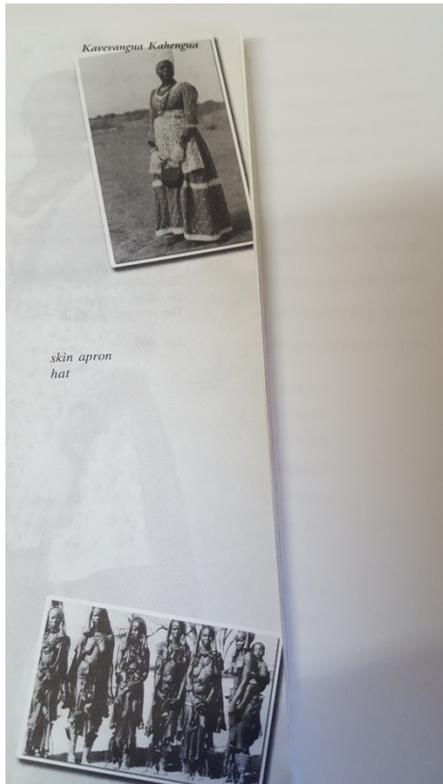


Image 3. From the anthology *Dreams*: Poem 'Leave me alone' p. 29

In the first stanza, Kahengua takes pride in the Herero culture. He praises their cultural way of dressing which he thinks adds to their dignity and beauty, as illustrated in the photograph. The simile used in “I want my life/ My culture to flow/ With originality/ like a river” highlights the poet’s awareness on the importance of staying rooted in one’s culture without diluting it. Kahengua seems to observe that a people’s culture is indispensable to the realisation of full freedom. The poet contends that efforts towards genuine liberation characterised by democracy, freedom and justice come to naught if such efforts are not rooted in the culture of the people concerned as Furusa (2006, p. 11) rightly observes that “real independence and development can occur through a systematic reorganisation and reinstatement of the cultural life of the people concerned.”

In the final analysis it can be noted that solace can be found only when black people go back to their social and cultural roots, to redeem all those values that characterised black people’s humanist approach to life, typified in the notion of ‘ubuntu’ (See § 2.3.3.2).

#### 4.4.2 The portrayal of women

One of the socio-cultural issues tackled in the poetry under study is the presentation of women in the post-independent Namibian society. Contrary to the findings by Malaba (2015) reviewed in Chapter 2, (see § 2.3.3.2) which state that women are subdued, the selected poets depict Namibian women otherwise. In the selected corpus, women are presented as very powerful, very assertive and brave enough to perform tasks that were traditionally stereotyped as men's tasks.

In the poem 'For grandma, who crossed thirstland', Kahengua presents his grandmother, Taureondja Kamutenja, as a heroic figure.

Grandma escaped the massacre  
Like a desert lizard  
She took cover behind the scorching  
Namib Desert  
On the way, from the same thirsty nipple  
Father, son, and daughter suckled  
A belief in immortality of human life (Molapong, 2002, p. 32)

The poem pays eloquent tribute to the resilience of the grandmother who "like a desert lizard" survived the twin scourges of the ruthless German colonial forces and the "scorching/Namib desert". The strength of the poet's grandmother is captured powerfully in the image of suckling the "father, son and daughter" from "the same thirsty nipple". In this poem Kahengua reverses the notion that women are weak and vulnerable; instead, they are presented as fighters and heroines who are capable of rescuing even the worst of situations.

In the poem 'Here she stood' Molapong proves without any doubt that in the post independent Namibia, women are no longer marginalised. On the contrary, they are capable beings who have managed to achieve what men achieve. The poem celebrates a woman who has managed to be categorised amongst the best poets and has flown into the horizons of success. The poet starts off by saying:

She stood  
In the midst  
Of giant poets (Molapong, 2014, p. 60)

The three lines above serve to show that women have been far removed from the marginal status where they once belonged, and have attained their new status at the top of the society as great individuals with very significant contributions to the society. The persona continues by saying:

She stood  
Amongst the best  
And caught the wind  
On her sails of essence  
And she gallantly followed  
Into the horizons of wisdom  
She stood amongst us  
And will remain standing (Molapong, 2014, p. 60)

Through this poem, Molapong advocates that there is now equality between men and women and equality shall forever be there, as women “will remain standing” among the best” with economic independence. Molapong is simply showing that the contemporary male counterparts in Namibia are now aware of the fact that women are not second class citizens in the society, instead, they are significant partners in the development of a nation. Thus, they have attained power for themselves. This depiction of women is contrary to Malaba’s (2015) findings that women are discriminated and are exploited in their work places where they work as cleaners for white people (See § 2. 4).

#### **4.4.3 The state’s position on women**

One of the social issues that emerge in the poem ‘Framed’ by Molapong, is overtly the issue of reversed discrimination against men. The poet complains about how the system in Namibia has become one-sided in favour of women, to a point where men are becoming negated in the society. In this poem the poet shows that the struggle to elevate women from marginal status has been taken to extremes leaving injustices against men.

The system has grown splinters  
Blinded by the affairs of women  
The total nullification of men  
Laws influenced by revenge

Hatred legitimised in courts.  
One sided justice of women, spite  
If this is justice, who is to protect us?  
The law has become a monster  
A feminist creature of terror  
That is out to destroy honest men (Molapong, 2005, p. 57)

The above lines reveal that the efforts to uplift the status of women from marginalisation in Namibia have been very vigorous, with the state stepping in with laws that protect the interests of women. However, in the poet's view the campaign for women has been so excessively done, to the extent that men have been disempowered. The personification "The law has become a monster/ A feminist creature of terror" clarifies the degree of unfairness these implemented laws are to men. In the poet's view, these implemented laws have actually left men oppressed and discriminated against.

#### **4.5 Reconciliation**

The policy of reconciliation in Namibia was put in place by the new government as a political strategy towards the higher goal of sustainable peace in the post-war era. Reconciliation meant working together to build a new, brighter future for every Namibian, it also meant political tolerance and an end to racism. However, some of the selected poetry under discussion seem to criticise the way reconciliation was practised in Namibia, since it excluded truth and participation. The poem 'Sharing the lift' by Kavevangua Kahengua shows that the policy of reconciliation in Namibia was just a theoretical pronouncement with little practical application on the ground.

She peeped into the lift  
Her eyes dazzling blue  
Like the heavenly sky

Mine predominantly black  
Like those of a crow  
She took a step  
Backwards  
I proffered a hand  
Beckoning  
She had vanished (Kahengua, 2002, p. 3)

Kahengua uses a metaphor “Her eyes dazzling blue” to display that the woman being referred to in this instance is white. When the white lady in the poem finds a black person already in the elevator, she chooses not to use the same elevator. This poem, which was written in 1998, eight years after independence, illustrates how white people in post-independent Namibia can still not accommodate blacks to the extent of not being able to share the same space with blacks. The poem demonstrates that in post-independent Namibia racism is still existent as there is still lack of new ethos of trust and mutual respect between whites and blacks. This observation by Kahengua confirms Mazuruse’s (2010) findings that the bulk of the white community after independence shunned and remained indifferent to the reconciliatory overtures extended to them by the government, as they persisted in separatism. (See § 2.3.3)

On the same note, Molapong reveals that the policy of reconciliation has also been the source of “his injuries” as it did not bring real practical, useful change in the lives of the poor (Molapong, 2005, p. xiii). In the poem entitled, ‘Reconciliation’ he says

With Independence knocking  
On my forbidden door  
I learned a new word  
Reconciliation

Reconciliation is an insult  
To our Black integrity  
A humiliating smack  
On innocent Black faces

Look at this skin  
I once glorified my colour  
But now the skin I carry  
Brings pain to my haunted life  
Yet, I am made to be blind

Reconciliation has been  
Pushed down my brain  
Like gunpowder in a barrel  
The trigger has been pulled  
And the tension is quite high

With independence knocking  
In front of my broken door  
Justice shall never prevail

With Independence knocking  
On my forbidden door  
I learned a new word  
Reconciliation (Molapong, 2005, p. 98)

The poet opens the poem by personifying independence “Independence knocking/ on my forbidden door” to demonstrate how independence has been an unrealisable goal to blacks. The poet’s choice of words paints a picture that independence seems to be a concept that was never meant for the black majority in Namibia, thus, it knocks at a “forbidden door”. The poet believes that the concept of reconciliation remains a mockery and an insult to an ordinary black man’s integrity because it does not benefit blacks. Molapong bemoans the idea that the colour black has been a victim in the whole process of gaining independence and reconciling. He deviates graphologically and writes the word “Black” with a capital letter in order to explain that blackness is a quality that should be esteemed in Namibia, but to the poet’s bitterness, blackness has become a symbol of poverty, pain and anguish. “But now the skin I carry/ Brings pain to my haunted life”. It appears that the poet disdains the concept of reconciliation because he thinks it is a concept that does not hold any truth. It is a concept that is abstract and not tangible to blacks, instead it was just imposed on people “Pushed down my brain” but yet in actual fact there was never a settlement and reunion in post-independent Namibia. Molapong uses a metaphor to describe white people. “The pale face I see/ Reminds me of the Blackness/ I started to hate”. The metaphor helps him to express his anger in whiteness which he thinks has made him lose confidence in his blackness. In the process his identity and true self has also been lost. In light of the foregoing, the poet reveals

that he is more troubled by matters of reconciliation which appear not to have brought the promised economic fruits of democracy to the people. The poet's disappointment is heartfelt as he specifically spells out that the black people are the ones who have been cheated by the reconciliation policy.

#### **4.6 Poetry as a genre can advocate change**

The chapter has established that poetry can be an effective tool for the struggle for complete and authentic liberation. It has also been observed that the poets are committed to the struggle for social justice, equality and freedom.

The poets proved without any reasonable doubt that poetry is a genre which can effectively depict the social happenings of any given society at any different epoch, by presenting the purest and most raw thoughts of poets. The poets of the selected poetry successfully employed various stylistic devices and figurative language in order to portray socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues. Symbolism, imagery, metaphors, personification, tone, irony, repetition and rhetorical questions are some of the devices that the poets relied on to present the social themes in post independent Namibia.

The use of imagery and metaphors in a number of poems was very instrumental in creating vivid images and impressions of the social issues discussed in the poems. The imagery and metaphors opened the readers' mental eyes to imagine and visualise in concrete terms, the social themes the poets presented.

Tone is one device that has been central in displaying the selected poets' attitude towards the social issues they raise. In some cases, the poets employed a satiric tone, in other cases a somber tone. Thus, it has been easy to deduce that the poets are generally bitter about the prevailing circumstances in the post-independence era in Namibia.

True to the poetry style, repetition and alliteration were a common feature in most of the selected poems. They provided a musical rhythm to the reading of the poetry but at the same time aiding in the understanding of the social issues addressed.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The gist of the discussion in this chapter has been that post-independence Namibian poets whose poetry has been discussed in this chapter express socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in post-independent Namibia.

The researcher first identified thematic frames namely, Namibian leadership, poverty, unemployment, poverty, images of exile and return, culture and identity, the position of women, as well as reconciliation issues in post-independent Namibia. In the first section, the chapter maintained that post-independence Namibian poets posit that the serious and deleterious crisis of leadership is an inhibiting factor to the realisation of freedom, equality and justice. In the second section, it has been noted that unemployment and poverty are serious socio-political, as well as socio-economic factors, affecting the post independent Namibian society. It has also been noted that through their art, post-independence Namibian poets are advocating for Namibians' immersion in their true roots in order to restore their freedom and dignity. The poets contend that aping other cultures, especially Western culture, weakens the creative potential of Namibian people and reduce them to mere slaves of other cultures. It has also been discussed in the chapter that racism is an impediment to the complete, as well as authentic liberation of the black community.

The following chapter is the conclusion which is a succinct summary of the major findings of the study. In the light of the findings of the study in this chapter, chapter 5 draws summative conclusions based on these findings. It also gives recommendations for further research in this field.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study has been a historical and postcolonial exegesis of the social issues as they find expression in post-independence Namibian poetry, paying particular attention to selected anthologies namely, *Come talk your heart* (2005), *The scars on my skin* (2014), *Dreams* (2002), *Invoking voices* (2012) and *Searching for the rain: An anthology of verse* (2004). The research aim was to investigate the extent to which English poetry by Namibian poets portrays socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural issues in the Namibian context.

This chapter, therefore, provides summative conclusions regarding the major findings of the thesis as presented in chapter 4. It also offers recommendations that are pertinent and useful, not only to the study of Namibian poetry, but also to Namibian literature in general, thereby showing opportunities for further studies.

#### 5.2 Summary of major findings as related to the research questions

The major questions in this study were:

- What are the most prevalent issues that the three poets address in the different anthologies?
- How do the poets portray socio-political and socio-economic issues in their poetry?
- How may poetry be regarded as an integral part of the struggle for freedom, equality and justice?

### **5.2.1 The most prevalent issues addressed in the different anthologies**

The findings of this research have shown that political independence brought with it the emergence of hierarchies of power in Namibia which saw several black elites occupying positions of influence in the government. Thus, leadership has emerged to be one of the major socio-political themes that the selected poetry has addressed. The poets under study contend that the Namibian condition which borders on entrapment, hunger and suffering can be explained in terms of the lack of sound leadership that is committed to creating a more habitable environment. The study has revealed that the poets regard greed as a malaise that defines Namibian leadership to the extent that true independence will remain a myth if the leadership does not change its ways. The study has argued that instead of distributing wealth among the people, Namibian leadership tends to distribute poverty equally among the majority. For example, the poetry of Joseph Molapong reveals unreserved and unapologetic condemnation of the deleterious crisis of leadership in Namibia. The poets contend that astute leadership has an important role in building a welfare state. On the contrary, a greedy leadership which does not put national interest at the centre leads to the demise of its own people. In light of the foregoing, this research shows that the selected poetry is constructive criticism in the way it shows that greed does not help in nation building since it is like cancer which destroys, slowly but surely.

An interrogation of the poetry that deals with the subject of identity and culture has revealed that post-independence poets are unapologetic with regards to the centrality of culture in life processes. The selected poems reveal that identity and culture are particularly important in the process of attaining true independence. The poems contend that disrespecting one's culture renders the people susceptible to enslavement and impoverishment. The poets also revealed that total disregard of one's culture for whatever reason, is tantamount to donating freedom and replacing that freedom with inferiority and suffering. The centerpiece of the

discussion on identity and culture as Ngara (1990) observes, is that there can be no freedom in the alienation of oneself that results from colonialism (and neocolonialism), and there can be no freedom if one's original being is stifled.

### **5.2.2 The portrayal of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural issues**

Furthermore, this study has postulated that post-independence poets are advocating against acculturation, and they hold that acculturation is incapacitating because it strips people of agency and produces confused individuals, who are just consumers of other people's creativity.

The findings of this research have also shown how the government has failed to deliver on most of its pre-independence promises of poverty alleviation, job creation and general improvement on Namibian's standards of living. They also show the failure of independence to transform people's lives for the better because of neo-colonialism and corruption. Throughout the post-independence period, the country has not been able to respond adequately to the fundamental challenges of genuine participatory democracy and delivery of the pre-independence promises. The poems studied indicate that these undertakings were just, but a perpetuation of the colonial legacy and the poetry being studied play a seminal role in the provision and generation of ideas on how to dislodge the neocolonial situation in Namibia.

It is also clear from the foregoing study that the three studied poets feel that the official policy of reconciliation has not been a reality in post-independent Namibia. The Namibian type of reconciliation does not embrace economic justice, as evidenced by the continuation of the legacy of inequality. Namibians must at least have a sense that there is economic justice, giving them a share in the wealth of their country. This has led to a repudiation of the policy of reconciliation by the Namibian poets as a myth not meaningful enough to address Namibians' inherited injustices. It has also been discussed in the findings that the poems

under study show that racism is an impediment to the complete, as well as authentic reconciliation of the black and white community. It can be argued that transcending racism is an imperative if liberty is to materialise.

This study finally highlighted that contrary to the long standing African belief that women are passive and oppressed in a patriarchal society, the post-independent Namibian women are portrayed as autonomous and active agents in the society. Women now assume new gender roles that challenge those prescribed by tradition in the name of equal rights or women emancipation.

### **5.2.3 Poetry as an integral part of the struggle for freedom, equality and justice**

The research has considered poetry and life to be very close allies. As such, poets have the responsibility to help society take note of, reflect upon and surmount challenges people encounter in life. The poets' role includes looking back into history; unearthing elements quite important for the contemporary society; exposing current issues; and helping to suggest ways of solving today's problems. It is in this regard that Wa Thiongo (1986) describes their role as that of publicists, newspaper columnists, public speakers; town-criers who stand for those whose voice would never be heard.

Due to the interrelatedness of poetry and life, the research also underlined the need for poetry to be studied in the context of historical experiences that shape both poets' awareness and the events conveyed. Every literary work is informed by observable events and experiences. It is against this background that such events as colonialism and the attainment of independence experiences such as exile, poverty, unemployment and the denigration of all aspects of the people's culture, became crucial.

The study has argued that the post-independence Namibian poets contribute to national development through highlighting, as well as their constructive criticism of the socio-political

and socio-cultural situation in Namibia. The study has made it clear that protest poetry helps to interrogate a society's beliefs and convictions which leads people to asking the right questions about themselves, helping them to find appropriate answers to their problems. Poets are practitioners directly involved in the remoulding of their society through their works. Poems like 'Fake money', 'Pain', 'Black man's burden' and 'Rumbling stomach' have demonstrated socio-political protest.

The findings of this research have shown how the government has failed to deliver on most of its pre-independence promises, i.e. poverty alleviation, and general improvement on Namibians' standards of living. They also show the failure of independence to transform people's lives for the better because of neo-colonialism and corruption. Throughout the post-independence period, the country has not been able to respond adequately to the fundamental challenges of genuine participatory democracy and delivery of the pre-independence promises. Evidence from the poems shows that these undertakings were just, but a perpetuation of the colonial legacy and the poems being studied play a seminal role in the provision and generation of ideas on how to dislodge the neocolonial situation in Namibia.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The researcher makes the following recommendations to find ways in which Namibian literature can be developed, in order for it to become useful and usable in the Namibian society:

The researcher recommends further studies on the reliability of the theme of social issues be carried on in other genres like novels, drama and short stories. Further research in these other genres should strive to show how protest literature is both corrective and motivating in the way it points to possibilities beyond life's problems.

It is recommended that those who choose to conduct research on Namibian literature, especially on contemporary issues, should try to take a holistic approach. Research on Namibian literature should not separate socio-political issues from socio-cultural and socio-economic issues since these are different sides of the same coin.

The researcher recommends that literary research should not only be confined to content analysis, but for a more holistic and fuller appreciation of a literary work of art, more strategies can be exploited and a number of methodologies should be employed in the analysis of the selected fiction. Since writers interpret the world from various standpoints, a multi-dimensional approach is also necessary to get more insight into the writers' perception of reality. This allows for a more inclusive and fulfilling appreciation of works of art. Again, the researcher emphasises that every work of art needs to be studied in its context to understand it fully. This is because every work of art is a product of a specific historical period with unique situations and experiences.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided summative conclusions of the research findings as related to the research questions which informed the study. The chapter also offered recommendations for further research in the field of poetry and literature in general.

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