

**NON-FICTION IN FICTION:  
POOR WHITES IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN LITERARY TEXTS FROM 1900-  
1950.**

by

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**"A novel can tell a truth otherwise hidden:  
fiction is a way of knowing,"<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, p. x.

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## **Abstract**

The term “poor white” is not uncommon and neither is the whole phenomenon. The topic dominated much of the academic, media and entertainment spheres for the better part of the twentieth century. This dissertation examines poor whites in fiction and non-fiction and attempts to demonstrate that there is a certain overlap. Thus by combining the two types of literature it shows that the selected novels, written during the first half of the twentieth century by authors from the Realist genre, may be considered cultural historical sources in their own right – in terms of portraying the daily lives and struggles of poor whites. This study considers the processes of combining fiction and non-fiction and the different types of sources written about the poor whites. The authors and the period in which they lived are examined to create a better understanding of the time context, the genre and the topic itself. The different types of poor whites and the different definitions of poor whites, in the academic sources, are compared to the poor whites who are portrayed in the novels and thus one could argue in popular consciousness. The different causes of poor white poverty in the academic texts are compared to those in the novels. Lastly, poor white women, a rather marginalised sector, are examined in terms of the *volksmoeder* concept and how the novels redefined the term.

### **Key words:**

Poor whites; poverty; literary text; cultural history; novels; fiction and non-fiction; Afrikaans literature; Carnegie Commission; South African history.

## List of Abbreviations

ACVV - Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging

CNO - Christian Nasionale Onderwys

DEIC - Dutch East India Company

DRC - Dutch Reformed Church

GWU - Garment Workers Union

NP - National Party

OFS - Orange Free State

SAVF - Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie

TED - Transvaal Education Department

UK - United Kingdom

UOFS - University of the Orange Free State

USA - United States of America

ZAR – Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION – OPENING THE NOVEL.

*"One of the pleasures of writing historical fiction  
is that the best parts aren't made up."  
(Diana Gabaldon)<sup>2</sup>*

This dissertation is concerned with the social phenomenon of poor whites and literature. In this chapter the concept will be defined, the methodological approach will be explained along with a brief background history. The outline of the chapters will also be set out. It therefore considers the who, the how, the when and the what of the proposed study.

#### 1.1 The who

The term "poor white" is not a new or an uncommon term. Poor whites are also not solely a South African phenomenon and neither is poverty in general. Evidence of poverty and poor whites exists throughout the world. Poor whites have been prevalent for as long as there have been whites, a class structure, an economy and a social setting where people do not earn or make a living for themselves. Although the idea of a "poor white" has always been frowned upon, especially in South Africa, it is one that has received a large amount of attention from a wide range of disciplines, academics and authors. The term "poor white" first began appearing in South African newspapers<sup>3</sup> and official records after about the 1860s.<sup>4</sup> It became a widely used term from the 1890s onwards.<sup>5</sup> However, it was only by 1906 that the Cape provincial parliament officially acknowledged the "poor-white problem."<sup>6</sup> Until the 1880s, poverty in Europe was seen as the result of an individual's own failures,

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<sup>2</sup> D. Gabaldon, *The custom of the army*. Canada E-book edition, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> The *Alice Times* appears to be one of the first newspapers that printed events regarding poor whites in society, but it soon became a more common occurrence in other small towns.

<sup>4</sup> C. Bundy, *Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: White poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism*, in W. Beinart, P. Delius & S. Trapido, *Putting a plough to the ground: Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850-1930*. Witwatersrand: Raven Press, 1986, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*. Cape Town: Reader's Digest Association, 1992, p. 328.

<sup>6</sup> N. Parsons, *A new history of southern Africa*. London: MacMillan, 1982, p. 242.



however, with the turn of the twentieth century the failure was now seen as the result of the failure of the physical and economic environment.<sup>7</sup>

In R. Morrell's chapter on the "poor whites"<sup>8</sup> he states that it is an elusive term, which is usually used in colonial contexts where blacks were in the vast majority, but that its most general applicability was to all whites who were poor.<sup>9</sup> He also states that there should be a "narrower meaning" and makes the point that there is a distinction between "rural" and "urban" poor whites.<sup>10</sup> The South African Carnegie Commission which was established in 1929 (with the report only appearing in 1932) was set up to investigate the poor-white problem also sought to define the concept of "poor white." Thus one of the definitions they constructed for a "poor white" was:

a person who had become dependent to such an extent, whether from mental, moral, economic, or physical causes, that he is unfit, without the help of others to find proper means of livelihood for himself or to procure it directly or indirectly for his children.<sup>11</sup>

According to J. van Wyk, economically they formed a class of mainly poor *bywoners* (tenants), hired farm labourers and owners of small pieces of land. In essence many tried to make a living from some form of subsistence farming. They also consisted of roaming trek farmers, tenants, hunters, woodcutters, the poor of the town, diggers, manual labourers on the railways and relief works. According to the government under Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog (1924-1939), the poor whites had sunk to such a level that it was difficult to differentiate between "their standard of living and that of the black people of the time."<sup>12</sup> A.B. Teppo states it is important to note here that at this time, blacks were generally not considered "poor" by the authorities, although

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<sup>7</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki, 2004, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992, pp. 1-28.

<sup>9</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932, p.18.

<sup>12</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, p. 6.

many lived in the same and worse conditions as the poor whites. This condition was merely regarded as "hereditary" for black people and being white had different connotations.<sup>13</sup>

Morrell makes the point that the term "poor white" was and is generally considered to be derogatory or at any rate negative. This emanated from the dominant white ruling class who looked at the white proletariat with dislike, disdain and alarm. Most poor whites in the countryside differed from those in the urban areas in that they retained some access to land, which shaped their response to capitalism. The poor whites struggled in various ways to contend with the challenges that structural changes in the agricultural industry, especially during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, placed on them. Due to this, the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) state was grappling with what it saw as the "armblanke vraagstuk" ("poor-white-problem"). There were two aspects to this problem: agriculture was unproductive and unprofitable, resulting in a growing class of landless poor; and the other was the political threat posed by poor whites who had the franchise. Jobs were created to deal with the threat of failed farmers and to appease a poor and struggling constituency.<sup>14</sup> However, in the urban areas poor whites had to rely on the little rural skills they had to make a living or compete with the cheap black labour reserve, whilst they waited for the government to create work for them.<sup>15</sup>

The term "poverty" should also be examined at this point. The meaning of poverty is highly contested and is usually used as a tool by those in power to be exploited and used to their own ends.<sup>16</sup> The *Oxford Dictionary* states poverty is "the state of being very poor". But what is "poor"? One therefore needs to understand how poverty and being poor was measured during the first half of the twentieth century in South Africa.<sup>17</sup> This may include the lack of land, money and equipment. Usually the poor

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<sup>13</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki, 2004, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003, p. 323.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 195.

<sup>16</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 2 & 16.

<sup>17</sup> C. Soanes (ed.), *South African pocket Oxford dictionary*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa, 2002, pp. 691 & 697.

did not have these commodities and also did not have a job or steady income. In the urban areas these poor whites would turn to illegal means to obtain money; however, in the rural area many became what was termed *bywoners*.<sup>18</sup>

According to H. Giliomee and B. Mbenga a *bywoner* (also sometimes spelt *bijwoner*) was a white Afrikaans man who lived on the farm of a land owner and in exchange for certain services received either a wage or some return of what the farm produced.<sup>19</sup> The Carnegie Commission further explains that a *bywoner* was thus a rural poor white and a large portion of poor whites belonged to this category. This was someone who had probably lost his land and thus had to go and work for another white farmer as a tenant, or a worker. There were two different types of *bywoners*: those who worked for the farmer and also rented a small part of the land for his own farming purposes; and there were those who were just workers and just worked the farmer's land. Both were able to live on the farmer's land. *Bywoners* were thus farm hands who might or might not have owned small shares of a farm.<sup>20</sup> D. Oakes points out that they were also regarded as "by dwellers," literally, and were seen as tenants or squatters on another man's land. By the 1880s the bigger farmers got richer, while the smaller ones lost their land through having to sell it to pay their debts due to crop failure. The bigger farmers had the capital to snatch up the smaller pieces of land cheaply and invest in dams and pumps. The poor whites who lost their land were forced to join the ranks of men who could earn a living only by selling their labour – a system of proletarianisation that favoured the spread of agricultural capitalism.<sup>21</sup>

The poor whites in South Africa, during the first half of the twentieth century, differed in many ways to the poor whites in other countries, such as England. The poor whites in South Africa came mostly from the rural or farming areas and went to the city or urban areas to make a better life for themselves. However, many became or remained impoverished in the urban areas as well.<sup>22</sup> In countries like England the

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<sup>18</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, pp. 328-329.

<sup>19</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007, p. 438.

<sup>20</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932, pp. 2-4.

<sup>21</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, p. 329.

<sup>22</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*. Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987, p. 66.

poor whites were already established mostly in the urban areas, due to industrialisation having taken place earlier. The poverty there existed as a result of factors such as the drastic economic revolution and the lack of union representation. According to L. Callinicos, in South Africa the poor whites had to face a changing economy along with the competition from a cheaper black labour reserve as well as skilled foreign immigrants and at times also had no union representation.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2 The how

The academic and fictional work written about the poor whites covers a wide range of fields and aspects. Some of these include research done in history, cultural history, sociology, anthropology as well as novels written about the poor whites. In recent times the spectrum of sources utilised by historians has expanded dramatically. Traditionally, primary sources were confined to official and unofficial documents housed in the repositories of governmental and private archives. According to T. Cook, more recently many contemporary types of sources have emerged ranging from the tangible to the intangible and from the visual to the oral.<sup>24</sup> T. Rowat states that archives themselves are becoming less concerned with the distinctions of legitimacy and authenticity and are more concerned with a broader range of formats that reach the realm of popular culture. This entails "blurring the distinctions between non-fiction and fiction in the documentary record and analysing it as a cultural construct."<sup>25</sup> However, it is the fictional novels that are often forgotten in serious analysis of the whole phenomenon, but these have begun gaining increasing credibility. In this context, this study will consider a selection of the Afrikaans novels written in the first half of the twentieth century by authors from the Realism genre.<sup>26</sup> Therefore this study proposes to make a contribution to South African history by focusing on the place and importance of the poor whites as represented in a selection of novels. To date no work has been done to merge this fictional material with the non-fictional or academic research.

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<sup>23</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> T. Cook, "Archival science and postmodernism: New formulations for old concepts", *Archival Science*, 1, 2001, p. 24.; T. Cook, "Fashionable nonsense or professional rebirth: Postmodernism and the practice of archives", *Archivaria*, 51, 2001, pp. 21-27.

<sup>25</sup> T. Rowat, "The Record and repository as a cultural form of expression" *Archivaria*, 36, 1993, p. 203.

<sup>26</sup> A full discussion of the Realism genre and other genres of Afrikaans literature will be discussed from p.11.

Art has been used to gain more information and insight into certain periods in history, by examining it along with academic research.<sup>27</sup> This study will use another art form, the novel, and examine it with academic, literary and documentary sources. As Fleishman puts it

Art is but a vision, yet it is very difficult to fix the belief that historical novels are but works of art... Art is a way of seeing... it aims to contemplate reality.<sup>28</sup>

However, the historical novel is able to "paint" a scene using words and can therefore also be compared to academic research and in a sense the selected novels also aim to contemplate reality.

These fictional sources can be seen as forming part of what is referred to as a community or counter-archive.<sup>29</sup> Many of the events and characters featured in these stories are based on what the authors experienced, witnessed or were told. They thus have a realistic nature and give voice to recollections of what occurred or what has gained acceptance in popular memory. It is the contention of this study that these novels may provide further insight or even augment the existing research on the poor whites. By comparing these texts with the established work on poor whites, these novels may be regarded as sources in their own right.

According to John Tosh novels must to some extent be considered a source.<sup>30</sup> Although not historical statements, they do offer insights into the social and intellectual milieu in which the writer lived and vivid descriptions of the setting as well. He gives the example of Charles Dickens as evidence of the frame of mind in which middle-class Victorians considered the "condition of England" question. He later goes on to say that through this source the historian is able to observe or infer

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<sup>27</sup> T.E. Raymond, *Painting race and culture in Cape Town: Bell, Bowler and Baines (1840-1880)*, Honours dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, p. ix.

<sup>29</sup> T. Cook, "Archival science and postmodernism: New formulations for old concepts", *Archival Science*, 1, 2001, p. 24.; T. Cook, "Fashionable nonsense or professional rebirth: Postmodernism and the practice of archives", *Archivaria*, 51, 2001, pp. 16-21.

<sup>30</sup> J. Tosh, *The pursuit of history*. London: Longman, 2000, p. 64.

the sequence of day-to-day events.<sup>31</sup> P.C. Schoonees makes a similar point by stating that the Character Ampie in Jochem van Bruggen's novels *Ampie: Die trilogie*<sup>32</sup> was considered the first real Afrikaans person in Afrikaner literature and that this novel can be used as a document for further study about welfare conditions of that time.<sup>33</sup>

In the context of this study it is important to note that by 1924 only a quarter of all Afrikaners fell into the poor-white class,<sup>34</sup> however, by 1930 Afrikaners comprised the majority.<sup>35</sup> Thus the overwhelming majority of poor whites were Afrikaans-speaking, and while a broad spectrum of academics have written on the topic, the bulk of the novels on poor whites are written by Afrikaans-speaking authors.

There are many examples of novels that represent a historical event or time. A classical example is the above-mentioned work by Charles Dickens. In his novel *Oliver Twist*<sup>36</sup> the poor whites in London as well as orphans, gangs and other labour problems are visibly depicted. Though the story line itself has no exact historical significance or credibility a number of the characteristics are true to life and contribute to an understanding of the period. Dickens was able to portray a time and events that he experienced and was able to relay them in a way that people who read this novel would be able to identify with and relate to.<sup>37</sup> American examples include the novels *The adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Samuel Langhorne Clemens or as he called himself Mark

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<sup>31</sup> J. Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, pp. 64, 93.

<sup>32</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die trilogie*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1965.

<sup>33</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaanse beweging*. Kaapstad: Bussy, 1939, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990, p. ii.; A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, pp. 34-38.

<sup>35</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1966.

<sup>37</sup> R.J. Allen, *The rise and decline of conscientious Realism in English fiction: A contextual study of novels by Charles Dickens and George Gissing*, D.Phil. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978.; A. Anderson, *Dickens, Charlotte Bonté, Gaskell: Politics and its limits* in R.L. Caserio & C Hawes, *The Cambridge history of the English novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 341-342.; C. Sei, 'Is *Oliver Twist* a Newgate Novel?: On the Feature and Reason of Charles Dickens's Depiction of Crime', KURENAI : Kyoto University Research Information Repository - Departmental Bulletin Paper, <[http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/154831/1/rek09\\_063.pdf](http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/154831/1/rek09_063.pdf)>, 2012. Access: 29 March 2014.

Twain.<sup>38</sup> In the story about Tom Sawyer, it is not the character or his situation that is described as desperately poor, but he does live in such a setting and poverty does surround him. However, the same cannot be said of the story of Huckleberry Finn. Although the novel has a humorous tone there are many depictions of poor whites in the story and how they lived. Twain lived during the Civil War (1861-1865) and therefore witnessed the poverty that emerged in the aftermath of the War in the South.<sup>39</sup> In a South African context, this is the ambience that the Afrikaans authors in the first half of the twentieth century reflected.

This study will aim to use a selection of novels with available and relevant secondary and primary sources to firstly deduce how the poor whites, their culture, everyday lives and experiences are portrayed. This in a sense can possibly be seen as being instrumental in the emergence of a particular sympathetic disposition towards the poor whites in popular consciousness. Secondly, it will consider whether the novels may to some extent be used as cultural-historical sources, which provide greater insight into the everyday lives of poor whites as well as the perceptions that were prevalent among society at large. These insights are not always evident in the academic and primary document sources and neither is the value of the novels regarding their social and cultural significance. While it is not the concern of this study, it can, however, also be argued that these novels might also have perpetuated certain perceptions among a white Afrikaner readership in the 1930s and 1940s - and even later. This in turn could have augmented the receptiveness of the white Afrikaner to the National Party (NP) ideology and increase its appeal around separate development and the upliftment of the poor white. Thus it is evident that these novels proved to be very popular during the first half of the twentieth century and the decades following. This is apparent from the examination of these novels and the times they were taken out of in a sampling of public and university libraries.<sup>40</sup>

According to R. Coetzee the poor-white novels were used to educate, inform, awaken and unite the *volk*. However, some readers felt that there were too many

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<sup>38</sup> M. Twain, *The adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. London: Heinemann Educational, 1961.

<sup>39</sup> M.D. Bell, *Mark Twain, "Realism" and Huckleberry Finn*, in L.J. Budd (ed.), *New essays on Huckleberry Finn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

<sup>40</sup> A range of libraries which keep these novels were consulted including a number of public libraries in Pretoria, the public library in Stellenbosch and the libraries at the University of Pretoria and the University of Stellenbosch. The number of times the books were taken out was considered.

literary pieces being written about the poor whites. This gives an indication of the importance of the social and economic situation presented. However, many more felt that it was an embarrassing topic and there were many other topics to write about, which Afrikaners could take national pride in, whilst others wanted to escape the harsh realities that either surrounded them or were part of their lives.<sup>41</sup> Schoonees explains that many of these novels were dealt with at school level by both Afrikaans and English students.<sup>42</sup> This is more pertinent given the fact that many people today do not know about the poor-white problem either in the past or present. Without knowing or understanding this social problem, one cannot fully grasp the complications of South African history of the twentieth century and the major implications it has left for the present.<sup>43</sup>

Thus this study of the poor whites is essentially an analysis using a range of sources - varying from the pure academic to the fictional novel. It is important to classify these sources into categories. Secondary sources include all academic books and journal articles written by historians, cultural historians, anthropologists and sociologists and are referred to as academic sources. This also includes research and analysis done by literary specialists on novels. The primary sources have been divided into two sub-divisions namely: primary document sources such as archival records, newspapers, magazines, legislation and commissions; and the novels themselves, which have been included in the primary sources because not only were some often written at the time of events, but they will be subjected to the same scrutiny and analysis as other primary material, and form the basis of this study.

The novels that have been selected to be examined were written by Afrikaans authors during the first half of the twentieth century, especially in the 1930s. Although no specific dates are mentioned in the novels, there are events which give the reader an idea of when the novel takes place.<sup>44</sup> These novels fall into the Second

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<sup>41</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 18-30 & 239; H. White, *Topics of discourse: Essays in cultural criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

<sup>42</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaanse beweging*, p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> M. Magome, "Zuma assures poor whites that the state cares for them", *The Star*, 31 March 2011, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> T. Pavel, *The lives of the novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 169.



Afrikaans Language Movement (After 1902).<sup>45</sup> This was a time when people and the Afrikaans language were pushed to the forefront of literature.<sup>46</sup> This time period was chosen because it best represents the height of the poor-white question. By the 1930s the poor whites were identified as a problem and dominated much of the socio-economic milieu. This was one of the reasons the novelists wrote about the poor whites - to express what was happening around them. Their purpose and goals may have been different depending from what view they wrote. The social and economic issues also appear in the novels often in graphic detail.<sup>47</sup> There were whites living in conditions and behaving in ways that were not deemed "white" or correct for their status.<sup>48</sup> The government also realised that it needed the poor-whites' vote if it wanted to remain in power.<sup>49</sup> The Carnegie Commission explains that by placing so much emphasis on being white and thus being "superior" to blacks it not only prevented a united poor man's revolution, but also could remain in power if it could keep the poor whites happy.<sup>50</sup>

Die werkloosheid sal toeneem, en ons armblikes gaan vermenigvuldig soos kaffers<sup>51</sup> in 'n kafferstaat.<sup>52</sup>

(The unemployment will take over and our poor whites will become like blacks in a black state or township.)

It was in the 1930s that commissions such as the Carnegie investigation were initiated. This period also represents the height of the poor-white problem in terms of the multitude of causes of the poverty that emerged at the time.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>46</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblike in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblike in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 238.

<sup>48</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 30-32.

<sup>49</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 229.

<sup>51</sup> A very derogatory and racial term - initially meaning a non-believer and used to refer to blacks in South Africa.

<sup>52</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die trilogie*, p. 245.

<sup>53</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem*

Many people who read novels which deal with the past usually ask the question - was it really like that and did that really happen? As, indicated, in this case the novelists selected for this study all come from the Realism genre. J.C. Kannemeyer explains that at the start of the 1900s there were four main genres in Afrikaans novels: Romanticism, Realism, Historical and the Folk-socialism.<sup>54</sup> Romanticism focused on the heightened interest in nature and emphasised the individual's expression. Realism attempted to describe life without idealisation or romantic subjectivity. Historical socialism aimed to depict or convey a historical setting, events, spirit, manners and conditions of a past. Folk socialism encases the myths, legends, oral traditions and folk lore of a people, which is usually handed down from generation to generation. Authors began incorporating all four genres into their novels, with one often being emphasised more than the others.<sup>55</sup> Most of their works were an adventure with a historical background and usually a romantic love-triangle.<sup>56</sup> This was a very popular theme with the readers of the time. Their central theme was usually labour orientated and thus through the use of "working" or "labour" novels they were able to reach a wide range of readers who could relate to the novel and working conditions and way of life described.

According to C. Chase, Romanticism is the past, people carry it within their selves as the experience of an act in which, up to a certain point, they themselves have participated.<sup>57</sup> It can be described as liberalism in literature and defined as literature freely depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form. Some of its characteristics include subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism, spontaneity, freedom from rules, solitary life, the belief that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty, love and nature; and fascination with the past especially myths and mysticism.<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that Romanticism not only includes people but

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*in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV.* Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V.* Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>54</sup> J. C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*. Pretoria: Academica, 1978, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> J. C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> J. C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 95.

<sup>57</sup> C. Chase (ed.), *Romanticism*. New York: Longman, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> K. Morner & R. Rausch, 'What is romanticism?' in NTC's dictionary of literary terms, <<http://www.uh.edu/engines/romanticism/introduction.html>>, 1997. Access: 23 October 2014.

also nature and the land.<sup>59</sup> The focus is mostly on the past, the simple, rural way of life and the simple, farming, rural people. In terms of the poor whites they were portrayed in a romantic fashion; these people did not gather material possessions, pursue luxury or pleasure. Nature was their wealth and freedom, their luxury and pleasure. They roamed from here to there, from the diggings to the settlements, to wherever their instinct lead them.<sup>60</sup> However, in realistic terms this was not the case – they were more often an embarrassment for the national-minded petit-bourgeoisies. They were no longer seen as the descendants of the strong and brave Voortrekkers, but rather they became part of the faceless masses.<sup>61</sup>

Realism followed from the Romanticism in Afrikaans literature, and brought the lives of the small towns into perspective. The end of the nineteenth century also saw the start of the poor-white question especially with regards to the social, economic, political and cultural changes which took place.<sup>62</sup> This heralded the end of the shallow and false romance and Realism was born.<sup>63</sup> The poor whites were no longer seen as an expression of an inner life, but as a product of the environment and heredity in the literature.<sup>64</sup> Realism is defined as a concrete representation of reality in contrast to idealisation, stylisation and fantasy and this is the general genre of the literary works used in this study.<sup>65</sup> A.P. Grové and S. Strydom state that Realism is also defined as having a close resemblance to what is real; fidelity of representation, rendering the precise detail of the real thing or scene: in reference to art and literature often with implications that the details are of an unpleasant or sordid character. Authors who are Realists have a great respect for the truth, however, they do not let it define them as they do not concentrate only on the facts. The Realists

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<sup>59</sup> H. P. van Coller (ed.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1999, p. 654.

<sup>60</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 6-12.

<sup>63</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Realism: Myfundi Your on line encyclopaedia, 'Realism', <<http://myfundi.co.za/e/Realism>>, N.d. Access: 9 May 2012.

have their own way of looking at the world and putting what they see on paper.<sup>66</sup> Literature therefore becomes a reflection of social conditions and evolution of the mind, like holding a mirror up to society and reflecting what was happening onto the pages. As Charles van Onselen says in his study *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985*:<sup>67</sup>

If any of the characters in this work shake themselves free of the word-shackles that bind them to the page and walk three-dimensionally into the reader's mind, it is a tribute to the story-telling abilities of these informants.<sup>68</sup>

This is exactly what Realism tries to achieve. He also states that the story tellers become the “best Social Historians.”<sup>69</sup> It represents the character of every nation, period of life and tempo of the period. In the 1920s honest Realism asserts itself and Afrikaans authors show a preference for everyday life and thus Realism bears a defined stamp.<sup>70</sup> In a review on *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, in *Die Huisgenoot*, L. van Niekerk states that the writers of that time were beginning to write longer and more realistic stories portraying the circumstances, experiences and views around them.<sup>71</sup> Nearly all literature has some degree of Realism. It is important for readers to be able to recognise and identify with the characters and the world they inhabit in the novel.<sup>72</sup> Thus life is blown into the novel.<sup>73</sup> Realism has been mainly concerned with the common places of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and where the

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<sup>66</sup> J. Van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria, 1973, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> C. Van Onselen, *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985*. Cape Town: Phillip, 1996.

<sup>68</sup> C. Van Onselen, *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985*, p. ix.

<sup>69</sup> C. Van Onselen, *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985*, p. ix.

<sup>70</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> L. van Niekerk, “Oor boeke: Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte”, *Die Huisgenoot*, 8(85), May 1923, p. 43.

<sup>72</sup> D. Campbell, review, 'Realism (late 1800s-early 1900s)' in *The New Book of Knowledge*, <<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3753924>>, n.d. Access: 12 April 2014.

<sup>73</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 3.

environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications.<sup>74</sup> R. Coetzee states that some of the novels are so realistic that they could be used as a study on the social conditions. Furthermore by using the poor-white theme in artistic works one is able to see the soul and not merely a superficial character and thus the characters become real and relatable.<sup>75</sup>

S. Earnshaw explains that the Realist novel presents stories, characters and settings that are similar to those commonly found in the contemporary everyday world. This requires events to take place in the present or recent past, and events themselves are usually organised in a linear, chronological sequence, and located in places familiar to the author and audience either through direct observation or report. The characters are plausible. The desire to portray contemporary everyday life entails and requires a breadth of social detail. As a consequence, the classes represented tend to be those categorised as working class and middle class, since these form the majority of the population. The subject matter is usually whatever is found in everyday life, good or bad. The novels often engage with social issues of the day. In this case, the poverty of whites, which was a major social issue for the NP, from when it was founded in January 1914, as well as among the Afrikaner people. The Realist novel may offer some moral view point, but usually remains neutral and objective and rather strives for accuracy of representation. According to Earnshaw, in the Realist world cause and effect explains everything.<sup>76</sup>

G. Dekker gives the following definition of the differences between Realism and symbolism. The novelist can approach outer reality in two ways. Firstly, he can lose himself in the outer world; learn to know things in the outer world with such loving care, that they might irrevocably reveal their deeper meaning or spiritual truth to him. If the novelist portrays this reality, the truthful version of his careful contemplation will take centre-stage. However, this version will always be filled with a deeper meaning. Such an artist is called a Realist. Secondly, the novelist can also be so preoccupied by his own concerns and conceptions, that he only uses the outer world as a means

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<sup>74</sup>Realism: *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia*, 6th ed. Columbia University, <<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/entertainment/Realism-literature.html>>, 2012. Access: 12 April 2014.

<sup>75</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 4 & 19.

<sup>76</sup> S. Earnshaw, *Beginning Realism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 14-15.

to reveal his own inner truth. It is not so much the things themselves that fill him with awe, but rather the meaning it takes on in his deeper experience of life. Its worth lies in the symbolic representation of his soul. In his artistic expression, the outward or literal portrayal of things will receive less attention, and their symbolism will come to the foreground instead. This artist is referred to as a Symbolist. It goes without saying that both elements are always present in any work of art: art as Realism (in the form of a novel) is not simply a version of reality with no expression of deeper meaning. At the same time, the Symbolist cannot ever break ties with reality – he will become incomprehensible. Despite the fact that we can refer to a novelist as a Symbolist or a Realist, depending on which paradigm outweighs the other, no clear distinction can actually be made.<sup>77</sup>

Since its earliest origins, Dutch art has been defined by its prominent character of Realism. Therefore it comes as no surprise that this same element of Realism plays an important role in the literature. The need for a realistic depiction of reality was an important influence in the origins and development of the “roman” (novel genre). Therefore, it might not be surprising to learn that the first conscious Realist in our literature, Jacob Lub, was in fact Dutch. Van Bruggen, possibly the most important writer of the era, had Dutch parents and was born in The Netherlands. It is with the Realists that the portrayal of human struggle becomes prominent in Afrikaans literature. It is also worth noting that when artists turn away from the false world of the old romance novel, they are able to capture not only the poverty and becoming or coming into being of the lower class, but also its humanity. Herein lies the first expression of the Afrikaner’s cultural consciousness, which also results in their catharsis. In this way, the novels also fulfil an important social calling. Realism, where humanity is expressed through simple everyday reality, is often characterised by humour. This interpretation of humour should not be taken as idle joking. Instead, it must be seen as an attitude towards life. The humourist is able to capture the contradictions that life holds. However, behind the contradictions, which may look silly and light hearted on the surface, he senses their deeper spiritual meaning. The true contradiction lies between the ideal and reality. It is for this reason that his laughter is tempered down to a sympathetic smile. The humourist lets his forgiving,

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<sup>77</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1935, pp. 135-136.

inclusive smile dwell over the idiosyncrasies of people, over the despicable and the apparently unexplainable reasons of their demise or lot in life, because he knows that meaning is to be found in all of what is relevant. Humour is born from love. There are also different types of humour. Much like the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, we were able to claim the humour cult of those that continued the trend of Van Bruggen, including the simplification that such trends induce. The sober, but sensitive irony of Johannes van Melle would later become a much-needed counter-weight to this.<sup>78</sup>

Kannemeyer states that although the Realist movement has its origins at the start of the twentieth century it only gained momentum during the 1920s with works from authors such as Van Bruggen.<sup>79</sup> It is one of the first times where the novelist's or artist's vision expresses the social problems in a complex life.<sup>80</sup> Van Bruggen himself is viewed as one of the most important authors of the 1920s and 1930s and has been labelled a Realist author. He is described as being sensitive towards the problems of his time such as the poor-white theme.<sup>81</sup> These authors often brought an element of humour to their writing to soften the harsh reality and also sometimes as a means of entertainment. It was during this time that the poor-white problem became an important focus point in South African politics, therefore, naturally the Realists used it as a theme for their work as well.<sup>82</sup> There were a number of themes used in the literary texts written in the Realism phase. These included the poor white on the farm, as a worker, in the town, in the city and in nature with smaller sub-themes such as the history of the Afrikaners, love and marriage, ghost stories, native people and religion.<sup>83</sup> Some of Van Bruggen's novels included Romanticism together with Realism as a genre.<sup>84</sup>

A literary movement closely related to Realism was Naturalism. Naturalist authors also wrote about common people and everyday situations. However, they studied

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<sup>78</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>79</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 181.

<sup>80</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 3

<sup>81</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*. Pretoria, 1938, p. v.

<sup>82</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 181.

<sup>83</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaanse beweging*, pp. 33-57.

<sup>84</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 181.

human beings and their behaviour with the objectivity of scientists. The characters in these stories are controlled by heredity elements, the environment, instincts and passion. They live in a natural world that is indifferent to their plights.<sup>85</sup> This is closely related to the Realism that is looked at in this study and may overlap or form part of the Realism definition.

J.A. Fishman and O. Garcia explain that generally this means the novels in the Realism genre are based on experiences that the authors have either witnessed or endured second-hand, which gives it more credibility as they contain real events and people within the fiction. This implies that it most likely eliminates the "sensationalism" of other genres. The important factor remains to try and separate the two so that what remains is the historical essence. This Realism genre and the authors selected for this study all have similar themes and styles.<sup>86</sup> R. Coetzee is of the same opinion and adds that there are many different motives for writing about the poor whites.<sup>87</sup> These novelists did not spend hours in an archive or research their topic. They wrote to express what they saw, experienced or were told about. Therefore their recollections come through during the novel and this makes it more real, tangible and believable - because more likely it was. Afrikaans novels were chosen firstly because by the 1930s 90% of poor whites were Afrikaners; secondly because there is a wide variety of novels that represent the poor whites written in Afrikaans that may create a better understanding of the time or shed new light on this subject.<sup>88</sup> Lastly, although it could be argued that the authors writing about the poor whites may be biased, the few English authors who have also written about the poor whites in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century were also biased and looked down on the poor. For example, the English-language newspapers described South Africa's slums as "bastions of racial degeneration and moral decay."<sup>89</sup> It can be assumed that the majority of the Afrikaans authors sympathised or at least empathised with them. Naturally not everything that is written

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<sup>85</sup> D. Campbell, review, 'Realism (late 1800s-early 1900s)' in *The New Book of Knowledge*, <<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3753924>>, n.d. Access: 12 April 2014.

<sup>86</sup> J.A. Fishman & O. Garcia, *Handbook of language and ethnic identity: The success-failure continuum in language and ethnic identity efforts II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 15-16.

<sup>87</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp.15-18.

<sup>88</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>89</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 21.



in the novels is one hundred percent real or accurate. However, this is not what this study is concerned with.

Given the topographical layout of South Africa during this period, the study will focus on both the poor whites in the rural and urban areas. It is, however, not a case of solitary places with examples of poor white characters such as Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn in the literature such as existed in the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA. In the South African context this includes places ranging from the rural areas in the South-Western Cape to urbanised centres in the former Transvaal.<sup>90</sup> However, there are more novels written about the poor whites in the rural areas and this will in turn be the main focus of the study. According to R. Coetzee this may be due to the fact the Afrikaners were from the rural areas and not from the cities and in many cases hankered back to their rural origins.<sup>91</sup>

As mentioned above there are many sources written about the poor whites from a wide range of fields. This study will only use selected sources that are relevant to its aims. Incorporation of all the sources would become repetitive and would detract from the focus of this study. As indicated, the poor whites rank as one of the most popular and most written about topics in the history of South Africa. They have received attention from a number of academic fields. In this rather extensive body of work a very wide range of topics regarding the poor whites have emerged. These include: rural and urban life, economic positions, political rights, social behaviour and conditions, the assistance requested and provided, education, health, labour, legislation, family and welfare.

The novels selected are in essence Realist fiction. Fiction is literature describing imaginary people and events. However, the selected novels come from the Realism genre and thus have a certain degree of truth, history and reality. If History is the study of past events, then combined with the Realism genre, these novels are usually regarded as Realist Historical novels. The novels are portrayed with either

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<sup>90</sup> D. Langner (red.), *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902*. Brandfort: Kraal-Uitgewers, 2009, p. 89.

<sup>91</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 22.

real events or people and in a realistic presentation of the time and culture.<sup>92</sup> Joseph Conrad stated that fiction is history and that it is based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas "history" is based on documents and second-hand impression. He claims that fiction is nearer to the truth, but that a historian may also be an artist and a novelist historian, preserver, keeper, expounder of human experience.<sup>93</sup>

However, each of the professions, novelists and historians, have argued for their professions: For the novelist "A novel can tell a truth otherwise hidden: fiction is a way of knowing,"<sup>94</sup> while the historian claims: "History, after all, is the true poetry;... Reality, if rightly interpreted, is grander than Fiction."<sup>95</sup>

A. Fleishman states that the historical novel, like history, must try to present the past to the present with controlled subjectivity and try to find meaning, rethink and complete the rationale to reconstruct the nexus of past action. It is the formula of the historian and novelist that differs but also has similarities.<sup>96</sup>

Commenting on the role of Fiction and its relationship with History anthropologist and fictional novelist, Amitav Ghosh claims:

History is like a river, and the historian is writing about the ways the river flows and the currents and the crosscurrents in the river. But, within this river, there are also fish, and the fish can swim in many different directions.<sup>97</sup>

In terms of this metaphor the fish is the novel. The water is history in which the fish or novel "swims" and it is important to know the flow to create the cultural setting, the time period and ideas of the time. Ghosh argues that the novelist's approach is different to that of the historian, it is through the novels and the eyes of the

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<sup>92</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, pp. xi-xiii.

<sup>93</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, Baltimore, 1971.

<sup>94</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, p. x.

<sup>95</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, p. xiv.

<sup>96</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, p. xv.

<sup>97</sup> M. Kooria, "Between the walls of archives and horizons of imagination: An interview with Amitav Ghosh", *Itinerario* 36, 2012, p. 9.

characters where a greater understanding of some aspects of the past are formed, which historians do not deal with. For Ghosh historical novels would not be possible if historians had not laid the foundations first.<sup>98</sup> In terms of Ghosh's analogy this study will be looking at the novels which is the fish's point of view. The Realist novel may add to the historical account, in terms of ideas, feelings, and culture, which has not been explained or which has not been recorded in the historical record. Historical novels or Realism have been used as a medium for the discussion of contemporary problems and social problems. These novels are no longer only vehicles of escapism, but also a means to create awareness.<sup>99</sup>

The Realist authors of the novels do not intend to corrupt history and misguide their readers but rather encourage an interest in the formal history and after reading the novel the reader could leave with a degree of knowledge.<sup>100</sup> As Ghosh states, the average person could learn something of history and culture while being entertained. Often the novel also introduces the public to an aspect of historical study almost neglected by formal historians.<sup>101</sup> This can be seen with the Afrikaans fictional novel written in the first half of the twentieth century. Elsa Nolte, who did a review of Van Bruggen's novel *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*,<sup>102</sup> states that younger readers may ask what the relevance is for the modern contemporary reader? Her answer to this is simply it is of literary-historical interest. These novels are dated in their time and thus give an insight into the Cultural History.<sup>103</sup>

### 1.3 The when

For the purpose of this study it is necessary to present a brief history of the poor whites. It goes without saying, for as long as there has been civilisation there have been classes. Therefore, there have been poor whites in South Africa from the time the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) landed at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 under the command of J.A. (Jan) Van Riebeeck. However, Giliomee and Mbenga state that by the end of the nineteenth century the numbers of poor whites were

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<sup>98</sup> M. Kooria, "Between the walls of archives and horizons of imagination: An interview with Amitav Ghosh", *Itinerario* 36, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*. The Hague: Mouton, 1973, p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>102</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*. Pretoria, 1988.

<sup>103</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, pp. v-vi.

becoming more pronounced. It became easier to single them out and, with the class of poor whites growing, this would soon become a problem for the government under S.J.P. Kruger. It would continue to be a problem for all the subsequent governments.<sup>104</sup>

As mentioned the first white people to come to South Africa and take up residence were those who came with Van Riebeeck in 1652. They worked for the DEIC and were to set up a small station and gardens to provide their ships with supplies for their journey around Africa to the East, for spices and other valuable commodities.<sup>105</sup> They traded with the local Khoisan people but mostly kept to themselves.<sup>106</sup> These people were known as Company servants and by 1657 nine were allowed to become full-time farmers on their plots of land, known as free burghers.<sup>107</sup> G. Davie explains that in the same year the first help was given to whites who were struggling and stood a chance of falling into poverty. There was a major crop failure in 1657 and help was sought from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Netherlands.<sup>108</sup> According to Giliomee not long after the nine becoming free burghers more and more became so especially after the increased influx of Europeans to the Cape of Good Hope. A small community town developed, besides farming, to include carpenters, bricklayers, black smiths and tavern-keepers. However, these free burghers were obliged to sell their produce to the DEIC and were often not paid the allocated price which caused many to sell their goods to smugglers. Furthermore, the climate and the environment were harsh and something they were not accustomed to. This resulted in many of their crops failing and this, accompanied with excessive alcohol intake, created a situation whereby the colonial settlement witnessed its first poor whites by 1661. In one of Van Riebeeck's letters to the DEIC he describes the extreme poverty and states that the children were naked and left to sleep on the earth with little straw next to livestock.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 185.

<sup>105</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa: South Africa to 1870 I*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 189.

<sup>106</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 42.

<sup>109</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 2.

Over time the DEIC decided to save money and many more of the free burghers were released from their contracts with the Company.<sup>110</sup> With the expansion of this small community and the need to better their conditions (wars with the local people, economic trials with the DEIC and competing with slave labour) many of the people, both previous free burghers and European immigrants, began to expand further into the interior and became known as *trekboere* (literally moving farmers).<sup>111</sup> These people were independent and isolated from each other as well as the developments that occurred in Europe during the eighteenth century.<sup>112</sup> According to M. Wilson and L. Thompson, they began to adjust to the environment and learnt from the local indigenous people, thus they took on certain cultural changes. It is important to note that this behaviour continued into the twentieth century, mostly due to them seeking better grazing land for their cattle. Many of these *trekboers* were later to become part of the Great Trek.<sup>113</sup> This isolation and the impact thereof will be examined more closely below.<sup>114</sup>

R. Ross explains that in 1795 the British invaded the Cape Colony ensuring that their link to India, for trade purposes, remained open. It was a strategic move, as Britain was at war with France.<sup>115</sup> According to Teppo this caused an influx of British immigrants, most of which became urban dwellers, while the majority of the *Boere* (now often called Afrikaners) remained in the countryside. Under the British a class system was put in place with power residing with the white elite. By the beginning of the nineteenth century poverty had become more visible in the Cape. The migration of impoverished immigrants from Britain and the rural Cape hinterlands added to a group of often homeless and unemployed people. This white poverty was enhanced against a background of the emerging middle-class elite. The 1820s saw the first “moral panic” about the uncontrollability of the lower classes.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> A half nomadic sheep farmer.

<sup>112</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>113</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa: South Africa to 1870 I*, p. 406.

<sup>114</sup> Many *trekboers* were impoverished and lived in abject material conditions similarly to the indigenous people.

<sup>115</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 35.; L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*. London: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 51-52.

<sup>116</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, pp. 26-27.

Two streams of white emigrants left the Cape Colony in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The first was the above mentioned *trekboers* who migrated into the interior for better pastures. These were usually in small family groups who did not move far away. The second group were the *Voortrekkers* and their movement out of the Colony was called the Great Trek. The *Voortrekkers* emphasised objections to British political and cultural issues and moved in groups of families intending to move far away. In short, the main causes for this migration were a lack of land and labour and security against the indigenous peoples, coupled with a pervasive sense of being marginalised by the British colonial government since 1806. These reasons worsened and with the inspiration of strong leaders a large portion of the Afrikaner people decided to migrate.<sup>117</sup> According to Wilson and Thompson it was a peaceful rebellion which saw several thousand people leave in the first wave.<sup>118</sup> Thus many Afrikaners joined the Great Trek between 1835 and 1845.<sup>119</sup>

Giliomee states that the relationship between the British and the Afrikaner were often very strained as English nationalism became the main ideology in South Africa's urban areas. This was expressed in the English language and enforced in symbols such as architecture, emblems, fashion, food and polite conversation. Comments by English critics annoyed the Afrikaner colonists. The Afrikaner had hardly any advancement to boast of and was mainly perceived of as a rural, isolated and relatively backward people with only a few who had received a rudimentary education. There had been no military resistance when the British had taken over in 1806 which resulted in feelings of social impotence. Furthermore, the British set forth to anglicise or "civilise" the language, churches and schools and introduced philanthropy in terms of the slave and indigenous populations. This infuriated the Afrikaner and many tried to resist, which led to more leaving the Cape and migrating north.<sup>120</sup>

Although the Afrikaners had each other, there was no influence from Europe on the *treks* and this resulted in the Afrikaner people becoming very isolated and insular.

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<sup>117</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>118</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa: South Africa to 1870 I*, pp. 406-407.

<sup>119</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 161.

<sup>120</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 194-199.; R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 39.; L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, p. 68.

Their migration was very challenging and dangerous as there were no roads and no real maps to go by. They attacked and were also attacked by the indigenous peoples. Many Voortrekkers died as a result of wars, obstacles of everyday life, disease, the terrain and the environment. There was more than one *trek* party and thus these Afrikaners began to settle all over South Africa, especially in the central region and the north.<sup>121</sup> Here they established the two lasting Boer Republics, the Orange Free State (OFS) in 1852 and the ZAR in 1854. Here they had their freedom from the British but quarrelled amongst each other. They remained predominately Afrikaans, however, not for long.<sup>122</sup>

By the 1860s most of the white poverty was found in the rural areas. Economic recessions had an impact of the wool price and wine exports and saw a banking crisis that had both local and international dimensions. Through capital accumulation and agricultural improvements well-to-do farmers could directly lead to the impoverishment of their poorer neighbours. This depression led to further rural poverty.<sup>123</sup>

Soon after the Boer Republics were founded, diamonds were discovered in Kimberley in 1867. However, drought and war hit the Cape's economy at the end of the 1870s, which was followed by a boom in the South African economy, which in turn saw the worst trade depression during the nineteenth century. This was fortunately followed by the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1886.<sup>124</sup> With the founding of the two Republics and the discovery of valuable minerals, the British began their expansion into South Africa and sought to annex the Republics and bring the Afrikaners under British rule once more. In 1877 they attempted to annex the ZAR and in 1881 the First Anglo-Boer War<sup>125</sup> broke out. The Boers won the war and re-established their independence. However, the mineral discoveries brought more

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<sup>121</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Voster 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*. Johannesburg: Perskor, 1975, p. 118.

<sup>122</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Voster 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*, p. 131.

<sup>123</sup> C. Bundy, *Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: White poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism*, in W. Beinart, P. Delius & S. Trapido, *Putting a plough to the ground: Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850-1930*, p. 106.

<sup>124</sup> C. Bundy, *Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: White poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism*, in W. Beinart, P. Delius & S. Trapido, *Putting a plough to the ground: Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850-1930*, pp 106-107.

<sup>125</sup> Also known as the First War of Independence.

immigrants to South Africa, a development that would soon challenge and change their independence.<sup>126</sup>

The British were intent on dominating southern Africa and in particular the mineral wealth. At the end of the nineteenth century, they proposed to Paul Kruger (president of the ZAR) to reform the ZAR franchise requirement, hoping to gain more control and stay in the region. When he refused it was just one step closer to the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War<sup>127</sup> in 1899. However the Orange Free State and Transvaal had an agreement to support each other in times of war and the burgher revolt in the Cape as well as the prospect of the wealth were the final straws which resulted in war.<sup>128</sup> Ross states in essence this was a War between British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism which lasted some two and a half years (1899-1902).<sup>129</sup>

During the first phase of the War Boers had the upper hand and seized various strong holds, thereafter with the arrival of British troops the superior numbers led to the defeat of the Afrikaner military force. The *Boers* began to use guerrilla tactics and the War was prolonged. However, the British secured a win when they began with the scorched earth policy. They would burn farms and slaughter all the livestock putting the *Boer* woman and children in concentration camps, where many died. With their supplies drastically reduced and their families dying in the camps, the Boers surrendered in 1902. The Peace of Vereeniging was signed on 31 May 1902.<sup>130</sup> Most of the poor whites had shared a history that included ancestry which had either been *trekboers* or part of the Great Trek and had suffered the extreme losses of the Anglo-Boer War.

Giliomee and Mbenga explain it was from the end of the nineteenth century through to the first half of the twentieth century that the poor-white problem became more visible. The politician John X. Merriman already stated in the 1880s that in order for

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<sup>126</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, p. 27.

<sup>127</sup> Also known as the South African War.

<sup>128</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 239-250.

<sup>129</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 72.

<sup>130</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, pp. 72-74.; L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, pp. 141-143.



the white population to survive, the poor whites would have to be assisted and forced to return to the cultural ways of the *volk*. From this period the government would struggle with this problem well into the second half of the twentieth century. During the first four decades of the twentieth century the poor-white question dominated politics and it had a variety of consequences. During the 1880s and 1890s the borders were closing and this resulted in a large rural population of limited education and no urban skills. This was the first time that politicians and the church recognised the problem and the results of the Anglo-Boer War aggravated the crisis. The poor whites slowly trickled from the rural areas to the urban areas, however, this soon became a flood of migrating poor. By 1936 half of the white population was in the urban areas. During the first twelve years of the Union (1910) Afrikaans workers formed a proto-revolutionary mass, but by 1930 a quarter of all Afrikaners were seen to be in need of assistance.<sup>131</sup>

During this time various political parties and alliances formed the government. In terms of this dissertation, “government” refers to the various political parties and their respective coalitions for the first half of the twentieth century. However, while the National Party only officially came into power in 1948 with its apartheid ideology, during this earlier period it was involved in numerous coalitions with a range of other political parties. (See Table below).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Parties involved</b>
1910-1924	South African Party government	South African Party
1924-1933	Pact government	A coalition between the National Party and Labour Party
1933-1948	United Party government	A fusion between the South African Party and the National Party
1948 -1994	National Party government	National Party

The NP therefore played an important and often dominant role in government in terms of its racial ideologies since its inception in 1914 through to its ultimate victory in 1948.

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<sup>131</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p.185.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304.

Although poor whites existed before the Second Anglo-Boer War, the numbers increased drastically thereafter. With the increase in the numbers, the problem also became more prominent as a result of the migration towards the urban areas began taking place. The poor whites had been contained in the rural areas, where they made a meagre living off the land, lived on small plots of land or as *bywoners*. However, with the turn of the twentieth century a number of misfortunes took place resulting from what Van Onselen refers to as the "hand of God and the hand of Man."<sup>132</sup> This caused the poor to become destitute, while many fell into abject poverty.

Poverty itself has had different impacts on different people and the same applies to the poor whites. Although there is an idea in popular consciousness of what a poor white is, the novels prove that there are many different dimensions and types. The novels may add to the academic research and the academic literature and thus might support the historical and cultural historical significance of the novel.

John Tosh states that History has to encompass many things. It has to be fair, objective and truthful. But in order to reach the masses it also has to be interesting, entertaining and imaginative.<sup>133</sup> Very few historians are able to capture all of this, thus historical literature together with the novel may ensnare an audience and the history may become better understood, remembered and more people may become enlightened or educated.

#### **1.4 The what**

This study includes several chapters each with a different aspect on the representation of the poor whites in the novels and in history. This first chapter was the introduction and introduces the reader to the study and explains what the study's objectives are. It also prepares the reader with the necessary background and definitions that are essential to understanding the study. The types of sources used for the study were examined and categorised as well as the literary genres.

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<sup>132</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Bell, 2001, p. 321.

<sup>133</sup> J. Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, pp. 17-35.

The second chapter is the literature review. This chapter includes an overview of a selection of academic and other sources from a broadly chronological and historiographical perspective. A high percentage of these sources are general histories as this reflects on the place of the poor whites within the broader South African past. This also enables the reader to follow the changes as the writing developed with new ideas and information building on the work that preceded it. They also reflect on the generally accepted notions of this topic. It also briefly considers the novels to be analysed in this study.

Chapter three, entitled "The Novel Novelists," will examine the Realist genre, which is the genre the chosen novels fall into. The chapter aims to explain the language movement in the first half of the twentieth century and its developments. The body of the chapter will revolve around the selected authors. The authors' biographies will be given, which usually is an indicator as to why they chose this specific genre and topic. The author's employment of history is also considered as this usually coincided with their novel writing. Lastly their style and novels are to be examined to serve as background and help the reader to understand the period the novels were written in as well as the people who wrote them.

"Poor whites and poor whites" is the fourth chapter of the study. This chapter will illustrate the different types of poor whites there were in the first half of the twentieth century. It will examine what a poor white was considered to be in popular consciousness and the different definitions given to what a poor white was in the academic literature. The poor whites in the novels will also be focused on and examples will be given, with regards to the category, where possible. The poor-white characters in the novels are also aligned with the categories as defined in the Carnegie Commission.

The term "The hand of God and the hand of Man," first used by Van Onselen, is the title to the fifth chapter of this study. This chapter will examine the causes which led to many whites becoming poor and "established" poor whites becoming destitute. The causes are to be divided into three categories: First the causes caused by God - such as natural disasters; second the causes caused by Man - causes which others

were responsible for, and third causes for which poor whites themselves were to blame. These causes are examined in conjunction with the novels.

In chapter six another aspect to which some consideration must be given is gender. This is done from a slightly different perspective given that the history of women has until relatively recently been neglected. The academic focus in the past decade informs how these women were written about in the novels and thus in this chapter there is therefore a greater focus on the academic content. One does not always consider the women attached to the poor-white men as also being poor. However, there are many cases of these in the novels. Moreover, the Carnegie Commission also investigated "mother and daughters" as a separate, but brief part of their study. In terms of this research women will also be focused on along with their lives as poor whites and the impact the poverty had on them and how they reacted to it. Furthermore, it will also consider how the white Nationalist government used white women to unite the *volk* and how the respective author's responded to this in their portrayal of their poor-white women's reactions.

The final chapter, the Conclusion, highlights the main arguments and sums up what the study was about and what it hoped to have accomplished.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW – TURNING THE PAGES

As indicated the poor whites appear as one of the most popular and most written-about topics in the history of South Africa. Although the idea of a “poor white” has always been frowned upon, especially in white South Africa, it is one that has received a large amount of attention from a wide range of scholars, academics and authors. They have been focused on in numerous academic disciplines and have also been the subject of many primary sources. For the purposes of this historical-interdisciplinary study the sources have been divided into four groups: First are the primary sources, which include mainly documentary sources such as archival material including government legislation, newspapers and commissions that focused on the poor-white question at the time. Second, the academic sources, which include a selection of secondary sources. As indicated these are limited to the general histories of South Africa that have been written by academics in their research fields of specialisation. These histories reflect on how the poor whites have featured in the broader perspective on the past. They indicate the significance or lack thereof in what could be related to the general concept of the poor whites as well as their possible place in popular consciousness. Third, the literary specialists who have also written secondary sources, however, which have reviewed and analysed the novels. The last category is the novels, which include those which were written during the first half of the twentieth century by authors who expressed what was initially happening around them in the form of fiction. This literature overview of the poor whites is by no means exhaustive. It is rather a selection of key sources that are of relevance to this particular study.

#### 2.1 The primary

First and probably the best known primary work done on the poor whites is that by the Carnegie Commission.<sup>134</sup> The Carnegie Commission was the first national

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<sup>134</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

poverty survey that could claim the status of a scientific enterprise.<sup>135</sup> This Commission was funded by the Carnegie Corporation, the Union government and the DRC. Five commissioners and a number of assessors were appointed from different fields to travel throughout South Africa between the period 1929-1932 and interview a cross-section of the poor-white society. These commissioners were: J.F.W. Grosskopf, R.W. Wilcocks, E.G. Malherbe, W.A. Murray, J.R. Albertyn, and M.E. Rothmann.<sup>136</sup> By the late 1920s white poverty became a national issue for two reasons: First was the global economic issue, which coincided with a prolonged drought. The government tried to stem the flow of impoverished whites leaving the rural areas to the city by making loans available and boosting relief and subsidies for temporary employment on public works. The second reason was that white poverty was given more attention in the developments of the academic world. A more scientific approach was taken towards social ills. Thus, with many similarities between South Africa and the USA, the Carnegie Commission of New York became interested in the problem of white poverty in South Africa.<sup>137</sup>

These interviews, which are in the public domain, were done with nomadic trek farmers, *bywoners*, labourers, pioneering bushveld farmers, woodcutters, diamond diggers, reef miners, and many others who were defined as poor whites.<sup>138</sup> They were especially conducted in places where the poor-white problem was at its worst. These included areas such as George, Knysna, Prince Albert, Oudtshoorn, Namakwaland, Lichtenburg, Johannesburg and Pretoria.<sup>139</sup> It must also be noted that the investigation took place at the end of a very severe drought in some of the regions, such as the Karoo. This in turn could also show the poverty of the poor whites at its worst.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 82.

<sup>136</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>137</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 345-346.

<sup>138</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, p. 332.

<sup>139</sup> D. Langner (red.), *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902*, p. 89.

<sup>140</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 154.

The result was a five-volume report running to several hundred pages on the poor-white question. It includes a wealth of information on most of the aspects of the poor whites: their lives and attitudes; the education and living conditions, including a report of mothers and daughters of poor-white families; health and sociological issues; economic conditions; and the psychology of poor whites. However, their culture as white South Africans and as poor whites was not included, but significant changes and developments are recorded. The report was crucial to the proposed solutions that were developed later. The conclusions included concerns regarding nomadism, alcoholism and degeneration, all of which were seen as major problems leading to whites becoming poor.<sup>141</sup>

Much of the Commission's findings prove that the commissioners realised there were poor blacks as well, but that solving the poor-white problem would in the long term benefit other communities as well. The commissioners felt that handing the poor whites everything on a silver platter would not be a solution, but a better remedy lay in education, the acquisition of skills and work opportunities in the urban areas.<sup>142</sup> It is interesting to note that the poor whites of the 1920s and 1930s were never saved, but rather died out. Their children received a better education and thus were equipped to find better employment opportunities.<sup>143</sup>

The Carnegie Commission's report created a new understanding of the crisis and people began to realise that poverty was not solely a problem for which the poor themselves were responsible, it was sometimes the social and economic circumstances over which they had little control.<sup>144</sup>

The Carnegie Commission reports will serve as the main primary source because it was done in the time frame of this study and was and still is considered the most important research on poor whites. Thus the Carnegie Commission, which was compiled in the 1930s, remains one of the best primary sources to examine along with the novels written around the same time.

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<sup>141</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, pp. 34-38.

<sup>142</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 347-349.

<sup>143</sup> H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners van 1910 tot 2010: Die opkoms van 'n moderne gemeenskap*. Pretoria: Die Erfenisstigting, 2011, p. 11.

<sup>144</sup> F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304.

## 2.2 The secondary

The secondary sources will be examined according to the different South African historiographical schools from earliest to the later, thus representing a type of historiography on poor whites. In terms of literature and historiography the focus on the poor whites appears first under the Afrikaner nationalist school. Afrikaner nationalist historiography is divided into two phases – a pre-academic phase and an Afrikaner-centric academic or professional phase.<sup>145</sup> It was under the academic phase that the poor whites are first considered.

P.J. van der Merwe moved away from the Leopold von Ranke style of top-down history and began looking at the phenomena of *trekboers* and *bywoners*. His approach was more in line with social and economic history studied in the 1970s.<sup>146</sup> This was to be one of the first major changes in Afrikaner nationalist historiography. Although the focus was still in line with the Von Ranke tradition with a historical thematology invariably centred on “national” history-politics, the state and inter-state relations, military history and the deeds of past great men, the shift had begun to look at other sectors of “their nation.” Thus the poor whites became an important focus point in a developing nation.<sup>147</sup> Although his research (done mostly on the period between 1650 and 1850) does not correspond to the time frame of this study it is important to note that academics were starting to look at the history and phenomenon of poor whites as a separate entity in history.

It is important to mention here that although the poor whites were not neglected in terms of history writing during the first half of the twentieth century, they were not considered a primary topic more most Afrikaner nationalist historians. Topics investigated in Afrikaner historiography confirm a close bond between the academics and the NP until around the 1970s. The NP did not prescribe to the historians which themes were acceptable. It was rather organisations such as the Broederbond that “intuitively” indicated which fields should be examined. The history of political parties, government institutions and biographical studies – a very “Rankean way” - were

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<sup>145</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute. Uppsala. 2004, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> K. Smith, *The Changing Past*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988, pp. 76-78.

<sup>147</sup> K. Smith, *The Changing Past*, p. 65.



considered the most important. Socio-economic factors had no place in their historiography and social history and the history of “ordinary people” were not considered important as this contradicted and clashed with their ideas of what was “real” history.<sup>148</sup>

Although many of the Afrikaner nationalists in the early twentieth century wrote the “Great Histories,” focusing on political history and the history of important men, changes did start to take place in the writing. It was during the second half of the twentieth century that F.A. van Jaarsveld began looking at the ordinary Afrikaner people and thus the poor whites found a key place in one of his first general histories of South Africa. In one of his books entitled *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster, 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*<sup>149</sup> he dedicated an entire section to them and examined some of the causes explaining why they became poor, their political and economic position and the government assistance they received. Although he did not go into great detail, he was able to create a broad overview of their place and role in the broader history of South Africa. This source was also first written in Afrikaans<sup>150</sup> and later translated into English and therefore probably accounts for the general focus on poor whites.<sup>151</sup>

Towards the end of the twentieth century a revision of Afrikaner history writing began to appear in a more liberal approach, although still Afrikaner nationalist in nature.<sup>152</sup> E.L.P Stals and Hermann Giliomee are two such historians that fall into this category. Their sole focus was the history of the Afrikaner people. Stals examined the Afrikaner, in the context of Johannesburg, and thus included the poor whites and their move or migration from the rural areas to the urban area. Parts of his two-volume study *Afrikaners in die goudstad*<sup>153</sup> examine the poor whites as a section of

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<sup>148</sup> A. Grundlingh, “Social history and Afrikaner historiography in changing South Africa: Problems and potential”, *Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 45, 1993, pp. 1-10.

<sup>149</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster, 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa* Johannesburg: Perskor, 1975.

<sup>150</sup> First published in 1971.

<sup>151</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster, 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*, pp. 117-319.

<sup>152</sup> W. Visser, “Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research”, Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004, pp. 5-6.

<sup>153</sup> E.L.P. Stals (red.), *Afrikaners in die goudstad I, 1886-1924*. Kaapstad: HAUM Opvoedkundige Uitgewery, 1978.; E.L.P. Stals (red.), *Afrikaners in die goudstad II, 1924-1961*. Pretoria: HAUM Opvoedkundige Uitgewery, 1986.

the Afrikaner people during the first half of the twentieth century, their living conditions and the social, economic and political aspects that surrounded them. He also considers what measures were taken to "bring them back" and to include them as part of the "volk". Furthermore, he examines the reasons why poor whites left the rural areas, the pull and push factors, many of which were the causes of poverty in the rural areas. Stals also examines the different generations of poor whites in the urban area and compares their poverty as well as the reasons for their poverty.

In *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, Giliomee examines the history of the Afrikaans people with a whole chapter, "Wretched folk, ready for any mischief,"<sup>154</sup> dedicated to the poor whites. In this chapter he explores categories of the causes of their poverty in both the rural and urban areas, what assistance was given to them and what they did to force the government to help them. Although a general history, he does go into some personal accounts to create a better understanding of these people.<sup>155</sup> In another work, *Die Afrikaners van 1910 tot 2010: Die opkoms van 'n moderne gemeenskap*, Giliomee presents a history of the Afrikaner people and a large section is devoted to the poor whites. He uses information from the Carnegie Commission and provides a background as to why and how the Commission was set up. He does not go into as much detail regarding the causes of the poor-white problem, but elaborates on the help and assistance they were given, the organisation and movements involved in the assistance, as well as the different phases the poor whites went through.<sup>156</sup>

Some liberal historians also focus on the poor-white topic, but present them as part of a more inclusive history of South Africa, rather than focusing on them as a single group. They for example consider white and black poverty in competition with each other. W.M. Macmillan and C.W. de Kiewiet fall into this category. Macmillan focuses on the poor-white problem in a section of his general economic history entitled "Poor Whites!". He provides a broad overview of their history and focuses on their origins and the causes of their poverty in both the rural and urban regions of South Africa. He also considers the unemployment, the investigations that were undertaken

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<sup>154</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, pp. 315-354.

<sup>155</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003.

<sup>156</sup> H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners van 1910 tot 2010: Die opkoms van 'n moderne gemeenskap*. Pretoria: Die Erfenisstigting, 2011.

regarding the poor-white problem, the destitute, their migration from the rural areas to the urban areas, life in the rural areas, the different systems of living on the land, their financial conditions and traditions.<sup>157</sup> He provides examples of their way of life, their legal protection, labour, wages, their hopes, as well as life and labour and the conditions that surrounded these issues in the urban areas.<sup>158</sup> He dedicates several chapters to dealing with poverty as a whole and examines issues that had not yet been focused on by earlier authors.<sup>159</sup> One of his main points was that the poor-white problem was not an isolated phenomenon, but a result of an all embracing historical transformation from agrarianism to capitalism. He also believed that poor whites and poor blacks were not separate entities.<sup>160</sup>

In a general social and economic history, his student, De Kiewiet, studies poverty in a chapter entitled “Poor Whites and poor blacks.” This focuses on an un-segregated history of South Africa and examining poverty in general.<sup>161</sup> In terms of the poor whites, he begins where the poor-white problem was first taken notice of and where solutions were sought. He also examines poor-white poverty in the rural and urban areas, their lifestyles, homes, health, labour, skills, farming techniques and systems, traditions, culture, isolation, *bywoners*, their interaction and competition with blacks, legislation, and the assistance and help they received.<sup>162</sup> Although, his chapter is an overview of the poor-white problem, like Macmillan, De Kiewiet contextualises them and sheds “new” light on issues that had as yet not been dealt with by other historians.<sup>163</sup> Both of their works have been extensively used by other historians and academics studying the poor whites.

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<sup>157</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1930, pp. 45-113.

<sup>158</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1930.

<sup>159</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, pp. 45-113.

<sup>160</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 68.

<sup>161</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*. London: Oxford University Press, 1941, pp. 178-207.

<sup>162</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*. London: Oxford University Press, 1941.

<sup>163</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, pp. 178-207.

Whilst decolonisation was taking place during the 1960s and 1970s in the rest of Africa, the two-volume *The Oxford History of South Africa*<sup>164</sup> followed by *South Africa, a modern history*,<sup>165</sup> appeared. Both volumes of *The Oxford History of South Africa* and *South Africa, a modern history* were heralded as "liberal thought." Both focused on South Africa and its people as a whole and how they influenced and affected each other. Thus the poor whites were put into the general context of the time with no specific detail resulting in their history being generally over-looked.<sup>166</sup> Both volumes of *The Oxford History of South Africa* side-lined the poor-white issue. The term poverty, poor white or *bywoner* do not feature at all. In fact the second volume does not mention any part of the poor-whites involvement in the history of the first half of the twentieth century. It merely considers the Afrikaners and their history without recognising the poor-white involvement or any of its consequence.

Towards the 1970s major political changes began taking place in South African history and this had a major impact on the historiography. Historians began focusing on the neglected history of blacks and other marginalised groups as well as minorities such as the poor whites. Academics were no longer concerned with the history from the top down, elites or political history, many were writing history from the "bottom up".<sup>167</sup> The focus was on the ordinary people - workers, the unemployed, criminals, policemen, home owners, renters, squatters, those living in comfort and those living in poverty and even women. It included everyone else who had up until then slipped through the cracks of the historical narrative. This included the poor whites who were now studied as part of a larger history which focused on their popular culture and aspects such as dance, music, literature and sport, which created a better understanding of their everyday life.<sup>168</sup> At the same time, the use of

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<sup>164</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa I*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.; M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

<sup>165</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

<sup>166</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004, pp. 8-9.

<sup>167</sup> C. Saunders, *Writing History: South Africa's urban past and other essays*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1992, pp. 14 & 73.

<sup>168</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004, pp. 12-13.

oral history became increasingly important as a source. Thus by the 1980s the social or revisionist history approach shed new light on the poor-white phenomenon.<sup>169</sup>

In 1973 R.A. Lewis examined the poor whites in his Master's dissertation entitled *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*.<sup>170</sup> His focus was on some of the causes of the problem, the poor-whites' migration to the urban areas and solutions or assistance they were given to help them out of their poverty. The fact that the Carnegie Commission was an indispensable source used in his work, especially in his chapter "The rural exodus," underlines the importance of the source.<sup>171</sup>

From the 1980s social historian L. Callinicos published three books that were very much aligned with the "histories from below" approach. In these works she examines the life of ordinary people, including women, and their everyday lives in a delimited area, Johannesburg, as a part of a larger history. However, Callinicos also focuses on the rural areas where most of the poor whites came from. She examines all races and their interactions, and as regards the poor whites she considers the reasons for why they were poor, how they became that way and what was done to help them. But she also goes beyond this by re-creating their daily lives and cultural changes as they were exposed to new cultures and people in the urban areas, in terms of both housing and labour as well as social activities. Her work contains interviews that were done with poor whites, which opens a window into their lives as well as their frame of mind.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>170</sup> R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973.

<sup>171</sup> R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973, pp. 25-43.

<sup>172</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa I: Gold and workers, 1886-1924*. Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1980.; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*. Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987.; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa III. A place in the city: The Rand on the eve of apartheid*. Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1993.

Also in the 1980s historian Colin Bundy produced a chapter for the Second Carnegie<sup>173</sup> enquiry into poverty and the development in Southern Africa, entitled *Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: White poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism*.<sup>174</sup> In this chapter he sets out to prove that white poverty existed in the Cape region before 1890. He looks at the history of smaller towns and makes use of letters, newspapers and journals of people who lived in or travelled through the area. He is able to show that the poor whites before 1890 also suffered from similar causes to those who emerged later, although after 1890 poverty seemed to escalate and appear on a much larger scale. Although his focus is primarily on one region of South Africa (the Cape) it gives a lot of insight into the scale and reasons for white poverty, which in turn serves as a good background to this study as well as a better understanding of the time after the Great Trek and before the Anglo-Boer War.

There are a number of other histories that are published towards the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century, these include the works of: C.F.J Muller,<sup>175</sup> T.R.H. Davenport,<sup>176</sup> N. Parsons,<sup>177</sup> J.T. Cameron and S.B. Spies,<sup>178</sup> D. Omer-Cooper,<sup>179</sup> L.M. Thompson,<sup>180</sup> N. Worden,<sup>181</sup> R. Ross,<sup>182</sup> H. Giliomee and B. Mbenga<sup>183</sup> and F. Pretorius.<sup>184</sup> While there are a plethora of studies that focus specifically on the poor whites, this section will briefly consider how the poor whites are depicted in a selection of the key general histories of South Africa. They generally wrote compressed or general histories of South Africa.<sup>185</sup> The varied attention and thus view on the significance of the poor whites is evident in the

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<sup>173</sup> The second Carnegie enquiry "Uprooting poverty in South Africa: Report for the second Carnegie inquiry into poverty and development in South Africa," was released in 1984. This report looked at poverty as a whole and did not focus on race or colour.

<sup>174</sup> C. Bundy, *Vagabond Hollanders and runaway Englishmen: White poverty in the Cape before poor whiteism*, in W. Beinart, P. Delius & S. Trapido, *Putting a plough to the ground: Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850-1930*. Witwatersrand: Raven Press, 1986.

<sup>175</sup> C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *500 years: A history of South Africa*. Pretoria: Academica, 1968.

<sup>176</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

<sup>177</sup> N. Parsons, *A new history of southern Africa*. London: MacMillan, 1982.

<sup>178</sup> T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (eds), *A new illustrated history of South Africa*. Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1986.

<sup>179</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*. London: Currey Portsmouth, 1987.

<sup>180</sup> L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*. London: New Haven Press, 1990.

<sup>181</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, segregation and apartheid*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

<sup>182</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>183</sup> H. Gilomee & B. Mbenga (eds), *New history of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007.

<sup>184</sup> F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2014.

<sup>185</sup> See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion.

different ways in which they portray the poor whites and the amount of attention they give to them. The poor whites do form part of the history, however, none looks exclusively at the poor whites and the amount of detail differs. Among the different histories of South Africa most only briefly mention the poor whites. These generally remain relatively neutral and objective with only the briefest mention of the poor whites in terms of their political and economic position as well as the causes and solutions that were sought for their poverty as well as the consequences of their poverty. Much of the information they use is very repetitive as they tend to use many of the same sources in writing their histories. These general histories will be discussed in a thematic order according to the amount of detail the source provides with regards to the poor whites.

The first group of general texts to be considered are those that essentially ignore or side-lined the poor-white issue. In Ross's more recent *A concise history of South Africa*<sup>186</sup> the term or phrase "poor white" is not mentioned either and the history of the poor white is not examined at all. The term *bywoner* is, however, mentioned once and a brief mention is made to their migration to the urban areas and the fact that their wages were higher than those of the blacks.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, in those two key texts it is clear that the history of poor whites and their impact on the history of South Africa is not regarded as of much significance.

*The making of a modern South Africa: Conquest, apartheid and democracy*<sup>188</sup> by Worden does not go into a lot of detail on the poor whites. They are briefly mentioned in terms of the farming in the rural areas as share croppers or *bywoners* and then later a few of the causes of their poverty are mentioned, the help that they were given, but more importantly their political implications in terms of developing ideologies are stressed.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>187</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 78.

<sup>188</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, segregation and apartheid*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

<sup>189</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: Conquest, apartheid, democracy*, pp. 55 & 66.

The next group of general histories consider the poor whites, but only to a limited degree. In *500 years: A history of South Africa*<sup>190</sup> Muller examines the poor whites in the rural and urban areas. However, he does not go into a lot of detail and only mentions the poor whites because of their role in a specific time and place. Economic reasons for the emergence of poor whites in the OFS are given and explained in the period of the 1870s along with their gradual increase in the rural areas. In terms of the urban areas, the history of the poor whites turns political. Here the poor whites are again alluded to with regards to all the different acts and laws the Pact Government (1924-1933) implemented to protect and assist them. It is also important to note that this source first appeared in Afrikaans and was later translated into English.<sup>191</sup>

In *A new history of southern Africa*,<sup>192</sup> Parsons examines the poor-white problem in the context of southern Africa. He does not go into a lot of detail but makes clear and relevant points in order to understand the poor whites. He does not, however, compare or link them to the blacks at the time and makes no comment on their relevance with the situation at the end of the twentieth century. He examines the political and economic situation closely and is able to present a broader picture whilst not losing his focus.<sup>193</sup>

The third group of general histories provide more detail on the poor whites and in particular their social, economic and political impact. Omer-Cooper's *History of southern Africa*<sup>194</sup> focuses on the poor whites in the context of the economic and political history of South Africa as well as their involvement in shaping it. Although the blacks are also mentioned, Omer-Cooper does not detract from the poor whites nor compare them to the blacks, but only mentions the roles they played. Omer-Cooper examines the poor whites in the rural and urban areas as well as their migration, the causes of their poverty, the reaction to them and the consequences of this.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *500 years: A history of South Africa*. Pretoria: Academica, 1968.

<sup>191</sup> C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *500 years: A history of South Africa*, pp. 248, 417 & 435.

<sup>192</sup> N. Parsons, *A new history of southern Africa*. London: MacMillan, 1982.

<sup>193</sup> N. Parsons, *A new history of southern Africa*, pp. 152-153, 242 & 251.

<sup>194</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*. London: Currey Portsmouth, 1987.

<sup>195</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, pp. 149-150, 167, 171-172, 175, 177, 193-194 & 202.



In *A history of South Africa*<sup>196</sup> by Thompson the history of the poor whites is examined in two sections - the history prior to 1910 and the history thereafter, extending as far as the 1970s. Thompson gives greater detail to the causes of the poor-white problem, their role in the political history of South Africa and the gradual rise and economic improvement of many poor whites as a result of nationalism. The poor-white topic is examined as an important part of South African history in the economic and political spheres, especially in the twentieth century.<sup>197</sup>

In *South Africa: A modern history*<sup>198</sup> by Davenport the poor whites are again viewed for their importance in the political history of South Africa. A few reasons for their poverty are listed. However, it is their poverty and what was done about it by the government, why it was done and the impact that this had on the future which is considered in considerable detail.<sup>199</sup>

The remaining group of general historical texts affords greater attention to the poor whites.

In *A new illustrated history of South Africa*<sup>200</sup> edited by Cameron and Spies the term "poor whites" is only mentioned on three pages, however, the source delves deep into the poor-white history. The rural and urban poor whites are discussed and what was done to alleviate their poverty. Influential and important people involved in the poor-white cause and their contributions are mentioned. An example is Emily Hobhouse. The Second Afrikaans Language movement, from which the novelists for this study were chosen, is explained briefly. Although the source is very much focused on the political and economic sectors, it provides a wide understanding of the time period this study deals with, as well as what the poor whites underwent.<sup>201</sup> This source was translated into Afrikaans as a publication for bilingualism.

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<sup>196</sup> L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*. London: Yale University Press, 1990.

<sup>197</sup> L.M. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, pp. *pre 1910* 64, 112, 132, *post 1910* 155, 162, 169, 172 & 188-189.

<sup>198</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

<sup>199</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history*, pp.191, 624, 635-636, 638, 665 & 683.

<sup>200</sup> T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (eds), *A new illustrated history of South Africa*. Johannesburg: Southern Books, 1986.

<sup>201</sup> T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (eds), *A new illustrated history of South Africa*, pp. 223, 260 & 268.

In a more recent publication, *New history of South Africa*,<sup>202</sup> which is a collaborative work by numerous contributors under the editorship of Giliomee and Mbenga, the history of South Africa is examined in general terms from the earliest recorded times to modern day. The source includes research done by a range of historians and other academics, but only briefly mentions them at the end. Little indication is given as to who wrote what section. This source is also published in both Afrikaans and English simultaneously. The poor whites are given a lot of attention and consideration and their history and the role they played have been well documented. The poor whites are focused on in all spheres such as rural and urban, social, economic, political and even cultural to an extent. Their history is seen to be integral to the greater history and their importance is stressed with many examples given for better understanding.<sup>203</sup>

*The Cambridge History of South Africa, volume II 1885-1994*,<sup>204</sup> edited by R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson focuses on nearly a hundred years of history. The poor whites formed an important part of South African history during this time period. This is made clear in this source which includes a lot of attention to the poor whites in all sectors and spheres. In sum, this general history examines the history of the poor whites in a broader context but emphasises their importance.<sup>205</sup>

The last general history to be examined is that of F.J. Pretorius entitled *A history of South Africa: From distant past to the present day*, which appeared in 2012 first only in Afrikaans and subsequently in English in 2014.<sup>206</sup> The introduction starts with the statement made by Professor J. van der Elst, chief executive officer of the South African Academy of Sciences and Arts in 2006, at a symposium organised by the History Commission which encapsulates the essence of the book:

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<sup>202</sup> H. Gilomee & B. Mbenga (eds), *New history of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007.

<sup>203</sup> H. Gilomee & B. Mbenga (eds), *New history of South Africa*, pp. 226, 239, 255, 265, 271, 280-282, 288 & 292-293.

<sup>204</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>205</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, pp.136, 225, 227-228, 249, 261-264, 273-274, 291, 314, 362 & 533-536.

<sup>206</sup> F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2014.

“Then we should write a history ourselves.”<sup>207</sup>

This statement originated out of the argument that currently at school level the emphasis of the history curriculum was on “struggle history”, and even though during apartheid the emphasis was too heavily on the Afrikaner, this present focus had swung the pendulum too far. Thus this book would attempt to be objective and represent the whole history of South Africa. It was written by a number of historians – each focusing on a certain time and topic. The book not only attempted to present “a history”, but also “an understanding”. The poor whites feature in different chapters: from their early struggles in the rural areas to their struggles in the urban areas; as well as their social, economic, political, and to a degree, cultural circumstances, as well as the influence of these on their poverty. The poor whites are examined as an entity on their own, but also in the broader history, especially during the first half of the twentieth century.

The *Illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*,<sup>208</sup> which was edited by Dougie Oakes along with Colin Bundy and Christopher Saunders as historical advisors, does not conform to any one historiographical approach. Rather it takes on a more popular form. It focuses on South Africa from the “bottom up” and looks at all peoples and classes.<sup>209</sup> The poor whites also have a section in this book with most of the research being based on the Carnegie Commission’s report. Although it does not go into great detail there is a lot of information given from the time the poor-white question was first acknowledged and mentioned in the public sphere, the causes of the problem within the rural and urban areas, to how the government<sup>210</sup> went about trying to solve the problem to their own benefit.<sup>211</sup> This source was researched by a number of scholars and thus little indication is given as to who wrote what section.

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<sup>207</sup> F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 9.

<sup>208</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader’s Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*. Cape Town: Reader’s Digest Association, 1992.

<sup>209</sup> P.G. Stone & B. L. Molyneaux (eds), *The presented past: Heritage, museums and education*. London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 38-41.

<sup>210</sup> See chapter 1 for an explanation of what is meant by “government” and the NP’s position in this regard.

<sup>211</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader’s Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, pp. 328-337.

In Van Onselen's seminal work on the early history of the Witwatersrand he focuses on groups that were marginalised and the consequences thereof. He includes all racial groups in his analysis, but in his chapter, "The Main Reef Road into the working class," he focuses specifically on the lives of the poor whites.<sup>212</sup> He considers their reactions to moving to the urban area and how they had to evolve with changes in the labour market and industrialisation, as well as compete with the immigrants and blacks to make a life for themselves in this new and unfamiliar environment. He examines the causes of their poverty in the rural areas and thus the reason for their migration, as well as the poor-whites' poverty in the urban areas. He focuses on the help they were given as well as the help government was forced to give them. He also considers the consequences of the poor-white problem for the government of the time and the poor whites themselves. Through his research he is able to show some of the different aspects of their daily lives and struggles in the Witwatersrand.<sup>213</sup>

Morrell edited a book about the poor whites in Southern Africa including different essays from one of the History Workshops at the University of the Witwatersrand held in 1992.<sup>214</sup> What Morrell termed a "strange silence"<sup>215</sup> hanging over the history of the poor whites was one of the reasons for the compilation of the book. Instead of solely focusing on the causes and solutions of the poor-white issue, these essays were able to shed new light on other aspects on the poor whites and their everyday lives. It included rural and urban areas, effects of the 1914 rebellion as well as essays on specific geographical areas. The latter essays were able to examine the poor whites in greater detail presenting new perspectives as opposed to the broad overview that most historians to date had presented. In his preface commenting on the gaps in the research on the subject, Morrell points to the key concern of this Master's research:

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<sup>212</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, new Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, pp. 309-367.

<sup>213</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, new Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*. Johannesburg: Johnathan Ball, 2001.

<sup>214</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992.

<sup>215</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. xi.

Poor whites in literature, poor white culture and the poor white experience (which could be reconstructed via exhaustive use of oral evidence) are all notable absentees,...<sup>216</sup>

Although the topic of the poor whites is not as popular today as it was in the past, there are still a number of sources emerging which focus on this theme, for example, D. Langner's 2009 edited book *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902* (Broken land: Poverty in the Afrikaans community since 1902).<sup>217</sup> It is divided into two parts with the first mainly based on the findings of the Carnegie Commission. The second half focuses on the current poor-white issue in twenty-first century South Africa. It includes new, fresh observations and both quantitative and qualitative research data on the poor-white problem facing South Africa today. It was compiled by researchers from different academic fields and funded by the trade union "Solidarity."<sup>218</sup> The book originated as a photo exhibition, to find solutions to the "silent white poverty". Historians and social workers became involved in the book and in order to further create an awareness, "a full colour history" of the poor whites was produced.<sup>219</sup> It deals with the lesser-known history of the poor whites, the progression of war, political oppression, poverty, marginalisation and social decay. The source also includes a number of pictures of the poor whites as they went about their daily lives and where and how they lived. Each of the chapters reveals something different about the poor whites and the causes of their poverty as well as the organisations which were set up by the government, and by outside organisations, to help them.

From the time the "bottom up" approach of history was written women also became a feature. The most popular themes that correspond with this study's time frame

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<sup>216</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. xii.

<sup>217</sup> D. Langner (ed.), *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902*. Brandfont: Kraal-Uitgewers, 2009.

<sup>218</sup> Solidarity is a trade union whose origins go as far back as 1902. Its motto is "We protect the people". The trade union also has strong connections to Afri-Forum, which is a community organisation focusing on the rights of minority groups in South Africa. One of their major issues is to help the poor whites in South Africa and to stand up for their basic human rights. It has a number of divisions, including its Helping Hand Fund. The Helping Hand Fund undertakes a number of social projects to help the community. Their main focus, clearly, is the white community. The Helping Hand Fund decided to compile the book *Gebroke land*.

<sup>219</sup> Solidarity: Helping hands, 'Letters to Mandela leads to new social work degree', <<http://www.helpinghandfund.co.za/archive/2011-09-15/?p=1941>>, 2011. Access: 13 January 2012.

have been the *volksmoeder*, the working-class women and the "loose" or promiscuous women. Important studies have been made on each and some historians have even linked the various themes. Authors such as Van Onselen, L. Vincent,<sup>220</sup> E. Brink,<sup>221</sup> E. Cloete,<sup>222</sup> M. du Toit,<sup>223</sup> L. Callinicos, J Grobler,<sup>224</sup> S. Swart,<sup>225</sup> J. Hyslop,<sup>226</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson<sup>227</sup> and M.E. Rothmann (and the other commissioners<sup>228</sup> in the Carnegie Commission's investigation) have studied women and made a contribution to the information regarding white women during the first half of the twentieth century.

Van Onselen produced a seminal study entitled "Prostitutes and Proletarians" of the prostitutes in the Witwatersrand during this period.<sup>229</sup> Many of the reasons that led these women down that path had to do with the situation in the country and the undeniable poverty they found themselves in, which in turn resulted in many believing that was their only option of survival. Most of the other above-mentioned authors focused on the working-class women and the *volksmoeder* ideology and how it was used by Afrikaner nationalism. Their studies reveal a different side to the upper and middle class women's histories and reveal the behind-the-scenes history

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<sup>220</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, pp. 51-73.; L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, pp. 61-78.

<sup>221</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 1990.

<sup>222</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, pp. 42-56.

<sup>223</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, pp. 155-176.

<sup>224</sup> J. Grobler, "Volksmoeders in verset: Afrikanervroue-optogte in Pretoria, 1915 en 1940", *African Journals Online*, 23(1), 2009, pp. 26-54.

<sup>225</sup> S. Swart, "'Motherhood and otherhood' - gendered citizenship and Afrikaner women in the South African 1914 Rebellion", *African Historical Review*, 39 (2), 2007, pp. 41-57.

<sup>226</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, pp. 1-29.

<sup>227</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>228</sup> Carnegie Commission, J.F.W. Grosskopf, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, R.W. Wilcocks, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, E.G. Malherbe, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, W.A. Murray, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, a. J.R. Albertyn, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society* & b. M.E. Rothmann, *The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>229</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, new Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*, pp. 109-167.

of working women, the reasons why they worked, their fight for recognition, acceptance and respect and how the political and economic situation during this time led to social and cultural changes. Furthermore, they discuss how with the ideology of the *volksmoeder* the government tried to control them.

The Carnegie Commission included a section on mothers and daughters of poor-white families and their difficulties. However, poor-white women are also mentioned in the other volumes. Authors such as Swart and Grobler focus on the *volksmoeder* ideology and the impact the ideology has had on history and specific events.<sup>230</sup> These specific sources have been incorporated into this study because the majority of sources either only briefly mention poor-white women or omit them while focusing on the poor whites as a single homogeneous group. What is interesting is the majority of these sources written about women are by women.

More recently the topic of the poor whites has started to make a comeback as new angles are being examined. For instance, the poor whites in the twenty-first century are being compared to the poor whites in the twentieth century and the poor whites of the twentieth century are being compared to the poor blacks in the twenty-first century. E.J. Bottomley, a geographical historian and journalist, published a book entitled *Poor white*.<sup>231</sup> Unlike other sources pertaining to the poor whites, Bottomley focuses not only on the causes of the poor-white problem but goes into a great deal more detail on the causes which are the poor whites own fault, or where they carry the blame. He also analyses the solutions the government and churches sought to eradicate these “shameful whites” who were perceived as a threat to Afrikaner Nationalism.

In the same year *The Cambridge History of South Africa, volume II 1885-1994*,<sup>232</sup> edited by Ross, Kelk Mager and Nasson was published. This source looks at the time period in which the poor whites played the biggest role in the history of South

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<sup>230</sup> S. Swart, "'Motherhood and otherhood' - gendered citizenship and Afrikaner women in the South African 1914 Rebellion", *African historical Review*, 39 (2), 2007, pp. 41-57.; J. Grobler, "Volksmoeders in verset: Afrikanervroue-optogte in Pretoria, 1915 en 1940", *African Journals Online*, 23(1), 2009, pp. 26-54.

<sup>231</sup> E. J. Bottomley, *Poor white*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2012.

<sup>232</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Africa and is the period in which many became poor. It also considers the results and consequences this poverty had on the history of South Africa. This source focuses on the poor whites as part of the larger history but does not take away their importance and influences on the larger picture, nor the direct role they played. The poor whites in the rural and urban areas are examined as well as their migrations. The reasons for their poverty are inspected as well as the solutions and reasons for the solutions that were sought. The poor whites role in the history and in the making of their poverty is examined and poor-white women are also included in the discussion. The blacks are not compared to the poor whites but are included where a point needs to be made. Although, this source mainly focuses on the political and economic dimensions of history during this period, it also has a social and to an extent cultural outlook.

Another Bottomley, John, completed his doctoral study in history, which examined public policy and white rural poverty for the period 1881-1924. Although his focus was on the rural areas, there are references to the urban areas, industrialisation and the migration from the rural to the urban areas. He examines the poor-white question by presenting a short history of the poor-white Afrikaners and how public policy developed around them.<sup>233</sup>

One of the latest studies that features the poor whites is *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social human science, 1855-2005*,<sup>234</sup> by Grace Davie. In her book she examines what is meant by poverty in certain contexts, how it is measured and what types of economic policies are needed to address it. She aims to provide a historical perspective on framing the poverty question since the nineteenth century. Her work is focused on poverty, how it was researched and measured and to what extent people in power have exploited it to their own ends and the reaction of the poor. Although her work does not focus on the questions in this study, it is useful to understand poverty as a whole especially with regards to the poverty in the twenty-first century. Much of her research is focused on black majority poverty, however, with white poverty playing a significant role at the start of the twentieth century it is

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<sup>233</sup> J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa. 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990.

<sup>234</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.



impossible for her to over-look. However, she links white poverty, which she does not go into a lot of detail about, to black poverty and it being one of the causes of the latter. She clearly states that she agrees with former President Nelson Mandela's poverty speech where he states poverty is not natural, but rather man-made.<sup>235</sup> She does not investigate other natural causes of poverty, such as drought and cattle disease, which affected both blacks and whites. Many of the causes of poverty she views as imperial, colonial and political and thus there always appears to be “someone” to blame for the situation.

Studies from other disciplines also focus on the poor whites in the first half of the twentieth century and provide another perspective on the topic. Teppo examined the poor whites in her doctoral thesis in anthropology. She presented a broad and well-formulated historical overview on how the government tried transforming the poor white into what they perceived whites should be. The study is centred around the Cape, where the field research took place, however, a lot of the background deals with South Africa as a whole and the origins of the problem. In her historical overview Teppo discusses some of the causes of the poor-white problem. She examines the personal side of the poor whites and was able to give insight into their daily lives, as well as the attitudes and ideas that emerged during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>236</sup>

From an economic perspective Johan Fourie examines the poor-white problem in the twentieth century to find solutions for the twenty-first century. In this working paper he focuses on the causes and reasons of white poverty and compares it to the causes and reasons of black poverty today. He also then examines what solutions can be created to deal with poverty. In his research Fourie also relies heavily on the Carnegie Commission's report.<sup>237</sup>

The theme of the poor whites has also been represented in other formats such as documentary films, journalist articles and drama. It is natural that novels written

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<sup>235</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, pp. 2 & 42.

<sup>236</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004.

<sup>237</sup> J. Fourie, *The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06. University of Stellenbosch, 2006, pp. 1-24.

about poor whites during the first half of the twentieth century would be reworked into dramas. This was the case with Van Bruggen's novel *Ampie*<sup>238</sup> and many others. J. van Wyk's work, from one of the University of the Witwatersrand revisionist History Workshops, focuses on the NP's ideology and social concerns portrayed in Afrikaans drama in the period 1930-1940.<sup>239</sup> A large section of his study is dedicated to the poor whites and how they were portrayed in these plays as well as how this portrayal affected different attitudes in society. Van Wyk analysed the responses of the audiences, (including both Afrikaans and English), to the way the poor-whites' "way of life" and everyday struggles were portrayed. He points out many of the dramas were written with the intention to romanticise or sensationalise the situation and create sympathy for the poor whites as part of the "Afrikaner race."<sup>240</sup>

Many documentary films have been made depicting the lives of the poor whites. David Harrison directed a five-part BBC series on the "Afrikaners in South Africa" in 1977. The series proved to be so popular that it was decided to write a book about it. Harrison focuses on how the relatively small group of Afrikaners rose to power within fifty years after defeat by the British forces at the start of the twentieth century and then as a minority imposed their dominance over all the people of South Africa. In his chapter titled "Naked as kaffirs in Congoland," Harrison focuses on the poor whites.<sup>241</sup> He also made use of the Carnegie Commission as a key source and especially focused on the personal accounts of one of the commissioners, Dr E.G. Malherbe, who had documented his personal experiences whilst undertaking the investigation. Harrison also examined the reason, causes and solutions to white poverty and ties these in with the Afrikaners eventual domination.<sup>242</sup>

### 2.3 The analysts

The literary analysts form an important link between the academic studies and the novels. These include Afrikaans literary specialists who have analysed the novels

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<sup>238</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Toneelspel in drie bedrywe*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1930.

<sup>239</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 1-29.

<sup>240</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, p. 6.

<sup>241</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*. Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa, 1983, pp. 65-83.

<sup>242</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa South Africa in perspective*. Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa, 1983.

and are able to provide important information regarding the authors and their works. The selection of analysts was made to represent both similar and different ideas with regards to the selected authors and novels throughout the twentieth century. Most of these sources are either historical portrayals of the literature, the Second Afrikaans Language Movement as well as the authors or novelists.

Dr G. Dekker's 1935 work entitled *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*<sup>243</sup> focuses on the history of the Afrikaans language, poetry and literature. He gives a broad account of the history and the beginnings of the Afrikaans language and the different Language Movements, the reasons behind them and the impact they had. Dekker also examines the different schools or genres, the authors and their novels and the poets and their poetry. Although he does not go into a lot of detail on each author or poet he is able to create a clear picture and an understanding of the Afrikaans historical feeling of the time in terms of literature and poetry. He goes further and also examines the different publications such as newspapers and magazines as well as the different plays and dramas that have originated from the literature.

R. Coetzee's 1937 Master's dissertation, entitled *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*,<sup>244</sup> is the closest work to this study done so far. It is also a combination of literature analysis and some history. The source itself is written during the focus period of this study and during the time of the poor-white question. Coetzee is able to focus on the novels written during the same period of his study and the Carnegie Commission, which at this time is still relatively new. However, the only historical source used is the Carnegie Commission. Although it does compare the poor whites in the novels to some instances in the Commission, it does not go into great detail nor does he focus on it as a specific theme but rather in the conclusion.<sup>245</sup> The main focus is the novels and poor whites portrayed in them. Some detail regarding the authors are given, but this is again only fleeting.

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<sup>243</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1935.

<sup>244</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937.

<sup>245</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp.238-243.

*Die prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse beweging*<sup>246</sup> by P.C. Schoonees published in 1939 is one of the most important sources in this regard. It gives a comprehensive explanation of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement as well as a brief history of the First. It goes into a lot of detail in terms all the different spheres and developments that make up the Second Afrikaans Language Movement. It includes all the different themes and genres and explains each one. It also includes and explains other important sources at the time that were printing and publishing Afrikaans literature and points out that some of the authors worked at these magazines and newspapers. It further includes a wide selection of important authors during this time period and gives a short biographical sketch of each author whilst also including an analysis of a selection of the authors' most important novels. The novels selected in this study all feature in this source. Some authors and novels are given a lot more attention. Furthermore, it provides a detailed explanation of the social and cultural climate of the time and even a bit of history. This background enables the reader to gain a better understanding of the literature and the climate it was written in. It is well-structured, easy to understand and very user friendly.

In P.J. Nienaber's 1949 publication *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*<sup>247</sup> he examines the biographical sketches of a number of Afrikaans authors. He provides a biography of each author and explains and provides reasons why they wrote what they did and what may have led to their specific expression and choice for their novels. Although some authors have a lot more information than others, he does attempt to give a clear idea of each author. However, in some instances this results in a clearer picture being portrayed of certain authors than others.

J.C. Kannemeyer is the author of both *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*<sup>248</sup> as well as *Die Afrikaanse literatuur 1652-1987*.<sup>249</sup> These two sources include a lot of overlapping information. They examine the influence the history of the Afrikaner people had on their literature including both literature and poetry. In terms of this

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<sup>246</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse beweging*. Kaapstad: Bussy, 1939.

<sup>247</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Persboekhandel, 1949.

<sup>248</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*. Pretoria: Academica, 1978.

<sup>249</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur 1652-1987*. Pretoria: Academica, 1988.

study these sources examine the novelist or authors who form part of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement and give a brief background and history of the time they wrote in as well as the different themes and genres that were used.

*Perspektief en profiel*<sup>250</sup> which is edited by P.J. Nienaber and *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuuorgesiedenis*<sup>251</sup> which is edited by H.P. van Coller are sources which examine both poetry and literature. Although they do not have a specific time frame or deal with a certain period they include a selection of authors and poets who have made important contributions to Afrikaans literature. These sources include a range of experts who deal with specific authors or novelists and poets. These experts also deal with literary analysis. The analysts generally provide a background to the author and then analyse their work in detail. By combining the two sectors the reader is able to gain a greater understanding of the time the novel was written in, a better understanding of the novelist and a better understanding of the reason and need the novelist had to express himself with regards to the novel. Although not all the authors used in this study feature in these sources, they still remain relevant sources that cannot be over looked.

*The Cambridge history of South African literature*<sup>252</sup> edited by D. Attwell and D. Attridge, is not a literary analysis per se. However, it comprises of the history of South African literature as a whole and considers the various developments. This source includes a chapter dealing with modernism and transformational culture between the period 1910-1948 in South Africa. Gerrit Olivier writes the section on "The Dertigers and the *plaasroman*: two brief perspectives on Afrikaans literature." This section deals with the authors and period of this study. It describes the period the novels were written in, as well as the themes and genres that feature. Although it does not give a lot of detail on the novelists, it explains the reasons why they wrote their novels.

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<sup>250</sup> P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Persboekhandel, 1951

<sup>251</sup> H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief & profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuuorgesiedenis II*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1999.

<sup>252</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

*Die Huisgenoot*, an Afrikaans magazine, will also be used in order to reflect the time and what was happening in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century. It first appeared in 1916 as a monthly edition, but soon acquired a lot of popularity so that by 1924 it became a weekly magazine. It featured many different topics, the language issue and poor whites being amongst them. These filtered through into the stories, some of which also featured in the magazine. This source thus indicates who the popular authors were and what the public was generally encouraged to read. It also includes reviews on important books. Some of those which have been chosen for this study have been reviewed in this magazine.

## 2.4 The novels

Several novels from a number of authors have been selected for this study and will be used to endorse the academic literature. The novels represent how the poor whites were described and portrayed during the first half of the twentieth century, which in turn created the stigma and feelings of concern that surrounded them.

Van Bruggen's novels are classified as the best examples of poor whites in the Realist genre and therefore, four of his best novels, representing different poor whites in different situations, were selected for this study. To begin with his novel *Bywoners*<sup>253</sup> revolves around a group of *bywoners* and their lives and circumstances. It presents the different types of poor whites that existed.

Van Bruggen's novel *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*<sup>254</sup> is one of the few novels in this study that focuses on poor women and the urban area. A young and ambitious young woman - Levina - comes from a poor-white family in the rural area. Her mother is a washer woman and her father fixes shoes for people. Her cousin from the urban area comes to visits and tells her all about the city life. She begs her parents to let her go and promises to look after herself and send money home to help. This does not happen. She leaves for the urban area and works in the sweet factory with her cousin, but soon meets a man and writes to her parents to tell them she has married him. Her parents go to visit her and although they are unhappy

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<sup>253</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1973.

<sup>254</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*. Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1936.

about how the marriage came about they think everything is in order. However, at the end of the novel it is revealed that they were never married and the man had lost his job and so she had to work in order to look after them. He finally leaves her to go fight in the First World War and she returns to the rural area with nothing and pregnant. This may have been the author's way of revealing what an evil place the urban areas were.

*Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*<sup>255</sup> is a novel about a poor-white man. The reader is made aware as to the reason for his poverty - which include a number of factors. The locust plague, which is the main underlying theme of the novel is one of the reasons, but ironically it is also the factor which helps him out of his poverty.

*Ampie: Die trilogie*<sup>256</sup> is considered as Van Bruggen's best work, for which he won numerous awards. These novels have been made into dramas and are widely known among the older Afrikaans generations. The novel revolves around the life of a poor young man or teenage boy. It gives the reader insight into his life and the way he sees the world, as well as the situation many poor whites found themselves in. Causes such as drought are mentioned and solutions to the poverty as sought - such as the diamond diggings. Numerous villains are also depicted who take advantage of the poor and naive.

Christiaan Maurits van den Heever is also a well known author in the Realist genre who wrote about poor whites. His novel *Droogte*<sup>257</sup> (Drought) revolves around this central theme as the cause of the poverty. Many references are made to the people and the environment due to the effects of the drought. The novel is about five brothers who each own a small piece of land that made up part of a larger farm their father owned - another reason for their poverty. It also includes the differences among the brothers in terms of what type of poor white they were. This novel is similar to Van Bruggen's *Ampie*, as it also has a villain that tries to take advantage of the situation. In the novel are side stories on other characters such as the teacher, Mr Hendricks. His wife who is from the urban area and now living in the rural area,

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<sup>255</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1938.

<sup>256</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die trilogie*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1965.

<sup>257</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1930.

longs for the city. Her friend comes to visit and a different type of woman (urban woman) is introduced to the reader. Joey Schoeman is someone who believes in the rights of women and the modern age and portrays the stark differences between the rural and urban realm.

Johannes Van Melle's novel *Bart Nel*<sup>258</sup> is one of his most well-known Afrikaans novels. First written in Dutch and then translated into Afrikaans, the novel is about Bart who owns a farm which he tries to improve by taking on a lot of debt. The rebellion of 1914 breaks out, which was caused by a section of Afrikaners refusing to join the British in the First World War. After surrendering, the protagonist is put in prison and his wife is unable to maintain the farm due to debts, animal diseases and failed crops. The novel includes some of the causes of the poor-white phenomenon and the influence that external forces had.

*Dark Johannesburg*<sup>259</sup> written by Jacob Lub was originally written in Dutch and was later translated into Afrikaans and then English, revolves around the different types of people living in Johannesburg at the start of the twentieth century. The short stories are based on real events and people Lub encountered during his time in Johannesburg. It thus reveals a realistic picture of ordinary people, including poor whites, in the process of their everyday lives. Petrus Imker Hoogenhout's *Vyf sketse van die delwery*<sup>260</sup> (Five sketches of the diggings) is similar to the novel by Lub. He also produces short stories of his time spent among people, mostly poor whites, at the diggings. Once again the reader is exposed to the everyday lives of these people as they went about it.

*Die plaasverdeling*<sup>261</sup> (The farm division) and *Die trekboer*<sup>262</sup> are two stories written by Abraham Hendrik Jonker. The latter continues the story where the first ends. The story revolves around Antonie Reys, who through a series of misfortunes loses his land and is forced to move. In the second novel he has become a *trekboer* who is searching for a piece of land for his flock so as to build himself up once more so as

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<sup>258</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1988.

<sup>259</sup> J. Lub, *Dark Johannesburg*. Potchefstroom: Het Westen Printing Works, 1912.

<sup>260</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*. Kaapstad: Maskew Miller, 1925.

<sup>261</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1932.

<sup>262</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1934.



to return home. However, through a number of circumstances this does not happen. Jonker is also from the Realist genre and these two novels present an accurate idea and description of the circumstances and conditions that led to many whites becoming poor and how they dealt with it.

The novels will be analysed in chapters 4, 5 and 6 in terms of their portrayal of the various aspects of poor whites.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE NOVEL NOVELISTS

In order to understand the novels and the time that they were written in - in other words their context - it is important to understand the novelists themselves. In this chapter each author will be examined by presenting a brief biography along with their novels' style, structure and the assumed reason for their writing about poor whites. The *tydgees* (atmosphere) and writing movement of the time were also factors that contributed to what and how they wrote and need thus to be examined in order to understand what "influenced" or "inspired" them. The order in which the authors will be discussed is thematic. It will also be when the novels were published so as to present progression of time and a chronological account of changes which may have taken place in history be they political, economic, social or cultural. This will be the case for all authors with the exception of Van Bruggen. His works mostly fall into the 1920s and 1930s period with the exception of his novel *Bywoners* (1918) and thus for the purposes of this study he will be considered in the 1930s period as his work was ahead of its time.

The history of Afrikaans writing will also be examined and the different authors and their key contributions will be analysed according to the different themes and genres. A short biography is also given to better understand the authors that are focused on. Some of the most important literary critics used in this chapter include: R. Coetzee, J.C. Kannemeyer, G. Dekker, P.J. Nienaber, P.C. Schoonees and various others who appear in H.P. van Coller's *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*. Much of their work over-laps with the authors and the time period used.

A number of the authors who have written novels about the poor whites were their contemporaries, while many others have done so in hindsight by doing research on the 1930s and its people. They have thus used either their first-hand recollections or researched knowledge to create a historical setting, in which to situate their fictional accounts.

### 3.1 The novelists in context

The authors who have been chosen for this study form part of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement, which took place after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). The First Afrikaans Language Movement (1875) only spread from the Cape to as far as Paarl and died out before the start of the War.<sup>263</sup> On the other hand, the Second Language Movement incorporated the whole of South Africa.<sup>264</sup> These movements were initially a reaction to Sir Alfred Milner's (British High Commissioner) Anglicisation policy, which was intended to transform the Republican Afrikaners into English-speaking colonists. In the words of Milner he wanted to: "Wipe out the last trace of Africanderism and damn the consequences."<sup>265</sup> He was convinced that the situation after the War was the perfect condition to force all South Africans to become "English." It is ironic that he believed he could use the Afrikaner *volksmoeder* to achieve his goal of educating the Afrikaans children in English.<sup>266</sup> This occurred after the devastating effects of the War and was at a time when Afrikaner nationalism was beginning to take shape as they identified themselves with their own culture and traditions along with efforts to have their language officially acknowledged.<sup>267</sup> In some cases, Afrikaans was not considered a "white" language. For example in D. Harrison's *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, Henning Klopper who is an Afrikaans-speaking trainee clerk on the railways, tried to express himself in his own language and was told, "Don't be a fool man, speak white," meaning English.<sup>268</sup> Even in the novels the precarious position of Afrikaners is made apparent with an implicit fight for an "own language" being evident.<sup>269</sup>

According to Fishman and Garcia, while some Afrikaners (a relatively high percentage) were suffering as a result of poverty, the Second Language Movement was seen as a means to fight British Imperialism and unify the people.<sup>270</sup> Everything seemed to be in English. Dutch was only taught in schools where the parents

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<sup>263</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 83.; G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 35.

<sup>264</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 83.

<sup>265</sup> S. Swart & L.M. van der Watt, "Taaltriomf or taalverdriet? An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement, c.1905 – 1927", *Historia* 53(2), 2008, p. 134.

<sup>266</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 35-36.; See chapter 6.

<sup>267</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 83.

<sup>268</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, p. 65.

<sup>269</sup> This will be discussed in chapter 6.

<sup>270</sup> J.A Fishman & O. Garcia, *Handbook of language and ethnic identity: The success-failure continuum in language and ethnic identity efforts II*, pp. 15-16.

demanded it and the law only made concessions for Dutch where it would make administration more effective.<sup>271</sup> However, the people who were against this Anglicisation policy were neither English nor Dutch speaking and they believed that the time had come for them to distinguish themselves.<sup>272</sup> In Van den Heever's novel *Droogte* the teacher is examining an old book of the forefathers on the farm Rooiwater. He comments that it was apparent in the writing that there had been a development in the language. While a lot starts with high Dutch and some Afrikaans expressions, it was clear to him and some of the writers of the book that a new language was emerging.<sup>273</sup> Dekker states that the *Christelik-nasionale onderwys*<sup>274</sup> or CNO private schools tried to oppose Anglicisation with the financial support of the parents and teachers and with strong support from the Netherlands. Churches also preached about the dangers of Anglicisation.<sup>275</sup>

Various academics from all spheres rallied around this cause and began to argue vehemently for Afrikaans to be elevated to the status of a language of culture. It was part of a defensive reaction of preserving Afrikaner values and traditions. This is clear in a statement made in 1908 by Dr D.F. Malan, an ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, at a meeting of the Language Movement Conference in Stellenbosch. He stated:

Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, make it the bearer of our culture, our history, our national ideas, and you will raise the People to a feeling of self-respect and to the calling to take a worthier place in world civilisation... A healthy national feeling can only be rooted in ethnic, [volk] art and science, ethnic customs and character, ethnic language and ethnic religion and, not least, in ethnic literature.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 35.

<sup>272</sup> P.T. Roberge, in, A. Deumert & W. Vandenbusche, *Germanic standardizations: Past to present*. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 2003, p. 30.

<sup>273</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 122.

<sup>274</sup> Christian National Education.

<sup>275</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 36.

<sup>276</sup> R.B. Baldauf & R.B. Kaplan (eds), *Language and planning policy in Africa I: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004, pp. 205-206.

In their book *Language and planning policy in Africa* R.B. Baldfauf and R.B. Kaplan explain that with this kind of "nationalistic inspirational fervour," focus on the language as well as a specific call for ethnic art, science, customs, character, language, religion and literature, numerous authors were encouraged to unite.<sup>277</sup> Thus Giliomee clarifies that Afrikaans was the key to equality with English - it needed to be developed and used in terms of law, politics, economics, socially and in educational institutions. In this regard it could be used as a cultural tool to unite a large portion of white South Africans.<sup>278</sup> Dekker goes on to argue that at the start of the twentieth century South Africa had three languages: English was the language of the capitalist; Dutch<sup>279</sup> was more a written language than a spoken language and was used mostly by the church; and the third language was the relatively new and developing language of Afrikaans. However it was not a recognised language, especially not a written language and, according to many, the time was not ripe for it. However, something had to be done in order to stop the spread and domination of the English language and the "danger" of this was fought with the new language Afrikaans.<sup>280</sup> Many of the topics that were chosen by the authors selected for this study were centred around what was happening at this time. These topics included the effects of the Anglo-Boer War; the poverty; the climate; the land; the urban evils; the changes to work; laws and so on. In addressing these issues these authors form either part of the Romantic and or Realist genre in the literature.

Gilomee and Mbenga describe how in the early 1930s Afrikaans was propelled as a public, literary language and educational medium for poets and novelists as well as historians and other writers. There was a challenge to build a national literature with its own character. History was turned into novels and ordinary people were now viewed as heroes and everyday life became a present companion of the novels. Even the poor whites were to form a part of the historical novel.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> R.B. Baldfauf & R.B. Kaplan (eds), *Language and planning policy in Africa I: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>278</sup> H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners van 1910 tot 2010: Die opkoms van 'n moderne gemeenskap*, p. 3.

<sup>279</sup> Very few people could write or speak Dutch at this time.

<sup>280</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>281</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 291.

Most of the novels selected for this dissertation are written by authors who form part of what is referred to as the *plaasroman* (farm novel).<sup>282</sup> D. Attwell and D. Attridge explain that these were a group representing a distinct phase in Afrikaans writing with a meaningful overlap of ideas among the main figures.<sup>283</sup> This can be seen in the similarities of the novels, especially with the cultural theme of the "farm novel."<sup>284</sup> They go on to state that the farm novel must be understood against the background of the dispossession and destruction brought about by the Anglo-Boer War. During the 1930s the idea of an idyllic and productive farm existence was threatened by social developments. Drought, growth of industry, urbanisation and the appearance of an Afrikaans proletariat underscored the tenuousness of small-scale farming. Therefore, the spectre of poor-white destitution always haunted the farm novel.<sup>285</sup> Thus good-natured local Realism hung condescendingly over the genre for many years. In the midst of the developments Realism would continue and the farm would retain its potential to be a site of symbolic contestation. The farm remained a place of triumph and vulnerability, a place of happiness and anxiety and thus although in some novels the farm is lost, the characters always yearn to return to the rural areas.<sup>286</sup> According to Attwell and Attridge, N.P. van Wyk Louw's comment about the tradition of Realism in Afrikaans and the limitations has been proven wrong by the farm novel and its resilience.<sup>287</sup>

### 3.2 The novelists and Realism

In this section a short biography of each of the authors will be given, which may give some insight into why they can be categorised as writing in the Realism genre.

Jacob Lub was born on 1 May 1868 in Garijp a small town in Holland. He moved to the ZAR in October 1892 and worked as the principal of a school on a farm in Brakfontein. He became a teacher at St. Birinus College and was later transferred to the *Staatsmodel* (State model) School in Pretoria. When President S.J.P. Kruger implemented English into the curriculum in 1898, several dual-medium schools were

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<sup>282</sup> Authors of the 1930s writing about the farm.

<sup>283</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, p. 309.

<sup>284</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>285</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, p. 316.

<sup>286</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, pp. 316-317.

<sup>287</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, p. 322.

established on the Rand and Lub was appointed as the principal of the school in Maraisburg.<sup>288</sup>

In 1899, with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, the government requested Lub to take control and manage the ambulance train. Eight months later the British occupied the ZAR and a depressing time settled over the Republic. When the Peace was signed on 31 May 1902, he had to be satisfied with an appointment as the seventh assistant at a school in Vrededorp.<sup>289</sup> He spent three years at this school before he was appointed as the organiser of the Dutch language on the Witwatersrand. After a further four years in this position, he was appointed as a lecturer of the Dutch language at the Normal School in Johannesburg.<sup>290</sup> Three years later he was appointed as inspector of the Dutch Language over all the schools in the Witwatersrand. One of his last achievements was being named Justice of Maurik, a state in the Netherlands.<sup>291</sup> He passed away on 23 May 1926.

According to R. Coetzee, Lub depicts the downward spiral of the poor whites in Johannesburg. Furthermore, Lub's accounts and short stories are seen as human documents and form part of the archives of history.<sup>292</sup> Dekker makes the point that in his writings, Lub was able to portray conditions of the culture and traditions of life in Amsterdam. Through this ability he was able to do the same with his realistic descriptions of the life and conditions on the Witwatersrand in works such as *Dark Johannesburg*.<sup>293</sup> P.J. Nienaber states that Lub, like other Afrikaans-fictional writers during the first half of the twentieth century, saw Johannesburg as a dark pit filled with social evils. Nienaber explains that he describes Johannesburg as a *vanggat vir maatskaplike skipbreukelinge* (pitfall for social castaways) for whom he feels a great compassion.<sup>294</sup> He focuses on the places where the poor white and evil social

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<sup>288</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>289</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 216.

<sup>290</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaans beweging*, p. 164.

<sup>291</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 216.

<sup>292</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armbanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 34-35.

<sup>293</sup> J. Lub, *Dark Johannesburg*, Potchefstroom: Het Westen Printing Works, 1912.; G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>294</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 216.

conditions are most evident. These include places such as the slums, the conditions in the prisons, as well as certain social evils themselves including alcohol and sex.<sup>295</sup>

Kannemeyer states that Lub was one of the first authors to use the Realism genre with regards to the portrayal of the lives and conditions of the poor whites.<sup>296</sup> In his novels he is also able to show the difficult adjustments the poor whites from the rural areas had to undergo, as well as the changes that their culture and traditions went through. During this period Lub was also able to explain their development in becoming a "new" type of Afrikaner.<sup>297</sup> Schoonees states that a great number of Lub's novels are in Afrikaans, however, it is clear through the style and language that it was written by a foreigner. With regards to him writing in Johannesburg and about the people there, who make up a wide range of cultures and languages, he also uses a great number of English words and expressions and anglicises many more. He uses melancholic scenes in his works and thus is able to create a melodramatic tone in his conclusions of the raw realistic realities, which according to Schoonees, paints "worded photographs" for the reader.<sup>298</sup>

His novels are one of the best that portray the poor whites in the urban area at the start of the twentieth century. During his life, especially his time in South Africa, he witnessed the "start" and escalation of the poor-white phenomenon in Johannesburg. His work is also of importance because like Hoogenhout, it is one of the few novels or sketches of poor whites in the urban areas and it includes realistic accounts of what he experienced.<sup>299</sup> His novel *Dark Johannesburg* was translated from Dutch to Afrikaans and eventually into English and will be one of the sources this study will focus on.

Petrus Imker Hoogenhout was born on 2 February 1884 in Groenberg, a farm near Wellington, a small town in the interior of the Western Cape. His father Casper Pieter Hoogenhout was the principal of the primary school he attended and he later matriculated at Hoërlingskool also in Wellington. He was top of his class in

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<sup>295</sup> J. C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 183.

<sup>296</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur: 1652-1987*, p. 80.

<sup>297</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 323.

<sup>298</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaans beweging*, p. 166.

<sup>299</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaans beweging*, p. 164.



languages and history, which are strong elements in his writing. He furthered his studies in Stellenbosch where he attended Victoria College and in 1904 obtained his Bachelor's degree in Literature with distinction.<sup>300</sup> Hoogenhout intended to continue his studies overseas in medicine, however, his father's disapproval of this decision and his father's illness resulted in him following his father's footsteps and so he also became a teacher. He completed a higher education diploma, which he received with first class and taught at Groenberg School in the Western Cape.<sup>301</sup>

In 1908, at the age of twenty-four, he became the principal of the Educational Institute in Jeppestown and remained in this position for two years. Hoogenhout was appointed by the Transvaal Director of Education, Sir John Adamson, to be principal of the amalgamated Government and Christian National Education (CNO) schools in Bethal.<sup>302</sup> There were many problems with this amalgamation, but under his leadership the institution grew into a high school which was named after him. He was appointed as a school inspector in 1921 and this job took him to the Western Transvaal with Wolmaranstad as his head office. Here he remained for five and a half years and fell in love with the people as well as the diggers (miners). In 1927 he was appointed as Head Examiner of the Transvaal Education Department (TED). Two years later Hoogenhout was appointed by D.F. Malan as the Secretary of Internal or National Affairs - a position he served in for seven years after which he was appointed as chairman on the National Roads Council. During these periods he served as chairman of a number of commissions, including the commission for the spelling of place names and education. In 1937 he became the chairman of the National Streets Council as well as the chairman of the Emigration Council.<sup>303</sup> In 1943, Hoogenhout was appointed by the then Prime Minister Jan Smuts to take on the post as Administrator in South West Africa (later Namibia).<sup>304</sup> Hoogenhout later also became the Ambassador to the Netherlands.<sup>305</sup> He was married twice and had three sons.<sup>306</sup> One of his sons, C.P. Hoogenhout, is also well known in the literary

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<sup>300</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 144.

<sup>301</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 144.

<sup>302</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>303</sup> P.J. Nienaber, "P. Imker Hoogenhout: Digter van 'Die brug op ons plaas' en ander Afrikaanse volklidjies", *Die Huisgenoot*, 26 (1019), 3 Oktober 1941, p. 17.

<sup>304</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>305</sup> Genealogie Hogenhout, 'Petrus Imker Hoogenhout', <<http://www.genealogieonline.nl/en/genealogie-hogenhout/1380.php>>, s.a. Access: 7 February 2014.

<sup>306</sup> Genealogie Hogenhout, 'Petrus Imker Hoogenhout',

world and is one of the founders of the Afrikaans Language Movement.<sup>307</sup> Hoogenhout passed away on 19 November 1970.<sup>308</sup>

During his student years, and thereafter, he witnessed the poverty and struggles of his people, the Afrikaner *volk*. He expressed what he saw and felt about them in both songs and novels. These songs quickly became popular, especially among the Afrikaans people as most of the songs sung at the time were in English. Some of these songs include *Die brug op ons plaas* (The bridge on our farm) and *Grietjie*.<sup>309</sup>

In terms of his writing, Hoogenhout wrote mostly school text books for the Afrikaans medium as well as historical sketches such as the novel *Op die delwerye* written in 1925.<sup>310</sup> R. Coetzee indicates that although his short stories give insight into the period the personal spirit is missing and his description of emotions is weak.<sup>311</sup> According to Kannemeyer after this novel, he did not write much as he did not have time. He was also not a very prolific writer in terms of novels, but the few he did produce gave insight into the urban areas and diggings during the first half of the twentieth century. It is for this reason that his work has been selected, as many of the other novels focus on the poor in the rural areas.

The novel that this study will focus on, *Op die delwerye*, is also not the conventional type of novel, but rather looks at events from the point of view of a range of characters. It comprises of real people and situations he had contact with during his time as Head Examiner of the TED. It portrays the raw Realism that surrounded him and he was able to set a convincing setting, primarily focusing on the life of the poor whites on the diggings.<sup>312</sup>

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<<http://www.genealogieonline.nl/en/genealogie-hoogenhout/1380.php>>, s.a. Access: 7 February 2014.

<sup>307</sup> P.J. Nienaber, "P. Imker Hoogenhout: Digter van 'Die brug op ons plaas' en ander Afrikaanse volklidjies", *Die Huisgenoot*, 26 (1019), 3 Oktober 1941, p. 17.

<sup>308</sup> Genealogie Hoogenhout, 'Petrus Imker Hoogenhout',

<<http://www.genealogieonline.nl/en/genealogie-hoogenhout/1380.php>>, s.a. Access: 7 February 2014.

<sup>309</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 146.

<sup>310</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, Kaapstad: Maskew Miller, 1925.

<sup>311</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armbanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 212-213.

<sup>312</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 195.

Jochem van Bruggen was born on 29 September 1881, in a town called Groede in the province of Zeeland in the Netherlands.<sup>313</sup> He was a very sickly child and this left him with an awkward walk and a speech impediment.<sup>314</sup> At the age of eight, his father decided to move to southern Africa. Gold had recently been discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886 and like many other foreigners his father decided to begin a new life on the Rand. His parents' hopes of him becoming a religious minister were dashed with Van Bruggen's speech impediment; however, with the move to southern Africa they hoped he would become a mine engineer.<sup>315</sup>

At first Van Bruggen was taught at home by his father, but was later sent to the *Staatsgymnasium* in Pretoria. The way his father taught him the facts about the First Angol-Boer War (1881) inspired him to write essays and novels about this history. Nico Hofmeyr, a poet, was Van Bruggen's Dutch teacher at the *Staatsgymnasium* and although Afrikaans was not an official language yet, he encouraged Van Bruggen to write in this language. Van Bruggen planned to become a poet, however, his father was not keen on the idea, arguing that this would not make a living.<sup>316</sup> As a child Van Bruggen grew up poor; his father did not earn much as a Dutch teacher and there were six children to be reared in the family.<sup>317</sup>

When the Second Anglo-Boer War broke out in 1899 it meant an end to his studies. He voluntarily joined a Boer commando and was part of it for seven months until Johannesburg was captured. After the War he had to support himself. He could no longer become a mining engineer and thus went into service work.<sup>318</sup> He witnessed the effects the War had on the Boers, who by this time he regarded as his own people. He wrote poetry about the poverty and hardships caused by the War and joined a debating society and choir to express himself.<sup>319</sup> However, like so many of his characters he longed for the rural areas, away from the city and the British. He moved away from Johannesburg to a farm called "Steenkoppies" in the Magaliesburg region 60km away, near his school friend G.J Oosthuizen. There was

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<sup>313</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 32.

<sup>314</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria: Daan Retief, 1960, p. 1.

<sup>315</sup> R. Olivier, *Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria: Cum Boeke, 1981, pp. 3-6.

<sup>316</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>317</sup> Kleinjan, "Jochem van Bruggen", *Die Huisgenoot*, 18(610), 1 Desember 1933, pp. 43 & 89.

<sup>318</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaans beweging*, p. 202.

<sup>319</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 2-3.

a lot of poverty evident in this region.<sup>320</sup> Van Bruggen remained on this farm until his death in 1957.<sup>321</sup>

It was here in the rural area that he became a teacher for a while. The parents of the children who were in his class were poor tobacco farmers. At times he was paid with tobacco. However, he soon left teaching after a disagreement with the School Commission for teaching the children to sing the psalms in different notes. With all the tobacco he had made, he and his friend and now business partner, Oosthuizen went into a tobacco business but within 18 months they were bankrupt.<sup>322</sup> It was after this experience that he decided to start farming and in 1905 he married Oosthuizen's sister.<sup>323</sup> Whilst he was farming he started a local choir, drama and debating society. The society flourished and became known as the "Magaliesburg Cultural Society", of which Van Bruggen was chairman for many years.<sup>324</sup> Meanwhile the farm was not prospering and he therefore decided to supplement his income with poetry. However, when a publisher told him that he would have to pay for the publishing he decided to abandon poetry and began to focus on literature.<sup>325</sup>

During his career as a writer he received many awards for his literary texts. His first fictional source *Die ou Brandwag* (The old Lookout) made its appearance in 1914. In the same year he won a second prize in a competition for his story *Die praatmasjien* (The talking machine). From then on he was both a writer and a farmer. His second fictional novel *Oom Jannie* (Uncle Jannie), won a prize in the South African Academic and Literature competition. It was, however, in 1917 that his first book, *Teleurgestel* (Disappointment), appeared. He received the Hertzog prize for it and from that moment on he became an established writer. He finally achieved what he was unable to do for years: he now sold his books and received money from them. He went on to win the Hertzog prize three more times for his works *Ampie, die natuurkind* (Ampie, the nature child – 1924); *Ampie, die meisiekind* (Ampie, the little

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<sup>320</sup> E. Botha, *Jochem van Bruggen: 1881-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuuresskiedenis II*, p. 645.

<sup>321</sup> A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 17.

<sup>322</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 184.

<sup>323</sup> E. Botha, *Jochem van Bruggen: 1881-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuuresskiedenis II*, p. 645.

<sup>324</sup> R. Olivier, *Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 19.

<sup>325</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 4.

girl – 1928) and *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis* (The Locust Official from Sluis – 1933). Both *Ampie* and *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* (The Mayor of Slaplaagte), under the title *In die maalstroom* (In the whirlpool), were re-written as plays and performed.<sup>326</sup> In 1953 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Pretoria.<sup>327</sup> After a fulfilling life, Van Bruggen passed away on the 22 May 1957.

According to C.J.M. Nienaber, Van Bruggen's work was heavily influenced by the Afrikaans language and culture struggle, the Anglo-Boer War and the poor-white problem - each with their own underlying consequences.<sup>328</sup> Dekker states that Van Bruggen was an important figure in the development of Afrikaans literature and was described as a Realist who in reality had found his spiritual truth although his writings were influenced by his love of his threatened ancestral order.<sup>329</sup> His novels and stories have a historical element and thus can be described as historical fiction, although he is in truth a Realist.<sup>330</sup> Kannemeyer argues that Van Bruggen was one of the first authors to begin writing novels in Afrikaans and his work in the Afrikaans Realism genre became the most well known and stood out as the "best example." He was regarded as the best writer on the poor whites and their lives, not only making people aware of the problem, but also giving them an insight into the lives of the poor whites.<sup>331</sup> His literary product climaxed in the 1930s, especially with his novels on *Ampie*, which were written and published during the height of the poor-white question. His novels would also inspire many other authors.<sup>332</sup> For the purposes of this study, *Ampie* (the trilogy),<sup>333</sup> *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*,<sup>334</sup> *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*<sup>335</sup> and *Bywoners*<sup>336</sup> were selected for analysis as they all have a specific focus on the poor whites and were written at the height of the

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<sup>326</sup> A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>327</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 20.

<sup>328</sup> C.J.M. Nienaber, *Jochem van Bruggen 1881-1957* in P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*, p. 285.

<sup>329</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 140.

<sup>330</sup> C.J.M. Nienaber, *Jochem van Bruggen 1881-1957* in P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*, p. 286.

<sup>331</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armbanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 46.

<sup>332</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 184.

<sup>333</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die trilogie*, Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1965.

<sup>334</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*. Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1936.

<sup>335</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1938.

<sup>336</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1973.

poor-white question. *Bywoners*,<sup>337</sup> *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*,<sup>338</sup> and *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*<sup>339</sup> were all mentioned in *Die Huisgenoot's* column entitled *Boeke ontvang* (Books received) and were thus recommended by the magazine. *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*<sup>340</sup> and the first *Ampie*<sup>341</sup> novel (*Ampie: Die natuurkind*) both received reviews in this magazine as well and therefore reached a wide range of people.<sup>342</sup>

Botha declares that Van Bruggen's literary texts have been best described as humoristic-Realism. This is Realism but with a humoristic element, which detracts from the harshness of the truth.<sup>343</sup> Lötter indicates how Van Bruggen had witnessed the suffering the War had caused: the burnt down farms and lost live-stock; the thousands of women and children who died in the concentration camps; and the misery that dominated the former Boer Republic. He also saw how many tried to rebuild their lives after the War and how many failed being then forced to go to the cities to seek employment or charity assistance while some had to become *bywoners*.<sup>344</sup> Van Bruggen also experienced first-hand the hardships of farm life such as drought and disease.<sup>345</sup> On his farm lived and worked a number of *bywoners* and he therefore witnessed the poverty and destitution these people experienced.<sup>346</sup>

The people, events of the time and his own experiences are what he used to draw upon when he wrote his novels and therefore his work is potent and realistic. His characters were formed from people he knew or met, such as a *bywoner* who became his inspiration for his literary text *Ampie*. *Ampie* became the first "living

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<sup>337</sup> Anonymous, "Boeke ontvang: Op Veld en Rande", *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 (56), Desember 1920, p. 344.

<sup>338</sup> Anonymous, "Boeke ontvang: Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte", *Die Huisgenoot*, 7(76), Augustus 1922, p. 172.

<sup>339</sup> Anonymous, "Boeke ontvang: Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis", *Die Huisgenoot*, 18(591), 19 Augustus 1933, p. 35.

<sup>340</sup> L. van Niekerk, "Oor boeke: Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte", *Die Huisgenoot*, 8(85), Mei 1923, p. 43.

<sup>341</sup> F. Malherbe, "Oor boeke: Ampie die natuurkind", *Die Huisgenoot*, 9(153), 13 Februarie 1925, pp. 21-23.

<sup>342</sup> L. van Niekerk, "Oor boeke: Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte", *Die Huisgenoot*, 8(85), Mei 1923, p. 43.; F. Malherbe, "Oor boeke: Ampie die natuurkind", *Die Huisgenoot*, 9(153), 13 Februarie 1925, pp. 21-23.

<sup>343</sup> E. Botha, *Jochem van Bruggen: 1881-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, p. 647.

<sup>344</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>345</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 17.

<sup>346</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 6.

person" in Afrikaans literature and was perceived as the most real character written about because the reader was made aware of his thoughts and emotions.<sup>347</sup> Thus although *Ampie* is a personal individual he becomes a symbol of poor whiteness.<sup>348</sup> Mostly those who were not main characters fell into groups and types of people rather than individuals.<sup>349</sup> According to A.P. Grové and S. Strydom, the lives and personalities of his characters are simple and uncomplicated. His love for the farm and country life is evident in his novels, while the urban areas are viewed as "evil." Although some parts of his novels are played out in urban areas it is the rural areas that are the main scenes, reflecting on the poverty and hardship endured there. Most of his characters return to the rural areas and this is what many who read his books idealised and longed for.<sup>350</sup>

The humour in his work softened the reality and at times did not allow for the seriousness of the situation to have the full impact on the reader. Sometimes this resulted in the loss of the importance of what he was trying to express, which in turn made the novels seem "shallow." One of the reasons he did this was to lessen the harshness of the situation and to ensure that the reader could also enjoy the novels.<sup>351</sup> Many of the readers of the time Van Bruggen wrote in were living in similar situations and circumstances and thus the novels would not only be a reflection on their own lives but rather something they could relate to, but with a happier and funnier story line.<sup>352</sup> Lötter explains that Van Bruggen loved people and therefore always "saved" his characters, rather than allowing them to take full responsibility for their actions and situation.<sup>353</sup> He tried to create some type of hope.<sup>354</sup> The time in which Van Bruggen lived and what he witnessed also corresponds to the time frame which this dissertation is concerned with.

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<sup>347</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 46.

<sup>348</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 81.

<sup>349</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 15.

<sup>350</sup> A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>351</sup> A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 14-15.; R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 129.

<sup>352</sup> A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 14-16.; R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 129.

<sup>353</sup> J. Lötter, *Tienertake: Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>354</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 69 & 105.

World-renowned author and poet, Christiaan Maurits van den Heever, was born on 27 February 1902, in a concentration camp near Norvalspont on the border of the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State, near the Gariep dam, during the Anglo-Boer War. Thus he grew up in the aftermath of the War and the increasing poverty both in the rural and urban areas. He saw the Afrikaners become impoverished due to the destruction caused by the War, especially with the devastation of many farms.<sup>355</sup> He lived on a farm in the OFS and was very fond of nature. This had a major influence on him and his later writings.

He was educated in the districts of Trompsburg and Brebner and later Grey College in Bloemfontein. After school he remained in Bloemfontein and studied under Professor A. Francken and Dr D.F. Malherbe, both of whom had a great influence on him and his work. He was employed for a short time as a teacher, state official and journalist for *Die Landbouweekblad* and *Die Volksblad*. Van den Heever returned to his studies in Bloemfontein at the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS today the University of the Free State) and then studied further at the University of Utrecht. He returned to South Africa and took up a post as a lecturer at UOFS and completed a thesis on the poet Totius at the University of South Africa.<sup>356</sup> In 1933, he was appointed as Professor in Afrikaans and Dutch Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand. He was the first lecturer in this new field.<sup>357</sup> Van der Heever remained in this position until his death on 8 July 1957.<sup>358</sup>

During his adult years he went to live in the urban areas, but often remarked that he lived "in" the city but was not "of" the city. According to Kannemeyer this was reflected in his works which mostly concerned the rural areas. He experienced the contrasts between the rural and urban areas and this also became a major theme in his novels.<sup>359</sup> During his career Van den Heever wrote many novels and much poetry as well as a biography of J.B.M. Hertzog. He helped other writers with their work and

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<sup>355</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 110.

<sup>356</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 299.

<sup>357</sup> Anonymus, 'Christiaan Maurits van den Heever', <[http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c\\_m\\_\\_van\\_den\\_heever.html](http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c_m__van_den_heever.html)>, N.d. Access: 7 January 2014.

<sup>358</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuuresskiedenis II*, p. 653.

<sup>359</sup> Anonymus, 'Christiaan Maurits van den Heever', <[http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c\\_m\\_\\_van\\_den\\_heever.html](http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c_m__van_den_heever.html)>, N.d. Access: 7 January 2014.



also involved himself in the cultural battle of the Afrikaans language in literature as well as cultural movements regarding the Afrikaans and Dutch languages and literature.<sup>360</sup> He played an important role in the development of the Afrikaans cultural life in Johannesburg. He was a strong supporter of the cultural bonds between the Netherlands, Flanders and the Afrikaans worlds. He was also an avid supporter of General J.B.M. Hertzog's policies.<sup>361</sup>

Van den Heever is first and foremost regarded as the first *Dertiger*, (Afrikaans poet of the 1930s) however, his development was not typical of a *Dertiger*. In some of his cultural views, he was the forerunner of Van Wyk Louw (a very well-regarded Afrikaans poet and author) especially about the role of Afrikaans intellectuals and the importance of critical thinking in spite of his pleas for a liberal Afrikaans nationalism.<sup>362</sup> H. du Plooy explains that Van den Heever's works appear between 1923 and 1954 and usually fell either into the Romanticism or Realist genre, but were generally referred to as the best example of rural farm novels regarding farm life. Not all of his works were classified as good, although he did win the Hertzog prize for literature twice: in 1928 for poetry and in 1942 for literature. Nearer the end of his career some analysts argued that his works became very repetitive.<sup>363</sup>

There have been many studies done on his work. Academics such as Dr Carli Coetzee believed that through his novels Van den Heever aimed at depicting a new type of Afrikaner: how they ought to differ from their predecessors, as well as how they should create a new Afrikaner nation. Van den Heever wrote at a time when the Afrikaner nation was redefining itself and where change was taking place in South Africa.<sup>364</sup> According to R. Coetzee later writers of the poor-white theme, such as Van

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<sup>360</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp.653-654.

<sup>361</sup> Anonymus, 'Christiaan Maurits van den Heever', <[http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c\\_m\\_\\_van\\_den\\_heever.html](http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c_m__van_den_heever.html)>, N.d. Access: 7 January 2014.

<sup>362</sup> Anonymus, 'Christiaan Maurits van den Heever', <[http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c\\_m\\_\\_van\\_den\\_heever.html](http://www.springbokboeke.co.za/html/c_m__van_den_heever.html)>, N.d. Access: 7 January 2014.; E. van Heerden, *C.M. van den Heever 1902-1957* in P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*, p. 337.

<sup>363</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, p. 654.

<sup>364</sup> C. Coetzee, "The Afrikaans farm novel and idealised sons: C.M. van den Heever's farm novels as narratives of the nation", *Alternation: International Journal for the study of southern African literature and languages*, 4(2), 2011, pp. 114-122.

den Heever had an impact, however, it was hard to show.<sup>365</sup> The themes of his novels have been described as “dark and pessimistic”.<sup>366</sup> His own experiences and artistic flair, from which his work developed, were governed by the historical circumstances and religious and political views of his time. This is evident in the novel *Droogte*,<sup>367</sup> which has been selected for this study.<sup>368</sup> This is one of his best descriptions of the destruction caused by nature and is a typical “farm-novel.”<sup>369</sup> This novel was first mentioned in *Die Huisgenoot* under the section “*Boeke ontvang*” (Books Received)<sup>370</sup> and later was positively reviewed in *Die Huisgenoot* by P. de V. Pienaar.<sup>371</sup> Du Plooy argues that although he grew up in a time of political upheaval he did not involve himself with the masses, but rather concentrated on the individual. Through his work he was able to create the Afrikaners as they were and was able to historically portray their poverty; their battle against the elements; their search for identity; their exodus into the urban areas; and the impoverishment of their materialistic and religious lives. Van den Heever's views of Calvinism permeate his novels. However, there are also elements of Pantheism - the belief that the universe, nature and everything is identical with divinity - especially in the novels regarding land or the rural areas.<sup>372</sup>

As mentioned, most of his novels are about the farm or rural areas and the people who lived there. Van den Heever grew up in this environment and therefore a lot that he wrote about he either witnessed or experienced. The characters that he created are not shallow or superficial, but the reader gets a look into a real and intense person and situation, which was his goal. His writings reflect on the different times and histories of South Africa in which he lived. Du Plooy, who wrote a short biography of Van den Heever and did an analysis of his work, was convinced that he

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<sup>365</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 145.

<sup>366</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, p. 655.

<sup>367</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1930.

<sup>368</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp.654-655.

<sup>369</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 292-293.; P. de V. Pienaar, “Oor oeke: Droogte”, *Die Huisgenoot*, 16(491), 21 Augustus 1931, p. 19.

<sup>370</sup> Anonymous, “Boeke ontvang”, *Die Huisgenoot*, 15(450), 14 November 1930, p. 59.

<sup>371</sup> P. de V. Pienaar, “Oor boeke: Droogte”, *Die Huisgenoot*, 16 (491), 21 Augustus 1931, p. 19.

<sup>372</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp.654-655.

wrote in such a manner that people of later generations would be able to understand the Afrikaans people and the history of that time.<sup>373</sup>

The next author, Abraham Hendrik Jonker, was born on 22 April 1905 on the farm Kalkfontein in the Boshof region. He attended school in the Transvaal and in 1925 he obtained his BA degree with distinction at Stellenbosch University and furthered his studies in Theology, Classical Languages, Law and Literature. In 1927 he obtained his MA in Greek with distinction. In 1942 he obtained the only D.Litt degree with distinction at Stellenbosch with the title *Die roman: Sy aard, ontstaan en soort* (The novel: Its nature, origin and type).<sup>374</sup> He passed the Theology candidates exam, but decided to register himself for a LLB course in law.<sup>375</sup> During his journalism career he obtained his BA degree in Law via correspondence. After completing his studies he became a journalist for publications such as *Die Burger* where he was part of the editorial team. He was assistant editor and editor for a number of magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot*. After his career in journalism, Jonker went into politics and served in the United Party, the National Conservative Party and the NP consecutively.<sup>376</sup> He was a renowned author and was also the father of the famous author and poet Ingrid Jonker.<sup>377</sup> Abraham Jonker passed away on 10 January 1966 in Cape Town.<sup>378</sup>

Jonker wrote many poems and novels. However, his most important novels were produced in the 1930s. These included novels such as *Die plaasverdeling* (The farm division)<sup>379</sup> and *Die trekboer*,<sup>380</sup> both of which will be used in this study. Both of these novels also made it into *Die Huisgenoot* and appeared in a serialised form over a number of weeks.<sup>381</sup> *Die plaasverdeling* was also reviewed a year later after it first

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<sup>373</sup> H. du Plooy, *C.M. van den Heever: 1902-1957* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp.662-663.

<sup>374</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaans beweging*, p. 356.

<sup>375</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 160.

<sup>376</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 339.

<sup>377</sup> H. Ohloff, *Perspektief op die Afrikaanse poësie: Die poësie van voor 1900 tot 1960* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, p. 218.

<sup>378</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p.160.

<sup>379</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1932.

<sup>380</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1934.

<sup>381</sup> A.H. Jonker, "Die plaasverdeling", *Die Huisgenoot*, 16(502), 13 November 1931 en 16(508), 25 Desember 1931.; A.H. Jonker, "Die trekboer", *Die Huisgenoot*, 18(627), 20 April 1934, 18(630), 11 Mei 1934 en 18(631), 29 Junie 1934.

made its appearance in the magazine.<sup>382</sup> Kannemeyer states that Jonker is well known for his tragic farm novels of the poor whites, with the same type of Realism that is associated with Van Bruggen. While other authors, such as Van Bruggen, had a more humoristic realism style the tone of Jonker's work is blunt, shocking, truthful (raw Realism). Rather than subtly playing on the emotions of the reader, he makes the reader face the hard reality and creates sympathy for the characters.<sup>383</sup> R. Coetzee describes his work as sombre and pessimistic. His interest was more defined in the characters than in the storyline. His main character Antonie Reys also becomes an original symbol of the majority of poor whites in South Africa<sup>384</sup> His work focused on the causes of the poverty and the tragic results thereof as well as the influence of modern world events as part of the bigger picture whilst simultaneously focusing on the small details as well.<sup>385</sup>

Johannes van Melle was born on 11 February 1887 in Goes in Holland. He received his education to become a teacher from the Christian Normal School in Doetinchem. He had been teaching for a year when he saw an advertisement in one of the school publications for a position in Dullstroom in the Transvaal in 1906. His parents gave their permission for him to go to southern Africa on condition that he would return within three years. From Dullstroom he went to a local-farming school in Wakkerstroom and from there to Witfontein near Bronkhorstspuit. After a year and a half he became homesick. It was winter and many of the farmers spoke of moving to the Bushveld. At a meeting they decided that they would all remove their children from the school so they could relieve the teacher from his “monotonous labour”. He went with one of the commission leaders to the Bushveld, however, when he returned to Witfontein the thought of spending all day between four walls was apparently very daunting for him.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> L. van Schaik, “Oor boeke: Die plaasverdeling”, *Die Huisgenoot*, 17(556), 18 November 1932, p. 31.

<sup>383</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 442.; G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 275.

<sup>384</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 174 & 189.

<sup>385</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 339.; G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 275.

<sup>386</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, pp. 239-240.

Soon the three-year period his parents gave him was up and he had to make plans to return to Holland. Partly as a result of his adventurous nature and partly because he wanted to save travel costs, he volunteered as a sailor on a German sailing ship, which was travelling to the West Indies. There he made friends with all types of people who featured in some of his novels.<sup>387</sup> On his return to Holland he remained for a further four years but longed for the warm weather and big open spaces of South Africa and thus returned in 1913, for good. This time he came with his wife - Adriana Leunis.<sup>388</sup> Through his work in local farming schools he had the opportunity to get to know the rural Afrikaners, the farmers and see, first hand, how they lived. He also included this in many of his novels.<sup>389</sup>

As a result of his participation in the 1914 Rebellion he was banned from teaching for three years and even spent time in prison.<sup>390</sup> This event in his life had an extreme impact on his work and became a central theme. For example, his novel *Bart Nel* is based on the Rebellion of 1914. From 1917, he worked as a private teacher in Bronkhorstspuit and it was here that he really got to know the people in the area.<sup>391</sup>

Initially Van Melle wrote mostly in Dutch and published in Dutch publications. However, in 1924 he moved to Johannesburg and it was here that he also got to know the urban Afrikaner. Before he had never had the courage to write in Afrikaans and believed that one should always write in one's own language. But he began publishing in Afrikaans publications, such as *Die Volkstem* and his first Afrikaans novel appeared in 1933. His famous novel, *Bart Nel*,<sup>392</sup> was first published in 1936, in Dutch, and was translated into Afrikaans in 1943. This is one of the novels by Van Melle that this study will focus on.<sup>393</sup> At first he wrote poetry, but realised his talents lay in literature.<sup>394</sup> Van Melle retired in 1942 and continued writing novels. After an

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<sup>387</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 240.

<sup>388</sup> E. Terblanche, J. van Melle (1887-1953), *ATKV-Skrywersalbum*, <<http://www.linnet.co.za/Article/j-van-melle-1887-1953>>, 2009-12-01. Access: 15 March 2014.

<sup>389</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 240.

<sup>390</sup> W.F. Jonckheere, *Johannes van Melle: 1887-1953* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, p. 701.

<sup>391</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p.324.

<sup>392</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1988.

<sup>393</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>394</sup> G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, p. 276.

illness of nearly two months he passed away on 8 November 1953 at the age of 66.<sup>395</sup>

According to Kannemeyer, Van Melle produced his best novels between 1931 and 1943. He generally concentrated on a single character who was confronted with a conflict situation, but who was gradually “refined” and “purified” and eventually grew into a bigger and better character. This stripping and refining of a character led to his most successful work, above the thematic limitations and monotony of Realism the reader could identify with.<sup>396</sup> He was well known for his Realism that was extremely blunt and true and exercising the art of bringing the short story to a higher level of consciousness through revealing the true nature of his characters.<sup>397</sup> Botha claims Van Melle's work has also been described as "factual literature."<sup>398</sup> According to W.F. Jonckheere, Van Melle never got any recognition for his work in terms of winning any awards. This may partly be due to the fact that literary critics were still too interested in positive, upbeat novels, rather than his brutal Realism and simple but full dialogue and the understated-sober style he used. His main characters were usually anti-heroes, frustrated, lonely and who came too late or never achieved their goals.<sup>399</sup> However, Botha explains Van Melle's characters as displaying a range of human personalities and emotions and the simplicity of his story line is surprising when broken down.<sup>400</sup>

He had an ability to make the reader identify with his "ordinary" setting and frustrated characters, especially the older generation of the 1930s. Many of his novels were thus out-dated and many younger readers were unable to identify with his work. However, according to Jonckheere, he made his writing style his own and added a new dimension to Afrikaans creative writing.<sup>401</sup> His settings were always based on his own experiences as well as the people and events he wrote about and this also

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<sup>395</sup> E. Terblanche, J. van Melle (1887-1953), *ATKV-Skywersalbum*, <<http://www.linnet.co.za/Article/j-van-melle-1887-1953>>, 2009-12-01. Access: 15 March 2014.

<sup>396</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur 1652-1987*, p.121.

<sup>397</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Die Afrikaanse literatuur 1652-1987*, p. 111.

<sup>398</sup> E. Botha, *J. van Melle 1887-1953* in P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*, p. 371.

<sup>399</sup> W.F. Jonckheere, *Johannes van Melle: 1887-1953* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp. 700-701.

<sup>400</sup> E. Botha, *J. van Melle 1887-1953* in P.J. Nienaber (red.), *Perspektief en profiel*, p. 369.

<sup>401</sup> W.F. Jonckheere, *Johannes van Melle: 1887-1953* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp. 702-703.

created a realistic feel to his work. It has been argued that the aim of his work was to gain a reaction rather than an action itself.<sup>402</sup> Terblanche explains that Van Melle's work can be divided into three periods. The first phase ends in the 1930s which includes the poems and novels he wrote in Dutch; the second phase includes his best works, written in Dutch and Afrikaans; while the third phase sees more novels dealing with biblical implications and biblical undertones.<sup>403</sup>

In one way or another these authors have all contributed to the Realism genre and have used the poor whites as the main subject of their novels. In many cases their writings are based on their own experiences of poverty – either as individuals or as observers. It is to these novels that this discussion now turns to see how and what they portray of the poor whites to augment the historical record.

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<sup>402</sup> W.F. Jonckheere, *Johannes van Melle: 1887-1953* in H.P. van Coller (red.), *Perspektief en profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis II*, pp. 705-706.

<sup>403</sup> E. Terblanche, J. van Melle (1887-1953), *ATKV-Skywersalbum*, <<http://www.linnet.co.za/Article/j-van-melle-1887-1953>>, 2009-12-01. Access: 15 March 2014.

## CHAPTER 4

### POOR WHITES AND POOR WHITES

Poor whites have been classified as a particular class; however, within the group "poor whites" there are different categories and different types. This chapter will examine the different types of poor whites, how they are perceived and defined in some of the academic literature and public consciousness i.e. the idea that comes to mind when the term "poor white" is invoked. A number of academic sources has been chosen for this purpose and in particular a range of general histories on South African history has been selected. These definitions and ideas will be compared to the different types of poor whites that appear in the novels. It will consider how some of the authors perceived the poor whites and classify the different types of poor whites which appear in the novels.

The two most important types of poor whites are those who have either become poor due to no fault of their own, thus the so-called "Hand of God," in other words natural disasters, and then those who became poor as a result of their own behaviour and means, thus the "Hand of Man." There are also those who became poor due to "Man's actions" such as wars and depression, which were not necessarily their fault but caused them to become victims of circumstance. The Carnegie Commission classified these groups into those categories in which the chief cause of the poverty or retrogression was a personal one and the other which was based on external influences.<sup>404</sup> There are further distinctions between poor whites in terms of their response to their situation: those who tried to support themselves and their families and those who are most notorious and who one tends to think of when the term poor white is used: the lazy, "good for nothing," dependent poor white. There is also a further distinction among the poor whites: those who had known better days but were slowly sinking within the economic and social milieu; those who had always been poor, even in previous generations and would remain so in the future; and lastly there were those who were poor but had risen from extreme poverty to a higher

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<sup>404</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 152.



economic and social level.<sup>405</sup> One of the Carnegie Commission's main conclusions was that in order to eradicate the problem, the poor whites would have to learn to maintain themselves and rise above their poverty. They wanted to prevent the poor whites from becoming dependent on help and assistance. However, due to the importance of the poor-white vote, politicians such as D.F. Malan stated all that was necessary was for them to remain white and to live like whites, culturally, socially, morally, spiritually and politically. They were to be seen and treated as part of the "volk".<sup>406</sup>

Given this variation in type of poor white it becomes imperative to attempt to define the concept. The academic literature creates certain impressions of what is viewed as a poor white in popular consciousness. There are different views and opinions among academics regarding the subject of the poor whites.

#### 4.1 Defining poor whites

Although the academic literature includes a range of causes for the poor-white problem and differs in what it deems the most important, it tends to present a rather unnuanced definition of what a poor white is. According to the Carnegie Commission, which as indicated is regarded as the standard text, the term poor white could only originate in a country where whites and blacks lived together in relative close proximity. In the USA the term has been used since the inception of slavery and it is probable that South Africa borrowed the term from them.<sup>407</sup> According to the introduction, before the Carnegie commissioners set off to do their investigations, they decided to try and define the term and found it difficult to find a definition suitable for their specific economic purposes. However, they examined a variety of definitions, such as the one given by the Commission for Poor Relief of the Cape Dutch Reformed Church, a few years before the Carnegie Commission, and came up with the following:

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<sup>405</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 3.

<sup>406</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 282.

<sup>407</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 17.

A "poor white" is a person who has become dependent to such an extent whether from mental, moral, economic or physical causes that he is unfit, without help from others, to find proper means of livelihood for himself or to procure it directly or indirectly for his children.<sup>408</sup>

However, the commissioners found that a definition is always to some extent arbitrary, and stated that for the purposes of their investigation it would be extended as follows:

... as regards their origin, they are persons of European descent who gained (or are still gaining) their livelihood chiefly from farming. As regards their economic condition, they constitute a class consisting principally of poor "bywoners," hired men on farms, owners of dwarf holdings or of small undivided shares of land, poor settlers and the growing group of unskilled or poorly trained labourers and workers outside farming.<sup>409</sup>

However, it is interesting to note that E.G. Malherbe, one of the authors of the Carnegie Report, described a poor white as a white person who had sunk below the economic standard of living which a white person, because of his white skin, should be able to maintain in comparison to the native, his perceived or actual competitor.<sup>410</sup>

In her doctoral study Teppo also maintains that the term "poor white" originated in the USA around the 1870s and was adapted to South African circumstances, like the American term "white trash." She maintains that the notion of "poor white" is problematic and "socially constructed." It is not considered a neutral term but is a result of certain historically defined social and racial hierarchies, which it serves to reinforce. It has a stigma attached to it and creates boundaries and categories of class and race.<sup>411</sup> Therefore in Teppo's study poor whites are defined as:

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<sup>408</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 18.

<sup>409</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, p. v.

<sup>410</sup> F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304

<sup>411</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, pp. 22-23.

...a person who has been labelled or classified as a poor white, not just any pale-skinned person who exists under conditions of poverty.<sup>412</sup>

The Carnegie commissioners made it clear that their definition would suffice in explaining what the term for a typical poor white was, but added that it was not intended as a description of all the finer distinctions they made. The commissioners further stated that a poor white was someone of European descent, but anyone who had a mixture of coloured or black blood did not comply with their specifications. However, they added that those who were excluded were only done so where the "admixture" was recognisable by ordinary observation. Poor whites were thus regarded as an element of rural origin and were usually descendants of impoverished families. It was stated that through means of adaptation many later generations who were poor, could rise above that class and that is one of the reasons why many of these rural poor families migrated to the urban areas. Although they were all seen as people who were poor, the commissioners considered it an extremely difficult task to determine the levels of poverty due to the fact that many received some of their payment in kind and their income was also subject to fluctuations.<sup>413</sup> Thus the commissioners decided to further define the poor whites by ordering them into one of five categories according to their particular situation: the natural group; the rural group; the industrial group; the pathological group; and the accidental group.<sup>414</sup>

The "natural group" included poor whites who evolved through social inheritance. They may be of normal intelligence, but for generations they had belonged to the inferior classes of society until they came to be identified with a definite social pattern of inefficiency. In some cases, with the proper treatment, however, they may be educated to become useful and respectable members of society. Also under the natural group falls those who flocked together as mentally deficient and

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<sup>412</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, p. 23.

<sup>413</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>414</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

incapacitated - which included the chronic sick, deaf, dumb, blind and all others who through some defect or other were unable to care or support themselves.<sup>415</sup>

The "rural group" included the poor whites who live in the rural areas and have a rural existence. The nomadic *trekboer*, the woodcutters, the *bywoners*, the ZAR / Transvaal bushveld type (nomadic hunters living from the environment) and the isolated group (isolated by geography or history). On the other hand, the "industrial group" included the poor whites living in urban areas. These were the village (small town or *dorp*) type who were usually farm labourers pushed off the rural land by modern technologies who were trying to make some kind of an existence. Most were unskilled or used their rural skills where possible in the urban areas. The "unskilled type" mostly consisted of rural labourers, unskilled in any trade, who came to the urban areas seeking any type of relief and aid but were unable to adapt to city life and sank further and further into poverty. The "industrial" or digger type were made up of poor fortune hunters without knowledge or experience of digging. These were also mostly rural farm labourers, with some skill or trade.<sup>416</sup>

The "pathological group" included the poor whites who through some aberration such as drink, indolence, improvidence, dependency or crime had sunk to a low economic and social standard. The misuse of strong drink was one of the main causes of the poor-white problem and why so many whites did not sympathise with them.<sup>417</sup> Lastly, the "accidental group" included those who used to be respectable, self-supporting citizens, but were the victims of some calamity or other. This included mostly natural disasters and causes that were out of their control. These poor whites, if aided, were often able to rise up from poverty and become self-supporting.<sup>418</sup> The Carnegie Commission also added a group of whites who were not yet poor, but would become so if circumstances did not change.<sup>419</sup> Throughout the

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<sup>415</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>416</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 7-15.

<sup>417</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>418</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>419</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 158.

investigation certain attributes were identified that would lead to their eventual poverty. Among others, a lack of proper and secondary education was the most important and could mean a huge difference in the lives of the children of poor-white families. Many of the parents in this group were aware of this fact. Other attributes included having smaller families as well as finding work and working hard. In many of these cases the whites were not poor yet or had struggled and pulled themselves out of poverty. These were the poor whites who proved not all of them were lazy and unwilling, but that there were some who were victims of their own and other circumstances and furthermore there were those willing to "return" to the *volk*.<sup>420</sup>

In his 1930 monograph, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history* W.M. Macmillan also refers to comments made by the 1913 Select Committee with regards to defining poor whites. Many dismiss the whole problem as one of mere "laziness" and if a man is poor it is "his own fault."<sup>421</sup> Macmillan, however, felt there was more to this and tended to agree with the 1913 Select Committee that there were different types of poor whites. The Committee only focused on two groups of the very poor: those who were indigent, degraded, vicious, living on charity or on a life of crime and then those willing to work, but lacked training and all decent opportunities. Macmillan felt that there were more than the two groups and mentions that the aged, sick and mentally deficient also had to be grouped somehow.<sup>422</sup> This was also the impression of poor whites by the 1930s as can be seen in the following comment made by the Carnegie Commission:

Most probably it was in English that the word was first used in South Africa, particularly by English-speaking town-dwellers who viewed the influx of impoverished and untaught persons from the farms sometimes with scorn and often with annoyance. To-day urban workers and small tradesmen are still inclined to look upon them as unwelcome intruders and competitors. But unfortunately a certain portion of the better educated and more favourably situated Dutch-speaking population are also beginning to

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<sup>420</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 158-166.

<sup>421</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, p. 48.

<sup>422</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, pp. 47-48.

feel ashamed of this group of their people and to treat them with some contempt and little sympathy.<sup>423</sup>

This viewpoint was generally held and was even reflected in the views of some of the opinions in the novels.

Armblankeplaag! Arm aan alles, behalwe aan ergernis vir hulself en vir gegoede mense!<sup>424</sup>

(Poor white plague! Poor in terms of everything, except in being a nuisance to themselves and to affluent people.)

Party dae dink ek amper dat hierdie klas mense dit darem maar lekker het in sommige opsigte: leef van niks nie en op ander se grond...<sup>425</sup>

(Some days I almost think this class of people has it easy in certain aspects: live from nothing and on another's land)

The word "plague" is used to describe the poor whites. This is an interesting phenomenon which reflects on the perception that the poor white was an indictment of the *volk*.<sup>426</sup>

In the first volume of the Carnegie Commission, J.F.W. Grosskopf stated that by the 1930s about a fifth of the Afrikaner population could be classified as "poor whites." For Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs who were concerned with classifying the boundaries of an ethnic community, poor whites were a source of concern. They formed part of a middle-class intelligentsia which had an overriding interest in creating Afrikaners who could refill the Afrikaner churches, attend Afrikaner schools and purchase Afrikaner books. This middle class was alarmed by the spectre of potential members of the *volk* being lost forever due to cultural and moral degeneration.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 17.

<sup>424</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 161.

<sup>425</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 171.

<sup>426</sup> This can also be seen later in this chapter in Van Bruggen's novel *Bywoners* to describe Sitman.

<sup>427</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 70.

In the chapter entitled “The poor whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900-1930: resistance, accommodation, and class struggle”<sup>428</sup> Morrell provides the following definition of the poor whites:

“Poor white” is an elusive term. Usually used in colonial contexts where blacks were in the vast majority, its most general applicability was to all whites who were poor.<sup>429</sup>

He does go on to state that there should be a narrower meaning and makes the point that there is a distinction between rural and urban poor whites.<sup>430</sup>

Giliomee and Mbenga state that it was only the colour of the poor whites’ skins that differentiated them from other poor people of colour. It was their poverty that made them visible. The term “poor white,” according to them, does not refer to a measurable poverty level, but rather to a condition, which in a state of minority white rule was viewed as unacceptable. Thus the poor-white question was seen as an important issue during the twentieth century.<sup>431</sup> According to the journalist M.E. Rothmann, who overheard Sir Carruthers Beattie, Rector of the University of Cape Town, make a statement where he claimed that poor whites were all intellectually backward and that there was something innate in the Afrikaners as a result of the phenomenon of poor whiteism that in their case had reached such alarming proportions.<sup>432</sup>

Giliomee also states that the term “poor white” also represents a people whose conditions were so horrendous that their living standards were not what a white's living standard were perceived to be, according to social and cultural constructs. According to him by the 1930s 300 000 whites were poor in South Africa of which 250 000 were Afrikaans. This means one out of every four Afrikaners were poor.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, pp. 1-28.

<sup>429</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 1.

<sup>430</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>431</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 255.

<sup>432</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 281.

<sup>433</sup> H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners van 1910 tot 2010: Die opkoms van 'n moderne gemeenskap*, p. 7.

E.J. Bottomley explains that the poor-white problem had to be solved and thus under both the colonial and nationalist governments, commissions were set up to investigate and report back. In order to do this the problem had to be defined and differentiated from other impoverished whites, such as tramps and beggars. According to E.J. Bottomley at the start of the nineteenth century the European elite in South Africa were influenced by how the poor was perceived in Victorian England. There they were divided into the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor. The deserving poor had become poor due to the hardships of life and deserved to be helped and to better themselves to become “decent” citizens again. The undeserving were beggars, criminals and prostitutes, who was poor by nature. In the USA the poor whites were regarded as lazy, lacked ambition and were the cause of their own poverty. Therefore, E.J. Bottomley uses the definition used by the Transvaal Indigency Commission (1906-1908) who expanded on ideas of Victorian moral science, who defined the poor whites along two lines:<sup>434</sup>

...those who were actually poor and those who were so ignorant or lazy and lived life at such low standards that they are almost certain sooner or later to find themselves in actual want.<sup>435</sup>

J. Bottomley also uses the definition from the Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission and adds:

The term poor white is sometimes loosely used in South Africa to describe any European who is more or less constantly in a state of destitution. The poor whites, however, are distinguished from the poorer classes in other countries, not by the character of their poverty, but by the fact that it is due to the presence of a coloured labouring population.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> E.J. Bottomley, *Poor white*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>435</sup> E.J. Bottomley, *Poor white*, p. 45.; Transvaal Indigency Commission, *Report on the Transvaal Indigency Commission 1906-1908*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>436</sup> J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa. 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990, p. 1.; Transvaal Indigency Commission, *Report on the Transvaal Indigency Commission 1906-1908*, p. 116.



Van Wyk's description of a poor white is also very similar to that of the Carnegie Commission. He describes a poor white as

...whites who made a living from farming; economically they form a class of mainly poor "bywoners" (tenants), hired farm labourers, owners of small pieces of land, settlers and unskilled labourers. They consist further of roaming trek farmers, tenants, hunters, woodcutters, the poor of the town, diggers, manual labourers on the railways and relief works. The poor white is then a person whose income doesn't enable him/her to maintain a standard of living in accordance with general norms or respectability. They have sunk to such a degree that it was difficult to differentiate between their standard of living and that of the black people of the time.<sup>437</sup>

These definitions by academics and commissions present an idea of what most perceptions of poor whites were, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, these somewhat monolithic or unnuanced explanations do not completely encapsulate what a poor white is defined as in popular consciousness. While the novels themselves portray many poor whites who are classified according to these various definitions as lazy, drunks and good-for-nothings, they also portray other poor whites who are "redeemable" and are presented as victims of circumstance. During the period 1926-1937 the poor-white question received a lot of attention. In fact the whole stigma obsessed many Afrikaans authors from the Realist genre and therefore they wrote about what they saw and experienced. This made members from both the white English and Afrikaans sections of society feel uneasy, as they wanted stories from which they could escape the harsh realities that surrounded them.<sup>438</sup>

## 4.2 The novel type of poor white

As indicated, it is the intention of this study to consider how the novels written about poor whites can possibly augment the academic literature and also reflect on the image the poor white attained in popular consciousness. By creating situations and

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<sup>437</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>438</sup> P.C. Schoonees, *Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging*, pp. 33-34.

characters one can more fully understand the poor-white problem and the consequences thereof. In each of the novels selected, such as *Ampie: Die triologie*, *Bywoners* and *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis* (Van Bruggen), *Droogte* (Van den Heever) and *Die plaasverdeling* and *Die trekboer* (Jonker) there is an underlying cause for the poverty: drought; land division; or hereditary issues. However, there are other causes which are presented in the novels in terms of the depiction of individual characters – as villainous, ignorant, innocent, unrealistic dreamers and those with serious inferiority complexes.

Thus in the novels different types of poor whites are portrayed. In each of those selected for this study the reader is introduced to poor whites who try to rise above their situation and try to better their condition. Van Bruggen's Ampie is the most famous "real" and tangible character that can be associated with this statement. Ampie was born into poor-white poverty and thus in a sense is a victim of the "Hand of God." His parents, for a range of reasons, are basically destitute and have no desire to improve their situation. Throughout the novels his parents are described as follows: his father is *verstandelike en geestelik minderwaardig, wreed, oneerlik, leunagtig, lui, gulsig, dierlik, smerig en liefdeloos* (mentally and spiritually deficient, cruel, dishonest, lying, lazy, greedy, animalistic, dirty and hard-hearted) and his mother is described as a *idiotie-moeder, vuil, onpresies, tam, kinderagtig en ontydig* (idiotic mother, dirty, careless, weary, childish and untimely).<sup>439</sup> Ampie's upbringing is described throughout the novels as *van opvoeding geen sprake nie, in die onmaatskaplikste bandeloosheid en temidde van ontbering en verliedeliking in elke vorm, geen orde, geen reëlmaat, geen netheid geen ambisie nie* (having no education or upbringing to speak of, in unsocial lawlessness and in the midst of hardship and debauchery of every form, and lacking order, routine, neatness and ambition).<sup>440</sup>

They as described as living in an old ruin which is partly covered with a straw roof. Ampie's father has made no attempt to improve the living conditions and most of their living space is outside and exposed to the elements. Van Bruggen describes it

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<sup>439</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*. Johannesburg, 1965.; R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 96.

<sup>440</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*. Johannesburg, 1965.; R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 97.

as having no comforts of the life of white people and that many black people have better dwellings and live in a better state.<sup>441</sup> The desperation of Ampie is apparent in the following extract:

“Pa wil my uitroei, want pa is te sleg om te werk! Ek moet almelewe uitspring en Pa vat somaar ou-Jakob... Ek kon al ‘n trop esels gehad het! Vandag het ek nie eers ‘n vulletjie nie”<sup>442</sup>

(Father, you want to ruin me because you are too lazy to work! My whole life I have had to learn to survive and you just take Jakob...[his donkey] ...I could have had a drove of donkeys! But today I do not even have a foal.)

In his early teens Ampie decides to leave his parent’s home to go and look for work. This is partly because he wanted his donkey that his father had sold back, and also because he wanted to earn his own money and try to make a living. This shows growth in the character which extends throughout all three of the novels. Ampie wants to become independent. Through this he becomes a redeemable character and one of the morals of the story is to show that there is hope for the poor-white problem. Through a better environment there may be a solution. In the following statement the love he feels for his donkey shows that he is willing to do what it takes to earn him back:

“Ek wil jou terughê, kom wat wil! Die aarde is leeg as jy uit my lewe uit is.”<sup>443</sup>

(I want you back, come what may! The world is empty when you are not in my life.)

His father too readily agrees to allow Ampie to take on a contract to work for Kasper Booyen hoping to get something out of the deal.

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<sup>441</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 47.

<sup>442</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 7.

<sup>443</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 55.

“Ek dink ons sal darem die vark kan koop, ou seun, want Booyesen kan dadelik betaal. Hy is mos ryk!”<sup>444</sup>

(I think we will at least be able to purchase the pig, son, because Booyesen can pay right away. He is rich after all.)

Kasper Booyesen is the farmer who bought Ampie's donkey and as Ampie knows he is a good person he is keen to work for him. Booyesen sees Ampie and the other *bywoners* like him as many of the whites in the first half of the twentieth century viewed them: as people who do not think about the future, and it feels to him that he is responsible for Ampie, that he thinks on his part and counsels him. Booyesen is convinced that Ampie thinks that is the way of the world. However, Booyesen fears for Ampie, especially for the time he may not be there to help him or guide him.<sup>445</sup> It is whilst living on Booyesen's farm that Ampie learns to wash himself, eat proper food, become decent, live in a house, sleep on a bed, have manners, self respect and pride in himself.<sup>446</sup> This is also clear on New Years Day when his mother's actions begin to embarrass him. He becomes self conscious and begins to see how others may perceive him and this becomes his real turning point.<sup>447</sup>

Al die jongmense het hom daarvandaan vermy...<sup>448</sup>

(After that all the young people avoided him.)

Vir die eerste keer in sy lewe kon sy oë toe opmerk die verwaarlosing en verslegting van sy familie...<sup>449</sup>

(For the first time in his life he could see for himself the neglect and deterioration of his family...)

Al wat Nortjé is, het hy toe verwens met ruwe vloeke - ook homself.<sup>450</sup>

(He cursed with rough curses all that was associated with Nortjé, even himself.)

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<sup>444</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 59.

<sup>445</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 246.

<sup>446</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 168.

<sup>447</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>448</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 130.

<sup>449</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 130.

<sup>450</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 130.

Before Ampie is confirmed by the church, he steals from Booysen. He, however, realises what he did is wrong and asks for forgiveness and amends his ways.

Hy het van oom Kasper se pampoene, rieme en gereedskap gevat, en dit was nie reg nie, 'n mens kan maar sê dis steel... Vir die eiers het hy meestal "sigrets" gekoop en dis ook maar direkte diefstal. God het die dinge almal raakgesien... Dis deur sy eie sonde. Hy sal nooit weer steel nie.<sup>451</sup>

(He took pumpkins, leather thongs and equipment belonging to uncle Kasper and that was not right, one could say it was theft... With the eggs he usually bought cigarettes and that was also theft. God saw all these things... It was through his own sins. He will never steal again.)

In the novel Van Bruggen also states that for Ampie it has become nearly necessary to lie even though he does not always have a reason to.<sup>452</sup> This again reflects on the negative attribute which typifies the poor whites.

The reader is also made aware that Ampie has no idea how to work with money. Although he does not work very fast, it is, however, apparent that he is not lazy and is willing to work especially after he marries his cousin, Annemie, and they have a child. Throughout Van Bruggen's trilogy the reader is shown that Ampie's cousin, Bart, who becomes his brother-in-law, is clever and can out-wit Ampie. By the third book, Ampie and his family leave the rural farming area and head for the diamond diggings to try and make a fortune. Here, once again, the reader is made aware that he is not lazy as he is keen to do the majority of the manual work available.

Maar eenkant in die kleimgat werk hy vir twee dwarsdeur die voormiddag, sonder verposing, soos 'n kaffer wat die duiwel in is en woes sy krag meet met die werk, sodat vuil kronkel spore op sy verlepte gesig agterlaat.<sup>453</sup>

(But one side in the diggings claim hole he does the work of two people right through the morning without pause, like a furious "kaffer" who is

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<sup>451</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 201.

<sup>452</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 211.

<sup>453</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, pp. 379-380.

wildly measuring his strength against the task, leaving dirty, winding tracks on his withered face.)

As soon as their luck turns on the diamond fields Ampie is done in by Bart and in the end he has to return once more to work on Booyesen's farm. Bart is very crooked and Ampie often reminisces about instances where Bart has done him in.<sup>454</sup> The biggest injustice he does towards Ampie and his family is at the diggings. Ampie and his father did most of the hard, manual labour, but Bart took charge of the diamond selling. However, he had a separate fraudulent and illegal book in his own name, in which he had made a lot of money with their diamonds via transactions that the rest did not know about. Ampie discovers this book and realises Bart has taken a lot of their money and has been only giving them the money from the smallest diamonds.<sup>455</sup> Ampie's father suspected Bart of the theft and warned Ampie that Bart is a crook and is cheating them all.<sup>456</sup> Other characters, including Bart's own mother, does not fully trust him either:

Sy is op die plek vol agterdog en vertrou vir Bart glad nie.<sup>457</sup>

(She is immediately suspicious and does not trust Bart at all.)

Thus in these novels we are introduced to a child who was born a poor white, but tried to rise above it, although much of his time is spent daydreaming. His love for nature, and especially his donkey, allows the reader to see a very humane side to his character. Van Bruggen is able to elaborate on this as he tells the story through the eyes of Ampie. Throughout the novels the reader is able to see him grow into a more "respectable" white. He is described as working hard, however, it is his ignorance and innocence which causes him to fail to see Bart for what he is until it is too late. It is, however, these qualities that lead to the reader sympathising with him, as well as the fact that he is portrayed as a redeemable character who develops and changes his ways.

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<sup>454</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 205.

<sup>455</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 418.

<sup>456</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 405.

<sup>457</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 210.

As mentioned, the Carnegie Commission had different categories into which the poor whites could be categorised. According to these, Ampie would fall under the "Natural Group" firstly through heredity causes and then the "Rural Group" of poor whites who became *bywoners*. Ampie is the most popular and well-known poor-white character in Afrikaans fiction. His story and the way Van Bruggen portrays him, which is based on his own personal experience, has been lodged in popular consciousness and created an attitude that the "Ampies" of the Afrikaner *volk* can and must be saved. This then presents a poor white that is very different to those generally defined in the realism of academia.<sup>458</sup>

In his novel *Bywoners*<sup>459</sup> Van Bruggen specifically focuses on the different types of poor whites and goes as far as to categorise them according to their names.<sup>460</sup> Not much is revealed as to how they became poor, but the focus is rather on their personal lives and the types of poor whites they are. The novel itself does not focus on the perspective of one character but rather each one is examined and the reader is able to see life from that particular *bywoner's* perspective. Thus the same will be attempted in the analysis. Firstly the most well-known type of poor white will be examined. Sitman represents what it means to be a poor white according to popular consciousness, he is also the most focused on in the book.

'n Eie boerdery het hy nie meer nie. Daarvoor is hy te sleg...<sup>461</sup>

(He does not have his own farm anymore. For that he is too useless.)

Die bywoners het goeie harte oor die algemeen, maar ook 'n stille geestigheid, wat Cornelis Sitman heimlik "meeldiaken"<sup>462</sup> noem.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>459</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria, 1973.

<sup>460</sup> Vyr (Free) is the owner of the farm on which the *bywoners* work. Niklaas (No class or not belonging to the class of *bywoners*) went to the First World War to earn a wage. Willemse - Wil (Willing) Willing to work and is the most hard working of the *bywoners*. Gouws - Gou (Quickly) His wife runs up a big account and he realises he will not have any money over from the harvest and decides to leave to go to the mine after paying his account. He decides quickly and leaves quickly. Sitman (Sit man) The laziest of the *bywoners* who prefers to sit around rather than working.

<sup>461</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 29.

<sup>462</sup> Flour Deacon - because he carries a rolled up pillowcase with him where ever he goes - ready in case he may be given something, in the same way a Deacon would carry his Bible.

<sup>463</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 29.

(In general, all the *bywoners* have good hearts but also a meek humour, which Cornelis Sitman secretly calls "Flour Deacon.")

He is lazy and tries to get out of working by using excuses, which are weak excuses as people usually know he is lying. As a result the other *bywoners* look down on him. However, he will work when he knows there is something for him to gain.

... willoos, vol ingebeelde kwale en 'n vyand van alle vaste werk.<sup>464</sup>

(... without a will of his own, full of imaginary ailments and an opponent to all regular employment.)

"Luisiekte!"<sup>465</sup> beweer 'n seker neef Niklaas, wat Jaap agterna sit, "vervlakste luisiekte! Hy is oorlede dood so uitgedruk!"<sup>466</sup>

("Lazy sickness!" claims a certain cousin Niklaas, who follows on from Jaap Gouws and adds "damn lazy sickness! He is already past dead so to speak.")

Sitman goes to work for Alwyn de Klerk, a man who has come from the urban area after being boarded by the mine. He has quite a bit of money and decides to rent a large section of Andries Vry's farm on the mountain. De Klerk does not know much about farming and is very happy at first when Sitman tells him he has decided to come work for him - *handjie by sit* (lend a hand). Vry does warn De Klerk about Sitman:

"... Hy is 'n man, wat sit waar hy sit en ek wil vandag nie die man wees wat hom eendag uit daardie hartebeeshuisie moet verhaal nie. Hy is die elfde plaag!"<sup>467</sup>

("He is a man who sits where he sits and I do not wish to be the man who has to chase him out of that wattle-and-daub house. He is the eleventh plague.")

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<sup>464</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 29.

<sup>465</sup> Lazy sickness.

<sup>466</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 31.

<sup>467</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 42.



However, he soon learns Sitman's true nature as his lies and his laziness continues while he works for De Klerk as well.

"Jy weet, ek word so stadigaan moeg vir jou gelêery die heeldag by jou huis!" "Ek kan tog nie werk as ek siek is nie!" het Neels temerig geantwoord. "Ek glo niks aan al daardie kwale, waarmee jy die mense se oë wil verblind nie. Dis pure slegtigheid en luiheid en niks anders nie."<sup>468</sup>  
(“I am slowly getting fed up with you lying about your house the whole day, you know!” “Surely I cannot work while I’m ill!” Neels drawled. “I do not believe in all your ailments that you try to blind people with. It is pure uselessness and laziness and nothing else.”)

As is common with many of the poor whites who lived during the first half of the twentieth century, Sitman has too many children and is incapable of supporting his family and does not make much of an effort to do so either. Poverty is rife in the Sitman household and the conditions in which they live are miserable throughout the novel. The reader experiences the slow deterioration of the Sitman family as matters seem to get worse and worse due to Sitman's laziness.<sup>469</sup>

Die ander kinders drein om haar heen. Dis nie meer 'n huil oor kos soos vroeër nie, dis nou 'n aaklige grensgehuil, vol langgerekte klaagtone, wat hulle taaie gemoedstemming uit, as hulle magies skreeu van die honger.<sup>470</sup>

(The other children whine around her. It is no longer a cry for food like before, but now it is a terrible mewling, full of drawn out groans emanating from their hopeless situation when their stomachs growl as a result of the hunger pains.)

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<sup>468</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 46.

<sup>469</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 64.

<sup>470</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 64.

Sitman is a liar and a thief and he teaches these qualities to his children. He is caught stealing eggs from De Klerk and after being caught he avoids De Klerk, but his wife catches Sitman's child stealing eggs a week later.<sup>471</sup>

Sitman het begin om rond te snuffel en die oop hoederneste op die arglose boere werwe was vir hom baie verleidelik. Wie sou dit agterkom?<sup>472</sup>

(Sitman has begun sniffing around and the unguarded chicken coops on the unsuspecting, surrounding farms were tempting. Who would notice it?)

Sitman is considered the worst type of poor white and according to the Carnegie Commission would fall into the "natural group," only because his poverty is most likely hereditary and he knows no better. However, he might more likely fall into the "pathological group," which includes poor whites who through some aberration such as drink, indolence, improvidence, dependency or crime had sunk to a low economic and social standard.<sup>473</sup>

The other *bywoners* on Andries Vry's farm are not of the same class as Sitman, who is considered the very worst type. Willemse is portrayed as the best out of the group of *bywoners* and the most hard working. Willemse is very different to Sitman. Sitman lives in a temporary dwelling - *hartebeeshuis* - and has no crops or livestock of his own. Willemse has built a solid, permanent structure - red brick house with a barn and kraal on his piece of land and also produces a small harvest for him and his family.<sup>474</sup> The reason he remains a *bywoner* is because he knows he is a big help to Vry and that he would struggle without him.<sup>475</sup> Willemse is hard working and gets along with the other *bywoners* who look up to him and work well under his

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<sup>471</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 66.

<sup>472</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 66.

<sup>473</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>474</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 29.

<sup>475</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 29.

leadership. Willemse is the hardest worker out of all the *bywoners* and they all know it.<sup>476</sup>

The other *bywoners*, Jaap Gouws and Niklaas, also try to provide for themselves and their families by working on Andries Vry's farm. However, due to the costs being so high, Gouws receives an account from the Jewish shop owner and he realises that he will not be able to pay it and that his whole harvest would have to go to cover it.<sup>477</sup> He thus decides that he can no longer make a living in the rural area and decides to go to the urban area and work on the mines for a fixed salary.<sup>478</sup> However, his decision to leave the rural area is not taken well by Vry, who thinks the urban areas are evil and that it corrupts the Afrikaners.<sup>479</sup> However, Gouws decides that it is the only solution.<sup>480</sup> This reveals that Gouws is not lazy and wants to be able to work to support his family and thus even undertakes the difficult task of moving his family to the urban area to find something rather than staying in the rural area and continuing to suffer.

Many months later Gouws comes to visit his friends on the farm. In the interim he has joined the army to fight in the First World War and has come to tell his friends, including Niklaas, about the perks of joining the War, such as grants for each of their children and a fixed monthly salary. To an extent he has also come to recruit them. At first many are apprehensive but later they all leave the farm in search of something more permanent because with the prices of goods being twice as expensive before the War many were unable to survive on their harvests.<sup>481</sup> Going to war for some form of wage occurred both in the First and the Second World Wars.<sup>482</sup> The same can be seen in Van Bruggen's novel *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*. Pieter van Staden, a hard-working farmer, states that if the rain does not

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<sup>476</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 29-34.

<sup>477</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 31.

<sup>478</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 31.

<sup>479</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 35.

<sup>480</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 35.

<sup>481</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 73.

<sup>482</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 295.

come soon he would have to give everything up to go fight in the First World War in Flanders or the Dutch East to earn something.<sup>483</sup> Later Harry Peach, also in this novel, similarly leaves his “wife” Levina to go fight in the War to make a living.<sup>484</sup>

In terms of the Carnegie Commission's classifications these *bywoners* fall firstly into the “natural” group as they make their existence in the rural area, but they also fall into the “accidental” and “recovering” group. Although the novel does not give reasons for their poverty, it does reveal how each one tries to work and create a better life for himself and his family and in some cases going as far as to seek out new and better opportunities.<sup>485</sup> These were not typical of the poor whites portrayed in academic literature or those in popular consciousness, but rather people (with the exception of Sitman) who were trying to get by and provide for their families without assistance.

In Van Bruggen's novel *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*,<sup>486</sup> the main character Lambertus Bredenhand is a poor white who has lost his land and source of income mostly due to the “Hand of God.” He now has to resort to manual work - small jobs here and there. He expected that it would have been easier to find work and that he would be able to compensate his income with manual labour, but this turns out not to be the case.<sup>487</sup> Although he lost his farm, he is not lazy and works to provide for his family. However, people do not always pay him very well, and therefore he remains reliant on their work.<sup>488</sup> He is a good worker and works well with his hands.<sup>489</sup> However, the whole situation of working hard but for so little makes him very despondent and bitter.<sup>490</sup> At a stage his brother-in-law recommends him for the position of the Locust Official in the area. He gets the job and takes it very seriously, even though it is not a permanent position.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 5.

<sup>484</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 104.

<sup>485</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>486</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*. Pretoria, 1988.

<sup>487</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p.11.

<sup>488</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 12.

<sup>489</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 6.

<sup>490</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 28.

<sup>491</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 40.

Met militêre houding kom Bredenhand op die vosperd aangetrippel.<sup>492</sup>

(On his bay horse, Bredenhand comes along with his military-like attitude.)

Die springkaanveldtog was van korte duur, tot teleurstelling van die beampte wat ver wag het om die betrekking sy lewe lank te bekleë.<sup>493</sup>

(The locust campaign was short-lived, to the disappointment of the officer, who expected the position for life.)

However, one of the first things he does after being appointed is to run up a considerable amount of debt, which he is unable to pay off once the position has ended. He thus has to work for Fisher, the shop owner, to pay it off. He therefore is faced to go back to his trade of manual work after the locusts have been eradicated in order to make a living once more.<sup>494</sup>

It is clear that Bredenhand is hard-working, however, the idea that surrounds the term poor white is also evident in this novel. Most of the farmers can see how hard Bredenhand tries to provide for his family and the work he does. Some of them even try to help him, however there are some who look down on him, even after he is appointed as the Locust Official in the area. Some feel that the poor whites are receiving too many hand-outs and opportunities to help them and that jobs are created in order to give them an easy, lazy life. They feel that they have to compensate for these jobs with the high taxes that they pay and that it is a waste of money.<sup>495</sup>

Vir hom is Bredenhand die sukkelaar-ambagsman wat ook al vir hom 'n paar dingetjies reggeknutsel het...<sup>496</sup>

(To him Bredenhand is the struggling tradesman who has also done a few odd jobs for him...)

"Jy is astant, nè, jou niksgewènd!"<sup>497</sup>

("You are impudent, you worthless person.")

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<sup>492</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 48.

<sup>493</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 113.

<sup>494</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 113.

<sup>495</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 61.

<sup>496</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 60.

<sup>497</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 100.

In this novel the reader is made aware of the difficulties the "Hand of God" can have on the people living in the rural areas. However, it also proves that there were hard working and willing people. In terms of the Carnegie Commissions report, Bredenhand falls in to the "accidental, rural and recovering" categories. His loss and poverty was through no fault of his own and at one stage he was self-supporting. At this time, however, he leads a rural existence making a living in the rural area. Bredenhand, however, does have skills and is able to do many different manual labour jobs. He has decided to remain in the rural area and offer his services to the people in the area. With the work he is doing and the position he takes, it is clear that he is trying to better his circumstances and rise out of his poverty.<sup>498</sup>

In Van den Heever's novel, *Droogte*, the reader is introduced to five brothers who are all different. The underlying common cause of their poverty is their father's farm that has been divided among them, into such small sizes that none of them can really make a living.<sup>499</sup>

This is a cause that falls into the "Hand of Man" category, but is not directly their fault. The other main cause of their poverty is the "Hand of God," the persistent drought, which kills off their livestock.

Oor die vlaktes maal-krul die dwarrelwinde, ver oor die eindelose horingdroë aarde.<sup>500</sup>

(The whirlwinds twirl over the plains, far beyond the endless bone-dry earth.)

However, there is another undisclosed cause, which falls into "Hand of Man" category. One of the brothers, Sagrys, wants ownership of the whole farm and he is content to watch as his brothers spiral further into poverty.<sup>501</sup> He therefore makes a deal with the Jewish shop owner to speed up the loss of his brothers' property by

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<sup>498</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>499</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 14.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304.

<sup>500</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 86.

<sup>501</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 145-146.

introducing high interest rates for their debt and calling for payment sooner. He also tells the policeman in the veld that his brother's flock has scab disease.<sup>502</sup> He is blatantly portrayed as the villain in the book. This is further emphasised by the fact that he betrayed his people in the Anglo-Boer War by joining the English and as a result was allowed to keep his belongings and not have any of his possessions destroyed.<sup>503</sup> However, he never achieves his dream because he is murdered by one of his other brothers, Datie, an act which the reader is led to perceive as "justice."

Datie was born deaf and dumb, and has no way of communicating his feelings. In addition he had to suffer years of abuse from Sagrys. Datie is depicted as a pathetic character, which also reflects on the nature of some poor whites. He feels that he is not wanted or needed anywhere and that he is a millstone to the world. He prefers the company of his flock of sheep to that of others and goes to sleep near them when his self-pity, inferiority and sense of weakness regarding his disability overwhelms him.<sup>504</sup>

Sy ou swak linkerogte en half-oop mond gee hom 'n dom, stomp gelaatsuitdrukking.<sup>505</sup>

(His weak left eye and half open mouth gives him a dumb doff facial expression.)

"... ek voel so jammer vir die ou doofstom broer van my... want so 'n mens verstaan mos nie dinge soos ons wat 'n gesonde verstand het nie."<sup>506</sup>

("...I feel so sorry for the deaf dumb brother of mine... because someone like that does not understand things like those of us with a sound mind.")

Van den Heever gives the reader insight into his life by writing part of the story through the person of Datie, which offers a great degree of empathy for him.<sup>507</sup> The reader is also made to understand that out of all the brothers, Soois is the only one

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<sup>502</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>503</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 59.

<sup>504</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 47 & 160.

<sup>505</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 8.

<sup>506</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 51.

<sup>507</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 47.

that had time for and tried to help and understand Datie.<sup>508</sup> This is evident when Soois moves to town and Datie desperately wants to go with him as he feels with Soois leaving, his protector is leaving as well.<sup>509</sup> Datie also desperately tries to finish making a pair of shoes for Soois before he leaves.<sup>510</sup> Datie is eventually sent to an asylum by the authorities for murdering Sagrys where he is to spend the rest of his days.<sup>511</sup>

Stoffel is the youngest brother who is not married but also does not look after his piece of land. He is a drunk and is interested in a relationship with his niece, Soois's daughter.<sup>512</sup> Luikes, Stoffel's brother, is also tempted by Stoffel into becoming a drunk.<sup>513</sup> The reader has no sympathy with these two brothers either, as they are partly to blame for their poverty and predicament and have no redeemable qualities.<sup>514</sup> This is then a clear case of the "Hand of Man" where man is to blame.

Out of the five brothers the only truly redeemable brother is Soois. The other brothers are constantly fighting with each other and are transfixed by the drought, which also seems to become the only aspect they care or talk about. Soois is the only one to look at future prospects and is willing to try and fight against nature. However, the reader never witnesses these farmers doing any real work. Either they have given up and are waiting for the inevitable or they do not know what to do. Again it only seems like Soois is willing to keep trying.<sup>515</sup> He is portrayed as the one who helps the cattle back on their feet when they fall, which is symbolic as he is figuratively trying to stay on his own feet. He feels that the cow he keeps lifting up gives him an accusing look as if the drought is his fault and a result of his sins or the curse that is upon the farmers.<sup>516</sup>

The livestock are described as having scab, and are practically skeletal as there is nothing to eat and only a small mud pool to drink from. The livestock are dying due

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<sup>508</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 73-75 & 143.

<sup>509</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 143.

<sup>510</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 147, 199.

<sup>511</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 198.

<sup>512</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 56, 71 & 97.

<sup>513</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 186 & 193.

<sup>514</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 125 & 186.

<sup>515</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 125.

<sup>516</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 76-77.



to the drought. Van den Heever's use of words gives the reader greater insight into how bad the situation really was and how hard Soois is trying yet failing. Finally, he has to move to town and become a labourer on the railways as he cannot pay his debt incurred as the farm has failed due to the drought and he has no other income.<sup>517</sup>

Die gedagtes aan sy skuld en armoede maak oom Soois mors-gedaan.<sup>518</sup>  
(The thoughts of his debts and poverty make Soois dead tired.)

After Sagrys's death, the brothers inevitably lose the farm because they are unable to pay their debt.<sup>519</sup> As mentioned Datie is sent off to the asylum and the other brothers have to move to town where they become day-wage workers on the railways.<sup>520</sup> Luikes and Stoffel continue with their drinking.<sup>521</sup> Once again Soois tries to create a better existence for him and his family, but instead of drought, the town is described as *koud* (cold) and this again affects the few cattle he took with him.<sup>522</sup>

...maer, inmekaaergekrimpte diere met die opgehewe hare, wat wys hoe koud hulle kry.<sup>523</sup>  
(... thin sunken in animals with raised pelts, which shows how cold they are getting.)

In *Droogte*, the reader is also introduced to many different types of poor whites. According to the Carnegie Commission categories, these five brothers fall partly into the “rural group”, due to their land being divided into such small pieces that they are barely able to survive and live together like *bywoners*. They also fall into the “accidental group” who have become poor due to conditions out of their control such as the drought. According to the Commission, Datie can be categorised into the “natural group” of poor whites under the incapacitated division due to being born deaf and dumb. Sagrys is categorised as the type of poor white that did try to better

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<sup>517</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 138-140.

<sup>518</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 104.

<sup>519</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 189.

<sup>520</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 202.

<sup>521</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 203.

<sup>522</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 201.

<sup>523</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 201.

himself, he behaved dishonourably and showed no humanity through his cruelty towards Datie. He therefore falls partly into the “pathological group”. Luikes and Stoffel are the type of poor whites that did nothing to better themselves and only exacerbated the situation by starting to drink - thus wasting money they did not have therefore both of them also fall into the “pathological group”. Soois is the only poor white who tried to make a real difference to improve his condition and is therefore the only redeemable poor white in the novel. Thus he cannot be categorised by the definitions set out in the Carnegie Commission, nor is this type of poor white evident in the academic literature.<sup>524</sup> Soois therefore reflects another dimension of the poor-white phenomenon.

The two novels written by A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling* and *Die trekboer* are a sequel. Similar to Van den Heever's *Droogte*, the father's farm is typically divided between two of his three sons – Jacob and Antonie - which is to some extent the underlying cause of Antonie's poverty. Jonker compares the two brothers and this gives the reader a lot of insight into their personalities. Jonker states that if you placed the two brothers next to one another a stranger would automatically see Antonie as the foreman and Jacob as the boss. Antonie is described as an *afwagtende, half apologetiese figuurtjie* (awaiting and apologetic figure), whilst Jacob is described as *rustig en breed in 'n allergemaklikste houding... Sy hele houding is vernaam en sy klere goed versorg... sy ronde gesig blink – so glad is dit geskeer – en sy klein, swart snorretjie is netjies geknip* (comfortable and relaxed with a laid-back attitude... His whole attitude is distinguished and his clothes well cared for... his round face shines – it is shaved so smoothly and his small black moustache is trimmed neatly).<sup>525</sup>

After a huge fight with Jacob, Hannes, the third brother hands over his part of the farm in exchange for money so that he can further his education.<sup>526</sup> Jacob farms with seed and is very entrepreneurial when it comes to business practice.<sup>527</sup> He lives a

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<sup>524</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>525</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 53.

<sup>526</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 13 & 109.

<sup>527</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 13.

decent life in good conditions, but is also deceitful in his business dealings and with the division of the inheritance.

“Die saailande, die huis, drie-kwart van die rivier, die dam, die sandveld, ‘n goeie lappie weiveld en ‘n stukkie van die rante vir skuiling as die suidewind kwaai word!”... “En Antonie s’n?” “Die rante en ‘n kwart van die rivier!”<sup>528</sup>

("The arable land, the house, three quarters of the river, the dam, the sand veld, a good piece of grazing land and a piece of the ridge for shelter when the southern wind starts up!"... "And Antonie's?" "The ridge and a quarter of the river!")

Another example is with regard to the selling of their father’s sheep. Although Jacob has very little to do with the sheep he always ensures he sells them and receives a monetary commission from their father for the sale. Thus Antonie feels he is exploited:

"Dis nie reg nie! Hulle het my berowe! Dit was my geld!"<sup>529</sup>  
("It is not right! They robbed me! It was my money!")

On the other hand, brother, Antonie farms with sheep and has no idea about business practices or to work with money.<sup>530</sup> He is naïve and a day dreamer.<sup>531</sup> He lives in a *hartbeeshuisie* in the same manner as a *bywoner*.<sup>532</sup> Antonie suffers from an inferiority complex, like many poor Afrikaners,<sup>533</sup> and is exploited time and time again by his brother, who also secretly wants to own the whole farm.<sup>534</sup> The reader is made aware that Antonie is not lazy and is willing to work.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 306.

<sup>529</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 65.

<sup>530</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 250.

<sup>531</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 16, 20, 22, 116 & 321.

<sup>532</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 380.

<sup>533</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 280.

<sup>534</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 65 & 306.

<sup>535</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p.109.

Hy moet sy broer en sy vader baie dikwels help op die saailand – daarvan kan hy nie los kom nie – maar hy voel maar eers weer gelukkig as hy kan weg kom na die vee toe.<sup>536</sup>

(He often has to help his brother and father in the arable lands - he can not get away from that - but he only feels happy again when he can get away to his flock.)

He tries very hard to make his part of the farm work, he takes pride in his work and his part of the farm and furthermore the reader is made aware of the extent, the responsibility and independence he tries to create for himself.<sup>537</sup> The reader is also made aware that Antonie knows how to look after his sheep, but when it comes to people and business he is at a loss.<sup>538</sup> However, after a terrible drought Antonie eventually loses hundreds of his sheep and with all his accounts coming in, he finds himself stuck in debt and has no other solution than to turn to Jacob for assistance.<sup>539</sup> Eventually Antonie decides there is no other option than to move from the farm and seek better grazing land for the remaining sheep.<sup>540</sup>

“Trek man, trek! Dis al wat ‘n boer kan doen as dit droog is!”<sup>541</sup>  
("Move man, move! That is all a farmer can do if it is dry!")

Jacob takes over Antonie's debt for his part of the farm and tells him to return when he can settle his debt and make a decent existence for himself.<sup>542</sup> Antonie now has to leave the farm. In the next novel *Die trekboer*, the story continues as Antonie searches for a place for him and his sheep, which continue to die literally along the road.<sup>543</sup> His depression is apparent in the following comment:

As hy maar net by die groen wêreld kan uitkom!<sup>544</sup>  
(If only he can get to the green world!)

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<sup>536</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 8.

<sup>537</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 255 & 321.

<sup>538</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 254.

<sup>539</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 363-366 & 377.

<sup>540</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 361.

<sup>541</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 358.

<sup>542</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 377.

<sup>543</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 9.

<sup>544</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 9.

After a lot of begging, he finally gets a plot.<sup>545</sup> However, his wife Bekka and his son Herklaas decide that they cannot stay there and move to the diggings to make a living.<sup>546</sup> It is in this novel wife and son can no longer rely on Antonie for survival. All the characters change in this novel. Antonie breaks from the strong and independent character in *Die plaasverdeling* and becomes a weak, pathetic, drunk figure, all as a way to cope with his poverty. His son Herklaas and wife Bekka have to take the lead.

"Ons kan nie langer hier bly sit en vrek nie. Ons moet maak soos Herklaas sê! Ek sê ook so!"<sup>547</sup>

("We cannot sit here any longer and die. We must do as Herklaas says! I also say so!")

The children who were well-behaved change as well and become undisciplined and roam around the diggings and towns and start using bad language.<sup>548</sup> The black shepherd Daiel who *trekked* with them starts to talk back to Antonie and demand payment and he finally leaves the family at the diggings to go to work for someone else.<sup>549</sup> Oom Jool the *bywoner* from Langverwag becomes bossy and tries to dictate what the family should do. He also leaves the family at the diggings after he discovers he can get a pension and moves in with a widow.<sup>550</sup>

At the diggings they sell some of the sheep to the diggers and Antonie becomes a water driver.<sup>551</sup> He, like many poor whites, is tempted into drink, which starts to ruin them.<sup>552</sup> He feels unhappy and dissatisfied. He is tired of struggling to survive and desperately wants better for himself and his family.<sup>553</sup> Eventually they buy a claim and find a diamond. From this point Bekka takes full control of their finances.

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<sup>545</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 73-77.

<sup>546</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 96-99.

<sup>547</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 99.

<sup>548</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p.p 117 & 146.

<sup>549</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 105 & 163.

<sup>550</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 134 & 163.

<sup>551</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 102 & 109.

<sup>552</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 119.

<sup>553</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 119.

Antonie vroetel met sy hand in sy binnebaadjiesak, haal 'n groot rol note uit en gooi dit lam op die tafel neer... van nou af aan is Bekka die baas.<sup>554</sup> (Antonie fiddles with his hand in his jacket's inside pocket, takes out a big roll of notes and throws it on the table... from this moment Bekka is the boss.)

As a result of losing control of his finances and not being the patriarch anymore, along with the hard work and difficult life that he has had to endure, Antonie finally breaks physically and spiritually and becomes a pathetic character. He knows he will never be able to return to his farm and most likely will never see it again.<sup>555</sup> This causes him a lot of anger and heartache as he had such big dreams. His back and kidneys begin to bother him and he is in constant pain so much so that some days it is difficult for him to move.<sup>556</sup> He remains a hard worker but feels ill and exhausted, too ashamed and lethargic in and about himself to lift a finger if it is not really necessary.<sup>557</sup>

After the finding of the diamond Bekka decides to move from the diggings as she views it as an evil place.<sup>558</sup> They move to a farm on the outskirts of the town, where they try to farm again and swash gravel from the river in search of diamonds for the owner of the farm.<sup>559</sup> They do not stay there long, live on the road for a while doing odd jobs and then decide to move back to the urban area.<sup>560</sup> Antonie is involved in an accident and passes away from his injuries, pathetically alone with none of his family with him.<sup>561</sup> The family finally have to sell the rest of their belongings, but Herklaas is able to find a job and helps to save the family from complete destitution.<sup>562</sup> Throughout the novels Herklaas also helps by working with his father. He acts as a shepherd for the livestock and helps look after them; he works on the diggings and often on the land for his father; he helps his mother with the slaughtering and selling of the sheep; and he also helps his family work on other

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<sup>554</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>555</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 165.

<sup>556</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>557</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 191.

<sup>558</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 156.

<sup>559</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 159.

<sup>560</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 177-180, 185 & 188.

<sup>561</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 223-224 & 232.

<sup>562</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 234.

people's land harvesting the crops.<sup>563</sup> These novels see the rise of a number of characters that try to better themselves and work hard to overcome their poverty. Again this reflects somewhat differently on the generally perceived idea of the poor white.

Antonie thus tries to work hard to better himself, but is eventually ruined through the drought and craftiness and selfishness of his brother. In *Die trekboer*, the reader is made aware of how bad the situation and poverty is becoming. Thus according to the Carnegie Commission Bekka and Herklaas would fall under the “accidental” group of poor whites and Antonie would later fall into the “pathological” group. Through circumstances both as a result of forces beyond their control and their doing the different characters become poor and struggle to create a better life for themselves. They are, however, not lazy but work hard to drag themselves out of the poverty and can therefore not be categorised according to the academic literature's definition of a poor white.<sup>564</sup>

Thus through characters such as Ampie, Willemse, Niklaas, Gouws, Bredenhand, Soois, Antonie, Bekka and Herklaas a different type of poor white is portrayed in the novels. Sitman was the exception and represents what popular consciousness reveals about the term poor white. The other characters were not lazy and tried to rise above their own circumstances and poverty to better their situation caused by the “Hand of Man” or the “Hand of God.” Their poverty was not always a direct fault of their own. Although they were to some degree ignorant, innocent, gullible and often at times unaware of what was happening, the reader is able to find them redeemable and worthy of the help, which is sometimes provided. Thus through these novels, an idea was created among a readership, which caused many whites, especially Afrikaners, to want to help these people. Through the novels the reader is taken into the daily life and struggle of what it means to be a poor white. Therefore the novels are able to augment the academic literature by creating another dimension to the human side of the poor white.

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<sup>563</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 29, 40, 107-108, 112, 114, 162-163, 167, 182, 196-197 & 211.

<sup>564</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE "HAND OF GOD" AND THE "HAND OF MAN"

It is obvious that there were numerous causes that led to a large section of white South Africans becoming poor in the first half on the twentieth century. Many of the situations have similar causes, however, there are unique cases as well. In the confines of this study it is not possible to discuss each cause as it is not the central concern of the dissertation, thus only the most prominent ones will be addressed. In London, 2005 former President Nelson Mandela gave his "poverty speech." He stated that poverty was not "natural," but rather "man-made." In contrast in a 1893 report given by A. Haldane Murray on education in the Cape, he blamed the poverty of the poor whites on "external forces."<sup>565</sup> This chapter will examine both these points of view as causes of poor-white poverty, whilst considering the academic literature and the novels. As indicated, the causes of poor whites have been divided into what Van Onselen regards as the "Hand of God" and the "Hand of Man."<sup>566</sup> The "Hand of God" refers to natural causes, in other words all the causes that were out of the control or influence of the individuals concerned. The causes that are referred to by Van Onselen as the "Hand of Man" have been further divided into the causes that were beyond the control of the poor whites and causes for which the poor whites themselves were to blame.

#### 5.1 "The Hand of God"

In much of the academic literature the causes categorised by Van Onselen as the "Hand of God" are natural occurrences or disasters such as droughts, flash floods, plagues and diseases as well as just the general failures of the weather itself.<sup>567</sup> According to De Kiewiet the biggest contribution to poor-white poverty was the large groups of subsistence farmers, where a relatively low education prevailed and where they were vulnerable to natural disasters. Drought was very cruel to the poor whites.

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<sup>565</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, pp. 2 & 42.

<sup>566</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 321.

<sup>567</sup> R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973, pp. 20-21.; J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa. 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990, p. 98.; D. Langner (red.), *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902*, p. 119.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 195.



During the middle of the nineteenth century frontier farmers are on record about the South African "golden age," of plentiful rainfall and rich grasses.<sup>568</sup> However, the Carnegie Commission claims that by 1860 a severe drought had taken hold.<sup>569</sup> Areas such as the Karoo had been subjected to drought for centuries and the flora soon adapted. Even areas such as Natal and the Transvaal were subjected to protracted droughts. During the period 1882 to 1925 South Africa suffered on average one severe drought every six years.<sup>570</sup> However, in Graaff-Reinet, a Karoo area, the period between 1889 to 1897 received a higher-than-average rainfall, but then a gradual drop occurred until 1921 which was lower than normal.<sup>571</sup> However, while farmers may have acclimatised or adjusted their methods and way of life to the higher rainfall, when the rainfall began to decline they were not able to readjust or cope and therefore it felt like a drought. Many older farmers, whose active farming careers took place between 1880 to 1900, gave accounts of the bigger rainfall and snow falling on the mountains in the winter, in areas where by the 1930s one could not possibly raise crops without irrigation.<sup>572</sup> For example, De Kiewiet explains that the period between 1878 and 1919 the area of Griqualand West suffered eleven ruinous droughts. This resulted in the farmers having to cut the throats of the lambs to save the lives of their sheep, many of which died of thirst.<sup>573</sup> In an interview with a *bywoner's* wife she states at one point whilst living on her brother's farm, she and her husband were able to acquire 500 sheep over a period of time. However, in 1916 there was a long drought and only 20 of those sheep survived.<sup>574</sup>

According to the Carnegie Commission, between 1920 and 1928 much of South Africa had been afflicted with serious droughts and agricultural statistics show that on average during the period 340 000 head of cattle and 2 300 000 sheep and goats

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<sup>568</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 189.

<sup>569</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 83.

<sup>570</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 189.

<sup>571</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>572</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>573</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 189.

<sup>574</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 32.

were lost with drought being the main cause.<sup>575</sup> The Carnegie Commission calculated with the low price of £4, in 1931, for a head of cattle and 10 shillings for sheep and goats the losses were on an average £2 500 000 annually, which was an vast amount of money.<sup>576</sup> The power of the land to resist drought had been weakened through overgrazing and wasteful animal husbandry, which weakened vegetation and drained underground water sources.<sup>577</sup> In other situations, farms that could supply ample stock in good years became grossly overstocked in years of drought.<sup>578</sup> The Carnegie Commission states it was man's reckless use of the veld which caused erosion, a quicker run off of rain water and a lowering of the water table which brought about a decreased power of resistance of the land against drought.<sup>579</sup> Thus the rainfall may not have decreased in its volume per se but in its efficiency and when it did fall it did less good.<sup>580</sup> A year with low rainfall caused greater losses than formerly and years with the same rainfall rate had less economic value.<sup>581</sup> The drought plunged men into debt, took their cattle and sheep, their land and even their attachment to the soil.<sup>582</sup> Thus the "Hand of God," and to some extent the "Hand of Man," resulted in failed crops and dead livestock, and caused many farmers to become poor whites.

In the novels, there are many examples of the "Hand of God" with drought as an extremely popular theme for the causes of poverty. In Van Bruggen's novel *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis* the main cause of the destruction of the land is the locusts, however, drought accompanies this. The land and animals are described as a *ramp* (disaster) that is witnessed by those who are powerless to do anything about it.<sup>583</sup> The land awaits the rain and the animals tear greedily at the thin grass or stand around waiting to die.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>575</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>576</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>577</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 189.

<sup>578</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 190.

<sup>579</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>580</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 189.

<sup>581</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

<sup>582</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 190.

<sup>583</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 11.

<sup>584</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, pp. 12-13.

In Van Bruggen's other novel, *Ampie*, drought also comes to the farm of Kasper Booyen and is one of the factors that results in Ampie's decision to leave the rural area and to go and seek his fortune at the diggings. In this novel nature is described as being *harteloos* (heartless) and that farming once again suffered as a result of the *banvloek* (curse) and the drought is described as a *kastyding wat kort-kort neersak* (reprimand that descends on the countryside often).<sup>585</sup> This curse and reprimand again have overtones of the "Hand of God." Booyen illustrates how many farmers are leaving their land and inheritance to migrate to the cities in search of work on the roads, doing maintenance or, like Ampie, are turning to the diamond fields to try their luck in delving for diamonds.<sup>586</sup>

The theme and main cause of the poverty in the novel *Droogte* by Van den Heever is obviously encapsulated in the title of the book which means drought. He starts the novel with a poem about drought and throughout the novel there are many references made to the drought and the extent of its impact on the people, animals and the land. The land is described as an *eindeloose horingdroë aarde* (unending bone dry plain) and the hot *dwarrelwinde* (whirlwinds) are a sign that the drought will continue.<sup>587</sup> The sheep are described as thin and roam around without a purpose or goal<sup>588</sup> and the cattle appear twisted due to the hunger.<sup>589</sup> There are some that are described as being so thin and weak that they fall over and have to be helped back up.<sup>590</sup> Nearly every character mentions and remarks on the drought which permeates the entire novel. Many of the surrounding farmers also state that it is the terrible drought which ultimately finished them.<sup>591</sup>

"Die laaste een kla net oor die droogte. Ek hoor die twee Neethlings het al boedel oorgegee."<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 243.

<sup>586</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 243.

<sup>587</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 43 & 86.

<sup>588</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 20.

<sup>589</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 76.

<sup>590</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>591</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 21 & 86.

<sup>592</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 23.

("Everyone is complaining about the drought. I heard the two Neethlings surrendered their estate.")

In die bloedige son...<sup>593</sup>

(In the blood sun...)

Floods and extensive rainfall also had terrible consequences on the land and were also part of the "Hand of God." In parts of the Karoo where there was good rainfall it had a deleterious effect on the quality of the soil, by denuding it of its lime. Macmillan explains this is what is referred to as *suur* (sour) veld and is impossible for growing crops. In other areas of the Western Province along the coast, the districts had heavier rains than in the Karoo but they were less regular. However, when it did rain it did so in floods.<sup>594</sup> De Kiewiet states that in South Africa rain hardly ever falls gently, but comes down in the form of harsh thunderstorms.<sup>595</sup> In the Midland districts of the Cape the Drought Commission of 1921 emphasised that the veld was being robbed of its resources. Though this was partly due to the droughts it was mostly attributed to overstocking and erosion caused by farming. This resulted in the denudation of the earth's vegetation covering and the drying of natural springs. These factors caused a quicker run-off and lowered the levels of the water table and caused a decreased resistance of the land against drought.

According to the Carnegie Commission, years of drought were harsher and years with normal rainfall had less economic value, whereas years with high rainfall caused floods with nothing to prevent the flow of the water and the run-off of the fertile top soil.<sup>596</sup> Thus the paths made by stock-driven animals, cracks that were produced by drought and valleys that lost their vegetation were all defenceless before the rushing water and thus became gullies and *sloots* (canals or channels) that carried off precious soil. The barer the soil is of vegetation the more moisture was lost due to exposure to the sun and evaporation. This was usually a result of over-grazing. Therefore the wind and water carried away fertility that was never abundant. This

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<sup>593</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 87.

<sup>594</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, pp. 65 & 68.

<sup>595</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 188.

<sup>596</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 85.

resulted in ruined crops and crop failure as well as a loss of grazing and veld.<sup>597</sup> Although the reasons that this occurred was due to bad veld management and farming practices, nature itself also had devastating effects and became a cause. The rainfall in South Africa differs from region to region and thus was not predictable to those who travelled through it trying to find land to settle. Therefore a combination of ignorance and nature resulted in this cause.

In the novel *Ampie* by Van Bruggen, the character of Kasper Booyens comments on the rains which are late in the season:

“Laaste Desember sou dit vir ons voorspoed gebring het vrou; nou kom hy soos ‘n maaltyd vir iemand wat honger dood is.”<sup>598</sup>

("Last December it would have brought us prosperity, wife, now it comes like a meal to someone who has already died of hunger.")

Jonker also examined drought as a cause of poverty in his novel *Die plaasverdeling*. Although the main cause was the division of inherited land due to Roman Dutch Law, it was the drought that accentuated the problem. Before the drought the characters would have been able to survive, however, with the drought it made it impossible for some like Antonie and his sheep to survive. He considers cutting his sheep's throats but decides rather to move away and look for green pastures for them.<sup>599</sup> He is also unable to pay his shop debt as the money he receives is less than what he owes, and thus he has to sell his land.<sup>600</sup> Antonie reminisces back to the last rains, which were before his father's death about eight months before and how the summer started hot. He knows that if it does not rain soon matters will not look good.<sup>601</sup> The land is too dry and there is no food for his flock in the surrounding areas and thus this also becomes a motivating factor to leave his land.<sup>602</sup> He thought he would have made quite a bit of money from the sale of his sheep and he would have used this money to pay his debts, but more sheep had died than what he would have sold and

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<sup>597</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 188.

<sup>598</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 245.

<sup>599</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 230.

<sup>600</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 243.

<sup>601</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 228.

<sup>602</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 327.

they are in such a bad condition that no buyer would have looked at them. He also believes the drought is some type of *straf* (punishment).<sup>603</sup>

In the second novel the drought has now dragged on for a year.<sup>604</sup> After four months on the *trek* road he has already lost a large number of his sheep and still has not come out of the drought nor found green pastures for his flock.<sup>605</sup> He feels as though he is crossing the desert the same way Moses did, trying to find the *plekkie waar daar volop gras en kos en geld is* (little place where there is an abundance of grass and food and money) the proverbial "promised land".<sup>606</sup>

It was not only the weather that played havoc on the land of the rural areas but it was one of the main reasons. Crops failed due to bad weather such as droughts, and plagues, and cold and frost also did considerable damage.<sup>607</sup> However, farmers also had to contend with another natural cause - "Hand of God" - plagues and diseases. Locusts were probably the worst of the plagues that devastated the farmers. Swarms of various species were a recurring feature of South Africa ecology. During both the 1890s and 1930s most of South Africa was affected with swarms of red brown locusts.<sup>608</sup> However, Lewis explains that South Africa experienced continued problems with locusts from the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, which ruined crops and income for many whites.<sup>609</sup> When drought occurred as it often did during this period, locusts hatched and swarmed in large numbers. They were especially destructive after the drought and devastating to crops after the rain.<sup>610</sup> For the most part farmers could only stand helplessly by and watch their field be eaten raw within half an hour. The locusts came in clouds and destroyed all types of crops. According to Minnaar the actual loss was considerable to both subsistence and commercial farmers who suffered immensely as a result of the plagues.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 346.

<sup>604</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 346.

<sup>605</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 9.

<sup>606</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 47.

<sup>607</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*, p. 107.

<sup>608</sup> S. Dovers, R. Edgecombe & B. Guest, *South Africa's environmental history: Cases & comparisons*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003, p. 80.

<sup>609</sup> R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973, p. 27.

<sup>610</sup> S. Dovers, R. Edgecombe & B. Guest, *South Africa's environmental history: Cases & comparisons*, p. 80.

<sup>611</sup> A. Minnaar, "The locust invasion of Zululand 1933-1937", *Natalia*, 20, 1990, pp. 35-36.

As indicated in the previous chapter, Van Bruggen examines this cause in his book *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*.<sup>612</sup> The locust problem is the main cause of the poverty in this novel although there are a number of other underlying causes. These are listed as follows: Springkaan! Skuld! Boedel! (Locust! Debt! Estate!).<sup>613</sup> The main character of the novel, Lambertus Bredenhand, who has recently lost his wife and has been left with the responsibility of their four children, has also lost all claim to his family land. The deterioration through adversity in the farming, failed crops, no markets, locusts, ground tax, debt and the estate after his wife's death all accumulated which resulted in him having to sell his land, cattle, wagon and horse.<sup>614</sup> The main focus in the novel as indicated in the title is on the locust plague and solutions to overcome it. The locusts had destroyed the farmers' crops in the area for the past two years and the government was forced to step in and help by appointing a Locust Official; who would help with the spraying of poisons. The surrounding rural areas were described as bare but with the promise that with the first rains of the season this could result in abundant growth and prosperity as long as the locusts did not come. Previously the locusts are depicted as rising like *rooi stofstorms* (red dust storms), which fell onto the veld and destroyed the crops like an unstoppable force. It was a disaster witnessed by those *magteloos* (powerless) to do anything.<sup>615</sup> Many of the farmers felt that it could have been a profitable year if the locusts did not become a nuisance.<sup>616</sup> For the last two years the farmers felt they had just "fed" the locusts.<sup>617</sup>

As mentioned, the lead character Lambertus Bredenhand gets the position of Locust Official, however, it is only a temporary job.<sup>618</sup> He has to help distribute and spray the poison when the locusts reappear.<sup>619</sup> This is a job which he takes very seriously and considers it a battle to be fought.<sup>620</sup> There are farmers in the area who worry about the effects the poison will have on their crops and animals and whether it may also

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<sup>612</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1988.

<sup>613</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 2.

<sup>614</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 20.

<sup>615</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 11.

<sup>616</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 4.

<sup>617</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 59.

<sup>618</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 40.

<sup>619</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 96.

<sup>620</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p. 97.

result in further disaster. However, Bredenhand ensures them that the poison will do no damage to their crops or livestock, it will only kill the locusts.<sup>621</sup>

Van Bruggen also mentions the locust plague and its destruction in his novel *Ampie*. During a drought, Kasper Booysen, the farmer, and his wife wistfully look for some sign of rain. However, he remarks that the following season after the drought he expects to have swarms of locusts infest his lands. He feels as though everything turns its back on the farm and that there is a *banvloek* (curse) on the Afrikaners and their land.<sup>622</sup>

In Van den Heever's novel *Droogte*, drought is obviously the main cause of the poverty. However, drought is usually followed by plague – and in this instance the locusts. The following statement emphasises how much the people in the rural areas depended on nature and how quickly it can turn on them and cause them to lose everything.

“Net soos jy bo is, kom die droogte of springkane en dan is jy waar jy begin het.”<sup>623</sup>

("Just when you get on top the drought and the locusts arrive and then you are back to where you started.")

Many farmers suffered as a result of the plagues, including the locust plague and they therefore had many of the same concerns. Farmers could lose everything due to a disaster such as a plague as was evident in the case of Lambertus Bredenhand. Without their crops, they were unable to create an income and were unable to settle their debt or pay their bills. With the plague returning year after year there would be no relief and many farmers would eventually join the ranks of the poor whites.<sup>624</sup>

It was not just plagues but diseases that also affected the farmers. The East Coast fever, gall sickness, red water and scab disease, rinderpest and horse sickness were some of the diseases farmers had to contend with. According to Harrison, scab

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<sup>621</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, p.57.

<sup>622</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>623</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 80.

<sup>624</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampste van Sluis*, pp. 2-4, 16, 33 & 59.



disease and the rinderpest were prominent among both sheep and cattle. Both of these diseases, along with the others, saw many subsistence and commercial farmers ruined.<sup>625</sup> Giliomee argues that it was the rinderpest disease that became the most notorious. It was an acute, usually fatal infectious disease which affected cattle with the worst case breaking out at the end of the nineteenth century (1896-1897). It wiped out herds in large parts of South Africa and in the Transvaal alone it destroyed half of the farmer's cattle herds.<sup>626</sup> Omer-Cooper adds this was also devastating for those whites who had left the rural areas to find work and make a living in the urban areas. Many did not have the skills that were needed to work in the urban areas, but could make use of their cattle and carts and wagons as transport riders.<sup>627</sup> They transported goods and water to the urban areas and mines and even transported people at times and thus lost their means of income due to the rinderpest. Van Onselen also points out that although it was industrialisation and technological innovation that destroyed the transport riders, eventually many whites lost all their cattle due to the outbreak of the rinderpest disease and were unable to recover and thus fell into the unemployed slump becoming poor white.<sup>628</sup>

Although there are no cases of the rinderpest in the selected novels as a cause of poverty, other cattle diseases are mentioned such as scab. For example sheep died as a result of the dipping process to alleviate the disease as well as for the control of ticks, while scab itself was eventually fatal. Scab was an acute or chronic form of allergic dermatitis caused by the faeces of the sheep. This disease also had a major effect on the price of the animals if they were to be sold and the disease could easily be spread through contact.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, p. 68.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 157.

<sup>626</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 322.

<sup>627</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, p. 149.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 195.

<sup>628</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 322.

<sup>629</sup> J.A. Turton, Department of Agriculture, 'Sheep-scab', <<http://www.nda.agric.za/docs/Infopaks/scab.htm>>, s.a. Access: 17 November 2014. and SCOPS - Sustainable control of parasites in sheep, 'Sheep Scab', <<http://www.scops.org.uk/ectoparasites-sheep-scab.html>>, s.a. Access: 17 November 2014.

Examples of this are mentioned in Van den Heever's novel *Droogte*. Soois's sheep are infected with scab and his desperation and annoyance at the potential of this spreading is expressed as follows:

Soois se skape het brandsiekte, en as hulle wragtie syne aangesteek het...<sup>630</sup>  
(Soois's sheep have scab disease, and if they have actually infected his...)

In *Die trekboer* by Jonker, Antonie has to dip his sheep against scab, which kills many.<sup>631</sup> He has come from a clean district.<sup>632</sup> However, the law required the dipping of cattle and sheep before entering a new district to prevent the spread of the disease.<sup>633</sup>

In Van Melle's novel *Bart Nel*, horse sickness breaks out which causes many of the horses in the area to become infected and die.<sup>634</sup> There are many variants of this disease and the virus is spread via the *Culicoides* midge, which especially occurs during a wet, warm season. The mortality rate is usually between 70-90% and is characterised by respiratory and circulatory damage, accompanied by fever and a loss of appetite.<sup>635</sup>

Many farmers and people living in the rural areas could not survive the onslaught of nature, that is the "Hand of God." They lost everything, forcing them to either become *bywoners* or look for work in the urban areas as the only solution to carry on surviving. In the urban areas people also spoke of the troubles in the rural area as is evident in Lub's accounts of life in Johannesburg. Lub, like Hoogenhout, wrote down many of his experiences and accounts of living in Johannesburg as a teacher. These were put together in a collection called *Donker Johannesburg*, which was translated into English - *Dark Johannesburg*<sup>636</sup> and is portrayed as a number of entertaining

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<sup>630</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 44.

<sup>631</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 68.

<sup>632</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 69.

<sup>633</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 72.

<sup>634</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>635</sup> African Horse Sickness Trust, 'African Horse Sickness', <[http://www.africanhorsesickness.co.za/about\\_ahs.asp](http://www.africanhorsesickness.co.za/about_ahs.asp)>, 2005-2014. Access: 19 November 2014.

<sup>636</sup> J. Lub, *Dark Johannesburg*. Potchefstroom: Het Westen Printing Works, 1912.

"stories" with true historical meaning and characters based on real people. One sentence reflects on the topics of the day:

And so we talk about locusts, and East Coast fever and the latest thing in politics.<sup>637</sup>

This then was the "Hand of God" which was one of the two main categories of causes of the poor-white problem.

## 5.2 "The Hand of Man"

There were also causes of the poor-white problem that can be categorised as the "Hand of Man" but were beyond the specific control or doing of the poor whites. These included the closing of the borders of South Africa, commercial farming, technology and industrialisation, competition with blacks and immigrants for wage labour, new legislation, wars and depressions.

The Carnegie Commission explains that when the Boer Republics were proclaimed in the mid-nineteenth century (1852 and 1854) each resident was entitled to choose a piece of land not taken up by another and to apply to have it surveyed and registered in his name. However, there were those who chose to continue trekking and did not want to settle down. Between 1860-1890 it was unnecessary to worry about property. In 1889 Cecil John Rhodes with his British South Africa Company was responsible for closing the borders of South Africa, creating Rhodesia. This now prevented many Afrikaners from moving north when the land became exhausted or over-populated, or when they wanted to get away from the unfamiliarity of the British which they felt threatened their culture and way of life. The closing of the borders forced many to settle in one area and restricted others from migrating and *trekking*. Most of the best pieces of land were already taken and thus many were forced to

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<sup>637</sup> J. Lub, "Simple Folk" in *Dark Johannesburg*. pp. 95-96.

settle and suffered on unproductive pieces of land.<sup>638</sup> Over-population and land exhaustion soon began to take place causing poverty to prevail.<sup>639</sup>

In Jonker's novel *Die plaasverdeling* Antonie decides he may have to *trek* with his livestock in search of better land. He reminisces about the time before the closing of the borders. It is implied that this quality and spirit of *trekking* would have made Antonie an excellent farmer a hundred years before (in the novel, before the closing of the borders). It was a time without the adjustment of the fast economic developments, a time when the world was open and free for every man to move where he wanted.<sup>640</sup> The old man Jool, a previous *trekboer*, states with regards to the drought:

"In die ou dae het ons in so 'n tyd lankal met ons veegoed getrek."<sup>641</sup>

("In the old days, in times like these we would have already taken our livestock and moved.")

With the discovery of diamonds and especially gold, more people came to southern Africa and settled in the urban areas. With the increased population there came an increase in the demand for food and this resulted in commercial farming. Most of the Afrikaners used out-dated techniques and methods to make a living for themselves through subsistence farming.<sup>642</sup> Callinicos explains that wealthy farmers began to grow crops to sell in a commercial manner and began to purchase smaller farms surrounding them.<sup>643</sup> By 1917 capitalist farming was taking off in the OFS and southern Transvaal.<sup>644</sup> Yet according to Fourie, there were many farmers who were unable to make the transition to a cash economy and market-orientated farming.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, pp. 36-39.; R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 9.; R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>639</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster, 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*, p. 309.

<sup>640</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 329.

<sup>641</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 329.

<sup>642</sup> W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, p. 71.

<sup>643</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa I. Gold and workers, 1886-1924*, p. 86.

<sup>644</sup> N. Parsons *A new history of southern Africa*, p. 242.

<sup>645</sup> J. Fourie, *The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06. University of Stellenbosch, 2006, p. 7.; J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, p. 171.

Those who did, began to use new and scientific methods.<sup>646</sup> However, the majority were unable to adjust, while for others the soil became overworked and began producing less. In addition, many farmers who were isolated and far away from the urban areas sold their produce to local markets at a loss.<sup>647</sup> Parsons states the South African Party (1911-1934) ignored this problem as their main focus was industrial development, which was intended to open employment in towns.<sup>648</sup> Thus technology and industrialisation, in effect the "Hand of Man," had an impact in both the rural and urban areas. Poor whites who sold their labour were replaced by machines that could perform their work more quickly and more cheaply.<sup>649</sup> According to Ross *et al* it was only until 1908 that the poor-white problem was viewed as a "rural phenomenon."<sup>650</sup>

In Van Bruggen's novel *Bywoners*, Andies Vry's farm and farming style is described as *alles bly in die ou sleur, volgens gewoonte, wat sy opvoeding hom geleer het* (everything staying the same with hardly any changes or expansions, exactly as he was taught). He is also described as not trusting developments in the agricultural sector in terms of the machinery and would rather have his *bywoners* do the work.<sup>651</sup> Vry states with regards to change on his farm:

"Dis mos origheid om my boerdery te verander... Daardie nuwerweste gedoentes is net in die wêreld om te knoei en om die duiwel te help..."<sup>652</sup>  
("It is just silly to change my farming... Those new methods and ideas are just introduced to tamper and to help the devil...")

However, at the end of the novel all the *bywoners*, except Willemse and Sitman, leave Vry's farm to earn a wage by joining the military. Vry is then forced to get in

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<sup>646</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 321.

<sup>647</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, pp. 329-331.

<sup>648</sup> N. Parsons *A new history of southern Africa*, p. 242.

<sup>649</sup> C.W. de Kiewiet, *A history of South Africa: Social and economic*, p. 194.; R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 5.; J. Fourie, *The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06. University of Stellenbosch, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>650</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, p. 261.

<sup>651</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 23.

<sup>652</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 24.

machines to do the work but is very unhappy about it and yearns back to the days where his *bywoners* did the work for him.<sup>653</sup>

Sy oog dwaal vol weedom oor die ou lande. Hy sien die hawerland vol stoere werkers en die roer van so baie hande en die gees van vrye arbeid na elkeen se aard en kragte en dis of daar 'n stuk uit sy ou lewe geskeur word. Sy hart heg alte vas aan die gemeensame lewe, waarin hy as 'n koning was.

(His eye wonders full of woe across the old lands. He sees the oat fields full of sturdy workers and the movement of many hands and the spirit of free labour according to each one's nature and strengths and it is as though a piece of his old life is torn out. His heart longs for the communal life, where he was regarded a king.)

J. Bottomley explains that not only did the poor whites have to compete with machines, but they also competed with black labour in the rural and urban areas, and in the emerging urban areas there were also skilled immigrants to compete with as well.<sup>654</sup> This is also a key component of the "Hand of Man." Many of the poor whites who came to the urban areas and did not have any urban skills and who could not speak English really suffered and found it increasingly difficult to find work.<sup>655</sup> Morrell states blacks were paid less for their labour in the rural and urban areas than whites and thus the former's labour was preferred.<sup>656</sup> Henning Klopper, a trainee clerk on the railways, was told point blank that they favoured the labour of blacks to Afrikaners.<sup>657</sup> The blacks could be controlled by pass laws, made to work harder and without fear of them forming associations for collective action.<sup>658</sup> Moreover, in the urban areas most of the poor whites did not have the necessary

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<sup>653</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 75.

<sup>654</sup> J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa. 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990, p. 98.; D. Langner (ed.), *Gebroke land: Armoede in die Afrikaanse gemeenskap sedert 1902*, p. 119.

<sup>655</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 202.

<sup>656</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 44.; R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 5.; J. Fourie, *The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06. University of Stellenbosch, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>657</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, p. 65.

<sup>658</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, p. 150.

skills to do the labour and therefore immigrants were brought into South Africa to do the work required.<sup>659</sup> This also included white women, who were already only paid a third of a man's salary, but who also had to compete with black women and "black boys" for work.<sup>660</sup> In Lub's account of life in Johannesburg he mentions in his short story *Simple folk* this competition with immigrants for work, where many Afrikaners such as Annie's husband were not given a chance to work, especially in the mines by the English.<sup>661</sup> He comments resentfully: "the English'll take good care not to give a man a chance."<sup>662</sup>

In Jonker's *Die trekboer*, Antonie finds work harvesting a farmer's crop alongside blacks and coloureds.<sup>663</sup> His whole family comes to help with the work, which is usually not normal for an Afrikaans family. The farmer also pays him the same wage as the others and does not differentiate his payment because he is white. The farmer states that *hy maak geen onderskeid tussen sy werkmense nie... 'n gerf is 'n gerf, of 'n wit man of 'n bruin man of 'n swart man hom nou ook al gesny het* (he makes no distinction between his workers... a sheaf of wheat is a sheaf of wheat regardless of whether a white man or a brown man or a black man cut it).<sup>664</sup> Antonie needs the money and thus does the work, but is happy when it is done because he is uncomfortable working on an equal footing with blacks.<sup>665</sup>

Although many laws were eventually put in place to try to protect or help the poor whites, there was legislation, "Hand of Man," which also caused them to become poor. In terms of the urban areas, the best example is that of the Mines and Work Act 12 of 1911 that reserved more highly skilled jobs for whites.<sup>666</sup> However, these

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<sup>659</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa I. Gold and workers, 1886-1924*, p. 71.; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 44.

<sup>660</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 222.; C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>661</sup> J. Lub, "Simple Folk" in *Dark Johannesburg*. p. 79.

<sup>662</sup> J. Lub, "Simple Folk" in *Dark Johannesburg*. p. 79.

<sup>663</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 184.

<sup>664</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 185.

<sup>665</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 185.

<sup>666</sup> Mines and Work Act 12 of 1911 (To consolidate and amend the Laws in force in the Union in relation to the operating of Mines, Works and Machinery and to certificate), *The Union of South Africa Government Gazette*, 111(4), Notice number 683, Pretoria, 28 April 1911, pp.542-549.

were predominantly for English-speaking skilled and experienced immigrants and not for the desperate poor whites, with no skills, who were mainly Afrikaans.<sup>667</sup>

A rural example related to the impact of legislation was the woodcutters who lived in regions of high rainfall such as George, Knysna and Humansdorp and who made their main income from wood. According to the Carnegie Commission these poor whites had to pay a certain amount either to the government or to private owners for every tree felled. At the beginning of the twentieth century when timber became scarce the government restricted woodcutting by law. However, over-cutting still occurred and the government then instituted special registered woodcutters. This caused many poor whites to cut wood illegally or to become destitute.<sup>668</sup> The best example of this can be seen in Dalene Matthee's novel *Kringe in die bos* (*Circles in a forest*).<sup>669</sup> However, this novel was written retrospectively and done by doing research regarding the period, rather than being based on the author's own experience. This novel falls specifically into the "Historical novel" genre.

There were also other laws - "the Hand of Man" - which caused poor whites to lose the little they had. The best example is that of Antonie in *Die trekboer*, where he is forced according to law, to dip his sheep before entering a specific district regardless that they did not have scab disease. This cost him quite a bit of money and also resulted in many of his sheep, who were already ill and starving, to die.<sup>670</sup> He also had other "run ins" with the law and finds them all to be disadvantageous to poor whites.<sup>671</sup> Antonie becomes very angry about all the laws and he feels that all these laws were put in place to keep poor people poor. This is evident in the following statement:

"Die Wet vereis..." was al wat hy gehoor het. Alweer 'n slag die Wet! Waar 'n mens kom bedreig hulle jou met die Wet. Met jou eie vee mag jy nie trek soos jy wil nie: die skaapinspekteur kom met 'n Wet; die vlees van jou

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<sup>667</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, p. 172.

<sup>668</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, pp. 146-147.; R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, pp. 44 & 51-55.

<sup>669</sup> D. Matthee, *Circles in a forest*. Harmondsworth: Viking, 1984.

<sup>670</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 72.

<sup>671</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 76.



skape kan jy nie op die delwery verkoop soos jy wil nie, dit moet juis in kwarte wees: die slagter se Wet; en nou is hier alweer 'n Wet - en wat vir 'n Wet?<sup>672</sup>

("The law requires..." was all he heard. The law again! Where ever you go they threaten you with the law. You cannot move around where you want with your own sheep: the sheep inspector comes with a Law, you cannot sell the meat from your sheep as you want to on the diggings, it must be in quarters: the butchers Law, and now again another Law - and what for a law?)

Wars always have victims and this too is integral to the "Hand of Man." Giliomee and Mbenga state that the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) was one of the major causes or catalysts of the poor-white problem. With the War came the British scorched-earth tactics, which involved burning homes and crops and slaughtering livestock and destroying much of the countryside when the commandos refused to lay down their weapons and surrender.<sup>673</sup> Women and children were put into concentration camps.<sup>674</sup> Some of the selected authors experienced these camps and the after effects of the War. In the two Boer republics a large majority of the farmhouses were damaged and cattle and sheep were also destroyed. In the post-War years some 15 000 Boer fighters were unable to resettle on their farms and ultimately became poor whites as a result of the devastation.<sup>675</sup> In some cases they returned to their farms to find that a black family had moved in and occupied it and refused to leave.<sup>676</sup> In other cases both sides of the War made use of the assets on the farms they came across and very few farmers were compensated for their losses after the War ended.<sup>677</sup> After two and a half years they had lost everything and had no land resulting in abject poverty. This is evident in Lub's accounts of the War and presents it exactly like the academic literature:

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<sup>672</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 174.

<sup>673</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 213.

<sup>674</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, pp. 27-28.

<sup>675</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 322.

<sup>676</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 225.

<sup>677</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 157.

But when the war was finished, Duvenhage was finished too. His few head of cattle had been taken, his house destroyed. The small piece of ground he had to sell, so as to feed and clothe his family.<sup>678</sup>

Economic depressions, also the "Hand of Man," affected the poor seriously.<sup>679</sup> Post Anglo-Boer War conditions caused a serious depression from 1904-1909, which coincided with the 1907 depression in America.<sup>680</sup> Stals also explains that the later post World War I depression resulted in many whites losing the little they had because they could not afford to pay their debts.<sup>681</sup>

Die Wêreldoorlog is lankal verby, maar hy maak sy nadraai hier.<sup>682</sup>  
(The World War is long ago past, but its consequences are felt now.)

According to Oakes, when Wall Street crashed in 1929 South Africa did not feel the effects of the depression at first because very few had investments in the USA. However, soon the price of wool and the price of maize began to fall. Wages dropped drastically and bankruptcies and unemployment soared. Work also became scarce. Many investors sent large sums of money out of the country which further worsened the situation.<sup>683</sup> Imports became very cheap, while profits from exports were drastically reduced. Farmers were badly hit and were forced off the land. Manufacturing also suffered as the profits of the mines were smashed. It was at this time that the number of poor whites reduced to dire poverty reached its highest level.<sup>684</sup> Giliomee and Mbenga explain this depression took place along with one of the country's worst droughts, which continued into the 1930s. The government was compelled to help the poor whites in the rural areas to prevent them from migrating to the towns.<sup>685</sup> However, due to the low prices for their crops and livestock many

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<sup>678</sup> J. Lub, "Trapped" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 165.

<sup>679</sup> J. Fourie, *The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06. University of Stellenbosch, 2006, p. 8.

<sup>680</sup> E.J. Bottomley, *Poor white*, p. 33.

<sup>681</sup> E.L.P. Stals (ed.), *Afrikaners in die goudstad I, 1886-1924*, p. 32.

<sup>682</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 244.

<sup>683</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, p. 333.

<sup>684</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of southern Africa*, p. 175.

<sup>685</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 281.

farmers fell into debt they could not recover from and the country's farming was placed on a knife's edge.<sup>686</sup>

A number of wars and the post-war years are mentioned in the selected novels, including the Anglo-Boer War, the First World War and the Rebellion of 1914. Throughout the majority of Lub's short stories reference is made to the Anglo-Boer War and the effect it had on the Afrikaners, a majority of whom became poor as a result and were forced to move to Johannesburg and the urban mining environment. Many of his stories also describe what life was like in the post-war times especially for the families of those who died during the war or those who returned to nothing.<sup>687</sup>

With regards to the First World War many Afrikaners and poor whites went to fight, as can be seen in Van Bruggen's novel *Bywoners*. They did this because it ensured them a stable salary for a while.<sup>688</sup> However, in Hoogenhout's account of the after effects of the War, many people returned to the same conditions they were in previously or were even worse off.<sup>689</sup> After the First World War there was an increase in poverty, many people returned to their normal lives without the income they received during the War and inflation rose by 50% between 1917 and 1920.<sup>690</sup> This is evident in Willemse's statement to Vry about the *bywoners* who may return to the farm, but due to the new machinery that was purchased in their stead they were no longer needed and become destitute.<sup>691</sup>

The same after-war affects can be seen in Van den Heever's *Droogte* with regards to the differences in the lives of the brother who joined the English and those who remained supporters of the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War. This is similar to the account of the De Wet brothers. Christiaan de Wet was a leader of a *boer* commando whereas his brother joined the side of the British. There were many

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<sup>686</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 283.

<sup>687</sup> J. Lub, "Simple Folk" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 72.; J. Lub, "A forgotten Voortrekker" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 97.; J. Lub, "Such there are" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 117.; J. Lub, "How oom Jannie spent his New Year's Eve" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 134.; J. Lub, "Trapped" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 165.

<sup>688</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 73.

<sup>689</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, 'Annie Losper' in *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, p. 11.

<sup>690</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 245.

<sup>691</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 75.

reasons for joining the British such as being compensated with sheep and cattle and other materialistic reasons.<sup>692</sup> The bitterness of this is evident in the following statement:

“Ek en die ander wat alles verloor het vir ons land sit brandarm en “joiners” is ryk en ge-eerd.”<sup>693</sup>

("Me and the others like me who lost everything fighting for our country are dirt poor and the "joiners" are rich and honoured.")

In the novel by Van Melle the character Bart Nel joins the 1914 Rebellion<sup>694</sup> of his own choice and this decision is the cause of his poverty. After the Rebellion he is arrested by the British and put in jail and fined. He is unable to help with the running of his farm and most of this is left to his wife with little help from elsewhere. She is unable to keep the farm going, as a result of failed crops, horse sickness, and together with the fine and the debt Bart has incurred during the Rebellion, she has no option but to sell. Once Bart returns from jail he is forced to rent land in order to have somewhere to farm.<sup>695</sup>

It is also important to add that some poor whites became destitute due to the dishonesty of others, usually family or people close to them. This again would be the "Hand of Man" and was examined in the previous chapter in terms of the types of poor whites. However, this is also a cause of the poor-white situation. In the novels, *Die plaasverdeling*, *Droogte* and *Ampie*, the "villains" are also part of the reason that the main characters become or remain poor, through the underhand and devious actions of others.

### 5.3 “The Hand of Man” to blame

Lastly, there are other causes that can be categorised as the “Hand of Man,” but which were entirely the poor whites’ own fault. Some of these causes include choices they made or what they deemed as their way of life. These included

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<sup>692</sup> H.Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 216.

<sup>693</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 59.

<sup>694</sup> Many Afrikaners did not want to fight for the British during the First World War, especially due to the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War and thus they resisted, which in turn resulted in a rebellion.

<sup>695</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1988.

isolation, ignorance, unregistered land claims, perpetual migration, stubbornness, over population, lack of skills, alcohol abuse, laziness and refusal to do what was termed or regarded as "black labour".

According to the Carnegie Commission, isolation caused family life, church traditions and farming methods to become a fixed social pattern. As mentioned earlier, new ideas in terms of farming techniques were looked upon with suspicion and strongly opposed.<sup>696</sup> Many of the poor whites living in the rural areas were isolated, usually many miles apart with practically no common bond of organisation. This made these people very unsociable and also uninformed.<sup>697</sup> Macmillan claimed that the isolation prevented young people from getting to know other young people they did not grow up with. Intermarriage and inter-breeding resulted from this and was even encouraged to keep the land in the family.<sup>698</sup> They had to rely on the little they knew about farming which was passed down from father to son. The isolation also prevented them from learning about new farming methods as well as other technological advancements.<sup>699</sup> It was in the urban areas where people were forced together in a smaller space and worked along side each other and lived right next door to one another which led to a lot more interaction. In order to gain what one wanted, people also had to stick together and thus isolation had no place.

Isolation is a popular theme in a number of the selected novels which are set in the rural areas. Isolation often prevailed and a suspicion for outsiders was also prevalent. A few examples can be seen in *Bywoners* and *Ampie*. In the latter novel, Ampie marries his cousin Annekie, most likely because there were not many young girls his age in the area who come from the same poor-white background as him and whose parents would allow such a marriage. Annekie's father does not see anything wrong with their marriage as he states that in the Bible Jacob married two of his cousins and he was blessed.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 11.

<sup>697</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 34.

<sup>698</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, p. 22.; W.M. Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An economic footnote to history*, p. 67.

<sup>699</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 12.

<sup>700</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 172.

In *Bywoners* the distance and isolation from other people is also emphasised. De Klerk wants to go farm high up on the ridge, *dis so uit die koers* (it is so far out of the way).<sup>701</sup> And when De Klerk moves back to town, Sitman and his family remain behind in their small wattle-and-daub house that was falling apart, *alleen in die wye ruimte* (alone in the wide open space).<sup>702</sup>

The Carnegie Commission states that many poor whites were ignorant about business methods, such as signing contracts. As a result of economic competition and the accumulation of large debts they were unable to pay back, it resulted in many of them losing everything.<sup>703</sup> This again relates to the "Hand of Man." Debt and ignorance in business as well as the unexpected and not being prepared for the worst is a main theme and cause of poverty in the selected novels. There are many examples of these poor whites losing everything as a result of disaster and an inevitability of being unable to pay their debts and then having to move to find another means of income.

This usually resulted in many leaving the rural areas to go to the urban areas in search of work. This is the case with regards to characters in *Bywoners*, *Droogte*, *Die plaasverdeling*, *Die Sprinkaanbeampte van Sluis*, *Bart Nel* and the story of *Oom Piet Legransie* in Hoogenhout's novel,<sup>704</sup> *Op die delwerye*.<sup>705</sup> In *Bywoners* a shop account is waiting on the table for Gouws when he comes home. He knows he cannot afford to pay it and that his whole harvest will have to be used to compensate for it.<sup>706</sup> He decides to leave the rural area and go to work on the mines rather than remain in poverty.<sup>707</sup> In the novel *Droogte*, Soois has to sell his farm to pay off the debts he was unable to settle due to the terrible drought. He leaves the rural area

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<sup>701</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 26.

<sup>702</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 74.

<sup>703</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>704</sup> Although, presented as a novel, *Op die delwerye* is life sketches and true experiences that Hoogenhout recorded about his time on the diggings and the people he met.

<sup>705</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, Kaapstad: Maskew Miller, 1925.

<sup>706</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 31.

<sup>707</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 35.

and goes to the town to work on the rail roads.<sup>708</sup> In the *Plaasverdeling*, Antonie is faced with a similar problem. After his father's death the farm is divided and then a great drought begins which results in many of the farmers in the surrounding areas not being able to pay their debts.<sup>709</sup> Their sheep are too thin and they are unable to sell them and thus have no other option than to *trek*.<sup>710</sup> In *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, as indicated Lambertus also lost his farm due to failed crops, no markets, locusts, ground tax, debt, and last of all the estate after his wife's death. He did not leave the rural area, but decided to try and do odd manual work for the farmers on the surrounding farms.<sup>711</sup> This is also the case with Bart Nel. Before he goes to join the 1914 Rebellion he realises what a fragile state his finances are in and one bit of bad luck could ruin him.<sup>712</sup> With regards to his prison sentence, his fine, the farm's debt and the debts he incurred at shops during the Rebellion, he is unable to pay the monies he owes and his wife decides she will have to sell the farm.<sup>713</sup>

Bad business practices also led to debt which was another form of the "Hand of Man." Surety was one such practice because if the farmer who failed the person who signed the surety they would be held responsible for the debt. In *Op die delwerye*, Piet Legransie states that it was the three-year drought, the three years of locust plagues, three years of failed crops and finally the surety he signed for Freek Willemse that ruined him.<sup>714</sup> In *Droogte*, Gert makes the point that he could not sign surety for Soois. He states that his father always said rather loan or give a man money, but never sign surety for him as he knew the misfortunes of others could ruin the person who signed the surety.<sup>715</sup>

E.J. Bottomley and R. Morrell argue that the crisis over land was exacerbated by the Roman-Dutch Law of inheritance that compelled the division of property equally

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<sup>708</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 140.

<sup>709</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 346 & 363-365.

<sup>710</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 346.

<sup>711</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 20.

<sup>712</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*, p. 2.

<sup>713</sup> J. van Melle, *Bart Nel*, pp. 97 & 100.

<sup>714</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, 'Oom Piet Legransie' in *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, p. 46.

It is also important to mention the other factors and causes here, drought, locusts and crop failures have also been mentioned as other causes in addition to bad businesses practices.

<sup>715</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 92-93.

amongst the sons.<sup>716</sup> This is also an element of the "Hand of Man." Most of the Afrikaners were Calvinists and believed male children should inherit equally.<sup>717</sup> Lewis explains that the land became smaller the more it was divided and soon overpopulated, to the extent that many whites were finding it difficult to make a living.<sup>718</sup> Boer families were large – it was not unusual to have eight to ten children and when they grew up, they wanted their own farms.<sup>719</sup> Van Jaarsveld further explains their conservatism, isolation and out-dated farming techniques required large pieces of land to produce enough for a family to survive. Linked to the fact that the borders were to close and more land being unavailable resulted in more and more whites becoming poor and destitute.<sup>720</sup> Examples of the impact of Roman Dutch Law can be seen in both novels *Droogte* and *Die plaasverdeling*. Through the division of land each son got his own smaller piece of land on which to farm.<sup>721</sup> Many would have been able to produce a meagre subsistence living from it. However, in both cases when the drought came the piece of land could not provide for them or their livestock.<sup>722</sup>

Due to isolation many whites had to learn other skills to survive, which they used for a while in the urban areas.<sup>723</sup> The Carnegie Commission explains that a considerable portion of the total labour of the farm was non-agricultural.<sup>724</sup> Many Afrikaners did not see any need for a proper education for their children and were even more reluctant in them receiving training in skills such as the industrial schools and thus they remained unemployable.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> E.J. Bottomley, *Poor white*, p. 33.; R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 37.

<sup>717</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 42.

<sup>718</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Voster 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*, p. 309. R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973, pp. 16-19.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304.

<sup>719</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa I. Gold and workers, 1886-1924*, p. 86.

<sup>720</sup> F.A. van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Voster 1652-1974: An introduction to the history of the Republic of South Africa*, p. 309.

<sup>721</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 14.; A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 268.

<sup>722</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 14.; A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 360 & 378.

<sup>723</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 66.

<sup>724</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 142.

<sup>725</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*, p. 319. and D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, p. 76.; R.A. Lewis, *A study of some aspects of the poor white*



There are many examples of a lack of proper education in the novels. In Jonker's *Die trekboer* Antonie's children do not go to school as they are on the road with him. His children help with the work concerning the livestock and diggings. The family moves around too much and the school is usually too far away.<sup>726</sup> In Van Bruggen's *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, after her mother's death the oldest of Bredenhand's daughters, at age 15, has been taken out of school to help look after the home and the younger children. She is forced to grow up and take responsibility before her time.<sup>727</sup> This was not an unusual custom and again relates to the "Hand of Man." In Van Bruggen's other novel *Ampie* schooling was also not a top priority. Ampie's own father is illiterate, which is evident when he needs to pretend that his hands are hurt and requires Ampie's help to sign his own name.<sup>728</sup> Ampie himself did not stay at school for long as he did not have the ability to grasp concepts as easily as the other children, even those younger than him and thus he became a little "wild."<sup>729</sup> In Hoogenhout's accounts of life at the diggings and especially his involvement in the education department, he is able to give some account of what the poor whites thought of having their children educated. Many girls did not remain at school and were taken out at an early age with barely the ability to read and write.<sup>730</sup> Other parents were of the opinion that their children had to learn in the same way and the exact same things as they did and left no room for developments or improvements.<sup>731</sup>

Although many poor whites were involved in selling alcohol illegally, many also participated in the consumption thereof. Especially those in the urban areas spent large portions of their earnings purchasing alcohol. Many confessed to drinking as an incentive to alleviate their suffering both physically and emotionally.<sup>732</sup> This addiction

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*problem in South Africa*, M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1973, p. 15.; E.J. Bottomley, *Poor white*, p. 33.; F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: From the distant past to the present day*, p. 304.

<sup>726</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 175.

<sup>727</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>728</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 61.

<sup>729</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 8.

<sup>730</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, 'Annie Losper' in *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, p. 3.

<sup>731</sup> P.I. Hoogenhout, 'Annie Losper' in *Op die delwerye: Vyf sketse uit die lewe*, p. 4.

<sup>732</sup> R.W. Wilcocks, *The Carnegie Commission: The poor white II*, pp. 84-85.

brought whole families into beggary and also broke up many homes.<sup>733</sup> This again was the "Hand (albeit alcoholic) of Man."

Many poor whites were looked down upon and regarded as "lazy" by educated Afrikaners. One witness told a member of the Carnegie Commission: "You feel, in a way, that they have let you down."<sup>734</sup> Laziness can also be directly linked to labour that some poor whites considered inferior work or "black work," and thus they would not work for the same wage or less than blacks.<sup>735</sup> Van Onselen states that this prevented many from obtaining work, which would have ensured some form of income.<sup>736</sup> For example during his investigation of the poor-white problem he came across two whites who were being paid six shillings a day to repair a road, but they then employed two blacks to do the work for them at three shillings a day while they sat and watched. Both groups were happy, and the poor whites considered it "good business" even though they earned considerably less than what they could have.<sup>737</sup> In another case M.E. Rothmann came across two very dirty sisters who lived in a one-room hut of the one woman's husband. Both were content to do nothing, not even clean themselves or their clothes and although obviously poor, with no work of their own except what could be done at home, they had employed a small black boy to do their cleaning.<sup>738</sup> Here again we see the "Hand of Man" (or woman) at play.

In both of Van Bruggen's novels, *Bywoners* and *Ampie*, reference is made to lazy poor whites. In *Bywoners*, as previously mentioned, Sitman is the laziest of all the *bywoners* and goes out of his way not to work. Even the other *bywoners* refer to him as lazy or having *luisiekte* (lazy-sickness) when he stays away from work and makes up weak excuses.<sup>739</sup> Even when Vry takes him back towards the end of the novel, when De Klerk decides to move back to town, mention is made that he still does not

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<sup>733</sup> M.E. Rothmann, *Carnegie Commission: The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white and society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>734</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 18.

<sup>735</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 340.

<sup>736</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 351.

<sup>737</sup> D. Harrison, *The white tribe of Africa: South Africa in perspective*, p. 76.

<sup>738</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>739</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 31.

pull his weight and avoids his obligations as a *bywoner*.<sup>740</sup> As indicated earlier in the novel *Ampie*, Ampie is well aware of how lazy his father is and reprimands him about it. He thus also realises that the reason they live the way they do is a result of this laziness. It is only when they move to the diggings that his father begins to help with the work by turning the machine that washes the stones and does some digging. It is more likely that the whole affair was considered team work.<sup>741</sup> In Lub's short stories, similar accounts can be seen of people not wanting to work with blacks or Chinese people or take orders from English-speakers and thus squandered good employment opportunities.<sup>742</sup>

The academic literature and the novels mention many causes for the poor-white problem related to both the "Hand of Man" and the "Hand of God." In integrating and comparing the fiction and non-fiction it shows that the authors and their novels are a valuable asset in describing the lives and causes of the poor-white problem, understanding and adding more realism to the accounts by historians and their narratives.

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<sup>740</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 75.

<sup>741</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, pp. 259 & 408-409.

<sup>742</sup> J. Lub, "A forgotten Voortrekker" in *Dark Johannesburg*. pp. 98-99.

## CHAPTER 6

### POOR-WHITE *VOLKSMOEDER*

As indicated in the outline of chapters, this chapter takes on a somewhat different format to the other chapters. It includes an overview of the more recent academic research on the white Afrikaans women which acts as a background to the analysis of the portrayal of poor-white Afrikaans women in the various novels.

#### 6.1 Women in the margins

When the term "poor white" is invoked often the first image that is conjured up is that of a poor-white man in tattered and dirty clothing, usually with a beard and a hat. The wrinkled brown skin and the hopelessness in his eyes portrays this stereotypical image. However, seldom does one think that this poor-white man has a wife and even children. For the most part, and until the latter part of the twentieth century, women and children, let alone poor-white women and children, were rarely the focus of academic study.<sup>743</sup> They are usually mentioned briefly as a passing thought and never a lot of detail is given about them. It was only after the 1970s that an interest in poor-white women as a separate entity emerged and revealed how women were used to create a national identity.<sup>744</sup>

The second part of the fifth volume of the Carnegie Commission is entitled "The mother and daughter of the poor family." However, true to form the title promises more than it delivers as it focuses on a number of cases representing different types of poor-white families and the different duties in the household. It also includes a description of the experiences that the author<sup>745</sup> had whilst conducting her interviews, yet she does not explain how she distinguished between the different types of poor whites. It includes broad explanations on the different birthing experiences of a range of types of poor-white women. Not surprisingly, this volume,

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<sup>743</sup> "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman." in V. Woolf, *A room of one's own*. London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992, p. 51.

<sup>744</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 53.; C. Saunders, *Writing History*, pp. 14 & 73.; W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004, pp. 11-13.

<sup>745</sup> M.E. Rothmann also a member of the Afrikaans Christian Women's Association (ACVV).

although written by a woman, endorses the male stereotype and conforms to the male paradigm of the time, and in this case, the *volksmoeder* image.

The Commission does, however, not refer to the *volksmoeder* specifically, but much of what is expected of the poor-white woman complies with the concept. She states that she had been strongly impressed with the idea that a lack of ability on the part of the mothers was a fundamental cause of retrogression and resulted in homes which could not withstand the pressure of adverse conditions. Unfortunately Rothmann does not give a lot of detail regarding the daily life and struggle faced by these poor-white women, but rather focuses on the family and the different levels of poverty. Most of the interviews are also done in the rural areas and do not represent the hardships of women living in the urban areas.<sup>746</sup> It is also important to note that the other authors of the Carnegie Commission, who were mostly Afrikaans, felt that these poor-white women no longer had the knowledge and support to fulfil their role as mothers. They argued strongly for education and social welfare in order that women might play their "rightful" role as part of a new modern Afrikaner nation.<sup>747</sup>

The subject of Afrikaans women and the *volksmoeder* concept has become a very popular topic of late. In terms of this chapter the following academics all contribute to this theme. Elsabe Brink's article entitled "Man-made women,"<sup>748</sup> explains the concept of the *volksmoeder*, where and how the term originated and what it was used for in terms of Afrikaner nationalism by nationalist organisations. It also considers the concept *volksmoeder* and how it was adapted to suit those women who had many of the traits - some of them poor-white women - but fell short in the eyes of those who endorsed this stereotype. The article by Louise Vincent entitled "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to

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<sup>746</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>747</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>748</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 1990.

1931"<sup>749</sup> examined the political role played by Afrikaner women at the start of the twentieth century and how the male-dominated society used the male-dominated construct of the *volksmoeder* to control these women's political aspirations and force them into subservient positions in society. A second article by Vincent entitled "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s,"<sup>750</sup> focuses on similar themes as Brink. However, she also points out how different classes shaped the *volksmoeder* icon. Vincent stresses that instead of breaking free of the restrictions the *volksmoeder* concept created, many working-class women, although poor, aspired to it and aligned themselves with many of its characteristics. Furthermore, they too wanted to belong to the *volk* and thus reinterpreted the concept to suit themselves. Marijke du Toits's article entitled "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929,"<sup>751</sup> states that women were consumers rather than producers of Afrikaans culture. Women, she argues, therefore became supporters of the male-constructed nationalist concept - the *volksmoeder*. The focus of her article is on the *Afrikaans Christelike Vroue Vereniging*<sup>752</sup> (ACVV) and demonstrates the entanglement of early Afrikaner nationalism with white Afrikaners circumscribed philanthropic ventures. She points out that while these ACVV women tried helping the poor whites they were simultaneously participating in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism. Maternalist discourse existed before the stereotype and the *volksmoeder* image was not a new construct, only one that now served a purpose. The women of this organisation drew on the *volksmoeder* concept, but sought to extend their sphere of action to play a role in social policy. The article by Elsie Cloete entitled "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender"<sup>753</sup> examines women in the broader Afrikaner culture and the role that was designed for them to "play" in the greater part of Afrikaner nationalism. Cloete focuses on the Afrikaners' cultural history and the development of them as a people struggling to define themselves. She further examines how the idea and role

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<sup>749</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, pp. 51-73.

<sup>750</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, pp. 61-78.

<sup>751</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, pp. 155-176.

<sup>752</sup> Translated as "Afrikaans Christian Women's Society." M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 155.

<sup>753</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, pp. 43-56.

of the *volksmoeder* was enforced and how women found themselves participating and conforming to the male paradigm.<sup>754</sup>

This chapter aims to compare how poor-white women feature in the novels as well as the academic literature. A comparison between these fictional and non-fictional sources creates a picture of the different types of poor-white women, what their daily lives constituted of and how they conformed or rebelled against the *volksmoeder* concept of the government. It is interesting to note that not unlike the pre-1970s academic work, very few of the selected novels represent poor-white women in the urban areas. However, women do feature in the novels concerned with the rural areas. Despite this they have some form of representation and thus a better understanding of what it was like to be a poor-white woman during the first half of the twentieth century emerges - or at least how the poor-white women were perceived and represented.

At this point it is important to once again note that by the 1930s 90% of poor whites were made up of Afrikaners.<sup>755</sup> This percentage includes women and children. In her article "Man-made women" Brink argues that it was in the first half of the twentieth century that Afrikaner women were placed into categories by the male-dominated society. This she claims was a means to control Afrikaner women by giving them some so-called "status," "honour" and "respectability" and use them to achieve their own ends. However, as soon as women did not conform or started to question their designated roles<sup>756</sup> as prescribed to them, these "privileges" could be withdrawn.<sup>757</sup> This was very typical of the Afrikaner patriarchal society.<sup>758</sup> One such category was the aforementioned *volksmoeder*,<sup>759</sup> which every Afrikaner woman (including poor-white women) had to aspire to be.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>754</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 45.

<sup>755</sup> J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>756</sup> In this case the *volksmoeder* role of being a certain type of woman in Afrikaner society.

<sup>757</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>758</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 45.

<sup>759</sup> Translated as "Mother of the Nation." E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>760</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 64.

The *volksmoeder* is an idealised image of white Afrikaner women. The term first appeared in South African historiography during the late nineteenth century. At first white Afrikaner women, who had moved with their families outside of the Cape Colony, were portrayed in a negative manner by the English in the 1860s and 1870s. However, with the mineral discoveries and in the aftermath of the Transvaal War (1881) this portrayal was countered with a more apologetic approach. These women were featured as symbols of courage, virtue, moral sensibility and political independence.<sup>761</sup> The image was soon used by other men to support missionary and philanthropic efforts, in the defence of the Boer republics before the Anglo-Boer War and to inspire other men during battle. After the War the suffering of these women, many of which landed up in concentration camps, and their heroism, patriotism and defiance of the British, augmented this image.<sup>762</sup>

The *volksmoeder* concept developed into a distinctive role in the early decades of the twentieth century and was magnified by the results of the Anglo-Boer War and the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism. However, the concept originated in the nineteenth century with the portrayal of these women in the Great Trek.<sup>763</sup> There is no precise definition of this concept, but it incorporated a clear role model for Afrikaner women.<sup>764</sup> The *volksmoeder* was essentially the notion of ideal womanhood, which had been strongly influenced by Victorian domestic ideology in Britain and which was based on middle-class morals and values.<sup>765</sup> The mother of the nation myth in Afrikaner nationalism echoed the eugenics movement in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century which called upon women to perform their duty to prevent the decline of the imperial nation and the deterioration of the race. This call was issued to awaken women to their obligations towards their families and their

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<sup>761</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 276.

<sup>762</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 155.; E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 274.; L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 64.

<sup>763</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 274-275.

<sup>764</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 290.

<sup>765</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 274.



*volk*.<sup>766</sup> These carefully constructed images of the *volksmoeder*, which in turn fulfilled the role of a master-symbol, remained imprinted in the minds of the Afrikaner *volk*. Cloete claims this concept was to unite the *volk* further.<sup>767</sup>

As indicated, it was at the end of the nineteenth century that the new historiography gave marginalised groups including Afrikaner women greater and more favourable attention. It was the trials, hardships, heroism, patriotism and the defiance these women underwent during the "Groot Trek" (1830s) and the "Anglo-Boere Oorlog" which further added to this notion.<sup>768</sup> Their actions and deeds were recorded and published by others such as Emily Hobhouse and this further broadened the range of characteristics ascribed to the *volksmoeder*.<sup>769</sup> Authors such as Willem Postma,<sup>770</sup> a Free State journalist and an advocate for Afrikaner nationalism, and Eric Stockenstom,<sup>771</sup> a historian, also emphasised the role of the *volksmoeder* as a role model for young girls. Her characteristics included a sense of religion, bravery, love of freedom, the spirit of sacrifice, self-reliance, housewifeliness, nurturance of talents, integrity, virtue and setting an example to others.

## 6.2 "Volksmoeder" in the novels

Fiction by Afrikaans authors of the time also persistently reflect on this image of the *volksmoeder*. Generally speaking, the poor-white women are juxtapositioned or compared to this so-called "ideal" status. In the novel *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*<sup>772</sup> by Van Bruggen, Lambertus Bredenhend is a widower who has four children.<sup>773</sup> He is looking for a new wife to be a mother for his children. Bredenhend has his eye on a much younger woman - Dirkie.<sup>774</sup> He makes his feelings known to her, but she puts him off by telling him she wants a family of her own and that she is

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<sup>766</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 65.

<sup>767</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>768</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>769</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 277-279.

<sup>770</sup> W. Postma, *Die Boervrou, moeder van haar volk*. Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1922.

<sup>771</sup> E. Stockenstom, *Die vrou in die geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse volk: 'n Beknopte oorsig van die rol wat die vrou in die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika gespeel het in die 350 jaar tussen 1568 en 1918*. Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1921.

<sup>772</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1938.

<sup>773</sup> See Chapter 3 and 4 for synopsis.

<sup>774</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, pp. 3-4.

tired of raising other people's children (here she refers to her sister's children) and does not want to go into a marriage and struggle in poverty from the outset.<sup>775</sup> However, after the death of one of his sons she feels compelled to marry him and take on the role of mother to his children. She feels partly responsible for the neglect of the children which had actually led to the little boy's death, this and the fact that the news of the boy's illness reached him when he was visiting and courting her.<sup>776</sup> In this novel the author presents the reader with the dire consequences of what may happen if one ignores or denies the so-called "mothering instincts" inherent to the *volksmoeder* image. However, Van Bruggen "saves" Dirkie when she agrees to marry Bredenhand literally at the deathbed of his son. The author comments: Selfverwyt praat heftig in haar gewete... (Self-reproach weighs heavily in her conscience....).<sup>777</sup>

This represents a type of spirit of sacrifice (she sacrifices having children of her own) and thus she is redeemed and can be seen as a type of *volksmoeder* - putting the needs of the children and family - and *volk* - before herself.

In another novel by Jonker *Die plaasverdeling*<sup>778</sup> Antonie's wife Bekka is represented as the ultimate *volksmoeder*. She is described as putting her family before herself and being devoted to their well being. She does not question the authority of her husband and is a very good house wife that takes care of her home and children. Antonie respects her greatly as a mother and feels she has a very good and positive influence over their children.<sup>779</sup>

Bekka moet maar net vir hom en die kinders aangee en het byna nie tyd om in haar eie behoefte te voorsien nie.<sup>780</sup>

(Bekka must just provide for him and the children and almost does not have time to see to her own needs.)

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<sup>775</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, pp. 8-10 & 84.

<sup>776</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, pp. 103 & 111-113.

<sup>777</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*, p. 112.

<sup>778</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1932.

<sup>779</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, pp. 26-35.

<sup>780</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 26.

Dit is vir hom eenvoudig 'n ononstootlike waarheid dat solank as die kinders maar net in haar nabyheid is, daar niks met hulle verkeerd kan wees of gaan nie.<sup>781</sup>

(It is for him a simple truth that as long as the children are near her nothing can or will go wrong with them.)

Bekka het nooit aan die kinders geslaan nie...<sup>782</sup>

(Bekka has never given the children a hiding...)

Uit Bekka se wese straal daar so 'n geheimsinnige invloed wat kwaad afweer en ongehoorsaamheid uit hulle verban. Saam met haar sal hy hulle in die groot see vertrou, en dit sê baie, want Antonie het nog nooit die see gesien nie.<sup>783</sup>

(From Bekka's being shines a mysterious influence over the children that prevents naughtiness and misbehaviour. He would trust the children in her care on the big sea, and that is saying something, because Antonie has never even seen the sea.)

... Hoe sy vanoggend toe hy weg is, geswoeg en geslaaf het om alles aan die kant te maak, hoe sy self die wasgoed gaan uitklop het by die rivier omdat sy graag alles self wil doen en weet dat dit goed gedoen is. En toe het sy die hele middag gesit en naai en stop.<sup>784</sup>

(When he left this morning she slaved away to tidy up, how she took the washing to the river to clean because she wants to do everything herself to ensure it is done well. And then she sat the whole afternoon sewing and mending.)

Although they are not well-off she does not resent her husband, but tries her best to make do.<sup>785</sup> It is only later in the second novel, *Die trekboer*,<sup>786</sup> that she not only continues to be devoted to her home and children, but starts to take control of the family in a patriarchal role because Antonie is becoming an increasingly pathetic character.<sup>787</sup> This is ironic as this is exactly what an Afrikaner mothers' role is

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<sup>781</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 29.

<sup>782</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 29.

<sup>783</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 30.

<sup>784</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 31.

<sup>785</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die plaasverdeling*, p. 40.

<sup>786</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1934.

<sup>787</sup> See Chapter 2, 4 & 5 for the synopsis.

portrayed as in the *De Kat* article of the Briel family. The mothers' role was traditionally that of homemaker, physical provider and supporter of moral and religious values. She was the binding factor in the family, the father was the patriarchal bread-winner. However, with poverty and urbanisation the mother's role also shifted to that of bread-winner and she was forced into unskilled labour in addition to her household duties in order to support the family.<sup>788</sup>

Writing at the time Postma and Stockenstom further extended the notion of "ideal womanhood" to expand from her home and family to include the *volk*. According to them these women were the mothers of the future Afrikaner nation.<sup>789</sup> Thus, their highest calling and greatest fulfilment was to be found in their own home - physically and morally reproducing the nation.<sup>790</sup> Organisations such as the *Ossewabrandwag* (1938) also argued that a woman's place was in her home, with a large family and that political involvement and employment was of secondary importance.<sup>791</sup> Likewise, members of the *Ossewabrandwag* argued that women who were guilty of not doing this would eschew narrow personal ambitions rather than seek the good of the *volk*.<sup>792</sup> White working-class women who were playing an economic role outside of the home were regarded as inherently a *bedreiging* (threat) to the Afrikaner patriarchy.<sup>793</sup> We see the place of women as essentially and preferably in the home underlined in many of the novels. Afrikaner intellectuals proposed "good motherhood" as the solution to the poor-white problem.<sup>794</sup>

As shown earlier in the novels *Die plaasverdeling* and *Die trekboer*, Bekka represents this kind of woman who in the end had five children and worked a bit, but

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<sup>788</sup> E. Pretorius, "Die Briels: Smartlappe en tranetrekters van weleer", *De Kat*, 4(2), 1988, pp. 18-22.

<sup>789</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 280.

<sup>790</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 64.

<sup>791</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 70.

<sup>792</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 70.

<sup>793</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p. 9.

<sup>794</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 73.

was mostly at home with them.<sup>795</sup> However, later in *Die trekboer* Bekka decides to take control of the family's money and becomes head of the household thereby almost overstepping the *volksmoeder* paradigm. This happens when she sees Antonie fail and the family suffer, thus she decides to also take part in decision making with regards to monetary issues and the future of the family, rather than following blindly as before.<sup>796</sup> In contrast, in Van den Heever's novel *Droogte*,<sup>797</sup> the teacher's wife's friend, Joey Schoeman, goes to visit the family in the rural area. She is from the urban area and appears very different and even scandalous to the people in the rural area.<sup>798</sup> She is described as:

...'n vroumens wat soos 'n man sigrets rook en gedurig aan haar ou rokkie onder en bo moet pluk om tog 'n stukkie van haar lyf toe te kry. En die onbeskaamheid wat die mens het... sy ry wydsbeen op mnr. Hendriks se perd alleen in die veld rond...<sup>799</sup>

(...a woman that smokes cigarettes like a man and has to pull the top and bottom of her dress to cover some part of her body. And she has no shame... she sits astride Mr Hendrick's horse and rides it alone in the veld...)

Furthermore, Joey is very opinionated and believes in women's rights. She also feels that the people in the rural area are backward especially if they believe a woman's place is at home.<sup>800</sup> When Mr Hendrick's, the teacher, asks her whether as an urbanised, educated, cosmopolitan and open-minded woman she thinks she is better off than for example her mother's generation. Her reply is:

"Ja ek sal jolly well so dink. Ons moeders het swaar genoeg gekry... die boeremense hier behandel hulle vrouens soos meide<sup>801</sup>..."<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 2 & 148.

<sup>796</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 156 & 186.

<sup>797</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*. Pretoria: Van Scaik, 1930.

<sup>798</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>799</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 117.

<sup>800</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 119.

<sup>801</sup> A derogatory term which refers to a domestic worker of colour.

<sup>802</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 119.

(Yes I jolly well think so. Our mothers suffered enough... the Afrikaners here treat their women like maids...)

He also asks whether she thinks her generation will do more for the country. Her reply is:

"Ek sou so dink, hulle het nooit 'n chance gehad nie"<sup>803</sup>  
(I would think so, they never ever had a chance.)

It is interesting to note in Van den Heever's portrayal of Joey she uses English parochial slang in her Afrikaans language ("enjoy," "jolly well" and "chance") which is another indication of her urbanisation and estrangement from the rural *volksmoeder* image.<sup>804</sup> When questioned about her mixed language Joey Schoeman in Van den Heever's *Droogte* states "What Afrikaans, it is no language. You should rather read English, then you will know what is happening in other countries. Afrikaans does not even have a literature."<sup>805</sup> This is the type of women the government either wanted to change or to shame as they did not conform to the *volksmoeder* criteria.

It is important to note that there were major differences between the people from the rural areas and the urban areas. These differences are mostly cultural. Many of the people who lived in the urban areas were exposed to a more cosmopolitan outlook and were influenced by many of the foreign immigrants that came to South Africa in terms of dress, language and mannerisms.<sup>806</sup> The people who lived in the rural areas were very steadfast in their traditions and in many areas very isolated, which left very little room for change.<sup>807</sup> The isolation cut them off from the modern world and caused them to become imprisoned by cultural habits.<sup>808</sup> According to the Carnegie Commission many poor whites who had moved to the urban areas confessed that they would have moved back to the rural areas if there was any chance for them

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<sup>803</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 120.

<sup>804</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 119.

<sup>805</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 120.

<sup>806</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 2.; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa I: Gold and workers, 1886-1924*, p. 28.

<sup>807</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white and society V*, p. 11.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 12.

<sup>808</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 42.

there. It was the urban areas that changed the lives of many people and many of the rural people did not like the changes.<sup>809</sup> This thus is evident both in the Carnegie Commission as well as the novels.

As described by Brink, the works of Postma and Stockenstom clearly reflect on how the notion of idealised Afrikaner womanhood had an influence on Afrikaner popular culture.<sup>810</sup> In her article "Bread and honour" Vincent explains that women were featured prominently in Afrikaans literature during the Second Afrikaans Language Movement. The Great Trek, the Battle of Blood River, the Anglo-Boer War were also favourite time periods in which to place their female characters. Women were depicted as tough and self-sufficient and it was these legendary women who were used as the embodiment of the *volksmoeder* traits.<sup>811</sup> These types of women feature as characters in a number of the selected novels such as *Die plaasverdeling*, *Die trekboer* and *Die Springkaanbeampte van Sluis*. It was this image portrayed in the novels and also emphasised in Afrikaans magazines that working-class women would be exposed to. Thus an Afrikaner identity permeated the reading of the Afrikaner working-class woman pointing them to the position of *volksmoeder* that they should aspire to.<sup>812</sup>

After the Anglo-Boer War the women and the suffering they endured remained at the forefront of popular consciousness.<sup>813</sup> Many men returned after the War to find that their wives and children had been placed in concentration camps<sup>814</sup> and of those that survived many had suffered due to the scorched-earth policy on their farms. According to Brink the *volksmoeder* concept was open to a central unifying force within Afrikanerdom and it was expected to fulfil a political role as well.<sup>815</sup> Brink further argues that the idealised Afrikaner woman was to play an important role in

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<sup>809</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, p. 118.

<sup>810</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 283.

<sup>811</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 64.

<sup>812</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 156.

<sup>813</sup> This can be seen in the light of the opening of the Women's monument in 1913 and in the Voortrekker centenary in 1938.

<sup>814</sup> It is important to note as mentioned in Chapter 5, 26 000 women and children died in the concentration camps.

<sup>815</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 273.

Afrikaner nationalism, which emerged during the first half of the twentieth century. It would add an extra dimension to these developments which augmented the approach with which the Afrikaner community was imagined and the role the new generation was to play.<sup>816</sup> In her article "Afrikaner identity: Culture, Tradition and Gender" Elsie Cloete explains that this was a time of poverty among most Afrikaners and a time where the Afrikaners had to rebuild themselves and their image. Later when poverty was "conquered" and Afrikaner nationalism was achieved, the *volksmoeder* became redundant and she, the *volksmoeder*, no longer had such a significant role to play.<sup>817</sup>

However, according to Brink, the suffering endured and the strength of character that developed among Afrikaner women during the time of obtaining their freedom from the British in terms of the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War, was to serve a political purpose. Thus there is a definite link between the development of the ideal of *volksmoeder* and Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>818</sup> By active involvement in all aspects of Afrikaner life, such as language, culture and religion, Afrikaner nationalism was sold as a device that placed the good of the nation above politics. The nationalist goal was not political power, but rather the birth of a nation.<sup>819</sup> Brink claims that these women would be regarded as "mothers of the nation" and their moral value would represent the nation at large.<sup>820</sup> It was a deliberately constructed ideal using women to become part of the Afrikaner nationalist mythology.<sup>821</sup> Cloete adds that the idea also extended to school text books, which explained through the history of these women what it was to be a *volksmoeder* and the importance for the *volk* as well.<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>816</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 274.

<sup>817</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 48.

<sup>818</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 278.

<sup>819</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, pp. 64-67.

<sup>820</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 281.

<sup>821</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 290.

<sup>822</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 47.



These women were expected to sublimate themselves and collaborate in the establishment of Afrikaner nationalism's *volks-utopia*.<sup>823</sup> The use of this *volksmoeder* concept gave women a distinctive set of roles usually associated with respect, admiration and importance, but were limiting. Thus the *volksmoeder* figure is paradoxical and inconsistent. The "power" of motherhood is acknowledged, however, the justification of limiting this power and sending women back home is as well.<sup>824</sup> Cloete states that they were stripped of their heroic past, whereby they fought alongside the men and pushed and pulled wagons to rather being represented as frail, defenceless, tender, delicate and weak.<sup>825</sup> This was the preferred image of the Afrikaner woman despite her strengths. According to Marijke du Toit, the *volksmoeder* image was a construction by Afrikaans men to fulfil a role, which was also constructed by men.<sup>826</sup> The women were now needed to play this role whereas before their contributions were usually behind the scenes.<sup>827</sup>

As mentioned, women were featured prominently in Afrikaans literature during the Second Afrikaans Language Movement (after the Anglo-Boer War 1902). Women were depicted as tough and self-sufficient and it was these legendary women who were used as the embodiment of the *volksmoeder* traits.<sup>828</sup> These types of women even made it into the Realist novels about poor whites during the first half of the twentieth century. It could be argued the some of the authors considered the government's ideologies important and in some cases this may have been implemented and promoted in the novels, as is the case with the *volksmoeder*. In some of the selected novels for this study the fiction reveals these types of women, who although poor and are struggling to survive, are the embodiment of the *volksmoeder*. They put their family and home first and remained religious and honourable.

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<sup>823</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 45.

<sup>824</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 72.

<sup>825</sup> E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, pp. 48-49.

<sup>826</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, pp. 156 & 158.

<sup>827</sup> J. Grobler, "Volksmoeders in verset: Afrikanervroue-optogte in Pretoria, 1915 en 1940", *African Journals Online*, 23(1), 2009, pp. 53-54.

<sup>828</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 64.

However, there were others, including women themselves, who began writing about Afrikaner women from the early decades of the twentieth century. One such woman was Marie du Toit who in her 1921 book "*Vrou en feminist - Of iets oor die vroue-vraagstuk*" (Woman and feminist - Or something regarding the question of women)<sup>829</sup> challenged the generally accepted notions of womanhood. Her work was not popular<sup>830</sup> and never became mainstream and therefore remained virtually unknown.<sup>831</sup> Women were therefore generally silent whilst men shaped and determined the image of Afrikaner womanhood and motherhood. The middle-class women seemed to accept their constructed role without question.<sup>832</sup>

Women did receive attention in other academic studies by women. These were concerned with the idealised lives of women. Marie Du Toit's study was overshadowed by the poor-white problem, which dominated academic literature and public interest. M.E. Rothmann (MER) was one of the five Carnegie Commission's commissioners to investigate the poor-white problem. Her focus was, as indicated, on the mothers and daughters and focused on the plights of the impoverished women across South Africa. Although women did not feature as a separate category, her study was considered so important that it was decided to publish it as a separate whole. Thus it formed part of the fifth volume of the Carnegie Commission entitled: "The mother and daughter of the poor family."<sup>833</sup> Much of her work endorsed the *volksmoeder* stereotype as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Hansi Pollak<sup>834</sup> investigated the working conditions of white women on the Witwatersrand during the depression and during the 1930s, while Erika Theron<sup>835</sup> conducted a similar

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<sup>829</sup> M. du Toit, *Vrou en feminist - Of iets oor die vroue-vraagstuk*. Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1921.

<sup>830</sup> Her work was, however, mentioned under the women's section of *Die Huisgenoot* who also encouraged its readers to get acquainted with it. Her ideas were ahead of their time and questioned women's positions in the world. It would have been a big eye opener to many. It must be noted that although this source featured in *Die Huisgenoot* it only did so in the specific section dedicated to women and not in the novel section at all. The reference to this article is: Anonymous, "n Belangrike boek", *Die Huisgenoot*, 6(67), November 1921, pp. 275-276.

<sup>831</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 281.

<sup>832</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, pp. 156-157.

<sup>833</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>834</sup> H.P. Pollak, "Women workers in Witwatersrand industries", *South African Journal of Economics*, 1(1), 1933, pp. 58-68.

<sup>835</sup> E. Theron, *Fabriekwerksters in Kaapstad: 'n Sosiologiese studie van 540 blanke en kleurlingfabriekwerksters*, D. Phil. verhandeling, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1942.

investigation into the lives of coloured and white women factory workers in Cape Town.<sup>836</sup> These female academic authors reveal that there were other notions about women besides the stereotype which complied with Afrikaner nationalism. There was the depiction of women in a more academic, realistic and more accurate and inclusive manner. It is also striking that the writers writing about the idealised *volksmoeder* tended to be predominately and exclusively male, whilst the writers writing about the difficulties and plights of women tended to be female.<sup>837</sup> It can be argued that the literature or the ideas that stemmed from the novelists also had an impact on society. Thus it is not surprising that some of these ideas made their way into the novels and influenced a wider selection of readers through the nature of the female characters.

It must be noted that not all the female characters were portrayed as the *volksmoeder* type. The *volksmoeder* ideal applied mostly to middle-class Afrikaner women and with so many poor whites at the time this middle-class *volksmoeder* group was probably a much smaller group, with the larger poorer group trying to aspire to it.<sup>838</sup>

Poverty was an ever-escalating problem in the rural areas and has been discussed at length by a range of academics such as Callinicos, J. Bottomley, Van Onselen and Giliomee to name but a few.<sup>839</sup> Many young women in the rural areas had no choice but to leave the farms and move to the urban areas.<sup>840</sup> Thus a large number of white working-class women entered the urban areas and engaged in wage labour a whole generation before many of the male members of their families did.<sup>841</sup> Here many could earn a living and try to send something home to the rural area to help

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<sup>836</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>837</sup> It is further interesting to note that the majority writing about women's history at the end of the twentieth century and currently in the twenty first-century tends to be women as well.

<sup>838</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 274.

<sup>839</sup> The causes and reasons thereof are explained in chapter 5.

<sup>840</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>841</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p. 9.

matters there.<sup>842</sup> A perfect example in the novels can be seen in Van Bruggen's *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*.<sup>843</sup> "Tant" Levina and uncle Lood's daughter, Levina desperately wants to leave the boredom of the rural area and go to the urban area to live and work. She tries to convince her parents who are struggling to make a living to allow her to go and promises to send money home to help them.<sup>844</sup>

Gedurig het sy toe vir haar ouers gesoebat om na tant Annie hulle te gaan om daar 'n verdienste te soek; dan sou sy tog ook elke maand so 'n kleinigheidjie kan opstuur.<sup>845</sup>

(She constantly begged her parents to let her go to aunt Annie and then to look for work. Then she could send something home every month.)

"Ek sal pa elke maand iets stuur!"

("I will send father something every month.")

This was the case with many young women who came from poor families.

The novels also reflect on the growing number of both white men and women from the rural areas who were driven to the towns and cities by a combination of rural distress on the one hand and urban opportunities on the other. Thus push and pull factors played a role in the decision to leave the rural areas and move to the urban areas.<sup>846</sup> It was not only the lack of opportunities for employment that pushed young people to the urban areas, but certain pull factors were also evident as can be seen in the novel *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*. These included:

Die vryheid om orals te kan rondgaan met 'n galant jonkêrel - bioskope en teaters, danspartye so amper al om die ander dag... "en ek sal jou guarantee, my niggie, dat jy binne drie dae 'n flukse jongkêrel het, wat vir jou treat met alles wat jy begeer."<sup>847</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 219.

<sup>843</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*. Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1936.

<sup>844</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 15 & 17.

<sup>845</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 15.

<sup>846</sup> E.L.P. Stals (red.), *Afrikaners in die goudstad I 1886-1924*, pp. 33-38.

<sup>847</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 11.

(The freedom to go around with a gallant young man - the bioscopes, theatres, dance parties every other day "and I guarantee you, my cousin, you will have a handsome young man within three days who will treat you to everything your heart desires.")

She also mentioned the commodities available, fashions, the social life and other so-called luxuries not available in the rural areas.

The 1916 drought uprooted thousands of *bywoners* from the rural areas and in 1917 the largest concentration of these poor whites were found on the Witwatersrand. The industrial expansion and growth in employment opportunities there created some hope of relief.<sup>848</sup> However, many of these *bywoners* were ill-equipped and lacked the necessary skills to find employment. According to Vincent, they struggled to find employment and by 1933 about 190 000 were in search of work. It thus fell to the women to find employment to ensure the survival of their families.<sup>849</sup> A good example is in Van Bruggen's novel *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, where Levina is able to find work whilst Harry is not.<sup>850</sup> After the Great Depression urban white unemployment soared but industries employing white women continued to expand even during the worst periods of the economic disaster.<sup>851</sup> In the urban areas women's wages were very important and their income often kept their families from starving.<sup>852</sup> Many women thus had to return to the factories after marriage and in many families the woman became the principal wage earners.<sup>853</sup> However, in some cases it was not only society at large that looked down on the working woman, but in some cases, as with Ampie, the husbands would not allow it. Anekie tells Ampie that she will go work and make herself useful to earn a living for the family and that Ampie will have to look after their child. Ampie's reply is:

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<sup>848</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, p. 291.

<sup>849</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 62.

<sup>850</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp.103-105.

<sup>851</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>852</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>853</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p. 10.

"Ek sal dit mos nooit toelaat nie... Dan meen jy te sê dat ek te sleg is om vir julle te sorg?"<sup>854</sup>

("I will never allow it... Then you mean to say I am not good enough to care for you both?")

At this time there were many prominent ideologues, such as Dr J.D. Kestell,<sup>855</sup> who argued it was wrong of these women to leave the rural areas and that the rural way of life was intrinsic to Afrikanerdom. They argued cities were full of moral threat and the danger of Anglicisation.<sup>856</sup> Besides the aforementioned description of Joey, we also find that Johannesburg was described as a new type of biblical Babylon and Nineveh - as is seen in the title of Van Onselen's book.<sup>857</sup> In the article on the Briel family it states that in the years of poverty and misery in the urban areas (the first half of the twentieth century) and particularly in Johannesburg, conservative Afrikaners were exposed to social evils. Thus many referred to Johannesburg as "Judasburg," "Rampokkerstad," and "Sodom and Gomorra."<sup>858</sup> In *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* neither "tant" Levina nor uncle Lood want to allow their daughter to go work in the urban area - Johannesburg. They view it as a "*gevaarlike plek*" (dangerous place) "*vol boese*" (full of evil). Later in the novel he states: "Johanneburg maak ons boere skelm." ("Johanneburg makes us *boere* devious.")<sup>859</sup>

Her parents finally give in knowing she will be living with her aunt. Her father prays for her:

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<sup>854</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 253.

<sup>855</sup> Eminent Dutch Reformed churchman J.D. Kestell was a leading figure in the formation of the Afrikaner nationalist cultural mythology. In 1916, he was appointed chairman of the Dutch Reformed Church's Bible translation project. In 1920, he became rector of Grey College, Bloemfontein where he did all he could to make this institution Afrikaner in character'. He was one of the key-note speakers at the Great Trek centenary festivities in 1938.

<sup>856</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 66.

<sup>857</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, new Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914*. Johannesburg, 2001.

<sup>858</sup> E. Pretorius, "Die Briels: Smartlappe en tranetrekters van weleer", *De Kat*, 4(2), 1988, p. 19.

<sup>859</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 98.

... as hy die liewe Here vra om sy kind, hulle dierbare kind, onder Sy hoede te neem en te bewaar vir die verleiding van die groot wêreld.<sup>860</sup>

(... when he asks the good Lord to look after their precious child, and to take her under His care and to protect her from the temptations of the big world.)

Levina's uncle warns them of the "sondige" (sinful) urban area and the dangers of letting her go, but it is too late as she had already left.<sup>861</sup> However, the reader is soon made aware that Levina does not keep to her promises and her morals change. Ultimately her uncle feels he should have warned them earlier.<sup>862</sup> Urban life impacts on her as she writes less often and does not send money home due to all her own expenses.<sup>863</sup> Her parents receive a letter from her informing them that she has moved from her aunts and has married to a man called Harry Peach.<sup>864</sup> They go to the big city to see her and leave satisfied that she is well taken care of.<sup>865</sup> However, later the reader discovers that this marriage with a "special licence" was a fraud. Harry did not marry her, although he promised to and then he lost everything. They had to move to a small room and she worked doing washing and ironing for strangers to help them survive. She also becomes pregnant. Harry soon leaves her to join the First World War to earn a living for himself. She finally has to return to her parents and confess everything.<sup>866</sup> She is now a broken spirit and does not live long after childbirth.<sup>867</sup> Thus this novel serves as a warning of what could happen when sending a young naive girl from the rural area to the urban area.

This trend was fairly prevalent, but did not include all white working-class women. To compensate for the poverty in the rural areas and on the farms many parents sent their daughters to seek work in the urban areas to supplement the family's income.<sup>868</sup> According to Van Onselen many of these young women entered domestic services, factories, dress-making concerns, bottling plants and hand-laundries. These menial

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<sup>860</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 18 & 72-73.

<sup>861</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 49-52.

<sup>862</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 63.

<sup>863</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 23 & 25-26.

<sup>864</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 61-63.

<sup>865</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 73-80.

<sup>866</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 95-105.

<sup>867</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>868</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p. 9.

jobs, he argues, did not offer a solution as they were paid very little. This, Van Onselen explains, pushed many young, poor-white women into the company of older and more experienced male labourers, which led to promiscuous behaviour and casual prostitution. He further states that by the depression years this behaviour resulted in many young, poor-white women making a career of prostitution with many of them being merely young teenagers.<sup>869</sup> Others also resorted to illegal brewing and selling of alcohol as well as the illicit trafficking of alcohol, which if caught caused many to land in prison. A large number of poor whites, including the women, fell into beggary due to this problem.<sup>870</sup>

Vincent states that regardless of the hardships these young women and their families were facing in the rural areas due to factors such as failed crops and debt, among other things, they had little choice other than to cope with reality and present circumstances and find work to support themselves and even their families.<sup>871</sup> The first half of the twentieth century was a time of dramatic social change and this transition to industrial capitalism saw many changes in the economic role of women.<sup>872</sup> The First World War was a key impetus for secondary industries many of which used cheap female labour coming from the rural areas. The clothing or garment industry was by far the biggest and it created opportunities for women to enter the labour market.<sup>873</sup> For many this was an important means of income which was necessitated by the loss of a subsistence way of life and one in which many continued to work in throughout the depressions of 1925-1933.<sup>874</sup> However, women also found employment in other sectors such as teachers, civil servants, nurses, religious workers, clerks, typists, in the service industry, in business and even in agriculture. By 1926 about 15% of the white women in South Africa worked outside

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<sup>869</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 159.

<sup>870</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white and society V*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>871</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 67.

<sup>872</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 291.; L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 61.

<sup>873</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 280.

<sup>874</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, pp. 61-62.



of their homes.<sup>875</sup> There were thus many different types of work for women in the urban areas.

In the novels many examples exist of women working in different occupations. In Lub's *Dark Johannesburg*<sup>876</sup> in the story entitled "Simple Folk," the washer woman's daughter is a shorthand typist.<sup>877</sup> In another short story "Trapped" women sell fruit to make a living<sup>878</sup> and in "Dark Johannesburg" the reader is introduced to a woman warden who used to be a nurse.<sup>879</sup> As mentioned earlier in Van Bruggen's *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, Levina also becomes a washer woman in the urban area after working in a sweet factory with her cousin.<sup>880</sup>

The conditions in which many of these working women lived were very rudimentary and limited. The small living they made meant that many could not send any money home and had barely enough to live on themselves. The conditions in the urban areas were far worse than many of them had anticipated.<sup>881</sup> According to Callinicos's research on the period after the depression in 1932, young women working as garment workers there were often paid very poorly. They came from the rural areas and there were often four sharing a room with one bed, which they took turns sleeping on. There was very little money for food and clothing and they had to often go hungry to make up for other necessities. This in turn caused malnutrition and sickness. Many had to subsidise their accommodation expenses by also working for people in their spare time.<sup>882</sup> As already referred to in *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* after Levina had lost everything and had to resort to living in a room with very little furnishings, she found work washing and ironing for strangers in order to make some money to support herself and Harry. She made many sacrifices to give

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<sup>875</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 62.

<sup>876</sup> J. Lub, *Dark Johannesburg*. Potchefstroom: Het Westen Printing Works, 1912.

<sup>877</sup> J. Lub, "Simple Folk" in *Dark Johannesburg*. pp. 72-73.

<sup>878</sup> J. Lub, "Trapped" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 163.

<sup>879</sup> J. Lub, "Dark Johannesburg" in *Dark Johannesburg*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>880</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p.103.

<sup>881</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 66.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 218.; L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, pp. 146 & 183-184.

<sup>882</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 205.

him what he required. With all the hardships she lost a lot of weight and even when he left her she tried to carry on supporting herself until she realised she was pregnant and returned home to her family.<sup>883</sup>

White women received a much smaller wage than white men. It was usually similar to that of a black man and the same reasoning was used - that they only needed to support themselves and not a family. This happened regardless of whether the woman's earnings was the only source of income. During the industrial boom of the 1930s the bias against women was accentuated as all men from all races fared better.<sup>884</sup>

Already by the 1880s, middle-class white women were promoting charity work among poor whites as part of a feminist movement to modernise the Afrikaner mother.<sup>885</sup> Women's organisations each held different views regarding the concept of the *volksmoeder*. The *Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie*<sup>886</sup> (SAVF) established in 1904, included a number of middle-class women who were sanctioned by the state as they undertook a number of welfare functions voluntarily. The state therefore did not have to pay them. They used the concept of the *volksmoeder* to underpin their work on the welfare front. The SAVF found confirmation of this in the works of W. Postma and E. Stockenstom. Although the work done by these women itself was a contradiction (being middle class and not needing to work outside the home) they justified their efforts with causes such as racial purity, the dangers of miscegenation and the degeneration of the poor whites. The "nobility" of the suffering poor whites was praised, but a hopeless picture was drawn of the shy, alienated, sensitive, poverty-stricken, sometimes backward and usually hopeless little woman with neither initiative nor ambition. In Van Bruggen's novel *Ampie die Trilogie*<sup>887</sup> Ampie's mother is described in a similar way:

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<sup>883</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 103-105.

<sup>884</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, p. 291.

<sup>885</sup> G. Davie, *Poverty knowledge in South Africa: A social history of human science, 1855-2005*, p. 42.

<sup>886</sup> This organisation was formed after the Anglo-Boer War by Georgina Solomon and General Louis Botha's wife who wanted to help those Afrikaners that fell into poverty as a result of the War and the growing national need. The first *volks* organisation was founded on 19 October 1904 to help their fellow Afrikaners stand on their own feet again. It has subsequently expanded since then to include branches all over South Africa.

<sup>887</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1965.

... sy is tam... Haar simpele onderworpenheid is te gewend aan ongerief en wanorde en kindergeraas dat dit haar kan hinder. En dit is vir haar 'n geluk dat sy simpel is in daardie omstandigheid, want sy voel tevrede in die roue werklikheid om haar heen.<sup>888</sup>

(... she is weary... Her simple submissiveness is accustomed to the inconvenience, and disorder and the noise of children that it does not bother her. And it is lucky for her that she is a simpleton in these circumstances because she feels content in the raw reality that surrounds her.)

Even Ampie who is not normal himself describes her as a "simpleton."<sup>889</sup>

The goal of the SAVF was to elevate women to the position of *volksmoeder*, which they viewed as their own sphere of influence and work.<sup>890</sup> However, a working-class mother could never fulfil the role of *volksmoeder* regardless of how hard she may have struggled against poverty, although her position was to be respectable and thus very few actually achieved this.<sup>891</sup> This was the case with Joey Schoeman in Van den Heever's novel *Droogte*.<sup>892</sup> According to du Toit the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging* ACVV<sup>893</sup> which was also established in 1904 was very similar to the SAVF in its concept of the *volksmoeder*. However, the ACVV argued that the concept of the *volksmoeder* could not remain restricted. With the growing concern among Afrikaner nationalists regarding the poor whites the emphasis of the individual family had to be shifted where they would be able to help uplift the *volk* of the Afrikaner nation's poor as motherly figures dealing with a child.<sup>894</sup> Thus these welfare workers represented the *volksmoeder* and the poor whites represented her

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<sup>888</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 48.

<sup>889</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 11.

<sup>890</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 286-288.

<sup>891</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 274, 287-288.

<sup>892</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 114-120.

<sup>893</sup> The ACVV was the first formal welfare organisation in South Africa and was officially instituted in 1904. Much of the social work was done with the focus on the poor whites. They have expanded since and have branches all over South Africa.

<sup>894</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 155.

children - whom she needed to help and care for.<sup>895</sup> The ACVV realised that some women needed to work and that economic conditions had changed.<sup>896</sup> Thus like the SAVF, the ACVV were organisations that intervened on behalf of the poor whites by also doing charity work to help the nationalist cause on a voluntary basis.<sup>897</sup>

As mentioned there was an ever-increasing number of poor whites and thus it became more difficult for poor-white women to live up to the ideal and aspire to be a *volksmoeder*. There were, however, other organisations such as the Garment Worker's Union (GWU) that also represented women and their interests, but in a working sphere. These women believed that the term *volksmoeder* was not as narrow and rigid as the SAVF and ACVV claimed it to be. They believed the idea of the *volksmoeder* could also be used to describe themselves, despite the fact that they worked.<sup>898</sup> These working-class women did not automatically accept their prescribed role.<sup>899</sup> These Afrikaans women linked the struggles of the Voortrekker women with their own struggle in the industrial environment.<sup>900</sup> They drew on the sub-themes of the concept of the *volksmoeder* such as "resistance" and "courage."<sup>901</sup> They therefore reinterpreted the concept in a way that appealed to the working-class women, who also viewed themselves as part of the Afrikaner nation.<sup>902</sup>

Women with the best intentions also saw hard times and no other solution than to go work to provide for their families. The same happens in *Die trekboer* when Bekka decides to help to contribute money to the home, whilst they lived at the mine diggings. She sold meat to the diggers and their families and when they were on the

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<sup>895</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 172.

<sup>896</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, pp. 173-174.

<sup>897</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, pp. 64-65.

<sup>898</sup> E. Brink, "Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 287.

<sup>899</sup> S. Swart, "'Motherhood and otherhood' - gendered citizenship and Afrikaner women in the South African 1914 Rebellion", *African Historical Review*, 39 (2), 2007, p. 48.

<sup>900</sup> E. Brink, "Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 289-290.

<sup>901</sup> E. Brink, "Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>902</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 67.

move she and the children went to help Antonie with the harvesting of a farmer's field to bring in more money than if Antonie had worked alone.<sup>903</sup>

"Toe dan Antonie," sê Bekka so in die sny. "Dis net verniet dat ek van eergister af al Herklaas se plek by die sny ingeneem het... Ons moet roer..."<sup>904</sup>

("So then Antonie," says Bekka while she is cutting. "It is a good thing I came the day before yesterday to take Herklass' place with the cutting... We must hurry...")

Maar Bekka kyk nie eens om nie. Sy druk aanmekaar vorentoe.<sup>905</sup>

(But Bekka does not even look around. She keeps pushing on forward.)

Garment workers were scorned at for not being respectable, decent or virtuous and this image became part of the popular consciousness. They responded by pointing out that in the factories there were many decent and noble girls, who were not ashamed to earn an honest living working and demanded to be treated with respect.<sup>906</sup> This may have been how Levina in *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* first may have viewed herself when she went to work in a factory in the urban area before she got involved with Harry.<sup>907</sup> "Pa is verniet bang; ek sal goed na myself kyk!" ("Father, you worry unnecessarily; I will look well after myself!").<sup>908</sup>

Joey Schoeman in *Droogte* viewed women in the urban area as respectable and moving on with the times.<sup>909</sup> This ambivalence is evident in the following comment

"Miskien is dit ook maar beter dat hulle van baie van die moderne dinge niks weet nie" sê mnr. Hendriks.<sup>910</sup>

("Perhaps it is for the better that the rural people know very little about modern things." said Mr Hendricks.)

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<sup>903</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 147 & 182.

<sup>904</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 182.

<sup>905</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 183.

<sup>906</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 289.

<sup>907</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 18 & 25.

<sup>908</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 18.

<sup>909</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>910</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, p. 119.

According to Ross *et al* white working-class women were often viewed as promiscuous and their prostitution, promiscuity and racial mixing had to be dealt with. By the 1920s a moral panic took place.<sup>911</sup> Many young girls migrated to the urban areas before the rest of their families in search of work, which with their lack of skills they could not always obtain a decent job and thus some were subjected to immoral influences. Low wages were also viewed as a source of danger.<sup>912</sup> This "sexually-out-of-control behaviour" was usually commented on by the middle class. These working women were regarded as unprotected and not quite respectable.<sup>913</sup> By helping these poor-white women and preventing them from falling into this line of work, the Afrikaner nationalists aimed to use this to bring these "independent" women into the *volk*.<sup>914</sup>

In some of the novels the authors try to warn their young women readers of some of the dangers that they may experience in the urban areas and what may happen if they decided to go to the urban areas without guidance. In Van Bruggen's *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, Levina was viewed as one of these promiscuous women after she had been in the urban area a while. She is unmarried and pregnant, which was very shameful for young women at the time.<sup>915</sup>

Toe het sy haarself oor wen om haar skande en bedrog eerlik te beken vir haar ouers; en sy het besluit om op Slaplaagte haar kruis verder te dra.<sup>916</sup>  
(She convinced herself to be honest and tell her parents about her shame and deception and returned to Slaplaagte where she would continue to carry her cross.)

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<sup>911</sup> R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager & B. Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa: Volume II 1885-1994*, p. 292.

<sup>912</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*, pp. 83 & 222.

<sup>913</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, pp. 10-11.

<sup>914</sup> J. Hyslop, "The representation of white working class women in the construction of reactionary populist movement: 'Purified' Afrikaner nationalist agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages 1934-1939", African Studies Institute Seminar paper. University of Witwatersrand, 1993, pp. 11-13.

<sup>915</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 98 & 105.

<sup>916</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 105.

The worst influence on Levina was her cousin who worked in a sweet factory. She is described as a shallow city girl. She has no idea about homely duties. She fills Levina's head with all the wonders of the urban area and tells her how easy it is to get a boyfriend who will give her everything her heart desires.<sup>917</sup> This was how many young urban women were viewed.

Die niggie het nooit geweet wat huislike plig is nie; sy is 'n oppervlakkige dorpsmeisie, wat in 'n lekkergoed fabriek werk en haar tyd verdeel tussen lekkergoed, mooi klere en plesier.<sup>918</sup>

(Her cousin never knew about homely duties, she is a shallow city girl, who worked in a sweet factory and divided her time between sweets, pretty clothes and pleasure.)

As mentioned Lub's *Dark Johannesburg* is a recollection of personal events that he has recorded in short stories during his time spent in Johannesburg when he was a school inspector there. Lub saw many cases of loose women who had resorted to prostitution.<sup>919</sup> He gives a brief warning at the end of his short story "Such there are" in *Dark Johannesburg* that people need to start coming out of their poverty by doing honest work - "literally, people have to put their hands to the plough" - to save themselves from the "devils pillow" (prostitution).<sup>920</sup> In the story "Annie," Lub gives an account of a girl that had been Lub's own student a few years ago and who was trying desperately not to resort to prostitution. He comes across her in the veld where she was living with some of her family. Her mother had become a "scarlet woman" without repentance and had tried to lead her daughter into her own evil ways. However, she had resisted and was doing washing and ironing for people. She clearly explained how easy it would be for her, but that she rather lived a difficult, but "decent life."<sup>921</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>918</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 12.

<sup>919</sup> J. Lub, "Dark Johannesburg" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 45.

<sup>920</sup> J. Lub, "Such there are" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 119.

<sup>921</sup> J. Lub, "Annie" in *Dark Johannesburg*, pp. 120-131.

"D'you know I could lead an easy life of it if I just wished to do as my mother and some of your old school-girls do?"... I understood the poor woman, and sympathised with her struggle to lead a decent life.<sup>922</sup>

These working women were what was regarded as poor and usually the people the SAVF and the ACVV would aspire to help. However, they received no sympathy because they were working, regardless of the poor conditions many of them had to endure.<sup>923</sup> The GWU also built up a tradition of mutual help and became a militant organisation in which the members would assist one another so that they did not have to rely on other organisations.<sup>924</sup> Many of these working-class women considered themselves to be "better Afrikaners" than those who did not lift a finger to help themselves or prevent their children from starving and often resisted organisational intervention. A point in case is Bekka in *Die trekboer* who literally removes the secretary of the town's school council from her home by threatening him with a broomstick, rather than allowing them to take her children away so they could attend the school in town in accordance with the law. She is trying desperately to look after them and to support them and will not let them be taken away.<sup>925</sup>

In many cases it was very difficult to support a large family. This is evident in the novel *Bywoners*<sup>926</sup> by Van Bruggen. Here the Sitman's have many children and due to their poverty, laziness and unwillingness to work to support themselves they are unable to care for their children properly.<sup>927</sup> The children cry because their stomachs are literally "pyn" ("aching") due to the hunger.<sup>928</sup> Regardless, the Sitman's would not let them be taken into foster care, although it would have been better for the children.<sup>929</sup> There are many cases whereby the government and welfare have removed children from their homes because the parents were unfit or unable to care

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<sup>922</sup> J. Lub, "Annie" in *Dark Johannesburg*, p. 130.

<sup>923</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 66.

<sup>924</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa III. A place in the city: The Rand on the eve of apartheid*, p. 18.

<sup>925</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 173-176.

<sup>926</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1973.

<sup>927</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>928</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 64.

<sup>929</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, pp. 69-71.



for them. One such case can be seen in the famous singing family "Die Briels." Their music portrayed the drastic changes in the socio-cultural circumstances of the Afrikaner in the period of the first half of the twentieth century and thus their music was filled with thoughts of suffering, lonely orphans and longing for the family and farm life. Both the mother and the father had been placed in an orphanage after their fathers had passed away and their mothers were unable to look after them.<sup>930</sup>

These poor-white working-class women were regarded as the "fallen" components of the *volk* although they were trying to help themselves out of their poverty. The working women's resourcefulness and ability to help themselves added to their credential of the *volksmoeder*.<sup>931</sup> Many were aware of the argument that a woman's place was at home raising a family, however, they countered this with the fact that many women were confronted with financial hardships and it would not help to wait idly for something to change this. It was better to go out and work for a living to alleviate the hardships at home.<sup>932</sup> In Jonker's novel *Die trekboer* Bekka also worked to provide for the family and at one point the money she made from the family's sheep was all that they had. She viewed it as her hard work and savings that was keeping the family going and that all responsibility had fallen to her.<sup>933</sup>

En in die watent die aand het Antonie aan Bekka gevra hoe hulle nou moet maak.<sup>934</sup>

(And in the wagon-tent that evening Antonie asked Bekka what they should do now.)

"Ja, maar jy sal 'n plan moet maak: ons kan nie meer van die spaargeld vat nie. Ek het vandag reeds die huishuur daaruit moes betaal en die goedjies van die winkelier af ook."<sup>935</sup>

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<sup>930</sup> E. Pretorius, "Die Briels: Smartlappe en tranetrekke van weleer", *De Kat*, 4(2), 1988, pp. 18-20.

<sup>931</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 68.

<sup>932</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 289-290.

<sup>933</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 120, 186, 194 & 212.

<sup>934</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 186.

<sup>935</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, p. 194.

("Yes, but you will have to make a plan: we cannot take anymore money out of the savings. I have already paid the house rent and the goods from the shop out of the savings.")

Want wat moet trekkersvrou Bekka hier op die dorp, met die hele las van die liggaamlike versorging van die Reysgesin op haar hals, aanvang sonder Herklaas...<sup>936</sup>

(Because what must *trekker* woman Bekka do here in the town, with the whole burden of caring for the bodily well-being of the whole Reys family without Herklaas...)

According to J.F.W. Grosskopf, one of the five commissioners of the Carnegie Commission's investigation, it depended largely on women whether a poor family sunk lower or could rise up and out of their poverty. This was mainly due to their ability to contribute to the advancement of their poor family life.<sup>937</sup> Here the best example from the novels is the case of Bekka from *Die trekboer*.

According to the Carnegie Commission it was not uncommon for whole families to be surviving on the earnings of the working woman.<sup>938</sup> As mentioned *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* "tant" Levina is a washer woman whose income is practically the sole income that supports her family. This can be seen in the following statements:

... oom Lood partykeer van sy goeie vrou haar verdienste 'n sikspens afknyp...<sup>939</sup>

(... sometimes uncle Lood would pinch a sixpence from his good wife's earnings...)

"Harta, ek het vir jou 'n blikkie sardyntjies gekoop; gee my nou 'n daalder<sup>940</sup> om dit te betaal."<sup>941</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> A.H. Jonker, *Die trekboer*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>937</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 219.

<sup>938</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 293.

<sup>939</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 22.

<sup>940</sup> An old Dutch monetary unit translated as the Dutch Dollar.

<sup>941</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 23.

("Sweetheart, I bought a tin of sardines for you; give me a dollar to go pay for it.")

She washes for richer people and earns more than uncle Lood. She also helps him to fix shoes for extra income because he is usually very slow. She is a good house wife as well as a washer woman and does not neglect her family. However, she is under no illusion about who brings the money in and does all the hard work and also reminds uncle Lood of this.<sup>942</sup>

Sy verdien met haar was en stryk vir die hoë mense baie meer as oom Lood met al sy geknutselary.<sup>943</sup>

(She earns far more with her washing and ironing for the higher class people than uncle Lood does with all his tinkering.)

- en sy lê klem op die woordjies *ek* en *my* -<sup>944</sup>

(- and she lays emphasis on *me* and *my* - [in terms of her work and the money she earns.]

Although the highest calling and greatest fulfilment of the *volksmoeder* was to be found in their own home - physically and morally reproducing the nation - many women who were poor and who had to go out to work were disenchanted with the idea of a life devoted to childbirth and large families.<sup>945</sup> They knew of the sufferings that often went with large families, as did the middle-class women that helped the poor, and therefore the need for women to work and to rather have smaller families.<sup>946</sup> A large family meant many mouths to feed. This is evident in the novel *Bywoners*<sup>947</sup> by Van Bruggen, with regards to the Sitman family.<sup>948</sup> It was not only the difficulties of raising the children, but the childbearing as well, which left the mothers tired and in some cases sickly. It was usually a huge physical drain on their

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<sup>942</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 2, 22-23 & 83.

<sup>943</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 23.

<sup>944</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>945</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 65.

<sup>946</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 70.

<sup>947</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*. Pretoria, 1973.

<sup>948</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Bywoners* in A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 64.

bodies. Many mothers and children died during childbirth and some children who were born did not live very long.<sup>949</sup> This was the case with Ampie's mother who had given birth to ten children, four of which passed away.<sup>950</sup> In Van Bruggen's other novel *Levina* dies not too long after giving birth.<sup>951</sup>

During the 1930s and 1940s the idea of *volksmoeder* became a contested concept. It, however, remained a term that appealed to most Afrikaner women. Afrikaner nationalists aimed to create a "role model" to guide, instruct and appeal to Afrikaner women. Brink explains that the appeal was so widespread that even those such as the working women (who needed to be saved and brought back to the *volk*) claimed the concept to rally women to a greater cause.<sup>952</sup> However, organisations such as the GWU tried to make the women feel part of the nation and tried to prove that nationalism and the class struggle need not work against one another.<sup>953</sup>

Just as not all academics wrote about the "wonders" of the *volksmoeder* concept neither did all novelists. Although the writers selected for this study are male, there are some of the authors who tended to reveal other sides of the life of a poor-white woman. In some cases the message that the authors conveyed through their novels were still in line with certain nationalist ideas while others were not. For example, the notion that the urban areas were not a safe place for unmarried women, whilst others reveal that bad things could just as easily happen in the rural areas and that the urban areas were not always so evil. For example, in Van den Heever's novel *Droogte*, the author enlightens his readers about the dangers of the isolated rural life as well. The main character's daughter is having a physical relationship with her uncle.<sup>954</sup> Van den Heever's reveals another side to the life of poor-white women in this novel *Droogte*, a stricter reality of what was happening and not an idealised idea of what women should be, but rather the other types of poor-white women.<sup>955</sup> He

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<sup>949</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, p. 190.

<sup>950</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Ampie: Die Trilogie*, p. 48.

<sup>951</sup> J. van Bruggen, *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte*, p. 105.

<sup>952</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 290.

<sup>953</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 223.

<sup>954</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>955</sup> C.M. van den Heever, *Droogte*, pp. 56, 71 & 97.

does this by remaining true to the genre he wrote in - Realism - and conveys a realistic representation of what was happening.

Du Toit argues that it was the working-class wives who first internalised Afrikaner identity. They did so by reading Afrikaans books and magazines and because these women worked outside the home the concept of the *volksmoeder* and urban dangers may have been strongly emphasised in the material they were most likely to read.<sup>956</sup> Such material dwelt on women's roles as bearers of cultural tradition and language. Afrikaner women were newly empowered by more extensive literacy. According to Beinart the "Burger Boekhandel" publishers produced 1100 Afrikaans books, which sold 3.25 million copies over the period 1917-1940.<sup>957</sup> This study falls in that time frame. The articulation of the *volksmoeder* discourse moved in the beginning of the twentieth century from history to popular literature.<sup>958</sup> Many women read *Die Huisgenoot*.<sup>959</sup> This magazine spoke across the divide of town and countryside. It was profusely illustrated and became the most popular publication in the 1920s.<sup>960</sup> As indicated, the authors selected for this study, as well as others from the Realism genre, had short stories and reviews of their novels feature in this magazine.<sup>961</sup> The novels revealed the daily lives of the poor whites and the struggles they had to go through in order to survive. Not only were some of the novels, such as *Ampie*, prescribed school literature, but many as indicated enjoyed a wide readership as well and some like *Die plaasverdeling*<sup>962</sup> and *Die trekboer*<sup>963</sup> appeared serialised in magazines such as *Die Huisgenoot* over a number of weeks. In the 1922 August edition of *Die Huisgenoot* under the title *Boeke ontvang* (Books received) Van Bruggen's book *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* is mentioned and its details are given. *Die Huisgenoot* states that it was voted number three of *Almal se Boeke* (Everyone's Books) and that it was well put together and that they want to strongly

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<sup>956</sup> M. du Toit, "The domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929", *Journal of Southern African studies*, 29(1), 2003, p. 156.

<sup>957</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 120.

<sup>958</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 64.

<sup>959</sup> "The home companion" magazine, which became very popular for its short stories.

<sup>960</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*, p. 120.

<sup>961</sup> J.A. Pretorius, *Die ontwikkeling van die kortverhaal in Afrikaans soos weerspieël in 'Die Huisgenoot' van 1916-1966*, D. Phil. verhandeling, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1973, p. 18.

<sup>962</sup> A.H. Jonker, "Die plaasverdeling", *Die Huisgenoot*, 16(502), 13 November 1931 en 16(508), 25 Desember 1931.

<sup>963</sup> A.H. Jonker, "Die trekboer", *Die Huisgenoot*, 18(627), 20 April 1934, 18(630), 11 Mei 1934 en 18(631), 29 Junie 1934.

recommend it to their readers.<sup>964</sup> It may be argued that these novels had an influence on the public and may in a way have had an influence on the support for the government's decision to help eradicate the poor-white problem. They might have contributed to creating certain perceptions.<sup>965</sup> Thus it can be argued that due to the novels being a popular medium for spreading ideas, the government and the novelists in turn may have advertently or inadvertently influenced and supported one another.

To conclude, white women played a role in the government's scheme to create an identity. This *volksmoeder* concept was to incorporate all white women, even the poor who had to work hard to aspire to that position. Instead of rebelling against the notion, poor-white women tried desperately to fit in and become part of the *volk*. The ideal woman was represented in literature, but some authors through the Realist genre revealed the other side of how things were. True, there were many poor women aspiring to be *volksmoeders*, but there were many poor who were also trying to survive and even some who were ahead of their time and wanted rights or who had to take the role of the head of the home in order to survive. The literature supported the government's concept to an extent and the government in turn made changes to help the poor due to the very issues the novels brought to light as well as the influence the Realist authors had on the larger public. Some of the authors did not shy away from bringing political circumstances and relevant issues into their novels, which the characters had to deal with. Through their daily struggles and poverty it changed many poor-white women and the majority wanted the ideologists to see that they too had the strengths represented by the concept. They just had to adapt to their own situations to suit their own solutions. Times had changed for the poor-white women, socially, economically and politically, and now it was time for them to change culturally as well in order to become a *volksmoeder*.

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<sup>964</sup> Anonymous, "Boeke ontvang: Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte", *Die Huisgenoot*, 7(76), Augustus 1922, p. 172.

<sup>965</sup> See Chapter 1.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION – CLOSING THE NOVEL

The term “poor white” remains elusive.<sup>966</sup> By combining the selected novels with the information in the historical sources a fuller image regarding the poor whites and their lives emerges. To a degree, the novels have broadened this elusive topic, but also reflected on what could be regarded as the image in popular consciousness at that time. The novels became mirrors that were held up and reflected on what was going on in society.

The poor-white topic dominated the first half of the twentieth century in both non-fiction and fiction. It continued to seep through into later decades and it remains an important focus point. Due to the white minority rule in South Africa and the NP's desire to remain in power there emerged a need to "protect" the whites. In other words it became of the utmost importance to "save" the poor whites, bringing them back into the fold and what it meant to be "white."<sup>967</sup> Thus the poor whites became part of popular consciousness and this problem was expressed in all facets of life. The poor-white problem dominated the political sphere as the NP needed to solicit their votes to keep them in power.<sup>968</sup> It also dominated the economic sphere as everything had to be done in order to help these people. Firstly to keep them contented so they would continue voting for the NP and secondly because they needed to save the *volk*. It was made blatantly apparent that they could not allow white Afrikaners to sink to the same or lower "levels" than blacks.<sup>969</sup> The poor whites dominated the social sphere again because there was a "white standard" to uphold.<sup>970</sup> Lastly they dominated the cultural sphere. The poor-white problem was

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<sup>966</sup> R. Morrell (ed.), *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in southern Africa, 1880-1940*, p. 1.

<sup>967</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 30-32.

<sup>968</sup> L. Callinicos, *A people's history of South Africa II. Working life: Factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand, 1886-1940*, p. 44.

<sup>969</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*, p. 229.

<sup>970</sup> A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D.Phil. dissertation, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 30-32.

also expressed by artists. One such art form was through novels.<sup>971</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the poor-white topic is integral to a number of disciplines.

Novels from the Realism genre may reveal evidence or create a better understanding of a time period or people than that of a historical text.<sup>972</sup> These novels may provide insight or augment existing research. They form part of the cultural history sphere and may add to a better understanding of the poor whites. The novels that were selected for this dissertation were from the Realism genre. As mentioned the novelists did not spend hours slaving away to do research, but wrote about what was happening around them and what they recollected. Thus the Realism they used was on first- or second-hand experience. And as Realism implies something that is real,<sup>973</sup> history was turned into novels and ordinary people were now viewed as heroes and everyday life became a present companion of the novels. The poor whites were to form a part of the historical novel and were given a place in history and literature.<sup>974</sup> However, each author had their own opinions of the poor whites and because mainly Afrikaner authors were used in this study and because most of the poor whites in the first half of the twentieth century were Afrikaners<sup>975</sup> many of the authors sympathised with them. Thus even in the novel itself one cannot speak of complete objectivity.

In the introduction entitled *Opening the novel*, it was pointed out that the study is not restricted to South Africa but can be adapted to novels written in and about poor whites in other countries as well.<sup>976</sup> It also illustrates that similar work has been done

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<sup>971</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armbanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 238.

<sup>972</sup> A. Fleishman, *The English historical novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, p. x.; M. Kooria, "Between the walls of archives and horizons of imagination: An interview with Amitav Ghosh", *Itinerario* 36, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>973</sup> Realism: Myfundi Your on line encyclopedia, 'Realism', <<http://myfundi.co.za/e/Realism>>, N.d. Access: 9 May 2012.; A.P. Grové & S. Strydom, *Drie prosastukke van Jochem van Bruggen*, p. 10.

<sup>974</sup> H. Giliomee & M. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*, p. 291.

<sup>975</sup> J. Bottomley, *Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa 1881-1924*, D. Phil. dissertation, Queens University, 1990, p. ii.; A.B. Teppo, *The making of a good white: A historical ethnography of the rehabilitation of poor whites in a suburb of Cape Town*, D. Phil. dissertation, Helsinki University, 2004, pp. 34-38.; J. van Wyk, "Nationalist ideology and social concerns in Afrikaans drama in the period, 1930-1940," University of the Witwatersrand *History Workshop*, Johannesburg, 1990, pp. 5-6.

<sup>976</sup> R.J. Allen, *The rise and decline of conscientious Realism in English fiction: A contextual study of novels by Charles Dickens and George Gissing*, D.Phil. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978.; A. Anderson, *Dickens, Charlotte Bontë, Gaskell: Politics and its limits* in R.L. Caserio & C Hawes, *The Cambridge history of the English novel*, pp. 341-342.; C. Sei, 'Is *Oliver Twist* a Newgate Novel?: On



using history and other cultural forms such as art.<sup>977</sup> Thus the question arises can fictional novels and historical sources be compared to create a broader insight? Novels cannot replace historical sources, however, the majority of people choose fiction in order to "escape in to another world."<sup>978</sup> Some of the novels, such as those chosen for this study, combine both truth and fact in them.<sup>979</sup> As indicated not only do these novels reach a wider audience due to their entertainment value, but they also educate<sup>980</sup> and inform the reader of a time. Furthermore, the Realism genre as was mentioned, were what the novelists saw and experienced and thus to an extent it also become a type of "oral history" of the authors' recollections.<sup>981</sup>

Although the poor-white problem was first identified in the 1890s and examples could be seen all around in both the rural and urban areas, it was the 1930s when the poor-white issue reached a climax and impacted all facets of life.<sup>982</sup> The poor-white issue featured in people's social and cultural lives and in the media. It was an important political and economic point which also featured in their leisure and entertainment (novels and plays). It was also the novel that reached more people, young and old, through popular magazines, prescribed school reading and reading pleasure.<sup>983</sup> One could venture as far as to say that this portrayal in the novels in some small way contributed to the receptivity of NP politics.

The introduction also focused on "The who" of this dissertation, thus on the term "poor white." When it appeared in South Africa for the first time and what it meant in

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*the Feature and Reason of Charles Dickens's Depiction of Crime*, KURENAI : Kyoto University Research Information Repository - Departmental Bulletin Paper, <[http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/154831/1/rek09\\_063.pdf](http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/154831/1/rek09_063.pdf)>, 2012. Access: 29 March 2014.; M.D. Bell, *Mark Twain, "Realism" and Huckleberry Finn*, in L.J. Budd (ed.), *New essays on Huckleberry Finn*. Cambridge, 1985.

<sup>977</sup> T.E. Raymond, *Painting race and culture in Cape Town: Bell, Bowler and Baines (1840-1880)*, Honours dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2012.

<sup>978</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*, p. 21.

<sup>979</sup> At the time of the submission of this dissertation a book edited by J.U. Jacobs is about to go to press. It considers identity and diaspora in fiction. (J.U. Jacobs, *Diaspora and identity in South African fiction*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016.) This then points to an emerging trend where fiction is becoming more significant in academic analysis.

<sup>980</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>981</sup> J.A. Fishman & O. Garcia, *Handbook of language and ethnic identity: The success-failure continuum in language and ethnic identity efforts vol II*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>982</sup> D. Oakes (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa: The real story*, p. 328.; R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, p. 238.

<sup>983</sup> R. Coetzee, *Die Armblanke in Afrikaans Letterkunde*, M.A. tesis, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, 1937, pp. 18-30 & 239.; P.C. Schoonees, *Die prosa van die tweede Afrikaanse beweging*, p. 33.

terms of South African discourse was also considered. Closely related terms that were associated with “poor whites” were also examined. These included poverty and *bywoners*. "The how" of the introduction examined what the study aimed at doing and achieving. In short, considering fiction or novels (written by a selection of authors in the Realism genre during the first half of the twentieth century) in the light of non-fiction or academic sources (written by a wide variety of academics about poor whites as well as the general histories of South Africa). By juxtapositioning the two genres the aim was to see whether the novels could shed insight or augment existing work done on the poor whites and to what degree the novels could be used as cultural historical sources on the period and daily lives of the poor whites.

Different types of sources have been used in this dissertation and have been arranged in categories. The novels were considered first because they were written in the time period in question and because they form the basis of this study. Other primary sources include archival records, newspapers, magazines, legislation and commissions. The secondary sources considered include academic books, articles and studies written in a range of disciplines as well as research and analysis done by literary specialists on the novels. The different literary genres leading up to the Realism genre were explained as well as their influence. Realism, in terms of literature, is defined and explained in detail with a number of examples.<sup>984</sup> As already alluded to, Amitav Ghosh gives a wonderful example of the relationship between history and fiction. History being a river with currents and crosscurrents, but within the river there are fish, which represent the fiction, and these can swim in many different directions.<sup>985</sup> Thus the river is the setting in which the novel can swim. If the novel is the fish in the river which represents history, then the fish becomes more tangible. The river flows past and the masses or white voting public do not relate to it nor always finds it of interest, but the fish remains and thus the characters and their lives become real. Thus it is important to note that the novels are not only a means of escapism, but a means to create awareness.<sup>986</sup> "The when" in the introduction sets the background of poor whiteism and gives a short history of how it came about,

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<sup>984</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute. Uppsala. 2004.

<sup>985</sup> M. Kooria, "Between the walls of archives and horizons of imagination: An interview with Amitav Ghosh," *Itinerario* 36, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>986</sup> J.C. Simmons, *The novelist as historian*, p. 21.

going as far back as 1652 with the arrival of the first whites and leading up to the period in question. Lastly, the introduction presents and overview of each chapter.

Chapter two offered a literature review of the poor whites. Again the literature itself was divided into primary and secondary sources. The main and most important primary source was discussed - the Carnegie Commission.<sup>987</sup> This was a commission that did extensive research on the poor-white problem in the 1930s. The secondary sources were then examined via different historiographical schools in which the poor whites first appeared and then with the changing of historical writing. Thus sources written by nationalists were examined first, then liberal historians, the social historians of the 1970s and then the cultural historian. Within each phase different aspects of the poor whites were focused on.<sup>988</sup> The literature review also looked at sources not written by historians only, but a selection of other academics that also focused on the poor whites. These included works by sociologists, anthropologists, academics in drama (many of the novels were turned into plays), economists and even documentary film makers. The order in which the literature review was structured was to show the changes in academic writing of poor whites over time. The analysts and their analysis were then also examined chronologically. Many of the earlier works were written at the time when the novels were first published and fall in to the same time period.

Chapter three is a continuation of two. It gave more attention to the history of Afrikaans writing and its evolution.<sup>989</sup> The time period that this study focuses on falls into the Second Afrikaans Language Movement, which also forms part of history and is a reaction to what was happening in terms of the language and Afrikaans' cultural battle during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>990</sup> The authors and novels

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<sup>987</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus I*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white II*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Education and the poor white III*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: Health factors in the poor white problem IV*. Stellenbosch, 1932.; Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*. Stellenbosch, 1932.

<sup>988</sup> W. Visser, "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute. Uppsala. 2004.

<sup>989</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 83.; G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>990</sup> J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse literatuur I*, p. 83.

themselves also form part of this movement in their fight for Afrikaans to be declared an official language and within the novels this battle is also highlighted. The language itself played a huge role in the "nationalistic inspirational fervour."<sup>991</sup>

This chapter also examines the types of novels selected for this study. Although all form part of the Realism genre the majority also form part of the *plaasroman* (farm or rural novel),<sup>992</sup> with the exception of *Dark Johannesburg* and *Op die delwerye* (On the Mines). The poor whites are integral to each novel, however, each novel also has other themes, which relate to the poor whites.

Chapter three examined each of the authors. A short biography of their life and works was given to create a better understanding of the time they wrote in, their motives for writing and the novels themselves. Their own biographies reveal either what they witnessed or experienced, the impact it had on them and how they expressed this in the novels.<sup>993</sup> The chapter thus provides the reader with the necessary knowledge and context to understand the remaining part of the dissertation.

The second half of the study which includes chapters four-six focuses more specifically on the poor whites and their representation in the novels. Chapter four entitled *Poor whites and poor whites*, focused primarily on the concept of poor whites and presented a short history from whence the term originated. This chapter examined how the term was perceived of in general histories of South Africa, what image and feelings are invoked when the term is used, the role of popular consciousness regarding the term poor white, and how this differs from what is perceived. Different sources are examined and each definition of poor white indicates what the term means in a range of literature. Thus the different types or groups of poor whites, which were classified by the Carnegie Commission, are examined according to the causes of why they are poor and what they are doing to

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<sup>991</sup> R.B. Baldauf & R.B. Kaplan (eds), *Language and planning policy in Africa I: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>992</sup> D. Attwell & D. Attridge (eds), *The Cambridge history of South African literature*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>993</sup> P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is ons skrywers: Biografiese sketse van Afrikaanse skrywers*, p. 146.

alleviate their poverty.<sup>994</sup> There are many different types of poor whites in the novels and these are compared to the different types of definitions of poor white. It is in this second part of chapter four that the reader is introduced to the characters in the novels and what type of poor white they represent.

Chapter five is similar to chapter four. However, where chapter four examined the different types of poor whites, chapter five focuses on the different causes which led to many becoming poor whites. These causes are divided into the "Hand of God" and the "Hand of Man," which is also the title of the chapter.<sup>995</sup> As indicated, the "Hand of God" and the "Hand of Man" refer to the two main categories regarding the causes. "Hand of God" includes all the causes which were outside the control of the people such as disasters and disease. The "Hand of Man" includes all of the causes which are man's own fault. However, this category is further sub-divided into causes made by man, but were out of the control of those who became poor, such as wars and depressions and those causes which were ultimately their own fault, such as laziness and ignorance. There are some similarities between chapters four and five as the causes of the poor-white's poverty and their reaction to it determines in which group they are placed or what type of poor white they are viewed as.

Chapter six, entitled *Poor-white volksmoeder*, focuses on a rather novel dimension of the poor whites. Although there are many studies regarding poor whites and studies regarding women during the first half of the twentieth century and studies regarding the novels, relatively nothing has been done to combine the three. Thus chapter six examined the poor-white women in the academic literature during the first half of the twentieth century with special attention given to the rise of nationalism in South Africa;<sup>996</sup> how women were used as tools;<sup>997</sup> how the poor-white women were not

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<sup>994</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The poor white problem in South Africa: The poor white in society & The mother and daughter of the poor family V*, pp. 4-18.

<sup>995</sup> C. van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, p. 321.

<sup>996</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 290.

<sup>997</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 273.; E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 45.

regarded as *volksmoeders*;<sup>998</sup> the political connotation of the term *volksmoeder*;<sup>999</sup> and how the poor-white women reinterpreted the term to suit their own needs.<sup>1000</sup> The novels are again used to gain further insights and many different sides to poor-white women are examined and considered in the light of the academic sources. Not all authors conformed to a specific representation and this is also examined.

Throughout this study fiction and non-fiction regarding the poor whites has been juxtapositioned. Not only does this study set out to remind us how poor whites have been represented and presented in the pages of the novels, but that their history is important in understanding the history of South Africa and all its consequences. Furthermore, this study has attempted to show that novels are not only there as a form of leisure or entertainment, but that they too can be used as a source in order to understand a time, a people and history itself. This also appears to be an emerging trend in the historical non-fiction and literary fiction domain.<sup>1001</sup> This might not be true for all novels, but the novels used in this study, from the Realism genre, written during the first half of the twentieth century, by a selection of Afrikaans novelists have given certain insight into the daily lives of the poor whites and have revealed what it may have meant to be a poor white in this period. It has in some instances augmented existing work on the poor whites albeit to illustrate through fiction the non-fiction dimension. In this sense this dissertation has shown that to a degree novels can be regarded as cultural historical sources in their own right.

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<sup>998</sup> E. Brink, *Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder* in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in southern Africa to 1945*, p. 274.

<sup>999</sup> L. Vincent, "The power behind the scenes: The Afrikaner nationalist women's parties 1915 to 1931", *South African Historical Journal*, 40, 1999, p. 65.; E. Cloete, "Afrikaner identity: Culture, tradition and gender", *Agenda*, 13, 1992, p. 43.

<sup>1000</sup> L. Vincent, "Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, p. 67.

<sup>1001</sup> J.U. Jacobs, *Diaspora and identity in South African fiction*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016.

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