

Narrativizing Kenya's Historiography Through Selected Popular Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The paper is premised on the intersection of popular fiction and history through narrativizing events. Language plays an important role in the revelation of a country's historical transformation. Writers use elevated language to foreground Kenya's historical transformation. Fictionalization of history is one mode the society is read and interrogated. The focus of the discussion is narrative techniques and how they interweave historical concerns within the Kenyan context. The paper is premised on the exploration of historiographic dimension as narrativized in selected popular texts. The major contention is that popular literature narrativizes the country's historical moments. The paper locates itself within New Historicist and Formalist theoretical frameworks. New Historicism as propagated by Greenblatt and Montrose indicates that texts are historical documents entrenched and located in culture and portrays of historical processes in a society. Formalism, as propounded by Victor Shklovsky examines the literariness of a text in the evaluation of ideological concerns; socio-historical, political and cultural issues notwithstanding. Narrative technique is one literary mode that mediates between history and fiction. Through purposive sampling, the texts Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* and Muroki Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court* were arrived at because they are pregnant with fictionalized history. Qualitative research method that is library based was used to excavate and chisel out data that that was required for analysis and interpretation. An interpretivist research design was used. The study aims at establishing that literature has affinity to history since there is interconnectedness. The study adds up to the dialectical polemics on both fictionalization of history and historicization of fiction; a debate that still bombards the literary scene.

KEYWORDS: *Formalism, Historiography, historicization, literariness, narrativize, New Historicism.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Literature has always reconstructed the happenings in society. It attempts to approximate both realistic happenings in society and history. Both literature and history relate in the manner in which they depict society. LeBihan and Green (1996) affirm the cemented relationship between history and literature: 'Literature and history go together in a non-essential relation: literature can be discussed without taking history into account...' (1). This is a clear pointer that the boundary between the two entities is thin as they can merge and coalesce in a text. Both can be regarded as text and context at the same time as they can represent and present a textuality within a given epoch. History becomes textuality on its own that narrativizes events while at the same time it is a context of the very same events in which the happenings in society are measured. The border line between text and context merges as the two entities intertwine. Since literary texts are human constructs, they derive their sources from social realities and complexities in society. So too are historical texts. What makes the two to be at variance with each other is the language each entity uses. Literature uses language selectively to consciously narrate events from a subjective point of view. A deliberate choice of tropes and other figures of speech foreground language in order to convey the writer's world view, attitude and ideological perspective. This concurs with the Formalist criticism that a work of art has to undergo a scientific and systemic analysis in order to achieve a deeper insight and understanding of it. Formalist literary theory is concerned with technique and language devices in what they refer to as form. It emphasizes on deconstructing a language that is estranged or what Shklovsky, (1965) calls 'defamiliarized' (2) so as to access the content that resides in the text. According to Newton (1988), a text is a "unified entity that is self contained" (3) and stands independent of outside forces. An analysis of form allows meaning to be derived.

History reveals and reconstructs things that have happened while literature recreates things that have happened and those that may happen in future. No wonder literary artists have always been accused of being political since they easily foretell what could happen in a country. History and literature are said to relate in historical matters that have transformed society. They are only at variance in the manner in which such issues are brought out. While Literature manipulates and exploits language by using tropes and the literariness to foreground the making of history, history employs a realist mode to recreate those important issues. The language used in literature is elevated to not only capture but also buttress thematic and ideological issues reconstructed in the literary text.

Kenya's historical transformation has always been captured succinctly in literary texts though from varying angles. Hutcheon (1999) contends that literature "works to situate itself within a historical discourse" (4). It does not capitulate its autonomy as fiction to history since both share happenings in society as raw materials that inform and form (re)constructed narratives. This reveals the close interaction and connection between fiction and history on account of representation and proposition. History, as a narration, chooses what to and what not to foreground. Similarly, literature, according to Brown (1998), picks on what to include or exclude, have or not to have from historical happenings (5) that are subject of myriad interpretations. White (1978) concurs with Casanova (1972) that both 'historical and literary discourses are inter-related' (6). This is largely due to the fact that both history and literature are human constructs and confluence in society. They both exist as discursive constructs that attempt to rationalize events in society from a historical and a literary point of view. At times, it is literature that has fictionalized the historical process in a society to mirror on what is happening so that text and co-text coalesce.

II. METHOD

The paper is premised on the exploration of historiographic metafiction as narrativized in selected popular literature. Kenya's historical moments during the quest for plutocracy is interwoven and fictionalized in selected popular literary texts. The study locates itself within New Historicist and Formalist theoretical frameworks. New Historicism as propagated by Greenblatt, Montrose and Butler avers that literary texts are historical documents embedded in culture and are artifacts while Formalism, through Victor Shklovsky examines the formal aspects that expound on the content of a text. Analysis was done on language use in order to re-read and interrogate fictionalized history. Through judgmental sampling, Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* and Muroki Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court* were arrived at as they are replete with fictionalized history. Qualitative research method that is library based was used to excavate and chisel out data that was required for analysis and interpretation. The design used was interpretivist. The study shows that history and literature have a symbiotic interconnectedness. Selected literary texts epitomize history as a textuality that comes to life within popular texts and they add up to the dialectical polemics on both fictionalization of history and historicization of fiction.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Wahome Mutahi (7), Kinyanjui Kombani (8) and Muroki Ndung'u (9) are popular genre writers in Kenya. They fictionalize historical incidences in Kenya in their literary texts. Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* and Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court* testify to the merging of fiction and history. It is through the aesthetics of narrativization that Kenya's history is foregrounded and revealed. The writers have employed adept skilful language techniques that directly render history its liveliness. We contend that through re-reading and critical interrogation of narrative techniques, the country's past is celebrated.

The selected popular genre writers narrativize Kenya's historiography using elevated language. Their fictionalized historical narratives strategy is such that the novels' vision of ethno-political bigotry, political repression and incarceration is focalized through reliable protagonists. Muroki Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court* uses Gareth Maitika and Dan Mwihoti while Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* has Momodu and Chipota. Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*, employs the use of myriad characters key among them; Bomu, Bone, Bafu, Ngeta and Nancy: each of whom has a gripping personal narrative of bigotry. Focalizing the narrative strand through more than one principal character in each novel gives historical events an objective perspective that serves to underscore the symbiotic relationship between the society and the historical process of transformation. Through a complex weaving of historical representations, each novel's portrayal of personal and collective trauma is quite evident in the quest for justice that mars self fulfillment and destabilizes nationhood in Kenya. This comes at a historical epoch when Kenya is transforming itself from a single party rule to plutocracy. In the 1990s, post-independent Kenya, witnessed many events that unfolded including clamping down on perceived enemies, politically instigated skirmishes, unwarranted arrests and detentions without trial. The country was undergoing political transformation that made a milestone in the country's democratization. A wave of plutocracy was sweeping the country yet the political class was averse. The interplay of historical

forces, discourses and happenings are artistically recreated and weaved into a narrative of personal trauma and collective quest for justice.

The selected novels employ the third omniscient narration through multiplicity of characters. The principal characters in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, Ogundipe Chipota and Albert Momodu through omniscient narration reveal the harsh brutality and oppression by the ruling hegemony. The former is a crime reporter of *Daily Horn* newspaper while the latter works for Barclays bank in Nairobi. Father Kerekou's dialogic engagement with the dreaded special branch police gives impetus and velocity to the events of repression and injustice that is meted on the two suspects. His information to the police that both Chipota and Momodu are members of the July 10 Movement, seals the victims' fate and propels events that culminates the duo being nailed on the cross for three days with untold suffering. The July 10 Movement was a clandestine association that the Kenyan government had banned in the belief that it wanted to usurp power at all costs. It was composed majorly of University lecturers. Being its member meant that one was a wanted man by the police. For those who were apprehended, they were tortured and some were even killed. The plot is told through shifting omniscient narrative voices from different coalescing settings: Mrs. Momodu and Father Kerekou in church, Chipota and Momodu in the basement cells and Superintendent Immure and the interrogators in the interrogation room. It is with such in mind that *Three Days on the Cross* is examined as a historical archive. It excavates the oppressive system that disallows divergences of opinion. It swings from one place to another within the same time frame and elucidates both dialogue and silences so as to explore political repression at its worst in Kenya in 1990. The novel opens up with Father Bosco Kerekou, a Catholic Priest, coming face to face with the seditious document which Mrs. Momodu has brought to his attention. It is with intense fright that he reads the content after which he feels as if he has swallowed a sizeable goblet of hemlock because of dread.

Bile rose to his mouth...his heart felt constricted. A sense of deep fear engulfed him and unconsciously, he looked around to make sure that there was nobody else in the room.... (Mutahi 1991, 10).

His fear and apprehension is noticeable. This echoes the state's inhuman repression of suspected individuals as traumatizing and chilling. This penetrative insight into the inner psyche of the innocent individuals reveals the ruthlessness of the autocratic rule. No wonder Ngugi (1990) talks of the relentless 'tyranny meted on them while in detention around the same time' (10). The tyranny is meant to break them physically and mentally so that they could offer blind following and acceptance of the system.

Ndung'u establishes a historical construct from the happenings recreated in El Molo division of Nakuru district. Much of the actions are actualized in the rural setting while the court scenes take place in the metropolis - Nakuru. The rurality is a semblance of political contestation while the metropolis is symbolic of redemption. People have to journey to Nakuru to seek for justice. Historically, this is the region that has often experienced the worst skirmishes during political up-heavals; the worst one was in 2007-2008. Ndung'u's literary text offers a fragmentary exploration of the limitations citizens go through while seeking collective justice in the face of politically instigated ethnic discord. The storyline is rendered aflame by Don Mwihoti - a third omniscient narrator who takes the 'all knowing stance.' Don is an enigmatic figure who defies our definition of conventional protagonist. In the eyes of the law he is amoral; a convict who has escaped from custody. This moral slipperiness destabilizes "the good image" notion of a protagonist. He compliments and supplements the two lawyers, Gareth Maitika and Gakeni who in deconstructing the "court narrative" advanced by politicians of stability and tranquility. Ndung'u uses the third - person narrative style which makes the narrator to stay outside of the plot "even though he is also in the text" (Lothe 2005, 2) much in the same way as has Mutahi used it in *Three Days on the Cross*. Mwihoti largely controls all events in the novel whether he is present or absent as he parodies an omnipresent character. As a complex multi-dimensional character whose formation rests on revealing the architects of ethno-violence, his amoral behavior allows him to mastermind his freedom from the hands of the police in order to unearth those intent on perpetrating the heinous crime and in a way becoming a detective rather than a law breaker. He gathers evidence against the political elite who are the financiers of political skirmishes. He offers to accompany Gareth to witness the oath-taking going on in the forest. They witness the political barons sowing seeds of discord, ethnicity and bigotry. This typifies the intransigence of the political class whose main assumption is that they are sacred and therefore, above the law.

The security apparatus in both novels allegorize a narrative of pain, torture and liquidation. The police officers who engage in the physical torture in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* typify individuals who have alienated their feelings from the human reality in effect creating an impersonal world. For instance, Inspector Ode uses unorthodox methods to force confessions from both Chipota and Momodu. He uses brutal, heartless and merciless antics: inhuman beatings, scalding, blindfolding, stripping naked the victims, putting water in tiny cells. Such tactics project a cruel harsh world where suffering has been normalized. Life becomes nihilistic. Nihilism is a philosophy that shows life is meaningless. People exist without feelings, purpose, meaning and value. Detainees have been reduced to lead a hopeless meaningless life. No wonder Chipota wishes for death to visit them quickly. Nietzsche (1968, 43) acknowledges that "suicide is the deed of nihilism"(11). The unjust world recreates Kenya's historical injustices at a time when a dictatorial culture is unleashed by the powers that

Characters are shown as leading an artificial life: cowering beneath the mighty and becoming mute (no voice) to the injustices surrounding them. The ruling hegemony in the three selected popular literary texts must come to the realization that one cannot escape from his own actions. One can fabricate the reality to achieve political status but one will always pay for the "sins" committed on the people. The perpetrators are arraigned in court in Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court* to answer charges of crimes against humanity. Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* displays and restores in people what Muindu, Jose and Kinara (2012) refer to as 'awakening consciousnesses' (12) to the political morass in society. This is evident in the symbolic title that envisages a resurrection after three days on the cross in the manner in which Jesus defeated death and consequently, all evil. The forces of darkness will be defeated and light will open up to illuminate optimism, hope and grandeur.

Another element of narrativization is time and space that becomes almost static; a mental punishment to those behind bars. Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* has its characters trapped in a *statis* where time does not move and division into hours does not make sense. This affects them psychologically to an extent that they lose the beingness that defines humanity and are ready to end their lives. This parallels the nullification of linear time in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1956) where the major characters are waiting for nothing and are oppressed by the time factor (13). Estragon and Vladimir's concept of time depicts an undefined continuum since days of the week are similar save for naming. Time tortures the characters in Mutahi's *Three days on the Cross* especially so because of the torture they undergo yet they are innocent. The oppressive nature of time though, does not break their spirit. They remain indefatigable; strong, resolute and firm with the optimism that they would be freed soon. Nullification of time is a an indicator of a collective historical past where innocent people were rounded up as mere suspects and 'herded' to the basement cells to undergo a ritualized torture. It legitimizes not the national discourses of peace, love and unity being narrativized by the politicians at the time but the anti-thesis: political repression. This was rampant in Kenya during the *de jure* (one party) rule in the 1990s. The novel by extension is an allegory of historical events as it lays bare a historical textuality for the readers to consume. This textuality reveals the force that the KANU government then, used to silence dissenters. Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* blends artistically physical space and movement in time to reveal historical happenings of the time. It sets in motion events that begin in the battle front in the rural Ndoinet forest in 1992 and then fast moves on to the ghetto in Nairobi, ten years later. Gerry Loughran's avocation in the "Sunday Nation" begins the first chapter, "...there are no villains or heroes, just victims" (Kombani, 1). This suggestively expresses despair, desperation and destruction that becomes a telling trope of the devastation of instigated ethnic skirmishes that is visited on people. The writer alternates two locations: which show the forces of division and animosity in society: mistrust and hate, anger and bitterness, revenge and pain. All these merge with the need to live and sacrifice. Retaliatory attacks are meant to make a statement: the security apparatus are powerless and impotent. And the recourse must come from the communities at war. Surprisingly, it is the youth who were engaged in war ten years earlier and have been engaged in a hunter-hunted connection who find harmony and tranquility in togetherness regardless of ethnic affiliation and relocating back to the village for a fresh start. The remnants of the slaughterhouse five, Bone, Rock and Ngeta together with Nancy epitomize hope and the country's fecundity. "For together, they would make a fresh start" (Kombani, 211)

The juxtaposition of two locales: rural and urban that is a depiction of ethnic skirmishes and revenge cuts across space and time. It is a technique that reveals an atmosphere of hatred and bitterness. Kinyanjui Kombani in *The Last Villains of Molo* aptly describes the low class urban area to locate it within grinding poverty, morass and survival tactics. He chooses words to vividly paint the slums in order to make it perceptible. He turns the insignificant into significance by making description an effective tool in locating the setting. He gives a full description of Ng'ando locale:

The slum lay wedged in between Santack Estate, Key-West and Ghettos...it was divided into two by one major road with many smaller outlets that led deeper into the rusty mabati and mud houses. You could smell the decay in the air- the whole place smelled like a pigsty. A sewer had evidently burst ahead and a thick greenish viscosity flowed along the road, weaving in some places. (Kombani 2012, 16)

The description physically locates the slum in one of the uncared for regions in the country creating the rift between the rich and the poor which politicians have not addressed. The reality of slum is revealed: the winding paths, small derelict houses, and narrow lanes, rows of congested iron houses and presence of local brew called 'mugacha' (Kombani 2012,16). Slaughterhouse, the abode for the five members is a replica of any ghetto dwelling. From the rickety door, the darkened wall, the disarranged items and the writings on the wall becomes a pragmatic depiction of the ghetto context. The residents of Ng'ando slum are stereotyped as "made up of drunks, the unemployed and idlers" (Kombani, 19). The latter's preoccupation is emptying people's wallets. A clear narrative device that historically reveals human relationships based on material gains. This echoes Marxist premise about the society. Marxism reveal how the socio-economic issues define how people relate in society. According to Tyson (2006) the material circumstances shape the historical situations individuals find themselves in (14). Undesirable political ideologies often promote repressive political agendas that give birth to classes. Those dwelling in the slums are perpetually subservient to the repressive ruling power

system. This reflects on why the slum manifests a narrative of hopelessness, despair and hardship. These are the people who have been forgotten and cast away by the system.

The courts, in Muroki Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court*, is an appendage of the oppressive regime. It is a narrative trope that elucidates injustice, oppression and bastardization of common decency and laws as is also revealed in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*. The court narrative is one of pain where innocent people are guilty and are given maximum sentences. In Ndung'u's *A Friend of the Court*, one judge stands out as a crusader of fairness and a just system. The convergence of the moral and amoral in the court space is an attestation to the gravity with which historical issues are held. In the Nakuru High court people's collective spirit finds assuage. The master minds of the mayhem, all of them high ranking government officials, are arraigned in the court to answer charges of instigating ethno-violence and dispossessing the citizenry. This kneads a historical text that those who subvert justice must face the law.

The crackdown on dissidents seen through the third perspective persona narrative style as seen in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* is gruesome, inhuman and unjust. The mistreatment the detainees undergo is inextricably intertwined with the country's history under the clamour for plutocracy. Wahome Mutahi underwent similar suffering because of his pungent satire in many of his newspaper articles. His was a scathing indictment on the totalitarian rule that was averse to the suffering of the masses. He was detained for his boldness and ended up undergoing similar torture in the cells. He lays bare this in *Three Days on the Cross* (1991) and *Jail Bugs* (1992). Ngugi wa Thiong'o was also detained in Kamiti Maximum security prison. He narrates these excesses in *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1990). Like Momodu and Chipota, he faces intolerable conditions that are debasing. His prison narrative echoes what Mutahi's *Three days on the Cross* illuminates.

Wahome Mutahi recounts his story beginning with the prologue that begins in the middle of the storyline, a narrative technique called *medias res*. The prologue sets the dark somber mood of events that culminates into an orgy of torture. The reader is immediately taken to the near-end of events. It is the third day being on the "cross" and like the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the two characters must 'resurrect' in one way or another. The two childhood friends who are blindfolded lie at the back of the cream jeep. From what they have faced within the last three days when they were in the cells, they only wish for death: "Chipota inwardly wished for death" (Mutahi 1991, 1). The three day experience leaves Chipota and Momodu with tell tale marks; "blistered feet, wounded knees, bruises on wrists and ankles confused minds and considerable anxiety" (Mutahi, 4). Similarly, Kombani in *The Last Villains of Molo* employs the use of *medias res* to reflect on the undulating seriousness of the skirmishes prior to the general elections in Kenya. Events, as they unfold in the prologue, begin in the middle of things. We are immediately thrust into an intense battle. The locale is Ndoinet Forest, Molo in 1992. Houses have been burnt and people killed. With screams and increasing noises outside, the young girl, nameless girl cowers under the bed trembling with apprehension and fear. She could discern crackling sounds of raging fires within the neighbourhood. The attackers forcefully burst into the sitting room with an intention to avenge the death of their community members. Nancy witnesses the killing of her father in cold blood.

She gasped when she saw her father convulsing on the floor. Blood was gushing out of a deep cut in his neck, and he was shaking violently. An incoherent flow of guttural sounds escaped from his frothing mouth. Her whole body still in shock, she bent down. (Kombani 2012, vi)

Medias res depict the middle of intense war which creates an atmosphere of expectation for peace. This prepares the readers for plotline strand. The characters are not named in the prologue. We are only told of a fearful and apprehensive young girl whose heart thunders in her chest as she hears the screams of her neighbours. The attackers are simply described as young men ready to kill in the name of their ethnic community. This hides the identity of communities engaged in the skirmishes. This is an adept narrative technique that buttresses historical animosity between communities. The historical reality underscores the revelation that the national morality has been deflated to an extent that friends and neighbours turn against each other. The use of *medias res* in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* depicts a brutal system that unleashes terror on the citizenry. The prologue sets in motion the tempo and pace of the storyline strand. The two friends are led to a deserted lonely road near a game reserve and are shot at when they are forced to flee in the process. Momodu is the first to fall. His death is a signification of the brutal effects of repression. He stands out as a martyr and represents all those who were killed during the clamour for political space. The prologue identifies not only the two main characters, Ogundipe Chipota and Albert Momodu, but also most importantly the repression visited on innocent people. Kenya's historiography of the late 1980s and early 1990s when there was a crack down on the July 10 Movement and Mwakenya dissidents' are clearly illuminated.

The two bodies lay at the back of cream jeep looking as still as corpses. The blindfolds around their faces gave them the look of unfinished mummies (Mutahi, 1).

It gives the plot some anticipatory anxiety to unravel the cause of death. The blindfolds depict an inhuman act devoid of compassion and kindness. This further buttresses the historical injustices the July 10

Movement and the Mwakenya dissidents went through in the hands of the police. This is strengthened by the wishful thoughts of death.

This resonates well with the crackdown on dissidents who are left traumatized physical and psychological bruises for those lucky not to have been killed. Mutahi has decided to foreground some actions to show the seriousness with which he holds them. Foregrounding is a narrative technique that makes some events or actions easily noticeable or conspicuous using different form of writing either in bold, capital letters or italicized writings. The writer uses capital letters to make the issue of dissidents conspicuous. Father Kerekou when he reads the typewritten seditious material, he shudders and a deep sense of fear engulfs him. It is necessitated by the government's brutal crackdown on dissidents and their sympathizers. The government of Illustrious One is waging war on the July 10 Movement whose motto remains "WE SHALL NOT SURRENDER" (Mutahi, 10) It co-relates with historical happenings where the government of the then President Moi in 1986 waged war on July 10 Movement who were seen as a threat to peace, unity and harmony. Most alleged members were rounded up and detained. A number of them fled the country.

The seditious document becomes a contested narrative between the government and the so called dissidents. It is a historical space of engagement. The dissidents accuse the government of rigging elections and coming to power through unjust means. The government is revealed as unyielding, oppressive and unaccommodating. Not only is there rampant unemployment but also that the cost of living is high with the food prices spiraling. These issues, though in an unnamed country have a similarity with the Kenyan situation in the late and early 1980s and 1990s historical epoch. In the cells part of the graffiti reads:

EXPECT NO MERCY HERE. YOU ARE FINISHED
BROTHER DON'T LET THEM FORCE A CONFESSION
OUT OF YOU, RASTA, NEVER GIVE UP (Mutahi, 133)

It prepares the detainees to be resilient, courageous and enduring. The mercilessness of the police system as shown above is an indictment of repression in Kenya's political history. This buttresses historical happenings in the country. This is further exacerbated by the made-up confession that Police Superintendent Immure conjures up and which he expects to use to convince Chipota. The statement of confession is alleged to have been signed by Momodu. Statement of confession is a narrative technique that presents unorthodox means by which the police get confessions from victims. It becomes worse when inhuman torture is forced on them to co-operate. Krieglner in his submissions of the Post Election Violence in Kenya (2007 – 2008) makes a scathing attack on the Kenyan police. He indicts them for ineptitude, slothfulness and larceny.

And since the Illustrious One has sworn to root out dissidents at whatever cost, then no effort is being spared by the police in obeying the order even if it infringes on peoples' basic rights. The leader has been foregrounded through the name *Illustrious One*. This is a pungent satire on the person of the president. Scholars and writers alike have opined that dictators clothe themselves with good names to camouflage their greed and insatiable appetite for power. Illustrious One is an epitome of political greed and avarice who detests any contrary opinion. Not only is he revealed as authoritarian but also an anti thesis of his name. The name he is given masks his greed and lust for personal power by suppressing the cry for democracy. This resonates well with Wole Soyinka *Kongi's Harvest* where Kongi is a manifestation of an autocratic leader of Ismaland kingdom; an African state (15). Illustrious One, like Kongi, decapitates their opponents through intensification of tyranny and repression. They get advice from close sycophantic leaders who are only after personal aggrandizement. Such autocratic leaders according to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010) "capture personal power by establishing one party rule and suppressing the opposition" (16).

Wahome Mutahi has arguably used interior monologue to buttress historiography. The two main protagonists, Momodu and Chipota undergo interior monologue in order to rationalize or justify events happening which forms a microcosm of historical happenings. After being picked up by the police without having committed a known crime, Chipota has his mind wondering on what possibly he could have committed: A traffic offence?

Fighting while drunk? Stepping on the sore
Toes of the law while in the line of duty?
Mistaken identity? (Ndung'u 2004, 20)

They cannot reconcile the horror they face in the hands of the police with the initial attempt of guessing reasons for arrest. They face untold miseries that they only wish for death. Individuals who have undergone such horrendous torture have tales to tell.

Kinyanjui Kombani too artistically demonstrates his understanding of the history through use of direct narration as a narrative technique. He makes known some major historical incidents that had a bearing in the country's dynamism process. One of which is the August 1998 Bomb Blast which reveals Kenya bearing the brunt of terrorism. The Likoni Ferry Tragedy in Mombasa in 1997 is clearly recreated in narration. Akinyi's parents died in the tragedy and Bafu takes the responsibility to cater for her education. It is a symbol showing

that people should care for the less fortunate regardless of ethnicity, colour, creed or religion. This arrangement offers hope and promises a future that Kenyans will appreciate one another irrespective of identity tags, ethnic or religious labels. Dialogue used in *The Last Villains of Molo*, serves to recreate the immediacy of the historical happenings. The tension created by the ethnic clashes is captured succinctly when, in the event of war, Peterson Lihanda tries to assist Waweru- Kimani's father when he is caught in the barbed wire.

"I can't leave you to die!" We'll die together if we have to!" he declared.

"Go! Leave me alone!" panted the man. He was shivering uncontrollably. "I'm old...you are young. May be you can make a difference."(Kombani, 110). The youth must not be sacrificed at the altar of expedience and bigotry. Their place is in the future. The relative peace before the skirmishes is shown as fertile ground for building the nation. People have integrated into a life of diligence and industry that is later disturbed by the instability that arises as a result of the ethnic clashes. Kinyanjui Kombani, in his narrative technique, has made a historical happening into a serious gripping plot which undulates in tension and action. It culminates in orgies of death that seeks peace in unity and friendship to exorcise the spirits of ethnic cleansing. The recreation of the past into a meaningful symbol of the present moment and precursory to the future peace and stability lies in entrenching a pantheon of human values for harmonious co-existence. The totality of this stark reality arising from misappropriation of power and the misuse of ethnicity becomes a symbol of historical situation that divides a nation in any African country. The hate-hate nexus initially exhibited by the youth later turns to unanimity of purpose and amicability. This is the optimism that the Kombani is passing across. People should not be held by the shackles of hatred and bigotry. Kombani sums up this optimism in the epilogue when he gives a quotation from David Mulwa's Redemption. "...the young refuse the bonds of the past, the bonds of hate." (Kombani, 205) Bone and Nancy representing two different communities, unite epitomizing the much needed unity and amity for the sake of posterity and nationhood. This is symbolic of the country's fecundity and regeneration.

IV. CONCLUSION

The two selected literary texts present Kenya's brutal historical occurrence during the time of political transformation. They can be viewed as historical allegories that reveal a nexus of ethno-violence. The only vestige of morality that remains with the communities is to 'resurrect' like Momodu in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* and forge ahead above and beyond tribal lines, balkanization, greed and avarice of the politicians and reclaim their place in history and society. Mutahi and Ndung'u's popular novels reveal major aspects of New Historicism. History as the context and fiction as the text are both connected in the interpretation of events. Both merge the rural and the urban to come up with gripping plots that indict the abuse of ethnicity and political patronage to gain political mileage and hold on to power. Historical discourse can beef or be beefed by literary discourse as both emanate from society. Literary texts thus manifest themselves as fictionalized representation of historical happenings. This concurs with Jameson's (1981) perspective that all third world narratives are allegories of the nation. We rightly concur with Ndlovu (2010, 240) who asserts that "attention should be paid to the popular narratives that have been coming out of Kenya" as they are manifestations of both the country's history and the socio-cultural complexities.

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