

**MIGUNA MIGUNA AND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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**DECLARATION**

This project paper is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another university.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to *Jaduong'* Barnabas Ogot Swaya, who epitomizes to me what a father should be, for all that you gave me and has made me be whom I am; and also to the memory of my late mother, *Mama* Turphosa Mary Atieno Ojwang' Ogot. *Turi*, as you were fondly called by many, the teachings that you gave us are the cords with which our family is closely knit and inspire us to scale heights even if they are dizzying, in spite of the many, many years since you left us.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Objectives .....	6
1.4 Hypotheses.....	6
1.5 Scope and Limitation .....	6
1.6 Justification of the Study .....	7
1.7 Literature Review.....	8
1.8 Theoretical Framework.....	14
1.9 Methodology.....	21
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Definition .....	22
2.3 Other Related Forms to the Autobiography.....	26
2.4 The Nature of the Autobiography.....	31
2.5 Functions of the Autobiography .....	46
<b>CHAPTER THREE:PEELING BACK THE MASK: A QUEST FOR JUSTICE IN KENYA</b> .....	<b>52</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	52
3.2 Miguna Miguna’s Early Life .....	54

3.2 Facts as the Basis of Truth in Autobiography.....	59
3.3 Miguna’s Fidelity to the Genre .....	68
3.4 Language and Style.....	77
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: KIDNEYS FOR THE KING: DE-FORMING THE STATUS</b>	
<b>QUO IN KENYA.....</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	85
4.2 Facts as the Basis of Truth in Autobiography.....	85
4.3 Miguna Miguna’s Fidelity to the Genre.....	102
4.4 Language and Style.....	108
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>WORKS CITED.....</b>	<b>117</b>

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## ABSTRACT

In this project I have critically examined Miguna Miguna and the autobiography. I have interrogated how Miguna Miguna employed the autobiographical form in his personal narratives. I sought to examine the truth-value of Miguna Miguna in his memoir *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* and its sequel *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*. I have also evaluated the author's fidelity to the genre; and I have also examined the literariness of the two texts. The study was based on the assumptions that distortion of facts undermined the reliability of Miguna Miguna's personal narratives. The other assumption that was explored was that the author disregarded the crucial tenets of autobiography. I also hypothesized that Miguna Miguna misused the autobiographical genre and this undermined the literary value of his writings. I collected the data by doing library research where books and other materials from the archives were used. I also collected some data by interviewing some selected people and institutions. The close textual reading and desktop research were also done to help gather the data. After the collection of the data the analysis was done. I found that Miguna Miguna's memoir is a very important narrative that has some positive values in it. The memoir gives the readers some important insights into what happens behind the scenes in our political institutions. It also gives the readers some inside stories of how our leaders behave and on how they play their political games, in what can only be described as their exclusive club. Through Miguna's personal narrative, the myth that surrounds these political institutions is dispelled. The distrust that became the preoccupation of the two principals is laid bare. The readers, through Miguna's personal narratives, are able to discern that all the unity and coalition talks were nothing but a charade to hoodwink Kenyans. However, I found that Miguna Miguna disregarded the crucial tenets of autobiography. I found out that Miguna Miguna did not mind about facts and this undermined his truth-value. And this also demonstrated his lack of fidelity to the genre. This misuse of the autobiographical genre undermined the literary value of Miguna Miguna's writings. Miguna Miguna does not care about breaking the rules that created the genres. This in itself effectively affects the form to which his writings belong, and this by extension affects the literary value of his work.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Miguna Miguna who has been variously referred to as a man with ‘one name twice’ or a man with ‘a recurring name’ was born in 1964 in Magina, in Ahero in Kano – currently in Kisumu County. His mother, Sure, was a widow who took care of her family single-handedly after the death of her husband, Miguna Jomune, shortly before the birth of his last born son – the narrator of the personal narratives. Miguna Miguna did his primary education in Magina and in Lambwe before joining Onjiko Secondary School for his O’Level. He later joined Njiiri’s High School for his A’level before proceeding to the University of Nairobi, where he was later on expelled after the students, for whom he was one of the leaders, went on strike. After the expulsion from the University of Nairobi, Miguna together with some of his colleague student leaders fled to Canada, through Tanzania and Botswana, where they sought political asylum away from the then repressive Moi regime. While in Canada, Miguna continued with his education and after completion of his studies, he furthered his education in law and even became a barrister in Canada where he practised law and where he set up his own law firm. The allure to join politics called him back home after having stayed in Canada for nineteen years. He vied for a nomination on an Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) ticket for Nyando Constituency in 2007 general elections but lost to Fredrick Outa who went ahead to win that seat.



After the general elections that became chaotic and precipitated the post election violence of 2007 – 2008 that culminated in the formation of a negotiated Grand Coalition Government between Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Raila as Premier appointed Miguna Miguna “ as his senior adviser on coalition, legal and constitutional affairs,” a position the latter held, together with “ serving as the joint secretary to The Permanent Committee on the Management of the Grand Coalition Affairs” (*Peeling*, xx) until August 4, 2011, when the same Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya suspended him indefinitely without pay, a development that triggered their acrimonious fallout.

Miguna Miguna is not only a writer, but a poet too. He says that he started writing and publishing his works in the various publications that existed in the institutions he went through and in the local dailies of the places he sojourned or lived. For instance, he associates his popularity among the students’ population at the University of Nairobi to “[his] radical poems and articles, which were either published in the *Campus Mirror* newspaper or being[sic] posted on the university notice boards” (*Kidneys*,53). In Canada he also “penned several probing and searing articles and poems in publications” (*Kidneys*, 135) that included some of the major newspapers and magazines. All these attest to the fact that Miguna Miguna is not a new writer or poet, but rather a seasoned one. Most Kenyans also came to know him through the weekly columns that he wrote in the local dailies in which he vehemently defended Raila Odinga and ODM party against their critics; and at the same time scathingly attacked the former’s and the latter’s perceived political enemies. Miguna Miguna has also published other works such as

*Songs of Fire* (1994), *Disgraceful Osgoode and Other Essays* (1994), *Afrika's Volcanic Song* (1995), and *Toes Have Tales* (1995) which were all published by AV Publications, in Toronto, in Canada; it is the publication of his two personal narratives, namely, *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* and *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* that have given him wide publicity in Kenya as a writer.

*Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King* are Miguna Miguna's memoir and its sequel. He has claimed that these texts capture certain aspects of his life that he feels he wants to share with others. It is the way in which he has written these two personal narratives that has generated a lot of debate. In these two personal narratives, Miguna Miguna has written on several issues that he felt he could share with his readers. One of the issues that the persona has dwelt on very much in his personal narratives is the character of the former Prime Minister of Kenya, Raila Odinga. In his memoir and its sequel, the persona has attacked the personality of Raila Odinga in two ways: he has attacked Raila Odinga as an individual and as an institution. Raila Odinga as an institution is alleged by the author to represent reform and democracy, some of the myths that Miguna Miguna attempts to explode in his personal narratives. He has implied this by stating that he "had openly challenged Raila's reform credentials and implied that he wasn't an agent of change" (*Peeling*, 501). The other issues that he has mentioned in these two texts are Kenyatta's, Moi's, Kibaki's and the Coalition's Governments; ODM, PNU, ODM-K and other political parties; his life in Kenya and in Canada; the many

liberation struggles that have taken place in Kenya in the recent past; and the people he knew as his friends and enemies alike.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Miguna Miguna has chosen to write his personal narratives in the autobiographical genre. In the autobiographical mode, the protagonist or the persona writes about his or her life and the various things that have shaped that particular life. Since it is a human life one would expect to come across a narrative that captures the strengths and weaknesses of the life being narrated. This is because the reader and the narrator do not live on different planets, but both share the same earth and therefore some of the things that impact on the life of the protagonist might also be the ones affecting the life of the reader. And it is only when the reader has found something to relate to in an autobiographical work that the protagonist's narrative gains credibility in the eyes of the reader. And this will only happen when there is, as James Olney puts it, "... a significant ordering of recalled experiences drawn from the writer's observation and awareness of himself, of his past, and of the entire social and spiritual context in which he has and has had his moral being" (21). In life, human beings succeed and fail, laugh and cry, climb up and climb down, feed and starve, drink and thirst, as well as being born and dying. It is this rhythm of life that a protagonist should bear in mind when writing his or her autobiographical work so that they avoid writing an angel's life story.

Autobiographical works are bound by certain laws which an autobiographical writer should obey. These autobiographical tenets help to differentiate between this genre and

other genres that a writer might engage in when writing. Even though it is subjective, introspective, self-revealing, and self-concealing, it calls for one engaging in it to be truthful, sincere or honest, factual and credible. Failure to abide by these tenets would render one's work as 'un-autobiographical' or a classical case of abuse of the autobiographical form.

Miguna Miguna in his personal narratives, *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*, presents himself as a person who researches on issues before responding to them or making his decisions. He presents himself as a conscientious person, whose words and writings convey the truth and are based on facts, void of errors, misrepresentations or lies of any kind when he states that before commenting on or committing to anything, "I subject the prevailing issue to thorough research, analysis and introspection" (*Peeling*, 445) . He projects himself as an objective, impartial, clear-minded and meticulous person. He elevates himself as the only person who has knowledge of everything while the rest – not withstanding their levels of education, profession, expertise and experience – are clueless. It is this image of an impeccable character that Miguna Miguna has cultivated for himself that makes us set out to interrogate what he writes in his two texts under study in order to verify whether he has done what he professes or not and the extent to which he departs from the norms of the autobiography.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The study seeks to:

- i) Examine the truth value of Miguna Miguna in *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*.
- ii) To critically evaluate Miguna Miguna's fidelity to the autobiographical genre.
- iii) Examine the literariness of Miguna Miguna's *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*.

### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The study will investigate the following hypotheses:

- i) Miguna Miguna's tendency to distort the facts undermines the reliability of his autobiographical writing.
- ii) Miguna Miguna flouts crucial tenets of the autobiography in his personal narratives.
- iii) Miguna Miguna's misuse of the autobiographical genre undermines the literary value of his writing.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

This study will primarily focus on the way Miguna Miguna deliberately distorts facts, and by extension examine his possible misuse of the autobiographical genre, in *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*. Other selected texts and critical works relevant to the task under study will be used as secondary sources to support the work. Newspapers will be used as one of these latest works by Miguna Miguna was serialized in one of the local

dailies and popularized by the media, and it is through these media (both print and social) that a lot of comments and reviews concerning Miguna Miguna's two latest books were made.

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

This study is justified on the grounds that Miguna Miguna's autobiographical works create an image of a superhuman on the part of the protagonist. The picture of Miguna Miguna that one gets in reading his memoir and its sequel is that one of a person who makes few or no mistakes at all, one who is exceptionally knowledgeable and gifted in organizational skills. Contrasted to this image of a superman on the part of the protagonist, are most or all the others mentioned in his autobiographical works who are either outright dumb or clueless and are not supposed to hold the positions that they occupy, be it in politics or in government. It is this crafting of himself to the point of being an angel that drives us to interrogate his autobiographical works based on what is known of autobiographical writings.

In addition, in the autobiographical genre, the person is supposed to be honest in what they write such that what the reader sees reflected in the narrative becomes credible. In *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King* one sees a Miguna Miguna who makes no mistakes, who is bright, who is daring and who is honest. This image of the author is the one that is juxtaposed with the other persons mentioned in his narratives who are weak, gullible, dishonest and clueless – irrespective of their levels of education, profession, expertise and experience. People can be all that Miguna Miguna writes of

them, but there is need for balance. There is need for a round narrator who also has weaknesses besides his strengths. He or she should also care to attribute to his characters some positive qualities too since they are not made of negative qualities only.

In autobiographical genre truth is important because the protagonist is supposed to record real things (facts) that impacted on his life. One should not lie or try to fictionalize what never happened in their lives. It is expected that the author will engage in a soul searching endeavour before embarking on writing his or her personal narrative. This is because the self writes of what it has undergone internally and externally and the effects these interactions have had on it. Essentially, in an autobiographical mode, the protagonist acts more or less like an eye – witness in a courtroom where the witness is not supposed to concoct issues, but rather sticks on recounting the truth in its basic form. It is this truth that I seek to verify its existence in Miguna Miguna’s personal narratives.

### **1.7 Literature Review**

Memoirs, just like autobiographies, are accounts of one’s life (Muchiri, 26) and therefore it is reasonable enough that one’s motive for engaging in this genre be known. A memoir is an account of one’s life, hived and given prominence; it focuses on specific events in one’s life that the author retrieves from his/her memory. It is an “anecdotal depiction of people and events” (Marcus, 3) in one’s life that (s)he feels like sharing with the others. A sampling of a few memoirs and autobiographies will suffice to exemplify this assertion.

In *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, Ngugi felt that he could not have written his "prison memoir without treading on some sensitive toes" (1), implying that he wrote his "prison memoir" to share his experiences with his readers even if doing so would hurt his detainers. Implicitly his motive was to expose the injustices perpetrated by Kenyatta's regime. By sharing his life experiences in the world of crime and through prison, John Kiggia Kimani hopes that one will be wise enough to "correct themselves by [sic] the mistake of others" (132). His is a confessional text. John Kiggia Kimani is in a way confessing to having lived such a life as he has narrated in his autobiography, *Life and Times of a Bank Robber*.

Saga McOdongo narrates her life story in order to "reach out" to those gullible people who may be lured into drugs and those "interested in the problems of drug use/abuse" (14). Equally telling is Esther Owuor's life experiences, which she used to drive home the need for everybody to be "informed about paraplegia in the simplest form possible in order to understand the disabled members of our society" (*My Life As A Paraplegic*, 102) and then enact legal and physical structures that are friendly to the members of the disabled community amongst us.

In giving the reason for writing *There Was A Country*, Achebe says, "it is for the sake of the future of Nigeria, for our children and grandchildren, that I feel it is important to tell Nigeria's story, Biafra's story, my story" (2), implying that he was chronicling the history of the Biafran war according to his own perspective. And in echoing Chinua Achebe,



Miguna Miguna claims of *Peeling Back the Mask* that: “I’ve done it for myself, for my family, for the country, for Africa and for humanity” (553).

Unlike Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s, John Kiggia Kimani’s, Saga McOdongo’s, Esther Owuor’s and Chinua Achebe’s autobiographies where the authors have given various, but single, reasons for narrating their personal lives, Miguna Miguna has advanced more than one reason for writing his memoir. He warns that he did not write his memoir to entertain readers but rather that he “tackles (...) some of the key issues” in his “ongoing life” (xxii). In this, one is able to see someone who is concerned with the issues affecting his life. The second reason Miguna gives for writing his memoir was to “unmask the duplicitous and deceptive life of Raila Amollo Odinga” (*Peeling*, 553).

This study will also look at the critical works on personal narratives and see how these will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of my study. Critical works are important to my study because they shed more light on issues which eventually make certain perspectives taken be clearer. In *Women’s Autobiography, Voices From Independent Kenya* Muchiri studies several autobiographies written by women in Kenya. Her focus is on the autobiographical voice, specifically that one of women in Kenya. But her view that autobiography is a representation of the “expression of individual authority in the realm of language” (157) will assist my study since stylistic devices are elements in language that Miguna Miguna employs in his memoir and its sequel. And again, as we shall see, Miguna Miguna demonstrates his authority in language as he manipulates it in the nonfictional writings under study.

Chaman Nahal in 'The Autobiographical Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru', in *Aspects of Commonwealth Literature*, sees the connection between an individual's personal life narrative and the history of that individual's society. In his case, through the study of Jawaharlal Nehru's two texts, *Autobiography* and *Discovery of India*, he was able to see that what Nehru narrated as his personal narrative amounted to India's history. This is exemplified by this statement he makes that: "Nehru must perhaps have written the only history of the world in the first person" (61). And his view that autobiography "is essentially an exercise in egoism" (61) will be important to my study as I shall try to demonstrate that Miguna Miguna's personal writings are not exercises in egoism but are rather outbursts of anger, bitterness and a sense of betrayal by the prime minister. And this bitterness can be destructive in a sense, as Nahal puts it further that: "We could take up any autobiography and see how the persona of the author is built on similar details – the ruin of others, albeit innocent ruin" (61). My study will seek to determine to what intent did Miguna Miguna appropriate lies in his works in order to ruin Raila Odinga and other characters in ways that were bereft of innocence.

In stating that Nehru might have been the only person who wrote the history in the world in the "first person", Nahal might have been endorsing the fact that personal narratives can be used to record history. The problem with his assertion is that if these personal narratives are "essentially ... exercise[s] in egoism" and ego being an attitude is subjective, then how can the history recorded out of "egoism" be regarded as the true state of the affairs? Not all personal writings are "exercises in egoism" as Nahal would want us believe. Barack Obama's, Esther Owuor's and John Kimani Kiggia's

autobiographies do not seem to have been written out of ego. Ego does not play any central role in their writings if one might be tempted to read it in their works; just the same way one looking casually at Miguna Miguna's personal narratives would see ego as the reason behind his writing – other than anger and bitterness which were occasioned by his abrupt suspension without pay by Raila Odinga, the former prime minister of Kenya. These anger and bitterness are felt throughout the personal narratives that Miguna Miguna has written until they form the nucleus of his memoirs and its sequel. His tone betrays everything, hence ruling out Nahal's assertion that personal narratives are "exercises in egoism"; because in Miguna Miguna's case this does not seem to be.

Joyce Nyairo in "Miguna's memoir annoyed many, but it was the book of the year" starts by blaming lack of readership among Kenyans as demonstrated by the way people reacted to the publication and the launch of *Peeling Back the Mask*. She claims that others were commenting on the work based on the serializations that were published in one of the local dailies without having read the actual book, while the others only scanned the book and then began critiquing it. She also mentions "absolute intolerance to divergent views" and "use of ethnicity as a unit of literary analysis" (Daily Nation, Saturday, Dec. 29, 2012) as factors that led Kenyans to have varied views on Miguna's work. In short, Nyairo decries the fact that most responses were subjective and biased. However, she also falls victim of what she condemns when her critiquing of the work reveals where her position stands as far as the ethnic matrix is concerned. She starts by endorsing *Peeling Back the Mask* as the book of the year, yet she equivocates when she admits that: "using the doctrine of logical assumptions, we can conclude that if this

aspect of Miguna's account of Moi years is incorrect, there are likely to be other errors in his rendering of the Kibaki and the *nusu mkate* years" showing that this is not the book of the year as she would like us to believe.

However, it is the way she points out that Miguna manipulates the language that gives relevance of her work to my study. She admits that:

Miguna has a persuasive style and a clever way with words. It draws you into his story and compels you to keep reading. This gift of the garb and witty turn of phrase is characterized by a penchant for over - kill, as if he has to cook everything twice! (Daily Nation, Saturday, 29, 2012).

Nyairo mentions language in general in Miguna's work, while my study will focus on the way he employs it to mis/represent truth in *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*.

Still, Nyairo in "Ngugi redefines the Kenyan identity," which appeared in the Daily Nation online on Tuesday, May 4, 2010 at 10:30, where she critiqued Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War*, which she referred to as "a narrative of confessions and suppressions" mentions a point that would be of interest to my study. She states that: "if we really want to understand our past, we need to seek the evidence of our varied existence from popular forms, including memoirs". My concern with this assertion is on memoirs as a popular form. Our past, which is basically our history, should not appear to

be constructed around distorted facts. Hence, even as we read our past from popular forms, and more so memoirs as Nyairo says, there is need for us to interrogate them so that we do not revel and dwell in a distorted past.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

The study will utilize the autobiographical theory, stylistics literary theory and formalism. The autobiographical theory will help my study to determine whether Miguna Miguna's memoir and its sequel were written purely to share his life experiences with the readers or whether they were triggered by other ulterior motives that made him probably tell lies in his works. The autobiographical theory emphasizes the importance of sincerity and the intention for writing one's life as lived without trying to distort facts deliberately.

The boundary that lies between memoir and autobiography is so thin that at times it becomes difficult for one to distinguish between the two. Both are personal narratives told by the self. To avoid getting caught up in the confusion between memoir and autobiography, some critics prefer showing that memoir is a sub-category of autobiography. They end up justifying this by stating that autobiography looks at an inner perspective while the memoir is focused on the outside. Some critics claim that memoir comes from memorable moments that an individual is able to capture in his life; while autobiography is seen as the unfurling of the individual's entire life. But still all these are products of the same source, memory. Hence, a distinction that seems to be acceptable of "focus on the inner self and the recounting of the mere facts and events of life" (Marcus,

19) for autobiography and memoir respectively, is what this study will take into account in order to justify the use of autobiographical theory in the study of memoir as a genre.

Another critic who accedes to the closeness that exists between a memoir and an autobiography is Muchiri. She attributes this closeness to the fact that both are about personal experiences which are chronologically ordered and reflective. She sees intensity as a distinguishing factor between the two genres which she states depends on “the amount of self-revelation contained in the memoir” (19), with autobiography focusing on the self and memoir focusing on the issues surrounding the self.

A German historian and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833 – 1911) has been regarded as the person who founded “a scholarly approach to autobiography” and the originator of the notion that, “autobiography occupied a central place as *the* key to understanding the curve of history” (Marcus, 137). He stressed historicity as that medium that is shared by all and therefore his feeling that “auto/biography as a mode of understanding, of self and other, which takes a variety of forms and to which every individual has access” (Marcus, 135-6) makes memoir be inclusive in autobiographical theory. Dilthey’s model of autobiographical theory which “takes into account the concepts of “life”, “lived experiences” (Erlebnis) and the understanding (Verstehen) of ‘life-expressions” (136) makes it easier when dealing with personal narratives since it offers one the focus on which (s)he can concentrate. His work on autobiographical criticism narrows to experience, unity and coherence. And the importance of experience in this mode of writing is based on the fact that it “is a direct reflection of life” (Muchiri, 12).

Georg Misch, a German, a student and a son-in-law to Dilthey, also had his contribution to the autobiographical theory. His assertion that autobiography was different from other forms of literary compositions allowed him to see autobiographical work everywhere he looked at (Marcus, 149). This was because he saw the boundaries of this mode of writing as more fluid and less definable in terms of form than “those of lyric or epic poetry or drama” (148). His stance bore a lot on the debate between those who defined autobiography “in generic terms” and those critics who viewed it as transcending literary conventions (148). Despite stating that autobiography “transcends classification” (148), he goes ahead to differentiate between ‘memoirs’ and ‘autobiography’, by stating that ‘memoirs’ present a passive relation to the world with their authors positioning themselves as “merely observers of the events and activities of which they write” (149), while in autobiography the life-story is given prominence. But still, despite the differentiation, these two genres are still so close to each other that many people in trying to define one, as opposed to the other, always show how confusing these two personal writings are. This therefore means that it is possible to study memoirs using autobiographical theory. This is so because autobiographical theory encompass all personal narratives based on non-fiction literatures such as “conversion narratives, *memoirs*, biographies, histories, [and] letters” (italic mine) (Marcus, 238).

George Gusdorf is another autobiographical critic who is concerned with the intention of writing autobiography. He sees autobiography as a way of one’s witnessing of his life through writing. He is concerned with man’s self-knowledge and self-awareness which is essentially a reflection of an individual’s life as lived by that individual. But he also

warns that this personal witnessing “becomes of less value when it is employed for the purpose of defending one’s reputation, or for self-aggrandisement” (Marcus, 157). Most of this writing is found in the ‘memoirs’ of public men, which Gusdorf views to be in the league as biography, which he considers to be simple representations (157). Therefore, any writing that is triggered by search for fame or monetary gain falls in the category of writing which Marcus strongly condemns when he states, “[t]he mercantile aspects of writing are viewed as particularly insidious in relation to autobiographic writing, especially when this is held to be an authentic and autonomous expression of an essentially private self” (4). Besides the intention to write, another driving force is the inner compulsion to write the self which “should not be driven by mercenary motives” (Muchiri, 15).

The study of style in language is known as stylistics (Verdonk, 3). Barry sees stylistics as “... critical approach which uses the methods of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary texts” (203). Barry refers to it as the modern version of rhetoric and attempts at tracing it from the medieval discipline known as “‘rhetoric’, to philology, to linguistics, to stylistics,” and finally to what he terms as “new stylistics” (205-8). The application of stylistics in literature is what is referred to as Stylistics Literary Theory.

Literary Criticism, which is the scholarly study of literature, pays attention “to a larger-scale significance of what is represented in verbal art” (Verdonk, 55); while stylistics is concerned with “how this significance can be related to specific features of language, to linguistic **texture** [sic] of the literary text” (55). Besides analyzing data in literary or non-



literary texts, stylistics goes further to give the interpretation of the same data. Since its methodology is scientific, the interpretation given of any data collected is objective and dependable.

Stylistics Literary Theory will assist my study since it will be a handy tool when I shall be trying to determine why and how Miguna's memoir and its sequel utilize stylistic devices. Miguna seems to use language cleverly for propaganda purposes. Again, this is important because, as Verdonk states, and I concur with him, that: "focusing on specific features of language can lead us to wider issues of literary significance" (62). Miguna has used language in a way that shows that he was deliberately applying it to construct himself as the hero and Raila Odinga as a villain. When I apply the literary stylistics stylistic theory in Miguna's personal narratives I shall be able to show why and how he uses the language to influence the readers' perceptions on the issues he writes on.

When a deviation occurred in the "traditional ways of interpretation" (Bressler, 50) of texts, two groups of Russian Scholars set forth ways of interpreting literary works. These groups were referred to as the "Russian Formalism" (Bressler, 50) and later on as "Czech" or "Formalists" (New, 22). These two groups were the Moscow team and the Petrograd (currently St. Petersburg) team. The Moscow linguistic circle team was founded in 1915. It had the following members Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukarovsky, Peter Bogatyrev and G. O. Vinokur; while the other team, which was associated with the society for the study of Poetic Language (OPOYAZ), comprised Victor Shklovsky, Boris Echeribaum, and Victor Vinogradov. OPOYAZ was formed in 1916. These two groups

dismissed many of the nineteenth century ways of textual analyses based on “the belief that a work of literature was the expression of the author’s worldview” (51). They also rejected psychological and biographical criticism as irrelevant to interpretation of the works of literature.

They also felt that literature and poetic language were autonomous. Therefore they advocated for a scientific approach to literary interpretation. They were basing their scientific approach to the study of works of literature on the methods or theories of linguistic study as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, who is considered as the father of linguistics. These Russian Formalists, believing that literature was autonomous, argued that literature should be studied within “literature itself” (50). To the formalist, to study literature is to study its poetics or its form; with poetics being its linguistic and structural features, while form comprised “the internal mechanics of the work itself (Bressler, 51).

The formalists were concerned a lot with the work’s literariness. They asserted that literary language differed from the conventional language. Literary language “foregrounds” itself, they argued, thus standing aside from the other languages. This deviation makes literature look strange. This strangeness is what Victor Shklovsky termed as “defamiliarization”. “Defamiliarization” is the giving of new meaning to what is familiar. Shklovsky refers to it as shedding light to a “sphere of new perception” (Bressler, 52) thus making what is known to a person be strange. The Russian word for strange is “ostranenie”. This strangeness in poetry comes about as a result of using various literary devices, such as irony, imagery, structure and rhyme scheme. In narrative

prose, Shklovsky argued that it has two aspects, the story and the plot. He used the terms *fibula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot). *Fabula* is “the raw material of the story” (52) while the literary device the author uses to tell the story is called the *syuzhet*. Although New has some issues with “defamiliarised” or “intensified perception” as propounded by the Formalists arguing that many other non – literary works can elicit these conditions and therefore render them unable to “formulate necessary or sufficient conditions for the application of the expression ‘literary discourse’”(22), it is his concluding remarks on the formalists definition, that of “sufficient condition”, that redeems our choice of formalism literary theory as a way of ascertaining whether a given work is literary or not. This is because it is a fact that no single theory (or meta-theory) exists that can adequately meet the conditions for literariness fully to conclusively determine that a text is literary or not, without requiring the need to have other theories in existence to supplement it. Matters of theories are like the well known story of the six blind sages who after variously coming into contact with an elephant, proceeded to describe it, each according to how he had sensed it. All of them gave different descriptions of what an elephant looked like in their mental pictures depending on which part of the elephant each had touched; they were all partly right but none of them was able to comprehensively describe the elephant fully. Nonetheless, each was able to, at least, describe what the concept ‘elephant’ was based on what they had touched; in like manner, formalism can still be used as a basis to verify whether a text is literary or not.

Russian Formalism Literary Theory will assist my study when I shall be trying to ascertain whether Miguna Miguna’s personal writings are literary or not. It is against the

conditions put in place by the formalists, to test whether a piece of work has what amounts to ‘literariness,’ that I shall expose *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King* to and then determine whether these two texts meet the criteria or not.

### **1.9 Methodology**

In this study I intend to do a close textual reading of Miguna Miguna’s *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* and *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*. I shall also do library and the desktop research in order to collect data that will enable me to write my project.

I intend to interview at least three people mentioned in the personal narratives of Miguna Miguna, one of whom will be the author himself where possible in order to verify the claims made in the memoir and the sequel. I also intend to research on two institutions mentioned in the two personal narratives of Miguna Miguna in order to ascertain the truth of the claims he makes concerning them. These institutions will be the Heron Court Hotel and the University of Nairobi.

The project will be in four chapters. Chapter one will include the introduction, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, scope and limitation, justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology. Chapter two will be on the nature of autobiography and chapter three will be on *Peeling Back the Mask*. Chapter four will be on *Kidneys for the King*. Lastly, there will be conclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NATURE OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

#### 2.1 Introduction

Personal narratives are creative works that are under the non-fiction category of literature. They are narratives written by and based on the actual life of the protagonist or on issues that affect the protagonist. Unlike fiction, where fictitious life is depicted, forcing the author to create almost everything – ranging from characters, settings, all through to events—the personal narrative writer does not need to create things up, but rather to select from a wide possible range of people, things, events and issues, both extrinsically and intrinsically, that have formed what s/he calls hers or his life. The personal narrative writer selects and decides from which part of his life and when to begin telling his story, based on the significances these have on his life. This is actually transforming a privately-owned life into a publicly-viewed life – in which the public can scrutinize and make comments on by way of praising or critiquing it. Or observing whether a life has been well lived or not.

#### 2.2 Definition

Many scholars, researchers and writers working on non-fictions, especially on personal narratives, have commented, by way of definition or description, on this genre – and by extension its sub-genres. The concepts these people have of autobiography, and its related forms, help in establishing the groundwork and setting the limit within which this genre and its sub-genres are to be studied.

Abrams sees autobiography as “a biography written by the subject about himself” (15). The implication of this statement is that the protagonist writes a narrative that situates him or her within it as the central figure around which everything revolves or places him or her at a vantage point where events and other happenings are narrated according to his or her view. Muchiri on her part defines autobiography thus: “the account of an individual human life, written by the subject” (26). And she goes further to insist that it must be “composed by the subject” (26) who may write it or dictate it to someone else to write. This means that the act of composing or creating is very important in recording personal narratives, since people with disabilities that can prevent them from writing or illiterate people can still have their works written and read, so long as they dictate them to the people who can write.

James Olney, in what he terms as “an important fact about autobiography”, states that “in it the whole man speaks in a way that he may not in certain other kinds of writing” (8). This proposition implies that what “man speaks” is an attempt to project one’s self. Shari Benstock in “Authorizing the Autobiographical”, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory, A Reader*, defines autobiography as “an effort to recapture the self” (145). Benstock, in presuming that the writing subject knows himself or herself, states further that “this process of knowing is a process of differentiating himself from others” (149). Benstock, still on defining autobiography, by quoting Gusdorf, states that it “is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image” (148). And this can be construed to mean that if the mirror is clean and clear, then the image formed is focused and sharp; if the mirror is misty and dirty, then the image formed will be hazy and distorted. This essentially means

that the quality of the image depends on the type of mirror used. And this is true, that if the autobiographer sticks to facts, is sincere, and is honest then the work he or she produces will be of higher quality than the one in which the writer has disregarded these simple, but very important points.

Henry Indangasi in 'The Autobiographical Impulses in Africa and African – American Literature', in *The Americas before and after Columbus*, sees a writer of autobiography as an artist who “selects, reorganizes, rearranges, and reshapes the fact of his life in order to communicate a higher truth”(114). Indangasi, taking cognizance of the fact that “truth” is immeasurable, goes ahead to indicate that a writer of autobiography can achieve a “higher truth” by selecting, reorganizing, rearranging, and reshaping ‘facts’. This inversely implies that any autobiographical work cultivated upon anything else, other than facts, cannot attain “higher truth”. Truth here is seen as the culmination of reality through the sifting and rearranging of facts in personal – life narratives. All writers of personal narratives aim at extracting what Obama refers to as the “granite slab of truth” (xvi) which can be attained by basing one’s writing on facts as Indangasi states it. Commenting still on autobiography, Obama views it as implying “a summing up, a certain closure...”of life which is fit for one who has got “experience” in life since it “promises feats worthy of record, conversations with famous people, a central role in important events” (xvi). This clearly informs why Obama has left the critiques and the scholars to attach labels to his life story, since according to him he wrote what he referred to as “an honest account of a particular province of (his) life” (xvii). This is because he sees his personal narrative, *Dreams from My Father*, as by no means a summation or a

culmination of his life. The implication here is that Obama feels that he has not lived long enough or gained enough experience to make him write an autobiography preferring to settle on some of the sub-genres of autobiography as it would please scholars and researchers to place him in. And this might be so because at the time he was writing *Dreams from My Father*, he had not yet become the senator of the State of Illinois nor the president of the United States of America (USA). And perhaps with this additional experiences he may feel like writing another volume of his personal writing that may capture these “provinces”, as he states, of his later life.

Another scholar who defines autobiography is Oliver Haag. He defines it as: “a life-narrative principally narrated by the protagonist(s)” (6) in an essay titled “From the margins to the mainstream: towards a history of published Indigenous Australian autobiographies and biographies”, in *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*. Haag’s definition emphasizes on the centrality of the self in the narrative by the self. Laura Marcus sees autobiography as dealing “more properly with the realm of thought” (38), a view that lends credence to the notion of self telling its own narrative which it retrieves from the memory – which is the repository of thought. For there is no person who can tell what another person thinks of unless the latter decides to divulge what is in his or her mind to the former. However, whoever chooses to put down their story in autobiography should ensure, as Muchiri writes, that they confine it “to a direct narrative aiming at a truthful record of (their) life” (27).



What one deduces from the foregoing definitions and descriptions about personal narratives (autobiographies), and the list is not exhaustive, is the fact that the autobiography is the narrator's narrative told by the narrator. The telling can be done in the oral form or in the written form. Written autobiography maintains its form, structure and plot, unlike the oral one, hence their popularity with both the writers and the readers alike. Its mutability also makes the written autobiography to be preferred by many to the oral form because it can be shared by many people scattered across the globe. Its other advantage lies in the fact that the written autobiography can be studied in institutions as a literary text or for other purposes. The bottom line is that whatever the form one chooses to use, the narrative should be told by the subject about the subject.

### **2.3 Other Related Forms to the Autobiography**

Biography is one of the forms related to the autobiography. Haag has defined biography as “a life – narrative principally narrated about the protagonist(s)” (8). Haag's definition points to the fact that the narrator of the biography is not the subject of the narrative. While Haag sees autobiography as “self – productions stories”, on the other hand he sees biography “as-told-to” stories (8). That is, biographies are written from those stories that the subject has told the writer. The writer, besides the stories s/he has been told, incorporates other data gathered from research to write a biography. Muchiri has defined biography as: “a written account of a person's life by another” emphasizing the fact that this is done “by documenting and interpreting that life from a point of view external to the subject” (38). Her definition echoes Haag's as both position the subject differently from the author. This makes it possible for biography to be written posthumously thus

forming one of the differences that appear between it and the autobiography. An autobiography cannot be written posthumously, its narrator has to be alive to narrate his/her story to the end. Unlike autobiography, which is a one person's involvement, biography is an involvement of two people – one as the focus of the narrative and the other as the narrator of that story through writing. Marcus sees biography as dealing more with the “action or the public life” (38) thus making it be possible for one person to collect data on a subject and then write on him or her. This is made possible because it is easier to perceive someone's actions and public life and make interpretations based on them than doing the same on someone else's thoughts or inner feelings, thus leaving such to the self to record.

Memoir is another form of personal writing that is so close to the autobiography that many scholars and critics have defined it differently. Haag views a memoir as that kind of personal – writing that “focuses upon select aspects of a life” (7). His contention therefore appears to differentiate between autobiography and memoir, whereby the latter only seems to capture what Obama has described in his personal narrative as a “province” of one's life. To Marcus, it is: “an anecdotal depiction of people and events” (3), which means that the way people and events are portrayed is based on one's own experience or information other than on facts. Mary Jean Corbett, in her essay titled “Literary Domesticity and Women Writers' Subjectivities”, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, sees memoir as a narrative “in which the writing subject recounts stories of others and events or movements in which she and/ or her other subjects have taken part” (262). What the foregoing Corbett's comment shows is the deflection of the writer so that what

the reader sees is not the teller of the narrative but the subject about whom is told. Muchiri's comment that "memoir devotes more attention to occurrences around and outside the writer" (39) seems to support the notion that this form decentralizes the narrator, thus giving importance to what the narrator tells than the narrator him- /herself.

Letters, also known as epistles, fall under personal – narratives as they too are indicative of self – portraiture like autobiography. Letters are normally viewed as private writings which are capable of revealing the writer's taste and personality. Patricia Meyer Spacks, in "Female Rhetorics", in *Women, Autobiography, Theory, A Reader*, has stated that: "personal letters, published, entice readers by fictions of self-revelation" (232). People like reading published letters because, as Muchiri states, they reveal "innermost feelings of the author(s) in their unedited form" (42). The reader feels as if the communication the letter is offering is meant for him or her. This feeling enhances some degree of intimacy between the writer and the reader because the latter gets to learn about the former. Spacks views letters as being demonstrative of the various "possibilities of self-presentation inherent in the epistolary act" (237). She also states, and I agree, that apart from constructing or revealing a self, letters "encourage readers to acknowledge a personality so compelling as to constitute selfhood" (232). And out of this constituted selfhood, since it does not exist in a vacuum, through letters, a reader can learn "a detailed account of the social structures that human beings live in" (Muchiri, 43). For instance, in the letter to his son, Barack Obama senior tells him to come home and that it is important for him (son) to know his people (*Dreams*, 114). Through this letter alone one can tell how Obama the father and Obama the son lived and related as well as the kinds of societies they both

lived in. Miguna, also commenting on the letter he was given by the university for his expulsion, states: “It was shocking. A professor of sociology writing a letter that purports to expel a student without any particulars, supporting facts or evidence”(Peeling, 75). In this letter one is able to deduce how the society in which Miguna and Prof. Mbithi lived behaved towards the maintenance of peace and of social order. These examples also exemplify the fact that letters can also be used as sources of data to write other narrative structures, such as biography and autobiography.

Diaries and journals are forms of autobiographical writings that also project the element of self. Muchiri describes a diary as “a personal record or journal of events, reflections, or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals” (39). She also explains that both diary and journal are used for keeping individual records, except that a journal can also be used by various institutions, where they record their daily observations or occurrences, and as printed periodicals where experts in various fields can put their findings and also engage with their peers. Margo Culley, in “Introduction to A Day at a Time: Diary Literature of American Women, from 1764 to 1985”, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory. A Reader*, states that: “diaries and journals are ... verbal constructs” (217). The diarists do not always record everything that happens in a day, but rather select events or happenings that have some importance in their lives. Culley refers to this as a “process ... of selecting details to create a persona” (218-9). It is instructive that the selections of what should and what should not be put in a diary is done with a lot of caution and care to avoid running into the same predicament Hellman discovered later when she wanted to utilize information she had logged in her diary and realized that what she thought then to

be important could not help her now. Hellman indicates her frustration with her diary, after keeping it meticulously for five months, recording every detail in it she thought was important, by lamenting that: “but when I read them last year, and again last week, they did not include what had been most important to me, or what the passing years have made important” (*An Unfinished Woman*, 144). This disappointment could be explained in two ways: her persona had probably changed with time and therefore what she had recorded as important events and people had also changed, or what she recorded as important things are probably the very things she ought to have left out altogether in her diary.

Writing the diary differs from the writings of other forms of non-fiction and fiction. The writer of the autobiography has control of what they write by way of selecting and directing the flow of the narrative because all the material they use is stowed away in their memory; while most diaries are a “series of surprises to writer and reader alike” an occurrence that makes Culley see it as “one source of the immediacy of the genre” (221). Diaries and journals are episodic in nature since the entries in them are done depending on when they happen. These modes of writings create what is seen as compartmentalized forms where the divisions are done on an hourly or on a daily basis or depending on how often their authors deem necessary. The frequency of recordable events or happenings that have some importance to the author also dictates how fast and regular the entries are made in a diary and a journal. A diary is thus created “in and represents a continuous present” (Muchiri, 40).

Being a work of art, the versatility of the diary is seen in its ability to “borrow from, and sometimes contribute to other narrative structures” (Muchiri, 40). The autobiographer, the biographer, the memoirist, the historian or even a novelist can use a diary as one of their sources of data collections. Equally, a diarist can also use one of the narrative structures as a referential data to make his diary. All these personal-narrative forms or modes as they are referred to at times, can be studied using autobiographical theory as an effective tool.

#### **2.4 The Nature of the Autobiography**

Memory is one of the key factors that writing of the autobiography is dependent upon. It is the source from which the autobiographical acts are drawn, as well as the “authenticator” (Muchiri, 29) of these autobiographical acts. The memory is thus the repository of most of the materials that an autobiographical writer uses to tell his or her personal narrative. Memory, therefore, is the mediating site between the past and the present which are never static. Both the past and the present are always shifting in the sense that there is no clear-cut boundary between the two, hence the mediation role played by the memory. This shifting can be explained by the fact that what happens now becomes a thing of the past after a few moments lapse of time so that any reference to it has to engage the use of memory, and if memory fails to bring it forth, then it appears as if that thing never happened or it is forgotten altogether. Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir, in *Borderlines*, captures this notion of a shifting relationship when he states that: “[t]he present has receded, as the presence of the past invades its space” (16), confirming the fact that the present – past relationship is ever in a state of flux. Indeed, the past seems to

occupy a larger part of our mind than the present, and it is in this past that memory resides. The present is always fleeting, ever trying to keep up pace with time as it lapses. And this is a clear indication that the farther the past the hazier the memory and the more recent the past the sharper the memory.

Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir sees memory as “the *raison d’etre* of the autobiography” (54) and therefore it plays a very important role in the creation of this genre. Paul Auster sees memory as a voice that “speaks to (the writer) in the way a voice might tell stories” (124) thus seeming to dictate to the autobiographical writer what to write. Unbeknown to the writer, it is the memory which influences what s/he writes even though the writer might always feel that they are the ones in control. This is possible because what the memory presents to the personal narrative writer is what is written. If it withholds some information through forgetting then that which is not availed from the bank of memory cannot be drawn and used in the writing. Auster alludes to this influence of the memory, which he refers to as mind, when he wonders at the “trick his mind continued to play on him, this constant turning of one thing into another thing, as if behind each real thing there were a shadow thing, as alive in his mind as the thing before his eyes, and in the end he was at a loss to say which of these things he was actually seeing” (135). This is suggestive that what eventually comes down as an autobiographical work has gone through various phases of change in the author’s mind before it is written.

Writing an autobiography can be seen as a process, rather than an event. Gudmundsdottir describes autobiography as “an active process of remembering,” which he also feels,

“does not always represent a smooth flow of memories” (31). The writer, as s/he remembers, “actively recreates the meaning of the past” (Muchiri, 29) in her/his mind such that what eventually translates into a personal narrative, is not “always” a free flowing of the memory per se. This act of remembering “instigates a peculiar kind of presence” which makes the writer tell himself (or herself) that they are “now present to something that was earlier” (Krell, 15). Writers through recollections tend to investigate their memories with a view to writing them. In what Gudmundsdottir refers to as “crucial task of recollection”, where he relates recollection to *investigatio* – ‘tracking-down’, he states that: “In writing an autobiography writers embark on this kind of ‘investigation’, tracking down memories that have left tracks or footprints, and attempt to lend these memories form and coherence” (11).

Memory also enables the subjects to reconstruct their own form of identity. They do this in two ways: through retrospection and through introspection. Most writers, in retrospect, tend to look back in time in order for them to find meaning to their life and by so doing they hope to discover their real identities. In introspection, these writers of personal narratives turn their focus from things external to things internal; searching their inner being to see if there can be something, however fleeting this may be, that can indicate to them their identities. This quest for identity by the subject appears to be asking: “Who am I and how did I become what I am” (Muchiri, 26). However, as Indangasi notes, not all writers of autobiography engage their memory in order to seek answers to their metaphysical question of “who am I”, but rather some also use memory to give them answers to their quests as members of the marginalized groups. The latter is common



with autobiographical works of non Western subjects who may write in order to seek recognition in terms of race, culture, religion, politics and socio-economic inequalities. Their quest for identity is not that of an individual looking for his/her own, but rather an identity that seeks to find recognition for an entire group of marginalized people or people perceiving their lot to be marginalized. This is reflected in their books where they always want to fight for their space, as if to assert their existence. Indangasi argues thus:

Unlike what is perceived by Western critics as preoccupation with the “Who am I” question in European and American autobiographical writing, African and African-American autobiographers perceive themselves as representatives of an oppressed and seek to challenge those who are responsible for this state of affairs. This does not mean that the narrators in these works do not have a complex inner life; what it means is that they subordinate this inner life to the larger demands of the struggle for racial equality. (*The Americas before and after Columbus*, 115).

Memory also operates in two spheres of human existence, namely, the private and the public. Private memory can be linked to the individual-based sources such as “dreams, photographs and family narratives”; and the public-based which comprises public “documents, books and historical events” (Muchiri, 29). Hence, the view of memory as consisting of “layers” of which underneath the first pile are “other texts, other stories,

other lives”, and that, “all exist simultaneously” (*Borderlines*, 33). These layers are therefore the mixtures of the private and the public memories. This notion of “layers” creates a perception of memories as being accumulative and stratified depending on perhaps how and when these were acquired. Thus when an individual is concerned with personal details he draws from the sphere of private memory; and when the same is driven by social issues, s/he draws from the public sphere.

However, Maurice Halbwachs has indicated clearly that memory changes depending on how it is put to use. He states that recollections which are not thought of for a long period of time “are reproduced without change” (183), meaning that they do not undergo any form of distortion as when recollections are subjected to reflections by an author. Halbwachs sees the quest for coherency as the reason for the distortion of memory when he states, thus: “But when reflection begins to operate, when instead of letting the past recur, we reconstruct it through an effort of reasoning, what happens is that *we distort the past*, because we wish to introduce a greater *coherence*” (italics mine) (183). This view is supported by Gudmundsdottir who sees the past as lacking some coherence and that people “inadvertently distort it by making it so” (25). Thus when the “subject actively recreates the meaning of the past in act of calling to mind” (Muchiri, 29), the subject, consciously or unconsciously, embarks on a path of memory distortion so that these ‘recreations’ can lend meaning to his or her life. All the foregoing indicate that writing an autobiography calls for a compromise on the part of the writer of “choosing some memories and discarding others” (*Borderlines*, 36).

It is probably in the process of “choosing” and “discarding” of memory that gaps, silences, or forgetfulness occur. Writers may try to downplay those areas they feel uncomfortable with and at the same time highlight those areas that they feel quite happy with. Theodore Plantinga has claimed that memories are not “inert but undergo a process of editing, whereby they are regularized, rendered more retainable and reshaped” (45) by the writers so that these can reflect their desires and how they want readers to interpret the meanings of their works. It is in this process of “editing” and “reshaping” that gaps and silences occur because what writers feel should not surface is left under the human carpet of memory to lie there. However, it is this missing link occasioned by the gaps and silences that researchers of the autobiography are interested in since their unearthing can lend way to a lot of wonderful discoveries that can tell more about an autobiographical work than the autobiographer or memoirist communicates directly through his work.

Historical events can also influence memory; the same way human senses can invoke it (Muchiri, 30). Peter Burke points out that history can make people remember certain events when they “relive it, and reflect” upon them to see “how different (they) might have been” (106). Perhaps that is why people view anniversaries, commemorations and other forms of celebrations whose sources are in the past or are historical with mixed feelings. As Muchiri has observed, “(the) senses [...] evoke memory and convey it in objects or events with particular meaning for the autobiographer” (30). This happens because history has a way of clutching onto our memory through the very sense organs that human beings have, such as that of sounds, smells and sights, for instance, might trigger particular reactions in our memories.

Experience is also one of the characteristics of autobiography. Viewed keenly, autobiography translates into “narrating and interpreting one’s experience through retrospection and introspection” (Muchiri, 30). The import of this statement is that when people write autobiography, they largely embark on a mission of presenting their experiences to readers. The reader is made aware of those experiences that the writer has gone through and probably how these events have transformed the writer into such a person s/he has become. That is why “personal experiences” (*Borderlines*, 50) are viewed as “authoritative” since they are the “primary type of evidence in autobiography, and the basis on which readers are invited to consider the narrator as a uniquely qualified authority” (Muchiri, 31). Experience in this case gives the narrator a high moral ground to tell what tales s/he has to her or his readers. And readers also expect that the experiences told will reflect the true states of things as they were when the narrator underwent those experiences, not made up things to entertain the readers with.

Since experience is interwoven within an individual so that what one narrates is what s/he has lived and sensed, it therefore turns out that the “author’s name in the autobiography is a signifier of identity” (Muchiri, 31). Certain personalities in society are well recognized individuals whose lives are deemed by other people in the society as exemplary and worth reading. People tend to look up at them as role models in their individual capacities and this in itself communicates these people’s identities in a big way to the readers of their personal narratives. Gudmundsdottir has stated that autobiography is “always about stating an individuality while at the same time making it public, giving individual experiences universal connotations” (6), and it is only when these individual experiences

resonate well with the public do they get acceptance. This is because the reality that is expressed through these experiences is what the public expects the author to tell through his or her narrative because of their perceived elevated status in the society. Laura Marcus in connection with what she terms as “the exceptional nature of (the) experience” explains that experience should be viewed “in the realms of action or thought” (*Auto/biographical discourses*, 38). Of importance to the people, according to Marcus, and I agree with her, is what an individual has done (action) for the society or what the same has created (through thought) to warrant their sharing of these achievements with society. One can easily cite Barack Obama’s *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk To Freedom* as examples of the author’s name being a signifier of authority. This is because in Obama’s case one sees how a person of a mixed heritage, nurtured largely by a single parent (his mother) and his maternal grandparents, rose to become the first black president of the Law Review at Harvard; while in Mandela’s case one comes across a man who epitomizes the notion that determination and selfless pursuits for the ideals that are beneficial to a wider society, than a quick search for self-gratification, pays. In the end, both did not only become leaders of their respective countries, but leaders recognized by the whole world as well: Both overcame the odds to attain their coveted status in the world standing as well as making Africa and blacks proud.

Experience can also be authoritative to the point that the readers come to accept what has been narrated as factual. Experience, which Muchiri defines as the processes by which an individual transforms him-/herself into a certain subject exhibiting particular “identities

in the social realm, which are constituted through material, cultural, economic, historical, and social relations” (30), is also the “primary type of evidence” in which the reader of the autobiography is invited to “consider the narrator a uniquely qualified authority” (31) whose work can be trusted. In life someone with authority in a certain field is always considered to be more credible than the one who is considered to be lacking it. People feel that every claim made in autobiographical writings can be verified since as “man is his experience” (Marcus, 158) whatever s/he writes should reflect reality, unlike in fictions where verification is difficult because everything takes place in a make-believe world whose access by real people is impossible. It is the experience that an author is believed to possess that makes readers accept the authenticity of allegations made in an autobiography. Public figures can talk of their experiences in their personal narratives and the reader might be persuaded to validate their claims owing to the fact that people expect them to possess such experiences. An example of an authority is Barack Obama’s *Dreams from My Father*.

Selectivity is also an aspect of autobiography since it falls under the genre that is considered to be subjective in nature. The authors of the autobiographies have freedom to choose what to put into their narratives and what to discard, to ignore or to leave out altogether. It is through the narrator’s point of view that the reader gets to “know [...] what the narrator tells (him/her)” (Muchiri, 32). The narrator also has control over the entire narrative deciding where to start and end, what to include and in which light to include it, and how much to expose and for what purpose. It is in this aspect of selection that the author’s ability to forget is demonstrated which are reflected in the omissions,

gaps and inconsistencies in a personal-narrative. Gudmundsdottir explains how a reader can detect gaps or inconsistencies in a personal-narrative bearing in mind that memory is not always smooth flowing hence making a writer to resort to selections of what to tell and what to gloss over. He explains that the reader can detect aspects of forgetfulness on the part of the writer when:

There are stumbles, hesitations, doubts, where it seems the forgotten has become visible. This can be seen in some texts as gaps in the narrative, or when the text moves from one specific childhood memory to a more general picture of childhood, or when autobiographers include evidence that contradicts their own memory of events. (32).

Jean Starobinski in his work *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, seems to be supporting the notion that an author can fill up the gaps in his/her work with imaginations when he states that: “it scarcely matters if he uses his imagination to fill gaps in memory” (98). My argument against Starobinski’s assertion that an author can fill lapses in his memory with imaginations is informed by the fact that if this is allowed in non-fiction, and especially in personal-narratives, then this genre that is touted as the mode where the subject engages in a discourse that attempts to capture aspects of his/her life as lived by the same subject will be transgressed. It will give room for people to concoct lies and then pass them over as their true lives in autobiography and its related forms. Authors of personal-narratives do not live in exclusive worlds from where their readers live so that they do not have to mind about historical facts as they document their

reconstructed lives in their works as readers would expect. They do not have to embroider their lives so that they can endear themselves to their readers by making up what to plug their gaps of memories with. So in selectivity the writer of personal-narrative should be conscious and careful with what s/he chooses and puts down in his or her work because readers expect recordings of experiences as opposed to the recording of imaginations. Edith Simcox seems to be negating the notion that imaginations can be used to implant gaps whenever they occur in an author's memory, and by far she appears to be condemning the mixing of fictions with reality, in her essay "Autobiographies", in *North British Review* when she states, thus: "To surround a fictitious hero with incidents founded upon fact can scarcely be said to constitute autobiography at all" (385). And the reverse is true, surrounding a character with made up "facts" would hardly qualify that work as autobiography either.

Autobiography at its core "aims at communicating the truth about one's life" (Muchiri, 28) and that the narrative so constructed "must qualify in respect to facts "(28) if readers are to be persuaded of the work's authenticity. Hellman has reiterated the importance of truth in her work *Maybe*, by stating the need to strive for it and at the same time questioning any work that does not strive to articulate truth. She states thus:

It goes without saying that in their memoirs people should try to tell the truth as they see it or else what's the sense? Maybe time blurs or changes things for them. But you try, anyway. (50)



David Starkey who has defined creative nonfiction as “literary writing that claims to be true” has also stated that the “writers of creative nonfiction are always accountable to the evidence” (93) of their work. The accountability to the evidence is all aimed at establishing the truth. And the truth is built up from the interpretation of facts collected. As E. D. Hirsch, Jr. has stated with regard to making the reliable adjudication as concerns the data provided by the author, “all relevant evidence, ‘internal’ and ‘external,’ should be considered”, (*Validity in Interpretation*, 197). Starkey advises the writer of nonfiction that “whatever (their) subject, (their) reader will expect it to be true” (164-5) and he continues to argue that like journalists, nonfiction writers “must deal in facts, and readers must believe that what is reported on the page actually happened” (163). What Starkey advises on “truth” in nonfictional writing is very important because most readers choose to read personal-narratives majorly not to be entertained but to be informed because they believe that doing so would be edifying to them.

Smith and Watson have defined autobiographical truth as “an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life” (qtd in *Women’s Autobiography*, 28). It is this shared understanding of meaning that indicates whether the writer has espoused truth or not. And this can only be so when the claims and allegations made by the author can be verified, especially on those shared social phenomena whose data can be laid bare for the reader to adjudge. Muchiri perceives autobiographical truth as based on “the sincerity of the writers” which in itself can be evaluated in terms of the “seriousness of personality and the intention of writing” (28). Truth can be viewed at three levels, namely, subjective, historical, and fictional.

Muchiri describes subjective truth as that unique truth of life as perceived and understood by the individual; historical truth as truth whose verification can be done through historical evidence; and fictional truth as that which is artistic in nature.

Autobiographical truth is developed when consistency is noted in the character exposition and the developmental stages of the protagonist's life as it moves through the spectrum of the human growth. It is how the autobiographer displays his or her life through their narration and the motions of their lives that will make the reader discern the truth in autobiographies. Equally important in the cultivation of the autobiographical truth is the cohesion of the narrative and the events and the characters being told. The narrative should be judged in terms of its consistency.

The author's claims in autobiographical work can be supported by the presentations of the para-textual elements. It is in letters, photographs, prefaces, speeches and dedications that an autobiographer's claim to truth can be communicated. Certain claims made in personal narratives can be verified, especially where documentations exist. With documentations and facts it is possible to verify or falsify claims made in a narrative outside the text. Chinua Achebe, for example, in *There Was A Country*, presents two maps that he titled "Republic of Biafra, May 1967" and "Biafran-Controlled Territory, Jan. 1970" to show proof that Biafra as a country existed before it was forced back to join the Federal State of Nigeria, after the Civil War that was dubbed Biafran. It was a war that pitted The Federal State of Nigeria against one of its states called Biafra which

wanted to secede. It is then possible for one to verify or falsify the claims made by Achebe in his writing based on these maps.

Autobiography is also transcendental in nature as it is able to cut across both temporal and spatial aspects of nature. Readers are always taken through what might be referred to as the down-memory-lane journey of the author's life. The author reels back from the present to the remotest past that s/he can remember and then attempts at reconstructing his or her life as s/he approaches the present. It is a task that over-reaches time and space and calls for patience on the part of the author to write. Apart from patience, it also calls for the courage and the willpower on the part of the writer in order for him or her to undertake this daunting task as its paths lead to nostalgic and traumatic episodes in life. It is a kind of a self assessment process that eventually leads authors to a "discovery about themselves" (Muchiri, 33). It is a journey that emphasizes more on the individual and how this single life affects the society in which the individual lives. The significance of this individuality is achieved when the personal narrator exploits his or her experiences "to pass on moral lessons to readers" (33). For it is expected that in all these stages of life, namely, childhood, youth and adulthood, there are some lessons of life to be learnt. This learning is for both the autobiographer and the reader.

Autobiography is a creative nonfiction form that requires that its authors stick to experiences that have shaped their personality and made them who they are. Autobiography is not fiction and thus avoids what Muchiri refers to as "conscious fictionalizing" (33) of events and characters. However, Northrop Frye, in *Anatomy of*

*Criticism*, has pointed out how unconsciously fictionalization takes place in autobiographical works. He points out that most “autobiographers are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional, impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer’s life that go to build up an integrated pattern” (307). The assertion of this statement is that the fictionalization aspect in this sense is limited to the choosing and patterning of experiences in order to form a coherent form and self that a reader can identify with due to its uniqueness. Experiences that the self has undergone through are many and for one to make sense out of them, the self needs to select, shape and organize them in an artistic way. This effort of trying to create unity out of varied experiences by the author is what amounts to fictionalizing. This can be likened to an artist using different materials on a canvas to make a complete form in a collage using his or her creative prowess, the same way an autobiographer creates a coherent narrative using various pieces of his or her selected experiences.

Autobiographers tell their narratives to the audiences who are the readers. The manner in which the narrative is presented “takes the nature of oral testimony” (Muchiri, 33) because the autobiographers appropriate their experiences as testimony to the historical times which they witnessed. They may describe and comment on historical events as witnesses or participants. By getting involved in historical events in this manner, the autobiographer inscribes the history of his or her times. However, this history rendered thus is very different from the same history written by the historian. First, the autobiographer writes a history in which s/he is a participant while the historian does that from the point of view of an outsider. Secondly, since the autobiographer is an insider or

a participant in the historical moments s/he narrates, chances of personal emotions affecting his or her judgments are high; whereas a historian, writing from a distance and detached from the events narrated, is able to make conclusions based on logic as opposed to emotion. The autobiographer's rendition of a given event is viewed as subjective, while the rendition of the same event by the historian is perceived as objective.

The autobiographer's major recourse to write a narrative is his or her memory. All that autobiographers tell come from their memory and memories are not always free from emotions which in most cases cloud one's judgment of events. Equally, consciously or unconsciously, memory may fail one and that may leave out very important aspects of an event that ought not to have been left out at all. The historian depends on several sources for his or her narrative such that at the end what is presented to the readers is the true state of affairs of an event narrated. The historian can collect oral testimonies from different people, gather archeological artifacts, and refer to information from the archives to corroborate their findings and then write their narratives. Indeed, as Marcus states: "autobiography and history have wholly different cognitive interests and methodologies" (160) and that is the reason why it is usually very difficult to rely on autobiographical narratives alone when it comes to determining historical events.

## **2.5 Functions of the Autobiography**

Autobiography functions as an umbilical cord that attaches an individual to society. Autobiographers narrate their own narratives which anchor them within their societies and at the same time connect them to these societies. This connection is very important

because autobiographers tell their narratives in a bid “to come to terms with their personal experiences and gain self-realization” (Muchiri, 45) within their societies, as is the case of Obama’s *Dreams from My Father* where he narrates his experiences in the three continents of North America, Asia and Africa and eventually how he came to his self-realization when he states thus:

I felt the circle finally close. I realized that who I was, what I cared about, was no longer just a matter of intellect or obligation, no longer a construct of words. I saw that my life in America – the black life, the white life, the sense of abandonment I’d felt as a boy, the frustration and hope I’d witnessed in Chicago – all of it was connected with this small plot of earth an ocean away, connected by more than the accident of a name or the color of my skin. (429-30)

Autobiography and history are like a pair. These two are intertwined such that autobiographical works have been read as historical documents and even used as “evidence for the analysis of historical movements, events, or persons” (Muchiri, 47). Most autobiographers will not only recount issues that affect them personally, but will also attempt at capturing events that affect his or her society as well — be they social, political, religious, or economical. Munzhedzi James Mafela in his essay “The revelation of African culture in *Long walk to freedom*”, in *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*, states that Mandela’s autobiography should be read not only as his own story alone but also as the story of the “struggle of Africans in South Africa”. Mafela

further suggests that Mandela's autobiography "can thus be categorized as a historical or political narrative because it deals with matters affecting not only Mandela but the nation as a whole" (99). Hence, there is no way that one would divorce the narrative of the struggle of the Africans in South Africa from Mandela's personal narratives since the two are intertwined.

Autobiography can also be therapeutic in the sense that it accords the writer and the reader a chance to remember their traumatic experiences in which case it helps some people to come to terms with their conditions of life. Traumatic experiences, such as a loss of a loved one, rape, survival from a fatal accident or natural calamities, are hard and painful to write about. And therefore for one to write about traumatic experiences in their lives, it calls for great courage and fortitude on the part of the writer since such cases leave scars in people's memories. In some instances the writer and the reader experience the cathartic effect and momentarily they feel purged of those bad experiences. In some cases readers may also feel empathy for the victims of trauma as they read their narratives. In *My Life As A Paraplegic*, Esther Owuor narrates her story of how she got involved in a fatal road accident that left her a paraplegic. It is a narrative in which, apart from informing readers about paraplegia, she also exhibits the traits of a person who has accepted her condition and moved on with life.

Human nature is such that it leaves a mark in the world as man recognizes that he is in this world just but for a short while. It is this transient feeling that makes a person record down the narrative of his life in autobiography. Autobiography accords the protagonist a

chance to exclaim that, “hey I was here!” Muchiri has stated that the aim of autobiography is to inscribe one’s self. This inscription of one’s self is premised on the perception of what Marcus refers to as “the temporality of the life and of the subject” (160). Most autobiographies are written by men and women who feel they have had a fulfilling life or they have something that they want to leave to the world before they exit it. Georges Gusdorf’s in his essay titled ‘Conditions et limites de l’autobiographie’, in its translation in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, captures the essence of using autobiography to prolong one’s self when he states that: “Under the guise of presenting myself as I was, I exercise a sort of right to recover possession of my existence now and later” (Olney, 44). This confirms the fact that autobiography can be used to stamp a mark of one’s existence in life, even after one is long gone.

Closely related to the intention of leaving an inscription of one’s life in the world is the desire to be heard. Autobiography avails the author with the platform from which to project his or her voice. The narrator has a story of his persona that s/he wishes to tell to the reader who also happens to be the society. This “pursuit for a voice to be heard” enables the autobiographer to define who s/he is as an individual who is quite “distinct from those images fostered by society or by cultural stereotypes” (Muchiri, 45). It is this desire to be heard that has made people whom society had marginalized, such as women, blacks, peasants, gay and lesbians, to write their autobiographies or memoirs. Julia Watson, in “Unspeakable Differences: The Politics of Gender in Lesbian and Heterosexual Women’s Autobiographies”, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, alluding to the autobiographies written by women, states that “naming the unspeakable is a coming



to voice that can create new subjects” because to her the marginality of women “may be unnameable” in what she refers to as “the terms and parameters of the dominant culture” (393). It is a stand that is supported by Maxine Hong Kingston who sees the marginalized people as “always trying to get things straight, always trying to name the unspeakable” (*The Women Warrior*, 6). In all these debates of mentioning the ‘unspeakable’ what underscores everything is the need to be heard by the dominant cultures which are perceived to marginalize others.

Autobiography also accords the protagonist a medium in which to look at the self introspectively. The protagonist makes two types of journeys in life with regard to autobiography: retrospective and introspective. It is the journey of introspection that makes an autobiographer discover his or her “inner standing” (Muchiri, 45) in life, making the protagonist perceive him-/herself in relation to the wider society. The protagonist searches his or her soul and then s/he discovers who they are.

Autobiography also functions as an instrument or a tool that is appropriated by the protagonist to record his or her personal testimonies. These testimonies make the protagonists “gain their sense of being” (Muchiri, 47). They also enable the protagonists to inscribe their places within the society. Autobiographers get to define who they are and what their philosophy of life is and how all these shape and create their relationships with others in their personal narratives. Miguna defines himself as an honest, conscientious person in *Peeling Back the Mask*.

In this chapter, we have defined autobiography, mentioned some of the related forms to this genre, discussed the nature of the autobiography, and explained the functions of the autobiography in order to clarify the concepts in this mode of writing. This will assist me situate my research on the right course as we discuss Miguna Miguna's personal-writings.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PEELING BACK THE MASK: A QUEST FOR JUSTICE IN KENYA

#### 3.1 Introduction

Miguna Miguna has written his personal narrative, titled *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, in which he outlines his struggles in life from his childhood to adulthood up to the time he was suspended without pay, and which is also a major turning point in his life. In this memoir, Miguna has attempted at telling the reader who he is, what his philosophy of life is, and the reason for his struggles for the rights of all those who are underprivileged in society. In this memoir, the reader gets to see and follow Miguna through the journeys he makes in life. These journeys have transformed Miguna's personality physically, culturally, spiritually, socially and philosophically. His physical journey can be traced from the time he left Magina Village through the various places he visited and went to school, his short stay at the University of Nairobi, his escape to Canada through Tanzania and Swaziland.

Culturally, Miguna has come into contact with many cultures locally, regionally, and internationally out of the many people from different communities that he has met. Locally he learnt among his community at primary and O'level at Onjiko Boys and he also got a chance to meet other communities in Kenya when he went for his A'level at Njiris High School, when he went to the National Youth Service (N.Y.S) at Gilgil and lastly at the University of Nairobi. Regionally, although for a short stint, he was able to get into contact with the Tanzanian and Swaziland people and their cultures. His sojourn in Canada enabled him to meet people from the different parts of the world in the form of

racess and nationalities. This was possible because in Canada, besides the citizens, he also met several immigrants who had come from all the parts of the world.

Miguna has also made journeys that can be associated with spiritual growth. He got religious transformation from Christianity to Islam. When he left Kenya he was a Christian, but in Canada he converted to Islam. This has made him wear a religious cap permanently, not just for dressing purposes, but as part of his religious code as the conversation between him and a judge in Canada about what was on his head shows. In his response, Miguna says: “Oh, Your Honour, it’s religious”, and he goes ahead to name this religion, “Your Honour, it is *Islam*. Isn’t that *recognized*, too?” (*Peeling*, 135).

Socially, Miguna has interacted with different people in his stay in Kenya, his temporary stints in Tanzania and Swaziland, and his long sojourn in Canada. These socializations have influenced how he relates with people – be they his countrymen or foreigners.

In this memoir the reader meets a personality who has undergone other various changes in life ranging from deprivations, betrayals, education, citizenship, to family matters. Deprivations can be read in his story of how his paternal uncle Aoyi took away all that his late father had left his widowed mother, and he goes further to tell how culture also contributed to his family’s suffering because his mother had refused to be inherited as their tradition demanded; the expulsion from the university also amounted to deprivation; and the suspension by the Prime Minister also points to this deprivation. This memoir presents the rhythm of life of Miguna Miguna.

### 3.2 Miguna Miguna's Early Life

Miguna Miguna's memoir commences from the time he was born. He captures the fact that his father had passed away when he was born, and that his upbringing was solely done by his widowed mother, Sure nyar Njoga. Being the last born, Miguna has stated more than once how the bond that existed between his mother and him was very strong. He mentions his mother several times even after she had died and he was then staying in exile. It will be apparent later how this bond influences Miguna's life as an adult. He also mentions his siblings and the life in the village and how people related to one another. Laura Marcus has stated that "[t]he past is always present to the great man" (66). Whether Miguna is a "great man" or not is debatable, but his narrative exhibits this notion that Marcus advances by the way he clearly draws the past of his life to the present. Miguna is able to remember even the remotest aspects of life that most people tend to forget, that of suckling. Apparently most people will not remember that they suckled, but Miguna is able to remember not only that he suckled but how he positioned himself while doing so. He states that:

I was breastfed until I was a big boy (or at least that's what I remember). It is amazing that even today when I close my eyes and try to remember that period, I can still see my mother kneeling as I suckled away, in full view of the villagers. (*Peeling*, 9).

The power of his memory is great in that it is able to capture the details in a clear manner despite the passing of time. To Miguna, what Otto Weininger has said about memory of a

genius that, “every impression that he has received endures” (*Sex and Character*, 122) is applicable. Not that I judge him to be a genius, but because Miguna still remembers what his paternal uncle Aoyi did to him when he went to stay with him at Lambwe and how he ran away when his two cousins were molesting him in the night in spite of the dangers that were inherent then and his tender age. He can still remember that it was from one kind driver that he had hitched a ride at the back of the lorry that, luckily for him, was headed toward his destination—Ayweyo. A journey that Miguna recounts took eight hours. One might be tempted to accuse Miguna of exaggerating the time the lorry took to travel from Lambwe to his place thinking that vehicles do not take that long, even between Lambwe to Kisumu, leave alone Ayweyo. But one can be persuaded to remember that Miguna is writing here based on his memory as a young boy of probably eleven years, and whose concept of time might not have been developed to enable him approximate time fairly well. Furthermore the types of lorry and trucks then were mainly Leyland, Bedford and Fiat models that never reached high speed as the modern Isuzu, Nissan and Scania vehicles do. Equally a problem then was the state of roads which were not as developed as they are now to allow free flow of vehicles. One appreciates here that the protagonist is struggling with the question of rendering the narrative of his life as truthful as possible.

Miguna also remembers, from what their mother told them, how Aoyi their uncle together with others fought his mother over the property that Miguna’s father had left her, leaving her and her family in a state of destitution. The fact that when she died she was buried at Miguna’s elder brother’s homestead is proof that her property had been taken

(49). To borrow his words, Miguna refers to his mother's tales as "harrowing stories of how" (*Peeling*, 6) their uncle had robbed their mother because she was both a woman and a widow. The bitterness the protagonist has over the uncle is made worse by the fact that Aoyi never cared about them in spite of what he had done to his deceased brother's wife and to the protagonist while he stayed with them at Lambwe. Miguna would carry this bitterness with him for thirty-seven years, until the death of the uncle in 2011, when he claimed he forgave him but would never forget what the uncle had done. He claims that between 1974 and 2011 he had only spoken to his uncle twice, and the second time was when, after he had relocated to Kenya, the son to the late Aoyi, Daudi had called him and requested if he could speak to his uncle Aoyi who was then ailing from prostate cancer. To Miguna, his late uncle Aoyi was "an embodiment of raw and unmitigated evil" (19).

John Forster, in "On a Man's Writing Memoirs of Himself", views memoir not only as a mere outlining of facts and events but as a desire to "discriminate the successive states of the mind, and so trace the progress of what may be called the character" (1). Miguna's recording of his life is not only an act of presenting facts and events that his life has experienced but also a form of character appraisal in what Forster refers to as "the successive states of the mind". His enumeration of his life at Apondo, Nyatoto Primary Schools depict a character of the protagonist in many ways. He left Nyatoto Primary School when he fled from his uncle's mistreatment. This act tells much of the character of Miguna who would rather risk his life by running out at night than stay in a stifling situation. His bold character and determination are seen in his life as he went through secondary, high schools and universities. At high school he was able to accompany the

head teacher to Thika to buy cattle for the school from the money the then head of state had given the school for the students to feast on. His role was to ensure that the process of buying the cattle was as transparently done as possible. But this was not to be as the head teacher, Mr Ndung'u, had only taken him with him as a cover up for the fraud that he did. Miguna says: '(...) I hadn't participated in its selection nor did I know how much it cost (...) I suppose he swindled some of the money Moi had given us' (38).

At the National Youth Service (N.Y.S.) the protagonist was able to assert his right of expression when he asked, in what he refers to as "a dramatic encounter", the then Chief Secretary and Head of the Civil Service Mr Simeon Nyachae to explain why "detaining political opponents without trial is consistent with Kanu's proclamation of democracy and the Nyayo philosophy of 'love, peace and unity?'" (46). This bold act of questioning Nyachae landed him into the bad books with the authorities at the institution. Later at the University of Nairobi his outspokenness, together with other student leaders, led to their expulsion. One of the reasons given for his expulsion at the University of Nairobi was his conduct at the N.Y.S., and the accusation stated thus:

iii) He is reported to have had problems with the National Youth Service and wrote an apology to be always within the requirements of the law. ('Senate Special Disciplinary Committee November 1987, 12)

Margaret Oliphant in "Harriet Martneau", in *Blackwood's Edinburg Magazine*, has described autobiography, which I state also applies to memoir, as a "terrible instrument



of self-murder” and she continues to say that no one “can diminish its damning power” (472). Miguna’s memoir exposes him to the reader who can decide to comment on the protagonist’s life the way and in the direction s/he wants. What Miguna has written in his memoir has broken the wall that provided privacy to his life and as a result readers are looking for the truth or lies in his work based on the facts and events he provides. Readers trust that the events narrated by Miguna of how he was born and brought up by his mother, how he went to remove his sister from a marriage that he deemed to be unproductive and his struggles are true because they do not see any intention to tell lies on the part of the protagonist. However, readers also expect that when it comes to those facts that can be verified, then credibility would be found and if it is not found then the “self-murder” aspect mentioned happens because the reader begins speculating and questioning the writer’s motive with regard to facts, tearing into the protagonist’s life and character.

Miguna was admitted to the University of Nairobi to pursue a Bachelor of Arts Course after passing his A level exam, and undergoing the mandatory six months training at the National Youth Service (N.Y.S). He had wanted to do law but had missed the cut off points by one. This desire to do law he would come to fulfill much later when he went to Canada. At the University of Nairobi, Miguna joined student politics and in the Students Organization of Nairobi University (Sonu) elections that took place in 1987, in his second year at the University, he was elected to the post of Secretary of Finance. His mother’s influence on him is noticed when he “resolved” after her death “to be more politically active” (51). The fear of joining the student politics was necessitated by the bond that

existed between him and his mother. Miguna feared that if he joined politics and something “untoward happened to (him)” (51) then his mother would be affected or probably be devastated by it. Maybe in hindsight Miguna was right because hardly two weeks passed before he, together with the other student leaders, members of the Students Representative Committee (SRC), were picked up by the government security agents and placed under detention for about a fortnight over the speeches they had made at the public meeting (*Kamukunji*) held at the university sports grounds. This incident would have been very painful to his mother whom he loved very much had she been alive. Worst still his release, expulsion and finally his exile would have exacerbated Miguna’s and his mother’s sufferings. He captures this ordeal in the poem titled “Life Inside Kenyan Hells”, when he writes thus:

Then came our forceful  
evacuation from the deserted campus  
and immediate expulsion  
For daring the authorities with truth and justice  
*(Songs of Fire, 93).*

### **3.2 Facts as the Basis of Truth in Autobiography**

The core features of nonfiction writings looked at holistically are their ability to reflect and convey reality. These are creative works that are written by protagonists as a way of expressing their inner worlds and their past lives. In the expression of their inner worlds and emotions it becomes truly difficult for another party, other than the subject himself or herself, to verify the truth value of the claims made. But when they express elements of

reality that are found and shared in the social domain, then the truth value of their work can be verified or falsified by the reader based on facts on the ground or on the alternative reality. In order to gain credibility in his or her work, an author of the personal narrative should endeavour to lay bare the facts, so that the reader can “see if (their) fragments match anywhere ... (to) make another larger piece of the truth” (Pratt, 16). Truth can only be cultivated when intention, honesty, and facts combine in a creative personal narrative. M.S. Subba Ramu in “Truth is Indispensable”, *Bhavan’s Journal*, states that “(t)ruth is the basis of progress in life” (71), and it is this desire to progress that makes one write their autobiography so that others who read the work can learn something out of it. Ramu views truth as “always transparent” (72) and it is this transparent nature of truth that writers of autobiography or memoir should strive to uphold so that their works meet the minimum conditions or threshold of creative personal narratives which is reflecting the reality as it was.

*Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, is Miguna’s personal narrative in which he writes his experiences as a child, an activist, a parent, a politician, and a civil servant. Miguna has chosen this mode to tell his life story because it gives writers a suitable platform on which to tell their stories in the first person narration. It is a genre that requires one using it to be honest, to be sincere, and to be factual; and also one should be disciplined and consistent. In this mode any assertion made should be, as Miguna states, “backed up with corroborative proof” (417). It is a mode where the author shows instead of stating “facts” so that the writer is taken into confidence by the readers.

However, Miguna departs from the tenets of autobiographical writing with regard to the presentation of proof of the facts in his memoir.

Miguna alleges in his memoir that one Caroli Omondi had bought the Heron (Court) Hotel (The Heron Portico), which is a three-star hotel in Nairobi. He claims that Dr Sally Kosgei had told him “that she had heard that Caroli Omondi had purchased Heron (Court) Hotel, a three-star facility (...) for between Sh. 800 million to Sh. 1 billion” (423). Our research into the claim revealed that the allegation was not true. Miguna’s intention for telling the Heron (Court) Hotel story is suspect because the fact of the matter is that the hotel had not been sold to Caroli Omondi, nor was he one of the board of directors of the mentioned hotel by the time these allegations were made. Miguna’s claim therefore was not based on facts. He ought to have verified the claims Dr Kosgei had made to him concerning the hotel. One of the persons working at the hotel, whom the interview was conducted, on condition of anonymity because the issue was now a legal one, said that the matter was in court as the hotel, through their lawyers Oraro and Advocates, were suing Miguna Miguna and the Nation Media Group (NMG) for what he termed as “spoiling our reputation that led to our loss of businesses”. The hotel was suing Miguna for the allegations he had made that the hotel had been sold while the Nation Media Group (NMG) was being sued for publishing false allegations.

Miguna Miguna also creates an impression that their expulsion from the university was done at the instigation of the President. The President was the Chancellor of all the public universities in the country then. The statutes governing the running and management of

public universities allowed whoever was president to be the chancellor of these institutions. However, the rules were so clear of what the chancellor could do and not do. To illustrate this, we look at the University of Nairobi Statutes which were in use then and the closest we find are the ones that were written in 1985 in which the roles of the chancellor, under *STATUTES II*, were written. It states thus:

#### THE CHANCELLOR

In exercise of the powers conferred on the chancellor under section 10(3)(b) and (c) of the University of Nairobi Act, 1985, the Chancellor shall notify the council of the University of his intention to direct an inspection or visitation of the University and the Council shall have the right to tender to the Chancellor advice on any matters relevant to such an inspection or visitation.

In the statutes mentioned above one does not come across any proviso that gave the Chancellor – and by extension the President – direct reign over the university affairs other than the ceremonial aspect of presiding over some functions such as the graduation ceremonies. And therefore for Miguna to insinuate that they were victims of Moi's government intolerance to criticism by Sonu leadership and that it was the President who expelled them from the University without showing how amounts to distorting facts. Miguna, by claiming this, also casts aspersions on the other systems that were in place in the running of the university. The council, the senate and other structures at the university dealing with issues of discipline and student matters are depicted as stooges to the

president. Without some factual background on what happened that led to the expulsions of 43 students, one would take as truth what Miguna writes.

The genesis of the expulsions were caused when Miguna, together with some members of the Students Representative Committee (SRC), were arrested at the wee hours of 14/11/1987 and detained for close to two weeks, an act that triggered a riot among the students that led to the closure of the university indefinitely. They had made speeches in a student's public meeting (*Kamukunji*) that took place on the University Sports Grounds. The speeches were viewed as attacking the university's leadership and the government. After these disturbances by the students and the closure of the institution, the university set up a *Senate Special Disciplinary Committee* to investigate the cause of the riots and give recommendations on the course of action to be taken by the institution. The Committee interviewed the Principals and Deans of the colleges affected by the student's strike, the day and the night custodians of the Halls of Residence (except for the ones from Kikuyu Campus), a senior lecturer from Kabete Campus, and some students. The *Senate Special Disciplinary Committee* recommended, among other things, that the students be placed in groups and that each group to be given punishment according to the magnitude of their participation in the riots. There were those groups to be expelled, those groups to be suspended, and those groups to be sent out of the halls of residence. Acting on these recommendations given by the *Senate Special Disciplinary Committee*, the University authorities expelled 43 students, among them the author of *Peeling Back the Mask*. In all those committees that handled the processes of bringing back order to the university with regard to the student's disturbances, the Chancellor was not among them.

And therefore, for Miguna to want to impress upon his readers that the President had a hand in their expulsion amounts to a distortion of facts. It is the university which expelled Miguna as per the laid down rules concerning the discipline of the students. Miguna was expelled on five counts.

Miguna knew very well the rules that governed his stay at the university as well as how the political atmosphere of the country was by then and therefore he should have taken a lot of caution to avoid antagonizing the university's authorities and the government. Miguna's choice to write what he termed as his "radical poems and articles" (53) placed him on a collision course with the university and the Government security agencies. And as if to admit rather reluctantly why he thinks Moi's security apparatus might have been on him, Miguna says concerning the two female American students who befriended him that:

My close friendship with the two American young women gave me additional (unusual) attention. On reflection, I now believe that Moi's special branch boys might have mistook that relationship to be that of a young impressionable student being infiltrated by the 'American CIA'. *I can't be absolutely certain that my friends weren't CIA.* But I can say that *I never suspected it.* They looked, sounded and behaved just as *naively* as any other of my colleagues. (italics mine) (53).

Here there are two scenarios to be considered with regard to Miguna's claim about his relating with the two American ladies. One, at that time that Miguna mentions, Kenya was still having a cordial relationship with America such that Moi's regime would not have been worried with Miguna's dalliances with those two American ladies who he claims might have been the CIA agents under cover. In the second scenario, the two ladies might have known Miguna's ideological inclination towards Marxism and his desire to go to Cuba, a country that was never liked by the West, and so they might have befriended him in order to gather more information on him and his fellow comrades for their use if at all they were CIA agents as Miguna claims. This can only portray Miguna as someone who was on an ego trip.

When one reads *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, one gets an impression that the protagonist, in a subtle way, is down playing the participation of the others in the SRC in trying to "reform" the university and he elevates himself. The protagonist usurps the role of the Sonu chairperson, Robert Wafula Buke, or would like to show that he was weak. Although he was considered as someone who looked physically "lazy and unkempt" (55) by Miguna, a fact that has been corroborated by the report of the *Senate Special Disciplinary Committee* who could not understand how Buke "an unkempt, inarticulate and non-charismatic candidate could cause a major upset to all other candidates", does not mean that he could not lead. Although this is Miguna's memoir, the impression he attempts to create rather cleverly does not give Buke the kind of recognition he deserved. The casual manner with which Miguna depicts Buke leaves one with the feeling that he, Miguna, was instrumental and in charge of all the



undertakings of the students' leadership. He says that he is still keeping the files that belonged to Sonu even though he was not the Sonu Secretary General. Buke's role as the one who spearheaded the radical leadership at the University of Nairobi is attested to by the fact that he was the one who was arraigned in court and convicted for five years. And he was also the one whom the university found to have been the influence on most of the others who were expelled. Henry Indangasi, who was the chair of the Department of Literature at that time, has said that Robert Wafula Buke was the one who was held responsible for the disturbances that affected the university by the senate committee that handled the indiscipline cases that the riots caused. Indangasi has also discounted the claim that Miguna has made that it was Moi who expelled them from the university. He said that the senate acted without external influence in deciding the outcome of that case. Godfrey Muriuki, currently Professor of History and Special Student Advisor, was the Dean of the faculty of Arts at the University of Nairobi during the time when the students rioted in 1987, corroborates Indangasi's statement when he says that, "the government does not directly get involved in the disciplinary committee" of the University. He went on to state that the Government might put pressure on the University to act when students break the rules, but the disciplinary matter is an internal affair. He emphasized that every individual case would be considered and judged on its own merit. The senate committee judgements, he reiterated, were fair. As for the one who was clearly the mastermind of all the disturbances then, Muriuki said that the records bore that. In the records it is Wafula Buke who was charged with the crime of masterminding the riots that happened at that time.

Miguna has attributed to himself the credit of being the one who really gave the speech about not thanking Moi for increasing the student's allowance by Ksh.300. Mwongela Kamencu, in his thesis, has stated that: "Perhaps the most scathing speech came from the chairman of SONU, Wafula Buke. In light light of President Moi's announcement of an increase in student allowances by Ksh.300, he refused to thank the president and attributed the increase to 'changed economic conditions'" (100). I attempted to contact Miguna Miguna for an interview where I hoped that he would respond and clarify some issues but this attempt failed because he did not respond to my email. In Miguna's memoir, this aspect is missing or down played to the point of making the protagonist assume that stature. This amounts to the distortion of facts.

Miguna's memoir reads as a narrative that has been told with a lot of vengeance by the author. The author's attitude demonstrates that he was bitter with what had happened to him. He felt wronged by those whom he worked with. However, the method he applies to fight this betrayal betrays his ideological conviction. In the poem titled "Bradha Osagyefo" in *Songs of Fire*, Miguna states that:

We are meant to work  
in solidary  
Not fight in vengeance  
over roughages  
of our egotistical traumas;

(164)

The way Miguna fights his personal wars shows that he does not believe in his ideology of solidarity. When he attacks everyone whom he does not agree with, it only demonstrates that he does not practice what he proclaims. One would curiously question why Miguna who is supposed to be a sturdy ideological man, would be fighting those whom he were with fighting the injustices in the government. His attitude towards Mutunga, after the latter had turned down an invitation to be a guest at the launch of Miguna's memoir demonstrates this. The solidarity that Miguna claims is rhetoric and thus it is difficult to attach truth-value on the author.

### **3.3 Miguna's Fidelity to the Genre**

In *Peeling Back the Mask* Miguna presents a narrative in which he shares his experiences in life with others. And since he has chosen the memoir we expect his narrative to keep to this genre's tenets and characteristics. Carolyn Kay Steedman, in 'Stories', has stated that "once any story is told; (sic) ways of seeing it are altered" (*Women, Autobiography, Theory*, 252) and this is the reason why we see Miguna's narrative differently. Miguna starts his narrative well and then before long he veers off the usual expected course of writing a memoir. In a memoir, the protagonist takes a vantage position and then commences his or her story. The protagonist takes charge of the direction the story goes. The narrator ensures that the narrative does not exclude him from the narrative, even though s/he is not at the centre. In *Peeling Back the Mask*, Miguna focuses more on others until at times the reader wonders whether he is the one telling it as his story or as someone else's story. He states that "this book is not just about me," but rather that "it is also about Raila Odinga and his administration" (507). It is when he starts narrating

Raila's and his administration's story that the power to own the story is removed from him. At this juncture the reader then reads something akin to Raila's biography interspersed with other stories. He lacks what Ann Goldman, in 'Autobiography, Ethnography, and History: A Model for Reading', calls "self-presencing which (she) believe(s) remain(s) an essential characteristic of the life writing" (*Women, Autobiography, Theory*, 288). This focusing on others to the level that Miguna has done it, where in a very large portion of his work the reader encounters the character of Raila and most of the others (Caroli Omondi and Isahakia) are told in relation to Raila, makes his work resemble a biography other than a memoir.

Miguna has also used the autobiographical mode to attack his enemies. He has written on most of the characters in a way that demeans them. Miguna has used the subjective nature of this genre to tell what he might have found impossible to tell in other genres. He has misappropriated this mode, knowing that whatever he writes will be fairly permanent and be viewed as 'truth'. He has used this mode of writing to settle scores with his foes instead of sharing his experiences with the readers. He has targeted his attacks on characters and the institutions such as Moi and his administration for what he feels led to his detention and the subsequent expulsion from the university and running to exile in Canada; Kibaki's administration; the Coalition Government; Raila and other individuals. Chinua Achebe, in *There Was A Country*, realizes the potentiality of words when he states that: "words have the power to hurt, even to denigrate and oppress others" (58) and these are the qualities of words that Miguna has appropriated to attack his enemies. People do not write their memoirs or personal writings to settle scores or attack others

like Miguna has done rather they write their memoirs to share their life experiences with the readers.

Miguna's memoir also depicts a picture of the protagonist who has no human frailties that afflict the lot of mankind and that if any be found on him it is blamed on others. The protagonist portrays himself as a perfect being while exposing most of his characters as imperfect beings. It is a memoir in which the protagonist would want the readers to see him as a person who knows everything and possesses only positive attributes. All the other characters are described in a manner that shows that they suffer either from moral, mental, psychological, or physical weaknesses. The way he portrays his uncle Aoyi makes the reader form an attitude towards him. Aoyi is associated with all the negative epithets and deeds, leaving the reader to wonder whether this man ever possessed any redeeming qualities. Miguna's anger towards Moi blinds him so much that he is unable to see anything positive on the person of Moi or his government. He only sees and fights "Moi's despotic and repressive regime throughout" (332) and this can be attested to by the way he refers to any person who might have worked under Moi's administration as "Moi's orphan". It cannot be that for the 24 years Moi ruled Kenya nothing good, in the eyes of the protagonist, can be said of it. Isahakia is also another character that has been portrayed as possessing only negative traits: "lethargic, incompetent and corrupt" (269).

Miguna has presented the reader with characters who are not round. Beside presenting his characters as onesided and ensuring that they are only negative sides, he makes sure that his side is all but positive. Unlike Miguna, Auma Obama presents herself as a round or

normal character. In her memoir, *And Then Life Happens*, the reader is able to see that what she writes is not meant to achieve some recognition in the manner that Miguna does. Auma Obama does not only give us her public life, but also gives the reader a glimpse of her private life too. She describes a scene in the plane as she was travelling from Zimbabwe to Britain in which she developed a crush on a fellow traveler. This person was a stranger who was seated a few seats in front of her. She made all attempts to ensure that she changed seats and sat next to that man whom she described as a dark, tall, handsome bald-headed man. She did all this notwithstanding the fact that she had a husband in London waiting to pick her up at the airport. Another instance occurs when she was travelling by plane with her father and she wanted to steal a glass in which she had been served some drinks and had liked it. Her father had told her that instead of filching it she should just ask to have one. Auma writes it thus:

We had just been brought lunch. On the tray was a glass I really liked. In those days, airlines still served their economy passengers drinks in real glasses and not in the plastic cups that are customary today. I decided to keep my glass as a souvenir, and without much hesitation I put it in my pocket, hoping that the stewardess wouldn't notice.

Unfortunately, however, my father saw what I did and reprimanded me with the words: "You don't need to do it secretly, Auma. Just ask whether you can have the glass".

(128)

These two illustrations, as embarrassing as they are to tell on one's self, do not make Auma Obama shy from writing them in her memoir so that as we read her narrative, we encounter a human being like us who is a product of positive and negative attributes unlike what one reads in Miguna's memoir. Miguna only narrates instances in his life that reveal his positive attributes where one comes across a man who succeeds in life in spite of his humble beginnings, a man who succeeds in exile and comes back to his country to join the liberation struggles that were ongoing. In all this time the protagonist's life is depicted as successful and in the case where a weakness occurs, the protagonist blames it on others. To exemplify this statement, that the protagonist blames his weaknesses on others whenever they occur, let us look at how he tries to cover up the fact that he too was prone to making errors in judgment when he tries to describe the reason for his disappointments thus:

As my narrative unfolds, it will become patently clear that my disappointment with some political personages I had earlier placed on a pedestal had a lot to do with my ideals and core values. Perhaps I was too idealistic; perhaps I expected too much from mere mortals with their inevitable foibles and frailties. Or perhaps, as I argue, one such disappointment – Odinga – was all along a 'political conman' who masked his true identity, nature and intentions and by doing so succeeded in fooling people, including myself, for a long time. (xxiii)

And at the end of it, the reader wonders whether, as Marcus argues, Miguna has attained “self-discovery and self-knowledge” (19) with his insistence of writing about others and forgetting much about himself. The reader comes out knowing more of Raila than Miguna, yet the narrative is supposed to be Miguna’s.

The intention that makes one to write his or her autobiography is very important because that determines whether the narrative is based on genuine reasons or it is based on grievances and need for revenge. The intention in this case gives a direction or goal that a personal narrative will aim at achieving. Roy Pascal, in *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, argues that the quality of work an author produces depends on “the seriousness of his personality and of his intention in writing” (60). Miguna has used his close proximity to the upper-most echelons of power to write his memoir hoping that the readers will consider this aspect to accept and believe it. However, what Miguna lacks in his memoir is the seriousness on the part of his intention. Laura Marcus, in *Auto/biographical discourses*, states that intention is very important in autobiographical writings since it “defines the ways in which the text should be received” (3). Miguna gives more than one intention for writing his personal narrative; one focuses on his life as an individual and the other focuses on someone else, but he combines them in one narrative. Miguna has said that his intention of writing his memoir was to tackle “some of the key issues in (his) ongoing life” (xxii). And his final comments on whether his narrative has achieved these objectives or not tells the reader how serious and focused Miguna was in his autobiography. The “key issues in his ongoing life” turns out to be what Miguna describes below:



The struggle for the total liberation of Kenya, of Africa and of all the repressed, oppressed and the exploited in the world is what I have been involved in, and it is what I shall continue to pursue. Therefore, if this book does nothing else, I hope it raises these issues and puts them in their proper perspective. (553)

But all along these have turned out to be the issues he has been circumventing as he focuses on his battles for survival so much that he forgets to create space for the Kenyans he claims to have been fighting for. And at the same time he states that the book was “also intended to unmask the duplicitous and deceptive life of Raila Amolo Odinga” (553).

Time is a good factor that requires consideration in autobiographical writings. Most people write their personal narratives after they have taken ample time to ponder on what they want to write. Time accords them opportunity to look back at the issues that lay at the wake of their past subjectively and objectively. Time blunts some emotions or pains that can interfere with ones writing. It is time that make one’s intention for writing his or her memoir be serious because the writer shall have pondered the lessons s/he desires for his or her readers to learn out of their personal narratives. Perhaps Miguna might have produced a different memoir from the one he produced had he taken time to think over the task he undertook, because from reading his work, one finds information that is quite recent that it is easy to detect certain variances that might occur in what the narrator tells

in *Peeling Back the Mask*. The most recent events have been narrated with a lot of emotions compared to the events that are recorded to have taken place in the deep past. A cool and sober Miguna tells the story since the protagonist went into exile and returned into the country; an angry and bitter Miguna takes over from the moment he was suspended by the premier until the book ends.

Miguna has also used the memoir as a platform to air his complaints and to try and justify to his readers his innocence in his saga with Raila. Memoirs are never used in other ways other than to document one's life and achieve 'self-discovery' and 'self-knowledge'. Miguna's query: "Why had a loyal general been dehumanized for nothing yet those who had flagrantly disobeyed his orders been protected by him?" (525) amounts to a complaint to the reader. It might be a rhetorical question; however, the reader can still find him-/ herself trying to come up with an answer for it, turning into a judge between the two characters – Miguna and Raila. It is such an intrusion that Thomas De Quincey suggests that is not good to people who read personal narratives when he states thus: "Nothing, indeed, is more revolting to (Readers') feelings, than the spectacle of a human being intruding on our notice his moral ulcers or scars, and tearing away that 'decent drapery', which time, or indulgence to human frailty, may have drawn over them" (1). De Quincey is right because when readers read through a personal narrative, they expect to construct "meaning along with the writer" (Gilmore, 186) and not to start engaging in conflict resolution or mediating between the writer and his characters. This is because the reader is looking for something positive that the work offers him or her and whether at

the end when the author discovers him- /herself, the reader has also discovered him or her too.

Miguna also fails to protect the integrity of the characters he uses in his personal narrative. In personal narratives, since characters are real and some may still be living, authors normally protect their integrity by disguising their names or in any manner that would point directly to them. When Miguna mentions Reuben Ndolo and Rachel Shebbesh as friends, in total disregard of whether the two had families and friends or not, it shows that he had failed to exercise a simple but important norm in autobiographical writing of obscuring or protecting the identity of someone unless one's mission is like that one of the tabloids – whose aim is to create money by the defamation of others. In a dialogue between the author and Dick, the names of these two are mentioned without any attempt at protecting them, thus:

“Yes, Dick. Now hear this; just yesterday, January 1, 2012, Ndolo told me that Rachel had told him that Raila had said he would kill Ndolo if he didn't stop 'seeing' Rachel. Now, do you know what that means?” (547)

Auma Obama in *And Then Life Happens*, has declared of her memoir that: “Out of respect for their privacy, the names of some people who appear in this book have been changed”. Most memoirists do this when they feel that someone's privacy may be invaded if mentioned, unless they do not mind when they are mentioned. Miguna does

not seem to mind that, so long as his quest to expose certain characters is achieved. To him the end justifies the means.

### **3.4 Language and Style**

Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen in *Truth Fiction and Literature* have stated that literature “covers only a small subclass of *linguistic* expressions” and this means that not all writings, “even those in the fictive mode” (255), qualify to fall under the concept of literature. Literature operates under the realm of language, and this language must convey certain qualities that are viewed as literary conventions. These “linguistic expressions” which Lamarque and Olsen view as a ‘small subclass’ is what is called literariness. And literariness as defined by the Russian Formalists involves the use of language in a manner that conveys meaning beyond the meaning such words have. It is using language beyond its conventional form. The language in literary works operates in two levels: the surface level and the subterranean level. For one to access language in the subterranean level, one has to view language in an unusual way. This unusual way of viewing language is what Victor Shklovsky, one of the proponents of Russian Formalism, refers to as “defamiliarization”. Apart from Literary Criticism, we are also using the Stylistics Literary Theory since this too is concerned with the realm of language in works of art. Verdonk has stated that the study of literature language is known as stylistics (3). These two ways of studying language in works of verbal or written arts will be used eclectically since both focus on the common aspects of language.

Language is a tool and Miguna has appropriated it in a way that suits his objective for writing *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*. He has also used it in a style that makes his meaning(s) be comprehended by his reader(s). From the title, which in itself captures the attention of the reader(s), he projects himself to the reader as someone who is out fighting for justice for the individual and also for the society at large. The title is a way that he persuasively attempts at endearing himself to the reader whom he hopes to inform, convince and influence his or her opinion over the issues that he has raised in his memoir. Miguna has combined language and style to communicate his message in “peeling back the mask”.

At a literary level, the meaning of this construction “peeling back the mask” can be grasped when one realizes that it contains a deeper meaning other than what the writings convey at face value. The meaning of ‘peeling’, ‘back’, ‘the’, and ‘mask’ must be worked at from what their combined aspects bring out their meaning other than what their individual aspects would convey. At the stylistics level each word belongs to a category and their arrangements to come up with meaning is important. The verb ‘peeling’ at the head of the construction clearly forces a reader to pause and work out the meaning of it in relation to the adverb, determiner and noun surrounding it. Even the choice of ‘peeling’ instead of ‘unmasking’, ‘pulling’ informs the meaning that Miguna wanted to put across to his readers. ‘Peeling’ is a stronger verb than ‘unmasking’ or ‘pulling the mask’ because it carries very strong connotation than these two. It conveys a meaning of violently or forcefully doing of something. Peeling is usually an act of forceful removal of peels from fruits or other forms of coverings that are attached to their objects.

Miguna has also used dialogue to help reconstruct some of the conversations that he had with his friends. These are said to be reconstructions that the author makes since it is very difficult to produce the exact speech that a person has made, picking up all the nuances of someone else's utterances, especially when time has mediated in-between. Auma in *And Then Life Happens* admits to the difficulty of reproducing the exact words that someone else has uttered when she states that the dialogue in her memoir have been reconstructed to the best of her recollection. Barack Obama also accedes to this condition of the difficulty for one reproducing another person's speech when he explains that: "the dialogue is necessarily an approximation of what was actually said or relayed to me" (*Dreams*, xvii). Since what the author succeeds in writing as dialogue is a reconstruction of what they have had as conversation with us, it means that some form of creativity is involved. The conversation between Miguna and a character he names Dick should be viewed as reconstructed dialogue.

"Yes my brother! I feel you." "Dick! Do you regret having fought against colonialism, having fought for liberation? Do you feel that you might have been better off collaborating with the British?" (543)

Christopher New in *Philosophy of Literature, An Introduction* refers to metaphor as a 'metaphorical utterance' and he defines it as that "in which the utterer produces a form of words which could constitute or be part of an illocutionary act while actually using it to perform a different and more sophisticated linguistic act" (81). New's definition emphasizes that such an illocutionary act possess a deeper meaning than what its surface

level might mean. Miguna has used metaphor in his memoir to enhance deeper meaning. The title of his memoir is 'peeling back the mask' is metaphorical. Another application of metaphor is found in this utterance that the author attributes to be Raila's: "Miguna, why can't you expose this *green snake* called Hassan in your column?" (483). One more statement to exemplify Miguna's use of metaphorical utterances is:

Raila has made his bed. He must now sleep on it. If he made a bed of thorns; he must endure the pain. However, if he made a bed of roses; he is entitled to enjoy the aroma.  
(502-3)

Similarly, Miguna has also employed similes in his memoir. Christopher New sees some closeness between the metaphor and the simile when he refers to the latter as a "close kin" (81) to the former in which case both deal with meanings that are deeper. In *Peeling Back the Mask*, the author has used a simile in the following statement: "On January 3, 2007, Kenya *resembled a burnt-out tomb*" (italics mine) (213), in which he attempts at making the reader visualize how things were after the elections in the form of chaos that engulfed Kenya. "Become a chameleon like him", (559) is another simile that the author uses to show how one of the characters, Raila Odinga's, behaviour changes to the point that he cannot be trusted. .

Miguna has also applied the oral narrative strategy in telling his personal narrative. In the oral narrative, narratives follow certain structures which the storyteller renders him-/herself to. One of these structures that Miguna has used in his memoir is the 'ending or

closing formula' of the Luo oral narratives *tinda*. At the end of his personal narrative, Miguna has said: "For that, I say TINDA!" (553). Besides this closing strategy, Miguna has also used the strategy, common in oral narratives, of direct translation from one language to another. Miguna has translated some common sayings in Dholuo into English. Two of these instances are: one, "But we are also aware that it is the brave *rhinoceros* whose hide is used to make shields" (543) – this has been translated from this Luo saying: *Jowi mager emaichuogo kuode*, with the only variation being the actual animal rhinoceros which is called *omuga* instead of the buffalo which is called *jowi* that the Luo saying has. Two, "Please don't use cooking oil on a wild cat" (543) which has been directly translated from the Luo saying which says: *Ogwang' ok olie mo. Ogwang'* has no equivalent in English because in Dholuo it can be used against many animals, hence Miguna's choice of a wild cat, the types that prey on chickens.

Russian Formalism has advocated for plot and structure in the work of art that qualifies to be called literary. They referred to the story as *fibula* and the plot as *syuzet* (Bressler, 52). Miguna's memoir is his story that he has set out to tell. This personal narrative has a plot that takes the reader from Miguna's early life through to his education and living in exile up to the time of his suspension by the prime minister of Kenya to the point of writing this memoir. And in all these phases of his life, one of the running issues that the author wants us to see is his struggle, which he even puts on the title cover page as *A Quest for Justice in Kenya*. In 'The Debate Rages On' ,in *Disgraceful Osgoode*, Miguna mentions the struggle-tendency in him that drives the plot of his memoir, when he writes thus:



I decided that the struggle could not be abandoned. Just because I was in exile did not excuse my participation in the global struggle against all forms of domination. In Kenya, I had fought totalitarianism. Yet here in Canada, I was faced with a new type of breed. (137)

As the plot to Miguna's memoir develops the reader realizes that the narrative changes focus from the protagonist to other characters when it reaches its climax. The driving force of the narrative changes from that of the protagonist's to that of one of the characters in the narrative Raila Amollo Odinga. This appears to have been the trigger that made the author to write this memoir. He states that besides the book capturing his story, it is also the book that "depicts a cowardly and intellectually dishonest leader undeserving of all the praise and attention he has generated or received over the years" (*Peeling*, xxi).

Miguna's memoir is written in prose. It is a personal narrative that is divided into books and again further into chapters. The major divisions of the books run from Book One up to Book Eight. The chapters also run from one to twenty one. And the book also has an epilogue. It is within these arrangements that the personal narrative of Miguna is woven. These divisions have made the work apply the form that is common with plays whereby the parts, scenes and chapters are common.

Miguna has also used rhetorical questions in his work. These rhetorical questions make the issues the protagonist is focusing on be understood by the reader when they take time to pause and consider them. Miguna uses these rhetorical questions to continue pushing his quest of convincing his readers that what he is narrating is true. In one instance, the protagonist has used a series of rhetorical questions in a paragraph, thus:

Aren't Raila and Kalonzo – two leading public servants – reportedly writing their memoirs? Wouldn't they be free to use, reflect on and partly rely on their experiences, including documents, relating to their current positions? What gives them the right and authority to do so but not me? (540)

Miguna's style of language shows one who chooses his words in order to make sure that his message gets understood by his readers. He knows the power of words and he also knows the art of using them in his narrative in order to influence the attitude of the reader. He describes a group of experts who were members of Raila's strategy team, apart from one of them, as, "bumbling bumpkins: intellectually lazy, morally decayed and without an ounce of progressive blood in their veins" (169). These words have been picked and ordered by the protagonist with an intention of creating a negative image of the people spoken of. He uses the same method on another character he describes as "a lethargic, lazy character". These are words that carry negative connotations that are aimed at casting the character in bad taste as the author intended. To another character he artfully chooses these words "lyrical sycophant in the king's court" (225) still serve the

same purpose of portraying the character as bad. However, he also uses words to portray positive aspects of a character and in one such instance is his description of one of the characters thus:” He was crisp, coherent, logical and focused” (228).

In this chapter we have explored the truth-value and the fidelity of the author to the autobiographical genre. We have also discussed the literariness of *Peeling back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* with a view to determining whether it meets those conditions. We have also looked at the author’s choice and use of language in his memoir.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### KIDNEYS FOR THE KING: DE-FORMING THE STATUS QUO IN KENYA

#### 4.1 Introduction

Miguna Miguna has followed his memoir, *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, with its sequel titled *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* in which he has attempted to clarify some issues that he had raised in his memoir as well as responding to the critics who had critiqued it. He has also furthered the displeasure he had with Raila Amolo Odinga and the Coalition Government in this sequel.

*Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* captures Miguna's most recent memories based on the experiences that had taken place after the launch of his memoir and an in depth analysis of some characters' lives. Miguna has written the sequel to his memoir to answer some queries that some readers might have had concerning some issues that he had written about in his memoir. It is also partly a debate that the protagonist has with his critics, a form of dialogue that the writer enters with his readers based on their responses to the memoir.

#### 4.2 Facts as the Basis of Truth in Autobiography

It is very difficult to envisage personal narratives without room for facts, however small this space may be. For it is these facts, which reflect some elements of reality in life, that separate these forms of writings from fictions. Otherwise, one may find himself echoing Paul John Eakin's query: "Why, (one) might ask, with its pretensions to reference

exposed as illusion, does autobiography as a kind of reading and writing continue and even prosper? Why do we not simply *collapse* autobiography into the other literatures of fiction and have done with it? [Italics mine] (27). That is why whenever any autobiographical writers resort to narrating what they were told by someone else, other than what they have experienced, the reader becomes wary as to the ‘factual’ aspects or ‘truth-value’ of the personal narrative. Miguna employs a lot of evasive stances with regard to the telling of the actual reality of the state of things as they were. He does this by claiming that what he tells the reader may have been told to him by someone else.

To exemplify this, Miguna tries to explain why Kalonzo Musyoka became Raila Odinga’s running mate in the last general elections by stating thus: “I have also been reliably informed that some powerful figures pulled strings, influenced and coerced Kalonzo” (*Kidneys*, 209), yet he declines to divulge these ‘powerful figures’ nor the people whom he is insinuating as reliable. This is so because Miguna has come out as a person who is out to ‘de-FORM’ what he refers to as the status quo. He has portrayed himself as a person who fears nothing when it comes to exposing what is hidden. True, he may have been told this by that ‘reliable’ source(s) he refers to, but in autobiographical writings, one does not need to ‘tell’ but to ‘show’ the claim one makes; failure to do this in a memoir or a personal narrative is tantamount to being an accomplice in rumor spreading in the society.

Paul John Eakin, in *Touching The World, Reference in Autobiography*, has stated that “(t)he presumption of truth-value is experientially essential; it is what makes

autobiography matter to autobiographers and their readers” (30) and this is also one of the reasons why autobiographical writings have become popular of late with many readers. Even though others may downplay the role of the importance of the pursuit of factuality in the personal nonfiction writings, what Eakin states concerning the ‘presumption of truth-value’ is very important in the sense that the urge to write one’s personal narrative stems from the fact that one wishes to tell ‘real’ life story as it was lived by him/her while the reader expects to be confronted with ‘real’ life story of a living personality other than by a fictitious one which they can get from fictions. So, when Miguna resorts to telling us in his personal narrative about what he was not privy to but told to by others, then the reader feels cheated somehow. The reader knows very well that Miguna could have disguised the identities of these people whom he claims divulged to him most of the allegations he writes in his sequel to the memoir.

Miguna has all along claimed that the premier suspended him for no apparent reason. The reader of his memoir has been confronted by a Miguna who blames the premier for acting hurriedly in suspending him, without giving him chance to defend himself against the accusations raised for his supposed suspension. In some instances he has claimed that some forces from the both political divides who were not comfortable with his close working relationship with the premier might have joined ranks to influence the prime minister to suspend him the way he did. In *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, Miguna states that he “sometimes wonder if Raila’s political enemies – the ones who goaded him into breaking with me – planned exactly the scenario now playing itself out” and adds that these “wanted Raila to self-destruct” (469).

These are no mere claims as they are the basis on which the reader comes to believe that he, Miguna, was suspended unfairly by his boss. It is on these claims that the reader forms an image of the character called Raila – showing how ungrateful he can be when dealing with those who helped him towards achieving his political pursuits. Still in trying to diagnose where his woes with Raila might have emanated from, Miguna also saw the hand of Party of National Unity (PNU) in it when he says that he thought to himself that: “perhaps the plan was to have Odinga’s mob kill me so that the real controllers of the state could blame it on him for political capital” and that he “believed that they had a hand in the fallout between (him) and Odinga” (*Kidneys*, 303). Yet in this sequel he claims that he had harbored the plans to stop working in the Office of the Prime Minister in view of some malpractices that were taking place within the Coalition Government, especially in the Office of the Prime Minister and found an outfit that would fight graft and other forms of improprieties in that same office – and the whole country at large. In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo*, Miguna finally discloses that his plans might have been known by the Prime Minister who acted promptly in suspending him. He states that:

As I schemed secretly, my family, friends, colleagues and compatriots were pilling [sic] pressure on me to persevere. But of course, hindsight is 20/20. It’s possible that Raila learnt of my plans and acted before I could execute them.

(123)

This in itself is an admission by the protagonist that some plans were underway by him to stop working for the premier and also at his office prior to his dismissal. In view of this, how does a reader, who had earlier on sympathized and empathized with the protagonist in his memoir, react to this disclosure in *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo* that he had all along hatched a plan to stop working for the premier reconcile this new development that touches on the integrity of the writer? One would genuinely ask whether Miguna is sincere in his work as is expected of those who write nonfiction or personal narratives because at one moment he says one thing and at another time he says a different thing. This kind of writing is what Chinua Achebe notes, in *There Was A Country*, when he refers to Ifeajuna's account of the coup, as "the inconsistencies in the narrative" (178). This shows that what the protagonist says lacks consistency. Miguna's case in which he tries to give reasons as to why the premier suspended him while in essence he had all along been scheming on how to stop working with and for Raila Odinga demonstrates inconsistency. This in effect makes the reader question his 'truth-value' since the reader is at a loss on which reason to believe might have led to his suspension.

Miguna Miguna strikes the reader of his personal narratives as someone whose sense of value or judgment changes with the changes of his allegiance to someone else or some party/ organization. Prior to his fallout with the Prime Minister, Miguna had indicated through his actions that he was supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) justice system handling the cases of the (formerly) six Kenyans whom the ICC had found bore the greatest responsibilities for the crimes that followed the wake of the General



Elections of 2007/2008. Miguna was then affiliated to the Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM) which, together with Party of National Unity (PNU), was a major player in the country's political and electoral practices. Miguna was among those who travelled to The Hague when the cases involving the six Kenyan suspects were mentioned. He, together with others in the entourage, represented the ODM-Party in that court while PNU-Party also had its delegation in that same court. It is inconceivable that during that time Miguna, or even any of the Kenyan delegations, did not meet (or could not meet if they sought to) with the officials from the ICC and pass to them some evidences he (or they) had. So that several years later, when the cases had been confirmed and the number of those standing accused had come down to four from six, Miguna could cast aspersions at the judicial processes underway at the International Court of Justice by stating that: "Unfortunately, right now, I have to admit that because of my interactions with the ICC investigators over this case, I now have serious misgivings about the intentions of the prosecutor" (*Kidneys*, 132). The reader starts to wonder whether Miguna is narrating facts based on what he knew or he was just playing to the gallery. As a person whose background is in law, the reader would have expected him to appreciate the importance of withholding or not withholding information that could have been used to accuse and nail the 'real' masterminds of the election violence that erupted in Kenya in the late 2007 and in the early 2008 other than the ones standing trial, whom Miguna considers to be scapegoats for their bosses in their respective political alignment. As a lawyer and a person who claims to be fighting for justice in Kenya, and who was at one time pro-ICC but now talks against the ICC because they did not accept the 'evidence' he claims to have had, Miguna portrays himself as a person who does not have a stand. This is not

withstanding the fact that it is Miguna himself who said that: “Truth shifts, it’s slippery like fish. Yet truth is what I believe we should seek in life.” (*Disgraceful Osgoode*, 9). How was he ever going to achieve his goal of finding the “truth” with this attitude?

Miguna Miguna’s preoccupation with making profit undermines the truth-value of his works. Any work that is done with the aim of making profits or monetary gains fails to produce good results as quality is compromised. Personal narratives are no exception to this universal rule of the thumb. When one writes a personal narrative with the motive of making financial gains, chances are that one may concentrate on those things that may impress the reader other than be subjective in an objective way. The point is, where the narrator may want to write a particular product of the memory, which s/he views as uninteresting to the reader, s/he may decide to embroider it in such a way that it eventually appeals to the reader. The narrator may attempt at ‘flavoring’ his or her work even if it means fictionalizing certain aspects of the personal narrative in order to appeal to the reader. Miguna’s comments that, “(t)he idea was to cripple me financially” (139) when he was informed of the pirated PDF copies of his memoir, and that he “placed (his)money in (his) shirt pocket, feeling quite contented” (*Kidneys*, 141) after he had sold some of the copies of his memoir clearly indicate that he had written his personal narratives for monetary gains. This is what Anna Robeson Burr condemns by referring to it as “scandalous memoir” that is written with an “ulterior purpose” (13). However, in Miguna’s case, the rate at which he wrote his memoir and its sequel might not show a person who was out to share with his readers his experiences in life. This normally calls for patience, retrospection and introspection on the part of the author. However, the way

in which Miguna did it indicates a person who was out to write his narrative for a particular purpose which was also time-bound. Miguna's statement that "(he) felt that *Peeling Back the Mask* and this book must be published before elections" (*Kidneys*, 105) is a clear testimony that the writing of these books were rushed by the protagonist who cared little of the value and discipline of writing autobiography and its related forms. To him the books would only have been of value if they were published and distributed before and not after the elections. Yet personal narratives are written to transcend space and time, such that they continue being relevant even after their writers' zeitgeist are past.

The inconsistencies in Miguna's personal narratives also lead to the questioning of his 'truth-value'. Miguna had all along used negative adjectives to refer to Kibaki and his PNU outfit in his memoir. Among the reasons why Miguna came back to Kenya from exile, where he alleges that he had been doing well in his law firm, was "to contribute" as he terms it "towards the democratic removal of Kibaki from power". This was because he "believed that Kibaki was a tribalist; a nepotist; and a man who abetted corruption, if not willingly partook in it" (*Peeling*, 159). Yet without showing the reader how the Kibaki described thus had metamorphosed into a man who deserved a complimentary free autographed copy of *Peeling Back the Mask* through Raphael Tuju. Tuju was once one of the advisors of President Kibaki and a man whom Miguna credits with coming to his rescue during the difficult periods after he had been suspended without pay. This gesture depicts how Miguna can be transformed and be made to adopt a new stance at a short time so long as he gains. In *Kidneys for the King*, this transformation has become instantaneous as the protagonist now describes his erstwhile friend Raila Odinga

negatively while praising Kibaki whom he had come to help remove from power democratically. He claims that he could not write about Kibaki because he did not work for him, adding that it was “up to those working for Kibaki to disclose any bad manners in his office” (315) yet he had already mentioned Kibaki adversely in the memoir. In what is a clear reaction to what he refers to as a hero’s welcome that he received in the Mount Kenya region during his book’s promotional tour and distribution, Miguna displays this to the reader whom he hopes would notice the “difference between the intolerance by Raila’s supporters in Kisumu with Kibaki’s democratic credentials here” (315). Miguna wanted to show that Kibaki, whom he had been criticizing for a long time, was better than Odinga. Indeed, Burr’s assertion that the “value of personal testimony lies in the quality of the witness” (13) is true because the inconsistencies in Miguna’s work leads the reader to doubt what he narrates based on how he handles his facts or his reality. To the reader of the personal narrative, the narrator is taken into confidence only when he walks the path of consistency since the reader believes that s/he is the witness to all that s/he writes. But when the witness keeps changing his or her statements, what should the reader make of all these?

Miguna’s way of responding to the critics who critiqued his memoir betrays his assertion that he likes debates and the sharing of knowledge. He responded well to those who shared his opinion and abused those he considered to have differed in opinion with him. It is he who had blamed those who had employed ad hominem attacks on him and wished that they had concentrated on the issues he had raised instead of being personal. Yet when he attacks his critics in this manner by decrying that “the reading culture (...) was

suffering terminally at our intellectual intensive care units called schools, colleges, and universities”, Miguna was also employing the same tactics that his critics were using on him. Miguna further claims that these institutions failed to produce scholars who could “appreciate literature” but instead “churned out robots chasing after trinkets and blabbering clichés” (*Kidneys*, 20). Then his stand on what he himself referred to as “[t]ruth is bitter to swallow” (*Kidneys*, 21) eludes the reader. When Miguna claims that “no one seriously critiqued the book, chapter by chapter, page by page” (20) but then goes ahead to mention Dr. Joyce Nyairo, whom he claims did it five months later, makes the reader question the truth in Miguna’s claims. This is because at the same time he goes ahead and abuses those whom he felt had critiqued his book negatively. This exposes Miguna to scrutiny on whether he should be trusted with telling the truth or not. In spite of claiming that no other persons critiqued his work ‘seriously’, Miguna has praised Messrs Koigi wa Wamwere, Muthiu, Kiai, Odipo and Kanjama, as people he commends for being objective in their work. However, Miguna criticises Ngunyi, Prof. Okombo and Makau, the ones he uses derogatory language on for critiquing his work in ways that never pleased him. And as Sommer states, “one judges the validity of the information or the authenticity of the informant” (197), and in this case by the way he (Miguna) is keen on how people respond to his work and how he takes this critiquing.

Miguna has advised that getting information about our leaders is better since it makes us come to know them and have an informed decision when it comes to electing them to hold public positions. Miguna’s assertion is fine and is what should be pursued, except that he does not follow his own prescription in trying to make the public to understand

their leaders. Miguna's assertion that "we could only interrogate and vet our leaders if we had concrete and reliable information about their strengths and weaknesses from people who had worked with them and knew them well" (*Kidneys*, 128) runs hollow because what Miguna writes concerning some of the leaders in his book is contrary to what he states. He worked for Raila Odinga and therefore the assumption is that he stood a better chance of divulging information concerning him so that the public could make its decision in either electing or not electing him to a public office. But Miguna's preoccupation with the supposed weaknesses of Raila Odinga does not exhibit the spirit he, Miguna, explains of scrutinizing the leader-to-be all round – taking into account the leader's strengths and weaknesses as he claims. In his attempt to give what he terms as 'concrete and reliable' information of Raila Odinga, the protagonist has dwelt on Odinga's 'weaknesses' until the reader is left wondering whether this character ever had some redeeming qualities that the writer could discern and write about. All the positive aspects the writer thought Odinga had, he has rolled into one and dismissed it as a 'political con man' and that is why he had written his memoir in the first place to 'unmask' it. Isahakia has been described variously with negative adjectives to the point that a reader might start believing that what Miguna says of him is the fact of the matter. When he terms Orengo as a 'lyrical sycophant' his intention is to give the readers more information on Orengo so that they can get to see how the latter has changed. Miguna has also attempted at informing the reader about the shenanigans that went on during the search for one who was to feel the post of the chief justice in Kenya vis a vis Willy Mutunga. He decided to tell this narrative so that readers would come to know what manner of a person Mutunga is. He had been disappointed by Mutunga's refusal to attend

to Miguna's book launch, even after Mutunga himself had accepted to attend the launching of Miguna's memoir *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*. Miguna took offence with this change of mind viewing it as an infraction committed by Mutunga over the agreement they had made that he would have grace the book launch event. For this infraction, Mutunga had to be exposed as a person who could not be relied on to reform the justice system in Kenya, although he continues to claim that they still remain as friends with the Chief Justice Dr Willy Mutunga.

The second president of Kenya has also been one of those whose personality Miguna has dwelt on with a view to portraying it as warped. In *Kidneys*, Miguna has described Moi as a "bone cracking dictator" (79) with an attempt at demonizing him. The retired President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi has not had even a single iota of a positive quality that the writer could write about. It should be remembered that Miguna has asserted that only those who have worked with the public figures could write about them: Meaning that these are the ones whose experiences can be trusted because they worked in close proximity with these prominent public figures, especially with those in politics. Yet Miguna who never worked with Moi writes many negative things about him as if he knew him better. Joan W. Scott has stated, in 'Experience' in *Women, Autobiography, Theory. A Reader*, that: "When the evidence offered is the evidence of 'experience', the claim for referentiality is further buttressed", and she proceeds to pose that, "what could be truer, after all than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through?"(59). This might apply to a different situation than Miguna's case with regard to how he continuously portrays Moi in his two personal narratives yet the experience he has with

Moi is the same as any ordinary Kenyan might have who was also infringed upon by Moi's Government actions on them yet they never got to close to claim to know Moi well to the point of writing about him the way Miguna does. Other than Moi's Government detaining him, what else had Moi done to him to warrant all these vitriol on Moi? a reader might pose. Miguna treats all those who have differed with him as people who are devoid of positive qualities. In view of this character that Miguna exhibits, the reader is left questioning whether the narrator has any truth-value in him that can make one believe what he says.

In *There Was A Country*, Chinua Achebe has doubted what one of the coup leaders, Ifeajuna, narrated concerning the coup plotting and the way this was executed because of the way the narrator tried to pass "himself off" as somebody who could be credited with the success of the whole operation. To make the readers appreciate my interpretation and application of this to Miguna's narrative, I share with them this quote from Achebe's narrative, which explains thus: "Ifeajuna's account show cased a writer trying to pass himself as something that he wasn't".(178)

Miguna's account, especially in the ones where he narrates of how the negotiations went on for the Coalition Government's formation, also suffers from what befell Ifeajuna's account that Achebe has explained in the quote above, of trying to 'pass off' as somebody of importance in the entire processes of the formation of the Coalition Government in Kenya. Miguna's explanations of the way he handled issues during the negotiations to form the coalition government leaves the reader feeling that Miguna himself might have



played a key role in making it succeed more than did the others. He has also stated that Orengo and the team that represented ODM at the Serena talks did not do a good job. He particularly blames Orengo and Caroli who were the two among the ODM side in the Serena talks with a background in law. He states that: “ODM would rue the day Orengo and Caroli joined the mediation team as the only lawyers” because to him they “were terrible negotiators” (*Peeling*, 239). To Miguna these two were incompetent or they had their own vested interests in the outcome of the mediation processes at Serena, particularly with Caroli whom he claims went behind the technical team to be “chosen” (*Peeling*, 239). It is a fact that Miguna was an insider in the ODM-Party’s activities and these could have been the true assessment of this people according to him. Our point of departure with him is when he makes it sound as if everything that he did went on well and all that the others did either failed or suffered from some form of incompetence on the part of those who were charged with discharging those duties.

He even casts aspersions on the manner in which Kofi Anan and his team of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities handled the talks, feeling that that was not the best way they could have done it. He even mentions that probably what Anan’s team had had been prepared outside the continent by foreigners. Miguna’s statement that: “This ‘grand coalition’ idea didn’t emanate from the parties or from the process; it was probably manufactured in Washington and London and delivered by Annan to Kenya; another dubious foreign experiment on Africa!” (*Peeling*, 238) indicates a person who was equivocating on the issue that was beneficial to most Kenyans whose lives were being ravaged by the violence that engulfed Kenya after the 2007 General Elections. People lost

their lives and property, some were raped and maimed, while a big number also got displaced from where they lived; and therefore the coming of Kofi Anan together with his team was like divine intervention to those Kenyans who were affected by these acts of anarchies that were engulfing the country at an alarming rate. And therefore for Miguna to hint that Anan had “failed to take charge of mediation... and failed to compel Kibaki to submit to the process” (*Peeling*, 238) only proves that Miguna cared little for the general outcome of the mediation processes more than he cared for rules and statutes. Miguna’s stand might appeal to those people who were hell bent to see a political solution to the impasse that affected Kenya. On the humanitarian grounds, the containing and stopping of the escalations of the election violence was a welcome outcome to those who were victims. However, in a winding way, Miguna has come to appreciate that the Kofi Anan led Panel of Eminent African Personalities helped Kenya from falling the down destruction slope. He writes that the Kofi Anan-led team “were instrumental in saving us from falling apart into small ethnic enclaves and chopping each other up in orgies of violence in 2008” (*Kidneys*, 215) effectively admitting that the mediations that were done in 2008 were beneficial to the country. This equivocation on the part of the protagonist leads to readers having serious credible issues with regard to truth-value on Miguna.

Miguna’s claim that he is “a Pan-Africanist” (*Kidneys*, 135) goes contrary to what his attitude demonstrates towards other people from Africa. Miguna’s comment on the appointment of Kofi Anan as the chairperson of the Panel of the Eminent African Personalities betrays his claim to the tag of ‘pan-Africanist’. His statement that, “Annan

hadn't really been 'appointed' by the parties to the dispute" and that his name had first been suggested by the US and UK and that it was backed by Kufuor because "partly (...) they were both Ghanaians" (*Peeling*, 235) suggests that Miguna felt that Anan was imposed on Kenya. And that Kufuor's backing Anan demonstrates that the Ghanaian President and also the chair of the African Union then had favored his countryman. Miguna was calling the moral credentials of Kufuor into question, while at the same time putting the legitimacy of Anan's appointment to mediate over the Kenyan post election violence issues to doubt. Knowing who Miguna was, his education, a lawyer and an official working to see that the coalition issues had succeeded, makes the reader wonder what Miguna was driving at with these wild claims. This only makes the reader question "the validity of the information or authenticity of the informant" (Sommer, 197), eventually putting the truth-value of the writer to doubt.

Further, Miguna's own admission that he had been carried away by emotions to say that he had evidence that could take some people to the ICC due to their roles in the violence that broke out after the 2007 elections during the launch of his memoir, *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, leaves the reader, the researcher, and the critic to question the credibility of the author. He states that:

Yes, I can take all these leaders to The Hague. I am careful, methodical; I analyse and record everything I observe. I have records of everything. So, I urge—no, I *beg*—those idiots running around saying that they will sue me to 'come, Baby, Come'! (*Kidneys*, 13)

And he instantly came to realize that he had misspoken, allowing himself to be carried away by the excitement of the moment due to the presence of the audience and the media. He later regretted the claim he had made that he could take some people to The Hague as “a serious error” (13). Jonathan Loesberg, in ‘Autobiography as Genre, Act of Consciousness, Text’, in *Prose Studies*, has stated that if “autobiography contains (sic) and is what it purports to convey, then it is pointless to worry what an author must attempt or achieve in order to attain the ends of autobiography” (182) which brings to mind the question of what happens if a narrator of personal narratives “pretend(s) with the intention to deceive” (Marcus, 265)? This is because Loesberg’s ‘purport’ can also be taken to mean ‘pretend’. Miguna by uttering those statements of having evidence that could incriminate his former allies in the ODM-Party and later on regretted that he had done so demonstrates that his ‘truth-value’ is put to question.

Moreover, it is Miguna himself who claimed without being prompted by anyone that he had evidence that he felt, in his considered opinion, could help the ICC prosecute the Kenyan cases effectively. He threatened the ODM-Party that he could take them to The Hague if they provoked him stating that:

This was the truth. Odinga and his cohorts knew that not everything they did before, during, or after PEV could pass the smell test. They knew I knew that some of them actually mobilised, fundraised, and purchased weapons for ‘self-defence’ once the disbanded Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) had irregularly declared Mwai Kibaki

president on December 30, 2007, and the latter had unleashed the security forces on ODM supporters. . . I left no doubt in listeners' minds that I knew Odinga's and ODM'S dark secrets that – if they were wise – they shouldn't have forced me to reveal (*Kidneys*, 130)

And when Miguna goes ahead to blame the ICC for saying that they had no interest in new evidence, this only demonstrates his hypocrisy in the whole matter. The reader would therefore query where Miguna was with this evidence which he knows, being a lawyer, could have been very important to the ICC had he given it out on time. That is why his admission, in the preceding paragraphs, that he had erred in uttering words that he could take people to The Hague leaves the reader questioning the integrity of the narrator.

### **4.3 Miguna Miguna's Fidelity to the Genre**

The *Dictionary.Com unabridged. Random House, Inc.* defines *Sequel* as: (noun) 1) a literary work, movie, etc., that is complete in itself but continues the narrative of a preceding work. 2) an event or circumstance following; subsequent course of affairs. 3) a result, consequence, or inference. Our study takes the first definition of 'sequel' as the working definition to show that *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* is not a sequel to *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* in spite of bearing that label. For the way it is narrated differs a lot from how sequels are written. It is like an extension that does not fit well on to its base.

The first sign that *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* departs from the usual ways of writing sequels is the manner in which it is written. The author starts by attacking those who critiqued his memoir. He engages with them in abuses and ad hominem attacks. Being a follow up to the memoir, the reader expects that it exhibits the tenets of writing personal narratives. Toni Morrison in *Beloved* explains that autobiography is “solitary and representative” (339), which means that it should dwell on a person’s life in a way that makes the readers understand the author’s life. But in this sequel, the author concentrates on other characters’ lives and in initiating dialogues with his critics unnecessarily by claiming that some had not produced “any original work of substance” adding that these “armchair” critics should “deal with the issues (that he had raised) or get off (their) high horses!”(*Kidneys*, 7). This was because they had tried to critic the work Miguna had written from a different angle other than politics, and in doing so did not support his work. However, for those who praised him and sided with his narrative, he wrote positively of them in this sequel making it become a record of his self-criticism to his memoir.

Harold Nicolson in *The Development of English Biography* has stated that: “‘Truth’ is the desideratum – the veracity of complete and accurate portraiture” (11). And even though postmodernists subordinate the value of ‘truth’ in personal narratives to creativity or art, claiming that it does not matter and therefore it cannot be used as the basis for judging personal narratives because it is subjective, the bottomline is that whenever one sets out to write their personal narratives and chooses one of the autobiographical forms to use, at the back of their minds they know that the desire to write is to tell the truth. Miguna’s

sequel does not convincingly strike the readers as one that was set to tell the ‘truth’ from its beginning to its end. The self portraiture of the narrator is either deformed or lost in his quest to achieve his goal, which was to disparage the reputation of those whom he felt did wrong to him in one way or another. Miguna’s posing regarding Hassan Omar who challenged his work thus: “was he hoping that Raila’s popularity wouldn’t be damaged by the negative exposure?”(*Kidneys*, 20), exposes the real reason behind his writing of the memoir. This explains the reason why Miguna sacrifices the telling of his own life narrative to telling that one of one of his characters, Odinga. The tone and intention in his narrative demonstrate that Miguna wrote his personal narrative to influence the opinion of the readers towards some of the characters in his memoir and its sequel.

The language in autobiographical writings is supposed to be civil and urbane because the author is expected to be writing issues that are products of his or her reflections. Through reflections the narrator of personal life stories would be able to sieve what he or she tells the reader and again he or she would be able to choose his or her language wisely. In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*, Miguna uses raw language that indicates that his writings were not subjected to moments of reflection by the author himself. This is exemplified by the manner in which he regretted uttering certain statements to the effect that he could take some people to The Hague. It is also realised by his use of language abusively calling some of his characters “idiots” (13), “thug” (302) and “worst geriatric social skunks” (319). Had Miguna followed Edmund Gosse’s advice to auto/biographers on “how to be as indiscreet as possible within the boundaries of good taste and kind feeling” then raw language such as this “*In ok ing’othi? Eeh? In*

*ok ing'othi?"* [Do you want to imply that you don't have sex? Eeh? You don't have sex?] (287), would not have been written. This is because memoirs are public documents that are written to edify the reader's life. They are accessed to by children and adults alike and thus the need for the narrator to select his or her language with a lot of sobriety. Eakin views language "as an 'umblical' bond that joins people" (13) hence the need for it to be used wisely or the reverse might happen where it separates people.

Memoirs are personal narratives that depict the life or the experiences of the narrator. In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*, Miguna has employed various strategies to write it. Initially, he starts writing his memoir as a critic of his own work, which in itself demonstrates some flaw on the part of the narrator. Even though he does this by way of trying to explain and clarify some issues that arose from the memoir, *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya*, and especially when he purports to be answering back his critics, it still leads to the critical mind of the reader questioning the wisdom of an author critiquing his own work. He also writes about the experiences that he went through when he was trying to launch his memoir. Lastly, in the same book he writes about Raila Odinga in a manner that biographers employ when writing someone's biography. These three strategies that the narrator has employed have affected the generic nature of his work. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices", in *Women, Autobiography, Theory. A Reader*, have stated that "autobiography unfolds in the folds of memory" (39). And so when Miguna purports to be commenting on his work by engaging with the critics who critique his work— readers are left wondering whether



these dialogues with the critics come from the fold of memory. For these responses are too fresh to seem to come from the folds of memory. And also on the part where he does some research on Raila Odinga's life, one would be obliged to interrogate whether these too come from the fold of his memory. This is because memory plays a very important role in autobiographical writings.

People do not write memoirs to settle personal scores with their foes but rather to explore their lives through the sharing of their experiences in life, especially those who have participated in public life or have participated widely in social life. Miguna has written *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* to settle personal scores with those whom he fell out. It is this kind of writing that falls in the category of writing that Burr refers to as 'scandalous memoir' because their writers' are seen to have 'ulterior motives'. What Burr's sentiment points to is the intention of the writer. Intention in this case is not as much as judged from what the narrator proclaims his or her work to be, but rather on what comes out once the work has been read through by the critic who is able to discern the implicit intention as opposed to the explicit one.

A.O. Prickard in *Autobiography* has stated that in autobiography, "it is always the voice of a living man which speaks to us of himself"(6) because this genre is supposed to be a first person narrator who tells everything in relation to him/herself. In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*, Miguna has taken more time and space narrating the lives of other people than he did his. The reader comes out knowing more of Raila Odinga than they discover the author. After Miguna had decided that "Kenyans

deserve(d) to know who the true Odinga (was)” (*Kidneys*, 320), he demonstrably went ahead and narrated what could only pass as Raila Odinga’s biography other than him writing his personal narrative. In the end, just like in his memoir, *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* has come out to the readers as the story of Raila Odinga than Miguna’s who was supposed to be the referent and the narrator.

*Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* differs from the memoir writing because the author uses a lot of the media reports such that it lacks the authentic personal narrative touch that a reader would expect of it. Starobinski , in discussing the importance of authenticity in personal narratives to the current critical thinking on autobiographical writings, has stated that: “we have moved from the realm of (historical) truth to that of authenticity (the authenticity of discourse)” (198). Miguna’s use of a lot of media material to develop the sequel to his memoir undermines the authenticity of his work. His work appears more as a report in some instances than a personal narrative. The reader is made to observe how Miguna attempts at reconstituting his personal narrative from the media reports which he also vilifies because of the manner in which he claims they handled certain characters found in his book. It is this application or excessive use of the materials from the newspapers and the other forms of media that denies his works the authenticity it needs. This has been necessitated by the author’s responses to those whom he felt critiqued his work in the media. This preoccupation with the media and the quotations from legal documents or articles has made the work look more of a historical book than a personal narrative one.

#### 4.4 Language and Style

The Russian Formalism proponents have always advocated for the ‘defamiliarization’ of words in order to get the deeper meanings of these words. New refers to this way of viewing things as “intensified perception’ (22) because the reader has to work out the meaning of what is said by the speaker or writer not from the literal sense that these words convey. The field within which the use of this language is common is Literature, hence the insistence of ‘literariness’ as a condition to ascertain whether a particular oral or written work is literary. Literature has been defined as ‘a work with aesthetic value’ (Lamarque and Olsen, 261) which makes people enjoy interacting with literary activities in their various forms—oral or written, whether this be in nonfiction or fiction domains. Literary works entail the appropriation of figurative language, rhetorical questions, sentence structure, choice of words or diction, and dialogue.

Miguna has used figurative language in his sequel. The title of his sequel *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* is figurative because one has to work out its meaning in order to understand what it conveys to the reader. Figurative language includes metaphor which is what the title of the sequel would be called. Other examples of metaphors in Miguna’s sequel are *one of Raila’s best hired gun* (210) and *Come, Baby, Come!* (13). In the title, ‘*the kidneys*’ represent the killing of the author while ‘*the King*’ stands for Raila Odinga. For ones kidneys to be taken out it means that they are dead or killed, and therefore Miguna was using this metaphor because earlier on when he had written the memoir, some people had sent him some threats that they would kill him. Among these threats was one which said that they would kill him and take his kidneys to

the King. The “hired gun” used there was Sara Elderkine who was an associate of Raila Odinga, while the phrase ‘Come, Baby, Come!’ was meant for ODM-Party or any person who felt aggrieved to take Miguna to the courts.

Miguna’s sequel uses long and short sentences. In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* the short and long sentences create variety. With variety the sense of boredom is eliminated. The reader can read without feeling the effects of monotony that beset those who read texts that are written in one form of sentence structure. For instance, in the following sentences the author has followed a short sentence with a long one, thus: “But he wasn’t done yet. He also sought Oraro’s help to ‘conduct an official search of the Registrar of Titles and Registrar of Companies to determine the ownership of the land and the hotel business on the premises known as Heron Court Hotel situated along Nairobi’s Milimani Road in Nairobi” (145). Besides, short and long sentences also create rhythm in a work of prose if well executed by the writer. These varieties of sentences also create a sense of motion on the work. This is exemplified by these sentences:

“They are, Mheshimiwa. Relax. You are safe. We are here to protect you!” He assured. The three men left the room.

Miguna also uses dialogue as a literary device in his work. When he went to receive the consignment of his books from the airport, he had some conversations with the people who were involved in the clearing processes and his security team personnels. While they were whiling time as the due processes were on course, Miguna started some

conversations with some people at one of the go-downs. Part of his dialogue with David went like this:

“Tell you what . . . I hear that the big cats have grabbed the entire JKIA . . . even the runways and hangers”, David continued.

“Well, I’m not sure, but I hear the stories everywhere. And it’s not just here. All Kenyan airports – JKIA, Wilson, Moi, Kisumu, Mombasa, name them. They all have been grabbed. I suspect even the roads around JKIA belong to some fat cats”.

“But how is that possible, Chief?” I fixed him with a stern stare. (*Kidneys*, 108)

In *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* the use of the story within the story is discernible. Miguna has employed this strategy of telling a story within his narrative when he narrates the tale of the *djins* in Mombasa and *koko*. Of the Mombasa *djins* the the narrator says that: “We were warned not to step over any crawling organism and not chase or abuse wild cats as these could turn out to be Mombasa or Tanzania *djins*” (187).

Miguna also uses rhetorical questions in *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*. The use of these rhetorical questions is discernible in the sequel. To exemplify this, Miguna uses a rhetoric question, thus: “Were we ready for such a highly

vindictive president?” (315). The other examples where this technique has been used are: “Transformation?”, (318) and “Are these the faces of reformers in Kenya, Mr Odinga?” (319)

The use of humour is discernible in *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*. Miguna injects humour in his work when he narrates how the phrase: “Come, Baby, Come!” (13) came to be. When he describes how this phrase, which he claims had gone ‘viral’, had come and goes on to demonstrate how he performed a jig and gesticulated, the reader is left amused. Another instance of appropriation of humour in the sequel is when Miguna describes a scene where after some violence had erupted, one of his security details, a General Service Unit (GSU) abandoned him. Miguna states thus: “In one instance, one ran off and left me being physically assaulted as he sought safety for himself” (266).

Miguna’s personal narrative is in prose form. The sequel has also been structured in chapters and parts which help with the flow of the narrative. Every chapter is subtitled thereby giving the reader some ideas as to what s/he should expect in a given chapter. This structuring also helps break the monotony when it comes to reading the personal narrative. Miguna’s sequel has six main chapters besides other several sections that run through the book.

Miguna’s *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* has a lot of characters in it. The protagonist is the narrator of this personal narrative who is also

accompanied by so many characters. Miguna has characterized his characters differently depending on how these affect or relate to him. For those whom he related well with, he portrayed them well, while those who related with him in a way that he considered negative, he portrayed them in a bad way. One such example is the character Raphael Tuju whom he depicts and uses endearing words on. Tuju and the author endearingly called each other “*Manuar*” (114) a term that clearly demonstrates how close they were to each other. Miguna has explained the reason why their friendship with Tuju was important: “Apart from my family, nobody else had been more supportive of me during those very difficult and trying times than Tuju” (114), whom he went ahead to give two autographed complimentary copies to. One was Tuju’s and the other Tuju was to take to the former president, Mwai Kibaki. Tuju exemplifies how Miguna portrayed those whom he felt had related with him well.

However, those characters that had related with him in ways that he disapproved of, he depicted negatively. Moi whom Miguna blames for his detention is described as a “bone cracking dictator” (79), while Anyang’ Nyong’o was said to be “a pale shadow of his previous self” (48). Every character was variously described depending on what message the author wanted to achieve by using them thus.

*Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* demonstrates how the author has deliberately chosen his words in order to bring out his meaning clearly. This deliberate choice of words is what in Stylistics is called diction. Miguna has selected words that he believes will convey the true picture of what he wants his readers to view.

For instance, Miguna's statement that: "We need an excavator, an earth mover to remove the old decaying structures, not old, tired and compromised whimpers like Odinga's (sic)" (320) exhibits some efforts at deliberate choice of words to bring out the intended meaning in words such as 'excavator', 'earth mover', 'decaying structures', and 'whimpers'. In the statement, "Kibaki and his advisers were hell-bent on subverting the new constitutional order" (37) one also sees 'hell-bent', and 'subverting' as words that Miguna felt would give 'weightier' meaning to his claims.

In this chapter we have discussed the truth-value of Miguna Miguna in his personal narrative sequel, *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*. We have also discussed the author's fidelity to the autobiographical genre, and finally looked at the literariness of Miguna's sequel.



## CONCLUSION

In *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* and *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya* Miguna Miguna has presented himself as a conscientious person who researches, analyses and introspectively looks at the issues before commenting or committing to them. It is this image of an impeccable character that Miguna Miguna has cultivated for himself that has made me set out to interrogate what he writes in his two texts under study in order to verify whether he does what he professes or not and the extent to which he departs from the norms of the autobiography.

My study sought to achieve these three objectives: it aimed at examining the truth value of Miguna Miguna in his personal narratives; to critically evaluate Miguna Miguna's fidelity to the autobiographical genre; and finally to examine the literariness of Miguna Miguna's *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*. These were based on the assumptions that Miguna Miguna's tendency to distort the facts undermines the reliability of his autobiographical writing; Miguna Miguna flouts crucial tenets of the autobiography in his personal narratives; and Miguna Miguna's misuse of the autobiographical genre undermines the literary value of his writing.

After doing the close textual reading, the library and the desktop researches, and the interviews with some people who were present to some of the events that Miguna Miguna mentions and some of the institutions that are mentioned in the narratives, I came to several findings. However, before I present my findings, I would like to put it on record that Miguna Miguna refused to grant me chance to interview him on some of the issues

that I felt that as an author he was the only one who could have clarified or the one who stood at a better position to respond to.

My findings were twofold. I noticed that, on a positive note, Miguna Miguna's personal narratives gave the readers an insight into what took place during the formation of the Grand Coalition Government in Kenya. He kind of lifted or parted the curtains for the readers to have a glimpse of what happened behind the scenes during that time. Miguna Miguna's personal narratives have also given the readers a chance to learn some character traits of some people who were involved in the formation and running of the Grand Coalition Government. For instance, through *Peeling Back the Mask* and *Kidneys for the King*, the reader is able to see Raila as somehow naïve and having blind faith or trust that things would work out for the coalition government even when they did not; while Kibaki is depicted as someone who was out to undercut his co-principal at all costs albeit cunningly so as to diminish his status in the Grand Coalition Government. The characters of James Orengo, Mohamed Isahakia, Caroli Omondi, Otieno Kajwang', William Ruto, Musalia Mudavadi, Rachel Shebesh, Sally Kosgei, Henry Kosgey, among many others are brought to light making the reader view them differently from what one had before reading the personal narratives. The jostling for power by the various players in party politics and the shenanigans that took place in establishing the various constitutional offices in Kenya after the new constitution was promulgated are also exposed in the two texts.

Miguna Miguna's works demonstrate inconsistencies as exemplified by the way the author was pro-ICC cases before his suspension and how he later on turned and doubted the ICC process in meting out good judgment for the accused. Miguna is not sincere when he wants to pass off as the mastermind of the students' disturbances in 1987 while casting aspersion to Robert Wafula Buke's leadership credentials. His claim that Caroli Omondi had purchased the Heron Court Hotel is a falsification of facts, since research has revealed that Omondi never bought that hotel.

Consequently, Miguna Miguna's inconsistencies in the personal narratives; his lack of sincerity in most of what he writes about; his deliberate distortion of facts; his explicit and implicit motives or intentions of writing the personal narratives; and his crowding of himself out of his own (personal) narrative by concentrating a lot on narrating about other characters' narratives demonstrates the lack of knowledge of the autobiographical genre on the part of the author. Miguna Miguna's misuse of the autobiographical form can only be construed to mean that he appropriated the genre for propaganda purposes and to settle down personal scores with his enemies for what he perceives as a betrayal for him by them. In this circumstance, to Miguna Miguna, the end justifies the means.

It is this Miguna Miguna's violating and disregarding of the tenets and the norms that govern the writing of the autobiographical genres that undermine the literary value of *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice in Kenya* and *Kidneys for the King: de-FORMING the Status Quo in Kenya*.

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## **INTERVIEWS**

Professor Henry Indangasi, former chair of the Department of Literature 1987, on 9/6/2014.

Professor Godfrey Muriuki, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts 1987, on 6/10/2014.

One representative from The Heron Portico Hotel, on 10/6/2014.

One representative from the University of Nairobi, on 10/6/2014.



