

NARRATING KENYAN HISTORY THROUGH FICTION IN YVONNE OWUOR'S

DUST

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DECLARATION

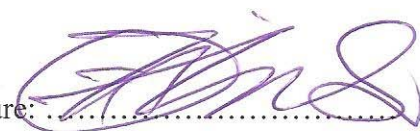
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DEDICATION

Njeri Burkeywo: Thanks my love for the moral support and prayers.

My daughter Joy Tiliil: For your incessant laughter and interruptions.

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the intersection of history and fiction in Yvonne Owuor's *Dust* (2014), this study discusses narration of Kenyan history through fiction by examining 'fictionalised history.' The study contends that fictionalised history challenges the publicly prevailing and dominant notions about a nation and provokes conversations and engagement with the ignored 'other' facets of the nation's history. This is because fiction recollects past events and leaves one free to explore alternative stories untold in official history, particularly in the process of nation-state formation, but which the writer may re-call. Since fiction is significant in recollecting and re-interpreting past realities to make sense of the intricate events in a nation-state, Owuor fictionalises history to narrate stories on the margin of the Kenyan nation-state. By doing so, Owuor evokes the Kenyan past and mirrors the historical events to challenge public prevailing notions about the nation-state and reveal ignored facets of history based on violence, assassinations, corruption, nationalism and disillusionment. Therefore, this study argues that *Dust* underscores what official history suppresses, that is, the marginal 'other' personal stories that form part of the nation-state history. Owuor relies not only on facts but also on imagination to create a story that readers can relate to because it fills in the historical gaps in recorded historical realities in official history.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The intersection of history and fiction is at the heart of any literary work that claims to attempt to re-create the past. A writer's manipulation of history and fiction plays an important role in the representation of histories of a nation-state. Noting the importance of the relationship between history and fiction, Sefan Snævaar (1997) argues that fiction and historical narratives meet in four places: "Fiction must imitate history; just like historical narratives, fictional ones have a kind of reference; there is always a fictional moment in history and both humanise time, help us come to terms with our temporality..."(229).

Even though Snævaar asserts that there is a mutual relationship between the two, the relationship needs to be analysed in light of the contemporary novel. What is the significance of the relationship in narrating histories of a nation-state? Ursula Brumm (1969), while acknowledging the collaboration between history and fiction, is sceptical on the usefulness of the relationship and asks why the two should engage in collaboration at all. Brumm is of the view that the service that "history offers to the writer's imagination is that it creates parts of the plot or constellations of events which express an insight into human life" (321).

History, often understood as a representation of the past, according to Patrick Brady (1993), is a 'real' past, a belief or set of beliefs about that past, and claims to report the 'truth' about that 'real' past (17). In other words, history is a construction based on real and collective experiences of the past as understood in the present. Its nature is that it captures what happened in the past according to sources, explains why it happened and attempts to give a rational and realistic interpretation of that occurrence.

In defining fiction, Brumm brings out important elements when she refers to fiction as “an essential of the writer’s imagination for the compound of plot, character, scene and situations which is the realisation of a creative intention or mood” (320). Through a combination of such elements, fiction often manages to reflect life realities and influences humanity aesthetically.

The critical relationship between history and literature constitutes the historical novel, that form of fiction that attempts to reconstruct the past of a society while depicting fictional characters in fictional situations in the context of a true historical period (H. Scot Dalton, 2006). Alastair Taylor (1938) talking about historical novel observes that it is a novel that “...is primarily interested in recapturing the underlying currents of human activity. Hence, its picture of a more complete perspective serves to re-vitalize isolated, disconnected facts in a manner that mere historical criticism finds impossible to accomplish” (475). While acknowledging that the historical novel is a unifying element between the novel and history, Frank Ankersmit (2010) argues that history is mostly occupied with saying what the past was like, but the novel focuses on showing the past, as it is open to various interpretations to depict the reality (45). Alun Munslow (2007) too observes, “...history cannot be equated with ‘fiction’ once it is understood that history is a narrative representation that pays its dues to the agreed facts of the past” (6). For Munslow then, fiction is an emancipated discourse, unlike history that is always focused on what has occurred. David Stromberg (2008) adds that fictional narrative simulates “events” and “facts” that may never have occurred, making them ontologically imaginary, yet it relates them as if they had actually happened, making their reference point experience in reality. I therefore suggest that literature, by integrating the historical realities into the fiction demonstrates that it can prompt a reader to critically reflect upon the nature of historical knowledge and inculcate the view that the term history connotes vast number interpretations about past events.

However, this study examines fictionalisation of history in a novel that is not specifically a historical novel but a novel that manages to create a historical consciousness and questions historical knowledge by touching on selected historical realities and interprets it from decentred perspective. While presenting stories of ordinary people, the novel diffuses the stories within a socio-political historical context of a nation.

By combining history and fiction, a novel reinforces in the reader the illusion of reality and suggests a certainty of historical realities. Additionally, it helps to stir readers' imagination and re-live historical experiences, which are vague or unstated. Therefore, the fictionalised history in *Dust* attempts to narrate an 'other side' of a nation's history that has not found its way into official history. It offers histories that provoke the reader's consciousness of the need to look past the conventionalised insights of historical reality. Ultimately, it re-examines historical claims and recreates alternative historical versions, which the official version deliberately forgets.

To reconstruct history to represent stories on the margin of a country, fiction writers create fictional characters and situations and intertwine them with historical events through anecdotalising history, filling some gaps in history through imagination and emplotting historical developments in fiction. Oyeniya Okunoye (2001) argues that creative writers interested in history draw on the collective memory of their people and privilege the rehabilitation of historical figures or heroes who are often demonised in official histories (230). In *Dust*, Owuor fictionalises the historical events in Kenya by drawing on the memory of fictive characters that can be said to be ordinary and uses an omniscient narrator to foreground the stories, which are frequently ignored in official history. Therefore, fiction highlights historical realities which official history cannot evoke emotively and persuasively, and creates a space for voicing the same realities.

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor is a Kenyan writer educated at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and the University of Reading. She won the 2003 Caine Prize for African Writing for her short story, “Weight of Whispers.” She worked as a screenwriter and was the Executive Director of the Zanzibar International Film Festival from 2003 to 2005. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications such as *Kwani?*. Her short story “The Knife Grinder’s Tale” was made into a short film in 2005 (Michelle Pauli, 2003). Knopf published Owuor’s first novel, *Dust*, in 2014.

Dust is a narrative set in Kenya from the colonial period to the anti-colonial Mau Mau revolt of the 1950s through to the 2007-2008 post-election violence. It revolves around the family of Nyipir Oganda, his wife Akai Lokorijom and their children Ajany and Moses Odidi Oganda, and historical incidents in Kenya. The narrative opens in 2008, amid the post-election violence that happened in the country, with a young engineer-turned-robber and former high school rugby star, Odidi, as he flees gun-toting police officers through the streets of Nairobi. Odidi had taken to crime after a clash with powerful individuals who were party to a scheme to ensure their lucrative engineering company colludes with government officials to steal public funds. He refused to remain silent about the fraud and colleagues in the company he co-owned kicked him out. He went around the city approaching people to sign a petition to stop the fraud but the people and even the civil society ignored him. Due to apathy of the masses about corruption and their refusal to sign his petition, Odidi got frustrated, turned to crime but police eventually kill him.

After Ajany returns to Wuoth Ogik to join Nyipir in burying Odidi, a British man named Isaiah Bolton arrives looking for his father Hugh Bolton. Isaiah is the presumed son of the late former British colonial officer. Isaiah was born in England after his mother left Bolton and Kenya before

independence. Wuoth Ogik is a home in Northern Kenya, east of Lake Turkana. Nyipir named the place 'Wuoth Ogik', meaning where the journey ends. It denoted rest for Nyipir, especially after making many journeys since his childhood. He had gone to Kisii, then to Fort Hall, Athi River and finally to Wuoth Ogik. Nyipir also found solace after the government tortured him. He retreated to Wuoth Ogik and recovered. It is also a home where secrets of the Oganda family are hidden.

Before Isaiah finds out anything about his father, Ajany heads off to Nairobi to find out what led to her brother's death. The narrator shifts the story to the lives of Hugh Bolton and his wife, Selene. The narrator tells of key historical events in Kenya such as the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952 to 1959, the attainment of independence, the assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969, the rise of Daniel arap Moi to the presidency in 1978, the Nairobi bomb blast in 1998 and the post-election violence in 2007/2008.

The novel narrates about Nyipir's background. The colonial government had recruited his father and brother to fight in the World War II in Burma. Nyipir desired to join them but he never made it. Later he went to school in Kisii and then to Fort Hall where the mission wanted a Christian non-Kikuyu to work as a gardener. While working there, he encountered colonial atrocities such as the killing of the Mau Mau fighters and sympathisers. Colonial regime relocated him to Athi River to help manage the inmates. This is where he met Hugh Bolton, who enlisted him as his servant.

After independence, Nyipir joined Kenya police service and awarded the Head of State Commendation for excellent service. He was moved to the Anti-Stock Theft Unit where he became a supervisor. In 1969, he became cynical and felt he was not a Kenyan following the

assassination of Tom Mboya. Government security agents tortured and released him on grounds that he would remain silent. He retreated to Wuoth Ogik where he traded in guns and engaged in cattle rustling across the northern territories and Horn of Africa.

In Nairobi, Ajany and Isaiah meet with Ali Dida Hada, the senior police officer who has some information about Hugh Bolton. They travel to Wuoth Ogik where they converge and buried secrets emerge. Nyipir had killed Hugh Bolton, inherited Bolton's house and married Akai.

Even though the novel seems to tell the story of Kenya as one characterised by violence, assassinations, corruption, succession politics and disillusionment, it ingeniously narrates the (hi) stories on the margins in Kenya. By interconnecting 'key' and selected historical realities such as the Mau Mau rebellion, murder of prominent personalities such as Tom Mboya, Robert Ouko and J.M. Kariuki, and the 2007-2008 post-election violence with the stories of fictional characters such as Nyipir, Isaiah, Bolton, Odidi and Ali Dida Hada, *Dust* attempts to recall Kenyan history and to depict the stories of the people on the margins.

Definition of Terms

Margin

In this study, I use the word 'margin' to imply periphery. I draw the definition from Jung Young Lee's (1995) definition of marginality. According to Lee, "marginality is defined only in relation to centrality... Without the centre there is no margin, just as there is no centre without a margin" (30). Lee argues that the margin can only be understood when it is juxtaposed with the concept of the centre.

Stories on the margin

In relation to Lee's (1995) definition of margin, the concept 'stories on the margin' refers to (hi)stories ignored, silenced and discarded while constituting the official history of a nation-state. It may also imply stories in the remote areas of a nation.

Official History

Official history is an authorised history sponsored and published by or with the support of government agency (Martin Blumenson, 153). It denotes a popular public narrative produced at a government order, mostly found government annals; a history Kenyans have studied through institutions such as schools and the media. The official history tends to focus on the centre, the niche of those in authority in a state. Therefore, the centre often becomes the framework to define the state and develop an ideology that encompasses those on the margin. However, the official history tends to miss a better perspective of the state because the centre neglects the views and stories of those on the margin.

Fictionalised History

By using the phrase 'fictionalised history', I denote an act of re-creating past realities in fiction using history as a backdrop. An author draws upon historical events and intertwines them with fictional characters and situations to reflect some concerns in the past and present, especially social history. According to E. P. Thompson (1966), social history is a type of historical narrative, which attempts to account for historical events from the perspective of common people rather than political and other leaders.

Nation-State

The term nation-state refers to a form of a political entity on a territory consisting of a group of individuals who feel that they have a shared identity. Within a nation-state is a group of people in which all members can recognise themselves as being part of a wider collective solidarity and of a history on a national scale called a nation (Benedict Anderson, 1983). In this study, I use the terms ‘state’, ‘society’ or ‘country’ interchangeably to mean nation-state.

Statement of the Problem

Writing of a country’s history evokes diverse views due to the nature of nation-state formation. Historians as well as fiction writers in their attempt to capture a history (story) of a nation offer varied understanding due to diverse stories within the very nation. However, fiction writers through intersection of history and fiction, attempt to narrate and explain events with greater liveliness and emotion, and revive the past to illuminate history (Richard Slotkin 225). Additionally, through use of narrative techniques, writers can form a meaningful narrative that recovers the indeterminacy of a past and explore stories overlooked by official history. In so doing, the writers can restore the stories ignored and discarded in nation-state formation. Therefore, by examining the intersection of history and fiction in *Dust*, I contend that Owuor fictionalises history to evoke Kenya’s past, challenge existing notions of collective nationhood that exist among Kenyans and reveal ignored and silent facets of Kenyan history on the margin.

Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To examine fictionalisation of history in narration of the stories of people on the margin as presented in *Dust*;

- ii. To evaluate the effectiveness of the narrative structures in *Dust* in narrating the stories of people on the margin of a nation-state.

Hypotheses

This study presupposes that:

- i. Fictionalised history in *Dust* is significant in narrating stories of people on the margin of a nation-state;
- ii. The narrative structures adopted in *Dust* is effective in narrating the stories of the people on the margin of a nation-state.

Justification

Fiction plays a unique role in recollecting and interpreting past realities to help us make sense of the intricate and paradoxical events in a society. Fiction writers interweave history and fiction to historicise a nation and to capture alternative angles from which to reconstruct the country's past.

Since independence, Kenyan novelists have narrated the country's socio-political and economic developments, highlighting issues such as the struggle against colonialism and the quest for independence, postcolonial succession politics, disillusionment, corruption, poverty and misuse of power. However, with the emergence of a new generation of Kenyan writers in English like Owuor who are significantly reflecting on the Kenyan past, there is a need to examine how these writers depict the past in the present to unearth silent and ignored histories.

Dust reflects on and informs the experiences Kenya has gone through for more than fifty years up to the 2007/2008 post-election period. It also attempts to interconnect Kenya geographically by situating its stories in regions of the country such as Western, Central, Nairobi and Northern Kenya. The characters depicted also represent the face of Kenya in terms of tribe, race and

religion. Although the characters are fictitious, their stories represent stories in Kenya such as of violence, corruption, betrayal and disillusionment that would otherwise not make it to the official history because of hegemonic control over discourses on country's history. The novel's narrative spans different periods in the history of Kenya, from the colonial time through the post-independence era into the 21st Century while selecting key events that happened during the covered period. Therefore, studying *Dust* invokes past and recent Kenyan stories that officially history glosses over.

Despite the intersection of history and fiction in *Dust*, the novel does not merely reflect Kenya's history but seeks also to break some silence and challenge various existing public notions about Kenya's official history highlighting some stories on the margin of the mainstream history. Therefore, in studying the novel, I attempt to investigate stories of people on the periphery to highlight their own experiences in the larger corpus of the history of the country, thereby challenging official history's record of people's experiences.

Scope and Limitation

The study is limited to a reading of Owuor's *Dust* as the primary text. I look at how the novel fictionalises history to tell stories on the periphery of Kenyan history and the techniques used in telling these stories. My focus is on the intersection of history and fiction, and the effectiveness of narrative structures in telling the stories of people on the margins of society.

Literature Review

The study of Kenya's fiction is an important part in understanding Kenyan history in the colonial and post-colonial period. Many critics have focused on how writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o,

Marjorie Oludhe and Meja Mwangi have attempted to narrate Kenya's history during these periods by reflecting on the country's historical realities.

For more than five decades, Kenyans have lived to believe that they share a common history and identity, but there are dissenting voices from people on the margin of the mainstream society. For instance, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) Report (2013) reveals stories such as the brutality of the British colonial regime, political assassinations, massacres of citizens, extra-judicial killings, detention and torture of opposition politicians, corruption and economic crimes, economic marginalisation and violation of socio-economic rights, land conflicts and ethnicity. Divisive politics, ethnicity, and unfair distribution of resources and neglect of certain groups might have occasioned suppression of these stories. As a result, stories of people on the edge have been missing from the narrative of the state.

According to David Carr in *Time, Narrative and History* (1986), a community exists whenever a narrative account of *we* exists. One or few of the group members in terms of *we* formulate this narrative and others accept it. The members thus begin addressing each other as members of a community and feel a sense of a community. However, new versions of this common and shared story can emerge. These new versions can be the basis of factions that can threaten the unified existence of the community (156-158). Carr points out that a minority group that feels repressed at the hands of the majority can arise and attempt to oppose the repression. Similarly, a country that emerges from colonialism always assumes it has a shared sense of history because it was colonised and the fight for independence was communal. However, within this society, there are members on the margin who feel that the country is just a geographical set-up that they do not belong to. *Dust* attempts to narrate the stories of such people by interweaving fictional characters and historical events to tell the history of a society from a decentred perspective – the margin.

To capture such a scenario in the history of a country, fiction gives the ordinary people an opportunity to express their ignored and silenced stories. In underscoring the significance of fiction in narrating a story, Karen O'Brien, in "History and the Novel" (2005), notes that there is a difference between historical writing and a work of fiction because of the quality of emotional experience in the latter. She argues, "Despite the increasingly affective nature of historical writing, eighteenth-century commentators generally remained committed to the notion that, even when a historical work invited reader identification with a character, the emotional experience was qualitatively different from that of reading fiction" (408). O'Brien implies that in fiction, one is able to narrate a story into one's heart and feelings unlike historical writing that attempts to impose a shared past and thus silencing alternative interpretation of historical experiences.

Based on O'Brien's thoughts on history and the novel, fiction can project a clearer representation of the way people lived at a particular time and create a vivid sense of how a situation might have been and what it connotes. Fiction can represent a past through imaginative construction of events and characters to offer several versions of 'contested history'. In relation to my study, O'Brien's concept helps to analyse Owuor's representation of historical realities on the margin of Kenya through fiction and to assess the quality of emotional experience that fiction brings out when recounting experiences of the ordinary people and thus unmasking official history.

Frank Ankersmit, in "Truth in History and Literature" (2010), argues that narratives often offer representations of things that have happened, whether real or imaginary and that for a narrative to represent it must be organised around some central theme whether in actual or an imagined reality. In distinguishing between a historical narrative and a historical novel, he argues that in a historical narrative, historical truth is discovered, presented and defended against potential criticism, but a historical novel is left open for possible multiple interpretations, epiphany of

reality itself. According to Ankersmit, a historical narrative has an explicit interpretation while a historical novel is explicit. Since fictionalised history in *Dust* revolves around people on the periphery of the country, my study focuses on how the stories presented reflect the country because of the existing diverse narratives and identities.

In defining new historicism, Peter Barry (1995) argues, “It is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period (116).” This is a kind of criticism, which the theory refuses to give a literary text an edge over non-literary texts so that the two texts can inform or interrogate each other. New historicism thus acknowledges that history (non-literary) and fiction (literary) can provide material to each other because history is a representation of the past in a society while fiction uses the past through imagination. Barry’s argument helps this study to juxtapose *Dust* with non-literary texts such as historical journals, records and newspaper articles on Kenya’s histories to inform or interrogate the stories narrated. Based on Stephen Greenblatt’s (1980) concept of how literary and non-literary discourses exercise power, participate in power relations or undermine it within a society, I examine how *Dust* reveals the social and economic realities of the people on the periphery of the society. I also look at the ways in which power is maintained in a society, whether the text supports dominant power structures or subverts them and what silenced voices have been given room to speak.

Dan Izevbye in “Issues in Reassessment of African Novel” argues that since attitudes to existing novels are always changing due to emerging novels, there is a need to re-examine the critical attitudes to find new critical language to reflect the modified consciousness of what literature means. He notes thus:

A periodic re-evaluation of the African novel is necessary in order to develop a lively critical heritage as support for its growth. One function of such a re-evaluation would be to sift the recent past for significant contributions to fiction in order to affirm our continuity with it, and encourage redefinition of existing literature in the light of new knowledge about literature and society (8).

Izevbaye suggests that there is a need to take into account other bases such as the diversity of African cultures when discussing the African novel and focus should not just be on colonialism. Fifty years since most African countries gained independence from colonialists and imperial powers, writers have emerged to depict social, political and economic under-development of these post-colonial nation-states. It is with this spirit that I examine how *Dust* makes a significant contribution to Kenyan literature through narrating margined stories in the society.

In “Ngugi's Concept of History and the Post-Colonial Discourses in Kenya”, James Ogude argues, “Both history and literature invoke the principle of selection and derive their material from specific cultures and historical experiences” (8). He adds that for Ngugi, the narrative is a tool for shaping, ordering, and reinterpreting history. Ogude further notes that Ngugi took to fiction to give space to the ordinary people, such as peasants, who were marginalised from the country’s official history. Ogude’s assertions are relevant to my study since Owuor has fictionalised history by borrowing from historical realities as a backdrop to fiction to tell stories from the decentred perspective. I therefore attempt to find out how *Dust* “shapes, orders and reinterprets” the history of Kenya.

Closely related to Ogude’s postulations on Ngugi and historical fiction is Carol Sicherman’s position in her book, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Writing of Kenyan History* (1989). Sicherman

argues that situating creative work within the same context as historical figures and events are nearly as important as the historical settings. In reference to *Petals of Blood* (1977), she says, “Ngugi's works are dense with allusions to historical personages and events, the density becoming most marked in *Petals of Blood*. Even where the allusions are general rather than exact, the fiction is deeply imbued with history” (352). The understanding here is that in Ngugi’s texts, history is submerged in fiction. Sicherman’s focus on Ngugi’s works and Kenyan history is helpful in understanding how Oluoch intertwines Kenyan history and fiction to voice silences in official history. It also helps to understand how Oluoch alludes to historical events, although she does it selectively, to address the gaps in these mainstream stories.

Peter Tirop Simatei, in “Colonial Violence, Postcolonial Violations: Violence, Landscape, and Memory in Kenyan Fiction” (2005), notes that one of the most persistent concerns of Kenyan literature is violence generated by colonial injustice and perpetuated in independent Kenya, through unaltered colonial structures and institutions. He observes that Kenyan writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Sam Kahiga and Leonard Kibera, among others, depict violence in the two periods in their works. My analysis of *Dust* adds on what Simatei has captured given that the novel also attempts to depict stories on violence from colonial Kenya in 1950s to the post-election violence in 2007-2008.

Simatei also points out the aspect of memory as the moment and site of telling the violence regarding the Mau Mau struggle for independence. For instance, Simatei notes that in “Kibera's writing, memory of the war of liberation is tyrannical in two respects. First, for the wretched ex-freedom fighters like Irungu and Kimura, the choice is between therapeutic amnesia and traumatic memory, none of which salvages them either from the terrors of the past or the agonies

of the present. Second, memory becomes a burden to the extent that the state-enforced amnesia criminalises remembrance” (92). *Dust* attempts to dig up repressed memories through Nyipir and other characters by reflecting on Kenyan history. Memories of torture, violence, loss and hidden secrets haunt Nyipir. The independent state, just like the colonial state silenced the voices of ordinary people through violence. By giving such characters the opportunity to speak out, Owuor enables the voices of the alienated people to be heard. I examine how characters in *Dust* act as sites of memory for the recollection and retelling of the history of Kenya.

In the essay “The Kenyanness of Kenyan Literature”, Henry Indangasi contends that the development of nations and their attendant national consciousness has been accompanied by the growth of a national literature, which is a form of national consciousness. According to Indangasi, what defines national literature is the content of the form. He argues that the choice of language of creativity, Christian themes and motif, the theme of armed struggle and populist sensibility characterise Kenyan literature. He concludes that, although Kenyan literature can change with time, “What is Kenyan about Kenyan literature might very well be what is Kenyan about Kenyans” (8). In *Dust*, Owuor attempts to depict Kenya’s national consciousness through stories of estranged people. As such, I also focus on how form in the novel highlights national consciousness as it spans more than fifty years of Kenya’s history.

In a 2014 review of *Dust* in the *New York Times*, Taiye Selasi observes that *Dust* is a novel about Kenya but it interrogates what Kenya is. He notes, “Owuor tells her country’s stories – and they are plural: urban, rural, Indian, English, Luo, and Kikuyu – with bitter honesty.” Although Selasi’s observation on the novel focuses on diverse Kenyan histories that Owuor tells about Kenya, I am interested in the stories on the periphery of Kenya.

John Sibi-Okumu, in a 2014 review of *Dust*, notes that Yvonne Owuor represents ‘purgation generation’ of Kenyan writers, at pains to make sense of the unsettling present by interrogating the not-too-distant past through fiction, but the writers run the risk of mythologising that past. Noting past concerns raised by the novel such as the assassination of prominent personalities like Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki, among others, Sibi-Okumu questions why they were murdered. To him there should be “‘Rewriters of Kenya History’ to enlighten us on our past through methodological and unbiased research and prepare not only to tell us what happened but also to speculate on why it happened (44).” Since Sibi-Okumu calls for rewriting of Kenya’s history and unbiased research on why for instance the assassinations happened, my study of *Dust* aims to find out how, through fiction, Owuor attempts to rewrite Kenya’s history and how she depicts assassinations and violence in Kenya.

Contrary to the notion that Kenya is one united nation, there seems to be ignored stories that depict Kenya as a divided nation. Tom Odhiambo (2014) avers that to read *Dust* “is to be jolted back into reality; away from the songs of hope retailed on Kenyan TV, radio, newspapers, in churches, at rallies by politicians, in lecture halls and even by NGOs that are supposed to be auditing the delivery of goods and services by the government”(56). According to Odhiambo, Kenya operates under the cliché ‘beloved’ country yet it obfuscates the truth of a country that has normalised violence, deaths, abandonment, alienation and marginalisation. Odhiambo’s argument is that *Dust* is about Kenya’s history, from the colonial to the post-colonial period. Drawing from these postulations, I further explore how the novel narrates neglected stories in a country, those who are portrayed as disillusioned and oppressed through violence, and how these stories contribute to the amalgam of the history of the country.

Parselelo Kantai seems to echo Odhiambo's argument. Kantai sees *Dust* as the "story of loss ... national silences in the face of terrible secret violence. However, it is much more than that. It is the tragic story of a nation as experienced by a family that both rejects and embraces its central myths." Kantai adds that what is strongly resonant about *Dust* is its familiar Kenyan tropes. According to Kantai, beneath the constructed history of Kenya lie untold tragic stories that have characterised the country since the colonial period.

In addition to the propositions made by Odhiambo and Kantai, Simon Lewis (2014) notes that *Dust* is a complex and complicated novel, part family saga, part political thriller, part historical quest narrative and it "exudes the harsh sounds and powerful smells of Kenya from every page; the dazzle of the desert sky makes you almost squint as you read." He adds that the author zeroes in even more closely than the nation, focusing her, and our, attention on the arid landscape of Kenya's desert northwest. Jalida Scheuerman-Chianda (2014) also argues that *Dust* is a novel that speaks from hidden histories and landscapes, adding that Owuor dares to give voice to 'the margins' by relocating 'the centre' to Turkana. Based on Scheuerman-Chianda's understanding, by situating the narrative in northern Kenya, an arid and neglected area – the periphery of the nation-state – Owuor uses the novel to unearth stories that are ignored when writing the official history of the state.

In studying the *how* of the narrative in *Dust*, I examine various elements of narratology such as narrative voice, narrative perspective, narrative time, order and narrative speed and their significance in telling the stories of people on the margin. Nelson Mlambo (2014) notes that what is most captivating in *Dust* is the author's use of style, in that the novel starts in *medias res* as Odidi runs for his life and then his murder which sends Ajany (his sister) to Kenya. According to Mlambo, "The plot is enriched by the fragmentary manner of writing which captures the hallucinatory sequences of a memory haunted by

history's wounds, hopes, thirstiness and aspirations” (2). Mlambo’s argument points to the non-linear construction of the narrative in the novel as characterised by the story beginning at some point in the middle of the action, the use of flashback and the stream of consciousness and the continuous flow of sense-perceptions, thoughts, feelings and memories of characters. What gives the novel prominence in narrating repressed histories is the manner in which stories have been fashioned – how the sequence of events in time have been organised into a plot. Therefore, from the literature review, this study attempts to examine how *Dust* through fiction attempts to tell an ‘other side’ of Kenyan history, one that official history ignores and silences.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by narratology and new historicism as theoretical underpinnings. Narratology looks at the form taken by the narrative. It attempts to appreciate what relations are possible between the elements of a narrative such as mood, narrative instance, narrative level and time. Theorists of narrative aver that there are two levels in a narrative text: the story (what is told) and the discourse (how it is told). The story consists of the events and existents while discourse comprises various elements such as plot, narrative voices, focalisation, narrative modes, time and style. Peter Barry (1995) observes, “Narratology is the study of how narratives make meaning, and what basic mechanisms and procedures are common to all acts of story-telling” (222). Narratology is thus significant in understanding the significance of narrative elements, which are important in revealing the silences in official history.

In my analysis of stories on the margin of the nation-state, I use Gerard Genette’s typology of narratology in which he argues that every text reveals traces of narration, which can be studied in order to understand exactly how the narrative is organised. Genette separates the various concepts such as narrative mood, narrative instance, narrative levels and narrative time, but I am

interested in using the concepts of narrative instance and narrative time to understand how the text is organised.

In narrative instance, I explore the narrative voice, time of narration and narrative perspective to understand who is speaking, from whose perspective and when the telling occurs. In narrative time, I examine order and narrative speed to appreciate how the story is presented with respect to the narrative as a whole and how the chronology of events is dealt with in the novel to narrate historical realities in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. *Dust* is told from an omniscient point of narration; its plot is non-linear and elliptical and exhibits an aspect of flashback.

New historicism, developed by Stephen Greenblatt, emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Bressler, 2007). It is based on the philosophy that a literary work should be considered as a product of the time, the place, and historical circumstances of its achievement rather than an isolated work. The proponents of new historicism argue that to find a meaning in a text, one has to look at a text within the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. Thus, all texts are seen as social documents that are meant for and respond to historical situations. According to Barry (1995), new historicists, when studying a text, juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter. The new historicists attempt to 'defamiliarise' the canonical literary text, detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as if new. They also focus attention within both text and context on issues of nation-state power and how it is maintained, on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonisation, with its accompanying 'mind-set'.

New historicism envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal credence and constantly inform and interrogate each other. According to Charles

Bressler (2007), “New historicism asserts that an intricate connection exists between an aesthetic object and a text or any work of art and society, while denying that a text can be evaluated in isolation from its context” (185). The intricate connection between history and fiction is useful in reading *Dust* in the context of Kenyan history and in examining how it responds to various historical situations. My analysis is in relation to recorded history, journals, newspaper articles and fictional works. I also attempt to examine how the novel functions as illuminator of the official history by documenting violence, succession politics, corruption and disillusionment in Kenya.

Since new historicism allows the possibilities of focusing on issues of a state’s power and how it is maintained, this study is guided by the understanding that due to power relations in a society, some narratives are unjustly suppressed, subordinated and forgotten. Therefore, by interrogating literary and non-literary texts together, one uncovers those suppressed and subordinated narratives that tell other histories of a country like Kenya. I analyse *Dust* through its historical context with a focus on issues of power, how it was exercised during and after colonialism and how it was maintained and perpetuated throughout Kenya’s history, thus repressing the stories on the margin of the country.

Methodology

This study is based on a close textual analysis of Yvonne Owuor’s novel, *Dust*. I examine how the novel recounts silenced and ignored stories on the periphery of Kenya. I also engage in a comparative analysis by reading texts detailing Kenya’s historical accounts. These include journals and newspaper articles that capture the historical events to help me in understanding *Dust* further by placing the historical events in the novel in context. I examine the text through the theories of narratology and new historicism. Through narratology, I explore how the novel

presents histories of ordinary people and how these people experienced historical realities. I also focus on the significance of the plot, narrative voice, narrative perspective, order and time of narration in terms of how they contribute to the depiction of stories on the margin.

New historicism is relevant in discussing how the text responds, through fiction, to the selected historical events. Based on Barry's (1995) understanding of new historicism, I examine ways in which power is maintained in the text, if the text is supporting dominant power structures or subverting them, if the author is representing the dominant discourse or if she is a subaltern and what silenced voices have been given room to speak. I read the primary text to identify stories of people on the margin of the society. I explore the role fiction plays when fused with history by focusing on the historical events and the fictional characters like Nyipir, Odidi, Hugh Bolton, Isaiah and Ali as a representation of Kenyan people. I also review secondary texts, especially critical works on history and fiction, in light of how they inform the narrative in *Dust*.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERSECTION OF HISTORY AND FICTION

Introduction

This Chapter discusses fictionalisation of history. It begins by first looking at the nature of history and fiction as argued by scholars and then examines fictionalisation of Kenya's history in *Dust* through stories of violence, corruption, alienation and disillusionment. The Chapter also examines how the novel depicts the historical events in relation to the historical documents such as journals and newspapers to highlight stories of people on the margin of the country and break the silences in official history.

History and Fiction: Critical Issues

Kenya's history is at the backdrop of the fictional stories in *Dust*. But how do the two subjects – history and fiction – intersect to present stories on the margin that have been silenced in the history of the country? Commenting on the historical novel as a source of history, Taylor (1938) argues that:

History and literature are complementary, not merely in that, they are both testaments to man's growth through the centuries, but in that they are the products of a common vital urge on the part of human beings to explain those intangible forces of life, which, in the ultimate sense, become the most tangible of all motivations (478).

Taylor's argument suggests that the close relationship between history and fiction shows that one supplies the other with both source material and inspiration. Taylor further argues that the prime necessity of literature is imagination because literature is essential in reconstructing the past even though then history tries to shun imagination in the reconstruction of the past. He states that:

What the historian failed to appreciate was the fact that imagination is necessary to obtain

a full picture of a previous age, and that literature itself, especially those writings written in the age which the historian is reconstructing, is able, by its very imaginative faculties, to 'breathe back', in some measure, the life forces that motivated our ancestors. Hence, historical reconstruction can never successfully divorce itself from either the literature of the past, or that branch of modern literature which concerns itself in depicting bygone ages (463).

Whereas history attempts to describe past events as they *really* happened, if it can manage to do so, fiction depicts what can be considered 'true' from the point of view of the characters representing people at the time of the event. Therefore, fiction enables assessment of historical claims as well as a reconstruction of alternative historical versions, which often pass unrecorded, in official history.

Official history is, according to Martin Blumenson, a subjective narrative, as it is usually told from the point of view of the powerful in a state but those on the margin have their stories repressed (153). Therefore, the lesser group, once suppressed, tend to forget its histories. Hayden White (1987), in *The Content of the Form*, argues that official history depends upon the existence of a social centre that allows the historian to locate events in relation to one another and "to charge them with ethical or significance" (11). White adds that the social centre makes it possible for the historical narrative to achieve closure as it neglects other narratives and annals. The understanding White advances is that the historical narrative is informed by the historian's need to assert his or her authority over other competing versions of the past in order to privilege a historical narrative as only one of the discourses that attempt to truthfully represent the past.

However, my argument is that fiction plays a great role in narrating and interpreting historical realities of a particular time to reflect the silences present in the history of Kenya and to give

people on the margin to voice their stories. While narrating the history of Kenya, *Dust* gives alternative angles from which to reconstruct or recall country's past and margined stories or histories. In discussing the stories in the text, I also recognise that the less powerful have histories to relate (to), that are silent in official history. I borrow this understanding from Bethwell Ogot (2010) who argues, "We need a history that will not deny the evidence of oppression and corruption" (49).

At independence, nationalist leaders attempted to create a national narrative that included all Kenyans, with the motive to ensure unity and development, but which actually ended up excluding other narratives that were equally important. Peter Simatei (2001) observes, "The desire by nationalist leaders to construct a unified nation and originate an official history to rationalise and legitimise the sanctity of the nation precipitates the suppression of alternative histories and other possibilities of identity formation" (55). Since stories, especially those on the margin, are suppressed, Simatei points out that literature intervenes in the making of history by evoking the suppressed stories.

Due to the inadequacy of official history to address and provide a full account of reality, writers of fiction create alternative voices that challenge, add to and complement historical perspectives. In *Dust*, Owuor, makes a conscious effort to let characters such as Nyipir, Odidi, Ajany, Akai, Ali, Isaiah and the Trader, all on the margin of society's mainstream, narrate their own stories thus giving their own versions of history, which in some ways contest the idea of a homogenous nation-state as portrayed by the official historical accounts. Despite the interconnectedness of fictional stories and historical events in *Dust*, the novel does not merely recall the history of Kenya but it also reflects socio-political realities for a period of more than fifty years from the perspective of alienated Kenyans.

The novel consists of subplots centring on the intersection of personal histories of several characters with different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds and historical events. As the narrator tells about the characters, issues that have dogged Kenya since Uhuru such as violence, corruption, assassination and disillusionment crop up. The essence here is that these characters are on the margin of the nation-state and through them, we can peer into their lives and feel of how they experience these realities.

In distinguishing narrative history and fictional narrative, Matt Oja (1988) argues that the history end of the spectrum is generally characterised by the big picture, the context as well as the events and social level as well as an individual level. Oja argues that the writer focuses on the ‘why’ of events, as well as the ‘what’. However, the fiction writer is engaged primarily in telling the story of ‘what’ happened and if he gives reasons, he does it on an individual and emotional level through the inner motivations of the characters, or the ways they are affected and influenced by external factors (119). Similarly, White (2005) notes that fiction is the repressed other of historical discourse and adds that the return of the repressed other (fiction) in history creates the simulacrum (the novel) that the history refuses to be (147). Therefore, by telling stories on violence, assassination, disillusionment, alienation and corruption, Owuor reveals the repressed experiences in the official history.

Historical Context

In describing the origin of Kenya in “The Invention of Kenya”, E.S. Atieno Odhiambo (1996) says that from 1895 to 1905, the land called Kenya today was transformed from footpath six hundred miles long between Mombasa and Kisumu into a harshly politicised colonial state (xiii). With reference to *Dust*, during the Second World War (1939-1945), the British colonial administration recruited the Africans to fight in countries such as Burma in Asia. The British had

arrived in Nyipir's village in Nyanza and recruited his father and brother to fight in Burma. After his uncle mistreated him, Nyipir left for Fort Hall Mission Station to work as a gardener. The missionaries wanted a reliable, Christian, and a non-Kikuyu good boy. While in Fort Hall, Nyipir met Warui, the gravedigger, and joined him in digging graves and burying the dead to raise money to help him travel to Burma to look for his father and brother. This was when the Mau Mau war was at its peak and the British were cracking down the Mau Mau supporters. Nyipir was later transferred from the Station to the colonial security camp and then to Athi River where Mau Mau members were detained.

While in Athi River, Hugh Bolton who had come to inspect detainees enlisted Nyipir as his servant and they moved to the Northern Frontiers District (NFD) and settled in Wuoth Ogik, Turkana. Colonial authorities had transferred Bolton to NFD to manage the security situation as a disciplinary measure because of disappointing the authorities. The authorities had hoped that by sending Bolton to the NFD, he would resign. While in the North, Bolton met Akai, a Turkana woman and took her in as his mistress (345). When Akai later became pregnant, Bolton chased her away. Nyipir later killed Bolton to save Akai when Bolton was just about to shoot her (349-350).

Bolton and his wife, Selene, had arrived in Kenya in the 1950s and settled in Naivasha. As Mau Mau insurgency took place, Selene was scared for her life but Bolton was determined that the British should keep its Kenyan colony. When Bolton was transferred to the north, Selene refused to move with him. Afraid of death, an expectant Selene left for England. The narrator also tells us that in 1960, Ali arrived in Kenya from Eritrea and he later joined the Kenya Police Service.

In 1964, Kenya became a Republic with Kenyatta as its first President and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga as the Vice-President. However, due to intraparty conflicts bedevilling KANU, Odinga

stepped down in 1966 to form a leftist opposition party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU). Shortly after its formation, KPU was banned and Odinga arrested in 1969. As such, Kenya became a single-party state. In the same year, Tom Mboya, the minister for economic planning was assassinated, sparking anger from members of the Luo community and heightened tension within the country generally.

Between 1963 and 1969, the narrator tells us that Nyipir had joined the police force and participated in Kenya's independence celebrations. He was then promoted to head the Anti-Stock Theft Unit but was later tortured and discharged dishonourably after the assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969. He retreated to Wuoth Ogik where he found solace and began engaging in cattle rustling and trading in contraband goods.

In the period between 1970 and 2007, *Dust* highlights political assassinations, politics of succession of Jomo Kenyatta, the 1982-attempted coup, multiparty politics, ethnic conflicts, terror attack in 1998 and other incidences like corruption. During Kenyatta's era in 1975, J. M. Kariuki was assassinated. Kenyatta died in August 1978 and his then Vice-President, Daniel arap Moi, succeeded him as Kenya's second President, ruling the country up to 2002. During Moi's twenty-four-year tenure, the National Assembly declared Kenya a one-party state in June 1982. The Kenya Army suppressed a coup attempt by members of the Kenya Air Force in August 1982. The political opposition groups were also suppressed until December 1991 when KANU, the ruling and only political party, agreed to a multi-party political system and elections were held in December 1992. Although Moi was re-elected in the multiparty elections of 1992 and 1997, both elections were marred by ethnic clashes.

In 2002, Mwai Kibaki won the elections for the presidency by a landslide majority, ending Daniel arap Moi's tenure. Although Kibaki took office with a promise to end corruption and poor

governance that had characterised Kenyatta's and Moi's regimes, his regime was also dogged by the same problems. Kibaki had also promised Kenyans a new constitution but after Parliament approved a draft constitution in 2005, voters rejected the document in a referendum as it proposed an imperial presidency. In December 2007, a disputed presidential election led to violence in which close to 1,500 people were killed, according to official records. The government and opposition signed a power-sharing agreement in February 2008. After the agreement, a tribunal was set up to investigate the perpetrators of the violence. In October 2008, a report on the post-election clashes was released, which recommended the prosecution of those implicated in the violence.

As an example of the representation of selected historical events in Kenya, the narrator in *Dust* says that in 1978, a lean cattleman, an inarticulate teacher, took over as President of Kenya, to refer to Daniel arap Moi (275). The novel also talks about the 1998 bomb blast in Nairobi. Akai was scared that Odidi could have died in the blast (33). The narrative then moves to December 2007, during the elections, when police guns down Odidi for robbery. Ajany arrives from Brazil after Nyipir tells her about the death of Odidi. As Nyipir's family tries to come to terms with Odidi's death, the narrator notes the incidents surrounding the post-election violence in which many Kenyans lost their lives and thousands of hundreds displaced.

Therefore, *Dust* deals with the complex interconnections between fiction and history. The novel consists of a series of subplots centring on the intersection between personal, family and nation-state histories from colonial Kenya to 2008. Deliberately shunning the linearity preferred by official history, Owuor takes the reader back and forth within the nation-state to areas such as Nyanza, Fort Hall, Athi River, Turkana and Nairobi. Moreover, Owuor provides only small amounts of information at a time, leaving many gaps in the narrative to be filled later. Just like

the historical novel, *Dust* mixes imagined situations with historical events like the Mau Mau rebellion against the British colonial government, independence celebrations, the assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969, the rise of Moi to the presidency in 1978, the 1998 bomb blast and the bloody post-election violence of 2007-2008. While creating these vast scenes, Owuor takes the reader through tumultuous Kenyan stories.

Case for Repressed Stories

In studying multiple versions of narratives about the nationalist past of a village in India to identify the differences between post-colonial nationalist narratives of the villagers and the mainstream dominant elite story of nationalism, Badri Narayan (2007) argues that:

There is no single unified narrative about their remembrance of the national movement and the contributions of different castes in it. It may not always be true that each community remembers the nation in the contemporary period with identical emotional fervour. Moreover, the individual caste and the group interests of the narrators are usually reflected through their narratives. Often, the communities that are existing on the fringes of mainstream society use it as a space to voice their grievances with the ruling classes (67).

According to Narayan, the nationalist narratives are mostly idealist, based on binary opposites of native versus colonial, and narrated with passion, hate and other emotional aspects (68). Narayan's adds again that a nation-state, with various socio-political divisions, has diverse meanings of itself based on the imagination of the different citizens. This suggestion runs counter to the perception by Eric Hobsbawm (1990) which suggests that a nation-state is a cohesive, holistic and unified unit because of the central government, one geographical boundary, one official language, a national anthem and one constitution (179). Such a notion is

shattered when one considers that there are various multiple narratives contesting the country's official history at any one time. This could be because of the powerful and the less powerful having different perceptions of the past and present because of different socio-political and economic experiences. In any society, there is no homogenous unified history but many contesting and fragmented histories and multiple disparities because the nation is an imagined political community (Benedict Anderson, 1983). In a once colonised nation-state like Kenya, there exist different histories.

Due to the existing multiple narratives in a nation-state, one realises that there are gaps in official history. For instance, David Der-wei Wang (2004) suggests that since Chinese historiography has not sufficiently addressed the scale and psychological aftermath of China's violence and pain, fiction can be drawn on as a complementing and contesting discourse (2). He argues that history can collect and analyse historical accounts, more by resurrecting individual lives from the oblivion of collective memory and public documentation in re-enacting the affective intensities of private and inadmissible truth (3). By telling the stories of fictional characters and situations intersected with historical events, *Dust* probes the official history of Kenya to reveal the silent and neglected stories in that official history to reflect on peoples' experiences.

Through fiction, Owuor counters the country's history as a construct by the elite. Therefore, the novel emerges as a creative way of reconstructing or even deconstructing the official history. The fictional characters of the novel, in a way, visualise the past, as it is drawn from their memory and imagination. Instead of making characters out of Kenya's history, Owuor creates fictional characters such as Nyipir, Akai, Hugh Bolton and Ali who narrate their own stories and as readers; we read their versions of (history) and thus hear the stories from the margin. We experience the lives of Nyipir, Akai, Hugh and Selene during colonialism and later the lives of

Nyipir, Akai, Odidi, Isaiah, and Ali, among others, in post-colonial Kenya. Through Nyipir, Owuor reveals colonial atrocities against Africans in Fort Hall and after independence, as those who spoke out were silenced while corruption and outlawed activities such as cattle rustling, poaching and trade in guns were the order of the day.

In fictionalised history, historical reality is captured through the integration of historical context and fiction to create new insights to represent the past, as a way of recovering alternate histories that might have been neglected in the official historical account. Thus, the fictional stories within the historical context challenge the implicit closure present in the official version of history. The motive behind these fictional stories is to recall history, create alternative histories and give the ordinary people on the margin of society the opportunity to narrate their own histories from their own points of view.

In the following section of this Chapter, I examine stories of violence, nationalism and disillusionment, corruption, alienation and election violence based on the characters and the narrator. My observation is that the state suppresses or ignores these stories, but fiction intervenes and gives the characters the opportunity to challenge official history.

Colonial and Post-colonial Violence in the State

Africa's history is replete with violence. This violence cuts across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. It can be understood as communal violence (between and among African communities), colonial violence (during colonial conquest) and resistance wars inspired by African nationalism. Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan (1985) sees violence as "any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group" (135). Cohn Leys (1965) says that the word 'violence' carries overtones of violating, implying that a person uses force to violate another person. Apart

from these forms of violence, there are others such as terrorism, xenophobia, racist-inspired violence, criminality, rape and ethnic-inspired violence (Leys 1965).

The establishment of most African post-colonial nation-states was done through violence. The violence is traced to the establishment of settler colonies by the European powers and the battles in the decolonisation process. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argues that the process of colonisation and decolonisation was characterised by violence. In a bid to secure their freedom and land, the Africans responded violently, a process that Fanon refers to as decolonisation. According to Fanon, decolonisation occurs when two opposing forces counter each other over vested interests. He points out that the first encounter between the settlers and natives was violence. He argues that:

Decolonisation is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances (36).

Similarly, just as the process of colonisation was initiated and sustained through repressive violence, so was colonisation overthrown through liberating violence. For Fanon, violence is needed in the decolonisation process because colonialism embodied it. Fanon sees colonialism as dependent on overt violence but also assaults on the natives' cultures and their relegation to spaces of squalor.

The British conquest of African territories constituted suppression through military process and coercion of Africans to collaborate. The British legitimised their conquest by arguing that

African lands lay idle and was not owned by any one person or specific persons, as it was tribal land (Jomo Kenyatta, 1965). They took it upon themselves to sub-divide it and forcibly brought Africans under British colonial rule. The Africans attempted to resist this appropriation but they were overwhelmed and thus violence was an inevitable encounter between the Africans and the colonialist. Due to the colonialists' alienation of African land, imposing taxes, forcing Africans to work in their plantations for meagre wages, contempt of African cultures and unfair representation in leadership, Africans saw the need to fight for their independence. They started forming associations to address their grievances such as land alienation and forced labour but they were mostly ignored. Matthew Carotennto and Brett Shadle (2012), writing on the question of colonial history and violence, argue, "Twentieth century African history, and violence in post-colonial Africa, cannot be adequately understood until we better appreciate the history of violence. We do not lack in historians of Kenya's violent history" (4).

In the history of Kenya, Mau Mau was an anti-colonial movement that fought for independence against the British colonialists. The Mau Mau insurgency against the British colonial administration led to a declaration of a state of emergency by the British between 1952 and 1959 to help control the supposed violation by Africans of the legitimised and privileged colonial space. E.S. Atieno-Adhiambo notes that Kenya was made into a colonial state through colonial conquest, became a settler state in the inter-war period and transformed by African struggles for civil liberties and human rights into an independent African nation-state (1).

Observing how fiction writers depict Kenya during this period, Simatei (2005) argues, "Fictional representations of colonial violence in Kenya demonstrate complex linkages between colonial violence, the violent responses to it or decolonisation, and the violations of the rights of citizens in the postcolonial/neo-colonial state" (85). Colonial administrators had employed force to

appropriate African land, imposed tax and turned Africans into wage labourers, and even sent thousands of young African men to their deaths as guards during World War I and II. When Africans retaliated, after suffering for long, the administrators used violence to not only conquer the Mau Mau fighters, but physically and psychologically crush civilians and fighters in detention camps as well. Writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o depict Kenya's colonial experiences, especially about the question of violence. Ngugi's novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), depicts colonial Kenya specifically during the state of emergency period. Ngugi captures stories of the African returnees from the Second World War who confronted the colonial regime and its African traitors over the issue of land ownership and agitated for decolonisation. Ngugi's other novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (2002), depicts historical events in colonial Kenya as it tells the stories of Mau Mau group and its achievements towards independence and the betrayal of the Kenyan people by the elites who took over from the colonialists.

On representation of violence in literature, Richard K. Priebe (2005) argues:

...representations of violence in any literature, as in life, may do one of three things: they may overwhelm us with a sense of the banality of violence, they may impress in us our capacity for the demonic, or they may serve to leave us with some sense of the sublime. The banal, the demonic, and the sublime, however are not easily separated in our daily lives (47).

Dust revisits the question of violence that has characterised Kenya from the colonial to post-colonial period. Owuor, in representing violence through *Dust*, takes on the task of interrogating the incidents of violence in Kenya. The colonial officers abused and tortured Africans and engaged in rule by fear especially during the counter-insurgency campaign against the Mau Mau. Some arrested Mau Mau fighters were castrated in detention centres, forced to suffer hard labour or beaten to death. Through the narrator and stories of particular characters, we experience the depth of Kenyan history dented with violence and suppression.

Owuor captures the history of the state of emergency. Governor Evelyn Baring declared the state of emergency and several operations such as Operation Anvil (1954), Hammer (1953), First Flute (1953) and a called for reinforcement from Uganda. During this period, Senior Chief Nderi was killed, the Naivasha police station raided and a massacre happened in Lari. Eric Bower, a colonial settler, was also killed together with his servants. The narrator captures this scenario in snippets thus:

In Nairobi. An idea-Kenyatta. A rally. A metaphor. Sugar cane. Unease. Chaos fluttered.

Kenya News Weekly. October 7. Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u car had been forced off the road as he was shot four times at close range. Rumours. These battalions of Kings African Rifles garrisoned. And the fourth Battalions from Uganda. And two companies of Twenty-Sixth Battalions from Mauritius (100).

The year 1952 is a time when the Mau Mau rebellion broke out and British regime declared a state of emergency. In a dinner to celebrate the outgoing governor, Mitchell, the topic that ensued was the Mau Mau under the subtheme KAR (99). During the uprising, numerous deaths of whites and Africans were reported. One of the instances is the murder of a white settler family and children in Aberdare Ranges. As murders happened, the narrator discloses the fear that gripped settlers despite their myth of superiority. Although the narrator says Selene was not afraid of death because she had seen her close friends die, Selene had hoped that the entire infrastructure such as the railway system, public works, the water works and the city be blown up so that she could go back to England. Selene's fright depicts disquiet among the British settlers who were afraid of the Mau Mau insurgency. It explains that despite the superiority that the British settlers showed in suppressing the Africans, there were those that cowered for fear of dying and therefore they wished they could relocate to England.

According to D.N. Sifuna (1993), Africans reacted sharply to discrimination and oppression policies by forming political organisations to protect their interests, especially the educated Africans and World War I and II ex-soldiers who demanded the abolition of the Kipande system, lower taxes, use of forest land and increase in education and title deeds for landowners. Sifuna further notes that in the 1940s, especially after the end of the Second World War, the country witnessed a steady growth in secondary and higher education that led to an emergence of elites at the national level. These elites were to provide a new strategy to political leadership. The elites who colonialists frustrated sought to overthrow the colonial system.

Through the story of Hugh Bolton and Selene, *Dust* reveals the atrocious events that happened in colonial Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion. Bolton was part of the settlers who desired that Britain should maintain its Kenya colony under all means. He was determined to remain in Kenya by exerting power saying, “*Power is useless if it cannot be expressed* (author’s emphasis)” (101). Through Bolton, we learn how the colonial masters mistreated their African servants. Bolton would always refer to Nyipir as *mtu shenzi* (bastard). After she impregnated Akai, he condemned her as a prostitute and chased her away.

By articulating the story of Nyipir interweaved with histories of the Mau Mau struggle, Owuor helps to pinpoint colonial-sponsored violence from the perspective of an ordinary person. Africans were arrested, tortured and some hanged and their bodies dumped in valleys. While at Fort Hall, at the peak of the Mau Mau revolt, Nyipir encounters gross human violation. He meets Warui, the gravedigger, who buried bodies of Africans killed by colonial regime. Nyipir joins Warui in burying the bodies to make some money, but the narrator says Nyipir had not yet understood that the interrogating units were killing many people and it was difficult for Warui to burry alone in a night. “Bodies in *gunia* leaked liquids into the ground, over his hands, the stench

of invisible human beings, smashed up...” (167) thus signalling mass murder by the colonial regime that was already going on.

The narrator captures the trauma that Nyipir experienced throughout the Mau Mau rebellion. At the British police camp, the commandant ordered Nyipir to join a group of men sent to retrieve bodies from a hut. In the hut, they encountered a beheaded old man, a hanged youth, a toddler and two split bodies of young women. Astounded, he fainted. Nyipir also saw Aloys Kamau, a catechist and a teacher of children, dead (170-171). Kamau was killed while trying to save a fellow teacher being chopped up by seven men in front of his students.

When Ajany asks Nyipir about the Mau Mau, Nyipir says that none can talk about the atrocious period. He says, “*And if I should speak, may the oath kill me*” (author’s emphasis) (68). Nyipir had taken the oath binding him not to reveal the secrets of torture by burying the evil with the covenant of silence. Somehow, as he talks to Ajany, he feels still bound by the oath. Oath was a ritual administered to convince individuals for a cause, to instil silence among individuals never to reveal secrets. Therefore, since Nyipir took oath and witnessed atrocities, he is afraid that by speaking out he might undergo the ordeal he experienced then.

Whereas official history narrates the heroic efforts of the Mau Mau to liberate the nation and notes individuals like Dedan Kimathi and General China as those who fought to liberate the nation from colonialism, stories surrounding those who were tortured to death and those who witnessed and experienced these atrocities are only particularly told or not told all. The official state history fails to grasp and negotiate several and mysterious experiences of the Mau Mau wars and struggle for freedom and the trauma after independence. *Dust* reflects the failure, through exclusion of ordinary people’s traumatic experiences as represented by Nyipir during the Mau Mau rebellion. Therefore, the state-authored official history produces an exclusive linear

narrative that seeks to repress stories on the margin of a state, yet within the state are ordinary people's stories that act shadowlike.

Post-colonial Kenya was no better than colonial Kenya. After Kenya's attainment of independence, citizens expected that new government would end torture and suppression that had characterised the colonial government. However, detention and imprisonment continued as individuals seen to oppose the post-colonial government policies were arrested, tortured or assassinated. Owuor captures this reality when the narrator says that after independence, fear split words into smaller and smaller fragments until words became secret and suffocation came. The state was seizing people and no one cried. Nyipir remembers how bodies started showing up mutilated and dead and the loudest protests were created out of whispers (25).

At independence, the ruling elite fashioned a national identity to hold Kenya together by creating national myths based on selective memory and amnesia. The national myths such as we are one united country, we all fought for independence found in state sanctioned annals propagated through the political, education institutions and government apparatus were just effective political devices to provide authority and legitimacy for the ruling political elite. These ruling elite repressed memories of the colonial past that threatened the call for peace, love and unity in independent Kenya. Marshall S. Clough (2003) avers that remembering the 1950s in Kenya means not just evoking the Mau Mau cause and struggle but it also means remembering the emergency; the killings and executions; the repression that evoked pain and ambivalence (254). Marshall adds that when Kenyatta took over, he ensured continuity of the previous political regime's ideologies. To ensure that people forgot about the Mau Mau, the government followed the policy of amnesia towards Mau Mau memory. He further observes that the policy of amnesia was encapsulated in the official slogan of "forgive and forget", in that remembering led to

division and forgetting led to unity (256). The elite appealed to the masses to embrace forgiveness and reconciliation while turning coercive power of the state against those who refused to surrender their discordant memories.

The citizens were silenced for the sake of peace and those that spoke were branded the enemy of the nation. The narrator notes:

Citizens blind and deaf even when they saw neighbours being hauled away, howling. Some buried bodies of mysteriously smashed up relatives, and addressed their anguish in riddles that archangels might decipher. Provincial officers and chiefs passed decrees in village after village: *From now on, we shall not speak of so-and-so again. Anybody who mentions this name is an enemy of our nation* (author's emphasis). Afterward, nobody was even willing to admit that so-and-so had even existed (302).

By narrating Nyipir's experiences and taking us through various incidents of violence, *Dust* constructs a narrative in which violence persisted after independence and haunts the nation-state. Reflecting on Kenya, Nyipir tells Ajany that Kenyans had been at war before she was born and the nature of war has been its silence because of not having resolved conflicts and challenges such as corruption, assassination and unfulfilled promises after independence. The voices that articulated their discontent were suppressed by the state. Nyipir admits that "even if you plant another story into silence...the buried thing returns to ask for its blood from the living...death does not keep secrets well" (69). Nyipir's statement means that whatever murder was committed and was supposedly silenced, it would always come to haunt the perpetrators. As a citizen, Nyipir had a sense of belonging to Kenya, a political entity with common sentiments that originated from a shared historical experience, but the sentiments disappeared when he was tortured.

Another instance of violence in post-colonial Kenya is police brutality. The police service is charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in a nation-state. However, an examination of the behaviour and operations of the Kenya Police, as depicted in *Dust*, reveals the institution has always been unscrupulous in dealing with the public and suspected criminals. One of the incidents that Owuor uses to depict police brutality is the killing of Odidi. Although Odidi is a suspected criminal, he is shot to death instead of being arrested and charged in a court of law. The police strapped a pistol to his chest and claimed that his gang had stolen one million shillings from a bank yet the Officer Commanding Police Division (OCPD) had been hiring a gun to Odidi's group in return for a monthly fee.

Ajany meets an angry mob in a Nairobi City suburb staring at a man shot in the head by the police for impersonating a police officer. When Ajany wonders why the suspect was executed instead of following the legal procedures of handling the case, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Petrus Keah tells her that the police always have a thousand reasons to implicate a person adding that if Ajany has any evidence, she can present it to the police. Petrus asks her to follow him to the police station to record a statement. According to Petrus, every crime story begins with a decision and finally execution and that the police always have a reason, "Maybe he attacked our officers. Maybe he was resisting arrest. Maybe he was a mad dog. A terrorist. Maybe he was planning a raid. We have a million reasons nyar Oganda. And we can apply these to you too" (185). When she asks Petrus about Odidi, Petrus tells her to go home, as no truth will set her free. During the clash between Odidi and the police officers, Keah had reached Odidi's side seven minutes after the bullets that fatally wounded him had been fired. Petrus had then escorted the body to the mortuary and tagged it as an unknown African male yet he knew it was Nyipir's son. Ali had brought Dr. Mda to examine Odidi's body to show that Odidi's murder was not a police case (20).

Petrus had been tipped off about an urban gang called Jokadhok who had been involved in a series of robberies in the city. He had evolved a profile and he got a photo of Odidi who years back had damaged the Dam authority's offices. He had then asked Ali to deliver a warning to the Oganda family. Nyipir had asked Ali in 1998 to spare Odidi's life, as he was his only son. Petrus remarks that he had tried his best to help Odidi but Odidi was an obstinate boy. According to Petrus, if Odidi needed easy money, he should have become a parliamentarian who would have awarded himself a weekly pay increase.

The government uses the police to silence its critics. After the death of Tom Mboya, Nyipir undergoes torture in the hands of the police for speaking out. The terms of reference for the police force, as Petrus says, is to die for the nation, their masters and save their masters' fat buttocks. Owuor moans the fallen heroes, including Tom Mboya who had sacrificed a lot for Kenya. She, thus, attempts to illustrate that since independence, the nation-state has silenced those perceived as dissidents and induced amnesia to destroy collective memory.

The Trader reveals that Petrus was part of the Kenya interrogation squad from 1968 to 1989. Part of Petrus' works included interrogating Nyipir. Petrus was also involved in the Wagalla Massacre in 1984. The narrator says:

“A 1984 northern frontiers security operation had gone out of control. Five thousand corpses later, he had been summoned to help clean things up. He had overseen the washing of blood-spattered Wagalla runway, had arranged burials in secret sites, had terrorised would-be witnesses into what should have been eternal silences” (323).

The Wagalla Massacre was a result of a campaign by the government of Kenya to disarm Somali Degodia clan in a town centre near Wajir in February 1984. The government reported that only 57 people were killed, but according to the survivors, close to 5,000 people died. After the

incident, the atrocities were muted in Kenya's history until recently when the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) heard testimonies from people who witnessed the massacre carried out in a country by its own soldiers. The TJRC, a body set up to probe human rights violations and other historical injustices in Kenya states in its report that "close to a thousand" people were killed in Wagalla but it was unable to determine the exact number of persons massacred. According to the TJRC report (2013), the security agents, apart from killing the people, committed other atrocities such as torture, brutal beatings, rape and sexual violence, burning of houses and looting of property.

According to S. Abdi Sheikh (2007), the Wagalla Massacre "was hatched because of the existing unresolved issues...it has also roots in Somalia tribal wars and eventually in regional politics that by coincidence gave one Somali clan the upper hand" (11). The plan to deploy the army at Wagalla was hatched at a meeting held in the office of the Vice-President. The meeting was a result of perceived threat to national security by rebel clan of the Somali tribe. The plan was meant to gather all the male members of Degodia clan that was suspected to be troublemakers and punish them until they would surrender their weapons (Sheikh, 17).

At the Wagalla airstrip, the army ordered five thousand men to strip naked, put all their clothes aside and to sit on the hot gravel. "...the elders were called out; their clothes were piled on top of them...doused in petrol under a mountain of clothes and set ablaze as other five thousand men looked in disbelief" (55). The rest of the men were beaten, clubbed or shot to death. The army was supposed to conceal the killings by making the bodies disappear so that no one could tell what happened. Nevertheless, the massacre found its way into the public and the Western press such as the Cable News Network (CNN) mostly covered it. According to Sheikh, attempts by the local political leaders to have the heinous act addressed were annulled by the national

parliament. Abdi Sheikh notes that the real story of Wagalla has been suppressed so much that it does not evoke bitterness anymore against the perpetrators. This case shows how the state uses amnesia as a way of erasing people's memories.

Owuor finds it apt to re-live the Wagalla Massacre experience for Kenyans to remind them to talk about other massacres such as Bulla Karatasi in 1984, Malka Mari, 1981 and Lotiriri in 1984 massacres in which hundreds of civilians were killed and the state security agents committed other atrocities such as torture, brutal beatings, rape and sexual violence. From Sheikh's argument, it is clear that the state was responsible for the massacre but it has never owned up to the heinous act.

Narrating Corruption

In post-colonial Africa, political regimes have been associated with grand corruption that has favoured the political leaders and elites. Osoba (1996) refers to the term corruption as:

A form of antisocial behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members of society in a just and equitable manner (372).

Corruption is a term that suggests an ill motive by a few individuals to deprive a society of its resources and ultimately benefit themselves. It therefore creates inefficiencies in delivery of public services, hampers development and denies citizens their rights (Osoba, 328). It is frequently seen in the cases where offering and acceptance of bribes take place, as well as embezzlement of public funds and misuse of public power for private gains.

Kenya's post-colonial history is marred by various cases of huge financial scandals since

independence. Mutula *et al* (2013) assert that after independence in 1963, Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of the Republic of Kenya, concentrated on amassing political power under the control of the central government. Moi, his successor from 1978, continued this legacy by tightening the control of Kenya's public life in all spheres, including politics, administration and management of public finance (263). Bethwel Ogot (2010) writes, "twenty-four years rule of Moi entrenched the policy of planning without vision, and the trend of repression and corruption, instead of changing for the better, became worse. In February 1990, the Moi regime brutally murdered its own Foreign Minister Dr. Robert Ouko for daring to investigate corruption in his own government and for challenging the politics of patronage and handouts (118).

Since independence, the government of Kenya has been enacting laws and setting up agencies to deal with incidences of corruption cases. According to a 2009 Africog report, official attempts to fight corruption is traced back to 1956 when the Prevention of Corruption Act was enacted, although there was little compliance with this law in the post-colonial period. The Act was amended in 1991 to enhance the penalties against offenders. However, no prosecution under the Act followed the amendments (3). Currently, a government body, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), is charged with investigating corruption cases but its efforts have always been in vain.

In Kenya, corruption either takes place between individual citizens, public officials, authorities, between companies and public officials, and authorities or at higher levels of public administration or political leadership. In the last two decades, Kenya has experienced scandals such as the Ken Ren, Goldenberg, Charter House Bank and Anglo-Leasing in the higher political and business echelons. Corruption at this level involves government officials, politicians and businesspersons. It has also been common at the levels of individual citizens and public officials.

The citizens always pay bribes to receive particular services or to get away with breaches of law.

Owuor depicts corruption in Kenya at individual, business and political levels. According to her, corruption has been happening since independence and has become a norm. While the post-colonial regime silenced critics and repressed memories under the guise of national identity, ethnic and regional elites in power enriched themselves through corruption at the expense of the poor. The narrator in *Dust* says that immediately after independence, a new word came about, 'nyakua', meaning grab, but it was cleansed to mean hard work. The 'hard work' involved taking over resources such as land that the colonialists had left (25-26).

Through Ajany's initiative to unearth the circumstances behind Odidi's murder, Owuor explores how levels of corruption have overwhelmed social justice among Kenyans to some extent. Odidi had refused to take an oath to silt the dam that provided electricity to the state so that the company could earn 30% of profit for ten years. For Odidi, this amounted to impoverishing Kenyans.

It seems the norm in Kenya is that joining politics is a means of enriching oneself. In post-colonial Kenya, politics is one of the sectors where one can make quick money. Kenyan politicians have increased their salaries a number of times and most have been implicated in corrupt deals but they are never convicted of any crime. In instances of a court case involving them, the politicians craftily get out of the corruption charges and only pay lip service in fighting corruption. Revealing how Odidi died, Petrus says Odidi was foolish in that if he wanted money, he should have joined politics (184). Petrus thinks that the desire for money pushed Odidi into robbery, but Odidi got impoverished after he was thrown out of his own firm after opposing a corrupt deal and his mortgage withdrawn.

The narrator tells us about scandals that have occurred in post-colonial Kenya, including the

Goldenberg and Anglo-Leasing scandals. Whenever a scandal is unearthed, the government forms commissions of inquiry to investigate the suspects but the culprits are never charged. What follows are dragged out court battles until the cases are withdrawn. A good example is the Goldenberg scandal in which Kenya lost Sh 158.3 billion. After protracted court battles, the High Court dropped, all Goldenberg cases in May 2013 because none of the cases presented had been concluded in almost two decades. In the ruling, the judge issued an order prohibiting the state from instituting any further criminal proceedings against the suspects (Isaiah Lucheli, 6). In the Anglo-Leasing scandal, billions of taxpayers' money was lost through payments based on promissory notes allegedly processed in return for fictitious projects that could not be verified. The persons responsible for the scandal are still at large. This has been a habit since independence as those involved in corruption scandals go scot-free while the government and the people of Kenya continue to lose money. Rok Ajulu (2001) notes that according to the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (1998), close to 1,500 billion shillings was either lost or irregularly expended between 1994 and 1996 (200).

The manner in which the Kenya police service is administered smacks of a warped institution. Ali is an immigrant from the Horn of Africa who came to Kenya as a refugee but ended up in the Kenya Police Service. He then rose up the ranks to become an Assistant Commissioner of Police. While on an investigation mission in the north of the country, Ali joins Nyipir in the outlawed trade of smuggling contraband goods and cattle rustling. He could warn Nyipir of an impending attack, misdirect government informers, and restructure messages dispatched from the police headquarters (261).

Corruption incidences in the police service are very much condoned. Whenever a police officer is caught in a corruption incident, he is sent to Northern Kenya as a form of punishment. Such is

the case of Aaron Chache who, while working as a traffic police commander along the Nakuru-Naivasha highway, is transferred to Northern Kenya when he and his colleagues are caught by anti-corruption police officers receiving bribes (207).

Owuor taking on corruption through fiction illustrates the extent in which the country has 'normalised' the vice. Kenyans have accepted taking and receiving of bribes as a way of life. The financial scandals involving the government and individuals, private or fictitious companies are never taken as a national debacle. The government that is supposed to deter corruption is at the heart of propagating it. Once it forms a commission of inquiry, the reports are shelved and no sooner than expected, another financial scandal is in the offing. Within the government are colluders that always scheming to reap from the country's coffers as they collaborate with the state officials. Political elites hamper the fight against corruption, as they are keener to shield one of their own from prosecution. The apparatus such as the police too have embraced corruption as a way of benefitting themselves. When individuals such as Odidi rise up for the good of the country, even the civil society and the media who seem to advocate for good governance shun him down. The citizens too are ignorant of the vice yet they incur the expenses that result from corruption.

Nationalism and Disillusionment

The history of Kenya is punctuated with snippets of nationalism and disillusionment. Scholarly evidence show that several individuals played different roles in the fight for Kenya's independence from the onset of colonial rule. However, after independence, the political leaders and elite that that took over from the British had promised Kenyans a great country of peace, love, unity and equity in sharing resources and opportunities. The masses had dreamt of a Kenya where everyone was guaranteed all the needs and would not be discriminated against. However,

post-colonial Kenya turned out to be another colony presided over by African elites. Independence did not bring about the desired expectations of socio-political stability, economic development and harmonious relations among Kenyans. It failed soon after independence due to selfish political interests and ethnic rivalry.

Jude Agho (1993) observes that post-independent Kenya, like many other countries in Africa, is faced with a horizontal rift dividing the elite from the mass of the people (121). Agho adds that the contemporary Kenya has not only witnessed the frustration of the peasants who had hoped for a better life after independence, but also deepening impoverishment and exploitation. Hardly had the citizens enjoyed the fruits of independence than the government started to unleash violence on those who voiced their opinions on corruption and misuse of power. The national myth that the ruling elite created in Kenya required coercion and sometimes even brutality to wipe out contradictory memories that questioned the 'truth' of the officially endorsed history of the colonial past. Ogot (2010) argues:

African nationalists who took over this colonially created state and 'nation' did not deconstruct the colonial institutions in order to reconstitute a new African national state. They merely adopted western models of governance. They had been socialised through the colonial system of education to admire European values.... The result has been predatory rule in Africa....Postcolonial Africa is thus much more like colonial Africa than most of us have hitherto imagined (143).

The African leaders that assumed the powers of the colonialists misused power for selfish gains and shunned the spirit of nationalism. After his release from prison, Kenyatta refused to recognise Mau Mau achievements, criminalised it and condemned it as a 'disease' that needed the strong medicine of hard work and honesty to cure (Ogot, 11). Individuals who were

dissatisfied with the government's capitalistic policies that favoured the ruling elite yet the poor continued to suffer were profiled as rebels, imprisoned and tortured. The Mau Mau fighters who had fought for return of alienated land continued to languish in poverty as leaders plundered the resources and consolidated their political power.

Before I delve into the issue of disillusionment, I first discuss the question of nationalism and nationhood. Owuor attempts to evoke national consciousness over the issue of nationalism and nationhood in Kenya. During independence day celebrations, the narrator says that as Nyipir marched, there were "Men on podium, some who he thought had died. Two men he knew had pounded other men to death. Another had been detained for his own safety and been supplied with a stream of world literature and unlovely comfort women, one of whom he married. He had focused on one man – Tom Joseph Mboya...years before scoured the landscape and found promising souls that he sent to America..." (25). One striking incidence here is that of the detained fellow who was supplied with world literature and had a comfort of women and he was now part of the leadership. Perhaps what Owuor attempts to depict in this scene is that some individuals benefited more than the Mau Mau freedom fighters concerning the fight for independence and those were the 'real' nationalists.

Kenyans, under the spirit of patriotism, fought for freedom and after obtaining independence under the 'invented' nation of Kenya, they felt a sense of belonging. Nevertheless, it soon emerged there were 'genuine' individuals in independent Kenya who deserved to eat the fruits of independence. Odhiambo and Lonsdale (2003) note the "Kenya's arguments about its freedom's divisive birth, about who sacrificed most to bring freedom, about whose contributions has been most unjustly forgotten, or whose has most selfishly eaten the fruits of independence, and at whose expense" (2). By describing the independence celebrations scene, Owuor asks the

question: Who participated in the birth of the nation of Kenya and who should eat the fruits of independence? Ogot argues that there has always been an attempt at imposing an official interpretation of the Kenyan past by selecting one identity. The government set up a National Taskforce to seek the views of Kenyans on who should be considered heroes and heroines of the nation-state and yet the same government had identified nationalists to be recognised as national heroes, including Dedan Kimathi, Bildad Kagia, Paul Ngei and Koitalel arap Samoei (28-29). The question that lingers is what is the place of ordinary people who, in their own way, contributed towards national liberation? What about the Mau Mau fighters who sacrificed their lives towards the independence struggle? What about individuals like Odidi who, since independence, are still patriotic enough to fight corruption? Sadly, Odidi's steadfastness does not follow the script of the official history of post-colonial Kenya. He joins the ilk of 'insignificant' Kenyans devoted to fight bad governance but never honoured.

Soon after independence, African writers began depicting disappointments and pessimism of Africans with the state of the post-colony. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o who had contributed to anti-colonial struggle began castigating oppressive and exploitative African elites. Achebe's *A Man of the People* (2001) describes post-independence Nigeria, a period in which the leaders engaged in corruption and misrule leading to conflict between the ruling elites, middle class and the general population. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1989) describes the entrenched corruption, greed and poor leadership that characterise post-independence Ghana. Those who take bribes lead wealthy lives but the honest are regarded as misfits as they are poor. In *Petals of Blood* (1977), Ngugi wa Thiong'o depicts the nation's betrayal of the hopes of the Kenyan people after independence. Instead of supporting the ideals of nationalism, the government, controlled by the elites and political leaders, embraced neo-colonialism that exploited the marginalised peasants and the working-class.

Another Kenyan novelist who depicts the state of despair in post-colonial Kenya is Meja Mwangi. In *Kill Me Quick* (1973), Mwangi tells the story of two young Kenyans, Meja and Maina, who come to Nairobi seeking better city life. Unable to secure jobs and living in despair, the duo join criminal gangs. Life in independent Kenya is not as rosy as they had expected. Ayo Kehinde observes that *Kill Me Quick* depicts a harsh account of urban life in post-colonial Kenya. He argues that Mwangi selects realistic details from ordinary life to expose his society's filth, decay, contradictions and conflicts with a view to presenting a true picture of it (229). He adds that "through the characters in the novel, most especially Meja and Maina, Mwangi exposes the complex problems confronting the Kenyan state, the suffering of the populace in the midst of plenty and the inability of the state to cater for its citizens" (233).

Parents like Nyipir, seeing Kenyans who criticised corruption and misrule suppressed, experience the illusion of a 'future Kenya'. Their mouths, ears and eyes were shut and they partitioned sorrow, purchased more silence and waited for better 'Kenya', which never turned up (10). Nyipir had warned Odidi against meddling in the affairs of the nation-state. He had told him, "You do not sing the songs of the people who don't know you..." (10). Nyipir's warning stemmed from his experience with the nation-state in 1969 when he was tortured. After Odidi was fired from Tich Lich Engineering Company, which he had founded with his friend, he went to the streets to petition people to stand up against corruption and injustices that had become a norm in the society. With no means to survive and his mortgage recalled, Odidi got disillusioned and became a criminal. Odidi had died in what Ajany says came from heroic idealism as he had been organising the disenchanting youth to work for a different future for themselves and it was sad that the 'stupid' nation-state did not have the capacity to grasp Odidi's vision and instead destroyed him (287).

By recounting the story of Odidi, Owuor narrates the disillusionment and despair that have characterised Kenya since independence. Odidi's story is a representation of the stories of individuals in Kenya who, after futile attempts to secure a nation-state free from corruption, end up with despair in their bowls. They resort to crime, die poor or are killed by the state for criticising its dire leadership. The official history that we have is a glorious one that denies the evidence of oppression and corruption (Ogot 48-49). It does not explain why, almost five decades later, Kenyans are still disillusioned, why corruption is still rife and why we have not realised unity despite calls for it since independence. Ogot argues that as a nation-state, we require a history that seeks to explain, "...why the high hopes associated with the struggle for independence have been disappointed, and why the legacy of nationalism in Kenya has not resulted into a cohesive society..."(50).

Political Assassinations

One of the key assassinations in Kenya, and which Owuor dwells on in *Dust*, is that of Tom Mboya who was minister for Economic Planning and Development in the Kenyatta's government. Charles Hornsby (2012) notes that Tom Mboya was shot dead in a Nairobi street by a lone gunman and the nation entered a period of shock and anger (208). This was followed by unrest from the Luo community. Violence erupted in Nairobi and Nyanza regions. When the vehicle carrying Mboya's cortège reached Nyanza, as it headed for burial, anti-Kikuyu feeling was intense, and there was a risk of mass violence.

Parselelo Kantai, writing about Mboya 40 years after his assassination, speculates on the reasons behind Mboya's murder. Kantai says that the sense of optimism that had come with independence and somehow survived the ideological discord within KANU was extinguished with the assassination of Tom Mboya. After Mboya's death, Kenya became a nation of cynicism.

According to Charles Hornsby, Mboya's death reinforced the disassociation between the Luo and the Kenyan state that was to result in economic stagnation and Luo's exclusion from sensitive positions for the next 15 years (211). Suspected assassin, Nahashon Isaac Njenga Njoroge, while being sentenced had asked, "Why pick me? Why not the big man?" (210). This clearly points out that there were other people involved in the assassination. Since then, fingers have silently pointed at individuals within Kenyatta's inner circle. Hornsby further notes that Kenyatta's closest allies, facing revolt amongst the Luo and horrified by Mboya's murder, reverted to their ethnic bailiwicks. Delegations of Kikuyu and later of some Embu, Meru and Kamba were taken in their thousands to Kenyatta's house in Gatundu to take 'tea with Mzee' and to swear oaths to keep the presidency in the 'house of Mumbi' as a way of paying allegiance to President Kenyatta.

Although there have been speculations over the murder of Tom Mboya, scholars and historians have failed to exactly pinpoint who was behind Mboya's killing. According to Kantai, Mboya's death had caused the most severe riots in post-independence Kenya's history and had deepened existing ethnic and political divisions to the point that they threatened to break the country apart. Kantai asks:

Who ordered the hit on Mboya? Was there a second gunman? Was there a link between Mboya's killers and an assassination plot almost six years later on Vice-President Daniel arap Moi? Did Mboya know about the plot to assassinate Pio Gama Pinto? Was there a link between President Kenyatta, Bruce Mackenzie, Charles Njonjo and the MI5? Did the MI5 want Mboya out of the way?

Owuor puts stories of assassinations into perspective when she depicts how ordinary people received the news of Mboya's death, especially those who felt heartbroken. No one could talk

about atrocious incidents like assassinations as the government would arrest and torture you. It is unimaginable that even after the assassination of Tom Mboya, Kenya went on with the rhetoric of a united country, as members of the ruling party pledged undying unity to the president while the masses were expected to keep quiet about it. However, Mboya's death was such heart wrenching that ordinary Kenyans could not keep calm. The narrator speaks of a woman in green dress, barefoot, carrying white shoes as she agonised over the death of Tom Mboya. When Nyipir heard this, his body temperatures dropped, his heart slowed down and he shivered. This seemed like Kenya had been killed and, therefore, dreams were shattered. Ogot (2003) notes that Mboya as a trade unionist, leader and as a politician promoted national goals eschewing sectional or ethnic interests but this was his undoing as he was one of the few Kenyan leaders who still believed in National Project (33). Killing of Mboya might have been termed as eliminating Luo from taking over the leadership as he was perceived to be a frontrunner. However, his killing was the demise of Kenyan dream.

To express the silenced memory, fiction becomes a means to search for an experienced past, to reveal the past atrocities and trauma. Memory thus plays a key role in recollecting the atrocities that Kenyans experienced during colonial and postcolonial period. Ogot notes, "If memory is kept alive in order to kindle and cultivate old hatreds and resentment, then it is likely to culminate in vengeance. However, if memory is kept alive in order to transcend hateful emotions, to free oneself or one's society from the burden of hatred, then remembering has the power to heal (194-195). Nyipir, having worked as a police officer, is able to narrate the events he experienced. Reflectively, he tells his daughter that after Tom Mboya died, Kenya's official languages became three: English, Kiswahili and Silence. However, because there was silence, he tried to memorise some of these events. Those that Nyipir saw handcuffed and were headed for

murder asked him to relay the regards to the families. The narrator says, “The core of post-Tom Mboya Kenya had been cracked. Nothing was certain, not even hope. Citizens spoke to one another in whispers.... When those associated with Tom Mboya and his name were hunted down like vermin, there was silence” (234).

In the aftermath of Mboya’s assassination, most of the witnesses died while those who dared to speak were arrested, prosecuted and killed (273). Nyipir knew about it but could not speak. People were prosecuted and judged at night. Those that were guilty were loaded on to the back of a lorry and corpses would be found heaped in large holes dug in appropriated farms. When Ajany asks Nyipir why he never went to Burma, Nyipir wonders if he should speak about the nights soaked in water-urine-blood, darkness and nothing (299) because of the torture and trauma he underwent.

Nyipir was among the many individuals who were tortured. Three days after he was discharged from the police service, Nyipir was summoned to the headquarters where his colleagues tortured him. They held him and examined his teeth as if he was a cow, shaved his moustache with a razor blade and beat him. The narrator says that a trail of bowel-loosened muck stained his trouser and the floor.

A fellow officer who had trained with him in Kiganjo beat his body and toyed with his testicles. Violence had pierced his skin, broken teeth and bones. They had pointed a gun to his head...Nyipir ran and thought about forgetfulness and how to create it, for amnesia was also medicine as Petrus will tell him thirty nine years later after his torture. Upon arriving in *Wuoth Ogik*, Nyipir could not speak for days (301).

The torture that Nyipir underwent suggests alternative experiences and recollections of Mboya’s

assassination and other assassinations in Kenya's history. These incidents seemed dangerous to the country and had to be repressed. Nevertheless, the state's attempts to control how people recollect the experiences failed partly because it is difficult to erase a memory. What should be noted is that the suppression of memories of the assassinations, torture and corruption incidents contributed to and continued the authoritarian leadership in Kenya since independence.

Apart from Mboya's assassination, the cause of other killings such as that of Pio Gama Pinto, J.M. Kariuki and Robert Ouko have never been unravelled although there have been various investigations. The state, to some extent, has been put at the centre of responsibility for the assassinations but it has always denied, distorted evidence leads and silenced those that could testify against it. Having observed assassinations since the colonial period, Nyipir says dying began long time before those of Pinto, Mboya, and J.M. Kariuki.

The assassinations of Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya, and J. M. Kariuki are attributed to the state terror machine during Kenyatta's regime. When Daniel arap Moi took over from Kenyatta in 1978, he ruled with an iron fist while espousing the Nyayo Philosophy of 'love, peace, and unity' in the hope of engendering a successful Kenyan nation. However, that love, peace and unity could be found only in the official Kenyan history. Moi's rule is synonymous with the assassination of Robert Ouko and Bishop Alexander Muge in 1990. After the murder of these personalities, the government would set up commissions to investigate the perpetrators but they would be quashed or the narratives twisted altogether. Reasons why political assassinations are not fully exposed is that the state sets up the commission, supervises the official inquiry and shelves the report. Either very powerful people in the government committed the murders or extremely influential people outside the government as a scheme to scare individuals in and out of the government perceived to be opposing the regime to remain loyal to the government.

David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo (2004) attempt to expose why assassinations are eminent in Kenya but the reasons for it are never revealed. Concerning Robert Ouko's murder, investigations remain shelved and silenced despite the debated official and unofficial testimonies. Even after government received a report from the Scotland Yard, it never opened it to public inspection as originally promised. Moi had gone further and appointed a judicial commission of inquiry to look into Ouko's disappearance and death. Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo (2004) observe further that formation of Gicheru commission to investigate Ouko's case real purpose was not fact-finding and determination of the just course of action, but to come up with "truths" conveniently geared in service of the state's interests—"truths" that would assist the state in reproducing and extending its own authority and legitimacy (44). There were thus two theories that attempted to explain Ouko's death: gumboots and white car theories (50-51). While the government pushed for the gumboots theory, the public believed in the trueness of the white car theory. Therefore, there has been conflicting information about Ouko's murder and disappearance. And for that reason, people do not quite know the inside story of the assassinations of Tom Mboya, Pio Gama Pinto, J. M. Kariuki, Bishop Alexander Muge and Dr. Christopher Mbai among others.

Nyipir is depressed after Odidi's death. Ajany arrives home from Nairobi to find him in desolate, denoting depression that had been eating him away due to the death of his son and the haunting experiences of torture and the Mau Mau atrocities he witnessed. His wife, Akai also left home. Nyipir remembers how he suffered at the hands of the police and wondered what kind of government would torture its people. Therefore, as the narrative ends, the reader may find himself or herself asking such questions as is a nation a fictional concept that comes about from a battle between those who have power and those who do not. In addition, is there such a thing as seeking truth from history?

Alienation in Post-colonial Kenya

Dust depicts a Kenya different from the one which official history documents. There is an alienated part of the country – the northern Kenya. When Odidi and Ajany grow up, their father Nyipir takes them to a boarding school down country, south of the Ewaso Nyiro River, referred to as the *real Kenya* (my emphasis). Once they are admitted, the headmistress thinks Odidi and Ajany do not know how to use the toilet and they are warned not to steal, to fight and to politic. People from the northern part of the country are always taken as ‘uncivilised’ because of a supposed lack of exposure to modern ways of living. It is a surprise to many in the school. Even their teachers wonder if their home is located anywhere on the map of Kenya, “*Ati*, from where? Is it on the map?” (5) Their classmates even ask them if they cook dust to eat.

The novel situates a major part of its narrative in an area in the northern Kenya near west of Lake Turkana and Mount Kulal called Wuoth Ogik, meaning the end of journey. The northern part of Kenya is a region that is hot and dry and lacks adequate social amenities like schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Apart from such challenges, the region is also faced by persistent hunger, low levels of literacy and insecurity. The inhabitants, mostly pastoralists, depend on livestock for their livelihood and often engage in cattle rustling against each other to improve their stocks. Due to low levels of development in the northern part of Kenya, the residents feel they are not part of the real Kenya, whose base is Nairobi. In describing Odidi and Ajany, the narrator says:

They were offspring of northern Kenya dry lands...had been hemmed in by arid land geographies and essences. Freed from history, and interferences of Nairobi’s Government, they had marvelled at Anam Ka’alakol, the lake swallowed three rivers – the Omo, Turkwel, and Kerio (7).

Northern Kenya is an area that is on the periphery of the country, both metaphorically and

literally. It seems to be an area for exiling individuals as a form of punishment. After Bolton disappoints the colonial authorities, they send him there with the hope that he will resign. Similarly, the post-colonial government sends individuals who are found on the wrong side of the law such as Aaron to work in northern Kenya as a form of punishment.

The narrator says that the participation of Odidi and Ajany in music and painting helped them escape from embarrassing stories of hunger in the Northern lands.

Music and painting cancelled out memories of annual February humiliations when news stories of northern land famines arrived with portraits of emaciated, breast-baring, adorned citizens, and skeletons of livestock. They suffered a flurry of ‘School Walks’ and ‘Give-Your-Change-Save-a-Life’ and ‘Help the Poor Starving People Kenya’ picnics (16).

The narrator adds that Ajany, being reed thin, small, dark, and bushy haired with large slanted eyes, would be photographed and the photo used in the school newsletter to report on the hunger campaigns. Embarrassed, Ajany and Odidi would yearn for the end of the term to go back to Wuoth Ogik.

Every time there is a disaster such as hunger, floods and inter-ethnic clashes in the northern part of Kenya, media reports numerous deaths. Kenyans in ‘real Kenya’ embark on campaigns to save the victims in the north. One such a campaign is the ‘Kenyans for Kenyans Initiative’ that took place in 2011. It saw Kenyans coming together to contribute food for fellow Kenyans facing hunger in the northern part of the country.

Northern Kenya has been alienated since independence. Gordon Obote Magaga and Jacob Adipo Ogalo (2012) say, “Northern Kenya was a closed district during the colonial period and was administered by military officers. This had negative effects on the social, economic and political

developments of the pastoral communities” (74). Even after independence, the post-colonial government replicated the same colonial strategy in dealing with the region. As a result, the region lags behind in development. Although the inhabitants know there is a government in Kenya, they hardly feel the presence of the government. There is a thin line between lawful and unlawful activities. The residents wield guns like walking sticks and there are always wars resulting from cattle rustling and conflict over water and pasture grounds. Men, women and children own guns, as exemplified by Nyipir’s family. When Nyipir reports to Aaron about his stolen livestock, Aaron tells him to find out in the Northern Frontiers Stock Exchange and the narrator notes that Nyipir was one of the people who would transfer rustled livestock through Omoroto more than fifty years ago.

The residents are almost completely cut off from the ‘real Kenya’ as they do not know the daily occurrences in Nairobi, the capital city of the country where much of the country’s governance takes place. When Nyipir asked if there was any news from Kenya, Ajany replied that a president and prime minister had formed a coalition government. This refers to the grand coalition government formed by Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga after signing the peace agreement to end the post-election violence in 2008. When Ali and Ajany arrive in Wuoth Ogik, Aaron asks Ali about Kenya.

Election Violence and Contestation over Belonging in Kenya

The post-election violence that ripped the country apart was because of disputed presidential elections between the ruling party, the Party of National Unity (PNU), led by Mwai Kibaki and the opposition party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), led by Raila Odinga. The electoral commission delayed announcing results of the presidential vote. The announcement that Kibaki had won the presidential vote sparked ethnic conflicts that led to violence in which more than 1,500 were killed. After the hurried swearing in of Mwai Kibaki, an unprecedented post-

election violence erupted in the country. Supporters of Odinga took to the streets to protest what they believed were fraudulent elections. Moreover, by many accounts, the vote was not free and fair.

Keith Somerville (2009) observes that violence has been rife in Kenya since independence. Politicians, desperate to protect their power or to challenge the powers of local or national rivals, employ violence to maintain their own power bases and to incite violence against their opponents. As for the 2007 elections, Somerville notes that there was violence during the latter stages of the campaign but it escalated following the announcement of the results and accusations by the losing candidate, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), that the count in the presidential election had been a sham. The violence that followed was a result of the frustration of those who felt they had been cheated of victory combined with extensive organisation by political elites fearful of losing – or not gaining – power or patronage (538).

Owuor tears into election violence, although from the perspective of the characters on the margin of the society. She attempts to paint grim scenarios of the 2007-2008 post-election violence to remind us of the recent history that we can otherwise easily forget. After the elections, the narrator tells us how Nyipir and Ajany followed the news although in fragments. Through radio, Nyipir and Ajany hear that down the country, they are chasing people from their homes while the ones who stay are chopped and burnt and that Kofi Annan has come to resolve the impasse (67). Kibaki and Raila, the main contenders of the presidential elections, finally signed a peace agreement after two months of violence (69). The government and opposition came to a power-sharing agreement in February 2008 and formed a cabinet in April of the same year. In October 2008, a report into the post-election clashes called for the establishment of an international

tribunal to try those implicated in the violence.

Reflecting on the state and violence in Kenya, Loren B. Landau and Jean Pierre Misago (2009) argue that "... Kenyan case suggests a more co-ordinated and state-centred campaigns. The violence was more or less controlled by Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement as a way to contest what was widely presumed to be a stolen presidential election" (100). Although it is perceived that the cause of the violence was rigged elections, suppressed silences since independence, such as unfair distribution of resources, corruption and ethnicity, contributed immensely. The violence demystified the notion that Kenya was an island of peace and tranquillity (Somerville, 528) as Kenyans had lived under the illusion that Kenya *hakuna matata*.

Ogot (2010) observes that:

Since Kenya attained its political independence, in 1963 the citizens have lived with a patent lie that they are one nation; that they are unique; and that the kind of conflicts that have afflicted most African countries could not happen here. So when the lid was suddenly raised, and the explosion occurred, they discovered that they are a deeply and perilous fractured society...the forces of intolerance, of hate and exclusion were on the rise... (191)

The post-colonial injustices are always traced to the colonial period. Towards independence, most settlers relinquished the lands they had occupied. The elite acquired these lands indiscriminately under the 'willing buyer, willing seller' agreement at the expense of the landless that had been displaced during colonialism, particularly in the Rift Valley (Benjamin Kipkorir, 214). The migrants in the Rift Valley also took the advantage of being there to claim land yet the land belonged to the Kalenjin and the Maasai. Kenyatta, an imperial president, also took the advantage of being in power to settle his relatives in the Rift Valley.

Land acquisition was not the only culprit to blame but also the constitution adopted during the Lancaster House Conference in London. The constitution gave the presidency imperial powers. As a result, when it came to power distribution, the president appointed senior government officials based on ethnic affiliation. Those close to the president enriched themselves with ill-gotten money and sycophants were rewarded. Thus, the sharing of government positions and (re)distribution of resources was based on nepotism and one's ethnicity. The same inequalities in state appointments and distribution of resources were carried into the Moi regime when he took over after Kenyatta's passing on. Ethnicity, corruption and misuse of power could have diminished in Moi's regime in 2002 when Kibaki took over, but these ills continued. Due to the historical and persistent biases, ethnic and social tension, discontent would always be experienced at any elections. Whenever there was political heat, the 'immigrants' in the Rift Valley become victims of violence. The 1992, 1997 and 2002 elections were held against the backdrop of violence. In all these elections, the land question would always rear its ugly head. Regarding the 2007-2008 post-election violence, Matthew Carotenuto and Brett Shadle (2012), argue that as the violence took place, the world media reverted to tales of mindless 'tribal' violence perpetrated by machete-wielding young men. They point out that what the popular narrative often failed to capture was the continuity with Kenya's violent colonial past. Their thought is that the roots of violence are traced to as far back as the colonial era, when public violence was employed to assert social and political authority (1-2).

Although they argue that the roots of violence stemmed from the colonial period, they are also deep-seated issues such as ethnicity and unfair distribution of resources since independence. Owuor is not quick to point out negative ethnicity but underneath the narrative is disquiet over ethnicity depicted through the elite and unfair distribution of resources. According to Nic Cheeseman (2008), salient ethno-regional identities reinforced by historical grievances over land

ownership, economic inequality and political exclusion are central to an understanding of the Kenya crisis. Cheeseman adds that the spread of the violence in Kenya owed much to the informalisation of the state, the diffusion of violence beyond central control, and the rise of militias connected to the political elite (167). After the signing of the peace agreement between Kibaki and Raila, Kenyans embarked on the usual crusade messages calling upon Kenyans to forgive and forget, and forge a more united Kenya. This scenario points to the national myths of unity created during independence for Kenyans to unite despite their ethnic differences.

As Kenya was trying to come to terms with the violence, Petrus Keah and Ali Dida Hada converse and ponder a peace rally from Dandora to Kangemi while they wonder whether a local tribunal will help the country heal. Petrus asks, “But, as people, do we even want to live together? (257)”. The Waki Commission recommended that a special tribunal be set up to seek accountability for the crimes against humanity (Waki Report, 2008).

After Kibaki and Raila signed a peace agreement, the Coalition Government launched the *Operation Rudi Nyumbani* to resettle Kenyans who had been displaced by the violence. The government was in haste to resettle the displaced people without first spearheading an honest reconciliation process. In some areas of the country, the locals resisted resettling the displaced people but the government attempted to coerce the locals to accept the resettlement plan. The government operated under the notion that Kenya is always one nation. The assumption was that after Raila and Kibaki signed a peace agreement and the violence stopped, Kenyans became united and peace and unity prevailed.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have discussed the intersection of history and fiction in *Dust*, paying close attention to stories on the margin of the nation-state. It is evident that Owuor fictionalises history

to depict colonial and post-colonial realities of the people on the margin. Through stories of fictitious characters such as Nyipir, Akai, Ali, Odidi, Hugh Bolton and Petrus Keah intertwined with historical events, Owuor attempts to explain why violence, torture, assassinations, disillusionment, corruption and alienation have persisted in Kenya and why we seem to have normalised and accepted the ills as a nation. It emerges from the analysis above that official history has assembled historical events that portray the nation-state positively while ignoring and de-emphasising stories on the margin, especially when they paint the nation-state in bad picture. *Dust*, therefore, voices such suppressed narratives in order to expose the gaps in official history.

CHAPTER THREE

EFFECTIVENESS OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF NARRATOLOGY IN NARRATING STORIES ON THE MARGIN

Introduction

This Chapter examines various aspects of narratology in Yvonne Owuor's novel, *Dust*. It identifies unique aspects of narratology that are evident in the novel and explores the role they play in recalling the history of Kenya to tell stories on the margin of the nation-state. The focus is on how narrative instance and narrative time in *Dust* interact to tell these stories on the margin.

To study a structure of a text, narratologists dissect the narrative incidents into their component parts and then attempt to determine functions and relationships. For narratologists, it is through the study of narratives that one realises the importance of ordering of time and space in narrative forms to construct meaning in a text. In studying a text, they attempt to distinguish between what is narrated (the 'story') and how it is narrated (the 'discourse'). In this Chapter, I identify and examine the effectiveness of *Dust*'s narrative instance and narrative time in narrating Kenya's history.

Mieke Bal (1999) defines narratology as "theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artefacts that tell a story," (3). For Bal, narratology is a theory that helps us to understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives. Since the focus is on the narrative, it is important to delineate the term narrative and its constituents. Bal adds that a narrative is a tale of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee (a notional figure). A narrative consists of a set of events known as a story which is recounted in a process of narration (discourse) in which the events are selected and arranged in a particular order known as plot. This brings out the most fundamental distinctions in narratology,

that is, the distinctions between ‘story’ and ‘discourse’. Bal avers that ‘story’ entails the events or actions which the narrator would like us to believe occurred while ‘discourse’ entails the way in which these events are narrated and the organisation of the telling.

The term ‘plot’ connotes the way in which events, characters’ actions in a narrative are arranged, and how this arrangement in turn assists identification of characters’ motives and consequences. The organisation of the narrative can be foregrounded by the narrative discourse itself or deduced by the narratee. According to Aristotle (1996), plot can be devised to create elaborate patterns of coincidence, reversals and recognitions that lead to readers’ insights about what is at stake in the narrative. To present the different courses, a narrative could take in forking plot paths or lead readers away from their expectations about narrative processes.

In *Dust*, Owuor incorporates historical facts but also ventures beyond these to re-imagine the situations and individuals on the margin of the country at the time of the historical events. Of interest is how she has structured the novel to reveal these stories and silences in the official history.

Narrative Order and the Storyteller in *Dust*

According to Genette, narrative time (which entails order and narrative speed) has to do with the relation between the narration and the story. In examining the narrative time in a text, a narratologist looks at the narrator’s temporal position relative to the narrated events, and how the story is presented with respect to the narrative as a whole regarding to the result. To achieve the expected result, an author can vary the order and speed of the narrative and the frequency of events. Skilful use of these techniques allows the narratee to identify which narrative elements are being emphasised by the author and what the structure and organisation of the text are. Genette divides temporal relationships between fabula and story into three types: duration, speed

and frequency (35).

In examining the temporality of the story, I look at how events are arranged in the narrative and the significance of these events in narrating Kenya's history. Order is the relation between the sequencing of events in the story and their arrangement in the narrative. In sequencing of events, there are two basic orders: chronological order and anachrony. In a chronological order, the presentation of the story follows the natural sequence of events. However, in anachrony, the order in which the events actually happen does not match the order in which they are presented in the narrative, thus yielding a complex plot (36-37). Anachrony occurs in two ways: flashbacks otherwise referred to as analepsis, meaning a temporal distortion between the time pattern of the story and the time pattern of the fabula; and flashforward referred to as prolepsis, an order in which the narrator anticipates events that will occur after the main story ends (Manfred Jahn, 2005).

Genette observes that to study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession. These same events have in the story, to the extent that the story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue (35). In *Dust*, the narrator recounts the events through analepsis thus eliciting a temporal distortion between the time pattern of the story and the time pattern of the fibula. The narrative is not content with a simple, one-way progression into the future but comes back to itself and finishes what was left unfinished, tell us the unknown. By returning to the colonial and post independence historical realities, the narrative enables one to understand the present Kenya. As the reader moves through the story, she or he has to note down the distortions that occur by looking at the time aspect because analepsis is not measured with respect to the time of the articulation but with respect to a narrative reference point created by

the ordered telling of events. Anachrony also occurs when a character reminisces through a story or the telling of the story though it is located in the present and the events depicted in the story take the narratee to the past (Genette, 48).

According to Lucie Guillemette and Cynthia Lévesque (Narratology, 2006), analepses often take on an explanatory role, developing a character's psychology by relating events from his past, prolepses can arouse the reader's curiosity by partially revealing facts that will surface later. These breaks in chronology may also simply fulfil a dissenting role, if the author wishes to disrupt the classical novel's linear representation to some degree. It also contributes to the structure of expectation, curiosity and suspense, to the activity of gap filling and construction of coherence, which is the task of the reader of the narrative.

Though set in December 2007 and the period of the post-election violence in 2008, most of the events in *Dust* are revealed to the reader through analepsis. When the reader encounters Odidi running on the streets of Nairobi escaping the police, the reader wonders how the situation came to be. As Odidi runs in the streets of Nairobi, the narrator peers into Odidi's mind and we experience his stream of consciousness. Odidi remembers Wuoth Ogik, when and how he came to know water songs and his encounter with a Somali ex-warlord (now a trader) who gave him a gun. After setting the various characters and situations, the narrator begins to flashback to inform us about the present events. Flashback here is significant in bridging time, place and action of the story and reveals information about Odidi's background so that as the story progresses the reader is aware that the story is set in 2007/2008 during the postelection violence in Nairobi and that Odidi's home is in Northern Kenya.

Dust is presented in a non-linear and fragmented plot. According to Tayeb Selasi (2014), "*Dust* moves as the human mind moves: forward and backward, incoherent, indulgent, lingering on the

light on a tree, sliding into murky reverie.” The narrative begins in the present and then returns to the past. However, as the story unfolds, the narrator digresses through analepses and enters the minds of the characters to give more information on what transpired in the past. After the police gun down Odidi, Nyipir and Ajany come to collect his body at the city mortuary and take it to Wuoth Ogik (19). Akai, Odidi’s mother, saddened by Odidi’s death leaves the homestead in grief (38). While in Wuoth Ogik, Isaiah Bolton arrives looking for his father, Hugh Bolton, but Nyipir, aware of the secrets regarding Hugh Bolton, chases Isaiah away (124-125). As Isaiah ponders what to do after his mission is ignored yet he has found hints, Ajany leaves for Nairobi in search of answers as to how and why Odidi died. Galgalu tells Isaiah to leave for Nairobi and look for Ali, a senior police officer who was investigating Hugh Bolton’s case (134). While in Nairobi, Ajany finds out that Odidi had died because of heroic idealism. She also finds out that after graduating from the University of Nairobi, Odidi and his classmate Musali had formed Tich Lich Engineering Company, but Odidi was later dismissed after he rejected a corrupt deal to silt the dam that produces national electricity (162-163). Isaiah meets Petrus Keah, and Ali who tells him that the file on his father was closed (216). Ali was involved in the investigations but he could not continue after he was recalled to Nairobi during the post-election violence (217).

Ajany and Isaiah meet and in their rendezvous, Ajany sculpts Bolton’s head based on her memory of when they were together with Odidi. They had visited the red cave and seen the skeleton. At Wuoth Ogik, Nyipir brings Hugh Bolton’s body to bury it. The four, Ajany, Isaiah, Petrus and Ali, travel to Wuoth Ogik. Their arrival at Wuoth Ogik marks the revelation of the secrets and silences that have characterised the lives of Nyipir and Akai.

As the narrative moves from the death of Odidi to Wuoth Ogik, back to Nairobi and to Wuoth Ogik again, the narrator inserts past events in order to provide the background context to the current events of the narrative. Questions such as why Odidi is running from the police, who

Hugh Bolton is, the origin of Wuoth Ogik, how Nyipir ended up in Wuoth Ogik, who is Ali, Akai Lokorijom among others are answered as the narrative unfolds. The narrator takes the narratee through flashback to reveal the stories of the characters and Kenya, including the Mau Mau insurgency, the early years of Kenya's independence and the assassination of Tom Mboya.

From the prologue, the story begins with Odidi running away from the police after a failed robbery attempt in Nairobi. The story then moves to three weeks back to explain how Odidi got the gun. The flashback reveals the level of lawlessness that has gripped the country since independence. As the trader tells Nyipir about post-election violence in Naivasha, Nyipir's mind "tumbles back to when brother, son, mother and father locked up family members in rooms and huts in honour of covenants of terror that guaranteed silence to take oaths... much later, horror painted over and replaced with myths and triumphs..." (83). Nyipir had seen these atrocities but the government concealed them. The trader adds that when the fire starters went from door to door to see what they had done, the first one witnessed the bursting open of the second wife's womb. According to the narrator, fifty years later, the murdered and the forgotten dead had returned to cry out for their lives, suggesting that the silences over the killings that have been occurring since independence came to haunt Kenya (84). The flashback complements the events in the 'present' of the story but also recalls the history of Kenya to reveal the silences in the official history.

At Wuoth Ogik, Ajany's mind travels back to when she was young. Together with Odidi, they had wandered all over the room and they saw a black and white photograph showing a man (Nyipir) on a horseback carrying a crooked Kenyan flag, the late minister for economic planning, Tom Mboya and finally the Oganda family, with Galgalu positioned as if they were facing a firing squad (50). The photos illustrates Nyipir's role in Kenya's independence celebrations, his

attachment to Tom Mboya and fright that was within the family as a result of experiencing trauma overtime, particularly for Akai and Nyipir.

To let the reader understand stories of torture on Africans, the narrator introduces Nyipir and Hugh Bolton through flashback. Here, we learn that Bolton and Nyipir met at the Athi River concentration camp where Bolton enlisted Nyipir as his servant as he was a clever African. When Bolton was sent to the northern frontiers, he moved with Nyipir and set up his residence that Nyipir named Wuoth Ogik. This is where they kept and buried secrets and stories such as death of Hugh Bolton, cattle rustling, poaching, trade in contraband goods and guns.

At independence while working as a soldier, Nyipir could see evil being committed by the state but he was silent because of the oath he had taken. The state's operations were hidden from the public and only those who were within the centre of power knew what was happening. Torture and assassination were justified as a way of ensuring security and unity of the country. Those working for the government had sworn allegiance to abide by the oath and never to reveal the heinous acts. Because of obeying the commands to ensure unity and peace, Nyipir and his colleagues received the Head of State Commendation. Nyipir was moved to head the Anti-Stock Theft Unit as a supervisor. He would run after rustlers to bring Kenya's livestock back home.

Through flashback, Owuor tells stories of cattle rustling and poaching. As a warrior in Northern Kenya, Nyipir too engaged in poaching and cattle rustling. He and other accomplices would load tusks on lorries with blacked-out number plates. The tusks would be ferried to Singapore through the help of State House operatives (125). Since independence, there has been outcry about poaching that has threatened to render elephants and rhinos extinct. The blame has always been on the poachers but the narrator suggests that the nation-state is part of the cartel involved in these poaching activities. The rapidly decreasing number of elephants among other wildlife did

not just start recently. Charles Hornsby (2012) notes that 1970s was the worst period of poaching in Kenya's history. The senior government figures were involved in slaughtering Kenya's abundant wildlife for the export of ivory and skins to the Middle and Far East. Hornsby adds that in mid-1973, at least 500 elephants were killed legally each month (312).

Through flashback, the narrator informs us about Kenya's colonial history, for instance, when the colonial administration recruited Africans to fight in Burma during the Second World War. Nyipir's father, Agoro Patrobus, and his brother, Theophillus Oganda, were recruited. They went to Burma never to return. Through flashback, the narratee understands why and how Nyipir left his home. Baba Jimmy had taken him to the Catholic mission after he had clashed with his uncle. While in Fort Hall, Nyipir came face to face with colonial atrocities. After they moved him to the administration post, Nyipir was sent to the Athi River concentration camp, a camp built to manage national crisis, to watch over the inmates (173). The colonial government was making massive arrests in the Mau Mau crackdown and so the detention centres needed more guards to watch over the detainees. As we read the story of Nyipir through flashback, we experience harsh realities of ordinary people such as trauma, loss, despair and massacres.

Flashback serves to inform the reader about the origin of Ali, how he ended up in the Kenya Police Force. It also exposes the nature of corruption taking place in the northern margins of Kenya. Ali arrived from Eritrea and Ethiopia as a young man in 1960s and became a Kenyan citizen. He stumbled upon police recruitment exercise and he joined the Kenya Police Force (now the Kenya Police Service.) He gradually rose up the ranks to be the Assistant Commissioner of Police and made the Assistant Commissioner Police with no defined duties. This is a pointer to the unscrupulous running of government institutions. While in the North, Ali had colluded with Nyipir, a cattle rustler, and trader of contraband goods. As Nyipir engaged in

the trade, Ali would divert or twist government information. The state had tasked Ali to investigate about Hugh Bolton, but due to negligence, he never concluded the case. He had closed the file because money stopped flowing from England.

While Ajany is in Nairobi, the narrator digresses to narrate how Akai had arrived at Wuoth Ogik. The flashback serves to give more background information about Akai. The narratee thus understands that Akai and other children were dragged into mission camps for religious education. When she started menstruating, the clan shun her to a secluded place to learn the ways of women but she ran away before the sessions ended and sought her beloved stepfather. Any time she was at home, she would organise proper cattle raids, as she wanted to own at least ten thousand large-horned cattle. Akai was also suspended from school having organised a boycott of the mathematics class when the school refused to serve milk or meat or plenty of vegetables and fish. She had gone southwards in a five-night journey where her father worked, but she detoured aiming for a seasonal watering hole with fragrant water where she met Nyipir and Bolton.

Akai's story points to a woman affected by harsh experiences in the colonial and post-colonial Kenya. She became a disgrace to her family after becoming pregnant, clashed with her mother, lost her twin children, rejected, almost killed by Bolton and finally lost her only son. Through her story, we also realise how the colonialists mistreated Africans, especially women. When Akai became pregnant, Bolton chased her away as he could not marry a 'prostitute' and an outcast.

The narrative order enables the narratee to experience and understand past events in Kenya through the stories of the characters that oscillate between present and the past. The characters also evoke the past through their memories and therefore an alternative perspective other than

that of the official history. As Kenyans, we may have some notions about formation of Kenya but by Owuor interlinking the past and the present, we experience diverse realities on independence struggle, ethnicity, corruption, violence, assassinations and alienation that continue to feature in Kenya to date.

Significance of Memory in Narrating Silenced Stories

One strategy that is significant in narrating silenced stories is the use of memory. In *Dust*, Owuor uses a range of elements of style such as plot, narrative voice, characterisation, repetition and silence to represent memory and ultimately reveal the traumatic violence and atrocities. The fragmented nature of the novel also connotes the fragmented nature of memory, language and the story as a whole. Disputing a common misconception about memory, Fentress and Wickham (1992) argue that “memory is not a passive receptacle, but ... a process of active restructuring in which elements may be retained, reordered, or suppressed” (40). Wolfgang Müller-Funk (2003) also argues, “...all forms of memory are explicitly or implicitly based on retrospective narratives that seek to cross the unbridgeable gap between the time of narrating and the time of the events that will be narrated” (208). Characters such as Nyipir, Akai, Odidi and Ajany retrospect through memory to reveal their experiences. By use of memory, Owuor attempts to respond to the official history that ignores memories of ordinary individuals as Tim Woods (2007) notes. Woods adds that “memory is regarded as having a demystifying effect and can be treated as a counter-hegemonic chronicle, in which an imagined ‘other’ history is narrated, thereby destabilising dominant histories” (21).

In *Dust*, memory is fragmented as the plot oscillates between the past and the present. The omniscient narrator provides fragmented narratives of characters’ memories of violence and then returns to current events in their lives. Therefore, the narratee is only allowed partial insight into

the past until the narratee reaches the conclusion of the novel. The narrator captures Odidi's memory reflecting on Wuoth Ogik while he is running along Jogoo Road. "Memory ticks. Odidi soars into the desiccated terrain of Wuoth Ogik, the home he abandoned... He turns down Jogoo road and glances upward, childhood habit..." (5).

Representation of memory underpins the theme of violence in *Dust*. Owuor suggests that though the citizens were silenced not to speak against the atrocities of the day, memory plays a key role in retrieving the experiences of violence. Therefore, through memory, characters recount their experiences and thus effectively recall Kenya's history, narrate the silences and ignored stories. Characters such as Nyipir and Akai, by externalising their memory, reveal bitterness about their past painful experiences. Consequently, it is therapeutic.

Nyipir recalls how he saw and buried dead Mau Mau rebels. Memories about Aloys Kamau, the priest who was hacked to death, still haunt him. He still remembers vividly how he was tortured after Tom Mboya was murdered. Akai, too, recalls how Bolton rejected her after she became pregnant. She quarrelled with her mother during the great hunger after she went home. She was also despised for becoming pregnant and without being properly married. After she leaves, her twins die on the way because of hunger. She faints but she is resuscitated by raging floods. When her son dies, she is overwhelmed by trauma and runs away from her home.

The narrator enters the memory of characters to reveal what they have gone through. Nyipir thinks, memories are ghosts to mean that whatever Nyipir experienced and what his memory captured come back to haunt him. He had seen shrivelled and mutilated bodies of Mau Mau dissidents, saddened by the assassination of Tom Mboya and tortured by the police. He had kept silent about these incidents, but they remained etched in his memory. They come back to haunt him in old age.

In *Dust*, traumatic memories and secrets continue to haunt individuals. The colonial and post-colonial violence also haunts the nation-state. The idea of haunting implies an anomaly that exists because of repression of memory. Therefore, it torments. Existence of haunting ghosts suggests impossibility of erasing the bitter past experiences. As such, an individual or nation-state will never be at peace until silence is broken and issues resolved. According to J. P. O'Malley (2014), Owuor says, "in Kenya we are particularly good at repressing memories. I am aware of the fact that memories are ghosts that do not rest easy at all."

Memory is selective as it picks incidents it seeks to remember. Nyipir's thoughts meander and his memory digresses and is in fragments. The narrator, commenting on how violence affected Nyipir says he could see in his mind how the coagulating wound, that is Aloys Kamau, seeps, spreads and becomes a subterranean stream of blood of Kenya, spreads its tentacles to reach even to the new-born and no person dares to speak about it (299). According to Owuor, violence has been going on even after independence. Although the people saw atrocities and assassinations, none was willing to speak out. As much as it claimed people who were at the centre of the state such as Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya, J.M. Kariuki and Robert Ouko, people on the periphery of the state such as Odidi and Nyipir experienced the same violence but they pass unrecorded.

Drawing and sculpting becomes a way of preserving memories and bringing it to life what seems to be forgotten or hidden. Ajany sculpts Bolton's skull later in life based on her memory of the days when she was young. Bolton's drawing of Akai resurfaces later and Isaiah upon seeing it sought to know the relationship between Akai and Bolton. The narrator suggests that silence would never explain why and how Akai came to be pregnant and subject of Bolton's art. Nevertheless, through Bolton's art, Isaiah can deduce that Bolton and Akai had some relationship. Isaiah can also deduce the presence of Bolton in Wuoth Ogik.

When Ajany started practising art, she had drawn techno-caricatures of ghosts, a black leopard and fire markers. Out of these pieces of art, her parents had recognised their enemies and some of the devils that had haunted them. As a child and oblivious of her parents past, Ajany is able to depict, through art, what she observed. The omniscient narrator is able to tell this from a vantage point. The narrator lets the reader to understand that there are incidents in Oganda's family that are kept out of sight. In describing Nyipir's illegal activities, the narrator peers through the mind of Ajany who observed her father coming home from secret journeys, carrying gifts of livestock and assorted weapons like a fourth magus.

Narrative Speed

According to Lucie Guillemette and Cynthia Lévesque (2006), Genette uses theatrical performances as his basis, in which the event-story ideally has the same duration as the staged narration. However, in a novel, the narrator can speed up or slow down the narration. Genette adds that narrative speed can be achieved through various aspects of narrative speed such as ellipsis, scene and summary. In *Dust*, Owuor uses ellipsis, scene and summary to narrate the non-mainstream stories in Kenyan history.

Ellipsis is the narrative device of omitting a portion of the sequence of events, allowing the narratee to fill in the narrative gaps. Seymour Chatman (1978) notes that in ellipsis, "the discourse halts, though time continues to pass in the story" (70). This can be used to condense time to allow the reader to fill in the missing portions of the narrative with their imagination. Therefore, ellipsis is connected to driving the narrative design that shapes relevance and interest to give shape to a plot, to emphasise causal over temporal connection by modelling the temporal sequence on the model of the causal one. Genette argues that, "...the analysis of ellipses comes down to considering the story time elided" (106). Therefore, in an elliptical novel, the reader is

left to infer the events that have taken place during the elapsed time by the changes evident in the characters in the novel. However, ellipsis can also hinder understanding of the narrative especially to a reader who is unfamiliar with Kenya's history.

Owuor's use of ellipsis leaves out a portion of the story and this allows the reader to fill in the missing portions of the narrative with their imagination. The reader is left to infer the events that have taken place during the elapsed time by the changes evident in the characters. In depicting a situation during independence, the narrator mentions the national anthem created from a Pokomo lullaby, but the anthem is left in ellipsis form for the reader to fill in the remaining parts, which include words such as 'unity', 'peace' and 'liberty'. The national anthem calls for a new and revised Kenya. Kenyatta emphasised for the need for goodness, education and hard work and for citizens to espouse the spirit of harambee, a call that the citizens seemed to have accepted. However, this was never realised as a new word, *nyakua*, sprung up to describe the looting and plundering of the nation-state by the elite. Although the national anthem called for liberty in Kenya, people never lived to enjoy the freedom that they fought for.

As Ajany and Nyipir listen to news on radio, Ajany hears Kofi Annan's voice weaving through in words that do not connect. "Parties... eminent person... bloodshed... peace... violent... peace... spoken... honourable gentlemen... war... tribal... politics..." (68). This ellipsis attempts to capture the aftermath of the post-election violence as Kofi Annan addressed Kenyans after Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga signed a peace accord to form a coalition government. The reader has to infer the rest of the information on the post-election violence and the ensuing negotiations. Nevertheless, behind this ellipsis are painful experiences of people who lost their loved ones, severely wounded, lost their property and traumatised by the violence. Not all this was captured in Annan's speech.

Nyipir remembers about Mau Mau and tells Ajany that if he should speak, the oath should kill him. Nyipir had taken an oath never to reveal the atrocities committed by the colonial regime, burying the evil with covenants. The ellipsis denotes what was never to be said. They had taken an oath never to reveal the incidents of nation-state violence.

While together, Ajany informs Nyipir that Isaiah has come with some items that Odidi had sent him which guided Isaiah to come to Wuoth Ogik. Ajany says, “Isaiah... he’s come with ... Odidi gave him things. Books... and this...” (70). Ajany avoids mentioning some of the things, leaves the narratee to ponder what they might be. She avoids mentioning the name Bolton that Nyipir had warned her about when she was young. Odidi too would tell her whenever she asked about the books that they belonged to Someone Else. The mention of the name Bolton in Wuoth Ogik would rattle the secrets kept. Someone Else was a name to refer to Bolton so as not to awaken Bolton’s ghost since mentioning him would be trying to ‘bring him back to life.’

Scene and Summary

Scene refers to a ‘dramatic’ method of narration that presents events at roughly the same pace as that at which they are supposed to be occurring, usually in detail and with substantial use of dialogue and vivid descriptions. In a work of fiction, scene occurs when an event is presented in detail while summary occurs when a narrator tells the story as a condensed series of events, summarising in a few sentences what happened over a longer period of time either done in elliptical, one word or short sentences (Guillemette and Lévesque, 2006).

Sternberg (1993) observes that a scene, as a basic movement of novelistic narrative, consists most frequently in an alternance of scene and summary, with the first scene marking the beginning of the first narrative and creating a reference point for the reader (8). In a scene, story duration and discourse duration are usually considered identical. Dialogue is often regarded as

the best instance of scene whereby the narrator nearly disappears from the story to give the characters an opportunity to interact. As the characters share their experiences, they unearth issues from first-hand experiences.

In *Dust*, the actions in the narrative are disclosed through omniscient narrative voice but sometimes the narrator relinquishes the power of the narration to the characters to create scenes in narrating stories such as of violence, torture, corruption and disillusionment. When Ali meets Nyipir engaging in outlawed acts such as cattle rustling, poaching and trading in contraband goods, he tells Nyipir that he would be charged with waging war against the people of Kenya, treason and engaging in activities that jeopardise the lives of citizens (260). Through this conversation, we realise that police officers are also partners in the illegal trade. Nyipir inducts Ali into the trade with the agreement that Ali would be receiving a quarter of profits earned. To start the trade relationship, Nyipir gave him twenty thousand shillings as a sign of goodwill. This exposes how corruption is embedded in the northern part of country which is hardly talked about as the focus is mainly in Nairobi. The police, while investigating a crime, end up colluding with suspects and let them continue engaging in crimes.

Corruption, an abuse of public office for private gain, seems to be a norm in Kenya as it cuts across senior officers in the government and police service. In the scene where Ajany meets Musali, the scandal that the narrator describes is synonymous with scandals in Kenya today, where the culprits hatch schemes to fleece money from national coffers. They deliver either substandard goods and services or nothing at all. Whenever they are investigated, either the suspects are left free for lack of evidence or they buy their freedom from the courts. The narrator notes that there was a time when long and short rains failed in Kenya and Odidi had chased and won a contract worth two hundred and seventy-five million shillings for the repair of dams, but he was asked to

take an oath of secrecy. A week later, Odidi had received instructions to render the turbines incapable of delivering power to the public. The company would then import generators at an inflated cost and the company would be rewarded with a colossal amount of profit. Musali confesses that they knew what was happening and had told Odidi to back down, as they needed to survive. Musali and his colleagues opted to stay with the job, but Odidi could not keep quiet about the scandal. Odidi was thus fired and the company reregistered as T.L. Associates Engineering. As the managing director held a party to celebrate the earning of his first personal one billion shillings,

National power shortages worsened.

Companies closed down.

Utility bills exploded.

Citizens paid up (163).

Musali wonders which Kenya Odidi grew up. The Kenya that Musali knows is that of selfish interests and lack of patriotism, the one that after you make money you become an activist. This scandal is a representation of other scandals since independence with the prominent ones being Anglo-Leasing and Goldenberg scandals through which the country lost colossal amounts of money in dubious deals meant benefit a few individuals.

Since independence, Kenya has been caught up in numerous corruption scandals despite political promises to crack down on the vice. Benjamin Kipkorir (2009) observes in his autobiography that corruption as Africa, and Kenya in particular knows it today was not a serious concern even as late as the mid 1980s. He says, “When it came to corruption, it is assumed that it is the business men at the lower level but when it comes to corruption at the top levels of government, it is often foreign businessmen who are the major sources of corruption for instance in arms trade

(291). Cases such as Anglo-Leasing and Goldenberg have always had local businesspersons colluding with those in government working with foreign individuals to fraud Kenya.

Owuor also explores the massive corruption in the police service. Petrus, while chatting with Ali Dida, wonders about a cryptanalyst (Ali) sent to Northern Kenya on police officers salary to find out what happened to a *mzungu*. But years later the police officer has thirty six million three hundred and fifty-two thousand shillings in six bank accounts, a simple car dealership in Eastleigh filled with cars that never get sold, twelve simple butcheries across the county and three simple lorries that have been hired to transport cattle from the north (251). The scene illustrates how corruption is deep-rooted in the country and worse is that it takes place in one of the state apparatus that is supposed to crack down the vice.

Another police officer, Aaron Chacha, had prosecuted traffic offenders without a receipt book along the Nakuru-Naivasha highway. His colleagues were arrested but he escaped and he was transferred to the northern margins of Kenya. While in the North, Chacha regrets many things such as the absence of regular fruits. In Naivasha, Aaron had reaped sufficient sums of money to extend the boundaries of his farm and bought a Chinese lorry. When he reports to Nairobi about an attack, he is promoted to be a District Security Officer. Another incidence that shows that the police collude with criminals is that, the OCPD used to hire Odidi's gun to the criminals and criminals would pay him monthly but he decided to sacrifice Odidi that time. After Odidi died, plainclothes police officers came and retrieved a pistol that the police had strapped on Odidi's chest. When Dr. Mda carries out a post-mortem on Odidi, he reveals that Odidi was shot dead, but Ali confronts him arguing that he is supposed to report that Odidi's death is not a police case (19). Ali wanted the police to be exonerated yet police were responsible for the murder. The scene is significant here in confirming how Odidi died and how police cover up murder cases.

Since Ali began investigating about Hugh Bolton, money was flowing from England but he closed the investigations when money ceased coming. When Isaiah asks Ali to reopen the case, Ali hopes that Isaiah gives him money so that he can reopen it. This is an indication that the police are willing to serve anyone, including criminals, provided they are bribed. Ali had been investigating the case because of the eight hundred pounds he was receiving, but when it stopped flowing, he closed the case.

Through a scene in Kapedo, Owuor reveals one of the silent stereotypes in the country that the uncircumcised are unjustified to lead. While Nyipir is playing *Ajua*, a colleague jeered him, “*Nyinyi! Mambo bado! Mtaona! Mnacheza na mzee?*”(274). Nyipir had collected all but four of corporal Gakuo’s seed cows and asked to be given a woman but the corporal had spat at him “*kihee*’, meaning the uncircumcised. However, Nyipir had asked him, “How does a mutilated penis make a man more of a man?” After the exchange, Nyipir realised that he had spoken and by doing so, he had made himself a sacrifice. He was thus discharged from work dishonourably. This scene underscores the fallacy in the state that uncircumcised men should not take up higher positions of leadership in the nation-state. Nyipir’s challenge to Gakuo meant the uncircumcised had disrespected authority. Such a scene constructed through dialogue is able to highlight one of the stereotypes in the society unlike in an instance of summary, which can easily gloss over.

Nyipir finally attempts to answer questions about Hugh Bolton but still conceals the truth about how Bolton died. Owuor creates a scene between Isaiah and Nyipir in which revelation about Bolton, his house, books, art and memories come out (292). Nyipir tells Isaiah that Bolton died by gun accident, but Nyipir had shot Bolton to save Akai who Bolton was just about to slay. Questions such as whether Akai was Bolton’s mistress with whom he had a child is met with silence. Nyipir leaves the questions unanswered as he is accustomed to hiding secrets. If he ever

revealed the secrets buried in Wuoth Ogik, he would be implicated in the murder of Hugh Bolton. Therefore, through scenes illustrated, Owuor is able to highlight silent stories surrounding the main society through dialogue and vivid description unlike in pause where an incident is interrupted or in the ellipsis that leaves the reader to ponder about a silenced incident.

Summary enables the author to skip some details to lay out facts quickly when scenes take too long to make facts known. According to Chatman Seymour (1980), “The novelist is permitted to conflate into a single speech what must probably be supposed to have been uttered as several separate speeches” (68). Owuor employs summary to condense series of events and speeches using a few sentences of what happened over a longer period. Owuor is able to dwell on some ‘important’ events like the assassination of Tom Mboya and mention the rest like that of Pio Gama Pinto, J.M. Kariuki and Robert Ouko. This is significant in helping the narratee to focus on Tom Mboya and how the assassination affected the dreams of Kenyans. However, more important is the fact that the assassination created a fissure thus dividing the country more than ever since independence. The narrator says, “...a central province was emptied of a people who were renamed cockroaches, those beasts from the west” (275). Citizens died secretly, some prosecuted and judged at night. Nyipir watched all these, remained silent and hoped that it would end soon.

Narrative Instance

Narrative instance is a conjunction between the narrative voice (who is speaking?), time of the narration (when does the telling occur, relative to the story?) and narrative perspective (through whom are we perceiving?). Genette argues that by examining the narrative instance, one can gain a better understanding of the relations between the narrator and the story in a given narrative.

A narrative voice depicts how the narrative is presented to the narratee. For example, a narrative may be conveyed through a specific character’s perspective or through another character’s

retelling of the events. The narrative voice of a story comes from the person telling the story. The term 'voice', according to Genette, literally invokes one of the major grammatical categories of verb forms such as tense, mood, and voice (213). However, in narratology, the essential voice question is 'who speaks?', that is, who is the text's narrative voice? Genette further notes that a narrator is the speaker or 'voice' of the narrative discourse (186) denoting an agent who establishes contact with the narratee and who decides what is to be told, how it is to be told, from what point of view, and in what sequence.

Genette distinguishes two types of narrative voice: the heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. Of interest in this analysis is the heterodiegetic narrative voice since the narrative is told from third-person omniscient point of view. According to Manfred Jahn (2005), heterodiegetic narrative voice is a form of third-person narration in which the narrator assumes an all-knowing perspective on the story narrated by diving into private thoughts, narrating secret or hidden events and jumping between spaces and times. The third-person omniscient narrator, always seen as impersonal and objective, has an unlimited knowledge about the story's events, characters and conflicts.

In a third-person omniscient narration, the narratee suspends disbelief and accepts what the narrator is telling them, whereas first person statements and observation run the risk, in certain situations, of sounding more like opinion. The narrator also has the ability to jump into the heads of other characters and quickly switch settings and circumstances and thus add more variety and energy, as well as bring a different tone and interpretation to the work as needed. The narrative voice also lets the narratee move freely through time and space, give more information in a smaller amount of time and even show what multiple characters are thinking within a scene.

In *Dust*, as the narrative progresses, the narrator interjects through a series of one-line catch

phrases such as ‘memories are solitary ghosts’, ‘to name something is to bring it to life’, to assert a complete authority of the narrative. This is because the narrator is able to peer into the thoughts and memories of the characters and narrate their experiences and the accompanying historical realities. Through the omniscient narrator, the narratee is able to know and see everything about each character. Because of this, we are able to get into the minds of multiple characters and create a stronger relationship and bond with them. We are also able to see the reaction of multiple characters, which helps to interpret the plot of the story.

The unlimited omniscient narrator, apart from narrating the events as they unfold and allowing characters to interact at will, is also able to look into the minds of all characters and tell the reader about their thoughts and feelings. The narrator also looks into the past and tells about the present to reveal stories on the margin and those silenced. The narrator oscillates between the present and historical present and intrudes by commenting about the incidents, thereby interweaving the story of the fictional characters with history of the nation-state.

Owuor’s use of the omniscient narrator allows *Dust* to have multiple voices in the story. By receiving the story through different voices, we are more likely to have a more objective interpretation of the colonial and post-colonial realities experienced by the characters as opposed to a more personal, subjective experience. Through this possibility, *Dust* provides an alternative understanding of colonial and post-colonial histories of Kenya.

The stories of characters such as Nyipir, Akai, Hugh, Odidi, Ajany, Ali Dida, and Petrus Keah are intertwined with the history of Kenya to highlight stories on the margin of Kenya. The narrative covers Aggrey Nyipir from when he was a young boy to when his father and brother left for Burma and when he was taken to Fort Hall to work as a gardener. He becomes a gravedigger, works in a colonial police post and servant to Hugh. At independence, he joined the

police service but was tortured after the assassination of Tom Mboya. He retreated to Wuoth Ogik where he became a cattle herder and rustler.

Through Nyipir's story, we can also see how corruption is entrenched in the northern margins of Kenya, as he traded in stolen livestock, poached and colluded with the police officers to carry out the outlawed activities. I also note that the experiences of Nyipir represent the mistreatment of Africans by colonialists. Bolton calls Nyipir *mtu shenzi* (a bastard); he works for Bolton as a servant and paid mere twenty-three shillings. His story is also captures the disillusionment of Africans who had hoped for a better Kenya at independence, but were tortured and others killed by the post-colonial regime for speaking against the ills of the nation-state.

The narrator is apt at telling the experiences that have affected Nyipir during his childhood after his father and brother left for Burma never to return, his torture at the hands of his uncle, the Mau Mau atrocities he witnessed, his torture after the assassination of Tom Mboya and the death of his only son. The narrator says Nyipir stares at his hands that have been scrubbing his face four times a day, and have done so for forty years. This shows a traumatised person haunted by torture, secrets and silences forced upon him by the state.

The narrator also describes Nyipir and lets Nyipir speak out what is in his memory. As he lifts the hoe way above his head and hits the ground, it bounces. As the hoe bounces off the ground, a message comes out of Nyipir's mind. His memory also replays back to when he and Warui were digging graves. The narrator says, "Dust in his eyes, inward gaze. Inside Nyipir secrets stir, and his mouth opens, '*ona icembe riugini rituhaga,*'" meaning this hoe is blunt (168). Although Nyipir did not know the meaning, the words got ingrained in his memory and he repeats them almost fifty years later as he digs Odidi's grave. Inside his memory are untold stories of violence, torture, despair and loss that he has experienced over time.

Akai comes out as a resilient, intelligent and courageous woman. The death of her own son comes close to conquering her. The narrator describes her as the one who wards off ghosts and bad night entities, wrestles with God, casts ancient devils into hell before their time, and kicks aside sea waves so her son would pass unhindered. Between Akai and Nyipir lie secrets about the death of Bolton, how they came to inherit Wuoth Ogik and the illegal trade in the northern margins of the country.

Through the narrator, we establish Akai's relationship with Bolton, her ordeal after Bolton chased her away and how Nyipir saved her. Nyipir had saved her by killing Bolton. They hid Bolton's body in the red hill cave and created a myth that Wuoth Ogik was once a missionary station but the missionaries had let them inherit it after they left, and people believed their story. Since then Nyipir and Akai harboured secrets about Wuoth Ogik and the death of Bolton. Even after they bore their children, the secrets were still well hidden.

To reveal how Odidi came to know the secrets of the family, the narrator captures instances when Odidi was young. At eighteen years, Odidi went into a room full of books and silences, and stumbled upon one of Bolton's artefacts but returned it when he heard his father's footsteps (5). Whenever, Ajany asked about Bolton's items, Odidi would tell her they belonged to Someone Else. During one of the December holidays, Odidi and Ajany visited a cave where there was a skeleton of Hugh Bolton, *obarogo*. Later as an adult, Odidi would come across Isaiah's inquiry about his father. Unaware that the death of Hugh Bolton was a kept secret, he informed Isaiah about Wuoth Ogik.

The mention of Bolton's name seems to open the can of well-kept family secrets. Nyipir would stutter. At one time when Ajany was young, holding one of Bolton's book, she tried to pronounce the name H-U-G-H. Nyipir's head almost jumped out of his neck and he snatched the

book. Ajany had also asked Odidi who was Hugh Bolton but Odidi told her Bolton was Someone Else. Isaiah's presence at Wuoth Ogik rattles the secrets because of the Bolton's name. The name was a highly kept secret, but as the narrative ends, Akai and Nyipir confess how they came to meet Bolton – although Nyipir lied about the circumstances under which Bolton died.

Through the omniscient narrator, Owuor attempts to recall incidents of violence that have characterised Kenya. Violence was an intrinsic element of the post-colonial African government, serving no other purpose than to create passive citizens. Achille Mbembe (1995) argues that violence is contagious in nature in that the oppressed, because of their desire for power as they are under oppression, re-enact in their daily lives the rituals and behaviours through which the oppressor constitutes and maintains his power over the postcolony (133). Mbembe attempts an examination of phenomenology of violence in post-colonial Africa. He points out that the 'omnipresent aspect of colonial violence transforms it into 'a cultural praxis', implying that the arbitrary random practice of colonial power continues to characterise the postcolony which exhibits carnivorous habit (175).

Just like during the colonial period when the Mau Mau were arrested, tortured and others strangled to death as a way to quell the riots, the post-colonial government, too, arrested, tortured and murdered individuals who were perceived to be causing disunity in the state, thus depriving the citizens of their humanity (Mbembe, 74). Nyipir was brutally tortured for speaking about the assassination of Tom Mboya and dismissed unceremoniously from the police service.

In *Dust*, silence is an apt metaphor for describing a form of suppression as far as violence in the country is concerned. One could only whisper. Silence is used to convey an abstinence from utterance. In other words, it is the intentional or imposed state of muteness. It denotes an

inaudible condition or moment of complete stillness. While it is normally attributed to keeping tight-lipped, it can signify the pain of being denuded of the ability to speak about an ordeal.

By listing silence as a language besides English and Kiswahili, Nyipir paints a grim picture of the scenario after the assassination of Tom Mboya. No one could talk about the assassination. Even after Moi took over power in 1978, silence would continue. Silence, therefore, creates an impression of a suppressed nation-state. However, the adverse effect of this suppression is that the nation-state explodes later during the 2007-2008 post-election violence because of bottled up emotions.

Through flashback, the narrator describes how Nyipir was tortured and forced to take an oath that he would keep silent. The narrator asks if this was nationhood. Africans anticipated that with independence, they would achieve full freedom. This was never realised as African leaders, too, engaged in torturing those opposed to their style of leadership. One of the machineries used by the post-colonial government to silence the dissenting citizens is the police force. The narrator says that Petrus had been enforcing silence by chopping off noisy human parts all his life. He was assigned Nyipir as a form of a test although he later released him under the guise that he had already died.

As Ajany goes to the City Mortuary, she hears vote counts, rumours, tallying hall disruptions and numbers that were even more fantastic. This represents the crisis that characterised the 2007 elections in Kenya, the results of which led to violence. As Ajany and Nyipir mourn Odidi, the narrator digresses to tell us about the winds racing southwards. Owuor refers to Kenya as part of the nation where unsettled ghosts have set the land afire and a gang of men are howling and dancing down a city street, dangling a man's fingers (41). This is in reference to the 2007 general elections whose consequence was widespread violence in the country. Although it is noted that

violence arose out of the vote counting that had pitted two rivals, Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, there were underlying silences in the country since independence such as corruption, ethnicity, unfair distribution of resources and political violence.

Petrus reveals to Ali that they are partners in crime against their own people. According to Petrus, the police are trained to be loyal to the nation-state and are used as apparatus to perform heinous acts and they are rewarded for keeping silent about all this brutality. Revealing what is in Petrus' mind, the narrator says Petrus had witnessed so many bloodstained transactions; hard cash for souls slaughtered or... power. Petrus tells Ali that they can use money to cello-tape their wounds (263).

Revisiting Tom Mboya's assassination, Owuor attempts to reveal the experiences of the people on the margin, such as Nyipir. Tom Mboya carried the hopes of many in the post-colonial Kenya. Nyipir had taken keen note of him during the independence celebrations as he had been involved in airlifting young Kenyans to America for further studies, in the hope that they would come back to help in the development of the new nation. His assassination diminished the hopes of many Kenyans, particularly those on the margin. Those who dared to speak about the assassination were silenced. The narrator says, "... the core of post-Tom Mboya Kenya had been cracked. Nothing was certain, not even hope. Citizens spoke to one another in whispers, when they spoke at all. When those associated with Tom Mboya and his name were hunted like vermin, there was silence" (234).

Time of Narration

A narrator is always in a specific temporal position relative to the story she or he is telling. The narrator witnesses, remembers, imagines, either in the past or in the present, or participates in the

actions he or she is narrating. Temporality is a usually recognised feature of any narrative since all narratives have some relationship with time. Temporality refers to the means by which a narrator is able to arrange the events that occur within a narrative in an order relative to one another whilst placing those events within a larger framework. Owuor employs both subsequent and simultaneous narration, as the narrator is able to tell what happened in some past time or tell the story at the very moment it occurs.

Based on Genette's definition, in subsequent narration, the narrator tells what happened in some past time. It occurs through the unlimited omniscient narrative voice presented in the text. Thus, it is not only the controlling voice that guides the narrative but also most of the narrators within it employ subsequent narration. In simultaneous narration, narration occurs when a narrator tells a story as it occurs, describing what the characters see around them. Owuor combines the two kinds of time in *Dust* as the narrative moves between the present and the past. Simultaneous narration enables Owuor to narrate the current events while subsequent narration helps in re-living and telling the past.

The events of the narrative that happen between late December 2007 and in early 2008 together with the converging of the characters in Wuoth Ogik and the shooting of Odidi are told in simultaneous narration. The events include the death of Odidi, the post-election violence, the arrival of Isaiah at Wuoth Ogik and Ajany's mission to find out what killed Odidi. This is significant in defining the space and time in which the narrative occurs, but more important is that it reflects on the state of Kenya almost fifty years since independence. The space and time portrays incidents in Kenya such as violence, ethnic hatred, corruption, poverty and state brutality. As the narrator captures a present moment in the narrative, through subsequent narration, she or he keeps on narrating about the past to let the narratee understand the present.

Subsequent narration in *Dust* thus recalls history to tell us about colonial and post-colonial experiences. In narrating Kenya's history, Owuor employs historical presence, whereby she relives the past scenarios and makes the narrative read as if the incidents are happening now. She is able to relive the Mau Mau revolt realities from the perspective of Nyipir, reflect the situations of the colonialists led by Hugh Bolton and Selene, hope and despair during and after independence and highlight issues such as corruption, violence and estrangement that has dogged Kenya to date.

Narrative Perspective

Narrative perspective describes the point of view that the narrator has in relation to the events being told, that is, what the narrator chooses to focus on, to tell, to question, to accept or to deny as being true. It is a perspective from which one witnesses the events of a narrative. Genette coined the term focalisation to mean a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical, entities in the story world (Burkhard Niederhoff, 2011). As for Mieke Bal, focalisation is the relation between the vision and that which is 'seen, perceived' (145). Bal, however, notes that it needs to be known what the focalised object is, with what attitude this object is viewed, and whose focalised object it is.

In studying a narrative perspective, narratologists investigate if the narrator knows more than the characters, if the narrator knows as much as the focal or central character and if the narrator knows less than the other characters. Monika Fludernik (2009), in an attempt to distinguish the three kinds of focalisation, says the zero focalisation perspective is unrestricted or unlimited in contrast to the limitations of internal and external focalisation. In the case of internal perspective, the view is restricted to that of a single character while in that of external perspective the

restriction is to a view of the world from outside, allowing no insight into the inner workings of people's minds.

Genette looks at the omniscient narration as a mode of focalisation where the "narrator knows more than the character, or more exactly than any of the characters know" (189). He uses the term zero focalisation for the God-like knowledge of the omniscient third-person narrator. The narrator moves freely in time and space, inside and outside the characters' minds, and is often not materialised by any physical presence. The omniscient narrator may also be intrusive with his story by throwing comments and remarks to the narratee.

The narrator in *Dust* proves to be reliable as she or he is a keen observer, peers into the minds of the characters, allows the characters to dialogue and keeps intruding with one-word sentences, giving comments in some scenes. Through zero focalisation, the narratee can have a better and detailed knowledge about story events, including what particular characters think about the events. For instance, the reader can understand stories of torture and trauma during the Mau Mau uprising and later in post-colonial Kenya when Nyipir is tortured after Mboya's murder. The reader can recognise how corruption is entrenched in the nation-state through Odidi who, when he attempts to fight it, fails and joins crime in order to survive. Through zero focalisation, we can understand the menace of cattle rustling, poaching and corruption taking place in the northern part of Kenya. The narrator focuses on Nyipir after he retreats to Wuoth Ogik. Nyipir, having been a successful anti-stock theft police officer, easily becomes the main player in the illegal activities and even recruits Ali, the Assistant Police Commissioner. The narrator also reveals the horrific details of post-election violence such as the senseless killings and loss of property.

The significance of zero focalisation in *Dust* is that it allows the unlimited omniscient narrator to

explore the stories objectively unlike in a narrative where the character(s) function as the focalisers. Zero focalisation enables the narrator to manipulate the characters as well as the narratee by the information she or he chooses to provide. The narrator is also able to comment on such historical realities as violence, torture, corruption and assassination, and to peer into the minds of characters such as Nyipir, Akai, Ali, Petrus, and Hugh Bolton to reveal their experiences, which complement the stories on the margin of the nation. While narrating the stories, the narrator also allows the characters to interact and reveal their inner experiences and, as a result, the narratee is able to identify and consume the stories on the margin of the nation-state. Zero focalisation is thus significant in letting the people on the margin of the nation-state tell their ignored and reveal suppressed stories through the objective eyes of the unlimited omniscient narrator.

Conclusion

This Chapter has examined the significance of aspects of narratology such as analepsis, narrative voice, focalisation, and time in narration and how they narrate stories on the margin of the society. The analysis indicates that the use of flashback and unlimited omniscient narrator are significant in recalling Kenya's history to tell the stories on the margin of the nation and voice the silences in official history. I also note that the novel is narrated anachronically as the story occurs in the present but keeps shifting to the past to give us a glimpse of what might have happened from the colonial to the post-colonial period. Owuor uses the identified aspects of narratology to voice and illustrate the silences in the official history of Kenya.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This research project has explored how *Dust* fictionalises history to narrate stories on the margin of the Kenyan nation-state, thus contesting the idea of a unified nation-state as espoused by the official history. Chapters two and three have examined the narration of stories on the margin of Kenya through fictionalisation of history and how the novel reveals and voices the silences in official history. First, I have examined the intersection of history and fiction in narrating stories on the margin of Kenya. Second, I have explored the significance of selected aspects of narratology in rendering these stories.

I have noted that official history focuses on *(re)presentation* of the past as it is mostly occupied with saying what the past was like, but fiction focuses on *showing* the past as it is open to various interpretations. To bring the past to the present, Owuor interweaves fiction and history by creating fictional characters and situations, and juxtaposing them with historical realities in Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Therefore, she illustrates how fiction may be used to foreground what official history suppresses, that is, the marginal, ‘other’ personal histories that form part of the country’s history. She relies not only on facts but also on imagination to create a narrative that readers can relate to by filling in the historical gaps.

While there are still many critical concerns about how the history of a country is narrated, my aim in this study was to show that fictionalisation of history is significant in the narration of stories of the people on margins of a nation’s mainstream and in revealing and voicing silences in official history. I have argued that fiction is central in recollecting the past as it gives writers room to explore alternative stories uncovered or ignored by history.

I have also argued that although official history presents Kenya as a homogenous nation-state, Owuor's *Dust* depicts stories on the margin of the country from the point of view of ordinary people. Owuor deliberately uses ordinary characters such as Nyipir to represent Kenyans whose stories are ignored when fashioning the nation's narrative. The stories of Nyipir, Ali, Odidi, Akai, and Petrus reveal torture that has been rife in Kenya since colonialism and other evils such as corruption, ethnic hatred, exclusion, murders and betrayals.

During colonialism, Africans perceived to be rebels were arrested, tortured, imprisoned and even killed, especially during the Mau Mau uprising. This trend went on after independence as the post-colonial government sought to silence those that threatened its (mis)rule. At independence, citizens had hoped for a better country as there were rallied calls to unite the country through peace, love and hard work. Citizens were urged to forgive and forget past injustices and engage in nation-building (Atieno Odhiambo and Lonsdale, 2003). However, this turned out to be a great disappointment as the elite engaged in amassing wealth in the name of 'hard work'. Those who spoke against corruption and misuse of power were branded as lazy while those who were perceived as a real threat to the continued plunder of country's wealth were arrested, tortured and even killed. The regimes deployed police officers to silence the dissidents. Those who kept silent were regarded as loyal and, therefore, rewarded.

Fifty years attainment of independence, Owuor depicts corruption as a norm in the post-colonial Kenya, as represented by the story of Odidi and the police officers such as Aaron and Ali. To depict alienation, Owuor locates the narrative in the northern margins of Kenya. Characters feel estranged from the 'real Kenya' where the government is based. As a result, they carry on with clandestine activities such as poaching, cattle rustling and trading in contraband goods.

Owuor also dwells on the assassinations in post-colonial Kenya, particularly that of Tom Mboya. After the murder of Mboya, those who were angered and spoke out were arrested and some tortured to death. The government instituted amnesia and silence through oaths as a way of controlling the nation-state. Although the people were silenced, their memory recorded the incidents that they would later tell. Thus, through characters' memory, fiction counters and challenges official history. Due to repression and oppression through silencing, emotions of anger and vengeance bottled and were compressed only to explode and manifest in the form of the 2007-2008 post-election violence that ripped Kenya apart.

As Owuor narrates colonial and post-colonial historical realities, she uses various aspects of narratology such as analepses, omniscient narrative voice and narrative time to present stories of on the margin of Kenya. Although the narrative is set between December 2007 and early 2008, it keeps shifting from the present to the past through flashback. Using subsequent and simultaneous narration, the narrative captures the historical events and creates scenes to depict these periods. The narrative also uses an omniscient narrative voice that is aware of the occurrences and characters' thoughts and views on the events happening. Thus, the non-linear and fragmented organisation of the narrative becomes effective means for Owuor to communicate the stories on the margin. The aspects of narratology therefore reveal that the stories on the margin though they are neglected or silence, they are as equally important in constituting the nation-state.

Having examined how fiction recalls history to tell stories on the margin, it is my conclusion that *Dust* disavows the idea of the Kenyan nation-state as a homogenous entity as presented in the official history. Instead, it seems to suggest strongly that modern Kenya is made up of stories that official history considers insignificant, but which form part of its history.

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