THE THEME OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SELECTED POST-INDEPENDENCE KENYAN LITERARY TEXTS

BY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To Weslay, a man for all seasons,

and to my father whose blessed memory I cherish.

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Definition of Key Terms

Below are definitions of key terms as used in this study.

Human Rights: The study adopts L. Henkin's definition that human rights are those benefits deemed essential for individual well-being, dignity and fulfilment, and that reflect a common sense of justice, fairness and decency. Human rights are values that inhere within human nature and they characterise the basic aspirations of every rational society. Human rights are rights people strive for everyday despite their race, nationality, tribe, class, religion, sex, culture, history, geography, marital status, or state of economic development.

Human dignity: This refers to the idea that a human being has an innate right to be valued, respected, and to receive ethical treatment. In this work it is used to suggest cases in which a human being is not receiving a proper degree of respect from others, or even an incidence in which one is failing to treat oneself with proper self-respect.

Justice: This is the concept of fairness and justness. This study refers to the following types four of justice:

a) Procedural justice relates to the study and application of the law.

b) Distributive justice is concerned with what is distributed, between whom it is to be distributed, and what is the proper distribution. It is the justice that is concerned with the apportionment of privileges, duties, and goods in consonance with the merits of the individual and in the best interest of society. It relates to the concept of equality.

c) Retributive justice is concerned with punishment for wrongdoing.

d) Restorative justice or "reparative justice" is kind of justice that focuses on the needs of victims and offenders as is evident in the empowerment and transformation of criminals in prison.

Abstract

This study sets out to analyse the theme of human rights in post-independence Kenyan literature. It examines the form and content of five Kenyan novels: Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*, Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*, Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*, Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. The study is motivated by a paucity of critical works relating to the issues of human rights in Kenyan literature, yet this perspective which involves examining the theme of human rights is crucial to deepening the understanding of Kenyan literature. The study aims at demonstrating that the writers' backgrounds influence their presentation of the theme of human rights, analysing issues of human rights in the novels, and showing how the novels explore these issues. It is assumed that the writers' background influence their presentation of the theme of human rights, that analysis of the novels best brings out the issues of human rights presented in them, and that such presentation is done artistically.

The study has used library research as the dominant methodology but it has also been enriched by information from one writer, Kinyanjui Kombani, who was interviewed. It relies on the close textual reading of the five novels and adopts two approaches to literary criticism: biographical theory and formalism which focus on biographical information of the novelists and formal elements of the novels respectively.

The study, deriving its conclusions exclusively from the novelists and their novels under study, finds out that the Kenyan novelists are concerned with issues of human rights. Aspects of the novel – story, plot, character, point of view, and style – contribute to the presentation of the theme of human rights in the novels.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background to the Study

Commenting on the urgency of human rights discourse, Eleni Coundouriotis and Lauren Goodlad observe that "human rights will remain central to many contemporary debates – from the global economy to the environment, gay marriage, human trafficking, and cultural and religious nationalism" (121). Discourse on human rights in the recent past has tended to take on a multi-disciplinary approach. As such it is important to explore the nature of relationship between literature and human rights, the pertinent issue in this case being what literary studies can contribute to scholarship on human rights. Existing scholarship has linked developments in human rights discourse to literature, especially the narrative forms – the novel, memoir and testimony as is evident in the studies by Coundouriotis and Goodlad, Joseph Slaughter, Lynn Hunt, James Dawes, and Kerry Bystrom. For instance Dawes argues that the novel as an artistic form is "dependent upon a certain conception of the human…that is likely also to be a prerequisite for the modern, liberal conception of (natural, equal and universal) human rights" (397). To this end, this study agrees with Dawes that human rights work, especially advocacy, entails story-telling. If we take this to be the case, then, we can naturally argue that the narrative genres play an important part in intervening in issues of human rights.

Kerry Bystrom points out the capability of imaginative literature to "create bonds of empathy and connection, draw national and international attention to human rights abuses, and denounce the exclusion of certain individuals and groups from the protections afforded by international human rights law" (388). In the same vein, Ben Davis suggests that literature is a means of encountering other people's stories, of fostering empathy, and inspiring imagination. For Davis, literature can open one's eyes to the reality of others and to a realisation that humanity shares one world. Both Bystrom and Davis imply the concept of literary humanitarianism, the idea that "the reader may fulfil a humanitarian act by reading a story of suffering" (Jeniffer Rickel, iv).

Rickel further posits that human rights are a dominant framework through which we narrate and read political violence in contemporary literature concerning Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian subcontinent. However, while the language of human rights as enshrined in the law and international human rights documents is a preserve of the elite, I agree with Javangwe and Tagwirei that literature does free human rights discourse off the legalese, making it accessible to the ordinary citizens. Therefore, the reader of a novel can interact with human rights without the burden that comes with legalistic terms.

Literature is both autonomous and reflective. A literary work has a life of its own independent of the writer and context of writing. Yet, the literary writer is a product of the society, shaped by the experiences and happenings of the society. The writer, however, does not reproduce the society in literature; a literary work is a new creation not a photographic imitation of the social events or experiences. The writer who is shaped by society in turn shapes it, transforming or transcending its experiences and often suggesting ways and means of improving it. In Reidulf Molvaer's words, literature reflects the life and spirit of a people since writers hold a mirror up to their society: "A society finds expression through its authors, and in this way it is the co-author of literary works...In its literature and art a society reveals its "soul" (ix).

Good literature edifies; it seeks to improve human well-being. It must of necessity embody human rights and participate in articulating violation or promotion of these rights since human rights are values for which every rational society aspires. Indeed Javangwe and Tagwirei assert that human rights are a dominant theme in proverbs, song, folklore, poetry, drama and fiction" (22). Similarly, Jenny Cockrill, Stephanie Hall, and Rebecca Long in their course "Understanding Human Rights through Literature" assert that literature can cultivate a better understanding of human rights through critical evaluation of characters, analysis of scenarios, and examination of diverse historical voices. It is against this background, of the relationship between literature and human rights, that the study sets out to analyse the theme of human rights in five novels: *Kill Me Quick*, *The Last Villains of Molo, Coming to Birth, Three Days on the Cross*, and *Petals of Blood*. It considers the social context of the novels and the novelists since human rights are a lived societal experience. There is the need to contextualise the novels within the lived experience of the writers who produced them to demonstrate that social experiences influence the writers' presentation of human rights in the novels. The study acknowledges the autonomy of these novels therefore additionally focusing on the formal elements like plot, story, setting, character, point of view and style to find out how the novelists artistically explore the theme of human rights.

Statement of the Problem

This study analyses the theme of human rights in five novels – Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*, Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*, Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth,* Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, and Ngugi's wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* – from biographical and formalist perspectives. A reading of post-independence Kenyan novels reveals commitment to human rights, but available literary scholarship on Kenyan literature indicates a paucity of critical works relating to the issues of human rights in Kenyan literature. Yet this perspective, which involves examining the theme of human rights, is crucial to deepening the understanding of Kenyan literature.

Justification of the Study

Previous studies on the five novels selected for this study – *Kill Me Quick*, *The Last Villains of Molo*, *Coming to Birth*, *Three Days on the Cross,* and *Petals of Blood* – have focused on socio-political issues such as disillusionment, poor governance and the resultant issues of corruption, poverty, unemployment, violence, poor and inadequate amenities, and the struggle for freedom. None of these studies has analysed the theme of human rights in the novels. Previous literary studies have discussed formal aspects of the novels but none of them has explored how the formal aspects enhance portrayal of the theme of human rights in these novels. Moreover, there is no study so far that has brought the five novels together for analysis. This study thus provides a new light in the criticism of the novels. The study therefore seeks to fill in the gap created by paucity or lack of scholarly discourse on human rights as a concern for the Kenyan novels. In so doing the study forms a basis for other studies on literature and human rights.

Objectives

The study aims to

a) Demonstrate that the backgrounds of the writers influence the presentation of the theme of human rights in the selected novels,
b) analyse issues of human rights explored in the selected novels, and

c) show how formal aspects of the novel contribute to the portrayal of issues of human rights in the selected novels.

Hypotheses

The study investigates the hypotheses that

a) the background of the writers influenced the presentation of the theme of human rights in these novels,

b) analysis of the selected novels best reveals issues of human rights explored in them, and

c) the writers of the selected novels artistically explore issues of human rights.

Literature Review

In this section I present studies on literature and human rights in general as well as specific studies on socio-political issues and on the form of the selected novels with a view to contextualising the current study and establishing a gap for this study to fill.

Literature and Human Rights

The study benefitted from several studies on literature and human rights. One such study is Javangwe and Tagwirei's "A Literary Approach to Human Rights Discourse: the Case of Zimbabwean Literature". The study, which draws from selected Shona folktales and some written literary texts, concludes that literature uses images and language in such a way that makes human rights accessible. The tales embody values that resonate with modern understanding of human rights. Javangwe and Tagwirei further observe that Shona Folk Tales (1987) provides insight into cultural heritage that has laid the foundation of what are now recognised as human rights in Zimbabwean constitution. Significantly, the study also points out that literature can be used to justify human rights abuse. It does so by citing how imperialist narratives by such writers as Joseph Conrad, rider Haggard and Joyce Cary justified the violation of human rights in pre-colonial Africa.

Rickel in her “Narrative States: Human Rights Discourse in Contemporary Literature” concludes that the potential of post-colonial literature is “not in staging humanitarian resolutions but in interrogating the frameworks that sustain imperialism” (200). She further argues that literature can facilitate critical analysis of structural inequalities and imagine new possibilities for the human” (201). Rickel’s study is important to the current one in giving insight into analysis of human rights that relate to imperialism especially in *Ngugi’s Petals of Blood*.

Dawes’ “Human Rights in Literary Studies” notes that the use of individual stories depicting inhumane treatment is important in supporting the human rights regime which in the long run may limit suffering. Dawes is here suggesting that literature participates in creating a consciousness for human rights which ultimately contributes to lessening human rights abuses. Dawe’s argument, though outside the scope of this study, is important in as far as it links human rights to stories of human suffering.

Another idea relating to the relationship between literature and human rights is advanced by Zsuzsanna Lucskay in “The Role of Literature in Human Rights: Studying the Art of the Novel through the Texts of Milan Kundera, J. M. Coetzee and Ernesto Sabato”. Lucskay argues that literature can illuminate on human nature and existence in its fullness. This means that literature has a “crucial role in understanding humanity and consequently the principles of moral propriety defined in human rights. The novel brings us closer to human rights” (1). Lucskay’s study enlightens the current one whose basic thesis is that literature embodies human rights.

Andrea McEvoy Spero carried out research on the use of performance arts to teach about human rights in an urban high school setting. He concluded that the approach was unique and powerful as “The students felt performance and creative art had the potential to capture people’s attention thereby providing an opportunity for students to share a message. The process and the product clearly reflected the goals of Human Rights Education” (141). Indeed Spero advocates for inclusion of performance arts in the implementation of Human Rights Education curriculum. Spero’s work differs from the current study in that it centred performance art, but it enlightens the current work in its call for a literary approach to human rights thereby implying that literature, as a creative work, presents human rights.

The studies presented here though significant to the study at hand, privilege the discourse of human rights, not literature as an art form. They do not discuss how form contributes to the portrayal of content which is human rights in nature. Furthermore, the study did not establish any existing studies on human rights in Kenyan literature in general and the five selected novels in particular. I therefore proceed to spell out significant studies on the socio-political issues and form of the selected novels.

Socio-Political Studies on the Selected Novels

Literary scholarship has focused on the socio-political issues in the each of the five novels. On *Kill Me Quick*, Rodger Kurtz says that the novel focuses on problems of urban environment: the problems of street children, unemployment, cynicism, disillusionment and despair. Segun Akinyode's "Social Cause, Consequence and Commitment in African Fiction: A focus on Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*" refers to the novel as a photographic representation of the emerging urban setups in Africa. Ayobami Kehinde observes that critical opinion indicates that Mwangi has succeeded in focusing his creative attention on essential social issues – injustice, hunger, oppression, exploitation and harrowing poverty. Likewise Ayo Kehinde's "Post-Independence Disillusionment in Contemporary African Fiction: The Example of Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*" views Meja Mwangi as a socio-political writer whose commitment in *Kill Me Quick* is to expose the challenges and problems of neo-colonial Kenya. He refers to *Kill Me Quick* as a "chronicle of the existential and societal realities of the neo-colonial Kenyan nation and therefore a national allegory". He further observes that

> Kenya, the referent society of the text, has been enmeshed since 1963 in the crucible of deaths and births, agony, poverty, dehumanisation and starvation. These, despite their differentiating phraseologies, work towards the same objective: the vitiation of human dignity. Hence, *Kill Me Quick*, like many other postcolonial African novels, reveals an atmosphere of fear, hate, humiliation and an aura of repression, in forms of arrest, exile and execution. It highlights the dictatorial and oppressive tendencies of the imperialists and neo-colonial rulers in African nations. (3)

This study appropriates Kurtz, Segun, and Kehinde's analyses of the social issues that ail Kenya in general and Nairobi in particular. I agree with Kehinde's assertion that *Kill Me Quick* is a reflection of the epoch of its production; it captures the problems of urban Kenya in the 1970s, a time when the gap between the haves and have nots was sharply widening.

Kehinde refers to Meja Mwangi as a humanist and a naturalist. Mwangi's fiction shows him to be a humanist because human concerns like class and gender inequality remain largely foregrounded in the novel. In consequence, in *Kill Me Quick,* Mwangi's thematic focus centres on the portrayal of the terrifying, the painful, and a common insistence on postcolonial disillusionment. As a naturalist, he observes the panoramic view of his society and fictionalises it as it is. He exposes his society's filth, decay, contradictions and conflicts with a view to presenting a true picture of it. Kehinde's analysis of Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* is relevant to the current study because it discusses human rights issues without necessarily using the term "human rights". It further places Mwangi and his novel within the social circumstances of postcolonial disillusionment. However there still remains a gap unfilled: the evaluation of the postcolonial disillusionment as characterised by issues human rights violated or defended. It is this evaluation which is at the centre of the current study.

Ignatius Khan Ticha comments on the theme of poverty in *Kill Me Quick* referring to its impact as "dehumanising and deadening" (223). He says that Mwangi strives to alleviate poverty by making the characters who are poor make fatal choices and surrender to death; this, according to Ticha, "rather than being proof of weakness, is also an indication of strength as it shows their stoicism and courageous resignation to or acceptance of unavoidable fate, having done what they can to resist it" (223). While I agree with Ticha's reference to the dehumanising and deadening effect of poverty, an analysis which hints at human rights, this study seeks to prove the contrary: that the characters' surrender to death constitutes a failure to assert their right to meaningful means of livelihood which can alleviate poverty.

Reviews on Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* centre the socio-political issues in the novel. These reviews relate the novel to the tribal clashes in Kenya especially in the Rift Valley. John Mwazemba claims that *The Last Villains of Molo* is a prophecy come true for the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya though it is itself a tale of the 1992 tribal clashes. James Murua similarly says, "if you want to know about the "clashes" of Rift Valley that wracked Kenya, this is an invaluable read" (1). Mbugua Ngunjiri equally says that the novel tackles the theme of ethnic clashes. It can be argued that Kombani foresaw the 2007 Post-Election Violence. The association of the novel with the two historical events is important to this study which intends to examine the portrayal of human rights issues in the light of the writer's biographical information part of which is the historical period in which the writers, in this case, Kombani, grew up.

Critical works on Oludhe Macgoye focus on socio-political issues in *Coming to Birth* as is evident in the works of James Ogude, Violet Barasa, and Tom Mboya. Ogude asserts that the political period depicted in Macgoye's novel is one before and after independence "fraught with fears and frustrations, and disillusionment with Uhuru" (11). This study borrows from Ogude's assertion as it identifies the political conditions in which the novel is situated but the study goes a step further to analyse the human rights issues embedded in the fears, frustrations and disillusionment with independence.

According to Barasa, a reading of *Coming to Birth* indicates that Paulina's story and the country's history interweave; they are developed alongside each other. She notes that there is no way Paulina's story can be developed without the history of the country being mentioned since the historical events and changes, for instance assassinations, detentions and killings, trigger change in Paulina’s life. She further observes that Macgoye foregrounds aspects of Kenyan political events in *Coming to Birth* that are relevant to helping develop the story of Paulina and that of the country. The novel explores the struggle for independence in the colonial period by citizens and later the betrayal of the common people in the post-independence period. Barasa’s study is worthy of mention since it relates the events of the story in *Coming to Birth* to political and historical issues in Kenya which form the necessary background information to the analysis of the theme of human rights. This study disagrees with Barasa’s claim that Paulina’s and Kenya’s stories interweave and are developed alongside each other but agrees with Mboya’s argument that Macgoye “relegates history to the background which in turn gives her space to focus on and develop Paulina’s story” (35). The story of *Coming to Birth* is more of Paulina’s story than it is Kenya’s story. As I agree with Barasa that the novel documents historical events, I further show that such events as political assassinations, detentions, and wife beating are issues of human rights infringement, and that Paulina’s maturity is a form of growth in her human rights consciousness.

Scholarship on Wahome Mutahi’s *Three Days on the Cross* has placed the novel within the Kenyan history of political oppression of the 1980s manifested through arbitrary arrests, detentions and torture of suspected members of the underground Mwakenya Movement while in police custody or in prison. Kurtz says that the story alludes to the detentions surrounding the Mwakenya scare of the 1980s when the Kenyan government claimed to have uncovered an underground movement committed to the overthrow of the government. In his paper "Where the Actual and the Fictional Share a Bed in Wahome Mutahi’s *Three Days on the Cross*", Kennedy Waliaula examines the intercourse between the actual and the fictional in *Three Days on the Cross*. He notes that the author’s refusal in his disclaimer to admit that his fictional work represents his own sentient prison experience is a tactical rhetorical device that enables Mutahi to tacitly narrativise his prison experience without appearing to be doing so. For Waliaula, this conclusion is not only premised on the theoretical assumption that all novels are autobiographies or autobiographical, a supposition supported by among other critics Olney, Nietzsche, and Gusdorf; but also based on the fact that there are far too many concrete resemblances between the author Wahome Mutahi and Ongudipe Chipota, a key character in the novel and between the unnamed country and Mutahi's own native Kenya to escape any perspicuous reader's attention. Moreover, in an interview with Index on Censorship 1992, Wahome Mutahi revealed that for his novel, he copied directly from experience: "Everything in the book happened to me personally…I didn't make anything up. It's all true" (par. 2). The current study utilises Waliula's conviction that *Three Days on the Cross* is a fiction that reads like Wahome Mutahi's experience in jail and the circumstance therein are similar to the circumstances of Kenya in 1980s and 1990s. The current study, however, further examines the prison experiences portrayed in the novel in the light of the theme of human rights.

Waliaula in his dissertation "The Incarcerated Self: Narratives of Political Confinement in Kenya" asserts that the fictional world in *Three Days on the Cross* corresponds to the actual Kenyan world during President Moi's reign:

> The remarkable resemblances between Mutahi's fictional text and the Kenyan context within which he lived and wrote are unmistakable. Within the tale of torture and murder is the subtext of potholes on the roads, of endemic corruption, religious hypocrisy, land grabbing, sycophancy, distrust, illegal abortions, university students' riots and ruthless police reaction to that, and a host of negative day-today realities that are perhaps still clearly recognizable to Kenyan readers but were more recognizable in the twilight years of Moi's rule when the story was written. Not that these aspects of society were unique to Kenya, but they helped situate the fictional world in the actual Kenyan world. (329)

Waliaula's observations are illuminating of the current study by showing that Mutahi's life experiences influenced his writing of *Three Days on the Cross*. The current study however moves further to suggest that Mutahi recounts human rights violations because his arrest and imprisonment violated his rights.

Mathew Karauri's thesis refers to Mutahi's three novels, *Three Days on the Cross*, *The Jail Bugs* and *Doomsday*, as political novels. According to Karauri, Mutahi in *Three Days on the Cross* reveals the mechanisms of oppression induced by dictatorial regime in an African state through the insightful description of the state police system. Index on Censorship 1992 commenting on the brutality of security forces says that the use of torture to elicit confession from political dissents, a routine feature in Kenyan political life, is nowhere better illustrated than in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*. While agreeing with this assertion, the current study goes further to categorise the oppression and torture as abuse of human rights and to evaluate how the author advocates for a politically and socially better society devoid of human rights abuses.

Critical works on Ngugi's novel *Petals of Blood* have equally concentrated on the novel's socio-political issues. Bruce King says that for Ngugi historical incidents provide at a conscious level the material from which the creative work is moulded and therefore, it is best to approach Ngugi's works as explorations into history conducted through the medium and conventions of fiction. David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe assert that the image of Ngugi is that of a man who identifies himself with a progressive line of thought concerning all pressing social issues of his time, and who eagerly deploys every means at his disposal to further the views and policies that he advocates. Cook and Okenimkpe further note that

Ngugi's fiction and polemical writings, his activities and his lifestyle all reinforce this image. Similarly, Kurtz observes that all Ngugi's works have in common a preoccupation with Kenyan social and political issues. This current study borrows from the foregoing argument that Ngugi relies on the historical incidents in his society to create his works and therefore, *Petals of Blood* is not an exception to this practice. This study, however, goes ahead to demonstrate that Ngugi uses the historical circumstances to artistically explore issues of human rights in *Petals of Blood*.

Wole Ogundele and Eustace Palmer view *Petals of Blood* as a critique of imperialism and capitalism. Ogundele says that the novel narrates how external imperialism was converted, upon independence, into an internal one and that the leaders of the independent state could have avoided this if they chose to do so. Palmer similarly observes: "Of all African novels…*Petals of Blood* probably presents the most comprehensive analysis to date of the evils perpetrated in independent African society by Black imperialists and capitalists" (228). At the launching of the novel, Ngugi agreed with this argument and hinted that

> imperialism…can never develop a country or a people. This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*: that imperialism can never develop us, Kenyans. In doing so, I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realized as shown by their historical struggles since 1895. (95)

Palmer further notes that the novel deals with neo-colonialism in all its manifestations: oppression, exploitation, social abuse and injustice, and thus "it probes the history of the heroic struggles of the people of Kenya, from pre-colonial times to the present day, within a comprehensive cultural perspective which embraces the political, religious, economic and social life of Kenya" (34). Chijioke Uwasomba makes the observation that the economic deprivation and ruthless dispossession of the peasants finds its most effective symbol in the degradation of Wanja, the barmaid, who rises from prostitution to economic independence and womanhood but is forced back to the humiliating status of a prostitute who sells her body because nothing is obtained free, and the slogan becomes "eat or be eaten" (101). He compares the Ilmorog delegation to the revolutionary-minded masses in Ousmane's *Gods Bits of Wood*; they march to the city in search of their representative. This march and its accompanying achievement mark a turning point in the lives of the exploited segment of Kenyan society in general (100). Ngugi hopes that out of *Petals of Blood*, Kenyans might gather "petals of revolutionary love" (94). I agree with Ngugi and the three critics, Ogundele, Palmer, and Uwasomba, that *Petals of Blood* documents the evils levelled against the peasants and working class but I intend to go further to show that these economic crimes constitute human rights abuse and that the march to the city is a demonstration of awareness of infringement of one's human rights as well as a means of seeking redress.

James Stephen Robson, like Palmer, says that *Petals of Blood* is an attack on neo-colonialism and its betrayal of the people. He identifies betrayal on two levels: personal betrayal of the four protagonists of the novel who have become exiles in their own country and political betrayal by the "parasitical national bourgeoisie who abuse and exploit those that they have sworn to protect" (iv). This study agrees with Robson on the socio-economic betrayal of the people but points out that the betrayal impinges on the economic rights of the people.

Kurtz refers to *Petals of Blood* as "an example of disillusionment literature" (44) meaning it recounts the frustrations with the neo-colonial experience. It not only presents disillusionment but it also offers an overt political commentary criticising the corruption of the post-colonial Kenyan society and calling for collective resistance by peasants and workers. This study agrees with Kurtz on the political involvement of the novel but goes further to analyse the abuse of human rights entailed in the corruption and the defence of human rights embodied in the collective resistance.

Having looked at socio-political studies on the five novels; we are going to turn our attention to existing formalist analyses on these novels.

Formalist Analysis of the Selected Novels

In the case of *Kill Me Quick*, Kurtz comments on the urban setting of the novel. He says that this setting allows for objectification of women as sex objects as “everyone and everything is objectified and prostituted in this dehumanised urban setting. I agree with Kurtz that the urban setting suits the story of dehumanised characters but I go further to show that this kind of setting is “favourable” for human rights abuses that the novel explores.

Mac Kemoli and Philip Etyang’s studies focus on characterisation in *Kill Me Quick*. Kemoli says that the characters in this novel are alienated from all means of production. While I agree with him I argue further that the alienation constitutes a form of abuse of the economic rights of the characters as these characters lack legal means of meeting the basic needs. Etyang’s study of the characters focuses on the negative portrayal of the female characters in the novel specifically Sarah and Delilah. I agree with him that Sarah is portrayed as a sex object and Delilah as a betrayer of Maina’s love. However, the study at hand concerns itself with the material and moral depravation of characters, both male and female as issues of human rights.

Wegesa Busolo’s criticism of Mwangi’s *Kill Me Quick* relates to the style in the novel. Busolo concludes that the novel’s use of dialogue makes the writer over-rely on speech and fail to explore the characters’ thoughts thereby portraying them as trapped in situations from which they cannot extract themselves. To this end, I agree with Busolo that Mwangi hardly sees beyond fatalism of his characters. I however add that this failure to see beyond fatalism is a result of characters’ helplessness in the face of abuses of human rights.

Joseph Slaughter referring to *Coming to Birth* as a bildungsroman – a novel of growing up – shows how this subgenre helps Macgoye to account for Paulina and Kenya’s growth and maturity. This study borrows from Slaughter’s identification of the novel as bildungsroman but it further examines how the sub-genre is suited to the portrayal of the theme of human rights. I make a claim that a bildungsroman affords a story the space to recount a character’s growth in terms of that character’s ability to recognise issues of human rights.

Kurtz in “Post-Marked Nairobi: Wring the City in the Contemporary Kenya” evaluates the significance of the setting in *Coming to Birth*. He says the city setting has a double effect on the main character, Paulina: by nature it is a male-dominated space which at first causes confusion in Paulina, but eventually the city is a place for Paulina”s personal emancipation from traditional restrictions. It is in an urban setting that Paulina grows from the naïve, shy girl unable to trace her way in the confusion of the city maze the reader encounters at the beginning of the story to the independent, confident and assertive woman who has come off age and has the capacity to create a life of her own. Kurtz’s analysis of the setting is significant to this study, but I depart from it to focus on how the city exposes Paulina to human rights abuses and also give her the possibility to develop a language (Kiswahili and English) and learn skills that enhance her independence and therefore promotion of her rights.

In *Urban Fears Urban Obsessions* Kurtz says that women in Macgoye's novels are symbols of nationhood; he proceeds to explain the symbolism of births in the novel. At the end of the novel Paulina is expecting a baby, a case which is a triumph over her previous miscarriages and which also signifies the "birth of a new nation and the hopes for a new and better society" (153). The third birth in the novel is that of Paulina herself into maturation. This study agrees with Kurtz's analysis of the symbols but moves on to treat the births as symbols of human rights fulfilment.

On *Three Days on the Cross,* Patrick Mutahi comments on the character role in the novel saying that Chipota is a character who opposes the oppressive regime by maintaining his innocence even in the face of torture; the novel should therefore be read as a "scathing attack and criticism of the government's repression of dissenting voices, and a critique of both the rotten judicial system and the appalling conditions in prison" (86). Muindu Japheth Peter, Gladys Kinara, and Anne Jose say that Mutahi does not stop at lining up the rot in the society but goes a step further to suggest the way out of the political repression by investing compassion and a strong will in some characters, which shield them from mental breakdown. Mutahi presents characters that articulate his revolutionary sentiments. This study agrees with these observations with regard to the characters but it gives an in-depth analysis of how the government violate the rights of the characters and how the characters in turn assert their rights.

Chris Wasike in "The Use of Satire in Fiction" says that satire plays an important role in the overall aesthetic meaning of *Three Days on the Cross;* it brings out themes like politics, police brutality and religious hypocrisy. The author mocks and ridicules the wrong doer while at the same time using his characters as mouthpieces through which he makes his social commentary. Kurtz similarly comments on Mutahi's use of irony and humour: "Mutahi's unique trait in *Three Days on the Cross* is his ability to tell a story of absolute corruption with a heavy dose of irony and humour" (61). I agree with Wasike and Kurtz that *Three Days on the Cross* is satirical, but I go further and analyse the satire in relation to the way it portrays the theme of human rights.

Studies on form in *Petals of Blood* include Gichingiri Ndigirigi's which focuses on the name symbolism and characters names in the novel. Gichingiri maintains that the novel makes use of characters who symbolise the social reality that the novel depicts. Ogundele discusses the character symbolism saying that Wanja personifies the land and is a reincarnation of the mythical Mumbi and therefore her problems are indeed problems of the land: Wanja's "many exiles from and returns to the community, and all her tribulations in the hands of members of the comprador class in the city become composite allegory of the land's suffering from colonial times to the postcolonial present" (128). For Ogundele, Abdulla is the mythical Gikuyu and therefore his union with Wanja at the end of the novel is a return to the birth of the Kikuyu community. This study accepts that characters and some character names are symbolic and that the novel makes use of typicality in characters, but it goes a step further to show that this strategy in characterisation enables the writer to represent, on the one hand, the oppressors and therefore abusers of human rights and on the other hand, the oppressed: those whose rights the oppressors have abused.

Ogundele also suggests that the setting of *Petals of Blood* is symbolic: there are archetypal symbols of the city as the centre, state, and the country as the margin, community. The outcome of the archetypal conflict is the death of the country, Ilmorog, and its re-birth into a working class community. The city triumphs over the country. This criticism is important to the current study as it shows the infiltration of Ilmorog by the city but I move further to show that this infiltration is characterised by the comprador class undermining the economic rights of the peasantry.

Maneesh Rai's criticism of *Petals of Blood* focuses on language use with a view to proving that Ngugi uses words and images from his native tongue to show that language is inextricably tied to the identity of a people. The study at hand takes a different angle to the study of the *Petals of Blood*: it examines the theme of human rights and how language use contributes to the portrayal of this theme.

The literature review has established gaps in knowledge: previous research evidently treats the selected novels as socio-political novels, dealing with political, social and economic injustices against people. The studies, however, do not examine the novels with regard to the theme of human rights. In cases where the studies have used a formalist approach, the formal elements are not linked to the presentation of the theme of human rights. None of the studies reviewed had the analysis of the five novels together. This current study sets out to accomplish the task which is missing in previous ones.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses biographical and formalist theories in the analysis of the five novels. Biographical perspective aids the study in as far as contextualising the selected novelists and their novels is concerned. The formalist perspective provides for the analysis of the formal aspects of the novels for better comprehension of how the writers explore the theme of human rights in each novel.

Catherine Wishart observes that biographical theory is a critical approach to literature which uses information about a writer's life and background to better understand the writer's literary works. Biographical theory is associated with the work of Samuel Johnson and Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. Its historical roots date back to Samuel Johnson who in 1779 researched on poets utilising truthful accounts of their lives to understand nuances in their writing. It begins with the insight that literature is a product of actual people and as such understanding the writer's life can help readers more thoroughly understand the literary texts. Biographical critics see it necessary to know about a writer and the political, economic, and sociological context of the writer in order to truly understand the writer's literature. The approach focuses on links between the content of a literary work and the writer's life, often using the writer's intentions, experiences, motives, and beliefs to interpret the writer's literary texts.

Robert DiYanni identifies three tenets of biographical theory. The first ones states that understanding a writer's background can help readers interpret a literary text. The social structure or way of life of the author's time period gives greater depth from which to understand the story and draw conclusions. Discovering details about the author's life and times also provides a way to further develop ideas about interpreting the story.

The second tenet is that understanding a writer's struggles or difficulties in creating a literary text can help readers appreciate a text. Thinking about different alternative titles a writer may have considered for a particular text, for example, can lead a critic to focus on different aspects of a literary work, especially to emphasise different incidents and to value the viewpoints of different characters.

The third tenet focuses on the need to study the way literary writers apply and modify their own life experiences in their literary works can help readers understand the writer. The literary biographer seeks to discover information about the writer, the characteristic ways of thinking, perceiving, and feeling that may be revealed more honestly and thoroughly in the writer's literary work than in the writer's conscious non-literary statements. Moreover, what we discover about a writer from the study of the writer's literary works can "be linked with an understanding of the writer's world, and thus serve as a bridge to an appreciation of the social and cultural contexts in which the writer lived" (DiYanni 1584).

Biographical perspective has the advantage of working well for literary works which are obviously political or biographical in nature as it places allusions in their proper classical, political, historical or literary backgrounds. It, however, has the disadvantage of falling into intentional fallacy: a case where the critic seeks to interpret a text in the light of what that critic believes was the writer's aim of writing the text. A biographical critic tends to reduce literary art to the level of biography and make it relative rather than universal one. To avoid this pitfall, DiYanni suggests that the biographical perspective “should be used judiciously, keeping the focus on the literary work and using biographical information [only] to clarify understanding and to develop an interpretation” (1584). This forms the point of intersection for biographical and formalist perspectives as both keep focus on the literary work to enhance interpretation of meaning.

In addition to the biographical perspective, the study uses formalism. In “Literary Theory” formalism refers primarily to the work of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language founded in 1916 in St. Petersburg by Boris Eichenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, and Yury Tynyanov, and secondarily to the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded in 1914 by Roman Jackobson. Russian Formalists were interested in the analysis of the text but their main concern was with method as the scientific basis for literary theory. There was thus a shift away from the moral approach to literature towards a scientific approach. John Peck and Martin Coyle point out that formalism started as an activity interested in the scientific examination of style. Paul Fry explains this scientific approach of the formalists to be the Darwinian science in which strategies of literariness struggle for dominance against each other.

“Literary Theory” states that the term "formalism" derives from one of the central tenets of formalist thought: that the form of a work of literature is inherently a part of its content, and that the attempt to separate the two is fallacious. By focusing on literary form and excluding contexts, formalists believe that it would be possible to trace the evolution and development of literary forms, and thus, literature itself.

According to “Literary Theory” formalism has the following four tenets. The first one is that a literary text is the sum total of its devices, form and content, fabula (story) and siuzhet (plot) cannot be separated. What a work of literature says cannot be separated from how that literary work says it, and therefore the form and structure of a work, far from being merely the decorative wrapping of the content, is in fact an integral part of the content of the work. Formalism is concerned with the meaningfulness of artistic devices; the core of the text is not its theme but its devices. The emphasis on the actual processes of the presentation of a literary text is known as “laying bare” its own devices. According to Shklovsky, the most essential literary thing a novel can achieve is to draw attention to itself and the literary devices it employs.

The second tenet is that art is a device of defamiliarisation. Peck and Coyle observe that defamiliarisation was a concept coined by Victor Shklovsky meaning “make strange” (209). The concept embodies the idea that literary language is a special kind of language and that literary writing disrupts ordinary language looking at the world in a strange way. As a result, a reader notices the peculiarity of the writing itself rather than the picture of reality. Defamiliarisation forces the reader to slow down and effects a more strenuous, but also more rewarding engagement with the text and, by implication, with the world.

The third tenet, DiYanni observes, is that a literary text exists of any independent reader; it exists outside any reader’s recreation of it in the act of reading. This means that irrespective of the reader, a literary text has a “constant” or “fixed” meaning as the meaning is essentially tied to its form, not to the reader or context.

The fourth tenet, DiYanni asserts, is that the greatest literary works are “universal”; their wholeness and aesthetic harmony transcend the specific particularities they describe. This means that the text is relatable to readers everywhere and at all times. This becomes the case as a result of the formalists treating literature as having its own history, a history of innovation in formal structures, and is not determined by external, material history.

DiYanni observes that the primary method of formalism is close reading of a literary text with focus on one or more of its formal elements. Formalism emphasises the form of a literary work to determine its meaning focusing on literary elements such as plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure, and point of view. For this reason, poetry lends itself to formalist criticism due to its brevity in length and its language that, in DiYanni’s words, “tends to be more compressed and metaphorical than the language of prose” (1581). DiYanni further observes that formal analysis of novels and plays focus on close reading of key passages.

“Literary Theory” notes that formalism has the advantage of emphasising the artistic value rather than the context of literature; indeed, all critical approaches should begin with this concept as the literary text is the focus of literary criticism. Wilfred Gulerin et al say that critics of formalist perspective have pointed at the formalists’ absorption with details which leads to intensive rather than extensive criticism hence its success with poetry and lack of success with the prose and drama. Insistence on the autonomy leads to isolation of the text from its political, historical, economic, social and cultural contexts therefore making it difficult to account for allusions.

While the tenets of the two theories selected for this study essentially contradict each other as formalism is opposed to inclusion of biographical information in the interpretation of literary works, this study treats them as complementary; they enrich the study with biographical criticism focusing on the socio-economic and political context to enlighten our understanding of the influences on the writers' portrayal of the theme of human rights and formalism enhancing our in-depth analysis of the aspects of the novel to show how they contribute to the portrayal of the theme of human rights. Besides, the novelists are human beings rooted in their societies and therefore the linguistic or formal choices that they make in their novels are essentially informed by the very fact of their existence – cultural, educational, political or otherwise. In other words, biographical facts influence formal choices and in this way, the two theories have a meeting point.

Methodology

The five novels that form the basis of this study were sampled purposively because they provided the information that the study required to discuss and make conclusion on the portrayal of the theme of human rights. The study makes use library research as the dominant methodology. It relies on a close reading of the five novels as primary texts of the study and their analysis within the theoretical frameworks of biographical and formalist perspective. It has used biographical criticism largely in chapter two in relation to determining four areas of concern for a biographical critic: one, the influences – persons, ideas, movements, events – evident in the writers' life and which the novels reflect; two, the extent to which events described in the novels are a direct transfer of what happened in the writers' actual lives; three, the modification of the actual events the writers have made in the novels; and four, what the particular writer has revealed in the novel about his or her characteristic modes of thought, perception, or emotion. This biographical information is essential in providing the context of the writers which informs their literary production. I read the biographical information on the novelists, paying particular attention to epochs in which the novelists grew and in which they produced their novels, and to any non-literary statements they made or actions they undertook that showed their consciousness of human rights. I also interviewed Kinyanjui Kombani as the available written information about him was scarce. The approach of getting biographical details of the writers was of great significance to the reading of the novels in the sense that it helped me examine contexts of the novelists and their novels. Within the framework of biographical perspective I was able to examine how the writers' actual life experiences influenced their portrayal of various facets of theme of human rights.

Formalism provided a framework for the analysis of five aspects of a novel: plot, character and characterisation, point of view, setting and language use. It aided in finding out the following: relationship of each part of the work to the work as a whole, who the major characters are, how they relate to each other and what they represent, who the narrator is and how the narrator tells what happens in the literary work, what the setting in terms of time and place is and how it relates to what we know about the characters and their actions, and what kind of language the writer uses with regard to the meaning and function of aspects of style such as images, similes, metaphors and symbols. Thus formalism contributed to the analysis of the aspects of the novels with particular interest on how these aspects contribute to the portrayal of the theme of human rights.

The study made use of relevant secondary readings to further ground the arguments and discussions of the five primary texts. For secondary sources, the study made use of existing literary criticism on the five novels and works on the theories. I read, reviewed and selected the secondary source materials in respect to their relevant and significant contribution to the study, that is, in as far as they enlightened the current study. I also read information on the application of biographical and formalist theories to the analysis of literary texts.

Scope and Limitations

Five Kenyan novels constitute the primary texts to this study: Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* (1973), Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* (2004), Mcgoye's *Coming to Birth* (1986), Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* (1991), and Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977). I selected the five novels out of many that deal with the theme of human rights so that I can make a generalisation about post-independence Kenyan novels and their commitment to issues of human rights. The selected novels represent four decades in the post-independence Kenya: the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, and the first decade of the 21st Century. I deliberately left out the 1960s because the novels published then did not deal with post-independence issues. Ngugi's – *Weep not, Child*, *The River Between*, and *A Grain of Wheat* – and Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* which dominate the 1960s deal with pre-colonial and colonial periods of Kenya's history.

The scope of this study comprises content and form of the novels in as far as they relate to the theme of human rights. I selected the five novels purposively as the portrayal of human rights issues which this study addresses is distinct in them. They cover a wide range of human rights issues which include poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, discrimination, detention without trial, assassinations, police brutality, prison life, tribal clashes and their attendant human rights violations among others. While I admit that there are other Kenyan novels that deal with the theme of human rights, the selection of these five novels, whose years of publication give a wide range of time and a variety of historical phases, was intended at drawing a conclusion about the involvement of Kenyan novels in human rights discourse. Moreover, I chose five novelists to demonstrate that consciousness of human rights issues is inherent in and in fact characteristic of post-independence Kenyan writers and not a concern of a single writer.

Outline of the Study

The study has five chapters and a conclusion. The introduction forms the first chapter which details what the study is about, why it is important and how it is carried out. The second chapter covers the historical context of the novelists and the novels and its influence on the portrayal of the theme of human right. The third chapter deals with issues of human rights related to displacement of characters from their rural areas of residence as portrayed in Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* and Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*. The fourth chapter involves an exploration of human rights issues in domestic and state setting as portrayed in Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* and Mutahi's *Three days on the Cross*. The fifth chapter discuss the theme of human rights under imperialism and capitalism in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*. The conclusion sums up the main discussions carried out in the preceding chapters and provides significant conclusion based on the thesis and objectives of the study. It further presents recommendation for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO: Writers, Texts and Contexts

The second chapter covers the biographical information of the five novelists whose novels are under this study. It seeks to establish the historical, social and literary contexts of the novelists with a view to bringing out the possible influences they had on the novelists in their portrayal the theme of human rights.

Meja Mwangi and *Kill Me Quick*

Mwangi was born Dominic David Mwangi on December 27, 1948, and grew up in Nanyuki, a town that housed a large number of military barracks for British soldiers. In nearby Nyeri, his mother was employed by British families as a domestic worker, and from these households came the first books – cast-off English children's titles – that Mwangi owned and obviously that constituted his initial reading. Lee Nicholas notes that Mwangi read these western books, but he acknowledges the fact that it was Ngugi’s *Weep Not, Child* which inspired him to write his own stories.

Roger Kurtz observes that Mwangi’s works can be divided into three major categories. The first category is made up of Mwangi’s Mau Mau novels. Like many Kenyan writers, Mwangi revisits the horrors of colonisation and the activities of liberation movement, Mau Mau, which won Kenya independence. *Carcass for Hounds* and *Taste of Death*, deal with this subject matter of anti-colonialism. The second category of Mwangi’s writings comprises the thrillers written in the late 1970s and the 1980s. These have put Mwangi at the heart of a raging critical debate in the Kenyan literary establishment as his critics dismiss them as popular as opposed to serious literature. The third category of Mwangi’s writing is that of the urban novel. He cut his niche as an urban chronicler in the early 1970. His urban trilogy –

Kill Me Quick, *Going Down River Road*, and *The Cockroach Dance* – deal with one of the most pressing contemporary social problems in Kenya: the rapid urbanisation the country has experienced since independence in 1963 and its accompanying social problems. *Kill Me Quick* is a story about two young men, Meja and Maina, from a rural village who get primary school education after which they come to the city where they cannot be accommodated as they lack sufficient work experience to get paid employment; they live in the streets, eating rotten food, and eventually Maina ends in death and Meja in perpetual jail terms.

The 1970s, when Mwangi was getting into his 20s and beginning to publish his writings, was a time of disillusionment with the unfulfilled hopes of independence in Kenya in general, and a time of crisis for the city of Nairobi in particular. It was at this time that the genre of disillusionment literature was born with a view to criticising the new African political and economic elite that had betrayed the nation by using education and positions of privilege for personal rather than collective gain. The term neo-colonialism, coined then, described a situation where a few of the faces in the power structure changed, but where the unjust colonial structures remained firmly in place.

In addition to the climate of political disillusionment, the population of Nairobi city was for a variety of reasons quickly outgrowing the capacity of its infrastructure. Although Nairobi has been characterised by rapid growth throughout its history, in the decade following independence and with the dropping of restrictions on African immigration to the city, the growth reached unprecedented heights. By the early 1970s, housing, employment and transportation facilities were being strained more than ever. Slums, a feature of Nairobi's geography, were growing at alarming rates. It is not surprising then that Kenyan writers portrayed this rapid urbanisation, perhaps the most significant social phenomenon of postcolonial Kenya, in their works. Mwangi too found this urban environment a fitting setting for his novel, *Kill Me Quick*.

Kurtz establishes from an interview with Meja Mwangi that *Kill Me Quick* is at least partially autobiographical; Mwangi wrote the novel after completing secondary school education and discovering that he and his friends could not find jobs. *Kill Me Quick* is a narrative in which the protagonists, the teenage school-leavers Meja and Maina, represent one of the major social problems of Nairobi: the growing number of orphaned or destitute boys who roam Nairobi's streets, surviving on hand-outs and by their wits. Delinquency leads to involvement with street gangs and more serious crimes; in the end, Maina is convicted of murder and is likely to hang, while Meja languishes in prison. Thus, the story of *Kill Me Quick* is partly a composition of Mwangi's own life experiences and partly the experience of his contemporaries who had to face inevitable suffering after undergoing a school curriculum which did not guarantee them paid employment or further education. Mwangi himself had applied for a course in journalism and television broadcasting programs at the University of Nairobi but failed to gain admission. He instead embarked on a career of practical experience with the film industry. Asked in an interview with Nicholas how he was able to write about the experiences of living off the dustbins as if he had lived that kind of life he said:

> I was brought up in this small town in Nanyuki. They had a big kind of…ghetto where they put all Africans during the emergency…You know, to keep them away from influence of the Mau Mau. It was a kind of a small city and I was brought up with this kind of people. You could almost say I was one of them. (Lee Nicholas 200)

Thus evidently, Mwangi in *Kill Me Quick* was writing out of a personal experience.

Mwangi not only experienced difficulties but also talked about them. He was aware of the situation of street children and in this regard he says that his overall aim of writing is “to give the audience – particularly East African audience – a realisation of the atmosphere around them” (Mwangi qtd. in Nicholas 197). Mwangi says he wrote *Kill Me Quick* so that after one has read the story one “can realise what’s happening to these kids out there. They’re going to be there for God knows how long and there is no doubt that within the next ten, fifteen years they’ll be the ones robbing people in the streets” (Nicholas 200). As a socially committed writer, Mwangi hopes that by writing *Kill Me Quick* he could help change the situation; that he will have created an awareness of the street boys who are everywhere so that “one could notice them” and “society would start to realise what is going on around them, what could be done...at least an individual could be more considerate when they’re dealing with this kind of people” (Nicholas 200).

We can, therefore, place Mwangi and his novel *Kill Me Quick* within the Kenyan historical phenomenon of urbanisation in the 1970s and the suffering of the urban population. This background influences Mwangi’s sub-genres of choice, the urban novel and the literature of disillusionment. From his biography, Meja Mwangi is seemingly conscious of social experiences of his time. The knowledge of his times as he transited from high school to a career in the city inspires him to write *Kill Me Quick* a novel in which he is particularly interested in street children and wished the society could realise what is going on around them and be considerate in dealing with these street children. Mwangi’s concern implies that he fully understood that children were not supposed to be in the streets eating off the dustbins and robbing people and that society needed to do something about this phenomenon. This knowledge implies a consciousness for human rights: that children have rights that must be respected.

Kinyanjui Kombani and *The Last Villains of Molo*

Kinyanjui Kombani was born in Nakuru in 1981 but grew up in Molo town where he spent fifteen years of his life. Later he lived in Njoro. These three locales – Nakuru, Molo, and Njoro are areas in the Rift Valley. He tells *Maisha Yetu* in an interview that he had a humble beginning, being the last born in a single mother's family of five. From standard eight onwards, his mother could not afford his education so a kind family friend educated him. He found it difficult to cope in the well-to-do status of Molo Academy where he was for his high school education. He and his brother could hardly afford shoe polish for their leather shoes so they often used soot from their tin lamp, giving their shoes a dull coat. His mother died when he was in form four and the family moved to Ngando, Nairobi where Kombani lived from 1997 to 2002. At Gando slums, Kombani played pool table from 8 a.m. to midnight. His stay at Gando explains his command of ghetto language and experience which he employs in *The Last Villains of Molo*.

In an interview, Kombani told me that he wrote *The Last Villains of Molo* because he felt there were many stories relating to violence. From all over the country, the news of violence was coming in terms of statistics, for example, those stating that ten people had been killed, and therefore he felt that he needed to tell the story of the people behind the statistics.

Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo* is set against the background of the 1992 tribal clashes. There have been tribal tensions since colonial times but tribal clashes have been politically instigated since early 1990s. The clashes are often associated with political events especially parliamentary and presidential elections. Joshia Osamba sums up the causes of tribal conflict as “the unresolved political and economic contradictions behind an apparently partisan political system [which] seems to place a higher premium on ideological and sectional interests at the expense of national interests” (38). Reports on the tribal clashes in the early 1990s implicated the leadership of the day which included top government officials, top ranking members of the ruling party and opposition parties, church leaders and other high ranking members of society. Some reports say that the government hired militia and transported arrows made in Korea for one of the warring groups during the 1992 clashes in Molo, Rift Valley. Similarly, a report produced by Kenya Human Rights Commission on the Likoni-Kwale violence of August 1997, implicated the involvement of the government with some politicians having paid a visit to an armed militia training camp in Shimba Hills to assure the attackers of the government support in expulsion of the “up-country” people from the area (Adar and Munyae 6). Tribal clashes have caused deaths, destruction of property, displacement of population, and added lawlessness to a state of insecurity. All these consequences of the clashes are violations of human rights with the ultimate being the right to life without which one cannot enjoy other human rights.

Kombani observes that he saw a lot of displaced people in Molo, though the clashes did not directly affect him. Molo town was predominantly Kikuyu, so at the heat of the violence the Kalenjins had to leave the town. He notes in the acknowledgement part of the novel that since 1991, two thousand people have been killed and over half a million have been displaced in tribal clashes in Molo, Olenguruone, Burnt Forest, Njoro, and Narok. He reveals that his friend and roommate at the university, Peter Muia, a victim of the tribal clashes in the Rift valley, was so much traumatised as a result of the clashes that he could not sleep with the lights turned off in his room. Kombani chose to dedicate the novel to "the innocent victims of tribal clashes" to show concern for them.

Kombani further states that he did extensive research to aid with the details of the novel. In this regard he acknowledges the contributions of Mzee Joseph Mbure and Muia both of whom were residents of Kamwaura and a man he calls Kip of Molo. Mbure was housed by Kombani's grandmother during the clashes and he is the one who offered most of the information that Kombani used in the writing of the novel. This is significant because Kamwaura and Molo form part of the physical settings of the novel and the names of the people interviewed imply members of the two parts of the divide in the tribal clashes in Rift Valley – Kikuyu and Kalenjin. The same case goes to show that Kombani got his raw materials for the novel from life experiences of people in the society. This contributes to a basic argument in this study which is aided by biographical theory: that one' life experience may influence one's writing. Kombani also acknowledges that some statistical information would have been faulty were it not for the information he got from Kenya Human Rights Commission. In fact he says that he wrote one of the chapters from the Kenya Human Rights Commission library, a detail which is important to this study whose centre of focus is human rights.

It is evident that Kombani is aware of human rights abuse in the Kenya and consequently he is familiar with human rights organisations like Kenya Human Rights Commission that champion for promotion of human rights. It is not surprising that some of the details in the story like the case of government helicopters supplying arrows made in Korea during the Rift

Valley clashes coincide with the report of the Kenya Human Rights Commission on the same. When I asked him about these details he answered, “All my sources’ stories corroborated on this issue”.

He seems to have reflected upon the topic of tribal violence. Of tribal clashes in Rift Valley, he tells me: “Tribal clashes stem from land conflicts. Since the advent of multiparty politics, politicians have been using these tense situations to fan ethnic violence.” This approach to the subject of tribalism makes Kombani a committed writer who suggests ways out of oppression and who wishes to mend human relationships.

Discussion on Kinyanjui Kombani has shown that he is conscious of the human rights situation around him. His preoccupation with violence in the country in general and tribal violence in Rift Valley in particular is evidence that he is aware this. As later discussions demonstrate, his novel *The Last Villains of Molo* shows the same consciousness. It explores not just violence but such other issues of human rights abuse as slum life, unemployment, corruption, and police brutality.

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye and *Coming to Birth*

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye was born on 21 October 1928 in Southampton. She moved to Kenya in 1954 as a lay missionary bookseller for the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the mission arm of the Anglican Church (Kurtz 4). The year 1954 was a volatile period in Kenya’s history with the state of emergency in force as the colonial administration tried to quell the uprising by the Kenyan people. She refers to this State of Emergency in the first of page of *Coming to Birth*. While working in Kenya, Macgoye met Daniel G. W. Macgoye

Oludhe in the late 1950s and married him in 1960, leading to her integration into her husband's Luo community in particular and Kenyan society in general. She was later naturalised as a Kenyan citizen after their marriage. Macgoye has worked both in Kenya and Tanzania.

Macgoye is one of the women creative writers in Kenya who has written extensively, showing mastery of prose-fiction and poetry. For this she has often been referred to as "the matriarch of Kenyan literature" a title which she dismisses arguing that other women writers like Grace Ogot were already writing by the time she started her wiring career ("A Day with Matriarch of Creative Writing").

Macgoye differs from other writers in this study in that she is Kenyan through naturalisation while the others are Kenyans by birth. Her writings, however, differ from the writings of expatriates like Karen Blixen or Elspeth Huxley. As Kurtz says, her novels and poems are written and set in Kenya exploring the sensibilities, "history and dynamics of Kenyan patrimony that she has embraced as her own" (5).

Kurtz notes that Macgoye, in her application to be considered for missionary work, criticised the white South African missionaries who maintained a clear separation from the black and coloured population. When she came to Kenya she found it embarrassing to live in the mission compound on Bishop's Road on the summit of the Nairobi Hill as the luxury of this mission quarters was "far removed from the daily lives of the people she was supposed to serve" (12). As a result she moved to Pumwani within her first year of her being in Kenya. Pumwani then was the large "African location" which the colonial government created for the Kenyans away from the Europeans. In Pumwani she shared a house with an old European missionary lady Maud Pethybridge who had adopted a Luo name, Ahoya. She lived in Pumwani and made this first native village in Nairobi the opening setting to her novel *Coming to Birth*. An incident in Pumwani inspired this novel: one day a white policeman brought a Luo teenage girl to the house in which Macgoye used to live with Pethy. The girl who was new in the area was confused and in need of help as Macgoye observes, “Pumwani was not a good place to be young, female and lost, and the policeman did not wish her to spend a night in police custody”, so Macgoye and Pethy took care of her to save her from “molestation” (Kurtz 103). This act shows Macgoye to be humanitarian and concerned with the welfare of fellow human beings. Twenty years later she used this incident as inspiration in creating Paulina’s character and story in *Coming to Birth*.

The human rights implication of this fact about Macgoye is that she was opposed to stratification of society on the basis of race (Europeans and Africans) or class (rich and poor). It suggests that by moving to Pumwani she was making a statement that the poor Africans were as important as the rich Europeans. She comments on her marriage to Daniel Macgoye, a Kenyan, to show how dominant racist attitudes were during her time; she says: “People were shocked by the marriage…we were not conforming and it was quite out of line for a junior officer to marry a white person. No one really knew what to do with us” (Kurtz 17). She did not conform to the racist attitude of her times; her marriage challenges this attitude. She suffered as a result of the marriage and for constantly challenging the system; she cites a case where the authorities transferred her husband from Kisumu to Alupe, a remote rural area. She says, “I had not yet understood that [because of the marriage] I was out-caste, below offering help or advice to white officialdom” (Kurtz 23).

Macgoye found the colonial system evil: she says, “What horrified me was the extent to which my fellow missionaries, especially the young ones, seemed unaware of the evils of the colonial system” (Kurtz 13). This suggests she was opposed to colonialism, hence judging it as evil; it implies that she wished for the independence of Kenyans.

According to Kurtz, Macgoye’s relationship with Ngugi, a Kenyan literary writer is one of respect and criticism. She joined in international protest when Ngugi was detained without trial in January 1978. She wrote “Shairi la Ukombozi” (“A Song of Freedom”) for his release which won third place in BBC-sponsored poetry competition and was published abroad in Summer Fires: New Poetry of Africa. It could not be published in Kenya although “a manuscript went to members of the government” (54) due to censorship. She criticised Ngugi however, for marrying another wife while he was in exile without acknowledging Nyambura, his first wife, and her role as a legal, senior wife. She in fact wrote “Three Stones” to celebrate Nyambura. When the latter died in 1996, Macgoye attended her funeral but Ngugi did not attend the funeral. About this matter she says: “I thought we women…owed her something for keeping the homestead going…It is only the denial of this marriage that is hard to take. After all a Kenyan can have a second wife without repudiating the first” (55). Both the case of protest against Ngugi’s detention and criticism of Ngugi for his ill-treatment of his first wife show that Macgoye is conscious of human rights and is willing to defend them when they are violated. Kurtz says her criticism of Ngugi “grows out of her consistency of moral vision; she would have Ngugi’s personal decisions fall into line with his call for social justice on grandeur scale” (55).

Macgoye's literary writings show concern for human welfare. As Kurtz observes, "All her novels and poems are written and set in Kenya and draw on her Kenyan experiences [exploring] Kenyan history and dynamics of Kenyan patrimony" (5). Her interest is the struggle of the Kenyan people against oppressive factors such as colonialism, neo-colonialism, disease, street life, patriarchy, lack of education and poverty. These are issues that bear the characteristics of human rights hence the interest to situate Macgoye as a writer who is interested in human rights and who through writing proposes respect for human rights.

Coming to Birth is an urban novel, Macgoye herself having lived mostly in cities: Southampton, London, Nairobi, Kisumu and Dar es Salaam, so she is writing about those settings with which she is most familiar and comfortable (Kurtz 106). The novel explores urban topics like street life, employment, and setting in the city after one has moved from the rural areas. Throughout the novel, the Kenyan setting is essential with mentions of such specific places in Nairobi like Pumwani, Majengo, Shauri Moyo and The King George Hospital (now The Kenyatta National Hospital). Emphasising on historical details, the novel chronicles Kenya's history from around the emergency period which started in 1952 to the post-independent Kenya of the late 1970s. In an interview she insists that her novel, *Coming to Birth* was not intended to tell the history of Kenya, but how important political events impinged on an ordinary family ("A Day with a Matriarch of Creative Writing"). The historical details are however, unmistakably clear. The novel makes reference to the October 1969 Kisumu riot sparked when President Jomo Kenyatta's bodyguards shot at rioters who had stoned the President when he went to open Russia Hospital in the town. It depicts the assassination and funeral of Tom Mboya a Kenyan political leader and the murder of J.M. Kariuki. All these cases have been a matter for concern for Kenya. The Truth Justice and

Reconciliation Commission established in 2008 was meant to look into, among other issues, mysterious deaths or assassination which include those of Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki. Therefore, in exploring these issues, Macgoye is arguably joining her voice with many of her contemporaries in not just rewriting history but suggesting ways to a better future. She is involved in a literary discourse but her concern occupies no less a position compared to Kenya Human Rights Commission or Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, two human rights bodies which have been concerned with the two assassinations, and which are involved in another form of cultural discourse, namely human rights.

Wahome Mutahi and *Three Days on the Cross*

Wahome Mutahi was born on 24 October 1954 and died on 22 July 2003. He was a renowned humourist in Kenya. He was popularly known as *Whispers* after the name of his column in the *Daily Nation* from 1982 to 2003, offering a satirical view of the trials and tribulations of Kenyan life. Mutahi was equally well known in theatre where he wrote and acted in both English and Kikuyu languages plays that caricatured Kenya's society and politics using his company *Igiza Productions*.

Mutahi spoke against political oppression in his journalistic writing. In one such column he has a conversation with the dead Dedan Kimathi and Robert Ouko in which in he satirically implicates the government in the death of Pio Gama Pinto, J.M. Kariuki, Tom Mboya and Robert Ouko. These deaths have been a source of concern in the post-independent Kenyan history.

In 1986 the police arrested Mutahi and his brother Njuguna Mutahi and detained them in the torture chambers of the Nyayo House, in Nairobi. Njuguna Mutahi tells of the arrests in “We Lived to Tell the Story of Nyayo House” referring to a newspaper headline “Brothers Held by the Police” to mean the arrests of the two Mutahi sons. The police charged Mutahi with sedition and alleged association with the underground Mwakenya Movement and later transferred him to the Kamiti Maximum Security Prison. Mutahi and his brother were both released after fifteen months without ever being brought to trial. His imprisonment inspired him to write *Three Days on the Cross* and *Jail Bugs*. It is significant that Mutahi suffered human rights abuse during his imprisonment and wrote about this abuse in *Three Days on the Cross*; he admits that everything he writes happened to him. Mutahi was arrested a few days after he had submitted his manuscript to the publishers and when he was released, the publishers asked him to revise it to incorporate other details of his incarceration.

Literary scholars have placed Mutahi’s *Three Days on the Cross* in the category of prison literature. In “We Have Refused to Grow” Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye refers to *Three Days on the Cross* as exemplifying novels which avoid giving identifiable local names to characters and yet clearly describing political realities. Kimani wa Wanjiru, writing for *Pambazuka News,* offers an insight into the position of prison literature:

> Like any other artistic venture, prison literature is an indicator of the various parameters that govern and shape society. It can on the one hand be closely linked to the democratisation of our society and an indicator that even jail has not and cannot dampen the fury of the pen, on the other hand. A brief explication of these writings indicates clearly that they can also be used to give an adequate, accurate and comprehensive commentary on the socio-economic, political development of Africa and Kenya for that matter. They are an important resource in showing where we are coming from and what sorts of fragments are scattered along the political, economic and social path that we have used.

This study appropriates Wanjiru's views on prison literature so as to contextualise Wahome Mutahi and his novel, *Three Days on the Cross,* within a particular discourse that fights for the rights of the oppressed. As a case of prison writing it shares characteristics and functions with other non-fiction and fiction texts belonging to this sub-genre which include J.M. Kariuki's non-fictional account *Mau Mau in Detention* back in 1963; Gakaara wa Wanjau's, *Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithamerio-ine (Mau Mau Author in Detention)* (1988), Abdulatif Abdullah's "Kenya Twendapi" ("Kenya Where are we Headed") (1968), which he wrote in reaction to the disbandment of Kenya People's Union; Ngugi's *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981), Maina wa Kinyatti's *A Season of Blood: Poems from Kenyan Prison* (1995), and *Kenya – A Prison Notebook* (1996); Wanyiri Kihoro's *Never Say Die* (1998)*;* Njuguna Mutonya's *Crackdown! A Journalist's Personal Story of Moi Era Purges (1986 – 1989)* (2010); Kiggia Kimani's *Prison is Not a Holiday Camp* (1994), Charles Githae's *Comrade Inmate (1994)*, Karuga Wandai's *Mayor in Prison* (1993) and Benjamin Garth Bundeh's *Birds of Kamiti* (1991).

As Wanjiru states, these works whether autobiographical or biographical or confessions are representative of pertinent issues. They provide a social commentary that needs consideration. They open new insights for both the authors and society at large. They have served as clear indicators that the system is rotten and closer scrutiny is necessary. They have been of cathartic value to both the writers and readers.

This discussion on Wahome Mutahi and *Three Days on the Cross* has situated the writer and his novel within the genre of prison literature which was intended to respond to a particular epoch in the history of Kenya. Mutahi's biggest socio-political influence in writing the novel was the Mwakenya Movement of the 1980s: the police arrested him on the grounds he that he was part of the illegal movement. Mutahi thus shows interaction with the socio-political experiences of his society. His writings show a consciousness for human rights.

Ngugi wa Thion’go and *Petals of Blood*

Ngugi was born James Ngugi in 1938 in Kamiriithu, near Limuru, Kiambu District. At that time Kenya was under British rule, which ended in 1963. Ngugi's family belongs to the Kenya's Kikuyu ethnic community. He attended the mission-run school at Kamaandura in Limuru, Karinga School in Maanguu, and Alliance High School in Kikuyu. During these years Ngugi became a devout Christian. However, at school he also learned about the Kikuyu values and history and underwent the Kikuyu rite of passage ceremony. Later he rejected Christianity, and changed his original name in 1976 from James Ngugi to Ngugi wa Thiong'o in honour of his Kikuyu heritage; he saw his Christian name as a relic of colonialism. His father, Thiong'o wa Nducu, was a peasant farmer, who was forced to become a squatter after the British Imperial Act of 1915. His parents separated in 1946, leaving his mother to take care of Ngugi, his two brothers and three sisters. Ngugi in an interview observes, “She virtually shouldered every responsibility of our struggle for food, shelter, clothing and education” (Sanders and Lindfors 99). He recounts his family’s abject poverty in his second collection of memoirs, *In the House of the Interpreter*, how during a school outing while at Alliance High school he had to dodge his friends because he could not afford anything: “Even a cup of tea or the cheapest candy was beyond my means” (11).

In his memoir Ngugi also documents his family’s involvement in the Mau Mau uprising thus: his elder brother Wallace Mwangi joined the movement, his stepbrother was killed, and his mother was arrested and tortured. Ngugi went home on 21 April 21 1955 after his first term at Alliance High School only to find his village destroyed and his mother missing. The mass relocation of people was an attempt by the colonial government to isolate and starve the anti-colonial guerrillas in the mountains. The mass relocation was followed by forced land consolidation in which persons or families that had several pieces of land had them consolidated in the same location without their choice of the location. According to Ngugi, this "was mass fraud…giving land from the already poor to the relatively rich, and from the families of guerrilla fighters to those loyal to the colonial state" (23). These issues show Ngugi's consciousness of the human rights abuses during this time. He was aware of the torture the British government inflicted on the Mau Mau and their families. He was equally aware of the process that led to landlessness and impoverishment of many; he calls it "mass fraud".

Ngugi was a victim of violation of human rights as a result of his literary works particularly *Petals of Blood* (1977), which is one of the novels making the subject of discussion in this dissertation and his play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*), co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii; both texts written in the same year led to his detention. The novel painted a harsh and unsparing picture of life in neo-colonial Kenya. It was received with even more emphatic critical acclaim in Kenya and abroad. The Kenya Weekly Review described it as "this bomb shell" and the *Sunday Times of London* as capturing every form and shape that power can take ("Ngugi wa Thiong'o: A Profile of a Literary and Social Activist"). The same year, the play, *I Will Marry When I Want,* was performed at Kamirithu Educational and Cultural Centre, Limuru, in an open air theatre, with actors from the workers and peasants of the village. Sharply critical of the inequalities and injustices thriving in the society, publicly identified with unequivocally championing the cause of ordinary Kenyans, and committed to communicating with them in the languages of their daily lives, Ngugi was arrested and imprisoned without charge at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison at the end of the year, 31 December 1977. He documented these experiences in his memoir, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981). In this autobiographical work, he describes the purposeful degradation and humiliation of prison life.

Ngugi relates how *Petals of Blood* and *I Will Marry When I Want* led to his one-year incarceration at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison:

> I am told, for instance, that some time in December 1977, two gentlemen very highly placed in the government flew to Mombasa and demanded an urgent audience with [President] Jomo Kenyatta. They each held a copy of *Petals of Blood* in one hand, and in the other, a copy of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. The audience granted, they proceed to read him, out of context of course, passages and lines and words allegedly subversive as evidence of highly suspicious intentions. The only way to thwart those intentions – whatever they were – was to detain him who harboured such dangerous intentions, they pleaded. [...] And so to detention I was sent. (Ngugi xvi)

Ngugi's official website indicates that after the Amnesty International named him a Prisoner of Conscience, an international campaign secured his release a year later, December 1978. However, the dictatorial regime barred him from jobs at colleges and universities in the country. He resumed his writing and his activities in the theatre and in so doing, continued to be an uncomfortable voice for the Moi dictatorship. Ngugi was in Britain for the launch and promotion of *Devil on the Cross* when he learned about the Moi regime's plot to kill him on his return at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. This forced him into exile, first in Britain (1982-1989), and then the U.S. after (1989-2002), during which time the Moi dictatorship hounded him trying, unsuccessfully, to get him expelled from London and from other countries he visited. In 1986, at a conference in Harare, an assassination attempt outside his hotel in Harare was thwarted by the Zimbabwean security.

Ngugi has fought abuse of human rights by Kenyan leadership not only in his writings but also in his actions. While in exile, he worked with the London-based Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya, (1982-1998), an organisation that championed the cause of democracy and human rights in Kenya; it is still active in Kenya today. He remained in self-exile for the duration of the Moi Dictatorship 1982-2002. He and his wife, Njeeri, returned to Kenya in 2004 after twenty-two years in exile.

Ngugi had assimilated generally the tragic history of the African people and specifically, the economic oppression levelled against Kenyan workers and peasants by what he refers to as the "native comprador class and a foreign bourgeoisie" (121). According to him, the comprador native ruling class, which he compares to modern slave drivers acting in favour of their white master, rules by torture, fraud, imprisonment, military brutality and terror. He takes a clear stance against oppression so that in a speech read during the International Emergency Conference in Korea in 1976 he states:

> As a writer I can never be non-aligned. How can a writer, if he is to be meaningful, assume a non-aligned position amid voices crying out in unison for the right to control the natural and human resource of their land; the right to control fruit of their sweet, the products of their labour? How can one be aligned in the very sight of a million muscles flexing to break chains tied around their bodies by imperialism and all the exploiting classes? (117-18)

Ngugi has repeatedly insisted on his commitment as a creative writer, cultural critic and socio-political transformer. Asked in an interview which of these three social positions was dominant, he emphatically states that one is not exclusive of the other:

> I am primarily a writer. But then, a writer is not an abstract being; he comes from a given society, with a given history. He is both a product and a reflector of these social conditions. So there should not be limits to the sphere of a writer's operations because a writer should reflect *all* the aspects which affect human relationships in society. A

> writer may start with an interest in the changing patterns of human relationships. He will probably ask himself: “What are the factors that prevent the realisation of more adequate human relationships in that society?” The answer to this question cannot be found in a limited sphere: the answer can only be sought in all the forces that affect all those relationships in society. (Marxism Today 34)

In an interview with Alexander Pozzo Ngugi observes:

> Like all artists, I am interested in human relationships and their quality. This is what I explore in my work. Human relationships do not occur in a vacuum. They develop in the context of ecology, economics, politics, culture, and psyche. All these aspects of our society affect those relationships profoundly. These aspects are inseparable.

Sander and Lindfors say that Ngugi, asked why he strongly believed that every writer is a writer in politics, asserts that all writers live in a world where what they can and cannot do is determined by who wields power and to what ends is the power being put. Ngugi is thus convinced that politics controls people’s lives and therefore writers cannot divorce themselves from the politics of their society.

Ngugi admits that in his writing he is interested with human relations and what hinders a full realisation of these relationships. He supplies an answer to the factors that affect human relationships; to him class distinction plays the biggest role as opposed to gender, race and caste:

> In any given society there are several contradictions but the class distinction is basic. And by class I mean here where a person stands in the organisation of the wealth of the community. Now, other factors do come into it. For instance, in an imperialist world factors of race and caste do come in, but often these are used to obscure the basic realities. (35)

Ngugi thus shows concerns that essentially entail an interest in human rights since the categories of interest – class, race, gender and caste – are central in ensuring whose rights in the society are acknowledged and whose rights are not respected. He shows awareness of human rights not just in fiction but in his life. In an interview with Margaretta wa Gacheru in 1979, Ngugi said the following about his detention: “I would like to say the following arising from my detention: detention without trial is really a denial of the democratic rights of a Kenyan national…every Kenyan has a right to a fair trial in an open court of law" (Sanders and Lindfors 91). He also terms the termination of his duties at the University of Nairobi after his release from detention as "entirely illegal" (Sanders and Lindfors 113). Ngugi's overall aim for his memoir *Detained* characterises a form of human rights assertion. In an interview in 1981 with Emman Omari he argued:

> *Detained*…is arguing for a world without detention camps and prisons. [It] is in fact saying that the Public Security Act should be abolished now. And that the particular Act is completely inconsistent with human rights and democratic rights of Kenyan peoples of whatever political situation…for *Detained* …I wanted to reach that section of Kenyans that might bring pressure on policy makers to change their attitude towards political detentions without trial. (Sanders and Lindfors 133)

In a speech given at the launch of *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi laid bare his motive for writing the novel. Delving into the issues of economy, he explained that imperialism and neo-colonialism were processes that oppressed the Kenyan peasants and workers. He wrote in pen the history that the peasants and workers wrote in in "blood and sweat" and "in doing so, [he] was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realised as shown by their struggle since 1895" (97). Ngugi is, thus, not only reflecting the history of struggle for his society, but he is also exploring and suggesting ways of achieving liberation. Social collectivism is the way out of this economic and social oppression.

The exposition on Ngugi has established that his own life experience as a child growing up in a peasant family during colonial times and later as an educated adult grappling with questions of oppression at the hands of Kenyan political class, has influenced his outlook on the human rights issues in Kenya. The discussion further contextualised Ngugi's interest and involvement in human right issues: the fact that he worked with Release Political Prisoners is a clear indication that he believed in respect for human rights and he would agitate for action against abused rights. Ngugi has suffered under the circumstances of colonialism and neo-colonialism but he has also fought the Kenyan oppressive system with a view of helping liberate the oppressed masses. *Petals of Blood* is a participation in this fight. Ngugi's life however, presents a contradiction of his level of human rights consciousness. That he neglected his first wife to death and did not even attend her funeral is evidence of his failure to respect her dignity and value her as a person and a wife. He is vocal in as far as the rights of the poor are concerned while he at the same time is violates the rights of his spouse.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that the five novelists – Mwangi, Kombani, Macgoye, Mutahi and Ngugi – are located in the post-independence Kenyan history and their writings, especially the novels under study, show both an influence of and a response to the socio-political circumstances or experiences of the novelists. Generally, all the five writers show a level of awareness of human rights situation around them. The chapters that follow give an analysis of the theme of human rights in the novels with a view to establishing the degree of human rights consciousness exhibited in the novels.

CHAPTER THREE: Human Rights and Displacement in Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* and Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*

In the previous chapter the study has established that the novelists were aware of the socio-economic and political experiences that characterised the situation of human rights during their time and influenced the novelists' portrayal of the theme of human rights in their novels. In this chapter I seek to analyse issues of human rights in Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* and Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*. The two novels were published three decades apart, the former in 1973 and the latter in 2004, but they have a common characteristic: Nairobi city as a setting is an area of displacement for characters in both novels. The writers take the characters from a rural set up to an urban one where differentiation among people is pronounced; this is a strategy to aid the writers in their focus on injustices the characters face as such injustices are common where class differences are significant. In the two novels, the characters begin their lives in the countryside and the city, as Joseph Slaughter observes, is a constant compulsion for the characters to move into it. In *Kill Me Quick*, the characters move into the city in search of paid employment after completing secondary school education while in *The Last Villains of Molo*, they move because ethnic conflict displaces people from their rural homes in Molo to other areas, the city being one of these areas. The characters in the two novels make journeys home in an attempt to re-establish themselves in the rural areas. These movements constitute a journey motif as a literary strategy that the writers use to capture not only the physical movements but also points of progression in the lives of the characters.

Once the characters are in the city, they have similar experiences: they lack adequate and decent food, clothing and shelter. They react to the lack of these basic needs by getting into illegal activities such as stealing, mugging and robbing people. Both novels use realism as a creative method so that the characters are a product of the society. Social forces shape their behaviour but the characters in turn react to their environment, shaping it. *Kill Me Quick* however has a mix of realism and absurdism as the events are realistic but the environment fully dictates character behaviour; the characters fail to act on the environment to shape it.

This chapter begins with a separate analysis of each novel after which I draw a conclusion which brings the two novels together showing points of convergence and divergence in relation to particular issues of human rights with which the novels deal.

Kill Me Quick is about two main characters, Maina and Meja, who go to Nairobi after completing their secondary school education with hopes for paid employment. They fail to get employment and lead impoverished lives eating from garbage bins and sleeping in streets. They go back to their rural homes but the expected re-union with their families fails. As a result they go back to the city and join criminal gangs that mug, steal, rob and kill to cater for their daily needs. Crime leads to their imprisonment. Eventually their lives both in the countryside and in the city come to a dead end and the prison seems to be the place they belong.

The title of the novel immediately strikes the reader as pessimistic: “kill me quick” suggests a human being accepting death eagerly. This person is accepting to be killed; this means the person is a passive victim accepting death without fighting for life. The same pessimism is evident in a poem that precedes the story in the novel. The persona in the poem captures the inevitability and acceptance of suffering. The persona is a victim of his circumstances, a passive helpless recipient as captured in the line, “time will lead me to the end”. The persona is resigned to fate: “so be it” as his experience is similar to his friends’ experiences, who have already been killed. There is foregrounding, typographically, in the last line with all capital letters, “KILL ME QUICK” commanding our attention to reflect on the line. The words in capital letters emphasise the persona’s feelings of hopelessness and inability to fight for life, and acceptance of death. The life of the persona the poem speaks of is seemingly threatened:

> Days run out for me,
> Life goes from bad to worse,
> Very soon, very much soon, time will lead me to the end.
> Very well. So be it.
> But one thing I beg of you.
> If the sun must set for me,
> If all must come to end, if you must rid of me,
> The way you have done with all my friends,
> If you must kill me,
> Do so fast.
> KILL ME QUICK

That the persona accepts death as inevitable is a threat to human life and therefore an issue of human rights. Thus from the onset of the novel the poem introduces the theme of human rights.

The novel has an omniscient narrator who is as pessimistic as the persona of the poem at the beginning of the novel. This narrator tells a story of down and out characters who come to a dead end in their attempts to survive in the city. Maina and Meja are jobless, homeless, moneyless street dwellers. The narrator, like a cameraman deliberately taking photographs, focuses on Maina and Meja, and like a newspaper reporter, tells of what goes wrong with their lives, never reporting any positive thing about their lives. The two are the main characters yet they are flat; the reader remembers them only by one personality trait: their resignation to fate. In fact they lack the depth and complexity of personality that would characterise them as human beings. They show no growth in the course of the story. Indeed their lives deteriorate as they start off as failures and end up in deeper failure in prison. The story exhibits characteristics of the absurd in as far as Maina and Meja are resigned to fate and their intentions and actions amount to nothing. Their lives become purposeless and meaningless just like Vladmir and Estragon's in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* or Gregor Samsa's in Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis". We have a pessimistic narrative voice telling a pessimistic story and the implication is that it is difficult for such a voice to affirm human rights. The voice instead renders a defeatist attitude to human rights. I am going to show how this is the case in a discussion of the culs-de-sac that Maina and Meja encounter in relation to employment, exploitation, poverty, crime and punishment.

First, Maina and Meja complete secondary school education and as a result they expect to find paid employment in the city. Maina explains how he expects this kind of employment to meet his needs of shelter, clothing and food: "I came out here raw and proud …I thought I would get a job and earn six-seven hundred shillings a month. Then I would get a house, a radio, good clothes and food" (1). He expects it to further meet his family's basic need to clothing: "if I got a job. Then I would buy a blanket for my father [and] an overcoat for my mother" (67). Gaining education is thus an important preliminary stage in bettering life through paid employment. Maina and Meja get good grades – Maina has a Second Division School Certificate and Meja a First Division School Certificate. Their right to education is therefore fulfilled and they and their families expect that this will lead to fulfilment of their right to employment.

Maina and Meja make a journey to the city with a purpose and expectation for paid employment but the city confronts them with "No Vacancy" signs. Maina is the first to look for employment and getting none; he accepts unemployment as a fact to live with and discourages Meja from trying to seek employment. The latter is however still hopeful; he sets about in the city and the narrator's camera follows him on one of the day's experience at job-seeking and the narrative voice reports on his gradual slip into desperation as he repeats his qualification to everyone he meets but still fails to get a job:

> He walked for the whole day from office to office until his feet were tired and sore. He talked to anybody he thought might be able to help, from office boys to managers. Few even wanted to hear him sing his qualifications or to know whether he had any. But undaunted he carried on. He repeated his piece in so many offices that he became addicted to it. He said it without thinking and this did not make matters any better. (4)

He is so desperate and frustrated that he pleads with prospective employers for a job that can pay even as little as twenty shilling or anything the employer would be willing to pay him. Thus, in his desperation he gives a prospective employer power to oppress him by paying him anything. He pleads, "I can…sweep and wash dishes and…chop wood….Any job…thirty…twenty…anything you like" (8). Contrary to their expectation to get employment, Maina and Meja get to a cul-de-sac in their journey; their right to employment is unfulfilled and by implication they therefore lack the means of fulfilling their rights to decent food, shelter and clothing as they expected.

Second, Maina and Meja resign themselves to their failure to get employment and seek to earn a living through collecting and selling scrap metal and old bottles. A middleman insists on giving them twenty cents for a bottle while they expect sixty cents; their negotiation for a fair price is unsuccessful. The middleman dictates the price and goes away happy while Maina and Meja sit back and watch as the middleman goes away. By contrasting the middleman's happiness and Maina and Meja's resignation to exploitation, the narrator appeals to our sympathy for Maina and Meja. The sitting back and watching suggest resigned acceptance of exploitation. The middleman goes away feeling satisfied meaning he benefits from controlling the relationships in this small business. By exploiting them, he denies them their right to fair price.

When Boi, a white man's cook, meets them in the back streets, Maina and Meja are dirty and dressed in rags eating rotten fruits. He, therefore, concludes that they meet the white man's specification of cheap youth to work in his farm. Boi's interior monologue informs us of their impoverished condition and the white man's intention to take advantage of this condition by equating the poor to cheap labour. The narrative voice reinforces Boi's thoughts on how the white employer wants cheap labour without caring for the welfare of the employee: "the big master…and his family did not care who worked in the garden. All they cared was that someone should do so, do it well and for as little as possible" (18). This means that in the eyes of the employer, the farm workers lack human value except in accomplishment of their duties in service of the master. Unemployed and without success in the small trade with the middleman, Maina and Meja passively wait in the back streets for anything that comes by; this predisposes them to further exploitation as when Boi comes to recruit them, they are desperate without alternative means of livelihood.

Boi promises Maina and Meja that the white man would give them "good pay…food [and] accommodation" (16). So as they make their journey from the back streets to the white man's farm they expect to receive six hundred shillings a month which is closer to their expectation when they went into the city. The white man however gives them sixty shillings which is a tenth of their expected salary of six hundred shillings. An interior monologue shows Meja's dissatisfaction with this salary and his inability to verbalise the dissatisfaction; he can only think about it without doing anything about it. He thinks of Maina and himself as "two educated young men earning one-tenth of what their education entitled them to and living under forced labour conditions" (25). According to Meja, this pay is inadequate; the white man underpays them. He further reduces their pay by half as punishment for discussing a possibility of stealing carrots from the white man's farm; this case worsens their poor wages. Contrary to the promise that the white man would provide them with good food upon hiring them, he not only gives them insufficient food but he also puts them on half-ration of this insufficient food as a punishment for Meja's taking a brief moment of rest from work. The half-ration worries Meja because the full ration is already inadequate: "A twelve-ounce pound of flour and a few grams milk is the grand ration. I try to halve that to get our new diet, but I get decimals and you cannot eat decimals" (27). The white man denies them an opportunity to rest during their long hours of work; he kicks Meja into the stream when he finds him lying down to rest. The underpayment and the reduction of already low wages, the halving of already insufficient food, and the denial of time to rest during the course of work are all manifestations of exploitation. The white man's exploitation in this case infringes the rights to adequate remuneration, food and rest.

Maina and Meja suffer the consequences of half ration and half pay without complaining. They accept these forms of exploitation as if they deserved them. They are afraid of losing their jobs and the narrator reports this fact as if fear and inability to complain against exploitation is a norm: "they did not argue…they knew that one word was enough to send them to the backstreets express" (28). By choosing to be silent, Maina and Meja contribute to the abuse of their rights as workers.

Contrary to the promise that the white man would give them accommodation, they live in huts infested with fleas, bed bugs and rats with roofs caving in and the floor rough and a foot deep into fine dust. They therefore cohabit with animals fighting with rats over food remains in the hut an act that reduces them to the level of rodents which they refer to as "friends" and "brothers" (44). The narrative voice's description of a fight between Maina and Meja on one side, and the rats on the other, evokes animal imagery:

> The dark hut was left to the big fat rats to command. They stormed and looted the rack where the tin lamp lay forlornly among the unwashed plates and pots. When the plates were clean, they raged through the hut gobbling anything that was edible. Then they started looking for a way under the blankets to the horny feet of the sleepers…one of the beasts charged in. There was a scuffle under the blanket. Meja leaped to his feet and shook the rat free. (36-7)

Animal imagery occurs elsewhere in the story: the two describe themselves as competing with mongrels in scavenging for food in the back streets, and, the narrator captures Meja's desperation for employment by the use of "bleat". When asked about his qualification Meja says, "First Division, School Certificate" (7) to which the narrator adds as speech tag, "Meja bleated" (7). Bleating is for goats and sheep, not for humans. The animal imagery serves to show that Maina and Meja live like animals without rights to be fully human. It further gives the story an absurdist tone.

Third, as a result of unemployment and exploitation, Maina and Meja lack means of livelihood and have difficulty fulfilling their rights to food, clothing, shelter and social life as our discussion shows.

To begin with, they eat stale food. As Graebner observes they “live from waste” (142) collected from dustbins or back alleys. Human beings consider this food as waste; they consider it unfit for human consumption and dispose it off. Feeding on it implies that Maina and Meja no longer live as human beings. The story provides us with a graphic description of the kind of food available to Maina and Meja and their scavenging survival tactics. The imagery in the description of Maina and Meja’s food engages our senses in such a way that we can see food in the process of decay and oranges which are deathly grey; we can smell the food; we can taste its staleness; and feel its hardness as evident in “rock-hard” and “fragments of rock”:

> There were various kinds of fruits in various stages of decay. There were also slices of stale smelly bread and a few dusty chocolate. Some rock-hard cakes glared stonily back at them...the oranges were no longer orange and beautiful but a deathly grey with mould. The cakes were no longer cakes but fragments of rock, and the chocolate looked like discarded shoe polish. (1)

The result of the narrative voice focusing to such length and depth on the details of Maina and Meja eating dirt causes our repulsiveness to the description. I disagree with Ayo Kehinde’s view that Mwangi dwells on the sordid details to compel the reader take a sympathetic view of the plight of the masses. Instead, the sordid details appal rather than marshal sympathy for Maina and Meja. It is however indisputable that their right to healthy food is unmet.

Besides, Maina and Meja’s clothing tells of their poverty, of the infringement of the right to adequate clothing. The clothes that they go to the city in gradually degenerate into tatters, exposing parts of their bodies. At the time Boi finds the two in the streets to recruit them for the white man’s employment, they are dressed in rags which expose their dirty bodies. These clothes clearly symbolise poverty.

Furthermore, their right to shelter and security is denied them. They sleep in the streets exposed to cold and rainy weather. They wait for policemen to leave the streets so that they can get into large supermarket bins which make their house. The narrator tells us how they are uncomfortable in these bins due to the foul smell from the rotten vegetables. They are worried when it begins to rain because "by the time it stopped [it] would leave all the culverts and bins flooded beyond habitation" (13). That they sleep in the streets, in bins, and even find it difficult to secure this street "housing" shows denial of their right to decent housing.

Maina and Meja are equally denied the right to have a family. They find it difficult to sustain their romantic relationships that can lead to marriage. They let go off their girlfriends as is evident in Maina's case when he discontinues his relationship with his girlfriend, Delilah because he cannot afford to sustain a family with her:

> He understood…she [Delilah] wanted a husband, a home, children and happiness and security [but] apart from love Maina had nothing else to offer…Children need to be brought up by a father who would keep them satisfied seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day…He himself did not eat seven days a week, even one meal a day…He would have to leave Delilah for her own sake. (88)

The lack of money thus denies Maina and Meja the opportunity to establish their own households and when Maina asks Meja, "Do you think we shall ever grow old and have wives and children of our own?", we accept as answer to this question Crummey's observation that Maina and Meja do not grow; they "fail… to make transition from adolescence to manhood" (98). This cul-de-sac in their journey of growth and development, the failure to transit into adulthood, speaks of their unfulfilled right to marriage as grown-up members of the society.

As a consequence of their failure to get paid employment, Maina and Meja decide not to back to the rural homes for fear that their families will not accept them. Maina says that without money to buy a blanket for his father and an overcoat for his mother he cannot go home. He condemns himself to the miserable life of the city, almost choosing death over going back home: “I would only go back if I got a job. Then I would buy a blanket for my father [and] an overcoat for my mother… Believe me or not, until I get a job, I may as well be dead. It is no use being alive if I cannot help them” (32). He has despaired of any hope of re-uniting with his family. When he finally goes home, he finds that his father had sold off the house and the piece of land where he had left them and relocated to unknown place. He is frustrated by the failure of a reunion; as a result he kills a couple for not letting him into their house. Meja too goes home but fails to re-unite with his family for fear that he has no money to meet their needs; he feels hopeless, helpless and useless that he cannot buy his younger sister a blue necklace and pay her school fees. The narrator captures Meja’s fears through an introspection into his thoughts and feelings; we see his inside view and sympathise with him that he is only a short distance from home but his fears cannot let him re-unite with his family: “He thought about his mother at home cooking for the children and his father gone to beg for school fees…he was scarred and afraid of going home. He dared not face them…Would they understand how he failed to get a job?” (112) This then is a cul-de-sac in the story; the journey home is fruitless. The characters are pessimistic and as such they deny themselves the right to be with their families.

Fourth, the narrator traces Maina’s and Meja’s gradual slip into crime: they go to the city expecting paid employment and get none; they resign themselves to living in the back streets where Boi recruits them to work in the white man’s farm. At the farm there is rivalry between Boi and them the result of which is that the white man dismisses them from employment and transports them back to the streets. The journey back to the back street signals their retrogression as once there, they are prone to human rights abuse; the white man's employment, bad as it was, is a step towards fulfilling their basic needs. It is while they are back in the streets that a supermarket attendant suspects Maina of stealing jewels from the supermarket. The attendant, a policeman and a crowd of people run after Maina and Meja who leave the back streets and for the first time get into the Main streets. A car runs over Meja and he stays in the hospital for three months. During this time, Maina meets Razor, a gang leader, who introduces him to gang life. The narrative voice thus persuades us to accept the simple explanation that since circumstances have driven Maina from the back streets where he had been keeping law, it is obvious that he will get into crime. Razor justifies crime by arguing that Maina should either work or belong to a gang if he is to find food and shelter. Razor says, "you don't work, you don't belong to any gang…What do you do?... What do you eat? Where do you live?" (56) Razor is suggesting that crime can substitute paid employment in as far as meeting basic needs to food and shelter is concerned. Razor's argument appeals to Maina, who, despite his initial resistance, joins Razor's gang.

The story portrays Meja's journey to crime as inevitable too: a car hits him as he runs across a city street; he is hospitalised for three months; he attempts to go back home in the rural areas but a re-union with his family fails; he goes back to the city and works in a quarry only for the rock to be completely hewn so that there is no more work. So he comes to a cul-de-sac in his journey as an employee and the only option he has is a gradual slip into crime. Meja tells fellow inmates how he starts off as an inexperienced criminal and gradually learns to be fearless in cheating, mugging, stealing and robbing.

Homeless, unemployed and without money Maina and Meja need to somehow meet their basic needs especially food and shelter, and it happens that they do so in illegal ways. As Ayo Kehinde observes, given the torturous experiences of these young people, it is no surprise that very soon they have recourse to criminal acts.

The narrative voice portrays crime as understandable as we see in the lengthy description of prisoners and their crime as Maina introduces them to Meja the first time the latter goes to prison. Maina mentions their names and each proudly proclaims the crime that put him in jail and the process is accompanied with laughter. The more grievous the crime the more excitement it attracts among the inmates as it happens when one of them says that he is in prison for the ninth time for robbery with violence. Meja Mwangi's portrayal of crime as understandable through the narrative voice and the characters' observation however has a moral implication. The characters lack means of fulfilling their rights to food, shelter and clothing and they react to this lack by denying other people their right to property when they steal or rob or their right to life when they kill as it happens when Maina kills the couple. This kind of reaction is an eye-for-an-eye mentality which constitutes a primitive consciousness of human rights as if a wrong rights another wrong. The view of crime as a solution to a situation of lack also fails to acknowledge that a human being is essentially a decision marker and therefore the characters have a choice to be or not to be criminals. Since to be fully human entails acceptance and respect for social laws, characters that turn to crime are less human in their behaviour.

Fifth, the story having put Maina and Meja into a path of endless crime, the next logical step is punishment. They suffer violence, imprisonment and death as the discussion shows.

Maina steals milk delivered at the doorstep of customers and sells it to his own customers so as to get money to feed himself and his colleagues in the Razors's gang. Two detective inspectors beat Maina up before handcuffing and hauling him into a patrol car when they catch him stealing the milk. Police officers arrest Meja for robbery and they only stop beating him when he is "one big ache" (145). They question him about the robbery and they beat him more to force a confession out of him. The beatings constitute physical violence which violates Maina's and Meja's bodies by inflicting pain. The police do so contrary to the provision that everyone charged with an offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty in a court of law.

The society curtails the freedom of movement of Maina, Meja and their colleagues in cell number nine to protect its rights to property and life from criminals who threaten its enjoyment of these rights. Indeed the criminals in prison get satisfaction and enjoyment from violating these rights. Moreover, they enjoy their prison terms as is evident in Maina's case; when Meja goes to prison, Maina has four months remaining before he is released but he consoles his friend: "I will leave you here. But don't worry. I will also find you here when I come back" (147). The in-and-out of prison habits are so predictable that the chief warder and the inmates book sleeping positions of these regular inmates of cell nine. Towards the end of the novel Meja tells the chief warder that a man is free to live where he likes when likes and in his case he is free in cell number nine. Ngugi, one of the prisoners, expresses sentiments that probably explain the criminals' unexpected "love" for prison: prison meets their basic needs. He says, "here we eat and sleep and get counted and locked up in cells. Smooth life. Better than most hotels in town. There is no charge for it whatsoever" (140). The inadequate and poor living conditions outside prison cause the criminals to value and treat as urgent their rights to food and accommodation as is suggested by “we eat and sleep”, and to trivialise and relegate to a secondary position their freedom of movement. I further agree with Crummey’s suggestion that the protagonists find their greatest stability in recurrent terms in prison because it is similar to the secondary school, which makes their last point of incorporation into an ordered social existence.

Ironically, the prison meets the basic needs of the prisoners and in this way encourages crime which enables one to get back to prison to be provided with food and shelter which are not available during the periods of freedom in the streets or in the slums. As Kehinde observes, due to its improved living conditions, prison custody is “preferable to hostile freedom” (235) and Riau notes that the young people prefer prison due to the “comradeship and contentment among the inmates” (114). The prison in *Kill Me Quick* fails to convert criminals into useful citizens. Both the inmates and the chief warder expect a continuity of the vicious cycle of crime and prison life. When Maina kills the couple and is awaiting trial for murder with high likelihood of hanging, Meja is sad at the thought that soon the chief warder will send someone to fill Maina’s vacant position on the floor of cell nine after Maina’s death, but, Meja adds that “in reality the empty bedding place would never be filled. It rightfully belonged to Maina and no one else” (176). The thought that a position in a prison cell could belong to someone permanently is an indication of the extent to which the prison institution has failed in its expected rehabilitating mission. It further fits in with the design of the story to create culs-de-sac for the characters and deny them opportunities of improving their lives.

In the novel, crime is also punishable by death. Sweeper, a member of Razor's gang, kills a fellow gangster while enforcing discipline in the gang; he is hanged for it. Likewise, Maina's prison colleagues express fear that given his repeated involvement in crime, chances that he will be hanged for killing the couple are high. The narrative voice gives us a description of Maina just before he kills the couple: he is "cold and hungry and broken…He [wants] food, a fire and a place to sleep" (159). Failure to fulfil these needs threatens Maina's life; so motivated by the will to live and the necessity to fight to stay alive, he kills. This way, Maina's behaviour is understandable as a means of self-preservation. The newspapers call Maina a murderer but Chege and Meja defend Maina saying that Maina was not a murderer and it was not in his character to wish to hurt anyone. I am thus persuaded to examine Maina's behaviour as an act of self-preservation. Maina is alienated not only from his family but also from the entire society. By murdering the couple he breaks the law of his society and society reacts by alienating him from humanity through imprisonment and the likely death sentence. The death sentence like in the case of Sweeper and Maina is retributive justice, an eye-for-an-eye understanding of punishment that perpetuates revenge instead of reconciliation and societal re-integration. It is opposed to restorative justice which gives an offender an opportunity to learn and re-join the society. It is not disputable that Sweeper and Maina have violated a basic human right by killing others but their deaths do not give Maina and Sweeper the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and reform.

As the discussion shows, the narrator tells a story in which the characters of focus, Maina and Meja, have no way out of their suffering; their rights are on a downward spiral with unemployment and poor working conditions leading to inhuman living conditions which further lead to crime. Criminal activities lead to prison life, and for Maina, the possibility of death by hanging. It is a pessimistic story in which the narrator not only recounts human rights abuses but also glorifies these abuses as in the case of description of Maina and Meja eating dirt, scavenging like and with animals, and enjoying criminal and prison life. Mwangi leave us with no hope that Maina and Meja's lives could improve in anyway. In fact, the story fails to persuade us to sympathise with Maina and Meja; it invites us to see photographs of them on the street, and stop at that. I agree with Kurtz's and Udenta's view that unlike the socialist realist who believes in the inevitability of change, Mwangi is a naturalist who depicts his society in the way it is without suggesting how to change the situation.

Kill Me Quick stops at showing how characters' rights to food, shelter, clothing, employment and decent standard of living are unfulfilled; it fails to show how to remedy this situation of abuse as is the case of a realist novel. It is in this way absurdist, presenting pessimistic characters who are passive victims of their circumstances. *The Last Villains of Molo* however introduces us to characters who are optimistic and active participants in their environment. The story begins with by a quotation, in the dedication part of the novel, from David Mulwa's *Redemption*: "The young refuse the bonds of the past/ the bonds of hate." The referents, the young, in this quotation are actively involved in the action of refusing to be enslaved by hatred. They are unlike the persona in the introductory poem in *Kill Me Quick* who is resigned to fate which could lead to death. We therefore expect from the onset that the story that the characters in the novel would fight their problems and challenges.

The Last Villains of Molo uses a third person omniscient narrator. This all-knowing narrator covers time and space letting us view scenes in Molo 1992 and Nairobi 2001 in alternating episodes. Using a cinematic technique the narrator tells two parallel stories concurrently, each with its characters and events, the two not converging until almost half of the story has been covered. This technique creates suspense as the reader reads on to establish the link between the two stories. The narrator creates an illusion of truth by giving specific dates for the events of the story such as “Ndoinet Forest, Molo, 1992” (1) and “Nairobi, 2001” (19) a factor that makes the story believable as the narrator’s journalistic reportage convinces us. The narrative voice tells in Molo the story of Kimani, Kibet, Kiprop, Lihanda and Irungu and in Nairobi the story of Bone, Bomu, Bafu, Ngeta and Rock. When the two stories converge into one we realise that the five boys we have known in Molo are the same young men in Nairobi ten years later. The narrator focuses on Kimani, Kibet, Kiprop, Lihanda and Irungu who suffer tribal clashes in Molo and the effect of these clashes on their lives. The narrative perspective is thus from an oppressed people; it privileges them by telling their story.

The story begins with an introduction of characters.

Bone is a young man talented in music but the subject of his music, corruption, is not popular with local music producers and radio stations. The latter give foreign musicians opportunities to take up the airwaves and deny Bone a chance for local listeners to hear his music. Bone complains about how local radio stations occupy the airwaves reporting trivialities about American music personalities including their birthdays and shoe size instead of giving such airwaves to local musicians like Bone to be heard. Privileging foreign over local musicians denies Bone an opportunity to utilise his talent and earn a living in his own country.

Bafu could mean the Kiswahili term for bathroom, or a phrase coined from sheng *kupiga bafu*, which roughly means to outwit. Bafu is popular for outwitting people; he is always looking for ways of conning someone to make money. He is a footballer and dreams of making it to the national team. His dream however ends when the football coach disappears with the money the trainees have been collecting and a few months later the local councillor allocates himself the football training grounds. Both the coach and the councillor deny Bafu and other young men the opportunity to develop their talents and earn a living through professional football. Bafu loses interest in football.

Bomu, whose name is Sheng for bhang, is a *matatu* conductor. His employer demands a lot of money and the police demand bribes; he must work for many hours serving arrogant customers. These conditions make his work difficult. The narrator uses the verbs "contend" -pand "deal" to suggest that the work of drivers and conductors is difficult but they manage it.

> Both *matatu* drivers and conductors…had to contend with a 5a.m–10p.m. work schedule. They left home with orders from the *matatu* owners to bring an astronomical amount of money at the end of the day. During the day they had to deal with arrogant customers as well as numerous traffic policemen who demanded unreasonable bribes. (23)

The narrative voice from the perspective of drivers and conductors spells out three major obstacles to gainful employment and they constitute human rights violations. The first is long working hours; the drivers and conductors are required to work for seventeen hours. This is an unfair demand as the person is only allowed seven hours of rest. The second is the unreasonable demand for money on part of the *matatu* owner. This demand has the implication that the driver and the conductor are not entitled to a minimum fair wage; they work almost entirely to enrich the owner of the vehicle. The third and equally serious obstacle is police and their demand for "unreasonable bribes". This term implies that there can be such a thing as "a reasonable bribe" hence presenting the case of bribery as a norm and not a deviation from the normal conduct of the police. This is corruption constituting abuse of office by the police as public officers. The police constitute a government body and their exploitation of the conductors and drivers is evidence of government's failure to protect the economic rights of the people.

Ngeta's name comes from Kiswahili *kupiga ngeta*, meaning to mug. Ngeta survives on mugging people especially in the late evening and at night. He, however, mugs people in an almost friendly way sometimes returning victims' valuable documents and other times letting those who identify him go:

> Ngeta never attacked people he knew. Actually, if you passed near his hideout and whispered into the darkness, "*Niaje Ngeta*?" ("How are you Ngeta?") nothing would happen to you. Sometimes he returned things he had taken and which he thought would be useful, like people's ID cards. (25)

The narrative voice here is suggesting that Ngeta is essentially a good person, so the reader, like the narrator, understands and sympathises with Ngeta. I must however assert as I did in Meja's and Maina's cases that mugging people is an abuse of their right to their property and is not justifiable even in circumstances where one's rights are violated.

Rock is the only character out of the five who has money and a family. He begins off with a cart business. Then during the 1998 Nairobi bomb blast a minister loses money and Rock stumbles on the minister's briefcase with the money. He uses this money to start off a grocery shop which his wife, Mary, manages. Before this success Rock experiences some challenges. At the market, he says, he could do "the worst donkeywork most people dared not touch" (112). That is how he earns himself the name Rock. The donkeywork is streneous for him, but it provides some form of financial independence which helps him afford his basic needs. He says, "I have never borrowed anything from anyone" (117). Security guards on the streets sodomise him which is a violation of his body and dignity, and Bone rescues him by fighting the guards off with a bone hence earning himself the name Bone, hence asserting Rock's rights. The street circumstances thus, make an environment favourable for this violation.

Evidently, these characters – Bone, Bafu, Bomu, Ngeta and Rock – are alive with history and delineated characteristics. As a result of lack of meaningful means of livelihood they live in a small room in Ngando, a Nairobi slum. They call it "The Slaughterhouse", a name that suggests that heinous activities are carried out in the house. They are idle, and the consequence of this is that they engage in illegal and immoral behaviour: "That was when the sex orgies, the binges and the fights started becoming a regular feature of The Slaughterhouse" (119). The neighbours to the slaughterhouse five do not know anything about the five young men, and how they settled in Ngando and why they live such irresponsible lives. Thus, after giving us a preliminary description of the five young men, the narrator, uses elaborate flashbacks take us back to their past. The narrator prepares us for this bit of the plot thus: "It puzzled the neighbours how anybody would live such a reckless life in this era. Psychologists say all behaviour is caused by something. So, what could it be that was causing this behaviour of The Slaughterhouse Five?" (30). Like the characters in *Kill Me Quick*, the narrative voice is suggesting that Bone, Bafu, Bomu, Ngeta and Rock are products of particular circumstances and environment; they are products of events that took place in Molo in 1992. The narrator, thus, invites us to take a journey back in time and space to Molo, January 1992, for an answer to the inexplicable behaviour of the young men. The events in Molo revolve around land ownership which sparks off tribalism leading to ethnic violence and its consequences. The events have human rights implications as the discussion shows.

In the novel, issues of tribalism stem from sharing of land between two ethnic communities: the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin. The Kikuyu require land for cultivation while the Kalenjin need it for grazing their livestock. The latter who consider themselves the original residents of Rift Valley where Molo is located feel they have a right to oust the Kikuyu and retain ownership of the land. This way rivalry between the two begins. Angelina Chebet, a Kalenjin complains that Macharia, a Kikuyu, has stolen her tender for supplying firewood and vegetables to Molo District Hospital. Likewise Mutai, a Kalenjin butchery operator, complains that he has lost his customers to two Kikuyu butchery operators and his Kikuyu worker, Karuri, has resigned from his employment in favour of a Kikuyu employer, Kamau. These feelings of suspicion give rise to violence as members of one tribe see members of the other tribe as enemies. It is not surprising then that Angelina's and Kimutai's feelings that the Kikuyu are stealing business opportunities from them are followed by threats to the Kikuyu to leave the Rift Valley. Angelina announces the beginning of violence thus: "That was the last meal. The last meal these robbers are going to eat off me!" (36) Soon leaflets are thrown all over ordering "all outsiders to leave the area immediately" (48). This implies forceful eviction which is a violation of human rights as it is discrimination of people on the basis of their ethnic communities instead of focusing on humanity as one.

When violence breaks out, members of tribes other than Kalenjin and Kikuyu suffer as well for the two warring tribes force them to join in the war. The Kikuyu insisting that their people are being killed and they are going to help them out tell Lihanda, a Luhyia, "You are either with us or with them. Nothing in between" (85). This is a call to join in the war between the two warring tribes. By coercing Lihanda to join the war, they violate his freedom to act according to the dictates of his conscience.

In the novel, execution of violence resulting from tribalism involves burning of houses, rape, and killing each of which constitutes has human rights implication.

First, unknown people burn two houses belonging to members of the Kikuyu community. The people affected identify it as arson rather than mere accident and seek the help of a chief. The latter feeling inadequate to handle the case refers it to the district officer. The district officer acts by calling a meeting to reconcile the warring groups. Burning of houses is a violation of people's right to ownership of property and to shelter. In this case the people are conscious of the violation and they know that government officials can help remedy the situation. Attempts by the government officials to stop the violence are fruitless, but the people that report the matter are involved in assertion of human rights and wish to restore good relations that favour co-existence of both tribes.

Second, Njoroge and fellow Kikuyu break into Kirui's house and the Kirui pleads, "Have mercy on us, Njoroge!" (72). The latter's response speaks of tribalism: "Sorry friend, but this is war. Friendship does not mean anything. We are not going to kill you. We are going to do something worse" (72). The concept of friendship which the attackers reject signifies harmony as a fruit of respect for human rights. The attackers rape Kirui's wife as the entire family watches: "Kirui was propped up to see it all; the agonised voice of his wife, her anguished face, the bloody mess on the floor, the frightened faces of the children…he saw the sardonic grins on the attackers as they humiliated him" (73). Sexual assault as in this case is humiliation and violence on a human being. It also has a gender dimension in that it is aimed at violating rights confined to women. Indeed, Unicef notes that "systematic rape is often used as a weapon of war in ‘ethnic cleansing’”. Kirui’s wife suffers both as a woman and as a Kalenjin. The rapists use this rape to humiliate Kirui as man and to some extent humiliate Kalenjin men. As a result of the assault on his wife, Kirui goes mad “his case having defeated even the most qualified of doctors at Mathare Mental Hospital” (73). His madness results from psychological pain that the rapists have inflicted on him. Madness alienates Kirui from humanity as he no longer associates with human beings. He is therefore robbed of his humanity. His madness signifies the depth into which people sink as result of violations of human rights issuing from tribal discrimination. On a moral level rape infringes societal rules by interfering with the institution of marriage that confines sexual relations to a married couple.

Third, there are many incidents in which life is lost. Kimani, Kiprop and Irungu lose members their family during the clashes. Unnamed people tear open Peter Ngundo Njoroge’s stomach and between the day of the attack and two days later when he dies in the Nakuru General Hospital he feels his neighbours have betrayed him; his only utterance is, “But we are neighbours” (58). Kipruto, Kipyegon’s son rejects his father’s decision to chase Kikuyus out of the Rift Valley saying, “*Mzee* I beg to differ…If all of us were to think like you there would be a civil war!” (38) Just before the clashes begin Kipruto warns *Mzee* Waweru, a Kikuyu, to leave to safety yet the tribe he so much protects kill him for the mere fact that he is Kalenjin. As he lies half-conscious in a pool of his own blood, his attackers snip off each of his fingers saying: “Each finger is for one Kikuyu your people have killed” (84). Kipruto recognises the speaker as a teacher he has worked with in the same school with in Molo and wonders why this teacher pretends not to know Kipruto. The narrative voice thus appeals for our sympathy for Kipruto as he suffers as a result of tribalism which he opposes. Death is the ultimate denial of one’s humanity especially when it is “prematurely” instigated through ethnic clashes. These killings violate the victims’ right to life and entail inhuman treatment in the torture of the victims before they die.

Tribal clashes in the novel set characters on journeys: to Limuru in a camp where people displaced from their home live, and to Nairobi where five boys – Kimani, Kiprop, Lihanda, Irungu and Kibet – end up.

Irungu and his mother flee from Molo in search of safety and temporary settle in Limuru. In the camp they are exposed to extreme cold as they lack adequate clothing and shelter. They “slept hunched up on thin blankets that did not keep out the Limuru cold” (110). They also lack access to adequate food. Irungu expresses the difficulty of accessing food thus:

> Life at the Limuru camp was not easy. Having hitherto lived a life where you determined when and what to eat, it was difficult to adjust to hunger. It was disheartening to have to depend on hand-outs from the church and other well-wishers, even as you ate your meal not knowing where the next would come from. Then you just thought about your full granary at home. (110)

He further observes that when they arrived at Kwa Mbira Camp in Limuru, “getting food on the table was really difficult” (114). The journey thus takes them away from violence and leads them into a new set of problems unexperienced in their home in Molo: they can hardly fulfil their rights to clothing, shelter and food fulfilled while in Limuru.

As a result of lacking means of fulfilling the basics of clothing, shelter, and food as well as the right to education in case of Irungu, Irungu’s mother becomes a prostitute and later dies of HIV/Aids. She exercises her free will to choose to get involved in prostitution whose ultimate price is death. Denied of basic means of survival, she worsens her case by further exploiting her body and depriving herself of dignity and moral uprightness. Her death ultimately denies her the right to life and enjoyment of all rights.

Kimani, Lihanda, Kiprop and Kibet become friends as they fight for their survival in the clashes at Ndoneit Forest at the end of May 1992. The four belong to different tribes: Kimani is Kikuyu, Lihanda is Luhyia, and Kiprop and Kibet are Kalenjin. To conceal their friendship from their tribe mates, the four run to Nairobi where they can be safe from tribal antagonism; in the city streets they later meet Irungu. Their journey to Nairobi is a search for safety but it displaces them from their homes and they live deprived lives facing lack of access to education, inadequate and poor housing, psychological trauma, social alienation and revenge. In this way the study agrees with Michael Cernea's research that the major impoverishment risks in displacement are landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, morbidity, food insecurity, loss of access to common property assets, social disarticulation and education loss.

Children have a right to education, but in the novel, going on with education becomes difficult for the boys in the circumstances of displacement as they have had to leave schools which they had been attending. When we first encounter Kimani and Irungu, they are anticipating finishing school and getting initiated into adulthood together. This soon remains only a dream as the two boys get caught up in the tribal clashes. When they are later displaced in Nairobi, they miss opportunity to resume their pursuit of education. Even for Irungu who goes to school in the aftermath of the ethnic violence, life is very difficult as he is bullied, ridiculed and embarrassed due to his poverty. When he passes his Kenya Certificate of Primary Education and joins Kwa Mbira Secondary School he feels "totally destitute"

(115) as he cannot afford most of the items in the shopping list. The matron embarrasses him further by calling attention to this fact. In the same school, students make reference to his destitute status by referring to him as “refugee” or “Rwanda”. These words allude to post-1994 Rwandan genocide refugees in Kenya. The historical allusion emphasises the hostility faced by displaced persons in their own country of birth; they are denied their rights as citizens. When a student calls Irungu “son of prostitute”, he finds it an insult to his personal dignity, and he drops out of school as a way of asserting his dignity. In this way, ethnic violence and its consequences have denied the boys the right to education.

Lihanda’s case is informative of the fact that education is important in enabling someone to secure employment just as it is the case in *Kill Me Quick*. As a child Lihanda “always wanted a white collar job where he would wear a suit and carry important files under his armpit” (66). Lihanda drops out of school in Standard One due to lack of school fees. The consequence is “with hardly any education, his childhood dreams of success clouded when he failed to get any employment. He had to settle for small menial jobs…he became famous as *kijana wa mkono* – an unskilled labourer” (66). For these displaced boys therefore, ethnic violence denies them not only their right to education but also their right to work.

The lack of genuine means of livelihood causes the five boys once displaced in Nairobi experience housing problems similar to those of Meja and Maina in *Kill Me Quick*. They live in squalor, housed in a dirty iron sheet room with a rickety door, which they popularly refer to as the Slaughterhouse. Mosquitoes which are a health hazard “breed in the filth out there” (18) and invade the room. The household items in the Slaughterhouse symbolise the austere life lived by the occupants: there is only one bed, three stools, a sooty stove and a pile of dirty dishes. This is all there is to share among the five members of the house. The toilet that serves the Slaughterhouse is in poor condition – dirty, smelly and leaning on one side – and inadequate too as Bone states that it "caters for fifty or so houses" (43). Some places have no toilets at all and people, as Bone says, use "*Choo* FM, that is *Choo* flying method" (43) in which human waste is put in a polythene bag then thrown in the air. This waste ends up polluting the environment hence becoming a health hazard. This implies a denial of the right to decent disposal of waste. Bone discusses the case of toilets pessimistically, without the seriousness it deserves as he seems at home with the situation; Nancy's reactions, however, make it clear that the state of the toilets does not meet the expected standards for human beings. The fact that Nancy who lives in Imara Daima, a residential area with better living conditions, gets shocked, is evidence that the case is different elsewhere and that availability of good and clean toilets is the ideal for all people. The Slaughterhouse five and the Gando residents are thus denied their right to decent standard of living.

In addition to being denied the right to decent living conditions, Kimani, Lihanda, Irungu, Kibet and Kiprop are psychologically traumatised by their experiences during the ethnic violence. This is evident in their use of only nicknames in their reference to each other. Nicknames are a strategy to ensure disconnect of these characters with their past. They live in the present and completely avoid any reference to their past. The narrator notes: "they never talked about their experiences in Molo. They shut their minds to that part of their life completely. Now they lived only for the present" (119). It is an unpleasant and humiliating past that these characters choose to mute; they are denied the peace and pride in keeping their names which tie them to their places of origin. That they deny their own histories, their past, is a sign that they have been robbed of their identity, an identity that constitutes who they are essentially as each human being has a history and place of origin.

Furthermore, the five characters displaced in Nairobi are socially alienated. They are so conscious of their social class that they do not allow for meaningful relationships across the social classes. Bomu, while referring to Nancy, warns his friend Bone to "beware of these rich girls" (45). Previously a girl from South B whom Bomu befriends breaks the relationship because she belongs to a higher social status than his and members of her social class are likely to question her choice of Bomu for a boyfriend. She observes, "I am from the suburbs and you are from the ghetto. What will my friends say?" (45). Stella, Bone's ghetto girlfriend, paints a mental picture that highlights the bad effect of class distinction on social relationships. Stella contrasts the social status of the rich residing Muthaiga, Runda and Lavington with that of Gando slum dwellers, showing that the two are worlds apart. While the former play prestigious sport like golf, drive expensive cars like Mercedes and BMW and have their dinner at classy hotels like Hilton, the latter make a living by selling cheap illegal brew, *chang'aa,* share a one-roomed house for a family of six and eat the same meal, ugali and *terere* every day, seven days a week. Stella challenges her boyfriend Bone to realise that he cannot marry his newly found rich girlfriend, Nancy, due to the social gap between them. The class system underscores the rights denied the low class: the right to a home, to privacy, and to food. The narrator's exposition of class system implies a need to get rid of it and ensure that the low class can fulfil these rights. It elicits feelings of hate for the system which allows some to be very rich while others remain very poor. The narrator elicits sympathy for the poor; sympathy is unavoidable when Bone refers to the struggles in the ghetto which have prevented him and Stella from getting married. Poverty in this case denies Bone the right to marry and start a family as it does to Maina in *Kill Me Quick*. The poor cannot marry outside or inside their class because they lack money the means to sustain marriage and family.

Moreover, revenge afflicts the five characters in Nairobi. The theme of revenge organically connects the five protagonists of the story to the antagonists. The latter consist of Nancy, her uncle, Superintendent Rotich, and her uncle's recruit, Chebet. During the Molo clashes, Bone (Kimani) killed Nancy's father to stop the latter from killing Lihanda (Ngeta) and Nancy's family seeks revenge. Nancy thus befriends Bone and showers gifts not only to him but also to his colleagues so that she can ultimately kill him. Rotich recruits Angelina for her hatred for Kikuyus so that she can execute the killing as part of revenge against this tribe. Thus despite running away from the ethnic conflicts in Molo, Bone, Bafu, Bomu, Ngeta and Rock still encounter effects of tribalism.

The first victim of revenge is Bomu who is killed in a mob-violence incident. Angelina, Bomu's distant aunt who is out to avenge Bomu's betrayal of the Kalenjin tribe by associating with Kimani and Irungu, shouts "Mwizi! Help! Help! Thief!" (129) and the crowd react by meting out mob justice without investigating the claims of the voice accusing Bomu of theft. The action by the crowd is illegal and a violation of Bomu's right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty in a court of law. In addition, the mob deny him the right to life.

Next Rotich organises for the killing of Bafu. A heavily armed contingent of police pick him up and after half an hour people hear gunshots and then Bafu is found dead among two other men. The police boss covers up this murder by displaying guns to convince the public that the three slain men, including Bafu, were gangsters. His speech which has been overused to the point of self-parody draws attention to the police as the guilty ones:

> *My men* ordered them to stop, but they opened fire at *my men* and so *my men* gave chase all the way from town. They shot at *my men* again and *my men* returned fire, killing three of them on the spot. *My men* recovered five Beretta pistols, an AK-47 rifle, and rounds of ammunition (138)

The repetition and italicisation on “my men” suggests the desperate attempt of the police to cover up having killed the three. The narrative perspective is from the victims of police killings revealing the insincerity of the police by observing that the speech is “the same old, well-rehearsed monotone that every police boss used in such circumstances” (138). The narrator seeks to make it clear that it is common practice for police officers to kill suspects and cover up for the killing in their speeches. Bafu’s case shows direct involvement of the police in the killings. The emphasis on “my men” shows that the speaker, who is the police boss, takes pride in the murders executed by his officers. Considering murder to be an achievement as it happens in this case, is indicative of appalling moral standards in the society. The police abuse power vested in their office when they oppress and kill citizens.

Bomu’s and Bafu’s cases present different levels of human rights consciousness. In Bomu’s case, the only person who knows that Bomu is innocent fails to act to avert mob-violence as he is afraid that the mob would turn on him. He tells Bone:

> I saw it all…He was innocent. He did not even try to escape as the woman accosted him. I saw her frame him. I had been watching him for a while because of his fancy clothes. But I could not do anything at all. The crowd would have turned on me for being a sympathiser, or decided I was an accomplice. (133)

A culture of silence pervades this murder scene with the man’s explanation suggesting that in this society silence is safety. The fear to speak thus obstructs justice. Bone decides to do something about Bomu’s murder, however. He reports the matter to the police for investigation. He knows that Bomu's right to life has been violated and the way to get justice for Bomu is through the police. The police detectives, however, have to be given "something small" (137), that is, a bribe to do their work. Even then they do not honour their promise of unearthing the truth. They only enter the case in the Occurrence Book as "mob violence with no available witness" (137). They then dump Bomu's remains in an unknown place and by the third day, Bone has not yet found them. By demanding bribe and covering up for Bomu's death, the police deny the victim his right to justice.

Contrary to the fear and silence that reign after Bomu's murder, Bafu's death triggers off protest from his friends and the masses who seek an explanation from the police. The narrator describes the protest thus:

> There was a sudden and unplanned show of protest – the coffin bearing Bafu's remains was carried by a multitude of people and taken to Ngando Police Post where it was dumped amid loud shouts of 'Murderers! Murderers!' Then the protesters sat down and waited for audience with the officer in-charge. (141)

The demonstrators and the police fight each other for hours. The demonstration continues on the day of burial when a huge crowd forms, walks all the way to the City Mortuary where Bafu's body had been taken by the police the previous day. From the mortuary they shout "anti-police and anti-government slogans" (142) as they head to Lang'ata Cemetery for Bafu's burial. During the burial each speaker asks for vengeance for the murdered young man, and one politician promises the mourners that he will bring the matter to the attention of parliament. At the end of these demonstrations the violation of Bafu's right to life may not have been corrected but the message is clear that people know that the conduct of the police is unacceptable, and they demonstrate their knowledge of human rights through demand that such behaviour stops. Such consciousness is necessary in the promotion of human rights.

The story focuses not only on events and characters that lead to violation of human rights but also on circumstances in which characters show concern for human life. The circumstances catch the attention of and persuade the reader to see the optimism, at which the narrator points, as solution out of the problem of ethnic conflict and violence. The following seven incidences speak of the efforts of characters to promote human rights.

The first one is found in Molo business operators who show solidarity with those affected by the ethnic violence. Public transport operators ground their *matatus* in Molo as protest against the violence in the interior of Molo. Traders in Molo town close down their businesses and join the *matatu* operators in the protest. When the local Member of Parliament and the District Commissioner appeal to them to open the businesses, they shout back at the leaders, “stop the killings first” (74). The violence does not negatively affect the protesters directly, but they choose to identify with the victims of the violence, irrespective of their ethnic affiliations, and seek better living conditions for them.

The second incident takes place in Nairobi where thousands of University of Nairobi students throng the streets in protest against the violence. The students are far away from the scene of ethnic violence, but they are moved by the human suffering, and they seek to change the situation. They contribute to the mounting pressure that makes the government acknowledge that the violence is a national crisis, promise to use helicopters to monitor the security in Molo South, and deploy fifteen District Officers in Molo and Olenguruone. Their demonstration thus leads to improved security which ideally promotes people’s well-being and therefore promotes respect for human rights.

The third case shows humane concern prevailing against the selfish desire for self-preservation during the fight in Molo South. Lihanda extends kindness to the injured and almost dying old Waweru. He extends kindness to the old man. He sympathises with Waweru and promises not to leave the dying old man even if it means his own death. Likewise Waweru knows that he is going to die and therefore shows concern for the young Lihanda by encouraging him to run to safety, and later make a difference in the state of things that have caused his own death. Kimani kills Nancy's father to save Lihanda's life because Nancy's father has his axe aimed at Lihanda. They then discover the little girl, Nancy, standing next to her father's body and their conversation convincingly tells that these boys are not intentional murderers; they still respect life. As Lihanda swings his axe to kill the girl, Kimani appeals to his conscience:

> "What are you doing?" Kimani asked.
> "We are not to leave anybody alive, remember?" Lihanda asked.
> "Oh, hell! Are we to kill a little girl for a crime she doesn't even know and in which she has not even participated?" (93)

They leave without hurting the girl even when the rules of tribalism would have considered her an enemy. While ethnic violence takes life away, there are cases where conscience and reasoning prevail over desire to kill like in Kimani's case. Such cases are attempts to preserve life and in so doing respect one's right to life.

The fourth incident is the development of friendship among Kimani, Lihanda, Kiprop and Kibet which is depicted as the ultimate case of transcending tribal bigotry. Kimani, a Kikuyu saves the life of Kiprop a Kalenjin by bandaging his badly injured leg and when Lihanda who joins them a while later seems to complain about this treatment extended to an enemy, Kimani explains: "I could not leave him here to bleed to death, Kalenjin or not" (98). This implies that Kimani sees Kiprop as a human being first before he considers Kiprop's tribe.

When Kibet, a Kalenjin finds the three (Kimani, Kiprop and Lihanda), his first reaction is to kill his Kikuyu enemy – Kimani – thereby honouring the oath of allegiance to the tribe during the war. Soon common sense, however, prevails and he overcomes allegiance to the oath to kill. Lihanda's skilful talk appeals to Kibet's humane feelings. He convinces Kibet to realise that humanity binds people in a way an oath cannot and that he (Kibet) does not even know why he is killing:

> What's an oath? An oath to kill for something you don't even know…something they don't even tell you? Why have you joined the war; you don't have anything against the Kikuyu, do you? It is just that they fed you with stories, oathed you and gave you weapons, telling you to kill…If you kill us, our blood will haunt you forever. (101)

Lihanda's words give voice to what Kibet had been feeling all along during this tribal conflict: "Lihanda's words had struck a chord in his befogged mind. Everything was true – he really did not have anything against the Kikuyu except what he had been told" (101). As he drops his weapon, we know that a human bond has broken a tribal one. The four boys begin a new family in which they care for each other as brothers and for ten years they do not have another family to look up to. Their friendship is an affirmation of their shared humanity and therefore, a promotion of human rights. The story, through the series of revenge attacks on the boys, however, communicates that the Kenyan society is not ready for a "tribeless" society and thus the boys must suffer the consequences of living a possible distant future in a present that is characterised by tribal intolerance.

The fifth factor is Nancy's consciousness of the concept of a shared humanity makes her backtrack on her commitment to kill Kimani to avenge her father's death. Each time her uncle hatches a plan to kill one of the Slaughterhouse five, Nancy's guilty conscience speaks loudly. When the mob lynch Bomu to death, Nancy calls the uncle to find out if he had to execute the killing in such a cruel manner and to express doubt if he had to do it at all.

Likewise when the police kill Bafu, she categorically states that she does not like what is happening and that she does not want to revenge anymore. Nancy’s remorse leads to the ultimate reconciliation between her and Kimani. Her uncle has been giving her drugs to numb her feeling and silence her conscience but Nancy lacks the courage to shoot Bone. She instead shares a human feeling that both are victims of the ethnic clashes and they should team up to fight the evil that the uncles have perpetuated by seeking revenge. This reconciliation makes us understand why Kombani quotes Gerry Lourghran at the beginning of chapter one: “there are no villains or heroes here, just victims” (3). The quotation, from which the writer draws the title of the novel, calls for a collective responsibility as opposed to blame in relation to matters of the ethnic violence. It indicates that everybody’s human rights have been violated as a result of tribal conflicts; none is to blame entirely for violation, and none is the sole victim of the conflict.

The sixth case is the resolution by Kimani and Nancy’s to reconcile which counters Rotich’s continued attempts at revenging. They tape him as he makes a confession and threaten to expose him should he ever attempt to carry on with the killings again; they say they will send copies of this confession to the police headquarters, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, all media houses in the country and to the office of the president. At this point Nancy is a human being seeking the company and comfort of Kimani another human beings, not a Kalenjin perpetuating tribalism. She admits that her family had nurtured in her the desire to kill; she confesses having no reason for it as she loves Kimani. The reconciliation and friendship between Nancy and Kimani therefore, act as a deterrent to further violation of human rights.

Lastly, the return to Molo after ten years marks the returnees' determination to show the power of reconciliation. Kimani, Nancy and Irungu build a house whose occupants of the house are Kimani (Kikuyu), Nancy (Kalenjin), Lihanda (Luhyia), Irungu (Kikuyu) and Akinyi, a Luo girl who is orphaned as a result of Likoni ethnic clashes. Bafu, before his death, assists Akinyi to pay her school fees but upon Bafu's death, she becomes an adopted child of Nancy and Bone. This group of returnees to Molo is representative of different tribes and their habitation of the house is indicative of the writer's vision for a nation free from tribalism. The building of the house at the end of story suggests a new beginning, a new nation born after the conscious rejection of violations of human rights stemming from tribalism. Supportive elders help this group of returnees to rebuild their lives. The overall atmosphere is one of peace and tranquillity, and the narrator remarks that seeing people happy in these Molo fields, one would not have believed that the same fields were a battlefield ten years before then. This way the narrator affirms and celebrates the events and characters that have conquered tribalism and emerged victorious in the quest for the value of humanity. While the journey from Molo had put the characters on the path of abuse of human rights, the journey to Molo is a journey of restoration of their rights as citizens to own a piece of land and a home.

The narrator in *The Last Villains of Molo* thus tells the story of the oppressed and the deprived victims of the ethnic violence. The characters, specifically Kimani, Irungu, Kibet, Kiprop, Lihanda and Nancy, reject tribal hatred and refuse to succumb to hopelessness. They hang onto the humane feelings in them, and their actions affirm Randal's observation: "love provides a way out of the depredations of force and hatred, the integrity of individual relationships compensating for a wider social disintegration" (211). The house they choose to build in Molo symbolises a new “state” for themselves where members of different ethnic communities are acceptable.

Both *Kill Me Quick* and *The Last Villains of Molo* tell stories of underprivileged members of the society. The main characters in both novels are drawn from the low class struggling with the challenges of this class. This choice of characters and narrative perspective privileges the stories of the voiceless in the society. The writers therefore show protection of issues of human rights of this class.

Kill Me Quick and *The Last Villains of Molo* highlight issues of human rights in the urban environment. They make use of a journey motif which entails similar movements the three major movements in the novels being the journeys to the city, Nairobi, the journeys within the city and the journeys back to the country. The journey motif as a strategy enables the writers to portray the characters as being in search of fulfilment. The journeys to the city aid the search of the characters; the main characters in *Kill Me Quick* are seeking employment while the five major characters in *The Last Villains of Molo* who are running away from violence caused by tribalism are seeking refuge. Nairobi therefore exercises a pull on the characters as a place where their needs can be met. The journeys within the city however signify restlessness of the characters; contrary to their expectations that Nairobi would ensure their fulfilment, the city is a place for further abuse of their rights. In *Kill Me Quick* Maina and Meja fail to get jobs and slide in poverty and consequently into crime and eventually into prison life, while Kimani, Irungu, Lihanda, Kibet and Kiprop in *The Last Villains of Molo* lack gainful employment, live in a slum and eventually the hostility of tribalism still gets at them through revenge. The journeys from the city back to the country suggest the importance of home in providing comfort during difficult times; therefore the characters, having experienced frustration with the city environment, seek fulfilment from the country, their places of origin. The return-home journeys for Meja and Maina in *Kill Me Quick* are a failure; these journeys launch the two into deeper levels of violation of human rights as after them Meja is resigned to prison life and Maina is about to hang for murder. For Bone, Nancy and Rock in *The Last Villains of Molo,* the return-home journey is a success ending in building of a house which symbolises a rebuilding, a restoration of their lives. They are restored and expectations are there will be no more abuse of human rights stemming from ethnic violence and its aftermath, and that there will be protection of human rights.

Whereas the two novels explore issues of human rights, in *Kill Me Quick* Mwangi through his choice of a pessimistic narrative voice, puts the characters in endless hopeless situations and events. Meja and Maina are cornered in all their attempts to free themselves from the burdens of poverty: they fail to get paid employment therefore they do not have money to live on and maintain their relationships with family and prospective spouses; so they get into crime and ultimately get addicted to prison life. They despair and succumb to hardships. Most of the events in the novel are negative. The one positive situation in the novel is the kindness that a nurse shows Meja when he is hospitalised for three months. She gives him money to go home. The narrator foregrounds this incident through the use of flashback as Meja remembers and reflects about his life in the city just before he faints before his sister a short distance from home. Everything that comes to Meja’s mind is negative except the action of this nurse: hopelessness, life in the back streets, eating dirt and being hospitalised. By exposing his thoughts, the narrators captures Meja’s disturbed psychic:

> Years of hopelessness passed through his mind and he saw in them two youths loitering around the dustbins in the back streets. Almost a year and a half of eating

> rubbish; then months on a hospital bed. Then he remembered the journey home from the hospital and the nice nurse who had given him fare home….There were some good souls still around although they were scarce, especially in the city. (113)

By foregrounding the act of this nurse, Mwangi suggests that the situation of poverty that Meja is in requires kindness and charity. Elsewhere, in an interview Mwangi with Nicholas says that by writing *Kill Me Quick* he wanted to create awareness of young people in the streets so that "one could notice them [and] at least an individual could be considerate when they're dealing with this kind of people" (200). The nurse thus fits in with Mwangi's goal. Charity is however a temporary solution to the problem of poverty; Meja is soon back on the streets.

On the contrary, Kombani in *The Last Villains of Molo*, through the choice of his narrator creates hope of overcoming abuses of human rights abuses. His characters – Kimani, Irungu, Lihanda, Kibet and Kiprop – go to the city and face challenges just like Mwangi's Maina and Meja. In fact they face death through which the lose Kibet and Kipro, and Lihanda is hospitalised in the ICU for a long time. They however remain proactive to the level of overcoming their challenges; they get to culs-de-sac in their lives. Kombani's narrator tells the story of triumph unlike Mwangi's story of pessimism and despair. The characters in *The Last Villains* of Molo are aware of their rights and of the channels through which they can remedy the wrongs done against them. By choosing reconciliation which is inclusive, they conquer tribalism which is exclusive. Kombani paints the image of a society that can live without violations of human rights. He is decisive about the direction in which his society should go in the attempt to create a more human rights conscious society. He suggests that a consideration of the common humanity that binds people is the way out for a society torn apart by tribal exclusiveness.

CHAPTER FOUR: Human Rights in Domestic and State Settings in Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* and Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*

In chapter three I discussed the issues of human rights in the environment of displacement and the centrality of the journey motif in exploring these issues as characters move from the rural to the urban setting. In this chapter, I examine the portrayal of human rights issues at domestic and state settings in *Coming to Birth* and *Three Days on the Cross*. The story in *Coming to Birth*, which spans twenty-two years beginning in 1956 and ending in 1978, depicts family relationships especially within the institution of marriage, and the state of affairs in colonial and post-colonial times. *Three Days on the Cross* is a story of how the state responds to political crimes, with arrests, detention and torture of victims to confess that they are guilty of these political crimes. At a family level the novel examines the responsibility of spouses to each other and to the well-being of the family. The two novels fall under the realist tradition of writing with the writers portraying realistic situations and characters who interact with and shape their environment with a view to better it. The analysis shows that the two novels depict affirmation and betrayal of human rights.

Coming to Birth tells the story of a female protagonist, Paulina. As the story begins, she is sixteen years old, just married to Martin Were, a twenty-three-year-old man. She travels to Nairobi to join him as he lives and works there. They are disappointed in their marriage because they fail to get a child. She goes to Kisumu for home craft training, and while Martin gets into adulterous relationships with other women. Paulina gets a child with another man, Simon, but the child dies and she goes back to Nairobi where she re-unites with Martin. As the story ends, Paulina is thirty-eight years old and the couple is expecting a baby. The novel interweaves Kenya's story into Paulina's story. Kenya is a British colony when the novel opens in 1956 experiencing a State of Emergency and an independent state when the novel ends in 1978. The story of Kenya captures such historical details as curfews, detentions without trial, political assassinations and police brutality. History however, as Tom Mboya observes, is relegated to the background to give Macgoye "space to focus on and develop Paulina's story" (35). Paulina's story is central to the novel but the reader can only reconstruct Kenya's story from details scattered occasionally in the novel. Paulina's story forms the domestic setting while Kenya's story forms the state setting of the novel. The two stories suggest an issue of human rights: an individual and a state progressing from a point of less or lack of independence to a point of liberation.

In as far as Paulina's story is concerned the novel is much like a bildungsroman, the novel of growing up. The story focuses on Paulina's growth from a naïve inexperienced sixteen-year-old girl to a mature experienced responsible thirty-eight-year-old woman. At the centre of the story is Paulina's personal development and maturation. The omniscient narrator explores Paulina's life as a journey towards this maturation. She makes physical journeys to, from and within Nairobi. As the story begins, she travels to Nairobi to join her husband who is at the railway station waiting for her. Soon afterwards, she makes a journey within Nairobi to and from King George Hospital where Martin takes her when she starts bleeding due to a miscarriage. She makes occasional journeys from Nairobi to their home in Gem and the second and subsequent times she makes return journeys to Nairobi, she is confident to move about; she does not require Martin's assistance to walk to their house from the railway station. She journeys to Kisumu to begin her training in the home craft school and when her baby with Simon dies she makes another journey to Nairobi, this time to stay. The journeys that she makes within the Nairobi city when she settles there the second time shows that she is confident about her movements within the city; she easily finds her way unlike the first time when she gets lost on her from the hospital. She has grown in the course of the story. Thus at a glance we realise that Paulina is a character in motion. The writer thus uses journey motif as a strategy to develop Paulina and in so doing develop her consciousness for human rights.

Paulina and Martin's marriage is a journey that starts with Martin's father providing two cows for Martin to pay dowry and Paulina's parents agreeing to the marriage on a promise that Martin will pay the remainder of the dowry. The narrative voice tells us that Martin who is educated, employed and married, meets his society's definition of a mature man: he is "educated, employed, married…he had already become a person in the judgement of the community he belonged to" (1). Marriage thus gives a man the right to identity as a "person" in the eyes of the society. Paulina and Martin expect to live together as husband and wife; so Paulina makes her first journey to Nairobi, a journey to nurture their relationship. Martin waits for her at the railway station, and he is excited at the thought of his wife coming to live with him in Nairobi. An interior monologue reveals his excitement: "she was coming and he would be a man indeed" (2). Her presence as a wife thus fulfils Martin's right as a husband and gives him a sense of manhood, a feeling that issues not from a biological fact of being male, but from one's marital status and ability to keep a wife. Likewise, Martin's presence fulfils Paulina as a married woman. By their contribution and cooperation, their families contribute to the fulfilment of the right to marriage for the couple.

Paulina's journey to the city places her in Nairobi, the setting of most of the events of the story. She travels unaccompanied but as Martin indicates she is learning lessons for future journeys: “he could not see Paulina [coming out from the train] but was confident that in days to come she would be one of the first to emerge, stouter and more impressive then, masterful of chattels and babies, a woman in her own right” (2). We can therefore conclude, as Violet Barasa does, that this initial journey is Paulina’s “first pursuit for self realisation” (38). Indeed the narrative voice recounts Paulina’s growth the second time she travels from Gem to Nairobi thus:

> Her breasts were firm and her eyes knowing and that her goods were expertly handled and she had …She had been crocheting industriously even on the train… and this time he did not have to walk home with her, but returned to the shop while she organised her woman’s business. (33)

The journey however takes her to a new environment from the familiar countryside she is used to; she is a stranger in this environment. She speaks only Dholuo unlike the city dwellers like Martin, Rachel, Ahoya and Amina who can speak Kiswahili and English, the two languages commonly used in Nairobi. Her newness to the city and the fact that she speaks only Dholuo prevent her from positively interacting with her environment. The case has human rights implication as we are going to see.

Paulina is in Nairobi for only one day when she begins to bleed as a result of the miscarriage and Martin rushes her to the King George Hospital. After a day the hospital discharges her in Martin’s absence. She is confused and does not know where to go: “At the door she still felt lost, but one of the Luo attendants came up to her: ‘you would better wait till your people come,’ he said. ‘Have you got money for the bus? No. Have you got the key to the house? No. You see you can easily get lost here” (11). She decides to leave the hospital despite that she does not know the way to their house in Pumwani because she has been socialised to obey orders: “She had been told to go and trained to take orders” (11).

Paulina gets lost. Out of ignorance she thinks that everybody in the city knows her husband, just as people know each other in the village where she was brought up; thus she enquires about his house: “excuse me…but I am a stranger here and I am looking for the house of Martin Were from Siaya” (14). Her inability to speak either Kiswahili or English compounds her problem as most people she speaks to do not understand Dholuo, the only language she can speak. The narrative voice tells us, “most people did not understand her and all shrugged her away” (18). She too does not understand the question in Kiswahili by the woman from the prison department who thinks Paulina is a prostitute: “Paulina did not understand but she knew where the message was directed all right” (19). As a result she cannot answer the questions appropriately even when the woman takes her to the police station. The consequence of her inability to express herself is that both the woman from the prison department and the officer on duty at the police station erroneously conclude that she is pretending not to understand; the woman says: “she refused to answer questions and that she pretended to be a halfwit for evasive purposes” (19). Consequently, the police officer locks Paulina up at the station making it impossible for her go home that day. Paulina’s newness in the city and inability to speak English and Kiswahili hinder meaningful communication leading to the violation of her freedom of movement when the police officer locks her up.

She finally goes home and finds Martin frustrated as a result of her two-day absence from home. Ayoya, the missionary lady who helps Paulina find Martin’s house explains that Martin’s frustration may be issuing from his fears as a young married man: “Probably all his [Martin’s] friends and workmates have been telling him he is too young to marry and now he begins to wonder how he will manage” (24). Indeed on the day of Paulina’s arrival in the city, Martin’s supervisor demands that Martin goes back to work after meeting Paulina at the station and the supervisor expresses doubt that Martin is married at the young age of twenty-three: “his boss had been sarcastic at the idea of such a youngster being married” (3). Furthermore, Martin suspects that Paulina might have been with another man; he demands her explanation: “Two nights. Where did you spend those two nights?” (22). His suspicion of Paulina’s infidelity is evident in his response when she says that she is still bleeding from the miscarriage. He says, “Bleeding there may be. Can’t even keep a baby for me. Can’t even be sure it was mine, can I?” (22) So to assert his authority, as he is afraid of looking weak for a married man, he beats Paulina up until she is “discoloured with bruises” (23). He further verbally insults her calling her a slut, a whore and an ignorant bitch, and locks her up in the house the whole day. By so doing he violates her body and dignity.

She, however, sees nothing wrong with the beating. She is only worried that their marriage will fail as Martin will send her back home to her people and her parents will feel “disgraced” (23), or she might die as a result of the beatings in Nairobi “where there was no tribunal to appeal to” (23). Martin too lacks consciousness that the beating is an abuse of Paulina’s right to inviolateness of her body. He is in fact disappointed when he comes home and Paulina has not cooked for him despite his having locked her up in the house the whole day without access to either water or charcoal. His complaint implies that Paulina has violated his right by absconding her marriage responsibilities: “Carry my own key, fetch my own water, cook my own food! What the devil am I married for?” (25) Ahoya tells Paulina of the cultural standpoint that condones wife beating:

> If you had been married in the old way your husband would have given you a token beating while the guests were still there… They say that is so that if you are widowed and inherited you will not say your new husband was the first to beat you. (24)

The characters – Martin and Paulina – and the society present a subjective view of wife beating as a normal practice. Objectively, however, that a husband physically and verbally abuses a wife suggests that, in this cultural context, marriage abrogates a right to the inviolateness of her body. Lack of consciousness for this right in the character and the society contributes to the violation.

Paulina and Martin's journey of marriage faces two obstacles: childlessness and adultery. Each of the two obstacles has human rights implication.

To begin with, Martin and Paulina want a child but she miscarries three times. After these miscarriages she fails to conceive for a long time. This makes her fear that she is barren and causes her to feel ashamed for the barrenness terming it as the "public evidence of shame" (54). Martin too feels ashamed and fails to go home to his parents as he thinks, "for what comfort could he be to his parents when after all these years he no longer had even the pretence of a child to care for their old age?" (86) Martin's mother and sisters are disappointed when they do not "see signs of a child" (30) when Paulina and Martin visit them. Fatima, Martin's mistress, mocks Paulina for her childlessness asking, "Oh…Mrs Were…and you are the mother of who?" (34) The reactions of Martin's mother and sisters as well as that of Fatima suggest that the society scorns childlessness by putting pressure on a couple which does not get a child soon after their marriage to get one. Societal expectations rob spouses of the right to peace and happiness when a marriage fails to have a child. Additionally, since marriage accords the couple not only the right to be husband and wife, but also the right to become a father and a mother, childlessness is an obstacle to Paulina and Martin's fulfilment as a married couple.

Next, Martin becomes an adulterer as a result of childlessness. He takes advantage of Paulina's absence from Nairobi as she occasionally travels upcountry and later joins the home craft school to get into adulterous relationships with four women – Fatima, Fauzia, the Alego girl and Nancy – but he does not get a child with any of them. His adulterous behaviour hurts Paulina whose psychological pain is captured in the many times she twists her wedding ring wondering whether this symbol of their marriage bond is strong enough to make her persevere during this time of his betrayal of their marriage. Yet Martin demands that Paulina remains faithful to him. At one moment when he realises that Paulina does not seem expectant with child, he "did not beat her…but threatened that he would do so if she was unfaithful to him" (46). Paulina is helpless at her husband demand for her fidelity: "She did not ask him for any pledge of fidelity in return. What would be the use?" (46) This statement suggests that the narrator tells the story from Paulina's resigned perspective persuading us to sympathise with her when Martin's adultery hurts her dignity.

Similar to the case of beating, Paulina and Martin see nothing wrong with the latter's adulterous behaviour. Paulina expects and understands Martin's adultery as a reaction against their childless marriage. We learn from the narrative voice that "word had come for certain that Martin was living with a coast woman and he did not write at all or send anything to his mother, and…she knew it was not surprising and that he had been patient a long time" (52). We deduce from "he had been patient" that Paulina exonerates Martin from any wrong doing. Paulina's sister-in-law and her friend persuade her to get a child with another man as "culture was not too hard on this practice" (36). Simon likewise rationalises that Paulina "was a married woman denied a married woman's rights and respect, in custom she should seek a child where she could. She had the right" (54). Therefore, individual characters as evidenced by Martin, Paulina, Paulina's Sister-in-law and friends, and the society too, expects a childless marriage to result in adultery. They allow Martin and Paulina the "right" to adultery.

Martin's adultery causes Paulina's as she engages in an adulterous relationship with Simon. We learn from the narrative voice that when she gets news of Martin's affair with Fauzia, she is saddened by it: "something had died in her…her heart sank" (52). She is unhappy with the course their marriage is taking. When her sister-in-law first broaches the subject of adultery, Paulina feels "revulsion" (36) against it but now with Martin's adultery, she is comfortable in hers with Simon. After the first night with Simon, the narrator reports Paulina's feeling of emotional satisfaction: "She knew without words being said that she would come again. She could not pretend that she could any longer do without" (54). Paulina's adulterous relationship with Simon is thus not directly aimed at fulfilling the search for a child. This statement suggests fulfilment of conjugal rights for Paulina which her own marriage had denied her. The narrator, by focusing on Paulina's adultery and recounting her satisfaction from it, persuades us to excuse it as a consequence of Martin's adultery. We can therefore conclude that the narrator lacks consciousness of adultery as a negative practice that leads to betrayal of human rights within marriage.

Martin and Paulina, irrespective of who starts to engage in adultery and the reasons behind these actions, betray their own and each other's expectations of the rights they had hoped to enjoy in marriage. "Polygamy as a Violation of International Human Rights Law" reinforces this argument thus:

> Human sexuality serves an important role beyond reproduction in contributing to human bonding intimacy, affection and fidelity, and spousal or partner attraction and as such is essential to human development and security…It has been argued that because sexual intimacy is inherent to being human, a denial of such sexuality, or by extension a violation of it through harmful sexual practices denies individuals the right to be fully human (par 1).

In the light of the foregoing, Martin and Paulina infringe on each other's exclusive right to a spouse, the right to a sexual partner, and the right to companionship. Martin neglects his wife's company the moment he has an affair with Fatima: "he hardly ever walked with her" (35). By extension they deny themselves the right to a child since they separate as a result of Paulina's adultery making it impossible to jointly become a father and a mother during their years of separation. Each similarly violates one's own personal dignity by engaging in a practice that negates respect for oneself. They also violate the rights of the people who are affected by their actions especially Martha, Simon's wife. At this point Paulina lacks consciousness of human rights as she hurts Martha in a similar way that Martin's mistresses had hurt her. Individual characters – Martin, Paulina, and Simon – cultural contexts and the narrator in the novel do not show consciousness of infidelity as constituting a violation of human rights but in the ideal context of respect of human rights, Martin and Paulina break a higher moral law that seeks to preserve the sanctity of marriage and ensure a cohesive harmonious society.

Childlessness and adultery lead to conflict in Paulina and Martin's marriage and thus to betrayal of their rights within marriage. There are, however, five factors that enhance progression in Paulina's life's journey to maturity and that therefore lead to affirmation of human rights in the novel: presence of humane characters, Paulina's efforts at attaining literacy, vocational training and career, social responsibility and restoration of marriage.

Firstly, humane characters include Rachel Atieno, Martin's neighbour in Pumwani, Susanna, Drusilla, Ahoya and the European police inspector. Rachel Atieno visits Paulina immediately she arrives in Nairobi bringing her tea and *mandasi* for her breakfast. The two women talk and when Rachel leaves, Paulina is feeling "comforted" (9) as Rachel understands and speaks Dholuo the only language Paulina knows at this time. Paulina's journey from the hospital when she gets lost takes her to new places – Kaloleni, Majengo and the police station – and to new people – Susanna, Drusilla, Ahoya and police officers. I agree with Barasa that this journey signifies Paulina's "attempt to situate herself in the city by getting acquainted with the city lifestyle" (34). The knowledge of these places and people help her in learning to fit in the city environment. Susanna gives her food and shelter for a night when the latter is lost. She further sends for Drusilla, a Christian midwife, who promptly comes to examine Paulina's condition as she has just miscarried. Two white female missionaries, Ahoya and the "young one" provide Paulina with shelter when she is lost on a second day and in the morning Ahoya, who despite being white speaks Dholuo well, helps Paulina trace her way back home to Martin. When Martin locks Paulina inside the house as punishment for being away from home for two days, Ahoya generously offers Paulina food, medicine, company and advice to understand the husband's anger as resulting from her absence. After Ahoya's visit "Paulina at once felt comforted" (25). Amina, Paulina's neighbour, as she recounts to other women how Martin had beaten Paulina, says, "We'll see that she [Paulina] learns to give him something to think about, won't we just" (25), and in the evening when Martin is about to beat Paulina again Amina and her female friends distract him with the noise they make. The novel thus portrays female characters as kind and hospitable to Paulina hence helping her settle in Nairobi when she is a new comer. This portrayal of female characters as embodying humane qualities suggests that humane treatment and hence respect for human rights has gender dimension. Women tend to value and help fellow women as human beings. The female prison warder who rudely and ruthlessly puts Paulina in a police cell is however a contradiction to this dominant portrayal of female characters; she is a violator rather than respecter of human right to one's security.

A European police inspector rescues Paulina from the police cell and takes her to safety in the missionaries' house. He differs from Paulina in respect to gender and race; he is male and white while Paulina is female and black. Unlike the female prison warder, this police inspector has Paulina's safety and security at heart. He exhibits human qualities at a time when racism is institutionalised as is evident in the railway services. As he waits for Paulina at the railway station, Martin observes that from both the first and second class coaches passengers appear, "white, brown and black, but not of course, from the same window. The sleepers were for four or six and when you booked the clerk wrote down your race to avoid embarrassment" (2). The expression "of course" shows that categorisation of people into races is the norm. Only a few black people are in the first-class coaches; the third-class coaches are however entirely for blacks. The distinction of races in the trains treats blacks as third-class citizens. The narrator suggests through the character of the European inspector that respect for human rights requires breaking racial and gender barriers to recognise a person as a human being, not a gender or racial category. The action and character of the European police inspector are contrary to the ruthless nature of police officers who conduct house searches in the novel, the police officers we see later in this chapter in *Three Days on* *the Cross* and those that we saw in chapter two in *Kill Me Quick* and in *The Last Villains of Molo*.

Secondly, when she first appears in the novel, Paulina is semi-illiterate having dropped off school at standard two. She cannot understand or speak Kiswahili or English, the languages of the urban people. She speaks only Dholuo and is comfortable with Atieno and Ahoya who can speak it. She however, learns a bit of reading and writing with Martin's help. She also learns Kiswahili "little by little" (28) as Martin buys a New Testament Bible in Kiswahili for her. Gradually she masters Kiswahili and English as she works with the banker's family, the Okellos, and the political class in the M's house. At the latter's house, she speaks Kiswahili and English to callers on the telephone. Her gradual mastery of these languages widens Paulina's scope of interaction and socialisation and narrows the gap between her a member of the lower social class and the members of the middle class with whom she is interacting. Paulina is evidently making significant steps in her journey towards emancipation from limited social interaction into which language barrier and illiteracy had condemned her. Her case suggests that fulfilment of human rights requires breaking the barriers of language and illiteracy so that one identifies oneself as a human being among others, not a victim of ethnic and linguistic confines. Literacy is a fundamental human right which Paulina begins to enjoy.

Thirdly, Paulina initially depends on Martin for money as he "gives her money every two or three days and tells her what to buy" (28). When she settles in Nairobi, she begins to make her own money as she practises her crocheting skills which she had learnt previously and Martin is supportive in buying her thread and hook. Soon the crochet work becomes a means of livelihood so that Martin borrows money out of Paulina's savings. Paulina further makes a journey to Kisumu where she improves her practical skills at the Home Craft Training School, and this marks the starting point of her emancipation. The journey is one of quest for knowledge and skills. She concentrates on her training, gets good grades, and successfully becomes a club leader. Her career provides her with a means of livelihood; she does not have to depend on Martin for money as she does as a newly married woman. Such independence affords her not only a decent standard of living, but also emotional liberty which is a human right too. The story describes Paulina's liberty thus:

> She had become free, in a sense, of Martin, and she had changed. She provided for herself, lived by herself. Although she had obligations to him she neither hungered for him from day to day. She made decisions for herself…what to buy, what train to travel on. (46)

Fourthly, as it is characteristic of bildungsroman, Paulina grows into social responsibility. This is evident in the case of her contribution to Chelagat Mutai's case and her maturity in handling the street boys whom she finds fighting.

As she works in M's house, Paulina attends women's meetings that Mrs M organises. So when Chelagat, a woman parliamentarian, is unfairly imprisoned for demanding explanation for the detention without trial of fellow parliamentarians, Paulina teams up with Mrs M to seek petition for Chelagat's case. This response exhibits characteristics of political awareness. Barasa argues that "Paulina's proximity to a politician's household helps her to become politically conscious. It opens her personal and closed world to the world of politics" (40). This argument, however, lacks premises for justification as the story does not directly account for Paulina's political awareness. Her political maturity is abrupt and unaccounted for, so we can only conclude that it results from the women meetings. As a result of her political maturity, she is able to interpret the arrest and imprisonment as a violation of her freedom and she is even aware of the channels that can be employed to redress the violated rights: she tells Martin that to redress Chelagat's case they can "write to [their] MPs, make processions, sign petitions, strike" (111). She has grown from the young, naïve, semi-illiterate and inexperienced girl that we encounter at the beginning of the novel into a woman who is mature physically, emotionally, socially and politically. She is in M's words "a new woman" (140). Responding in this way to Chelagat's case is evidence that Paulina has grown up to take social responsibility, to voice other people's rights.

Paulina, towards the end the story, finds three street boys fighting over money and each says that he wants it for food. She stops the fight and buys the street children food. As they eat Paulina listens to their stories on how they went to the streets, and she advises them in a caring way. This is how Paulina finds her photograph in the newspapers with a news headline, "Discipline by Kindness" (139), and the press requesting for an interview with her. She treats the boys in a humane way and takes social responsibility over them as an adult member of the society; and in this way she promotes the children's right to food, love and basic care. Two characters, Martin and Mr M, criticise Paulina's charitable action. Martin is angry with her that she has set a bad precedence as beggars in town would expect such kindness from everyone. Mr M discourages charity saying that that "palliatives don't help much" (139), and when he suggests that she needs to think before acting, Paulina's response is a mark of what Mr M calls "a new woman" (140). She says: "It is my business who I buy a cup of tea for, who I give my number…" (140). Mrs, M however, affirms and encourages Paulina's kindness wishing Paulina would give a lecture on "responsible parenthood" (139). Nancy likewise praises Paulina's charity saying of the newspaper article featuring Paulina, "Anything that helps readers to see those kids as people is good" (140). By focusing on Mrs.

M’s, Nancy’s and Paulina’s defence of charity towards street boys, the story gives prominence to Paulina’s charitable act than to its negative criticism. Macgoye thus suggests, through Paulina, that charity is a way of responding to street children the same way Mwangi suggests through the nurse’s charity towards Meja. I agree that palliatives promote the human rights of these children but, I suggest that charity is not an adequate solution to the problem of street children. It feeds them for the day and leaves them in the streets exposed to several other forms of human rights violations. After buying food for the boys, Paulina still encounters Muhammad Ali, one of the three boys who were fighting, in the streets looking as poorly dressed as she had left him in the previous occasion.

Fifthly, the once-separated couple gradually mend their relationship. The spouses slowly assume their roles without coercion by each other: Martin gives Paulina hundred shillings toward food every month-end and brings home bananas and eggs from his travels outside Nairobi. He buys a pair of shoes for her and a dictionary for her younger sister. Paulina readily accepts to mend and iron Martin’s shirts and cook for him. in this way, they gradually develop a harmonious relationship which is fruitful as Paulina is soon expectant with a child and the couple looks forward to the birth which will take away the misery and anxiety caused by previous miscarriages. The couple thus finds restoration as husband and wife and this results in the enjoyment of their right to parenthood in the baby they are expecting. The narrator captures the excitement of the couple at the revelation that Paulina is expectant: “They laughed until they were tired…almost too tired to sleep, overcome with joy, surprise and unexpected trust” (148). Mrs M who sees it as a lesson for her women talks says: “I’ll use it as an illustration for my family talks. Do not rush to marry young. Satisfaction for the older couple. Happiness through persistence, mature maternity” (148). This restoration of their marriage meets their expectations to be completed by marriage. Childlessness and adultery had created disharmony between them and led to their separation, but the process of reconciliation between Paulina and Martin suggests that peace, love and care are germane to human rights.

The sequence of events of the story is such that the once-separated couple reconciles after Paulina's personal growth to maturity. Upon separation, Paulina gets a child, Okeyo, from an extra-marital affair with Simon after which Simon evades responsibility for the child with the excuse that his wife's people would not agree to a polygamous marriage. Thus abandoned, Paulina takes care of her child until he dies. After Okeyo's death, Paulina is conscious of a morality that forbids getting children outside wedlock; this is evident in her continued feeling of guilty for the adulterous relationship with Simon and as she often feels that Okeyo's death "was a punishment for being born out of wedlock" (85). Paulina, conscious of morality never gives in to men who knock at her door as she works at the Okelo's because "the child's death left her hyperconscious of sin" (88). Paulina has a conscience that is clear about what is right and wrong, a case that remedies her previous compromise for adultery. The story thus gives moral judgement of the characters and their rights not in relation to cultural law in which they are rooted, but in relation to the Christian law that condemns adultery as sin. Okeyo dies so that Paulina does not find satisfaction in a child conceived in an adulterous relationship. Thus by rewarding the couple with a child after their reconciliation, the story presents Macgoye's aesthetic ideal which is averse to adultery and divorce or separation. Macgoye suggests a moral ideal in which true motherhood and fatherhood can only be sought within the confines of a legal marriage; outside one's marriage, one cannot claim one's right to a child. Thus, Macgoye anchors a fulfilment of human rights within marriage on morality.

Having analysed human rights issues in Paulina's story, lets us now consider the story of Kenya which forms the state setting of the novel. I have singled out three issues of discussion under this state setting of the novel: abuse of human rights under colonialism, affirmation of human rights with struggle for independence, and betrayal of human rights after independence.

The colonial government declares a State of Emergency, imposes curfews, detains Kenyan political leaders and conducts random searches of people's houses. When Paulina arrives in Nairobi in 1956 a State of Emergence has been declared. Rachel Atieno tells her that "there are times and places the Kikuyu cannot go without a special pass, and guards to see they don't" (8). There is a curfew in place restricting the movement of the members of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities. Political leaders, specifically Jomo Kenyatta, are detained. Additionally, there are random house searches which are characterised by police brutality. Once, the police search Paulina's house with characteristic brutality thus: "Paulina…was pushed out of the way by the three policemen who crowded in. They overturned the bed, shook the cupboard until a couple of glasses broke, strewed the contents of boxes over the floor" (31) and when they are gone Paulina's back is "grazed and sore" (31). The search thus causes bodily harm on Paulina, and it psychologically traumatises her.

The State of Emergency, curfews and detentions restrict people's freedom of movement and freedom of association, and in this way constitute a violation of human rights. The discrimination against members of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru ethnic communities relegates them to a position lower than that of other human beings from ethnic communities unaffected by curfew. House searches, as Barasa observes, "violate and interfere with personal space and privacy" (34); this is worse when the searching officer does not produce an official document and explanation prior to the search. The brutality that accompanies it inflicts bodily harm which is an abuse of one's right to be free from pain.

In addition, the indigenous people of Kenya struggle to ensure that the British colonial administration recognise the right of the natives to their country. The State of Emergency ends in January 1960, Kenyans form a political party, the Kenya African National Union, and the narrator comments on the Kenyans preparedness to defend their country by saying that African politicians are "beginning to show their teeth" (41). The activities of politicians are an assertion of Kenyans' right to rule themselves. The struggle wins them the release of Jomo Kenyatta from detention to become the official leader of the newly formed Kenya African National Union. The "vision for *uhuru* is growing larger and larger" (46) and there is a black headmaster, a black bishop and black ministers and there is going to be a black prime minister. This statement indicates that Kenyans are taking up leadership from the British in various sectors – school, church and politics. It is against the tenets of colonialism that the anti-colonial struggle becomes a crusader of the human rights that colonisation denies the colonised. The novel portrays the actual time of independence as a time marked with celebrations and great expectation. Paulina and a group of women go to Kisumu on a hired bus

> for the celebration of internal independence, feeling so safe, so mutually protective…so moved by the half-understood thing that was happening to them, that there was compulsion in them to be present. They went again in December for the full independence celebrations. (52)

Colonialism had denied Kenyans the right to rule themselves through such inhuman practices as the State of Emergency, curfews and detention while the climate of political freedom affirms this humanity of the colonised as people who can govern their affairs. Kenya's political independence is an affirmation of a people’s rights. It challenges human rights violations under colonialism.

Characters in the novel expect that the violations of human rights witnessed during colonialism would not recur after independence and the narrator reinforces this expectation by noting that people are “feeling so safe” (52) as a result of having gained their own political independence. Implicitly, people expect that in the independent nation they will be free from foreign political domination, detention, the State of Emergency, curfews, brutal house searches and racism as witnessed under colonialism. These expectations are met as the narrator refers to “January 1965, the beginning of the second year of freedom” as “a time of newness for the country” when most people are happy that “someone they knew or called kin had met with promotion, land or first-grade housing” (59). Promotion, land and housing are benefits which are associated with independence and they are a fulfilment of rights to property ownership and a decent means of livelihood. In the post-independence era in the novel, indigenous people rule themselves, there is no mention of State of Emergency, brutal house searches or racism. These constitute affirmations of human rights at independence.

There are, however, undercurrents of betrayal of the people’s expectations after independence. This betrayal is manifested through detention, police brutality, curfews and political assassinations. Some characters however make deliberate attempts to counter these incidents of betrayal of human rights.

The novel portrays the detentions of the Jaramogi Odinga, Mr Seroney, Mr Shikuku and Ngugi. The story focuses on the detainees as the offended party not on any criminal activities that the detainees are involved in that would justify their detention. Detention implies restriction of freedom of movement and association which is a violation of the rights of detainees. It is thus a source of human rights violations witnessed in colonial times that the government of the independent state perpetuates. Chelagat, a woman MP, however, seeks for an explanation for Seroney's and Shikuku's detentions, an act which challenges the violations. The post-independence government jails Chelagat as a result of speaking against detention. The narrative voice presents the jail sentence as a punishment for speaking against the detentions and not as a result of a criminal offence: "all of a sudden…Chelagat Mutai…was accused of inciting a crowd to violence in the previous year and sentenced to thirty months' imprisonment" (110). The state seeks to silence the voice of protest by jailing Chelagat. Protest does not however stop with Chelagat's imprisonment as women including Paulina and Mrs M decide to petition for Chelagat's case. Paulina asserts, "We must do something" and goes on to give the options available: "write to our MPs, make processions, sign petitions, strike" (111). Paulina demonstrates knowledge of how people whose rights have been infringed can seek redress. Her decisiveness and action are in stark opposition with Martin's pessimism captured in his often repeated statement "you can't do anything" (111). The plan to petition for Chelagat does not succeed but the thought of it is indicative of a growing consciousness for human rights; people are aware of human rights violations and they are prepared to press for redress.

Moreover, the police beat people causing injury and death among people as is evident during Tom Mboya's funeral and on the occasion of opening of a new hospital in Kisumu. In the former case, as the people attempt to touch the hearse, the brutality of the police is uncalled for: they batter people with batons; a riot breaks out and police throw tear-gas to disperse the people. We deduce from the story that the people are innocent; this way the narrator condemns the violence of the police: it was “as though people were being punished for their reverence” (80). The attitude of the narrator comes through in this statement which attributes “reverence” to people and punishment to the police. The narrator in this way shows concern for the human rights of the people facing police brutality.

Similarly, during the opening of a new hospital in Kisumu, the police kill innocent people including Paulina’s child, Okeyo, whom the police gun down as he innocently runs towards the presidential motorcade. Paulina is not the only person mourning as a result of the police violence of the day as the narrator tells us: “one neighbour had two fingers shot off and a quarter of a mile up the road there was another house of mourning. They had no idea of how many others were in Nyalenda and Kisumu town” (85). The old man comforting Paulina says, “In Kano we shall treat our wounded and bury our dead. Do not think you are alone” (83). Thus many have been wounded and others killed as a result of police using excessive force on unarmed people. The narrator expresses dissatisfaction with the independent state in a Luo expression: “the country had eaten its people. At last” (84). Reference to the country “eating” its people is indicative of a government that has turned into a violator rather than protector of people’s rights; this is contrary to people’s expectations. The death of the two-year-old Okeyo is an indication that the authorities who are charged with the protection of the citizens have betrayed the people; they have turned into violators of people’s rights. The story is silent on the conduct of the people which would have necessitated this reaction from the police and so the focus is entirely on the police as violators of human rights. Killing denies the victim the ultimate right to life and also an opportunity to enjoy other human rights.

Additionally, in the novel the government imposes a curfew on the Kisumu people after the riot during the opening of the hospital. As a result of curfew, people leave Paulina with only a few neighbours to help bury Okeyo as the rest of the mourners are forced to remain indoors from dusk to dawn; no one stays for the cultural wake to mourn with Paulina. This curfew thus limits the freedom of movement for the people and thereby denying them their right and duty to mourn with Paulina and help bury Okeyo. The independent state has betrayed people's implicit expectations that curfews witnessed in colonial time will not recur in the independent nation. The narrator finds it worth noting that later the curfew is shortened by two hours. This is a positive move towards affirmation of human rights.

Furthermore, *Coming to Birth* depicts political assassinations of three prominent personalities which violate their right to life: Argwings Kodhek, Tom Mboya, and J. M. Kariuki. Kodhek's death would pass for a normal one but the narrator adds people's reaction to it suggesting that the death is politically motivated: "rumours flew back and forth but she [Paulina] didn't make much sense of them: after all lots of people die in road accidents" (72). The reference to rumours which Paulina does not understand implies that people are suggesting that someone planned for Kodhek's death in the car crash. It also suggests a societal conscience that is opposed to assassinations and thus a consciousness for human rights. In relation to J. M. Kariuki's death, the narrator notes that anyone who asked questions about it risked being heavily punished: "Hyenas were there to settle with those who asked many questions" (107). This is reference to the attempts made to conceal assassinations and silence people who would want to speak against them; it speaks of a climate of political suppression.

The novel, however, shows that people condemn political assassinations. They express their dissatisfaction even though in hushed tones. After Kariuki's assassination, there is "whisper, whisper, whisper" (106) about this death. The people's whispering, like the rumours after Kodhek's death, indicates a conscience which is uncomfortable with the assassination and therefore affirms Kariuki's right to life. The narrator too sides with those the government assassinates by suggesting that Njenga who is tried and hanged for Mboya's murder is just a cover-up for some highly-placed individual who is directly responsible for this death. Referring to Njenga's execution, the narrative voice says, "Nobody took account of Njenga, for the circumstance of the murder remained as hidden as they had been" (88). This implies that Njenga takes someone else's blame and therefore hanging him does not redress the dead man's violated rights; in fact, the death sentence violates his right to life.

Mr Mwangale shares the narrator's attitude towards the assassination of Mboya and Kariuki; he makes protests against J. M. Kariuki's case by remarking during one of the Parliamentary sessions, "this time we cannot be told Njenga did it" (108). Mwangale makes reference to the cover-up of Tom Mboya's assassination and hopes that the government will not cover up for Kariuki's murder. There is no indication that Mwangale's assertion produces any results, but we know that it contributes to defence of human rights. By demanding an explanation, Mwangale refuses to remain silent in the face of political assassination. The attitude of the narrator as is evident in the remarks about each of the three assassinations and the execution of Njenga condemns these murders while the narrator takes sides with the victims. The narrative voice is concerned with the human rights of the politicians whom the government kills. The story is silent on the reason behind the assassinations, a case which is a weakness on the ability of the narrative voice to comment adequately on the assassinations but which otherwise makes us focus on the assassinations as violation of the human right to life; we conclude that politicians have not committed any crime and as a result we sympathise with them and condemn the assassinations. By so doing, we too affirm human rights.

On the domestic front in *Coming to Birth* the situation of human rights improves as Martin and Paulina reconcile and are expecting a child at the end of the novel. This baby symbolises hope for future. On the national level, however, the human rights situation seems to deteriorate or, at least, stagnate towards the end of the novel. The last major political event in the plot of the novel is the arrest and detention of Ngugi at the beginning of the year which negates his freedom of movement, hence it exemplifies betrayal of human rights in the independent nation. The effect of Ngugi's incarceration is that people are unhappy and restless: "they all knew that there was nothing to celebrate" (144). Joseph Slaughter suggests that towards the end of the novel there is foreshadowed relief in President Kenyatta's death, but I argue that the ending of *Coming to Birth* shows a nation that is still suffering violations of human rights. At the end of the story, the narrator notes that it is March 1978 and in my view the prediction of Kenyatta's death which historically happened on 22 August 1978 is not evident in the story. I agree with Ogude that the political period after independence in the novel is one "fraught with fears and frustrations, and disillusionment with Uhuru" (11). As Kurtz observes, there is, nonetheless, hope suggested in the progressive aspect, coming, of the title showing that birth is not a one moment's event. Paulina's life mirrors the life of Kenya; as Paulina goes through a period of domestic strife and gains her personal independence, so does Kenya as she suffers under colonialism and gains political independence. I suggest, therefore, that Paulina is a microcosm of Kenya, the state, and that just as she has been born into a mature woman physically, emotionally, socially and politically and has been restored in her marriage, Kenya will be born into a nation that is conscious of human rights. Viewed in this light then, the violation of human rights evident in the post-independent Kenya can be described as teething problems characterising the struggles for Kenya to establish itself as a new nation-state and therefore, there is hope that these human rights violations will come to an end.

As the discussion shows, *Three Days on the Cross* like *Coming to Birth* deals with human rights issues in family and state settings. The latter focuses more on the family and treats the state as almost incidental while *Three Days on the Cross* gives the state setting more prominence than the family in its portrayal of the theme of human rights.

In *Three Days on the Cross* an omniscient narrator tells the story of two protagonists: Ogundipe Chipota and Albert Momodu. Chipota is a journalist with the *Daily Horn* while Momodu is a banker. Momodu's wife, a church-goer has been feeling that her husband is neglecting the family, so when she finds a seditious leaflet in his coat poet, she concludes he is involved with a group of political dissidents and therefore seeks Father Kerekou's help. Kerekou is at first afraid of being associated with a group of political dissident, but later he thinks it a good idea to get Momodu arrested so that he could have easy access to Mrs. Momodu. He calls the Director of the Special Police Department whose office is charged with the responsibility of fighting the dissidents, and he reports that he has reliable information that Momodu and Chipota are members of the July 10 Movement. Relying on this report, the police arrest Chipota and Momodu on a Monday morning, and the two remain in police custody for three days. The police torture Chipota and Momodu and when they realise that the two have not committed any crime, they decide to kill them as cover up for the torture; Momodu dies, but Chipota survives with a bullet wound.

The title of the novel makes us anticipate issues of human rights in the novel. “Three days on the cross” is an allusion to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. According to Matthew 27:11, the Roman soldiers stripped Jesus, twisted a crown of thorns and set it on his head, flogged him, mocked him, spat on him, and, ultimately crucified him on the cross. Jesus Christ was then in the tomb for three days before his resurrection. The cross in the title of the novel refers to the suffering of Chipota and Momodu in police custody while the three days compare the characters’ three days in underground cells to the Christ’s three days in the tomb. Chipota and Momodu are in the tomb as their families do not know their whereabouts; they are inaccessible. Indeed their three days end with police executing them; Chipota lives but Momodu dies. The torture and killing constitute violations of human rights.

Mutahi begins the novel with a prologue which introduces the two main characters, Chipota and Momodu, and gives background information. The police had arrested Chipota and Momodu three days before and held them incommunicado. They have now blindfolded Chipota and Momodu and made them lie down on the floor of the jeep in which there are three policemen seated in front and two in the back guarding Chipota and Momodu. Everything is silent except the sound of breathing. It is therefore a tense atmosphere and uncertainty hangs in the air as Chipota and Momodu do not know what will happen to them. As they lie there, the narrator introspects into their innermost feelings: they are anxious and they feel death “seemed so close” (1). In fact Chipota allows suicide thoughts wishing a speeding bus could ram in the jeep and kill all its passengers, including him. Both think that they are innocent and therefore believe their treatment by the police is an “inhuman act” (2). The narrator summarises their shared introspection:

> Each one of them kept wondering why thousands of people outside in vehicles and on foot in the city did not suspect that two ordinary citizens who had been kidnapped by the police were now at the back of the jeep being taken to an unknown destination. They wondered how blind everybody was to an inhuman act that was being done in the open. (2)

Chipota and Momodu’s anxiety intensifies as the jeep leaves the tarmacked road into a rough one. The police then remove the blindfolds from Chipota and Momodu’s faces and for the first time the two friends see each other. The shared emotional agony of this moment is thus presented: “They had endured…hoping for freedom, jail terms, and sometimes death. Now death was imminent and neither of them was quite ready for it” (4). Soon, the police actually shoot at Chipota and Momodu.

The prologue too creates a sad mood as the reader begins reading the novel. The prologue further creates interest in the rest of the story for the reader to read on and find out why and how Chipota and Momodu end up in police custody; we establish from the prologue that the narrator is telling Chipota and Momodu’s story; the narrator is sympathetic of them. The prologue also introduces us to the social class of the two characters: they are not only middle class citizens but they are conscious of their human rights hence terming the police behaviour as “inhuman act” (2). The police have however denied them voice by forbidding them to talk and therefore introspection conveniently becomes the common means of communicating their fears.

The arrest and solitary confinement in the underground cells alienate Chipota and Momodu from their families and friends, their work places and from meaningful human relationships as the only people they associate with are the police officers who alienate them further by demanding that they remain silent hence denying them their voice. The two experience disconnect with the environment of empty cells:

> The cell was the normal police affair. Walls with smudges, scarred floor a barred high window and a musty smell. . . There wasn't even a blanket rug on the floor and the peep hole stared at Chipota menacingly. The bulb dangling from the roof was on although enough light was coming from the window. The room had an eerie coldness about it. (20)

I agree with Muindu, Kinara and Jose that the description of the cell shows that Chipota and Momodu's fact of incarceration is painfully depriving hence leading to their alienation. This alienation leads to the deep introspection we see Chipota and Momodu's sincerity and disturbed psyche. The writer then often resorts to psychological realism as a strategy of bringing out the characters' emotions and thoughts.

As we discuss the theme of human rights within the family setting, we explore how weakness in human character leads to failure of relationships and ultimately to abuse of human rights. We are going to examine three characters: Momodu, Mrs. Momodu and Father Kerekou.

The story presents Momodu as a responsible husband to Mrs. Momodu and father to the children. We deduce this from the narrator's introspection into Mrs Momodu's objective rating of her husband's performance of his duties. She thinks, "True, he had kept her and the children comfortable but she wanted to have more" (61). The "more" that Mrs. Momodu thinks she wanted points at Momodu's weakness: he spends too much time with Chipota often coming home late in the night and Mrs. Momodu feels that Chipota is a bad influence to Momodu as she tells Father Kerekou that Momodu has become Chipota's "wife" and explains that to mean that Chipota "controls Momodu's thoughts, actions and movements"

(13). She feels that if Momodu spent less time with Chipota, he would invest more so as to "have a piece of land somewhere, run a small business and own a house of his own" and hence have "things he could fall on if he lost his job or something like that" (61). We thus conclude that Momodu may be giving his family adequate monetary and material support but his conduct of spending a lot of time away from home causes a feeling of neglect in the wife. She feels denied her exclusive right to her husband; she does not have enough of him as she shares him with his friends, especially Chipota. It is indeed Momodu's habit of spending more time with Chipota than with his wife that fuels his wife's jealousy and suspicion that he and his friend are involved in political dissidents, a case that makes him suffer.

Mrs. Momodu is not only unhappy about Momodu's friendship with Chipota but also worried he and Chipota are involved with a political dissident group, the July 10 Movement. This worry arises when she finds a seditious document in the pocket of Momodu's shirt and she concludes that he belongs to the July 10 Movement; that is why he spends time away from home; he and his friend must be political dissidents. The media reporting on the July 10 movement informs Mrs. Momodu's conclusion that her husband is a member of the group: "according to the newspaper reports, only committed members of the movement got the document" (62). The reporting on political dissidents inspires immense fear in her upon seeing of the seditious document. The narrator describes this fear:

> The moment her eyes fell on the contents of the document, she began to tremble involuntarily. She had read enough in the newspapers about people being jailed for possession of such documents or knowing about their existence and then failing to report the matter to the police. She knew that being in possession of such document was as good as holding a live bomb in the lap. (61)

So motivated by the desire to have her husband to herself and the fear that he could be involved with the dissidents, she seeks the help of her spiritual leader, Father Kerekou with the hope of saving him from the illegal activities. She however exaggerates her information with regard to her knowledge of the husband's involvement in the illegal movement so as to win Kerekou's sympathy: "She had overblown her story about having known her husband's involvement in subversion for years. She wanted the priest to be moved…into immediate action" (63). Whereas Mrs. Momodu means well for her husband and the family, her tendency to make hasty conclusions and rash decision, based on fear, about his involvement with political dissidents and exaggerating the details, escalates the problem by leading to Momodu's arrest. She wanted more of him but ironically, she loses her right to his presence at home by contributing to his arrest.

Kerekou, like Mrs. Momodu, is afraid of being associated with political dissidents or having any information about them. His initial reaction to the latter's concern for her husband is thus to distance himself from Mrs Momodu. He has read a lot from the papers about how cruelly the government deals with the dissidents, and he fears for a possible newspaper report on his case with the headline: "PRIEST ON SEDITION CHARGE" (39). Fear holds him back from acting to end the misunderstanding between Momodu and his wife. He acts contrary to Mrs. Momodu's expectation that "spiritual counsellors offered the most rational advice…when the domestic scene threatened to flare up" (63). Kerekou's fear gives way to another human weakness: lust. He imagines how he can possess Mrs Momodu while the husband is away in prison, and the seditious document that Mrs Momodu had left behind in his study does not inspire fear in him anymore; it is the key to an illicit affair with her. Lust propels Kerekou into reporting Momodu to the police authorities without confirming the truth in the wife's fear that he is involved in illegal activities and the police arrest Momodu. We sympathise with Mrs. Momodu when we contrast her expectation which are summarised in her "mental picture of the three of them [herself, Momodu and Kerekou] ending the dinner with a prayer after solving the problem through Christian patience" (63), with Kerekou's lustful wish to possess her which lead him to take advantage of her trust in him. Kerekou's lust denies the spouses their right to each other. Kerekou, like Simon in *Coming to Birth*, disrespects Momodu's exclusive right to his wife by desiring to possess her; and by getting Momodu arrested, he denies him his freedom and Mrs Momodu the presence of her husband and causes her psychological torture as she worries about his whereabouts.

Issues of human rights in the family and state settings interrelate: fear in the larger political scene causes Mrs Momodu to mistrust her husband's involvement with Chipota while failure to have a gratifying marriage launches human rights issues in the state setting as Father Kerekou, relying on Mrs Momodu's information, reports Momodu to the police. The police arrest Momodu and Chipota after which they relate directly with the police and through this relationship the theme of human rights in the state setting develops.

Prior to our discussion on human rights within the state setting in this novel, we need to explain the place of fear in the relationship between political dissidents, and the government. The dissidents who in the novel are represented by the July 10 Movement challenge the government with a call for armed struggle inciting people to wage war against the leaders as is evident in its seditious document:

> TIME FOR ACTION HAS COME! IT IS TIME TO TAKE UP ARMS AND FIGHT THE CRIMINAL REGIME. LET US FIGHT…IT IS TIME TO TAKE UP SPEARS, CLUBS AND GUNS. THE STRUGGLE MUST CONTINUE. WE SHALL NOT SURRENDER! (10)

The movement causes fear within political leadership so that the Illustrious One, the ultimate leader of the state cancels the funding of some economic projects so as to afford his personal security in relation to his motorcade and bodyguards who are described as “numerous enough to make a village” (136). He resolves to fight political subversion at all costs. The Director of the Special Police Department allows Superintendent Ode, the head of the team assigned to crack down the July 10 Movement, “a budget that would have been the envy of some cabinet ministers” (44). Out of fear the Illustrious One orders the police to hunt down the dissidents and bring the political subversion to end.

Police too act in fear; they know that the July 10 Movement does not in reality pose a serious threat to the government of the Most Illustrious One but they do not dare advise the latter of this fact; they fear him. The Director of Special Police Department admits that despite the many political crime suspects who have suffered and died, the threat of the July 10 Movement was more imaginary than real:

> We all knew that the July 10 Movement was nothing to worry about. It was a bunch of a few fellows who had printed a seditious document and circulated it in the city. They were not a threat to anybody….But who would have told the Illustrious One the July 10 people were not a threat when he was convinced they were? We had to produce corpses so as to prove him right. (163)

The police violate the freedoms of political crime suspects through arrests, torture and killings; fear is at the base of this violation.

The story focuses on Momodu, Chipota and other suspects like Nakaru, Nduru and Sigaro who are tortured in the underground cells. In this way the narrative voice persuades us to view issues of human rights from the point of view of a state that violates the human rights of its citizens by creating fear so as to restrict their freedoms, especially the freedom of expression. I however argue that it is the presence of political pressure groups, specifically the July 10 Movement that forms the focal point of viewing issues of human rights within the state setting. The story makes no attempt to explain any wrong-doing on the part of the government which would necessitate opposition from the dissidents. It is therefore the dissidents, not the government, who initiate a bad relationship with the government by challenging its political authority. In turn the government responds violently to bring about cessation of political opposition and in the process the police violate people's rights, especially arrests and detention of people suspected of committing political crimes. We are going to see how the police violate Chipota's and Momodu's human rights from the time of their arrests to three days later when the police shoot at them.

One, police officers arrest Chipota and Momodu without telling them they are under arrest. They lure Chipota into a police car and then into a police station without knowledge that he is under arrest. They search his house without giving him any information and only notify him much later that he is under interrogation. Similarly, they lie that Momodu is required at the police headquarters to record a statement in relation to a robbery at the bank where he works. In failing to notify the suspects of their arrests the police infringe on the suspects' right to the due process of law in relation to arrests. Chipota knows that his rights have been violated and he does not hesitate to complain and demand an explanation, thereby asserting his right to due process of the law: "May I know why I am under arrest? I have a constitutional right to know why you have arrested me in this manner. You have literally kidnapped me!" (18). The narrator sides with Chipota by noting that "everything about the way [Chipota] was being handled was unprocedural" (20) and that he only cooperated because he was helpless.

Two, when the police take Chipota and Momodu to the police station they do not enter details of the suspects in the Daily Occurrence Book. The narrator highlights Chipota's thoughts to suggest that the reason behind this practice is to conceal facts so that the police can evade accountability for the suspects. Chipota knows that “a prisoner should not be held in one station for more than 24 hours without being produced in court. The police got round that piece of law by moving a suspect to several stations after keeping him in each for a few hours” (30). The police cover up their abuse of this law and by so doing, they make it impossible for the relations of the arrested persons to trace them. The cover up further indicates that the police lack solid grounds for prosecuting Chipota and Momodu a case that shows their innocence and appeals to our sympathy for their predicament in police custody. Chipota is conscious of the violation of his right to be presented in court within twenty-four hours of his arrest so when they are about to put him in a police cell, he protests: “For what? Surely you cannot just grab me on my way to work, haul me into a cell without preferring charges! It is against the law. Who is in-charge here? I want to see the highest authority in this building” (19). Chipota asserts his right to protection of the law by demanding audience with the authority.

Three, the police officers are out to prove the suspects are guilty of political crimes, a case which would ultimately convince the Illustrious One that the police are putting in place adequate measures to ensure that they crush the July 10 Movement. The police deny the suspects the services of a lawyer; they take the suspects to court at 5 p.m. after office hours where the audience is made up of only policemen and the press; and they bring the accused before the same magistrate. The magistrate wants the authorities to promote him to the position of a judge, so he is out to please the authorities by giving long sentences to the suspects after denying them the services of a lawyer, and the presence of audience available during the working hours of the day before 5 p.m. this is manipulation of the legal procedure which favours the state at the expense of the accused and it is an abuse of the human right to the due process of the law. The story articulates concern for the right to legal services through Chipota's protest: "I am a citizen of this country and should be accorded all my rights. I am entitled to a lawyer" (22). Chipota is not only aware of his rights but he also asserts them. His introspection reveals to us resistance to oppression even at the level of his will, "whatever happened, he would not be brow-beaten into submission" (94).

Four, the police torture suspects physically or psychologically to force a confession out of them. The team of interrogators physically assault Chipota through strenuous exercise and beatings. They first force him to do press ups and when he cannot do them, each of the seven men beat him up with pieces of wood, leaving him with swollen ankles and wrists and a bottom that "felt as if it had been worked on with a hot iron" (54). They make him walk on his knees "like a frenzied animal" (54); this means the police treat Chipota as an animal, not a human being like them. As Chipota nurses his pains he hears a neighbouring inmate groaning in his cell and the groan is "more like the sound of an animal in pain, a deep mournful cry of a subdued creature" (91). The torturers strip the victims of their rights as human beings; they treat the suspects as and make them sound like animals. Chipota cringes as he thinks of "what reduced the groaner to that" (91). He suspects that the groaner is in a situation similar to his. The police then make Chipota go round in a circle with his forefinger touching the same spot on the ground. The result of this last punishment is that Chipota falls down unconscious. The interrogators slap, undress and tie Momodu to a chair with ropes. They then burn his penis and fingers with a burning cigarette inflicting severe pain which is confirmed by the fact that he passes urine involuntarily. They humiliate him and his helplessness is juxtaposed with Ode's "unlimited powers" (151). Physical torture inflicts pain on the victim and in so doing amounts to inhuman treatment downgrading the human person to a position of a being less than human. As Muindu, Kinara and Jose suggest, the burning of Momodu’s phallus is symbolic of emasculation of his manhood. It denies him his gender identity as a man.

In addition to physical torture, the story presents psychological torture on graduated scale, from the simple to the most intense.

The police blindfold Chipota and Momodu as they transport them or move them around the building during interrogation. This makes Chipota feel helpless and begin to imagine himself being executed; he thinks they are going to kill him and he is distraught as he anticipates the moment of his death. The narrator recounts this psychological suffering thus:

> He immediately felt as if he was being prepared for the execution squad and trembled with fear. A cry nearly escaped from his mouth but his now parched throat produced no sound. Everything became dark, after the eyes were denied sight. The mind refused to function for a while…. [He had a] sinking feeling that this was the end of his life. (31)

As the police lead Chipota blindfolded to an underground cell where he spends the rest of his stay in police custody, the narrator evokes the image of Daniel and the lion’s den to vivify Chipota’s fear: “He was like a blind man now being led around in a place he had never been before. For once he knew what Daniel of the Bible felt when he was being led into the lion’s den” (32). Blindfolding therefore creates psychological torture as evident in Chipota’s case. It affects Chipota and Momodu psychologically as they are uncertain of what to expect; they keep contemplating the worst: death. This violates their peace of mind and the right to knowledge of his arrest.

Next, the police strip Chipota and Momodu naked. In Chipota's case the stripping starts with the removal of his coat, then his shirt, trousers, shoes and lastly, the underwear. They accompany the stripping with laughter and verbal insults. One says, "Have you ever tried to find out whether the children you claim to be yours are truly yours? The small thing you have between your legs cannot father children. Look at how small and shy it looks!" (52) Another one remarks: "Look at the beer tummy and those skinny legs…the things clothes hide!" This treatment negatively affects Chipota's self-esteem as he feels "very small standing in front of all those seven men… [and] terribly humiliated" (53). He is so hurt that even when he covers his private parts, "shame would not leave him" (53). Shame hurts Chipota's self-esteem causing psychological torture as he feels helpless before his torturers. Thus stripping is not just a physical act; it is intended at stripping him of all his human dignity and stamp humiliation.

After that, on a more graduated scale, the police torture the families of the suspects psychologically. Mrs. Momodu spends a sleepless night not knowing the whereabouts of the husband. In the morning after Momodu's arrest, Inspector Ummure calls Mrs Momodu and without identifying himself he says he has Momodu in his custody. Ummure's call greatly disturbs Mrs Momodu so that she decides not to send children to school for the day; she appears confused. Mrs Momodu speaks so that we can feel her pain and sympathise with her. She tells the children, "I am sorry children. No school today for you" and the narrator notes that she says this "with a tremor in her voice" (104). For Momodu, this call, which Ummure records and plays for him, is a source of emotional and mental disturbance as described:

> He [Momodu] hated listening to the tape. It hurt him to hear her plead for help on his behalf. It pained to know that she had no idea where he was. He himself did not know where he was being held apart from the fact that it was in a building in the city. He

> could not understand how the policemen could have found the heart to torment an innocent woman. (112)

The tape is thus a means of psychological torture for Momodu as it denies him his peace of knowing that his family is well. He is emotionally distressed but torture has not conquered his will. Thus when the interrogators accuse him of drinking at Wam Wam Bar, he asserts his freedom of association and his right to drink where he wishes: “That I drink at the Wam Wam Bar is purely coincidental. A person has the freedom to drink where he wants!” (114) This is an assertion of his rights at the face of torture.

Then, after failing to get desired results from torturing family members, the police begin to exploit the bond of friendship between Chipota and Momodu and pit them against each other. They tell each in turns that the friend has confessed that both are members of the July 10 Movement. They further write confessions and forge signatures on them so that one friend can believe that the other has confessed and accused him of involvement in the illegal movement. These lies are intended to make one party succumb to the accusations and make a confession. By fabricating the stories that one has accused the other, the police torment Chipota and Momodu psychologically. Momodu’s introspection at these false accusations not only testifies to their innocence but also to Momodu’s tortured psyche:

> Momodu keeps silent, his mind concentrating on the possibility of his best friend having testified falsely against him. He knew very well that he and Chipota used to discuss politics but they had never supported the July 10 Movement. They had discussed it in view of the people who had been jailed in connection with it but they had never expressed support for it leave alone joining it. (115)

This is psychological realism in which the narrator uses interior monologue to achieve Momodu’s sincerity; thoughts do not lie. It is only the memory of the good times shared in the past between Chipota and Momodu that convinces Momodu that the allegation that Chipota had testified against him are false, and thus, it rejuvenates his strength to keep resisting the pressure to give a forced confession. This resistance is an assertion of his human rights. Chipota too resists these false accusations. Although he is psychologically tortured when he reads the confession bearing Momodu's signature - he is "visibly trembling" (128) with fear - he resolutely remains true to his conscience and asserts his right to abide by what he thinks is right. He tells his interrogators with confidence: "I told you that I am innocent and I have nothing to tell you. If my friend decided to tell you lies, that is upon him. Let the matter be between him and his conscience. As for me I will maintain that I know nothing about the things that Momodu has said" (129). Assertion of human rights in this way directly counters violation of human rights through torture.

Additionally, there is a more intensified form of torture when the police combine water torture and denial of food to put the suspects in a near-unconscious state during which they can question the suspects who without thinking would disclose information that can incriminate them. The police subject Chipota and a fellow detainee, Desmond Nakaru, to this kind of torture. Chipota fears that he might catch pneumonia, but it is Nakaru's case that gives us the devastating effects of this kind of treatment: he suffers delirium and the "effect of the water on his body, the hunger and the mental agony had taken toll, reducing him to a zombie. He was living a life of constant nightmares. He had lost most of his senses and had no control over most of his faculties" (169). He urinated and excreted in the water and drank some of it. This form of torture has effect on the physical and mental health of the victim and in this way it threatens life itself. Nakaru is totally dehumanised; torture has robbed him of his humanity which entails being in the right frame of mind and being in charge of his mental faculties. Chipota, however, has a fighting spirit that makes him visualise himself as a hero and therefore survive the long hours of torture. His determination is described:

> New confidence started to come into him. He saw himself as a martyr who was being sacrificed on the altar of political savagery. He told himself that since he was innocent, he would not allow himself to break down; he would brave every kind of torture his tormentors came up with. He would prove to them that the spirit is stronger than brute force. He prayed that his innocence be shield to protect him from breaking down in the face of physical and mental pain. He swore that hunger and cold would not shake the confidence he had in the triumph of the spirit. (134)

Chipota's determination to overcome torture implies triumph of the human spirit over violations of human rights.

The peak of torture is death in police custody. Ndimu Nduru and Wilberforce Sigaro die in the underground cells. Nduru is a university Economics lecturer detained in the cell for a month, his health fails and he is found dead one morning. Superintendent, Ode not wishing to take the blame, organises for the body to be left lying on the road therefore disguising it as murder by thugs. Sigaro succumbs to internal injuries sustained during torture by Ode's team. The police take his body to the mortuary and promise to carry out investigation to "bring the murderers to book" (146) but do nothing about it. Out of fear and selfishness, senior police officers have a meeting at which they resolve to kill Chipota and Momodu against whom they have nothing concrete to frame a charge; they cannot take them to court neither can they release them for fear that Chipota and Momodu will "tell the whole world what we did to them" (165). Ode suggests that the only solution is to "silence the two for ever" (167) and the silence of other officers endorses the killing. Ode constitutes an execution team and promises promotion and cash prize for killing and leaving all "tracks…covered" (179). Such is the state of moral degradation in the prevailing climate of fear that someone is rewarded for killing innocent people, in this case Chipota and Momodu, when killing even a criminal is actually a violation of human rights. The result of this decision is that the execution team shoots Momodu dead while Chipota survives with injuries. The last moments of this execution are terrifying as the two victims run only to look back and realise that the police have their pistols ready to shoot. This mental and emotional anguish amounts to inhuman treatment of the victims. The police through this execution deny the families of Chipota and Momodu the right to their husbands and fathers. Death is the highest form of torture and denial of human rights.

The novel suggests gross violation of human rights through the intensity of torture that forces suspected political dissidents to prefer long jail terms to any additional length of time in police custody or detention without trial. Chipota's reflection provides alarming statistics on how these people sacrifice their freedom to evade torture:

> Only about four out of four hundred or so people who had appeared in court had denied charges against them. They came to court and pleaded guilty even though they knew that they would get long sentences. Out of the four who denied the charges two of them reappeared in the same court in the afternoon of the same day to change their pleas of not guilty to pleas of guilty. (93)

Just as selfishness, fear and lust contribute to abuse of human rights, humane qualities in some characters is a source of human rights defence and assertion. As Muindu, Kanara and Jose observe, Mutahi is perhaps making a commentary that humanism is the only redeeming virtue in such pervasive tyranny and that any meaningful future calls upon individual citizens to embrace the noble feelings within them (3). The humane qualities include diligence and fearlessness as exhibited in P'Njiru, remorse as displayed by Kerekou and, empathy, criticism and decisiveness as is shown in the person of Chris Wandie.

P'Njiru suspects that Chipota is in police custody and he fearlessly goes ahead to call the Commissioner of Police for confirmation and in so doing makes the commissioner uncomfortable enough to release Chipota. He knows that the police harbour fear for media publicity and takes advantage of it:

> All he wanted…was to alert [the commissioner] that he had a suspicion that Chipota was being held illegally by the police. He wanted to make the Commissioner of Police uncomfortable and perhaps decide to release Chipota. The last thing that the man would have wanted, P'Njiru knew, was to report that the police were using wrong methods to arrest suspects. (139)

P'Njiru's call creates fear in the commissioner who believes that P'Njiru knows more that he discloses to him. He blames the director and his juniors for leaving "tell-tale marks when arresting that reporter for the *Daily Horn*" (139). This fear is positive in the affirmation of human rights as it confronts the criminal activities of the police. They are afraid because they know that they are guilty of having arrested and detained Chipota and Momodu without trial. P'Njiru also rushes to the scene after Momodu and Chipota's and is kind and fearless enough to take Chipota to safety and to "make arrangements for Momodu's body to be removed from the park before it was eaten by animals…[and] safely transported it to a mortuary in a private hospital" (182). As the novel ends we speculate that P'Njiru is keeping Momodu's body away to build a case against the police as he has the information that the police killed him. Such a case would contribute to affirmation of human rights.

Kerekou feels sorry for Momodu and his wife. His conscience challenges his immoral betrayal of the couple. He realises how his fear and lust have denied Mrs Momodu a husband she loves, so he resolves to retract the statement he had given the police in relation to Momodu's guilt. He calls the Director of Special Police Department to retract his previous report. He lets his humane feelings override his lust for Mrs Momodu, and he categorically says that the report to the effect that Momodu was a member of the July 10 Movement was a lie and pleads that the police do not arrest Momodu. After this call Kerekou is genuinely relieved that he has done something to secure Momodu's freedom: "He felt that he had opened the door to Momodu's freedom…. He had set up the machinery that had denied the man freedom and believed that now he had turned the key that would open the door to Momodu's freedom" (111). The call is significant in that as soon as the director ends the conversation with Kerekou, he calls Superintendent Ode to notify him of the retraction. Ode is at this time leading others in interrogating Momodu and we are not surprised that after all the torture, Ode says Momodu "seems to be telling the truth" (154). Seemingly the retraction has had a positive effect on Ode, a change of attitude to consider a possibility of Momodu's innocence. Kerekou's remorse is a humane feeling which contributes to affirmation of human rights which his selfishness and lust had previously undermined.

Wandie is a police officer who works as a blind-folder in the torture chambers. He becomes critical of the torture that he and his colleagues mete out to political crime suspects. He admits that his job as a policeman has made him inhuman: "He began inwardly to question the orders that he had been obeying blindly…he felt time had come to atone for the inhumanity that he had engaged in" (146). His conscience, a moral affirmation of human rights, battles with his sense of duty to keep silent about the torture and finally the former triumphs; he empathises with the victims of torture. He sounds patriotic when he tells P'Njiru that "it is good for us and the country that the information be known" (159) and goes on to reveal everything "about the building where he worked and how those who had gone through it were treated. He gave some names of the suspects who had been tortured, including those who had died" (160). By the end of the meeting with Wandie, P'Njiru knows the whereabouts of his reporter Chipota and Momodu and other victims suffering police violence and the result is a newspaper article that threatens the government of the Illustrious One. The

Illustrious One who has been happy with the progress of the crackdown on the July 10 Movement is not aware that the police have been using "crude torture methods" (161) so he demands explanation from the Commissioner of the Police who calls a meeting to deliberate on the crisis.

After executing his duty to kill along other officers, Wandie telephones P'Njiru who joins him immediately and the two rush off to the scene of Chipota and Momodu's injury and death respectively. Wandie is the "blind-folder now turned a bedside nurse" (182) taking care of Chipota. His decisions and actions have conquered fear and selfishness which have caused violations of many human rights especially by his fellow police officers. The story thus suggests that empathy, having a critical mind and decisiveness like Wandie are important characteristics in the protest against violations of human rights. Wandie's humane feelings show that the police are human beings capable of empathising with fellow human beings and of criticising the system which has made them violators of human rights. To this end I agree with Muindu, Kinara and Jose that Wandie's betrayal of the police force is a subtle assertion that rocking the oppressive system from within is the only sure way to steal its sails for it is his act that deals a big blow to the forces that hinder the birth of a new epoch.

The discussion in this chapter shows that *Coming to Birth* and *Three Days on the Cross* have points of convergence in their portrayal of the theme of human rights. The narrative perspective is from an oppressed class of people. In *Coming to Birth* the narrator tells the story from the perspective of Paulina, a character from the lower social class. The story therefore marshals sympathy for Paulina especially when Martin abuses her rights. In *Three Days on the Cross* the narrator tells the story from Chipota and Momodu's perspective and therefore we sympathise with them when the police violate their rights through arrest, detention and torture and also affirm them when they protest against the violation of and assert their rights.

The narrators in both novels tell the stories of the family and the state and thus explore issues of human rights within these two settings. They show that the marriage institution, which is at the centre of the domestic setting, and the government, which is at the core of the state setting, are charged with care and welfare of people who operate in these settings. When these institutions fail to deliver the expectations placed on them, the result is violation of human rights. In both novels, the behaviour of spouses – Martin's infidelity, Paulina's over-dependence on Martin, Momodu's habit of spending more time with friends than with family, and Mrs. Momodu's rashness in making hasty conclusions – undermine the enjoyment of the right to one's spouse therefore leading to human rights violations within the family. In both novels too, the government and its close arm, the police, are violators instead of protectors of human rights. Macgoye and Mutahi create events and situations which and characters who are conscious of human rights and in this way, show the importance of human rights assertion. They both show that humanism is essential for defence, promotion and enhancement of human rights by creating characters with such humane qualities as mercy, kindness, hospitality, remorse, empathy, decisiveness and critical nature.

Macgoye and Mutahi however portray the theme of human rights in their novels differently. The main characters differ in their knowledge of their human rights. Paulina lacks consciousness of her rights and thus contributes to their abuse through beating and adultery. The society in *Coming to Birth* exhibit the same lack of consciousness of human rights thereby endorsing human rights violations through acceptance of negative customs such as wife beating and adultery. On the contrary, Chipota and Momodu are educated middle class characters holding jobs in the media and bank respectively. They are aware of their rights and they assert them even in the worst of circumstances with police torture.

In *Coming to Birth* the narrative voice is explicit in its presentation of issues only to the extent to which it deals with the rights of Paulina. This precision and decisiveness in the narrative voice issues from the fact that Macgoye is out to write the story of Paulina from adolescent (she is sixteen at the beginning) to adulthood. Macgoye is writing a novel of growing up similar to a bildungsroman hence a clear view of Paulina's journey to maturity. The narrative voice is however subtle and implicit in its portrayal of issues of human right regarding the state as it mentions and indirectly implicates the government in such violations of human rights as political assassinations, police brutality and detention without trial. The only characters who are conscious of the these politically related issues of human rights and are deliberate about condemning them are the politicians: Chelagat and Mwangale. The people only whisper and spread rumours suggesting that they are unsure of what to do in the circumstances of political oppression. We can also see the narrative implicit voice in relation to politically related issues of human rights as a strategy for Macgoye to distance herself from the work through self-censorship so as to be safe in the prevailing political circumstances. The subtle hints also result from narrator telling about these political issues from Paulina's perspective, as Paulina understands them, and therefore to be true to her character she would not overly show a comprehensive knowledge of political issues. She is after all a formally standard two school dropout who upgrades herself to a near-middle class citizen through working and interacting with the members of this class.

Three Days on the Cross is however explicit in its condemnation of the government especially police operations; it does not leave room for speculation about the torture experienced in the hands of the police and the unfounded fear of the government. It is a protest against violations of human rights; in deed Mutahi writes with consciousness for human rights. He however entirely places the blame on the police and the government and gives a blind eye to the contribution of the political dissidents in bringing about instability that motivates the government to act in violation of people's rights.

CHAPTER FIVE: Human Rights as a Journey in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*

In chapter four I analysed the issues of human rights in domestic and state settings showing how the two can impact on each other. In this chapter, I discuss how Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* explores issues of human rights that relate to imperialism under which the characters live. I demonstrate that Ngugi uses the journey motif to explore abuse, awareness and affirmation of human rights as a gradual process.

The story begins with the arrests of Munira, Abdulla and Karega in connection with the murder of three prominent personalities – Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria – who are the African directors of Theng'eta Breweries and Enterprises Ltd. The three are burnt to death in a whorehouse that Wanja runs and so a police officer goes to interrogate Wanja in the hospital where she is still lying in shock after the arson. In the rest of the story, as Inspector Godfrey solves the murder mystery, the novel explores socio-economic issues that characterise the grounds on which the characters of the story interact. The story makes use of flashbacks to show how each of the four murder suspects – Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega – went to live in Ilmorog, the scene of murder and the central setting of the novel. Each of the characters has a motive to have murdered the three directors.

The story in *Petals of Blood* focuses on a country in transition from a formerly colonised to a newly independent state. Social institutions have changed from foreign to local leadership as is evident in the positions of Reverend Kamau in the church, Mzigo and Chui in educational institutions, Nderi wa Riera in politics, and Kimeria, Chui, Nderi and Mzigo in economic sectors. This is a positive change viewed against the background of colonisation which had denied the indigenous people their right to lead themselves and govern their affairs.

Expectation at independence is that Kenyans would take positions of leadership in these social institutions, so when it happens as expected, there has been affirmation of Kenyans' right to govern themselves and benefit from this leadership. The success of Reverend Kamau, Nderi, Kimeria, Mzigo and Chui is the wish of Kenyans in the postcolonial period. The novel uses these characters to represent a positive step toward the fulfilment of human rights at independence and further to critique the social institutions they represent.

Ngugi uses the journey motif at three levels: titles of the parts of the novel, physical movements and psychological explorations of individual characters.

First, Ngugi divides the novel into four parts which he gives the titles: Walking, Toward Bethlehem, To Be Born, and, Again, La Luta Continua. The first part, “Walking”, has five chapters and the initial pages of chapter six which continues to cover the entirety of the second part. The second part, “Toward Bethlehem”, coveres most of the second chapter. Its title points to the “where” of the walking: toward Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a city in Israel. The third part of the novel, “To Be Born”, which covers chapters seven to ten spells out the purpose of the walk to Bethlehem: to be born. The fourth part, “Again La Luta Continua”, meaning “the struggle continues”, runs from chapter eleven to chapter thirteen.

Chapter six is the longest chapter shared by part one and two. This structural device suggests to us a continuation in content in the two parts. In deed the two parts cover movements from and into Ilmorog. The first part is the longest followed by the last, a case that foregrounds the importance of progression signified by “Walking” and the struggle as suggested by “Again, A La Luta Continua”. Collectively, the titles of the four parts of the novel, Walking Toward

Bethlehem To Be Born Again A La Luta Continua, suggest an action of initiating a journey to a place of where birth takes place and after this birth the journey still continues. Bethlehem alludes to the journey that Mary and Joseph made for census in Bethlehem and in the event Jesus Christ was born. The biblical allusion makes us anticipate birth of someone or something in the novel. Birth suggests newness of life. On the outset therefore, by just looking at the titles of the parts, the novel implies a purposeful journey leading to birth and culminating in the action of the struggle suggested by A La Luta Continua, the revolutionary refrain used by the FRELIMO in Mozambique. A La Luta Continua is thus a historical allusion to the struggle for liberation. The awareness of and the struggle for liberation are issues of human rights as people seek to improve their human condition by attaining freedom. This overall meaning of the parts relates to the physical journeys and psychological explorations that characters make.

Second, the four main characters in the novel – Abdulla, Munira, Wanja, and Karega – make physical journeys. They move from Limuru, or in the case of Wanja from Nairobi, to Ilmorog, a remote village which is the central setting of the story.

Abdulla is the first to arrive in Ilmorog. He is a former Mau Mau fighter who nurtures hopes of getting land and a job once Kenya becomes independent. He however feels betrayed when he does not get these benefits. He seeks a place of escape away from his home in Limuru and sets off to Ilmorog where he establishes a shop and lives among the residents with his only possession, a donkey, and his adopted brother Joseph. Abdulla's movement to Ilmorog is fuelled by expectations that life there will be better than it is in his native village – Limuru.

Munira makes a journey from his home in Limuru to Ilmorog to escape from those he feels have rejected him – his father, Ezekiel Waweru, his wife, Julia, and Siriana Secondary School which expels him before he completes his studies. As a result of this rejection Munira feels he is a failure and hopes for a better life by contributing to education in Ilmorog, a place where he can hopefully feel at peace and accepted. He says he wants a "place of peace" (12) and finds such a place in Ilmorog.

Wanja goes to Ilmorog and Abdulla gives her a job in his bar, but she is used to city life so she finds Ilmorog boring for her liking due to its remoteness and lack of customers. She therefore goes back to the familiar life of prostitution in the city. In the process of looking for wealthy commercial sex clients, she meets a German tourist who lures her to his house to mate with his dog. This incident scares her and while she wonders about her next move her house is burned down because of her relationship with a Somali client; members of her tribe interpret this to mean that Wanja snubs her community. As a result of these two incidents, Wanja resolutely makes a journey back to Ilmorog and settles there.

Karega is the last arrival in Ilmorog. He has two problems which compel him to make his initial journey to Ilmorog: the death by suicide of his girlfriend Mukami who is Munira's sister, and his expulsion from Siriana Secondary School. He thinks Munira can help him come to terms with the two issues frustrating him. Mukami commits suicide because her father, Ezekiel Waweru, objects to her relationship with Karega. Waweru considers Karega underserving of his daughter because his family is poor and because Karega's brother, Nding'uri, fought in the Mau Mau countering Waweru's efforts as he was a collaborator with the white colonialists; the Mau Mau cut the latter's ear. Karega leaves Ilmorog soon after he arrives. The second time Karega travels to Ilmorog, he is in the company of Wanja and Munira. The three find themselves drunk in a bar in Limuru and they decide to return to Ilmorog hoping for peace and escape from their frustration. The narrator reports this journey: "They returned to Ilmorog, this time driven neither by idealism nor search for personal cure but by an overriding necessity to escape" (106).

As it evident from the movements of Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega, issues of human rights emerge. Unlike the first set of characters – Kamau, Mzigo, Chui, Nderi, and Kimeria – who have benefitted from independence, Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega are dissatisfied with their lives and environment. Abdulla feels betrayed and his right to land and employment denied him. It is the post-independence betrayal of his rights to land and employment. For Munira it is the denial of education in Siriana School and denial of his position as a son and a husband that causes his frustration. Wanja, a sex-worker is exploited and exploits herself sexually for monetary gains; she is further dehumanised by the German's attempt to make her mate with a dog. Her case further highlights how tribalism as exhibited by her community denies her the right of association with people of choice. Karega's life exhibits two issues of human rights, one being how class distinction is detrimental to the point of causing death as is evident in Mukami's death, and the other being denial of the right to education with Karega's expulsion from Siriana School. With their needs unmet, Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega are restless; they make journeys in search of fulfilment of their rights.

Once in Ilmorog Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega interact with Ilmorog residents. During a time of famine in the area, the four lead the community in an epic journey to the Nairobi

City to seek the help of their Member of Parliament, Nderi wa Riera. The four thus initiate collective struggle for the Ilmorog people to demand their rightful representation by Nderi.

There are other characters, except the four, who make journeys – Inspector Godfrey travels to Ilmorog to solve the murder mystery; Nderi goes to Mombasa inspect his hotels; Chui goes abroad after his expulsion from Siriana – yet the narrator focuses on these four characters, suggesting that we should know and understand them more than the other characters and that the issues that they raise as well as their lives are at the heart of issues of human rights the novel explores.

Third, Wanja, Karega, Abdulla, and Munira make psychological journeys. Once they converge in Ilmorog they enjoy each other's company and together they create an environment conducive for self-revelation. They share feelings, thoughts and experiences that up to this moment have been secrets kept to them. Wanja says that they "all have secrets to hide" (220).

Wanja has travelled through pain, guilt and humiliation since her relationship with Kimeria while she was a school girl. She tells Munira of her pain and humiliation as a result of Kimeria disserting her after impregnating her. She says she "remember[s] that day with shame and guilt" (40). Munira can sense these feeling in her narration: "Munira could somehow imagine a tortured soul's journey through valleys of guilt and humiliation and the long sleepless nights of looking back to the origins of the whole journey" (40). Wanja thus inwardly travels back to the initiator of her sufferings, Kimeria. She relives the guilt of having killed her own child, the unfulfilled longing to conceive another child despite her numerous sexual relationships with men, and the ultimate material deprivation when she loses her business to Mzigo, which forces her back to prostitution. Wanja lives a troubled life as a result of poverty and the response she has made to it especially her option for prostitution. Once she cries in Karega's presence and tells him, "My past is full of evil…when I look back I only see the wasted years" (128).

For Karega, Abdulla and Munira, the occasion of drinking *Thenge'ta* which Nyakinyua brews to celebrate bountiful harvest makes it easy for them to confess their secrets to each other. The drink loosens their tongues to speak of their oppressed psychic. Karega speaks of the psychological burden he has carried as a result of his girlfriend Mukami committing suicide. He admits that "Mukami's face had haunted him all his life" (215). Ndingu'uri, his brother, is at the centre of Karega's loss. By telling his story, Karega experiences pain at the memory of Mukami and pride and excitement at the thought of his brother whom Abdulla describes as ardent Mau Mau fighter:

> Tonight he had lived more conflicting experiences than ever before in his life. He had lost Mukami and he found, in telling the story, that the pain and the self-accusation had not lessened with years. But he had discovered his brother, who had been a silhouette buried deep in his childhood's earliest memories. He now claimed him in pride and gratitude. (228)

Abdulla discovers that Karega is Nding'uri's brother and he, reliving his past, tells of his tortured mind upon the death of the latter as a result of Kimeria's betrayal. He feels guilty for his failure to avenge his friend's death as he had promised. His hatred for Kimeria is renewed and Abdulla vows that he will have to kill the latter one day.

Karega's narration of his relationship with Mukami and her subsequent death makes Munira relive a past that has always haunted him, his feeling that he was an outsider in his own home. Of the night of *Theng'eta* he says, "I walked home…wrestling with my own anxieties…Karega's story. During the telling it, my past flashed across the dark abyss of my present" (226). He feels the guilt, humiliation and confusion of communing with Karega whose brother Nding'uri had caused pain to Munira's family. Munira feels that Karega is more of an insider than he (Munira) is to his own family.

From their psychological explorations, it is thus evident that the lives of the four characters are intertwined. Kimeria stands as on oppressor for Wanja, Abdulla and Karega. It is no wonder then that in their psychological journeys, Wanja and Abdulla resolve to kill Kimeria while Karega chooses to change the system that allows Kimeria and his kind to oppress people. For Munira, Karega's family has caused his family pain through both Karega and his brother, Nding'uri. Moreover, Karega's knowledge of Munira's family augments Munira's feeling of rejection and denial of his right to belong to his family; he does not know how Mukami died until the time of Karega's confession.

As the discussion shows, the novel uses two sets of characters and the journey motif to explore issues relating to imperialism in the novel. Kamau, Chui, Nderi, Kimeria and Mzigo are satisfied with imperialism while Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega suffer under imperialism. I am going to show how colonial legacy and neo-colonial forces oppress and exploit Kenya in the post-independence times. As Kwame Nkurumah says, neo-colonialism "represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage" (ix). I further show how imperialistic powers use capitalism as the economic system that allows class exploitation. Vladimir Lenin refers to imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. He further adds, "Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of "advanced" countries" (4). I have isolated for discussion four areas in which imperialism is manifested in the novel: religious, educational, political, and economic institutions.

To begin with, the presence of Reverend Kamau gives inkling into the performance of the church as a religious institution in the post-independence Kenya. Kamau calls himself Reverend Jerrod Brown. So when one of the boys, Joseph, falls sick as the delegates trek to the city to seek the help of their MP, the delegates walk to Kamau's residence thinking he is a white man but expecting help because he is a man of God. It is ironical however that Jerrod Brown is African and unlike his calling as a man of God, he is full of hypocrisy. The workers' houses of mud-walls and grass thatch are indicative of an oppressed people compared to his mansion with a huge sitting room with sofas and a fireplace. The security guards wear uniform which is a mark of colonialism: "a red fez on [their] head and a red band to match around the waist" (146). Abdualla's thoughts indicate how this uniform conjures up the image colonial tag which was supposed to have ended at independence: "and we fought to end red fezzes and red bands on our bodies" (147). Jerrod Brown thus deals with his workers the same way a colonial master would have dealt with his African servants denying them their right to decent housing and letting them decide to dress in clothing or uniform that can be authentically African. The delegates wait for Jerrod Brown to pray and then prepare his sermon before he could see them, but after listening to them he is not of any help; he lacks humane feelings for the sick child. Hypocritically, he says that prayers are enough. It is ironical that an African clergyman should be categorised with Europeans in their mean treatment of Africans. As they continue to seek help the delegates are sure to "avoid Europeans and clergymen" (149).

In addition, educational institutions are arenas in which head teachers abuse human rights as it is evident in Fraudsham's and Chui's headships of Siriana School and Munira's headship of Ilmorog Primary school but in which students grown in awareness of their rights. Fraudsham's and Chui's abuses relate to the welfare of the students while Munira's relates to the welfare of a staff member, Karega.

Fraudsham, a colonial headmaster takes over from Ironmonger the headship of Siriana School and withdraws privileges of dressing in trousers, wearing shoes and eating rice. According to Siriana students these privileges are actually their rights and so they equate the withdrawal of the privileges to disrespect of their rights. African students at Siriana School further seek equally with students Europeans by demanding to be given glucose and juice during games like these European students, not just plain water. The students react with a strike in which they refuse to go to class and to salute the British flag as a way of showing honour to the colonial government. Fraudsham reacts to their strike by calling the anti-riot police who beat the boys back to class and by expelling Chui, Munira and five students. Despite his seeming success, and the seeming loss on the part of the students, the latter further agitate for change of syllabus to African history and African literature and for an African head teacher with a second strike. It is expected that an African head teacher would ensure inclusion of African history and literature in the syllabus and that these subjects will help the African students to know themselves better. This second strike is a success as Siriana

School gets Chui, an African head teacher and Fraudsham forgives all strike participants unconditionally; he does not expel any students as he had done in the previous strike.

Chui fails to live up to the expectations of the students that he would allow them to learn African history and literature. Karega narrates of Chui's reactions to the boy's demands: "He did not want to hear any nonsense about African teachers, African history, African literature, African this and that; whoever heard of African, Chinese, or Greek Mathematics and Science?" (172) Chui tells the teachers to "teach them good idiomatic English" (173). He uses his position of power to disregard the student's demands saying "I am the headmaster and it is the piper who calls the tune" (173). The students react to Chui's treatment with a strike in which they demand more than the Africanisation of their syllabus; they reject expatriates and foreign advisers who are essentially agents of imperialism, and they applaud the ability of Africans to rule themselves: "Down with Chui: up with African populism: Down with expatriates and foreign advisers: up with black power" (173).

Like Fraudsham before him, Chui calls the police who beat the striking students up after which he expels some students who include Karega. Karega says, "Chui called in the riot squad…led by a European officer. We were all dispersed, with a few broken bones and skulls. The school was closed and when it reopened I was among the ten or so not allowed to sign for re-admission" (173).

During Joseph's generation of Siriana students, Chui neglects his duty as a head teacher as he is busy with his business and social positions he occupies with companies. Joseph observes: "Chui ran the school from golf clubs and boardrooms of the various companies of which he was a director, or else from his numerous wheat fields in the Rift Valley" (339). This generation of students is however more enlightened than the earlier ones; it plans to go on strike to demand that education addresses the issue of liberation for the people. Joseph says, "This time we were going to demand…that all our studies should be related to the liberation of our people" (339).

Issues of human rights emerge from Fraudsham's and Chui's headship of Siriana School as the head teachers deny the students their rights and the students retaliate with strikes as means of redressing the rights they are denied. One, Fraudsham discriminates against the African students from the European students and in so doing treats the former as less human. The irony is however that by denying the students these privileges, Fraudsham helps in making the students live authentically as Africans, not students divorced from their African experience and culture. Two, both Fraudsham and Chui deny the students they expel their rights to education. Three, the police, with Fraudsham's and Chui's permission, use physical force to deny the students their right to express themselves as a means of redressing injustice. Four, both Fraudsham and Chui deny students education which would be relevant to their African experience by making the African students know their past and work for the liberation of the African people. Liberation is freedom from forms of oppression and it is therefore a human right and a goal of education.

Evidently the head teachers abuse the rights of students and the latter are aware of the abuse. Their awareness grows gradually as the intensity of their needs reflect: they start off by demanding for food, trousers and shoes and proceed to demand for Africanisation of the syllabus, for an African head teacher, for the rights of the ordinary citizens, although they do not spell these out, and finally, for the liberation of the African people. These demands are on a graduating scale and so is the students' level of consciousness of human rights. The students not only have consciousness of their rights but also they act through strikes to get better treatment. Their success includes getting Chui for their head teacher and receiving unconditional forgiveness for those that Fraudsham wants to expel after the second strike.

Munira's headship of the Ilmorog Primary School shows human rights abuse directed to a staff member. He hires Karega as a teacher in the school and later dismisses him. His reasons for the dismissal are personal: he is unhappy with Karega over the death of his sister, Mukami, and he is insecure and jealous over the Karega's involvement with Wanja, a woman in whom Munira is interested. Munira's action robs Karega of his right to work and earn a living. His is a case of abuse of public office to advance a personal agenda. Karega, like the Siriana students, reacts to this abuse; he says, "I shall not resign from this school. It will be hard our working together, but I don't intend to go away" (241). Karega's resolve to keep his job despite Munira's demand that he goes away is an affirmation of his right to work.

Fraudsham, Chui and Munira are typical head teachers, using their positions of leadership to oppress those under them. Their students, in the case of Fraudsham and Chui are equally typical, demanding better treatment and hence fighting for their rights. The head teachers make the educational institutions as one of the places where human rights are abused.

Yet, the novel portrays education as an important factor in the affirmation of human rights. Like in Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*, education is necessary for employment. Wanja drops out of school and suffers consequences of unemployment; she becomes a bar maid. She says, "I have tried my hands at various jobs, but work in bars seems to be the only work readily available to us girls – dropouts from school and CAPE failures and even some drop-outs from high school" (41). Karega is expelled from Siriana and suffers unemployment before Munira could give him a job as an untrained teacher. As a result of gaining education, Chui is prosperous as he secures a job at Siriana as a head teacher and gets appointed director of companies. The right to education is thus tied to the right to paid employment as a means of livelihood and therefore lack of proper education denies people the right to meet their basic needs.

People's perception of education is that it provides knowledge for problem solving. This is evident in Ilmorog where during a time of drought and famine, when the community seeks Munira's and Karega's opinion saying, "Perhaps the teachers of our children might have a modern cure for an old illness" (114). As he is educated, Karega knows that the Ilmorog people have a right of representation in the central government by their elected Member of Parliament; he creates awareness of this fact among the Ilmorog people. The awareness further leads to an action, a journey, to demand their right to be helped by the government during times of such natural catastrophes as drought and famine. Education is thus necessary in creating awareness for one's rights.

Besides the presentation of human rights in religions and educational institutions, the story recounts transition in political leadership. The struggle for independence through Mau Mau, a land and freedom army, entails sacrifice as is evident with Abdulla, Nding'uri, Ole Masai and Dedan Kimathi. Kimeria pretends to supply Abdulla and his friend Nding'uri, Karega's brother, with bullets on their first day in the Mau Mau, but he betrays them to the European police. Nding'uri is arrested and hanged a week later. Abdulla loses his leg in the fight in the forest while fighters like Ole Masai and Kimathi are killed during the war. The need to free Kenya as a country, from the colonialists, makes this sacrifice a worthy cause for Kenyans. A song sung as the fighters await judgement on Kimathi, after the Europeans have captured him, asserts Kenyans' right to rule themselves: "Kenya is black people's country…Kenya is an African people's country" (142). The struggle ultimately leads to independence which ideally gives Kenyans the right to govern themselves. The country begins to have its own elected leaders like Nderi wa Riera. The narrator celebrates this case for the Ilmorog people thus: "Even they of Ilmorog had a voice in the house of power and privilege" (143). That the people have a say in their governance through elections is an affirmation of their political rights. Nderi is the Member of Parliament for Ilmorog in the postcolonial Kenya. That he is an elected leader is an indication that there has been transition, a journey, from the colonial era where Kenyans have no say how they are ruled to a post-independence period where Kenyans rule themselves.

Nderi however fails to live up to the expectations of the people that he is their voice in the ruling government. He begins off as a well-meaning servant of the people who is concerned with the affairs of the ordinary citizens; he is a voice of the voiceless in parliament fighting for land ownership, nationalisation of industries to benefit the public, abolition of illiteracy and for Pan-Africanism which is likely to fight imperialism. He, however, deviates from this positive path in leadership and becomes an oppressor of the people who elected him. The narrator captures this shift in Nderi's behaviour by a grammatical structure of the initial sentences of the two quotations that show Nderi then and now: "there was a time when…then he was" is a time sequence accounting for change in Nderi's character. He changes from an advocate of rights that favour ordinary citizens to a violator of these rights, from an advocate of socialism to a practising capitalist. He insists on dropping Europeans names and taking on African names for the companies for which he is a director, "names like Uhuru, Wananchi, Taifa, Harambee, Afro, Pan-African, which would give the enterprises a touch of the soil" (175). This insistence is mere tokenism. By portraying Nderi then and now, the narrator applauds Nderi's initial disposition as "a man of the people" and condemns his new capitalistic tendency. Thus go the two contrasting descriptions of Nderi:

> There was a time when Nderi wa Riera was truly a man of the people. He used to play darts and draughts in small and big places…He was in those days also one of the most vocal and outspoken advocates of reform in and outside parliament. He would champion such populist causes as putting a ceiling on land ownership, nationalisation of the major industries and commercial enterprises, abolition of illiteracy and unemployment and the East African Federation as a step to Pan-African Unity. (174)

Nderi becomes wealthy by getting directorship of big companies, investing public funds in his personal businesses and as a result he stops being associated with the poor, he is no longer a voice of the voiceless. The narrator describes his metamorphosis:

> Then he was flooded with offers of directorship in foreign-owned companies. 'Mr Riera, you need not do anything…It is only that we believe in white and black partnership for real progress.' The money he had collected from his constituents for a water project was not enough for piped water. But it was adequate as security for further loans until he bought shares in companies and invested in land, in housing and in small business. He suddenly dropped out of circulation in small places…Soon he began talking of 'the need to grow up and face reality, Africa needed capital and investment for real growth – not socialist slogans'. (174)

The title "a man of the people" attributed to Nderi in the initial years of political leadership invites a comparison of Nderi with Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People* by Chinua Achebe. Referring to Chief Nanga as a man of the people, the narrator, Odili comments on Nanga's commendable beginning of his political career as a man of the people: "No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M.A Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country.

Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people" (1). He (Nanga) however turns to be greedy and gluttonous, spending public funds in enriching himself. The expression "a man of the people" as applied to Nderi thus becomes a literary allusion that creates an image of the African post-colonial political leader. By comparing Nanga and Nderi the narrator shows us the typicality of character and the situation. Nderi is a typical politician taking advantage of his position and abusing public office for his own personal gains just like the head teachers in the novel; he uses money his constituents contribute for a water project as his own personal investment, therefore denying them the opportunity to benefit from their initiative; he robs them of their money. His name, Nderi wa Riera directly translates to "eagle of the air" and as such suggests a predator scheming, hovering overhead looking for prey to attack. He is an opportunist looking for chances to enrich himself at the expense of the constituents. By "dropping out of circulation in small places" Nderi operates contrary to his title as a man of the people so that, like Nanga, the title is ironical. It is Nderi's neglect of his own constituents, during a time of famine that necessitates the epic journey to the city in search of him, their MP. This journey initiates a process of human rights consciousness as our discussion shows.

The constituents' lack of knowledge of the duties of an MP and their rights in as far the services of the MP are concerned predisposes them to the abuse of their rights by their MP. The Ilmorog constituents know neither who an MP is nor his work. As a result of their ignorance the MP takes advantage of them and neglects his duty of representing the constituency in the government. Nderi is the envy of his fellow politicians because Ilmorog constituency hardly troubles him with complaints; he enjoys what his colleagues refer to as "an MP's political freedom" (175). Nderi takes advantage of his constituents' ignorance to evade responsibility of representing them. He is thus disturbed when the Ilmorog delegation arrives at his office; he thinks that someone must have incited them to take this measure and he vows to look for and punish his supposed political enemy. Nderi’s conduct and reaction indicates his greed for power which provides grounds on which oppressive leadership thrives.

In a bid to preserve his political power, Nderi seeks to isolate Munira, Karega, Abdulla and Wanja as non-residents of Ilmorog so as to keep his constituents ignorant of their rights and therefore oppressed. Offering a solution to the drought as sending a delegation to the president in Gatundu, Nderi says, “Get true Ilmorogians as your spokesmen, not foreigners – and I shall definitely lead the delegation” (183). Yet, Munira and Karega are in Ilmorog as teachers of Ilmorog Primary School. Abdulla is a businessman supplying the villagers with their basic needs. Wanja is a granddaughter of Nyakinyua, an old woman who is resident of Ilmorog as she fought in the Mau Mau War for land and freedom. Wanja has a right to belong to a village where her grandmother resides. Munira, Karega, Abdulla and Wanja are therefore justified to take part in the welfare of Ilmorog. Isolating them thus denies them the right to participate in the welfare of the community.

The crowds that gather to hear Nderi solve his constituents’ problem react to his divisive strategy by stoning him. This is a case that has a double human rights effect: while the crowds are asserting their right to good governance, they violate Nderi’s dignity by treating him indecently. Nderi’s reaction to the treatment by the crowd is however one of show of might and abuse of power; he brings the police to arrest the culprits, but the people who bear the blame are the innocent members of the delegation. Nderi’s behaviour in this case is thus ridiculed: “A riot squad and sirened police car came to the scene. But the officer-in-charge was surprised to find a dignified though puzzled group of old men, women, children" (183). Nderi is embarrassed to have sought such heavy presence of the police for such a small group of people so he covers up his embarrassment by isolating Munira, Abdulla and Karega from the rest of delegates to suffer on behalf of the idlers in the crowd who have stoned him. The arrests of the three are abuse of their right to their freedom as they are innocent.

When the police officers take the three delegates to the police station, Nyakinyua proposes that the rest of the delegates follow the three and demand their release since they are innocent. Her suggestion constitutes a verbal assertion to redress the rights of the unjustly arrested delegates. It indicates that the Ilmorog people are growing in consciousness of their rights. They are on a journey to discover their rights and the means of getting redress when they are abused. As political oppression intensifies in the novel, so does human rights consciousness grow; the delegates are making more and more steps in this journey.

A further step in the journey of human rights finds expression in the lawyer whom Wanja introduces to the delegates. When Nyakinyua's efforts to secure the release of Abdulla, Munira and Karega do not bear fruit, the lawyer's intervention in court is the next step. The lawyer's defence in court for the three delegates upon their arrest exposes the problem of the Ilmorog community to a wider audience than Nderi, their initial audience. The lawyer condemns Nderi's irresponsibility which necessitates such a journey:

> From the questions and side comments the lawyer somehow managed to tell a story … which highlighted the plight of those threatened by the droughts and the general conditions in the area. He described Ilmorog with such phrases as a "deserted homestead", "a forgotten village", an island of underdevelopment which after being sucked thin and dry was itself left standing, static, a grotesque distorted image of what peasant life was or could be. He castigated the negligence of those entrusted with the task of representing the people. If the people's representatives did their duty, would such a journey have been necessary? (184)

The lawyer suggests that Nderi's neglect of duty is responsible for the journey that leads to further abuse of the delegates' rights through unfair treatment by the MP and the police through unfair arrests.

The judge acquits the three delegates and affirms them for the contribution in enlightening the Ilmorog constituents on the duties of their elected leaders. The lawyer's intelligent exposition of the Ilmorog problems and the judge's fair judgement of the case, lead to defence and promotion of the rights of the Ilmorog community. Through the lawyer, the novel portrays the court as an institution that affirms human rights. The narrative voice celebrates the lawyer's work thus: "He [the lawyer] summed up by describing the epic journey in such detail that the people in court, even the magistrate, [were] visibly moved" (184).

As a result of the court ruling in favour of Ilmorog, the Ilmorog delegation receives help from different parties. The media take up the story and feature it in the newspapers with the pictures of the delegates and their donkey, a case that leads to well-wishers giving donations in such overwhelming quantity that one company offers free transport for the delegates and their donations, donkey and cart. The government promises to look into the development of Ilmorog; the church conducts prayers for and promises to build a church in Ilmorog; charitable organisations promise to set up various operations in the area; and a group of university students calling themselves "Committee for Students against Neo-Colonialism", writes a paper relating the drought to neo-colonialism, and calls for abolishment of capitalism. The government, the church, the charitable organisations and the students' group treat the Ilmorog people as fellow human beings deserving respect for the rights to food, water and economic advancement. The story thus suggests, through inclusion of the lawyer, that the court of law is a higher platform of human rights redress when individual and collective efforts fail. The lawyer represents a higher step in the defence of human rights: the legal dimension of human rights.

Furthermore, there are multiple exploitations most of which result from characters interacting in economic institutions which are owned by the rich and the powerful. In the novel, exploitation has four manifestations: age, gender, race and class.

First, exploitation on the basis of age is evident in the presence of underage girls working in Mombasa resorts with whom tourists have sexual relations. Wanja is equally a young girl when Kimeria deceives her into a sexual affair. She is a schoolgirl in her last year in primary school with expectations of joining high school upon scoring high marks in the final national examination. She becomes pregnant and hoping Kimeria would marry her, she runs away from home before the mother could know about the pregnancy. Kimeria however evades responsibility for the pregnancy, claiming to be much older than Wanja and to be a Christian too. It is ironical that Kimeria who claims to be old enough to be Wanja’s father and to be a Christian, a religion that is opposed to sexual promiscuity, should engage in an adulterous relationship with minor. The irony mocks his behaviour and invites our revulsion against him. It underscores the exploitation extended to a minor. Wanja and the Mombasa girls have not attained the age at which they can consent to a sexual relationship therefore the men that relate this way with them are taking advantage of their age to abuse the sexual rights of the girls and to exploit these girls' bodies as objects of pleasure. Kimeria further abuses Wanja's right to education as she drops out of school.

Second, exploitation on the basis of gender is evident in the same case of the girls in the Mombasa resorts and Wanja's experience with Kimeria and the German tourist who forces her to mate with his dog. Wanja's employers exploit her as a woman as they expect her not only to be a bar maid but also a prostitute. Commenting on her life as a barmaid, she says she is supposed to serve in the bar during day time and sleep with the men at night. The use of "supposed" indicates that she may not want to engage in sexual activity with the customers but her very work as a barmaid forces her to do so. Wanja and the girls are exploited as women; this therefore becomes a violation of human rights based on gender differences. It is a case of men taking advantage of women due to gender differences.

Third, exploitation based on race is evident in the cases where Europeans oppress and exploit Africans. This kind of exploitation is evident in the case of sexual exploitation of the girls and Wanja by foreigners. The narrator observes that two resorts in Mombasa whose ownership is associated with Nderi are "special places where even an aging European could buy an authentic African virgin girl of fourteen to fifteen to the price of a ticket to a cheap cinema show" (175). A German tourist lures Wanja into his house to force her into a sexual activity with his dog. This experience makes one of the most graphic events illustrating the abuse of human rights in the novels selected for this study. While in *Kill Me Quick*, human characters scavenge for food like and with animals, in this particular case a human being is forced to mate with an animal. By forcing Wanja to mate with an animal the tourist robs her of her humanity which requires that sexual relations be confined to fellow human beings. He dehumanises her by placing her on the same plane with animals. The case is an abuse not only of her right to choose a partner in sexual relations but also of her humanity. Racial exploitation thrives on the assumption that the Europeans are superior to Africans.

Fourth, the novel explores exploitation on the basis of class. The rich and the powerful who constitute the capitalist class exploit four classes of people: the poor, the peasants, the workers and the small business owners.

The poor lack access to opportunities to economically advance in the post-independent Kenya. We see this as we examine Abdulla's story. Having fought in the Mau Mau, Abdulla hopes that he would have land upon independence. His hopes are however dashed. He tells of how long he waits in vain for land reforms which would ensure that he gets his fair share of the land that was once in colonialist's hands. His disappointment is captured in poetic form and the syntactic repetition of "I waited". The use of poetic form in the midst of narration foregrounds the message that draws attention to the betrayal of Abdulla:

> I waited for the land reforms and redistribution.
> I waited for a job.
> I waited for a statue to Kimathi as a memorial to the fallen.
> I waited. (254)

Abdulla's waiting results from his poverty; he lacks money to buy land and without property he cannot get a loan to buy land:

> I heard that they were giving loan for people to buy European farms…I went there. They told me: this is new Kenya. No free things. Without money you cannot buy land and without property and land you cannot get a bank loan to start a business or buy land. (254)

Abdulla is thus denied his right to land and property ownership just because he is poor.

Without access to land, Abdulla looks for employment, a sign of his plummeting self-worth as he equates land ownership with his dignity. He decides to go back to the factory where he worked before joining the Mau Mau, but the factory denies him a job because he is poor and crippled. Abdulla's poverty thus leads to denial of his right to employment. Additionally, his is a case of discrimination against a disabled person; they deny him his right to employment due to his disability. I agree with James Ogude that Abdulla's plight is representative of the life of former freedom fighters who a growing native bourgeoisie with roots in colonialism cripples as it thrives in post-colonial Kenya.

Failure to recognise the independence struggle lies at the heart of Abdulla's woes and benefits characters that betrayed or stood aside from the struggle. Kimeria, Abdulla's betrayer, has a contract to transport the goods of the company that denies Abdulla a job. Abdulla is shocked at this discovery. He says, "I remained rooted to the ground. So Kimeria…was eating the fruits of *uhuru*!" (255) The irony is that Kimeria, not Abdulla, should enjoy the fruits of independence with access to wealth and positions of power in the new nation. Wealth begets more wealth and so the rights of the poor people are neglected or abused as is evident with Abdulla.

The peasants form another class of the exploited in the novel. The relationships between the peasants and multi-national companies, and big businesses owners in New Ilmorog, is that of exploiter and the exploited, for while they purport to be working for the economic welfare of the peasants, they are in essence exploiting them. One such company is a sugar mill owned by a British company, Macmillan Sugar Works which starts in Western Kenya. The goals of this company are ideally noble as Karega observes: "The company's sugar plantation was started soon after independence… to develop the area…to raise the standard of living" (289). As it appears to help the indigenous people, the company promotes rights of alien people and even trample the rights of the indigenous people. The sugar plantation in Western Kenya ironically, instead of developing the area, displaces some peasants to create room for the plantation and lures others are to plant sugar in their own land only for the company to dictate the price at which it buys the sugar and in this way impoverish the local population. Karega recounts:

> A number of peasants were driven off their land to make room for the company's nuclear estates. The peasants who were not driven off the land were encouraged to grow sugar on their plots instead of food. But the company buys sugar at whatever price they deem fit! The peasant growers are not organised to protest and bargain. So they lead miserable lives. Some cannot even send their children to school. (289)

The company purports to help the Africans while it abuses their right to land ownership. By dictating the market price of sugar, the company sabotages the market relations of willing buyer and willing seller; it has the upper hand in these relations. It thus violates the economic rights of the peasants who become poor and cannot afford to meet their basic needs or educate their children.

Similar exploitation of the peasants leading to land alienation is carried out by the bank. The African Economic Bank cheats peasants to take loans only to auction their land for money when they are unable to service the loans. The narrator uses "lured" to suggest a deliberate action on the part of the bank to exploit the peasants. Such is the case of the old woman, Nyakinyua and peasants whose pieces of land the African Economic Bank seeks to sell. The bank denies the peasants full information regarding the loan and the papers that they sign as they take the loans. Hence it takes advantage of the people's ignorance to rob them of their land and in so doing deny the peasants a means of livelihood. The name of the bank – African

Development Bank – is ironical, a device that underscores its exploitative nature. Land alienation denies the peasants their right to land ownership and by extension, their basic needs as they mainly depend on land.

The effect of land alienation has far reaching consequences; it creates more categories of poor who are further exploited: the workers, the petty traders and the criminals and the prostitutes. Karega's introspection on the changes in Ilmorog upon his second return to Ilmorog reveals an attitude of disapproval for displacement of peasants from their land. His anger towards exploitation of people is evident in lexical deviation achieved by the use of the obscene word "cunt" suggesting that the situation is as despicable as the word itself:

> Within only ten years…Ilmorog peasants had been displaced from the land: some had joined the army of workers, others were semi-workers with one foot in a plot of land and one foot in a factory…others became petty traders in hovels and shanties…along the Trans-African road, or criminals and prostitutes who with their guns and over-used cunts eked a precarious living from each and everybody. (302)

A section of Ilmorog in this modern setting lacks legal means of fulfilling their basic needs. This implies an abuse of their economic rights.

Exploitation of peasants finds opposition in Nyakinyua, a woman who fights for land in both colonial and independent times. She resolves to fight the bank before it auctions her land. She says, "I'll go alone…my man fought the white man. He paid for it [land] with his blood…I'll struggle against black oppressors…alone" (276). Nyakinyua lacks the physical strength to put up the struggle as she is old and frail, but her will to assert herself as the rightful owner of her land is a defence of the right to land ownership. Land in this case is portrayed almost in spiritual sense as a cultural heritage to which a stranger is not entitled. As Gakwandi observes, injecting Kikuyus from their land signifies material deprivation as well as an attack on the people's traditions; he further quotes Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* to show that land implications go beyond the merely economic: “the earth as the ‘mother’…feeds the child through a lifetime; and…after death it…nurses the spirit of the dead for eternity” (112). Nyakinyua’s death is a defiance of exploitation as culturally she would not want to be buried in someone else’s land. She thinks she owes her late husband an explanation as to why she would not guard the land that the husband had secured for her through fighting the white man: “Nyakinyua died peacefully in her sleep a few days after the news of the bank threat…she had said that she could not think of being buried in somebody else’s land: for what would her man say to her when she met him on the other side?” (276). Wanja knows the spiritual link between her grandmother, herself and the land, and therefore sacrifices all she has to pay off the loan and in this way redeem Nyakinyua’s land. Wanja’s action defends the human dignity which would otherwise be lost through forced sale of their family land, and it goes further to defend the cultural rights of a people whose identification with their own land is important.

Besides the exploitation of the poor and the peasants, employers exploit the working class. This is evident in the assigning of positions in multinational companies and in the working conditions of workers.

Karega, naming a Kenyan as in-charge of transportation of a multinational company’s goods, remarks with a sarcastic tone that the African participation in the company is mere tokenism; the company employs African workers but European expatriates occupy its topmost positions. The narrative tone suggests that the so called European experts are not experts at all; they are put in these positions to further the interests of Europe in as far as business relations with Kenya are concerned. European owners of the multinationals, through the

African managers and European expatriates, control and monopolise the business relations leaving Kenya under-developed.

> The company has an African manager…a few locals own shares in the company… So you see African participation was extensive. The middle level managerial positions were in the hands of the Africans. Otherwise all top jobs on the technical side were held by European expatriate experts – mere schoolboys…lording it over African graduates training to be sugar technologists. (290)

Elsewhere, in *Detained*, Ngugi refers to these African managers as the comprador bourgeoisie, "a dependent class, a parasitic class in the *kupe* (tick) sense. It is in essence a *mnyapala* [overseer] class, a handsomely paid supervisor for the smooth operation for the foreign economic interests" (56). It is also a matter of violation of one's right to employment when the company does not hire its employees on merit; the African graduates, not the European schoolboys, deserve these top jobs.

Once peasants are converted to workers, the working environment is burdensome. The case of Wambui, Muriuki's mother, "staggering" suggests an image of a burdened and oppressed worker. It suggests a situation whereby Wambui is assigned a task beyond her physical strength hence poor working condition for her. By recounting Munira's shock upon seeing Wambui employed as a labourer, the narrator suggests that Wambui's initial disposition as a peasant with her own parcel of land is better than the new capitalistic arrangement:

> He [Munira] stopped and rubbed his eyes clean: Wambui, Muriuki's mother, was staggering behind the handles of a wheelbarrow piled high with stones. The demarcation and fencing off of land had deprived a lot of tillers and herdsmen of their hitherto unquestioned rights of use and cultivation. Now they were hiring themselves out to any who needed their labour for wage. Wambui, a labourer! Now she had joined others who had been drawn into Ilmorog's market for sweat and labour. (272-73)

That the Africans are hiring themselves out to employers for wages is a development from the colonial state of affairs where the Africans are forced to offer themselves as cheap or free labour as is evident in Karega's family case as they live as squatters on forced-labour conditions on European farms. During colonial times Europeans constituted a class that denied Africans cultivation rights in their own land and further condemned the Africans to servitude and slavery; this is denial of Africans' economic rights. While the post-colonial phenomenon as portrayed in Wambui's case is still oppression like the colonial one, it is a journey away from forced labour as in this case someone has a choice to or not to work.

Moreover, big owners of capital absorb small businesses hence manifesting class exploitation. The New Ilmorog business environment creates a class of prosperous business owners represented by characters such as Mzigo, Kimeria and Chui, and a class of petty traders like Abdulla and Wanja. The former take advantage of the power of owning large capital to monopolise the business environment and absorb the latter's businesses. The case of Wanja and Abdulla exemplifies how this aspect of class exploitation is oppressive. Abdulla and Wanja's ownership of their businesses is unquestionable until they sell their new building to Mzigo to help redeem Nyakinyua's land. Mzigo, a powerful businessman, uses his position of power and connections with the county council to take advantage of the two small traders and fleece them, forcing them to close down because, as Wanja explains, "the County Council says our license [to brew] was sold away with the New Building. They also say our present premises are…unhygienic! There is going to be a tourist centre and such places might drive away visitors" (279). Mzigo's action to get Wanja and Abdulla out of business is an act of exploitation, violating their economic rights. The irony that the authorities think the place should be kept clean for visitors, not residents, is an imperialistic tendency seeking to please Europeans at the expense Kenyans hence denying the latter opportunities for economic advancement.

The result of business loss in the case of Abdulla and Wanja is that both find it difficult to meet their basic needs. Abdulla becomes a roadside fruit hawker, reverts to drinking and is headed for depression. He lives in slum-like housing conditions and can hardly afford food. Wanja becomes a prostitute whose commodity for sale is not only her body but also the bodies of the girls she employs in her brothel. This is the highest form of abuse of personal rights under capitalism yet circumstances force Wanja into it as she confesses: “I wanted to live honestly, an honest trade, an honest profit” (292). As Chijioke Uwasomba notes, economic deprivation in the novel finds its most effective symbol in the degradation of Wanja, the barmaid, who rises from prostitution to economic independence and womanhood but is forced back to the humiliating status of a prostitute selling her body. Govind Sharma says that the name Wanja is an adaptation of the Gikuyu word for "mother earth" or "spirit of the land" hence suggesting that Ngugi uses Wanja as a metaphor for Kenya to whom imperialist oppressors offer prostitution as the only option. Sharma defends Wanja’s prostitution as unavoidable:

> She is not the wicked and shameless woman, the Jezebel of Scripture, as Munira takes her to be. [Wanja] is the spirit and earth of Kenya, humiliated, exploited and ill-used by the Kimerias, Chuis and Mzigos, fighting for sheer survival and hungering for fulfilment, still retaining her beauty and kindliness, dignity and decency. (302)

I agree with Uwasomba’s and Sharma’s views as Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo have assimilated the capitalist ideology of control, manipulation and domination against which it is difficult for Wanja to fight; she can only be a victim. Their names suggest the negative characteristics of capitalist class: Kimeria, is Kikuyu for “swallower” and the name therefore suggests greed; Chui is Kiswahili for leopard which conjures up the image of hostility and arrogance; Mzigo, Kiswahili for burden, suggests how capitalists are a burden to the rest of the indigenous population.

Wanja’s rationalisation of her prostitution, however, shows that she too has assimilated the capitalistic ideology; she is not only violated but also violates other people’s rights. She discovers that in a capitalistic system you “eat or you are eaten” and decides to act so that she “will never return to the herd of victims” (294). She is thus a victim and a “predator” simultaneously. Her “sinking” down into the depths of sexual exploitation is a heightening of a journey started with Kimeria’s abuse of her right to personal dignity, but she is more than a victim unlike in the earlier cases; she feels that prostitution accords her a position of power over Chui, Kimeria, Mzigo and the men who go to her brothel. She also abuses the girls that she has employed in her brothel; she is making monetary profits on the sale of their bodies. In this way, she too is a capitalist exploiting other people. I however assert that in a human rights sense, she degrades her body and her human dignity. Circumstances show that her only option is prostitution but as a human person, she has a choice to become or not to become a prostitute. Ngugi is keen to show that Wanja’s way is not the right way to remedy the problem of economic impoverishment so he makes Wanja quit prostitution but only after killing Kimeria the symbol of oppression in her life.

Against the backdrop of class exploitation, champions of class struggle emerge. As we have seen all the four main characters that move and settle in Imorog – Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega – suffer class exploitation and they advocate for change which essentially means a rejection of capitalism. They are decisive on what needs to be done for liberation. For Wanja and Abdulla liberation means the death of Kimeria, the person who initiates their journey of being exploited. For Munira it is a spiritual reform through salvation offered by Jesus Christ; the way to purify the capitalistic world is through death of those who are evil and that includes Wanja and the men who go to her brothel. As a result of their reasoning, Wanja stabs Kimeria to death, Munira sets the house on fire killing Mzigo and Chui and Abdulla who is near the house to accomplish his mission of killing Kimeria saves Wanja from the inferno that consumes the three men. Abdulla, Munira and Wanja resort to murder to remedy the abuse of their human rights but by so doing they take away life. Killing is the ultimate denial of human rights as the three dead men, denied of life, do not have a chance of regeneration. The novel however shows defence of the right to life through Inspector Godfrey who carries out investigation on the murder and as the story ends Munira is in police cells awaiting trial for the murder.

The novel proposes trade unions that Karega forms as a means of redressing abuse of workers' rights. Karega, unlike Abdulla, Munira and Wanja advocates for a revolution instead of anarchy in changing the capitalistic system. He is the one to carry out the revolutionary work suggested by the fourth section of the novel, "Again, A Luta Continua". He therefore replaces Munira as the protagonist of the novel in this fourth part; the focus is on him and we view much of the action of the story through him. Karega, whose name is Kikuyu for "refusal", is determined to "refuse" all forms of oppression.

The novel shows the centrality of trade unions in the fight for workers' rights by portraying the growth of the unions in three phases: the preparatory, formative and future phases.

In the preparatory phase we trace Karega's qualification for the task of a trade union leader through personal training and formation. He begins by refusing help from tourists who dispense charity as they laugh at Africans, then proceeds to be restless in various work stations as he finds himself unfulfilled as a worker. He learns through interaction with the lawyer and the books the lawyer sends him after the journey to the city. He reads history, political science and imaginative literature books. He discovers from the lawyer and the books that people, including book writers are categorised on class lines; the lawyer advises him: “You serve the people who struggle or you serve those who rob the people. In a situation of the robber and the robbed…there can be no neutral history and politics. If you would learn look about you: choose your side” (201). The initial step in defending the rights of a particular class thus entails identification with the class and gathering information on how to carry out the class struggle.

The formative phase of a trade union centres education in creating awareness of one as a member of an oppressed class, of the rights of the workers and of the need to demand for their respect. This education is achieved through distribution of pamphlets among the workers bearing the message that business owners do not care about the worker “in the game of exploitation” (304). The workers read these pamphlets and discuss the content among themselves. As a result of the new consciousness, the workers decide to form a workers’ union, a body meant to fight for their rights as workers. The narrator identifies with the workers in the decision to form a union, as the narrator clearly tells the workers’ story, not the employers: “The directors and the management were taken by surprise: whence this whizzing noise from those who only the other day were docile and obedient and spent the salaries on *Theng’eta* and fighting amongst themselves?” (304). Education, therefore, precedes liberation and assertion of human rights; this is evident not only in this case but also in the case of the Ilmorog delegation as well as in Joseph’s generation of students demanding that their education relate to the liberation of the society.

The future phase of a trade union entails a collective social vision, not individual leadership. The novel communicates this message by detaching the growth of the workers' movements from an individual, Karega. The police arrest Karega over the murders of Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria, and later keep him in custody for his communist ideas. The activities of the workers however go on despite Karega's physical absence. The workers are planning a strike and a demonstration. And it is not just the workers at the breweries union but a bigger "movement of Ilmorog workers" (343). Akinyi, one of the union members, tells Karega, "all workers in Ilmorog and the unemployed will join us. And the small farmers… and even small traders" (343). This is a more advanced stage in the journey of human rights than where Ilmorog is at the arrival of the four outsiders, the last of whom is Karega, the source of knowledge for the new awareness. Karega's introspection at Akinyi's information shows that historically the labour class has always struggled against capitalism "a system…with parasitism and cannibalism as the highest goal in the society" (344). Karega recalls historical figures who have struggled for the recognition of the oppressed humanity like Stanley Mathenge, Koitalel and Kimathi, a memory that authenticates the current and future struggle of the proletariat over the bourgeois class. Historically, the proletariat has always opposed capitalists. The victory of the proletariat and restoration of humanity stolen by capitalism is certain in the following narration:

> From Koitalel through Kang'ethe to Kimathi it had been the peasants, aided by the workers, small traders and small landowners, who had mapped out the path. Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying bloodthirsty gods…bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many…Then…would the kingdom of man and woman begin, they joying and loving in creative labour. (344)

Akinyi's name in Dholuo means "one born in the morning". She therefore represents the dawn of the revolutionary wave. Significantly therefore, the workers' movement has membership from more than one community, which is a case that signifies the workers' realisation of their common identity as the "tribe of the oppressed" and their preparedness to work together for their liberation.

The novel further suggests that successful continuity of the struggle against capitalism into the future relies on the mentorship of the young generation. Joseph represents the future; those who are to continue with the fight for liberation as the journey is far from over. Abdulla's life and stories as well as history and education in general, have mentored Joseph's generation into the struggle of the oppressed. Holding a copy of Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood,* Joseph speaks of his desire to be like Abdulla. He tells Abdulla,

> You fought for the political independence of this country: I would like to contribute to the liberation of this country…I have been reading a lot about what workers and peasants have done in history…about revolutions in China, Cuba...Angola… Mozambique. (340)

Ousumane's novel, *God's Bits of Wood* is significant to the struggle of the exploited as the overall moral of the story is that "masses of Africa should be united in order to defeat exploiters" (Gakwandi, 124). Its message is similar to Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* as they both champion for the rights of the workers.

The future of class struggle is equally symbolised by the baby Wanja is expecting. When Wanja's mother asks about the father of the baby, Wanja sketches an image which is a combination of both Kimathi and Abdulla. This suggests that the revolutionary spirit of the two Mau Mau fighters will live on in the child. The journey of fighting for human rights therefore continues with the child.

Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* explores issues of human rights under imperialism. The title of the novel suggests stifled growth; its source is an extract from Derek Walcot's poem "The

Swamp" quoted on the first page of the novel: Fearful, original sinuosities! Each Mangrove sapling/ Serpent-like, its roots obscene/ As six-fingered hand,/ Conceals within its clutch the moss backed toad,/ Toadstools, the potent ginger-lily,/ Petals of blood." The surface meaning of this poem is that young tree (mangrove) obstructs other plants that are shorter than it is like the mushroom and the ginger-lily. The result is that the ginger-lily which has potential of growing and producing beautiful flowers ends up unhealthy-looking petals. Munira in the story explains to his pupils that a flower can become that colour – yellowish-red – if it is prevented from reaching the sunlight. According to Ngugi the symbolic significance of the swamp is that it "prevents little flowers from reaching out into the light. [It] symbolised the way…in which the social system of capitalism acts to stifle life" (Killam 126). Eustace Palmer has an interpretation of the title that links the petals of blood to victims of corruption: "The flower thus becomes a symbol of the entire society Ngugi is concerned with potentially healthy, beautiful and productive, but its potential unrealised and itself destroyed by agents of corruption and death" (153). I use Ngugi's interpretation of the swamp and Palmer's views on the title to suggest that the title "Petals of Blood" makes us view the effects of imperialism in comparison to a worm-eaten flower petal. Just like Munira says that such a flower "cannot bear fruit" (22), imperialism cannot be productive for the Africans. It only destroys Africans and violates their human rights.

As the discussion shows *Petals of Blood* portrays cases of both abuse and demand for human rights. The levels of abuse range from simple discrimination on basis of race as experienced by Siriana students during Fraudsham's headship of the school to more grievous cases such as gender exploitation of Wanja by the German and the class exploitation of the poor, peasants, workers and small business owners. The abuses thus increase in intensity as the novel weaves its journey to the end. The journey motif allows for the progression in the abuses of human rights and for the growth in consciousness of the characters to demand their rights.

The protagonists of the story – Munira, Karega, Abdulla, and Wanja – and the Ilmorog community as a whole gradually realise that they belong to the class of the oppressed and as such the capitalist system under colonialism or independent government has denied them their rights and especially economic ones. They learn to assert their rights individually. It is however class exploitation and consequently class struggle, which carry weight in the novel. The story of workers coincides with the revolutionary part of the novel "A La Luta Continua" therefore suggesting that the struggle of the workers continues as they agitate for their rights. The writer's aesthetic ideal is therefore that workers should fight for the respect of their rights as capitalism cannot accord these rights freely. Once people's economic rights are granted, they live fulfilled lives in all other spheres of life. The consciousness to fight for these rights however, is not a once-for-all happening; it is a process, like a journey.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study analysed the theme of human rights in five Kenyan novels: Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*, Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*, Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*, Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*, and Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*. To do this, it examined the background of the novelists and their novels so as to contextualise them; it analysed issues of human rights explored in the selected novels; and it assessed how formal aspects of the novels contribute to the portrayal of issues of human rights in the selected novels.

The study established that the novelists were aware of the human rights situation in their society as they grew up and as they wrote the novels. They interacted with and responded to the human rights experiences in their society and these experiences further influenced them in the writing of their novels. The societal happenings that inspired their writing include urbanisation that leads to street life, slum life, crime and imprisonment; tribalism, racism, imperialism which found expression in colonialism and neo-colonialism; capitalism and its exploitation of the poor, peasants and workers; and political oppression. These happenings constitute violation or denial or lack of fulfilment of human rights. As such they present a "ready" conflict for the novelists as write their stories. The novelists' extra-literary pronouncements and actions showed that they were conscious of the fact that these experiences posed a challenge to the society. They however presented varying degrees of consciousness for human rights with Mwangi showing the least awareness and Ngugi presenting deliberate consciousness of human rights displayed in his fight for his own rights and those of others.

The study found out five things relating to the portrayal of human rights issues in the novels.

One, the five novels concern themselves with the issues of the underprivileged class in the society. The writers take sides with this class of people. All the stories except *Three Days on the Cross* tell stories of main characters from the lower social class. They are interested in how the common people fulfil their rights to basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Education becomes a key issue in its capacity to empower people for employment which would lead to fulfilment of these rights. Often the characters fail to get employment and the result is street or slum life where they are denied their rights to decent standard of living. Crime is a resultant of this lack; characters who are already deprived and denied the means of fulfilling their basic needs rob others of their rights to property by stealing, mugging or robbing, and their right to life when they kill. Crime attracts punishment as justice for those whose rights the criminals have violated. This kind of justice limits the freedoms of the criminals as jail terms require confinement. The justice is often retributive focusing on the wrong doing and never reparative as it happens in *Kill Me Quick* with the continuous cycle of in-and-out of jail. Lack of attaining reparative justice for the criminals means that they are not re-integrated in the community for a reciprocal relationship with their society. The novels further depict lack of distributive justice in the society in as far as employment and natural resources like land are concerned. Such is the case especially in *Petals of Blood* where people fail to benefit from independence as they had hoped. The novelists, therefore, make the oppressed audible by privileging their stories.

Two, the novels portray the police as violators of rights they are supposed to safeguard. They break the law when they mete out violence as it happens in all the novels, or when they deny suspects their right to legal services as is the case in *Three Days on the Cross*. They obstruct fulfilment of human rights through corruption in the form of bribes, hence standing in the way to fulfilment of people's economic rights. They abuse their office when they use their power and authorised weapon to kill as it happens in *Three Days on the Cross* and *The Last Villains of Molo*. In this way they deny the victims their right to live.

Three, the novels often portray the government as a violator of the human rights of its citizens. *Kill Me Quick* is the only novel out of the five which is silent on the position of the government in as far as violation or fulfilment of human rights is concerned. *The Last Villains of Molo* implicates politicians, and therefore, the government, in human rights violation through the instigation of tribal clashes. The novel portrays the government as discriminating against members of one tribe. In *Coming to Birth* the government violates the freedoms of movement and association of people through arrests and detentions, and the right to life through political assassinations such as those of Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki. In *Three Days on the Cross* the government creates fear in the citizens making it difficult for them to enjoy their freedom of expression and association and further causing the police to violate the rights of citizens especially those suspected of committing political crimes. In *Petals of Blood*, we critique the performance of the postcolonial government through Nderi wa Riera who belongs to the comprador bourgeois class from which position he undermines the rights of his constituents whom he represents in parliament, as well as those of the poor, peasants and workers as it is evident in his business dealings. Nderi's failure to fulfil his mandate as an elected MP is the failure of the postcolonial government. The novel thus criticises both the colonial and postcolonial governments as standing in the way of economic rights of the people.

Four, the novelists display the economic, social and political rights of the people, but it is the economic rights that occupy the centre stage in the novels. The novelists are interested in the way the ordinary people acquire means of livelihood and fulfil their rights to decent standard of living. The novelists become advocates of these rights especially in a situation which threaten the rights. They often relegate political rights to a secondary position and often explore them in relation to enhancement of the economic rights.

Five, the novels focus on the activities of the oppressed persons to counter the numerous forms of violations. All the main characters in the novels under study except Maina and Meja in *Kill Me Quick* show awareness of their violated rights and they gradually learn to assert them. Chipota and Momodu in *Three Days on the Cross* and Karega in *Petals of Blood* are the most assertive of the characters. These characters share one characteristic: they are educated. We can therefore conclude that education is key to the knowledge and promotion of human rights.

The study discovered that the novelists employ particular artistic strategies that contribute to the portrayal of human rights. The formal elements of the novel support portrayal of the theme of human rights. This is evident in the choice of the novel sub-genre, setting, point of view, story and plot, characterisation, and the use of realism as a creative method and journey motif.

To begin with, the sub-genres of the urban novel as in the case of *Kill Me Quick*, *Coming to Birth*, and *The Last Villains of Molo*, prison and protest literature as exemplified in *Three Days on the Cross*, literature of disillusionment as is the case of *Kill Me Quick* and *Petals of*

Blood, and the bildungsroman which is the case in *Coming to Birth*, are suited to the portrayal of human rights. These sub-genres allow the novelist to explore abuse, violation as well as defence and promotion of human rights. The study came to the conclusion, issuing specifically from *Coming to Birth*, that the bildungsroman as novel sub-genre is adapted to portrayal of human rights especially growth in human rights consciousness. As a novel of growing up, the bildungsroman facilitates growth of the main characters; such growth of necessity entails acquisition of knowledge and skills and service to one's community. In as far as a character goes through such growth and development, the character must acquire knowledge of human rights and muster confidence to defend human rights for themselves and on behalf of others in the community. This case is true of Paulina in *Coming to Birth*.

In addition, a study of the settings of five novels reveals that the novelists are clearly writing stories of Kenya: Mwangi in *Kill Me Quick* moves his characters from an unnamed rural area to Nairobi to seek paid employment; Kombani in *The Last Villains of Molo* moves his characters from the interior of Molo to Molo town, Limuru and Nairobi; Macgoye in *Coming to Birth* shows the movement of her main character, Paulina from Gem to Nairobi then to Kisumu and back to Nairobi; and Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* tells of the movement of his main characters from Limuru to a fictionalised locale – Ilmorog – and of the great trek of the delegates to Nairobi to seek out their MP. All these areas – Molo, Gem, Limuru and Nairobi – are physical locations found in Kenya. Even for Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* in which the locales have fictionalised names and in which the writer claims that he is not writing a story of anyone or any place that exists, a careful reader would notice the Nairobi geography in the novel; indeed the descriptions of the underground cells are similar to the descriptions that Kihoro's *Never Say Die* provides of the Nyayo torture chambers. One realises then that many of the events of *Three Days on the Cross* take place in the Nyayo House, a building in the Nairobi Central Business District that houses government offices. By explicitly having Kenya as a geographical setting, the writers are inviting us to focus on the issues of human rights in the novels as issues of Kenya.

Nairobi as a setting for the five novels is significant in that it is an urban setting where class differentiation is more pronounced than in the rural set up. Moving the characters from the countryside to this urban setting aids the writers in their portrayal of the lack of means of livelihood that the poor experience and the resultant violations, or denial of their rights which often leads to their violating the rights of the rich class. Nairobi city, therefore, becomes a convenient setting for the portrayal of human rights.

Moreover, the writers adopt a narrative perspective of the oppressed class. This perspective appeals to our sympathy for this class, causing us to understand them and support them as they agitate for their rights. The stories focus on the lives and experiences of the underprivileged, meaning that the writers privilege the oppressed over the oppressor. The narrative voice is often affirming the rights of the characters on which the voice focuses. The plot explains the behaviour of the characters of main focus in the novels in such a way that even when these characters are morally degraded so that they violate the rights of their fellow human beings or even violate their own dignity, the plot appeals to us to understand the behaviour of these characters and to sympathise with them. It does so by clearly indicating the “path” the characters have travelled and accounting for it in such a way that getting to the point of moral depravity is inevitable. In so doing, the plot enhances the portrayal of the theme of human rights and specifically, it draws our attention to the rights of the main characters whose stories the novels tell.

Furthermore, the novels employ humane characters to show that love, kindness, reconciliation, peace and harmony are germane to human rights. They create an environment favourable for human rights to thrive. Humane characters counter hatred and disharmony which lead to different forms of violation of human rights.

The study also discovered that the five novels make use of realism as a creative method to portray the theme of human rights. This artistic strategy exposes us to life-like characters and situations. Human characters are shaped by circumstances in their environment and they further act on and shape these circumstances. Therefore characters who are put in an environment like Nairobi City, that fosters abuse of their rights, react to this environment and assert their rights. Like human beings, they grow in this assertion. There is however an element of the absurdist especially in *Kill Me Quick*. This absurdism is the opposite of realism as within it as a creative method, characters become pessimistic and cynical of their situation, and they fail to grow or progress from their position of abused human rights; they fail to affirm, promote or assert their rights or those of others.

Lastly, the study discovered that the journey motif enhances portrayal of human rights issues. Characters set on journeys, physical and psychological, making it easy for us to evaluate their progress and therefore their consciousness of human rights. The journeys have a purpose; where purposes are fulfilled, there is fulfilment of human rights. Where the journeys are fruitless, there is violation or denial of human rights. All the novels under this study except *Three Days on the Cross* use the strategy of journey motif.

The study came to the conclusion that post-independence Kenyan novelists consciously or unconsciously write human rights narratives; it is evident that they portray issues of human rights in their novels. They portray denial and violation of human rights but differ in their level of human rights consciousness as is evident in the five novels under this study. *Kill Me Quick* is silent on the way forward to improving the human rights conditions the story portrays; *Coming to Birth* is subtle in its protest against human rights violations, especially where the government is involved; *The Last Villains of Molo* is certain about the place of reconciliation in affirmation of the rights violated in the circumstances of tribal conflicts; *Three Days on the Cross* is loud in its protest against unfair arrests, detention and torture of suspects; and *Petals of Blood* is a champion for the economic rights of the people, and Ngugi is clear that the poor, peasants and workers should unite to agitate for the rights that concern their class. As the five novelists and their novels were selected from a broad spectrum of post-independence Kenyan writers and literary writings, we can conclude that since these five, without exception, portray the theme of human, then post-independence literature does concern itself with human rights.

This study was limited to portrayal of human rights in novels. I would therefore recommend that future studies relate to other literary genres like poetry, drama and the short story. I further recommend an investigation into the relationship between the bildungsroman and human rights as the current study presented only the case of *Coming to Birth*. Engaging more novels of the nature of this sub-genre will deepen the knowledge of how the bildungsroman affirms human rights.

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