

# Narrating Martyrs Of Democracy Through Fiction In Wahome Mutahi's Three Days On The Cross (1992)

Julius Kipkorir A. Chepkwony

Caroline Chebet

Department of Literature, Linguistics and Communication,  
School of Arts and Social sciences, University of Kabianga, Kenya

*Abstract: While focusing on the intersection of political history and fiction in Wahome Mutahi's Three Days on the Cross (1992), this study discusses martyrdom as a trope. The study contends that fiction and political history are intertwined in the revelation of historical injustices even though they are at variance in style of presentation. Each is distinct but they both coalesce as mirrors of society. At the core of both lies the representation of historical transformation of a country. Literature is a reflection socio-political and cultural changes that reveal the morphing of society. Fiction is an artistic representation of among other facets of life; governance and politics. The study contends that politics shapes the way people live and relate and is shaped by leadership style. This is buttressed by the fact that bad politics make the citizens to suffer. Wahome Mutahi, by fictionalizing Kenya's political history during the political transformation in the multi-party era in the 1990's, attempts to narrate stories of martyrs. The study is grounded within Marxist literary theoretical framework which is based on the socialist and dialectical theory of Karl Marx. The theory propagates that literature arises out of the existence of economic and political ideological circumstances prevailing. Literature not only demonstrates class struggle but is also products of them. The competing forces depict a stratified society that attempts to come to terms with its history. The study employed a library based analytical research design. This involved close reading while identifying, curling out and coding information that portrayed martyrdom in major characters. This form of research design best suited this type of study which allowed the researcher to make an in depth analysis of martyrdom. The study used purposive sampling to select on the literary text because torture by political hegemony on perceived enemies is a motif that weaves the plot strand. This study hopes to contribute to the on-going polemics about justice and democracy. The study attempts to reveal the socio-political struggles common to people who love their country.*

**Keywords:** Political martyr, Marxist, trope, hegemony.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. OVERVIEW

This section explores the confluence of political history and literature in a bid to reveal the political ideology prevalent at the time that created repression.

### B. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Political history and literature relate in the depiction of issues in the society. Both represent the socio-cultural and

political realities that reflect the morphing of society. The search for justice is as old as society. It is a common attribute especially in situations where the government of the day is not only tyrannical but also despotic. People always raise up to question such bad governance. The relationship between governments and the voice of the masses has always been fluid and shaky. This comes as a result of the ruling hegemony clinging on to power against all odds. The African continent is replete with oppressive leadership.

Literature is actualized as serving society; unearthing socio-political decadence in society. Political novels make commentaries on political events and or governance. This is

only but to echo Africa's iconic writer Chinua Achebe (1984). He asserts that the trouble with Nigeria is squarely a failure of leadership. "... the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility..." (1)

Kenya experienced a wind of political change in the 1990's. The citizenry agitated for plutocracy against a background of a *de jure* - one party system. Around this time the world witnessed coups, counter coups, assassinations and civil wars which also characterized the political climate in most African countries. Literary artists have been in the forefront in demanding for justice, fairness and good governance. Some writers like Nigeria's Christopher Okigbo and Ken Saro-Wiwa, decided to join the Biafra War in Nigeria when Biafra State wanted to secede; indeed, he died in the battle front. Ken Saro-Wiwa elaborates the role of a literary artist in his book *Genocide in Nigeria; The Ogoni Tragedy* (1992). A writer is political and has to choose sides. In most cases, he has to support the masses against the exploitative oppressive regimes. Those who decide to choose the side of the oppressed as in the case of Wahome Mutahi must be ready to become martyrs.

Writers' engagement with politics is not in dispute. Politics shape the everyday life and is a pointer to the country's destiny. Kenya's legendary writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in most of his literary texts, details how Kenyan leaders while steeped in oppression, manipulate and exploit the populace. His texts, *Matigari* (1986) and *Devils on the Cross* (1982) point to this ideological underpinning. Some writers in Kenya have been detained as a result of agitating for freedom and democracy. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wahome Mutahi illustrate what dictatorial regimes can do to writers who harbor divergent views.

The art of politics and that of writing often merge in many occasions. Some writers often turn to politics and politicians on the other hand have also mastered the art of writing. The writer can be viewed as a needle pricking the conscience of the political class. While some write from the point of view of the establishment, others identify with the exploited, oppressed masses. This paper examines the consequential suffering individuals are taken through in their quest to fight for justice.

We examine Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross* as a trope of martyrdom that is visited on the main characters. In fact the literary text is an exposition of what the writer underwent when he was detained in 1990 in one of the worst cells in Kenya. He utilizes the novel genre and its dialectic nature properties to reveal the excesses of a totalitarian system that cracks down on and torture perceived adversaries.

### C. EVOLUTION OF DISCOURSE: POLITICS, IDENTITY AND GENDER

Kenya has a rich articulate literary artists who express important historical discourses. A number of literary artists in the 1990s concerned themselves with socio-political transition, governance and cultural identity. Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* (1986) is a literary text that draws a parallel between fiction and historical happenings in Kenya since independence. The text actualizes Kenya's history through the use of fictional as well as historical characters. It articulates politics of Kenya's

governance. History is replete with historical personalities who have advanced Kenya's ideals in her historical growth as it emerges into nationhood. The country's historical transformation should be understood within the context of such luminaries as Jomo Kenyatta, Argwings Kodhek, Pio Gama Pinto and Chelagat Mutai.

Paulina becomes a symbol of a country that undergoes political turbulence in its endeavor to find the right footing in post-independent epoch. Macgoye recreates Kenya's political landscape. She reconstructs the political rivalry based on ideological and ethnic differences. This is echoed by Martin's impotence when he does not want to get things done. "We can't do anything, he kept on saying" (Macgoye 1986: 113). This literally translates into a state of disappointment and utter disenchantment. Martin, the anti-thesis of Paulina, is shown as drained of energy and epitomizes pessimism on the country's leadership. On the other hand, Paulina - a stoic character - is always "demanding" to grow, to get out, to do things" (112). She symbolizes a woman's quest for recognition revealing the national discourse of gender relation. Gender equality within this decade gained national stature. As such, literary artists capture it in their literary works.

Macgoye gives space to female characters especially the main protagonists to grow, develop and aspire for greater things. Through such characters as Paulina, the country's promise of optimism and success becomes a reality. She metaphorically stands a young country that exhibits plenitude in terms of resurgence, vitality and rebirth. That is why she is not "prepared to accept 'can't' as a standing answer" (Macgoye, 113) for she has the ability to perform. The country must remain focused in the post independence epoch in order to offer hope and redemption to people's yearnings and dreams. The physical, emotional and sexual abuse she undergoes in the hands of Martin becomes an eye opener to negotiate her own "space," away from the traditionally oppressive patriarchal locus. She moves out and gets this space.

Gender relations are based on mutual respect, understanding and recognition. Violence and physical abuse has no room in the twenty first century. The re-union of the two (Paulina and Martin) that comes towards the end of the book is symbolic of the country's need for amicable understanding and genuine unity. Ogola's (1994) *The River and the Source* amplifies the national discourse on gender. The literary text narrates the history of a family that spurns three generations from the point of view of women. Odhiambo (2006) postulates that Ogola privileges women over men with the aim of offering a counter narrative to recent history, a woman's view on Kenyan history as opposed to the narrative told by the Kenyan male writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Meja Mwangi. Akoko, like Paulina in Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* is the source of inspiration that defines the country's pace and tempo. She is the source of a great successful future generation at the time when British colonialists have just brought their rule to Kenya. Metaphorically, she is a genesis of a great river that flows across time to her children, grandchildren and great grand children. She destroys the male hierarchical structure of dominance and brings in female space that is cherished by all.

Gender imbalance is addressed through such female characters as Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti and the modern female characters Vera, Becky and Wandia. The traditional role of women is revised; we see this right from Akoko. Rather than being inherited after the death of her husband as tradition demands, she decides to lead an independent life. She decides to seek for justice in *Kisumu* after her brother-in-law Otieno Kembo misappropriates her wealth and forcefully takes over the ruling stool. "Time had come for the battle lines to be clearly drawn," (Ogola, 1994: 73) for she actually feels the weight of injustice the women have gone through since time immemorial in a male dominated world. Her quest for justice makes her trek to *Kisumu* to seek the intervention of the *Sirikal* (the government).

The female characters are foregrounded. They are not only seen but are also felt. Wandia, Becky and Vera are elevated to public limelight through education. Becky becomes an air-hostess, Vera, an electronics expert while Wandia becomes a professor in medicine. The traditional view that the place of woman is at home is destroyed. Ogola appropriates equal rights and opportunities to both men and women. Ogola's *The River and the Source* traces Kenya's historical happenings from 1893 to early 1990s. Happenings are reflected in the historical phases: pre-colonial, colonial, freedom struggle, liberation, independence and post independence.

Eldred and Durosimi (1987) points out that the two female writers, Macgoye and Ogola, depict their commitment to rectify misrepresentations and misconceptions about women in a patriarchal structure that is culturally sanctioned. Roger (2000: 170) sums up by saying;

The story as Macgoye herself emphasizes, is about the growth of a woman's consciousness, and in this respect, the contrast in the trajectories of Martin's and Paulina's lives is striking: *Coming to Birth* relates to empowerment of Paulina, who ends up a "a new woman" and the concurrent diminution of Martin's status as a man.

At the end of the story, their roles are reversed. Discourses depict the changing society. As politics became the centre stage of the everyday conundrum of socio-political lives, discourses too followed suit. Political discourses in the 1990s in Kenya became a manifestation of the type of governance, individual identity and selfless sacrifice that had a direct bearing with literary discourses. Political-ideological underpinnings and literature converged in the revelation of historical happenings. The political matrix inherent is the oppressor-oppressed matrix that has its locus in the ruler-subject relationship. As stated by Amase, E. (2013: 63) the literary artists "can through their works offer critical appraisal of existing political situation in order to mould or redirect the actions of society, its belief and values." Selected literary text, in this paper, reveals individuals who have suffered for their country: martyrs so to say.

More often than not, literary artists examine political transition in a country. In effect political discourses become re-current motifs. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is renowned for recreating the country's history from pre-independence to post independence period has been viewed as canon in literature. Most of his texts: *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1986) elucidate his disillusionment with

the powers that be in delivering justice, fairness and equitable distribution of resources. Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) clearly explores issues on bad governance in dictatorial regimes which include corruption and the attendant power struggles. Similar issues are also captured by popular literary texts.

Politics of exclusion have always yielded discontentment, rivalry and conflict. In a bid to remain in power, the ruling elite often become repressive and autocratic. Literary artists in Kenya during political repression in 1990s have brought out this stark historical reality. Wahome Mutahi in his literary text *The Jail Bugs* (1992) captures political oppression through the protagonist Kweyu who has been imprisoned. The psychological and physical torture he undergoes makes him aware of the unjust tyranny meted on the otherwise defenseless populace who has no recourse within the law. Others like Mnyonge who have no connections with the powers that be have no chance of a fair hearing in a court of law. Actually, Mnyonge is jailed for protecting what is rightfully his. Corruption has pervaded the judicial system to an extent that people become disillusioned and pessimistic. Politics provide raw materials from which literary artists get their content, thus fusing the two.

Popular writers cannot be blind to the political happenings of the day like corruption, bad governance, political repression and political betrayal. Popular literary texts cannot be condemned as some critics have done as they also deal with "serious" issues of national concern. Imbuga, F. (1993: 23) sums up the centrality of popular literature; "Popular literature is by account the true mirror of the hidden reality of the region's expectations"

Popular literary fiction are just like other novels and they gain seriousness since they are loaded with messages as asserted by Kurtz (1998: 105);

Novelist...may be showing us about the history, sociology and politics of a place even when they are simply pretending to be presenting an entertaining story. In short, we can read between the lines to discover a novelist is telling us about the "hidden reality" of a time and place.

In conclusion, literature, whether popular or canonical addresses issues affecting society but from different fictional mode. The message could be similar. Like canonical literary texts, popular literary works navigate the socio-political realms to reveal political dynamism the society is going through.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study was premised on the qualitative research design that was library based. It adopted analytical design. This involved close reading while identifying, curling out and coding information that portrayed martyrdom in major characters. This form of research design best suited this type of study which allowed the researcher to make an in depth analysis of forms of martyrdom. Extracts from the primary text were sampled for reading, analysis and interpretation. They were curled out to support the proffered argument. The study used purposive or judgmental sampling to select on the literary text because torture by political hegemony on

perceived enemies is a conspicuous motif that weaves the plot strand. This method was also important since we deliberately selected sections of the works that bulked with information with respect to martyrdom as a trope in Kenya's political transformation. Primary data was collected from the analysis of Wahome Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*. Secondary data was derived from other publications; journals, books, internet sources and relevant literary texts.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Wahome Mutahi (1954-2003) is a well known Kenyan journalist born in Nyeri on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1954. He is famous for his column 'whispers' in the print media. The column earned him the nickname 'whispers.' His articles were largely read as interrogations of political issues and this earned him and his brother, Njuguna Mutahi, detention in 1989. He was detained in the infamous Nyayo House Torture Chambers in Nairobi. He was transferred to Kamiti maximum security prison and was released fifteen months later without being charged in a court of law. Such kind of injustice inspired him to write *Three Days on the Cross* (1991) and *The Jail Bugs* (1992). The former won the prestigious Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (1992) in Kenya.

Mutahi wrote *Three Days on the Cross* after he was detained and released. He sets his novel in an unnamed African state led by 'Illustrious One,' a dictator *per se* who orders a crackdown on dissidents and those perceived to be enemies of state. The two main characters, Momodu and Chipota, find themselves arrested over allegations of being members of the outlawed July 10 Movement. What follows is a narrative of heartless torture, pain and horror in the cells. For three days they are metaphorically 'nailed on the cross' facing the mechanisms of inhuman torture. The Special Branch police require them to confess that they are part of the dissidents. The novel is in an autobiographical form as Mutahi, the writer, was once incarcerated on trumped up charges. A semblance of the happenings in an unnamed African country and in Kenya in the 1990s exists. Mutahi utilizes the popular novel as a genre to narrativize historical happenings of the time.

#### B. MARTYRDOM

Mutahi was accused of sedition and having a link with the underground Mwakenya movement in Kenya in the early 1990s. The leadership then in the 1990s was largely viewed as autocratic and did not welcome any opposing views. This forms historical background from which Mutahi pens *Three Days on the Cross*. Popular literature depicts important events that are historical. As Chepkwony (2017:5) puts it "the relationship between history and literature based on the interconnectedness constitutes the historical novel. Integrating historical issues into fiction manifests the notion that the two are symmetrically intertwined." The less serious literature "Should not be treated as belonging to a different order of textuality" (Selden *et al*, 2003: 181). This nuance lends

credence to the examination of Kenya's post-independent popular fiction as literary trope of a given time. Said (1993) amplifies this when he posits: "all types of narratives have to be interpreted and understood within their historical and cultural milieu" Mutahi fuses the fictional and the political in *Three Days on the Cross*.

Mutahi stays clear of the corpus of Kenya's popular fiction of the 1960s which dealt with social issues like romance, sexuality and bank raids to recreate the political transition of the 1990s. The experience of incarceration positions him to examine the injustices emanating from hegemonic repression.

Martyrdom is manifested through torture and police brutality. Ogunidipe Chipota and Albert Momodu have been great friends since student days at the university. We regard them as martyrs in what they go through while under the hands of the police. While Chipota is an investigative journalist, Momodu is a banker. They are both lured into waiting police vans and whisked into the cells where they spend the next three days in the dudgeon hence the title *Three Days on the Cross*. They are both suspected of being members of a clandestine movement – July 10 Movement in Kenya. The government of Kenya then believed that the clandestine movement wanted to overthrow the government of the day. The police and the cells were used to scuttle and dehumanize those agitating for plutocracy. The narrative within the government circles is that the July 10 Movement is out to destabilize and anarchize the country. It fears it so much that it becomes brutal in dealing with the perceived members of the movement. Prison is a tool that used for oppression and domination by the ruling elite.

The prison narrative of torture, agony and dehumanization is exposed when the police brutalize the two, Chipota and Momodu, in order to 'force' a confession. The police expect them to own up as members of the outlawed movement. The government has sworn to crack down on dissidents and courts have shown ruthlessness in dealing with those who are prime suspects. The brutality shown by the police is akin to what security agents did during the crackdown of dissidents in the KANU era in the 1990s. Bludgeons are used to brutalize individuals into accepting crimes they have not committed.

Within this period, Mwakenya faction of University students organizes themselves to press for more democratic space. KANU which was then the ruling party had been declared a *de jure* party. The ruling party could not brook any form of opposition or dissent. Those clamoring for free space were regarded as dissidents. The courts are used by the ruling hegemony to give maximum sentences to the so-called dissidents. A young civil servant is even jailed for ten years for being in possession of a seditious document. This clearly depicts what Muindu, Kinara and Jose (2012: 2) call "a universe fragmented by tyranny where morality has been eroded by brutality and the culture of materialism." The catholic priest, Father Kerekou equates the government with fire. Those who play with it get scalded or burnt. The oppressive regime becomes too tyrannical to an extent that people are reduced to silence. But it is a silence that talks and reverberates with fear. The leader of the country, 'Illustrious One,' is firm on perpetuating his hegemony. He trusts no one and he fires his ministers at will. It is ironic that with



oppressive police officers, he has a coterie of body guards enough to occupy a village.

The tumultuous political climate in Kenya in the 1990s and the political repression that went overboard prompted Mutahi to reveal the excesses of such a totalitarian regime. The government wages full war on the July 10 Movement and the Mwakenya dissidents. The two movements are fighting against political repression and corruption in high places. The state operatives go into frenzy in trying to bring the so-called dissidents to book. The intellectuals are not spared. Those who are not lucky to escape and are arrested like Ndimu Nduru die in the cells. They are viewed to as martyrs of a worthy course; to restore the ideals of liberty and democracy. Others like Professor Kigoi, a vocal individual, who voiced his concern over the avaricious politicians, had to flee the country becoming a proof that the elites are fleeing political repression. This becomes a clear indication that the intelligentsia who should be part of the solution escapes the torture that awaits them in the cells. In the foreign lands they continue agitating for more democratic space back in their homeland.

The country is led by the Illustrious One, a dictator *per se* in all aspects. He is sarcastically referred to by various names as the 'star in the continent' and 'father of all' in a way making him larger than life. A mythical figure is created whom some people revere. But it is his fear of losing power by giving in to the clamor for democratization and plutocracy that makes him overreact and go overboard in dealing with dissent. So large and powerful is he that people cannot criticize his close prominent friends engaged in corruption. His close cronies stow hoarded maize in the high seas and when time is ripe they re-sell to the citizens at exorbitant prizes thereby enriching themselves.

The ruling party then in Kenya, was clinging to power at all costs which similarly is recreated in Mutahi's *Three Days on the Cross*. The political climate is one of mistrust and fear. One must look behind to see who is within earshot when exchanging political views or else one would be arrested and taken to the torture chambers. The government of the Illustrious One has become intolerant to any opposition or divergent views and uses state police machinery to silence dissenters. The Illustrious One syndrome looms large everywhere and those who accuse him of any social ills are whisked away by the police never to be heard again. Some who are lucky remain maimed. Momodu and Desmond Nakaru are a case in point.

Political repression is seen through the mechanization of state security to the extent that the citizenry have been inured into total silence. Fear is created. We are told the political climate in the country does not allow one to entertain even a whisper about some people 'playing with the government.' (Mutahi, 7). The notion that Momodu is involved with clandestine movement hurts Father Kerekou like the fire and brimstone that he has always preached about. He too has fear of the government. He feels 'his temperature rise instantly and his heart nearly miss a beat' (8). The government has created fear in order to achieve total submission and allegiance

Repression is too deep-seated in people that when Father Kerekou is reading the seditious document, it is as if he has swallowed 'a sizeable goblet of hemlock' (10). It is in itself a

death sentence. He even fears that people are watching him beyond the walls and will have him reported to the police. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1990) in his prison diary reveals the same fear created by an autocratic government. He asserts that the government of the day represses people in order to silence them. They will not be in a position to comment on the atrocities being perpetrated. A silenced people are voiceless. Theirs is only to watch. With muted voices they just whisper because fear has been entrenched in them. What they fear most is the torture that is meted on them. The result being that they remain martyrs in their own motherland.

Chipota, the editor of *Daily Horn*, is sure that he is innocent when he is apprehended. It could be a case of mistaken identity. His house is thoroughly searched. Books are strewn all over and those that lean towards communist ideals are carted away by the security. Former Guinea Bissau President Amilcar Cabral's historical book on revolution is condemned by the police officers as bad literature. They view communism as revolution. The action of house search is too inhuman; overturning everything upside down and ripping pillows open. It forms part of the brutality meted on people. Chipota is blindfolded when being transferred from the police station to the underground cells. This dehumanizes him to an extent that he feels as if he is being taken to a slaughter house and that his life is coming to an end. It reduces his sense of humanness. The government achieves its goal of using operatives to send a chilling message to the people that nobody who plays with it goes scot free.

Senior superintendent Isaac Ode, the Director of the Special Police Department, is given the task and authority to crack-down on subversives. He uses crude methods which dehumanize the victims further. This becomes a testimony of intense repression. The prison as observed by Thiong'o (1990: 120) is "a cage for the politically deranged."

Both Chipota and Momodu are held in-communicado in the dark solitary basement confinement which is unfit for human habitation. The solitary cell has devastating physical and psychological effects which are meant to make the victims breakdown in order to force them accept 'crimes' they are leveled against. They are threatened that their families will be harmed if they do not own up to the crime of sedition. It is this reason that Chipota is driven towards home and is made to see his pregnant wife at a distance. Ummure, one of the police officers tells him:

You have seen that your wife is as healthy as you left her. But that does not mean that something could not happen to her. We are not necessarily saying that we could do her any harm although that possibility is there (Mutahi, 100).

Chipota is coerced into 'co-operating'. He is told the faster he co-operates the quicker he will be back at home. The wife is used as a bait to corner him into submission. He should confess being a member of the underground movement. His plea of innocence is not taken seriously. It is a cruel act that is bereft of compassion. Not only is solitary confinement cruel but also degrading. As much as they want to 'break' the detainees there is nothing to be 'broken' as they are innocent. Chipota says as much 'I am innocent...' (100). Thiong'o (1990) while writing about his experience in prison, amplifies the effect of solitary confinement. Political detainees are

tortured, degraded, dehumanized and abused till they view themselves as less human.

Mrs. Momodu is also used as a bait of coercion. The security agents telephone to inform her that her husband is with them. They also inform her that her husband is not cooperating. The same conversation is replayed to Momodu who seethes with anger. His wife's distraught voice is unmistakable. This affects him as he realizes that his wife is in emotional distress. This is a form of psychological torture that debases human kind.

Not even the fabricated and signed confession of Momodu moves Chipota. A confession to the effect that Momodu is a member of the clandestine movement is given to Chipota who knows what has been done. The police try to use any form of coercion to force them into submission. Chipota states clearly "if my friend decided to tell you lies, that is upon him. Let the matter be between him and his conscience..." (129). The two are friends who have never supported the July 10 Movement. But the torture they undergo under the hands of the police is enough to break their spirit. But they remain resolute and firm with the attestation that heroism is part of martyrdom.

The Center for Constitutional Rights (2015) in the USA has reported human abuse in the US prisons over the years and especially in the nineteenth century as a form of silencing the voices of the masses. Some countries have had the practice of imprisoning people in solitary confinement without access to any human contact. This method is borrowed by the ruling regime in Kenya then to 'break' the detainees into accepting crimes leveled against them. Chipota, while in the basement cell, could only hear human groans as a result of torture. The cells have reduced them to creatures that have been subdued. They stand firm in the conviction that they are willing to die for their beloved country.

The *Saturday Telegraph* of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2015 details the horrifying conditions the suspected Afghan militants go through in US prisons. Such prisoners like Gul Rabman who are held in US prison called Salt Pit in Afghanistan are dehumanized by being stripped naked, starved and forced to sit on a basement concrete floor. Eventually Gul Rabman dies epitomizing the harsh inhuman treatment the detainees undergo. The horrendous mistreatment the detainees face dehumanizes them. Security agents would find means and ways to extract information from 'uncooperative' detainees.

Similarly, Momodu and Chipota are stripped naked; "I said remove that underwear" (Mutahi, 52) shouted Ode storming towards him. Chipota's hands involuntary go to his loins and he peels his underpants off. The beatings are made worse by the nature of the cane they use. They use legs of broken furniture. "Blows fell on his bottoms, ankles, wrists and shoulders...sweat flowed freely all over his body..." (53). They are derided and taunted to an extent that they feel ashamed of their physique: "beer tummy....skinny legs" (53). Chipota feels terribly humiliated. He tries to cover his private parts with his hands but the shame would not leave him.

Such degrading torture that includes walking on knees and being forced to do press-ups make Chipota pass out when he is taken to his cell. The magnitude of torture is exemplified by battered mass of flesh, "wracked with pain and groaning with pain" (91). Chipota in another beating is reduced to a

groaning mass of bruised bones and flesh. To make matters worse the cells are flooded with water;

...water started flowing from the pipe. It first came as a gentle jet and then burst into a powerful blast. The blind folder aimed the blast at the naked Chipota standing in the cell (132).

The torture is almost unbearable. The powerful jet of water that lands on the naked body makes him lose his breath and gulp for air. The cold water makes him chatter. Flooding the cells is a torture mechanism that is meant to make the victims to break down and incriminate others or accept being members of the July 10 Movement which has been outlawed. Yet life imprisonment or death awaits those who 'confess.'

The graffiti on the wall of the cells underscore the inhuman treatment former detainees have undergone through. "Expect no mercy here; you are finished brother..." (33). The mercilessness of the security system and the government in general is thus shown. The author recasts this historical repression of a government that hopes to cling to power at all costs. But for how long shall this continue?

### C. CONCLUSION

The political interface of the history of multi-party in Kenya is succinctly captured by selected literary texts. A nexus is clearly conspicuous which recreates the socio-political and cultural happenings of the time. Martyrdom becomes a trope that raises underlying issues key among them being inept leadership. The torture mechanism that is instilled on some individuals reeks of dictatorial tendencies and smirks of escapism by the ruling class. A delineation of the excesses perpetrated by the hegemony and the artistic rendition makes literary texts be viewed as repositories of history. The texts, as amplified by Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle (2004) are bound up with other discourses and rhetorical structures.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Amase, E. K. (2013). Language: A Political Literary Discourse. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Invention*; Vol 2, Issue 3 , 63-68: Print.
- [2] Bennet, A. & Royle (2004). *An Introduction of Literature, Criticism and Theory*. 3rd Edition. London: Pearson.
- [3] Centre, f. C. (2015: Web). US Rights Abuse. Retrieved March 5TH, 2015, from <http://ccjustice.org/solitary>
- [4] Chepkwony, J. K. (2017, May). Violent Upheavals in Kenya: A Literary Historiographical Analysis of Kinyanjui Kombani's *The Last Villains of Molo*. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*; Volume 22, Issue 5 , pp. 1 - 6.
- [5] Eldred, J. D. (1987). *Women in African Literature Today*. London: Trenton Africa World Press: Print.
- [6] Imbuga, F. (1993). *Matatu*. East African Literature in the 1980s, Nairobi; EAPH, Print .
- [7] Kurtz, R. (2000). Afterword in *Oludhe Macgoye's Coming to Birth*. New York: The Feminist Press, City University- New York: Print.

- [8] Kurtz, R. (1998). *Urban Obsessions Urban Fears: The Post Colonial Kenyan Novels*. London: Africa World Press: Print.
- [9] Macgoye, O. (1986). *Coming to Birth*. Nairobi: Heinemann: Print.
- [10] Muindu, P. A. (2012: Print). *The Vision of Social Justice in the Novels of Wahome Mutahi*. Herald International Research Journal , 1 - 08: Print.
- [11] Mutahi, W. (1992). *The Jail Bug*. Nairobi: Longhorn.
- [12] Mutahi, W. (1991). *Three Days on the Cross*. Nairobi: Spear Books: Print.
- [13] Odhiambo, T. (2006). *Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola's The River and the Source*. African Identities, Vol 4; Issue 27 .
- [14] Ogola, M. A. (1994). *The River and the Source*. Nairobi: Focus Books: Print.
- [15] Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage Books: Print.
- [16] Saro-Wiwa, K. (1992). *Genocide in Nigeria; The Ogoni Tragedy*. London: Saros International.
- [17] Selden, P. W. (2005). *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Edinburgh: Pearson Longman: Print.
- [18] Thiong'o, N. w. (1990). *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*. Nairobi: Heinemann: Print.
- [19] Thiong'o, N. w. (1982 ). *Devils on The Cross*. Nairobi: Heinemann: Print.
- [20] Thiong'o, N. w. (1986). *Matigari*. Nairobi: Heinemann: Print.
- [21] Thiong'o, N. w. (1977). *Petals of Blood*. Nairobi: Heinemann: Print.
- [22] Thiong'o, N. w. (2006). *Wizard of the Crow*. London: Harvil Secke: Print.
- [23] Thiong'o, N. w. (1981). *Writers in Politics*. London: Heinemann: Print.

IJIRAS