

POLITICAL VOICES IN SELECTED NOVELS OF MWANGI RUHENI

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DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

To the following extraordinary women in my life: my mother Grace Muchiru, the matriarch who against all odds saw to it that I acquired education to the highest level, my dear wife Esther Kagure, whose love and patience encouraged me all the time and daughter Neema Muchiru for cheering me up during those low moments.

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ABSTRACT

The advent of colonialism and eventual attainment of independence in the 1960s left indelible marks on the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of the colonized societies. Different genres of arts capture these aspects in varied ways. This project paper analyses political undertones in three novels by Mwangi Ruheni namely; *What a Husband!*, *The Mystery Smugglers* and *Future Leaders*. A prolific writer in the popular literature genre, Ruheni has largely been deemed to be addressing issues central to pop literature such as, prostitution, alcoholism, crime and the like that accompany the decay that comes with urbanization. This paper focuses on political voices in Ruheni's fiction. It examines the artistic strategies employed by the author to voice political comments even as he primarily portrays social challenges of a society in transition. That the novels under the study of this project were written only a decade into independence, in addition to the fact that the author grew and schooled during the colonial regime calls for the paper to further examine transformational effects of characters and institutions during this significant period, politically. The study demonstrates that amid hedonism aptly exemplified by liberal sexuality and alcoholism, the three novels incorporate subtexts that reflect political reality of the time in addition to revealing the political perspective of the pop artist whose works are the focus of this research.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following is the working definition of terms in this study.

Allegory: different scholars have defined the term with slight variations but this study employs the sense given by two scholars below:

Patrick Murray defines it as an extended metaphor or extended simile conveying a meaning other than and in addition to the literal meaning.

Geoffrey Leech defines it as a “multiple symbol” in which a number of different symbols, with their individual interpretations, join together to make a total interpretation.

Apolitical: not involve or interested in politics.

Political: either of the two definitions by:

V.O Key who defines it as the human relationships; of super ordination and subordination, of dominance and submission, of the governors and the governed or the practice of the acquisition and retention of power.

E.C. Banfield who defines it as the activity negation, argument, discussion, application of force, persuasion... by which an issue is agitated or settled.

Popular literature: any of the following scholars’ definitions:

Tom Odhiambo calls it that kind of literature that borrows its subject matter from the public on issues of contemporary importance to that public in particular contexts.

Stephanie Newell says it is that which never fails to generate debate amongst readers on moral and behavioural issues.

Bernth Lindfors defines it as any work that seeks to communicate a perspective to a large audience in a style that can be readily apprehended and appreciated.

Voice: attitude, feelings or opinion.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

In 1960s and 70s, most African countries were experiencing what British Prime Minister called political wind of change, a huge percentage of the countries attained independence around this time. However, the joy of independence was not to last for long. Coups and counter coups, assassinations and civil wars characterized Political situations of most African countries soon after independence. In West Africa, the Biafra State sort to secede from the greater Nigeria. Artists such as the poet Christopher Okigbo's Poetry and author Chinua Achebe left the comfort of their desks and got deeply involved in the war to the extent that Okigbo lost his life in the battle front while Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Gabriel Okara were served as goodwill ambassadors of the Biafra state. Indeed, Achebe's last creative work *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* is a memoir of the Biafran war. In central Africa the infamous Congo-Crisis dominated the news in the 1960s and in a way its aftershocks still reflects the country's situation to date. Most of the Southern African countries were involved in the armed struggle for independence not to forget the long enduring Apartheid in South Africa. In Kenya, Shifta War threatened to tear away a section of the country as Kenyan Somali fought to secede and join their tribes' men in Somali-land. Such situations could have provided fodder for writers in the 1960s and 1970s.

As writers from time to time engage in politics, they do so in varied styles and to different depths. For instance, Ngugi's works have mutated from covert to overt political writing. While *The River Between* and *Weep not Child* cultivate mild political consciousness, *Devil on the Cross* discards the veil to portray a gradual political maturation of Wariinga when she attends a feast of thieves and robbers. Wariinga's consciousness climaxes with her shooting her exploiter- former 'sugar daddy' knowing that "the hardest struggles of her life's journey lay ahead" to use her words. His later novel *Matigari* would go a notch higher in calling on the new generation after Mau Mau to take up the mantle from where their fathers left the liberation struggle, this time against the Kenyans leaders perpetuating oppression and injustice. Ruheni's career, idiosyncrasy and genre may not have allowed him Ngugi's latitude but writing from a similar setting could steer to a convergence at a certain point.

The environment of disillusionment after independence influenced writers' thoughts; evidently Ngugi and Okot were endeavoring to change the mind set of both the rulers and the populace. As such their target audience appears to be the intellectuals while Ruheni targets what Roger Kurtz in *Introduction to Kenya Popular Literature* calls "mass audience that has no special training or education" (100). Kurtz goes on to draw a similar distinction between Ngugi's and Ruheni's generation of writers; the latter he calls popular literature writers:

Earlier novels by writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o were about "narrating the nation" and were committed to shaping the political, economic and socio-cultural aspects of the newly formed nation-state of Kenya. However, when *popular writers like Charles Mangua, Mwangi Ruheni, Mwangi Gicheru and David Maillu* started writing, they broke away from the established themes about nationalism and engaged in "narrating the nation" by dealing with issues ranging from prostitution, sex, sexuality, urbanisation to alcoholism (9-10).[Emphasis mine]

Thus, this later generation of Meja Mwangi, Mwangi Ruheni, Mwangi Gicheru, David Maillu Ndisio-Otieno to name but a few were faced with a slightly different task and audience perhaps because the issue of colonialism and betrayal had been dealt with by their forerunners or perhaps because Kenya then was facing different issues a decade after independence.

The later generation moves their setting from rural to urban; consequently their fiction deals with urban decay. For example Meja Mwangi, the most prolific of urban writers, after *Carcase for Hounds* that deals with Mau Mau war in the forest shifts the settings of his novels to urban setting. Meja's *Kill Me Quick*, *Going Down River Road* and *The Cockroach Dance* have full urban setting and focus on urban issues of poor living standards, morals and alcohol. The same can be said to a more or less same degree, of Ruheni and other writers of the 1970s.

Novels by Ruheni have been classified as a popular literature by critics such as Bernth Lindfors, Rodger Kurtz and Tom Odhiambo, to mention but a few. In a contribution to *The Writing of East and Central Africa*, entitled "The Literature of Kenya," Jaqueline Bardolph had this to say about Ruheni:

Mwangi Ruheni, a prolific writer, started turning out year after year lighthearted novels on the joys and servitudes of city life. *What a Life!* (1972), *What a Husband!* (1973), *The Future Leaders* (1973), *The Minister's Daughter* (1975) – here is a truly popular literature, in a cheerful mode, competently written, with a basic tolerance – even acceptance – of the new

individualistic ethos of urban society. The comedy of manners in the description of a new urban class is entertaining ... (45).

Further, Jaqueline notes the dual achievements of the 'prolific writer' saying, "Entertaining books such as *What a Life!* and *What a Husband!* are not to be dismissed. They are perceptive chronicles of the mores of an emerging middle class which is dynamic and resourceful, both puzzled and delighted by the fast changes in its life" (45). Indeed his novels appear primarily designed to entertain as is the case with pop literature, this paper sets out to establish whether in the blurred divide of 'pop' and 'serious' literature, the author arouses political consciousness like Francis Imbuga or predecessors Ngugi, Okot for instance .

Though Mwangi Ruheni's fictional works seem primarily meant for entertainment, they appear to bear political under tones that can influence young readers who are apparently the prime target audience of the author. In exploring political voices in Mwangi Ruheni's works, I took into account V.O Key JV's view that:

"Politics deals with human relationships of super ordination and subordination of dominance and submission, of the governors and the governed. The study of politics is the study of these relationships of political power; the concerns of practicing politicians is the acquisition and retention of political power."

(Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups. (1955) Quoted in Gould's *A Dictionary of the Social sciences*)

This accommodates such issues as racial subordination which occurred especially during the colonial and transition to independence period as well as the cross border power play in his works. Where the works portrays elements of international politics even after independence, it still has carryover effects of super ordination and subordination.

I also took into account E.C Banfield view of featured in Gould who in defining politics says:

Politics is the activity (negation, argument, discussion, application of force, persuasion etc) by which an issue is agitated or settled (Guold 5).

The above definition suffices especially where force is applied to settle issues like does happen in imperial power play.

Aristotle has used the word *polis* to refer to a city, place or a political community. He further refers to man as a political animal meaning that man as a social being cannot live without some form of a political association. Some incidences in Ruheni's fiction reflect Aristotle's observation in *The Politics*

of Aristotle when he says that:

Man when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he be isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all. Injustice is all the graver when it is armed injustice and man is furnished from birth with arms such as language which are intended to serve the purposes of moral prudence and virtues but which may be used in preference for opposite ends (7).

In raising political consciousness, African fiction takes one of the following perspectives; African/Kenya political experience during colonial era, the encounter with Western countries after independence or, a country's internal political experience in post independence era. These, are the issues Ruheni addressed even though inadvertently in his novels.

1.1 Research Problem

Mwangi Ruheni's popularity as a pop writer has been acknowledged by many scholars, but the political subtexts of his works has not been fully explored. I have selected his three novels to examine the above perspective. Pop writers ordinarily discuss issues of major social concern albeit in an apparent 'light' way. It may also be noted that, even main stream writers such as Ngugi does in the *Devil on the Cross*, acquire a 'pop tone'. I intend to focus on the (con)fussion of political consciousness with the pop trends of entertainment in Ruheni's three novels. The writers' role as educators and as entertainers do overlap a great deal, it is in this zone that I hope to explore whether Ruheni transcends the entertainment role and infuses political commentaries in his works of fiction.

1.2 Objectives

My research focuses on the following objectives in three of Ruheni's novels namely: *The Mystery Smugglers*, *Future Leaders* and *What a Husband!*

- i. To examine how Ruheni uses allegories to voice political issues in the pre and post independent Kenya.
- ii. To evaluate effects of political changes on institutions and characters in Ruheni's works of fiction.

1.3 Hypotheses

- i. Ruheni uses allegories to portray the political situation in Kenya.
- ii. The author exploits institutions and seemingly apolitical characters to reflect the effects of politics in the society.

1.4 Justification

Fiction by authors of popular literature has often not been given much attention especially by literary scholars even at times when a work deserves it. In most cases it is accorded attention when research has to do with sexuality, hedonism, masculinity and such issues that are deemed to be the domain of pop literature concern. It has been viewed as largely serving the purpose of entertainment and more so to young people. For this reason, issues that are beyond entertainment often go unnoticed, or they are accorded very little attention, indeed Roger Kurtz in *Introduction to Kenya Popular Literature* expresses these feelings but with reservation when he says:

Because of this deviation from what was considered to be mainstream themes, Kenyan popular literature was at one time said to have no utilitarian value (Wanjala 1980). Such a conclusion probably explains the inadequate attention that it has been given in literary studies for a long time (10).

A change of opinion regarding pop sub-genre is now evident to many scholars including Professor Wanjala whom Kurtz has quoted above. Karin Barber in *The Introduction to Readings in African Popular literature* is unambivalent in his endorsement for popular literature, when he asserts that:

The assumption made by some early enthusiasts of African “popular art” that is by definition naïve, cheerful and care free has been replaced by the recognition that genres billed as entertainment usually talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them. (2)

It is significant to note that some authors of popular literature have succeeded in sandwiching ‘serious with the naïve, cheerful and carefree’ issues to the young readership of pop literature in a manner palatable to them. Popular literature writers cannot be accused of engaging in ‘art for art’s sake’. Majority of pop readers would hardly be at home with ‘hard’ political themes say of Ngugi’s *Matigari* or *Petals* or *Blood* given their age, taste and level of exposure. By ‘catching them young’, writers such as Charles Mangua, Mwangi Ruheri and Ndissio-Otieno to name but a few are consciously or unconsciously adding on the list of themes hitherto not presented to the young readers hence weaning them over, and as Fredric Jameson quoted in Roger Kurtz’s *Urban Obsession Urban Fears* argues:

Narratives represent an ideological and aesthetical manifestation of broader social dynamics. Literature, including popular literature, contains a ‘political unconsciousness’ that may be read as a ‘symbolic meditation on the destiny of community’. Novelists, in other words, may be showing us about the history, sociology, and politics of a place even when they are simply

pretending to present an entertaining story. In short, we can read between the lines to discover what a novel is telling us about the ‘hidden reality’ of a time and place (104-105).

My project explores this ‘hidden reality’ and ‘political consciousness’ in three of Ruheni’s novels. In the research papers on popular literature I have reviewed, I have not been (un)lucky to encounter one on Mwangi Ruheni’s fiction works’ political dimension. My research thus endeavors to explore the “non-carefree” political issues explored by the author albeit in a ‘pop tone’.

It is this telling in a carefree way a serious theme-politics, that I feel has not been thoroughly researched on in Ruheni’s works.

Mwangi Ruheni whose novellas are the subject of my research, is the pen-name for Nicholas Muraguri a Science graduate of Makerere and Britain in the fields of Botany, Zoology and Chemistry.

Perhaps it is for this reason that his writings reflect some scientific intrusions and just as science intrudes, so could politics and social realities of the time. He has also co-authored science books for Secondary schools e.g. Practical Certificate Chemistry. In an article appearing in *Saturday Nation* Ciugu Mwagiru says of the author:

Educated at Mang’u High School and Makerere College in Uganda, where he studied Botany, Zoology and Chemistry, Muraguri graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 1956. He then embarked on a master’s degree in Chemistry between 1957 and 1959. He later did a one-year MSc course in forensic science at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, after which he returned to Kenya and was appointed the Chief Government Chemist, a post from which he retired in 1990 (23).

His novels, as is the case with many popular literature writings, seem bent on entertainment however, in the course of entertaining this paper investigates whether Ruheni’s novels explore issues that pre-occupied his predecessors.

Though was not the intention of this project paper to define what does or doesn’t constitute popular literature, some of Ruheni’s novels can only reluctantly be classified as pop literature. That notwithstanding, I would like to acknowledge Newell’s claim quoted in Kurtz’s *Introduction to Kenya Popular Literature* that ‘popular texts have some of their characteristics determined and defined by the subject matter that they address, their reflexivity and adaptability, heterogeneity and ability to generate debates among readers on moral and behavioural issues (154).’ Newell further quotes Tom

Odhiambo (2004) at length who says:

Popular fiction is that kind of literature that borrows its subject matter from the public on issues of contemporary importance to that public in particular contexts. Popular fiction also organizes these themes into particular kinds of genres or texts – romance, thriller, adventure story, mystery story, and rumours – and rebroadcasts them within the same audiences with the intention to entertain, educate, inform or instruct, performing these multiple roles as it seeks, at the same time, to be of immediate relevance to people's worries, questions, experiences and lives. (33)

Ruheni's novels reflect most of the above characteristics. But having grown up in Central Kenya around the time of the state of emergency occasioned by the Mau Mau uprising, and writing in the mid 1970s, I was curious to know if and how his fiction could have been influenced by his childhood experiences and the situation in Kenya after a decade into independence. In other words to see whether his novels have been influenced by bits of European- African contact he experienced in his childhood prior to Kenya's independence and post colonial Kenyan reality during his youthful days. Mwangi Ruheni has written six novels namely: *What a Husband!*, *The Mystery Smugglers*, *What a life!* *The Minister's Daughter*, *The Love Root* and *Future Leaders* in addition to a children adventure book *In Search of Their Parents*.

Of his six works of fiction, I intend to do a research on *What a Husband!* *The Mystery Smugglers*, and *Future Leaders* primarily because, the above show more than a passing interest in political issues whole still exploring the adventure of youth. In *What a husband!* despite telling the narrative of a young graduate employee, there are also stories of governance and background of struggle for freedom. *Future Leaders* on the other hand juxtaposes a coming to age of a young man in social circles and the birth of Kenya as republic. *The Mystery Smugglers* a Spear Book, has young readers as the intended audience, however, unlike the former two, it deals with international mineral smuggling syndicate. That it transcends Kenya's borders, I feel, depicts the initiation of the young countries into the treacherous world cross boarder dealings. The three novels above contrasts with the rest in that, the latter have less politically inclined themes. However, this paper identified a common thread of social challenges facing young people in a society under transition running through his six novels is a common thread. For instance, *What a Life!* Shows Willie, the protagonist, frustrations to live in style despite a pay rise and his liaison with a bar maid while *The Minister's Daughter* tells of the moral transformation a

clergyman's daughter undergoes when she comes to the city. On the other hand, *The Love Root* narrates of a doctor who is cured off impotence and his subsequent blackmail in a case of baby switching in a maternity home. Despite depicting hedonism, sexuality and a society undergoing a metamorphosis like the rest, the three novels under my research seems to embed a political teaching to greater extent than the rest.

That the author's work shows dedication to social reality is not in doubt, it is my intention to explore whether political reality is also gets attention from Ruheni in the above mentioned three novels.

I am also emboldened by Tom Odhiambo's analysis of popular fiction. In his article "Africa Literatures" appearing in *African Literatures Vol. 39 No. 4*, Tom Odhiambo observes that pop writers at times present reality better than the professionals:

A reading of the fiction by writers such as Charles Mangua, David Maillu, Mwangi Ruheni, Meja Mwangi, Mwangi Gicheru and John Kiriamiti to mention a few, seem to suggest that they are probably much more acute in their examination and prediction of the social reality lived by majority of Kenyans in the postcolonial era than are predictions by economists, development experts, sociologists policy planners, or the state itself (74).

Is Ruheni more acute in presenting political reality than the politically inclined commentators or even the established political writers? These are some of the questions my paper endeavors to shed light on.

1.5 Literature Review

The art of politics and that of writing crisscross each other in very many occasions, thus it is not surprising for writers to turn to politics and politicians to engage in writing. Although not many go to the battle front as did Okigbo, Africa is replete with cases of writers who have got themselves on the receiving end from political leaders who happen to have been the subject of writer's criticism. On the other hand there are writers who being hegemonic, write about politics but from the establishment's point of view. In Africa one can hardly think of a renowned writer who hasn't in one way or another dealt with this theme. For instance, because of engaging in politics writers such as Ken Saro Wiwa of Abacha's Nigeria had to pay with their lives. In Kenya, such writers as Wahome Mutahi, and Ngigi wa Thiong'o have been detained by independent Kenyan government as Gakara Wanjau had, by the pre-independence government. Addressing the issue of politics and writing, Achebe in *There was a Country* had this to say:

The question of involvement in politics is really a matter of definition. I think it is quite often

misunderstood. I have never proposed that every artist becomes an activist in the way we have always understood political activity. Some will, because that's the way they are. Others will not, and we must not ask anyone to do more than is necessary for them to perform their task. (58)

In Kenya, most renowned writers have dealt with politics in their poetry, drama, novels and short stories. I would like to assess where Ruheni falls in Achebe's rating.

Immediately after independence writers had virtually no time to compose celebratory art because independence leaders in haste fitted in the departing colonialists' roles. It is for this reason that even in *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol*, Okot p'Bitek had to warn the wrangling ruling and opposition parties for engaging in meaningless fights 'while the python of sickness swallow the children, and buffalos of poverty knock the people down and ignorance stands there like an elephant, the war leaders are tightly locked in bloody feuds, eating each other's liver' (182), or further metaphorically comparing of *uhuru* to a game hunt and those whose ' chests are bony and their knife blunt' go home with dung on their elbow and even their dogs bark at them.

In Kenya, Ngugi's novel *The River Between* features the cultural impacts of colonial occupation and politics of colonial land grab, female circumcision forced labour and taxation. His later works deals with betrayal of the masses by the ruling elites after independence. The same can be said of political elite cum-writers such as Oginga Odinga and Koigi wa Mwere the author of *A Woman Reborn* and Odinga's *Not yet Uhuru* with the latter as the title suggests, telling of political betrayal of the 'real' freedom fighters. This was a decade when assassinations were not rare occurrences. Starting with Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki give a hint into the political environment of the day. Those who were lucky to criticize the ruling class and go unhurt were silenced in the way of Odinga's demotion and detention. Likewise Ngugi would be sacked and detained but he never gave up his calling: writing. This paper sort to explore whether Ruheni, who schooled, grew up in the same environment as Ngugi, and wrote around the same time as all the all the above, does not reflect the same in his fiction albeit of popular genre.

Many critics have commented on the dominance of issues of women sexuality, sexuality, hedonism and even the fast pace of the popular novels. Most of the writers of the 1970s, the golden years of Kenyan novel, indeed exhibit these traits because it was then the period most pop writers were at their peak. But amid all these pop themes, pop writers could not have been blind to the political happenings of the day like assassinations and imperial interference of the nascent African states. Given that Kenya was about

a decade into independence, it was a time when people felt that their self-governance expectations were being met or otherwise. It was also a time when political ideologies were taking shape as was characterized by Mboya and Odinga West and East leanings respectively.

Perhaps because of the label pop literature, this genre of fiction has been accorded attention from scholars on popular themes like sex, women, immorality, and the like. In the same vein Ruheni's novels, has not attracted a lot of attention from critics on "serious" issues. In his arguments and counter-arguments for and against pop literature, Rodger Kurtz while arguing for one side of the debate in *Urban Obsession Urban Fears*, had this to say:

Popular literature are intended for a mass audience that has no special training or education; they belong to the bottom half of a dialectic, pitting 'high' or 'elite' forms of expression against 'low' or 'common' forms. Above all, if you are concerned with the moral impact of stories, this assortment of 'rag-bag characters in a rag-bag language' seem hardly worthy of thoughtful attention (103-104).

On the other hand, some critics have defended it especially on the account that it is 'popular'. Imbuga says, "Popular literature is by this account 'the true mirror of the hidden reality of the region's experiences' (Francis Imbuga, "East African Literature in the 1980s," *Matatu* 10, 1993, 127)

Though serious stuff doesn't appeal to the popular readership, popular literature may provide more than entertainment.

Concerning the works of Mwangi Ruheni, Robert E Morsberger of Department of English in California State Polytechnic University has appraised Ruheni's *Future Leaders* as an amusing satire, he says:

Future Leaders is one of the most amusing and entertaining novels to come out of Africa. Writing in dry humour, Mwangi Ruheni satirizes both colonial administration of pre-independence Kenya and the college-educated Africans who automatically expect that their degrees will make them national leaders even if they have no experience and sense of responsibility (71).

It is very unlikely that Ruheni could have written satire for the fun of it given that the period leading to independence was pregnant with hopes for the new country the youth especially were all set to reap from the bloodshed by their fathers. This optimism was heightened by the expectations of white men's departure and an educated class of Africans.

The novel is indeed an amusing satire as Morsberger observes. But could class and racial differences be

informing some of the happenings in the novel? Could it be that Ruoro is indeed a victim of colonial dislike for the educated Africans in as much as he has his undeniable shortcomings? Since ‘freedom is not given willingly by the oppressor’ it won’t surprise us to see the kind of reception the soon to be free African Ruoro, is accorded by the colonialists. There is most likely a political underpinning underlying the two racial and classes finding themselves in a similar political space. This is the angle my research paper explores while dealing with *The Future Leaders* that I feel doesn’t weigh in much in Morsberger’s paper.

Robert J Green on the other hand sees Ruheni as being “Preoccupied with people who inhabit the border lands between responsibility and criminality” Talking of *The Future Leaders* and *The Minister's daughter*, Green identifies the moral dilemma facing the newly independent Kenya. (Could it be a moral as well as a political dilemma?) Indeed, the bulk of Ruheni's work reflect this much. *The Future Leaders* apparently illuminates the irony of African graduates in Kenya on the eve of independence which could be a product of transition politics. Green doesn’t identify, or chooses to ignore the political awakening that such a reality shock can have on the characters and leaders of the said novel. It is hoped that my research fulfills this role. At the eve of independence, people are said to have been very optimistic as people are always bound to be filled with expectation in an event of the expected social change. In many cases, society moves not only from colonialism to independence, but also from the traditional social setup to a modern social-cultural environment. It is this social transition that makes Green observe that some of Ruheni’s characters border on the vices of *Moll Flanders*:

Mwangi Ruheni is a Kenyan novelist pre-occupied with people who inhabit the borderlands between responsibility and criminality. His earlier novel *The Feature Leaders* details the misadventures of a young graduate, while the sequel *The Minister's Daughter* tell how a girl of a strict religious upbringing becomes involved in murder and blackmail when she arrives in Nairobi. Like Defoe, then, Ruheni tells of a people experiencing the decisive personal reverberations that accompany rapid social change (837).

Cultural shock manifested itself especially on issues of morality. The West-African contact brought about issues of polygamy and monogamy, rural-urban lifestyles, and money economy that saw commercialization of even of sex! Rental houses and by extension urbanization, could have contributed to a fall in moral standards because it placed people away from the stabilizing eyes of the community. It won’t be drawing expectations too high to speculate that this social-cultural shock was accompanied by a political one which my research is intent on unearthing. It would be unusual for a writer to register

social transformation and fail to highlight a political one which was also happening at the same time.

Another scholar Nici Nelson, in the paper “Representation of Men and Women, city and Town in Kenyan Novels of the 1970's and 1980's” deals with many Kenyan novels among them Mwangi Ruheni's *What A Life!* and *The ministers Daughter*. The paper shows how women are portrayed sometimes negatively. “The wicked city women” is a term Nici uses for prostitutes and ‘good time girls’ who just love the high life of town and drinking and dancing in bars” unlike Green, Nici deals solely with the negative moral portrayal of women. In the paper it is stated:

Grace (in *The Minister's Daughter* by Ruheni is gutsy, fun loving and keen on clothes and dancing. While she is recognized as religious (therefore good) it is trivial and thoughtless kind of religion she is committed to. A character describes her as “religious as all women are religious. It changes with the weather” (1977:3)

In Ruheni's *Future Leaders*, a character confides that he does not want a girl who talks too much academic stuff. All he wants from a woman is the 'basic commodity' (e.g. sex) (150).

Whereas the two novels have a lot to be said about the portrayal of women characters, this paper would like to explore whether politics informs some of the happenings in the texts. For instance, in *Future Leaders*, whereas Ruoro's hedonism leads him to the situation he gets himself into as we will see shortly, the colonial political order and conspiracy appears to have lead him to that fate. Given her gender and the scope of her paper, it is in order that Nici deals with issues of feminism, further, the minister's daughter is principally about what urban influences have on women, sexuality, and morality and thus issues political are beyond the scope of her paper.

While Nici deals with portrayal of men and women characters, Tom Odhiambo in one of his papers has discussed hedonism among some Kenya's pop writers.

Odhiambo has argued that “Kenyan men in the post -independence period acquired identities that were mainly articulated in the imagery of hedonism, sexism, sexual conquest and the control of women”. Mwangi Ruhemi, like his compatriots pop writers deals at length with these issues. It appears that even when political issues appear in his fiction, they are not centralized as hedonism and sex are because as Odhiambo says:

In the case of Kenya popular fiction, it is safe to suggest that its most “popular” subject has always been formulated around the topics of sex/sexuality and manhood/womanhood. In the

fiction works of Maillu, Meja Mwangi, Ruheni Mangua Genga- Idowu and other popular writers in Kenya, sex is used as key image (654).

In this paper as can be deduced from the title, “Sexual Anxieties and Rampant Masculinities in Post colonial Kenyan Literature”, Odhiambo deals with the changes in social space and the way it affects the relationship between men and women. He aptly shows how men after conquering the colonial establishment embark on a project to “conquer” their women folk. Many popular literature of the 1970's golden age proves this beyond doubts. It is this collection of pop writers, among them Ruheni, that Tom Odhiambo discusses and elaborates the above theme. In the said paper Odhiambo expounds on “the image of hedonism, sexism, sexual conquest and the control of women. Thus political dimensions of pop writers or Ruheni’s in this case, have been spared the attention.

It is instrumental to bear in mind that Ruheni came into the scene in the period when political assassinations such as those of Tom Mboya and J. M. Kariuki were being experienced. It was also a period when Id Amin belligerence was at its peak; with claims that Uganda territory extended to Naivasha Kenya’s patriotism was being put to a serious test. It is thus possible that Mwangi Ruheni , could have taken Achebe’s role of writer as a teacher, and chosen to teach patriotism even as he wrote to entertain. Besides, being a civil servant at the time in Government Chemist ,and having worked as a teacher, the with Curriculum Development Centre (later Kenya Institute of Education), Ruheni could have had good reasons to write hegemonic texts and more so ones calling youth to patriotism. For this reason, it would seem that Ruheni writes not only to entertain but also to raise a sense of patriotism among his readership. In *The Mystery Smugglers* he seems to be attempting the later end. Politically speaking, Ruheni's fiction works are hegemonic in that even the wayward characters eventually come to mend their ways and change to responsible people, or in other cases stand for the welfare of the nation. As the Kenyan critic Abdul Jan Mohammed quoted in Roger Kurtz says:

We can lamp texts into one of two categories depending on whether they are guided by hegemonic or counter-hegemonic impulses, that is, whether they support the political and social status quo or whether they bring it into questions. Hegemonic texts reinforce and justify the existing political order and dominant cultural mores. Counter- hegemonic texts challenge them (105).

It is not surprising then that Ruheni’s works are largely hegemonic when one considers his position in

the government and the prevailing political environment then. That notwithstanding, a hegemonic text can achieve as much as a counter-hegemonic one like Ngugi's *Matigari* or *Petals of Blood*, both utilize a political voices in the reader albeit from different perspectives and varied moderation. In both, one realizes that some things don't happen as a matter of chance; there is a political passion/motive behind them. In his fast paced narratives, Ruheni could be narrating more than a tale of hedonism, sexuality, and (im)morality. Because as Karl Max says, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness."

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Issues highlighted in Ruheni's novels albeit not ideally meant to push a political agenda, are influenced by a political environment directly or indirectly. And because his works were written during the post independence era, Ruheni's works of fiction easily render themselves to Post Colonialism.

Political issues highlighted in Ruheni's works range from those depicting situations prior to and after independence as in the case of *Future Leaders*; that immediately after independence in, *What a Husband!* and *The Mystery Smugglers*. The *Future Leaders* captures more African European friction than the latter two because at the eve of independence, young graduates had the notion that they would soon be filling the positions of "departing" British civil servants. This mindset is in line with a Postcolonial critic Craig Owen who quoted in Aschcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* says:

That the hegemony of European civilization is drawing to a close is hardly a new perception. Since the mid-fifties, at least, we have recognized the necessity of encountering different cultures by means other than the shock of domination and conquest (57).

As the two cultures shake hands, collide and eventually 'part' at independence many in the postcolonial states learnt the hard way that the parting was not how they had imagined it - the British Empire still wielded its influence even on its 'death bed'. The colonial masters were not enthusiastic to part with what they had christened theirs.

Hybridity has been the other product of the handshake between European and African cultures. Though some African cultures have given way to Western practices, many exist side by side creating hybrid; an issue of interest to postcolonial critics. As Andrew Smith says, 'some forms of hybridity can take the literal sense of the word where a multicultural society came into being when separate ways of living mingle with a sense of mutual respect' he further posits 'hybridity as a synonym for diversity or multiculturalism continues to rely on the assumption that there were primeval, separate, and distinct

cultural orders which are only now beginning to meet in the context of global migration' Boehmer, (113). However in most colonial situations cultures do not meet on *equal* terms; they increasingly meet asymmetrically on a 'dominant-subordinate' cultural scale as envisaged by Abdul Jan Mohamed and David Lloyd quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literature Studies* when they say:

The semblance of pluralism disguises the perpetuation of exclusion insofar as it is enjoyed only by those who have already assimilated the values of the dominant culture. For this pluralism, ethnic or cultural differences is merely an exoticism, an indulgence that can be relished without significantly modifying the individual who is securely embedded in the protective body of dominant ideology. (251)

Could Ruheni's work be reflecting some of this sense of hybridity? That he was born and educated during the colonial period and most probably by European teachers and lecturers, there is a high possibility of European- African hybridity occurring. Such cross-culture reflects in an author's work.

For instance, early Christian sects were as a resort of such clashes with the foreign culture even later drawing in polygamy and monogamy debate. It is interesting to see how such find their way in Ruheni's works. In *What a Husband!*, this paper explores the possibility of the two cultures handshake and hybridity and also assess Griffith's Ashcroft's and Tiffin's argument that:

The post-colonial world is one which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms. Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group purity', and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized (35).

The impact of the North versus South; master versus servant; colonizers versus colonized and inclusion versus exclusion are issues this dissertation sort to explore in Ruheni's works and at what varying degrees they play themselves out if and when they do. When Africans and Britons find themselves working in the same environment from a hitherto segregated policy, there is bound to be friction. How does each group accommodate such social and political reality?

In *The Mystery Smugglers* Magana is a Servant of European uranium smuggling and nuclear weapons industry. The author may be implying a European imperialism preying on post-independent African countries, developing the "West at the expense of the "other"- African countries. And as Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin puts stated:

All post colonial criticism, however, is united in its opposition to colonial and neo-colonial hegemonies and its concern with the best way or ways to create a just and true decolonized culture and literature (243).

Westbrook could be acting as an agent of neocolonialism akin to (Imperial British East Africa Company) with an elaborate chain of siphoning Uranium from Congo via Belgium, Britain and Kenya destined for South Africa nuclear reactors.

Post Colonialism unlocked what happens when a newly independent country is confronted with the instruments of neo-colonial institution.

Dealing with issues of political and social realities of post independent countries calls for me to also examine situations in such countries at the period in question. Thus my research required of me to explore such political realities from both literary and non literary sources and juxtapose the same with Ruheni's novels in question. It is only thus that the author's fiction and other historical accounts of the time can authenticate each other. Historical documents will be of great importance in my research because as Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* says, "Since these historical documents are not subordinated as contexts, but are analyzed in their own right we should perhaps call them 'Co-texts' rather than 'Contexts.' It is reading literature 'within the archival continuum.' (174)

I thus have used New Historicism theory in my research so as to be able to interrogate political reality in fiction with that on the ground then as well as currently. New Historicism, unlike Old Historicism which privileges the 'literary jewel against a historical background setting,' will enable me not to be too limited in navigating the political (hence historical) environment of my texts. Barry Peter in *Beginning Theory* says that:

New Historicism is a method based on parallel reading of literary and non literary texts, usually of the same historical period...New Historicism refuses (at least ostensibly) to 'privilege' the literary text. Instead of a literary 'foregrounding' and a historical 'backgrounding' it envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform and interrogate each other. This equal weight is what American critic Louis Montrose defines as combined interest in 'the textuality of history, the historicity of texts (172).

Stylistic theory will also be employed to explore how Ruheni communicates the issues he does to the reader. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short in *Style in Fiction* have said that, "The distinction between

what a writer has to say, and how it is presented to the reader, underlies one of the earliest and most persistent concepts of style as a dress of thought” (15).

How does Ruheni dress his ideas? Stylistic theory assists me also interrogate allegories, metaphors, symbolism, irony and other features of style not to forget exploring the occurrence of hybridity as pertains language especially in matters to do with lexical deviation. This will enable me to examine how the author presents the issues he does, besides indicating how hybridity of the language affects the author’s mode of communication and other products of cultural contacts.

1.7 Methodology

To examine of political voice in Ruheni's *The Mystery Smugglers*, *Future Leaders* and *What a Husband*, I did a close textual reading of the three. I had to read his other works of fiction generally to identify the tread of thoughts in his oeuvre, with an eye on political innuendoes and/or symbols. Therefore, comparative reading of the text was employed to explore how similar or dissimilarly the author has treated political consciousness, patriotism and related fields in his texts. My research has largely been library based especially to see how Ruheni’s novels under this study relate to other writer’s views on thematic and stylistic issues. I reviewed other popular literature works and did a comparative study with Ruheni’s novels especially the three mentioned above

Besides printed hardcover books, I also exploited online sources. I interrogated the theoretical and critical perspectives against the primary texts and drew conclusions from these analyses. This enabled me compare scholar’s view on Ruheni’s fiction and their views on thematic and stylistic issues. I also employed comparative reading between the author’s novels under this study and ‘canonized writers’ voicing political issues so as to see how convergent or divergent their approaches are. I also perused archival periodicals and dailies for a comparative study of historical issues.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

My research will have a general over view of Ruheni's fictional works

What a husband!

What a life!

The mystery smugglers

Future leaders

The ministers daughter and

The Love Root

I zeroed in on political sentiments as raised in the three novels *What a Husband!*, *Future Leaders* and *The Mystery Smugglers*. I also looked at styles employed by the author in presenting political comments. Since politics is of essence recorded in history, I extended my scope to capture historical records of significance to the novels under this study. I further read work by other authors of pop genre with a bias to those written around the same time as Ruheni's, to identify thematic concerns of the writers at the time. To see how far of or close Ruheni is compared to the so called canonized writers both African and European, I read works of these writer especially those who have dealt with political situations in Africa with a bias to the 1970s -60s period.

The paper also ventured to highlight elements of popular literature without necessarily drawing a distinction between them and 'elite literature.' I also visited the internet especially to review historical records that relates to the novels. Internet also helped to get critics view on Ruheni and popular literature in general.

1.9 Conclusion

My study therefore intends to examine whether Ruheni, renowned for his adventure, mystery, romance and crime novels features political dynamism of the time he was growing; primarily owing to the fact that during his childhood and youth, the country was undergoing a lot of changes socially and politically. He grew up witnessing super ordination and subordination of races in Kenya and remedial of the same. The author is a witness of social-cultural erosion of the African culture by the West a facet the author captures in his popular literature perspective. That he also observed the subaltern class acquiring political power and most probably benefited from it, it is highly likely that he may consciously or unconsciously be influenced by the process. The paper intends to explore the seriousness of Ruheni's pop novels this time in raising political awareness and if so how he achieves it.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL ALLEGORIES

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is going to address itself to political allegories in Mwangi Ruheni's three novels namely *What a Husband!*, *Future Leaders*, and *The Mystery Smuggler*. In his book *Literary Criticism*, Patrick Murray says that, 'Allegory is often described as an extended metaphor or extended simile, since it is a representation conveying a meaning other than and in addition to, the literal meaning (p1)'. On the other hand, Geoffrey Leech in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* says, 'an allegory might be described as a "multiple symbol", in which a number of different symbols, with their individual interpretations, join together to make a total interpretation' (63). The three novels address the contemporary issues of sex, marital infidelity, and alcoholism among others that are the fodder of popular literature. However, there are political undertones that a reader can deduce even as the narratives are about young men and women experiences in the post independent Kenya.

Writers employ various techniques such as satire, parables humour, symbolism and allegories to name but a few to achieve either educative or aesthetic objectives. Most of these techniques come in handy when the writers want to give a lesson to their audience without eliciting a backlash that their subject would in certain circumstances produce. For example, in the Old Testament, prophet Nathan uses a parable of the poor man's ewe lamb and the rich man's herds to convey the evil that king David had committed by taking Uriah's wife to symbolize the polygamous King David taking Uria's only wife (II Samuel 12:1-6). In the New Testament Jesus used Parables and allegories in numerous occasions especially when he wanted people to figure out his message for themselves or to avoid altercations with the Pharisees and scribes.

None of Ruheni's novels can be considered as an entire allegory like happens in the case of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Occasionally however, while reading Mwangi Ruheni's novels, one gets the feeling that the author is telling "something other than and in addition to" the narrative in front of the reader. But while Ruheni 'detours' to narrate a story with political interpretation, he doesn't abandon his loyalty to doctrines of popular literature genre, he juxtaposes the two voices in what Bakhtin calls dialogism. The three of Ruheni's novels which are a subject of my research were published between 1973 and 1975 however, they address issues ranging from; colonial to post independence period, local setting to international, social (the bulk), to political realities. This chapter will address political

allegories from pre to post independence perspective.

2.1 Pre Independence Images

It is ironic that a novel addressing challenges of urbanized youths such as sex and alcoholism could find room to address realities of pre independence era. A number of critics have aptly identified a variety of popular aspects in Ruheni's writing and indeed, his writing reflects trends central to popular writings. It is for this reason that such scholars as Roger Kurtz in *Introduction to Kenya Popular Literature* says, "when popular writers like Charles Mangua, Mwangi Ruheni, Mwangi Gicheru and David Maillu started writing, they broke away from the established themes about nationalism and engaged in "narrating the nation" by dealing with issues ranging from prostitution, sex, sexuality, urbanization to alcoholism"(9-10). Reading Ruheni's novels one can only concur with Kurtz on the above observations. Be this as it may, his novels even in as much as they depict these vices convey other 'serious' lessons; one being social and political situations in the pre-colonial period.

For instance, in the *Future Leaders* a novel published in 1973, a decade into Kenya's independence is ridden with political undertones. But true to its genre, the novel portrays a fair share of vices. For instance, the protagonist's dealing with women lands him in prison for assisting a girl abort so that he can marry her workmate and friend. By large the novel is a narrative of the protagonist's escapades with 'prostitution, sex, sexuality, urbanization and alcoholism' as Kurtz has observed. But as its title seem to suggest, it features political narratives nonetheless. Besides sexuality, in a way, the protagonist's struggles reflect Kenya's torturous journey to independence. In the *Future Leaders*, Ruheni traces the gradual social-political transformation that beset Kenyan, and by extension African societies with the advent of the Westerners. Before taking the reader to Ruoro's experiences with his girlfriends, the writer relates the protagonist's father's colonial encounter. The old man acquires elementary white man's education which teaches him to believe that everything good came from Europe. Education is also the asset that makes him leave his family and goes to work for a white settler in the Rift Valley. As if to prove that pop culture of alcoholism and sexuality aren't recent phenomena, the writer narrates how his father as a labourer in the pioneer colonial settlers deserted his family for Wakonyo, a young girlfriend, and alcohol. For this reason, Ruoro grows up with an absentee father. Thus the protagonist began to work for the family welfare from a very tender age. In a flashback and true to the pop spirit, Ruheni takes us from a Kampala drinking party to the protagonist's experiences of growing up under colonialism before returning to the woes of a job seeker. By 'digressing' to the past, the author is able to give us tit bits of politics – how the empire was established in Kenya. His

father works for Mr. Creighton whose life mirrors a slice of British Empire political conquest history. Ruheni writes:

My good old father, Jackson Kaiga, ended up doing the work of a cook for a white man called Edward Creighton. This man was one of those settler colonialists that you hear of. The nose was always pink with booze. He told people that he was in India long ago, where he fought some kind of a war. When that one got finished, he went off to Burma to start off another one. But then he found out that he was not getting any younger. Instead of going back to Britain to enjoy the fog, he ended up in the Rift Valley as a farmer, no not a farmer that sounds like a native. *He came, he saw he settled* [Emphasis mine](4-5).

Of interest is the fact that the writer uses the phrase ‘he came, he saw, he settled,’ which is a parallel of Julius Caesar’s *Veni, vidi vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered). This phrase has been used to refer to swift conclusive victory akin to Caesar’s victory after a short war against Pharnaces II of Pontus in the city of Zela at around 46 BC. It is telling in that the writer subtly juxtaposes the conquest history of the settler in Kenya to that of the Roman Empire. This was indeed the tread with European powers as Captain Richard Meinertzhagen quoted in Caroline Elkins’ *British Gulag* says, “The expansion of Europe during the last century has been the story of crime and violence against backward peoples under the cloak of protective civilization” (1). Such historical insights are rare in popular literature where the author gives us a tale of British Empire conquest. While ‘innocently’ giving a flashback of his troubled upbringing and his father’s experiences at the hands of colonial teachers and employer, he gives tit bits British Empire expansion and even mis-education.

History records that the British Empire was founded and expanded through conquest from the Far East India through to Africa Caribbean and the Americas. After conquering an indigenous people in one place, they explored for another one to conquer. In the literary phrase above we can see the New Historicist Louis Montrose’s maxim of ‘textuality of history and historicity of the text’ at play. A brief preview of Victorian British Empire conquest of Asia and Africa is given in this fiction even as the writer is “pretending” to be revealing his childhood experiences.

Through the ‘adventures’ of Mr. Creighton we see the British subjugate India, go to war in Burma probably during the Second World War and finally retiring in Kenya as a settler. His farm is most likely a retirement benefit as was the case with many war veterans who settled in the white highlands, much preferred than the foggy Britain especially for the aging veterans. In her book *Shadow in the Grass*, Karen Blixen tells us that the British government had an advertisement for the colony of Kenya

settlement after the First World War. Of this campaign dubbed “Closer Settlement” she says:

It brought out a new class of settlers, people who had grown up and lived in one town or a community in England, and who were strangely provincial compared to the African Natives, who were at any time prepared for anything. Plots of land were also given out as rewards to British non-commissioned officers, most of whom were city people, who in the loneliness of the great landscapes felt that they had been promised more than they were given (384-5).

As if to authenticate Karen Blixen, Ruheni presents a Mr. Creighton who confirms Blixen’s observation that the ‘no-commissioned city army officers’ were not keen on farming. Further corroboration is found in Ruheni telling us that such settlers were not known for hard work, Mr. Creighton's nose we are told “was always pink with booze.” He was not the diligent type he is appropriately called a settler not a farmer as farmers “meant small African natives out there in the bush”. Of the expanse of the settler’s farm Ruheni further tells us that, “Mister Edward Creighton had his little state, this farm called Miranda Valley, out there in Subukia. Miles and miles of it, tucked away quietly, far from any possible interference” (5). This state of affairs temporarily deviates from what critique Bardolph in her paper ‘The Literature of Kenya’ featured in *The Writing of East and Central Africa* refers to as a cheerful mode of Ruheni’s *Future Leaders* when she writes:

Mwangi Ruheni, a prolific writer, started turning out year after year lighthearted novels on the joys and servitudes of city life. *What a Life!* (1972), *What a Husband!* (1973), *The Future Leaders* (1973), *The Minister’s Daughter* (1975) – here is a truly popular literature, in a cheerful mode, competently written, with a basic tolerance – even acceptance – of the new individualistic ethos of urban society (45).

The novel is indeed cheerful as Bardolph observes in the pop sense but only when looked from a political perspective can the seriousness of the matter be appreciated. Though always drunk, this does not prevent Mr. Creighton from being awarded a “State” after all he is a settler not a farmer. It proves farming skills was not a qualification white settlers needed to be allocated land in Kenya, in any case soldiers have very little qualification in this field. It is probably a political reward for serving the crown well in the chain of conquests as mentioned in excerpt from the novel and corroborated by Blixen. Mr. Creighton, coincidentally shares the name with Mr. Creighton the heartless land owner in the Caribbean island of Barbados in George Lamming's novel *In the Castle of My Skin* an exploitative white land owner in the Caribbean Barbados.

By ‘pretending’ to be giving the childhood experiences of the protagonist, the author gives a settlers’ tale and even succeeds to contrast it with the natives’.

The “State of Miranda Valley” contrasts sharply with Mummy Monica's strip of land from which she has to feed and scrape for money to pay for her six children's education.

The contrasts doesn't end here, Memsab (a word borrowed from India Memsahib meaning lady) does almost no work. She is cooked for by Ruoro's father, and “When the sun shines. What the Memsab does is to pull out a mattress and lie on the thing on her back out on the grass” (5)

Besides this holiday, the family takes holidays to the coast; indeed theirs is a long summer holiday.

Unlike Memsab, Ruoro's mother not only doesn't know of holidays or time to bask in the sun, she doesn't have enough land to sustain the family it is for this reason that the protagonist says:

Relatives gave us a lot of fields to cultivate. During the holidays we would dig the whole day. During school days we would dig after school. Sometimes going into the night especially when there was moonlight. There is nothing as invigorating as digging out there just below the moon. It is cool and calm. When your back bone gets hot, you straighten it up and look towards the sky. You watch those woolly clouds sailing past the moon. You watch the moon racing fast in the opposite direction. Then you raise your hoe again and sink it deep into the earth. (p11)

This seemingly romantic reminiscence takes a solemn dimension when contrasted to Memsab's two children. ‘They not do any work in the house. They don't even wash their own clothes.... They look at flowers and laugh at them ... The boy is sixteen and the girl if fourteen’ (p6). By juxtaposing the two families maybe the novelist would like as to draw a logical conclusion for ourselves regarding the colonial land policy. Such are the readings that makes one concur with Karin Barber’s remarks in *Readings in African Popular Culture* that:

The assumption made by some early enthusiasts of African “popular art' that is by definition naïve, cheerful and care free has been replaced by the recognition that genres billed as entertainment usually talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them (2).

Comparing the two families, it is evident that it is Ruoro's family that deserves the Miranda State; they are needy, they are many, besides they have proved hard working enough to the extent of begging for land and transporting the farm produce to Kamakwa market on their sore backs.

But colonial administration is not an egalitarian society, it is a government of the king and his tribe and Mr. Creighton political beliefs makes him a deserving beneficiary. We are told of ‘his respect to the king back in England. His great loyalty to the Empire. His inherent belief that his people were born great’ (p5). This hints at the kind of education the pioneer African learners like Jackson Kaiga, Ruoro's

father received and the beliefs imparted on them. Here again the novelist ‘digresses’ from the tales of sex and alcoholism to ‘attack’ colonial educational curriculum which apparently was meant to indoctrinate learners on the superior position of the white man. They had been taught of David Livingstone and Lord Lugard. The old man as a result has a warped view of the Europeans:

He thought that combing the hair or brushing the teeth was a practice peculiar to the Europeans. He thought that they discovered the Bible and that they were the first people to put on shoes. He believed that they discovered Kirinyaga and that they were the first people to look at Lake Victoria. He thought that they discovered shirts, watches, soap. Everything that differed from the old, Kaiga thought came from England. (p6)

Indeed the old man believed that every practice in hygiene had been introduced to the black man by Europeans. Morsberger has said that in *Future Leaders*, “Ruheni creates genuine comedy of character that makes a rewarding” but true as his observation may be, the excerpt also decries the products of British education. It should not surprise us then that the British, having ‘caught them young’ had a very easy time conquered the natives’ minds. It would appear that the education system was politically engineered to make it easy for colonialists to physically and politically dominate Africans.

This resonates with Ngugi waThiong’o’s views in *Decolonizing the Mind* when he says:

Children who encountered literature in colonial schools and universities were thus experiencing the world defined and reflected in the European experience of history. This entire way of looking at the world, even the world of immediate environment, was Eurocentric; Europe was the centre of scholarly axis. The images children encountered in literature were reinforced by their study of history geography and science and technology where Europe was once again the centre. This in turn fitted well with the cultural imperatives of the imperialists (93).

Having cemented their sense of entitlement in the minds of the natives, the British had no qualms placing semi-literate retired army officers to boss it over African graduates. Sidney Slater is the divisional head at Kigogoini. Though his qualification include schooling at the Duke of York in Karen, serving in Kenya Regiment and having interest in flowers and gardening, this does not inhibit him from being the boss of diploma and degree holders like Nyakio and Ruoro respectively. To heighten the racial-political satire, the provincial agricultural officer is a retired Colonel Whitworth Walker whom to Ruoro appears to be on the verge senility. But though lacking in academics, Ruoro learns that the colonel is adept in devious schemes especially when an underdog like him meddles with a distinguished officer of her majesty. His dancing with Lady Henderson during the graduation dance

ended up costing him his job. This breach of protocol is relentlessly pursued by the colonel. Ruoro ends up appending his signature on the resignation forms after the colonel boxes him into submission. The Colonel had rhetorically asked, ‘Do you think that an African can do a disgusting thing to the wife of one of Her Majesty's most distinguished Colonial officers and get away with it? I know what to do’ (31). The impacts of these colonial machinations are what Robert Morsberger fails to fully appreciate when he refers to *Future Leaders* as an amusing entertainment, “Wring in dry humor Mwangi Ruheni satirizes both the colonial administration of pre-independent Kenya and the college educated Africans who automatically expect that their degrees will make them leaders even if they have no experience and a sense of responsibility” (70).

By ‘brushing the colonial administration the wrong way,’ (alcohol had made him pick governor’s wife for a dance) Ruoro undergoes almost a similar experience with the freedom agitators in Africa and elsewhere in the third world. A good example is his trial in a Kangaroo court. Though Ruoro's case did not go to full court trial, it in a way analogizes the charm trials and blackmails that Africans who had attempted to meddle with His/her Majesty's government. Jomo Kenyatta and the Kapenguria six trials were based on fabrications and bribery. The same can be said of Harry Thuku, Mekatilili and others who have attempted to wrestle with the colonial might. Ruheni’s pop hero faces a pale shadow of national heroes before colonial systems of justice.

It is through blackmail that Ruoro is made to resign, for having been assigned a task too difficult for a first timer. Being new in the field operation, he desired to have a preview of how agriculture estimates are done. With all the legitimate access blocked, Ruoro finds himself in a delicate situation and decides to siphon the format from his experienced boss. Just like nationalists who felt that all legitimate ways to freedom had been blocked resulted to illegitimate means.

Further analogy with nationalist tribulations at the hands of colonial system of justice is the fraud in Ruoro's court trial that never was. Like was the case in Kenya and elsewhere, colonial courts were not in the business of dispensing justice especially to Africans. It is with this in mind that Ruoro says that, “Moreover, those colonial courts were not very much of courts anyway. You were guilty before you went in, and you were guilty when you come out” (56). The interesting bit about Ruheni’s novel is the fact that the exposure of colonial courts as a farce is done not in political treatise but atypical pop drunk attempted theft and a tug for a girl with his boss. Similarly, in narrating the story of Kitosch, in *Out of Africa*, Isak Denesen (pseudonym for Karen Blixen the setter), gives an idea of what justice in a

colonial court felt like.

Kitosch had died of flogging from his master and his servants under instructions of their boss of course. The colonial authority saw a need to constitute a jury to conduct an inquest into his death. Despite doctors ascertaining that Kitosch's death was due to flogging a clever way was found to mitigate the guilt of the white settler. Here Karen relates a 'will to die to theory' conspired by doctors where they say:

The flogging in itself, they held, was not sufficient to have caused death. An important factor came into the matter, not to be ignored, that was the will to die. On this point, the first doctor stated, he could speak with authority, for he had been in the country twenty-five years, and knew the native mind. Many medical men could support him that the wish to die, in a Native, had actually caused death. In the present case the matter was particularly clear for Kitosch had himself said that he wanted to die. The second doctor bore him up in this point of view (270).

The two doctors' conspiracy must have saved the settler because even with the jury guilty verdict and a surgeon postmortem examination pronouncing the death as a result of injuries and wounds, he is only charged for grievous hurt and sentenced to two years in prison.

It is such courts that convicted most African nationalists who had 'rubbed Her Majesty's government the wrong way' or even an individual white man.

Correspondingly, in Ruheni's *Future Leaders* lack of credibility of colonial courts is confirmed by the retired army Colonel Whitworth Walker- now the provincial Agriculture Officer, who tells us of the qualification of the magistrate saying:

"Listen Reuben ... you know what you have done. We know what you have done. I know the magistrate in this place. He was an Air Squadron Commander in Eritrea. He is the law-and-order type, if you see what I mean. Three years will be the minimum" (58).

So within a tale of a young graduate's misdemeanor at his first station of work, Ruheni has indicted the colonial system of justice. Though emanating from theft of documents and snatching of a girlfriend that never was like bound to be the case in pop literature, of the author's distrust of colonialists to dispense justice to an African. Thus within a popular fiction plot, the injustice of colonialism is laid bare.

Apparently miscarriage of justice was at times due to deliberate scheming by Colonial authorities and at others due to lack of qualified legal practitioners. It is also understandable that in the 1950's, Britain could not supply qualified magistrates throughout its dominions' many courts but whether by design or default, it served the Empire well in putting the natives at the right place. Ruheni succeeds in showing

the colonial justice in the course of his “amusing and entertaining novel” to use Morsberger’s words. With the fear of such courts Ruoro gave up and wrote the resignation letter. And as he puts it “Then we shook hands over it, the way they shake hands after signing the Nuclear Disarmament Non-Aggression Treaty” (58). Here, the reader is tempted to recall similar fraudulent agreements such as, Lenana and Sir Donald Stewart K.C.M.G shaking hands over the First and Second Maasai Agreement after appending his thumb print on the (as fraudulent and oppressive as the Protagonist’s) 1904 and 1911 agreements respectively.

Later, Ruoro is imprisoned for getting implicated in an abortion so that a girl he had impregnated does not stand on his way to marry her friend. On his way to prison to serve an 18 months sentence, the only consolation he could think of was that he was following the tradition of many African leaders. In this he reminds the reader of prison connection of some leaders. He says, ‘A lot of leaders have been in prison before me. So may be Sir James Henderson was not too wrong. Only time will tell,’ (121). The a reader is reminded of countless leaders who have left prison only to become some of the world’s most celebrated leader; Mandela, Kenyatta, Castro, Nehru to name but a few. Readers will think of political prisoners and many prisoners of conscience around the world and even near home, or even of leaders who may not necessarily be heads of state but leaders at national rim light. For instance, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga had his time in detention and home arrest; his son former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, Kenneth Matiba, Koigi and many more. Though not a prisoner of conscience the protagonist while on his way to prison takes consolation from the many prisoners who had become leaders and in a way he also becomes a ‘leader’ in independent Kenya.

Nationalists who had trusted but were betrayed by their fellow Africans are analogized in Ruoro’s betrayal by an African girl whom he thought was his ally. Initially he had tried to seduce her not knowing that she was his boss’ girlfriend. Nevertheless, Ruoro trusts that Miriam, (the African girlfriend of his boss) a fellow African, can assist him pinch the estimates. It turns out that herself-interest -to ingratiate herself to the colonial officer Mr. Slater hoping that he would marry her - superseded African brotherhood. Taken as a political allegory, it reflects many Africans who in wrestling with the colonial powers were betrayed by fellow Africans whom they had hoped were comrades- at- arms.

Such a popular novel would very well fit into a Mandela’s or Kenyatta’s betrayal by their respective countrymen. In South Africa they had Ngubase who though black had no qualms playing false witness against Mandela. He claimed to be a member of ANC and that he had attended a meeting that had never

happened. In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela says of Ngubase, ‘At the time of the meeting he claimed to have attended to plan Port Elizabeth riot, he was serving a sentence for fraud in a Durban jail. Almost none of Ngubase’s testimony bore any resemblance to the truth (246).

An even worse testimony is given against Mandela during the Rivonia treason trial by a comrade Mtolo, who had been a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) as Miriam, a fellow black and a sufferer under colonialism testified against the protagonist. The trial resulted in Mandela being sentenced to life imprisonment. Mandela says that Mtolo’s memory, simplicity and what seemed like candour made him a reliable witness:

This was undoubtedly done on police instructions. He told the court that during my remarks to the Natal Regional Command I had stated that all Mk cadres ought to be good communists but not to disclose their views publicly. In fact, I never said anything of the sort, but his testimony was meant to link me and MK to the Communist Party. His memory appeared so precise that the ordinary person would assume that it was accurate in all instances. But this was not so (424).

A true popular novel hero, Ruoro avoids the tedious task of going to the field to collect data and reposes in a bar squandering his salary advance. He started spending his money even before he earned it.

He is arrested while waiting for the estimates from Miriam his ‘benefactor.’ Chief Inspector Mike Mulligan did not take Ruoro to prison or police cell but into a small room with very high walls. Here he was handled by ‘an ill-mannered and uncouth European. I doubt whether he had ever gone to school.’ And here he proceeds to charge him with:

“Stealing by agent. You conspired to steal by agent from the house of one Sidney Slater of Monmouthshire, England, a document entitled “Financial Estimates for the Fiscal year 1959/1960 for the locations of Kiriti Gitahi, and Kamuyu in the Unjiru Division of Nyeri District.” This is an official document. It is also an accountable document. It belongs to Her Majesty the Queen of England.: (p55)

Though Ruoro’s was not on trial because of a nationalist course, we see parallel with leaders like Mandela, Mugabe and Kimathi who were guilty of using the only avenue left to them by the White Colonial power. Like Ruoro’s “Stealing by agent” violence was the only option left to such leaders in the course of survival of their people. Outnumbered and at times unrepresented in parliament, and all legitimate forums for dialogue blocked, such leaders had to resort to illegitimate means to achieve their objectives like Ruoro’s illegal attempts to survive in his job. Though telling a fast paced narrative of a young man who is even seducing his boss’ girlfriend, betrayal of an Africa by an African harmoniously

fits in the matrix. A reader is also shown the justice of colonial courts in the process, a thing that contrasts to the African court during the protagonist's second appearance.

Further allegorical correspondence is that in the case of nationalist movement's betrayal has often come from countrymen they trusted as Ruoro did Marriam. Indeed Macharia the key witness against Kenyatta was a fellow countryman from the same locality. Ndirangu who betrayed Kimathi shares the same similarities with Miriam and her ilk. It appears that white minority governments specialized in using Africans to give evidence, especially fabricated one, against their countrymen. Like Ngubase and Mtolo giving false evidence against Mandela, so was Rawson Macharia against Kenyatta. With the incongruence of Macharia's testimony being a fabrication while Miriam's is the truth, their role is the same; to fix an African. In his words in his autobiography *The Truth About the Trial of Jomo Kenyatta* (apparently written to purge his guilt), Macharia confesses to colluding to falsely testify against Kenyatta:

My foremost wish was to call Mzee Jomo Kenyatta as my defence witness in a Nairobi Court; where the case would be conducted in the presence of the African public, a thing which colonial government would be frightened of. I was prepared to be charged with perjury in connection with the evidence I had given at Kapenguria so that the old man might be released as by my confession, it would mean they had convicted him on cooked up evidence. I wrote down all the lies I had been made to say during the Kapenguria trial. I felt a bit relaxed and was now ready for anything- anything including death itself. I walked into Tom Mboya's office in Victoria Street (199).

In giving information about a graduation guest of honour, the author hints at a historical fact recently observed in *There was a Country* by Achebe; having governors who had previously overseen a transition to independence in another country prepare another for independence. In *Future Leaders* Her Majesty's most distinguished Colonial Officer “, Sir James Henderson K.C.M.G, C.B, D.S.O (who had previously served in Palestine) served in Sudan before being posted to Uganda on the eve of that country's independence. Ruheni could be giving hint of the Empire's system in granting independence though guised as a graduation party revelation and posting. Sir James Peterson the governor of Nigeria who presided that country's transition to independence had immediately before then served in Sudan. Ruheni gives an illustration that show a governor who had overseen transition to independence in one country in the British Empire was posted to the next country in the line. This was most likely to prepare

that country for independence, hence the Sudan- Nigeria and Palestine –Sudan- Uganda pattern in Nigeria and Uganda cases (in Nigeria history and Ruheni's fiction) respectively. As can be noted, the above countries had gained independence in that order of the governor's posting. This reflects well Kurtz's assertion in *Urban Obsessions Urban Fears* where he says:

Novelists in other words, may be showing us about the history, sociology, and politics of a place even when they are simply pretending to present an entertaining story. In short we can read between the lines to discover what a novelist is telling us about the "hidden reality" of a time and place (105).

It is said former British colonies rarely slid to chaos like did the Belgium's or Portuguese. However, it won't be over indulgence to speculate that they were also preparing regimes favourable to themselves in independence takeover. Achebe in his autobiography, *There was a Country*, tells of Governor Sir James Robertson – whose name has an almost similar ring to Sir James Henderson of Uganda at the eve of independence. The Nigerian governor Sir James had coincidentally come from Sudan like the Sir James of Uganda; and both at the eve of independence of the two countries. There could be more than the above similarities of names and posting. In *There was a country* Achebe tells us:

When Britain decided to hand over power to Nigeria... They brought a new governor general from Sudan, Sir James Robertson to take the reins in Nigeria.... It is now widely known that Sir James Robertson played an important role in overseeing the elections (or lack thereof) at independence, throwing in his weight behind Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who had been tipped to become Nigeria's first Prime Minister (49-50).

In other words, though Ruheni's fiction is not as explicit as Achebe is in his autobiography, he may nonetheless be drawing the reader to a similar historical reality with political implication.

In *The Mystery Smugglers*, the hero steals by exchanging his employers parcel with sand before delivering and proceeds to advertise the same for sale. As usual, like Odhiambo has observed, he spends most of his leisure time in alcohol and women.

When the story crosses boarder to South Africa, Ruheni highlights the central role the locals have to play in that country's liberation without however out ruling African countries' assistance. In the novel, author tracks an international uranium smuggling syndicate. Although the novella has been classified by Kurtz as "my life in crime" story, it has more than this. In *Urban Obsession, Urban Fears* Kurtz says of the novel:

Two major plot lines dominate Kenya's popular novels: "my life in crime" ...and the

“prostitute’s tale. *The Mystery Smugglers* (Ruheni, 1975) and *The Bhang Syndicate* (Saisi, 1984), among others... [follow ‘my life in crime’ line]. The story line typically follows the adventures of gangster and thugs, both in and out of prison, usually with a moralistic ending that unconvincingly emphasizes the depravity and emptiness of all that has gone before (100).

Kurtz says the narrative depicts crimes but looked at from a nationalistic perspective; the crimes are paradoxically virtuous crimes for they save and enrich a country from disaster. Though set in post-independence Kenya it highlights the situation in pre-independent South Africa and has a lesson for struggling blacks in South Africa. Invincible as South African regime appeared to be, in the novella we are shown that their fear was not from a foreign intervention but ironically from those they seemed to terrorize internally. A conversation between apartheid’s top military pivots reveals their fears:

I have never feared a direct attack, but I have often wondered what would happen if all Kaffirs in this country turned themselves into guerrillas. They would make life pretty uncomfortable for us Colonel, don’t you think so? Besides, an atomic arsenal would not be much use to us (40).

To the South African Nationalists, Ruheni seems to be arousing a consciousness that it is not an intervention from the north (probably a metaphorical reference to The Front Line Countries), that will win them freedom but their own self-determination. Meaning that the best weapon against apartheid is South Africans themselves for theirs are weapons trained against external aggression hence incapable of being used internally. Thus in the brief anecdote above, Ruheni shows the reader that the destiny of a free South Africa lies not from neighboring African states but black South Africans themselves.

Whereas the bulk of the novel is typical adventures of a young man with all the ingredients of a pop text, stories such as the above provoke the reader to see more than adventures of a young school dropout. In it the reader is informed of the racial tension between the races in South Africa and the apartheid regime’s designs for her back neighbours. It may not be a lesson in foreign relations or military strategies but one sees the pragmatics of liberation in South Africa, for as Paulo Freire says in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth” (47).

In another episode pointing to the identity crisis colonialism caused to African, the writer in *Future Leaders* gives an allegory that seems to question the use of foreign names that is in most cases taken for granted. Whereas hybridity has been hailed as one of the ways to deal with cultural crisis facing

Africans, it is at times a crisis in itself. Torn between the African and western cultures Africans are in most cases faced with an identity crisis. One hardly expects a pop genre to address such cultural politics because as Odhiambo and other pop critics have pointed out, sexuality and the like vices are the main stock of this genre. Ruheni in *Future Leaders* gives an encounter that allegorizes this situation during an interview the protagonist attends as part of Africanization process at the eve of independence. It is apparently only when challenged about things we take for granted that most of us appreciate the magnitude of the 'small things.' In the civil service interview, Ruoro is asked, "What does your name Reuben mean?" (p211) Only then does he realize that he doesn't know. When further challenged why he uses a name that makes no sense to him the magnitude of the issue dawns on him. The same drunk and womanizing hero shows his philosophical side. The novel and by extension the novelist, seems to question the relevance of foreign names on Africans. The novel which was published in 1973 proves that the author had initiated the debate on Christian names long before Ngugi waThiong'o plunged into the debate and dropped his baptismal name James in a PCEA conference in 1977. Perhaps because Ruheni was famed as pop writer, this did not elicit debate until Ngugi took the issue personally or possibly because of 'despise' accorded to pop genre. Kurtz in *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears* shows the thinking of those who bash popular literature:

Popular novels...belong to the bottom half of the dialectic, pitting high or "elite" forms of expression against "low" or 'common' forms. Above all, if you are concerned with the moral impact of stories, this assortment of "rag-tag characters in a rag-bag language" seems hardly worthy of thoughtful attention (103-4)

Like Ruoro in Ruheni's *Future Leaders*, Ngugi had been challenged by an elder that he is a Christian as his name suggested only then did the weight of what he had never considered significant dawn on him prompting him to officially drop James as his name. While the canonized Ngugi discusses the European names debate in his essays, Ruheni addresses it in a truly cheerful humour. This allegory brings to the fore the politically correct system of Christianity where Africans pick European names whose meaning they don't know and foreign products without real scrutiny of their implications. Since a name is a part of one's identity, when Africans adopt names without proper scrutiny, it explains the hasty and/or confused identity we pick as a people. The symbol can actually be extended to western diets, fashion and even western backed policies. Many dressing styles in our streets are aped from the West, to echo Okot p'Bitek, without the wearers comprehending their significance not to mention speech habits, diets and the whole chain of western imitations.

As an allegory of independence, *Future Leaders* reads like a narrative of a country coming. We read the story of Ruoro's struggle with education and colonial obstacles to eventually gain a stable job that guarantees him independence from his former employers, incidentally all white. At the national level Kenya moves from colonialism to independence as the novel closes. The hero and the nation coming of age at independence is historically significant symbol. As Stephanie Newell observes in the introduction of *Readings in African Popular Fiction*:

African popular fiction is of great ethnographic and historical interest to scholars, especially given its primary concern with 'ordinary' people and its steady growth over fifty-year period spanning decolonization and the emergence of postcolonial states (9).

In the *Future Leaders*, the author relates a transformation by the protagonist that metaphorically depicts that of many Kenyans at the period. During the transition to independence, the protagonist like many educated Africans found vacancies in the government jobs to replace the departing Europeans in the Africanization process. It was a period of joy to Ruoro to whom independence came with the bonus of a wedding and a new permanent job. It is also hoped that he has learned his lesson with the girls after one of the girls he has been cheating his fiancée with organizes a gang that beats him senselessly. After a long struggle to get a sound footing, the protagonist succeeds to get a job as a senior civil servant with the first independent Kenyan government.

It is a success story because we finally have leaders we would dream of; young, educated and above all who reflect and carry the wish of the majority. They are no longer *Future Leaders* but leaders to our destiny because the future which the protagonist so longed for has come. Kenya underwent imprisonment and detention of its leaders, above all it needed educated and visionary leaders before being born into freedom.

In the interview, we learn the ideals of good leaders akin to Plato's philosopher king as quoted in Aristotle *Politics* that, "for kings to be philosophers was so far from being a necessity, that it was rather a hindrance"(186). Ruoro passes all the board's requirements of "a broad, informed outlook" and will thus make part of the intelligent leadership that is to take the new country to new heights.

Literature whether popular or otherwise address issues affecting society be they moral or political. In fulfilling this role in *What a Husband!* Ruheni ventures to speculate what might have happened to the unaccounted for Mau Mau freedom fighters. It is such a task that Priebe, captured by Barber in *Readings in African Popular Culture* says:

Unlike many commentators on popular fiction, he recognizes that...popular novelettes addresses themselves to the same serious and political issues as elite literature, but argues that they do so in a complementary and indeed diametrically opposed fictional mode (5)

It is indeed an audacious feat for Ruheni to address the issue of the missing warriors. His creative speculation fits a pop genre because the freedom fighter's discovery is all as a resort of a philandering drunken man's adventures.

At independence, Kenya was rife with speculation and rumors of freedom fighters who were still unaccounted for. Ngugi's *Matigari* employs this speculation as Ruheni's *What a Husband!* but while the former is revolutionary the latter is adventurous bent. Historically, after independence a few diehard remnants were talked to leave the forest because Kenya was from then transiting to majority rule. Then there is the group that is said to have earlier taken refuge to Ethiopia and accorded asylum by the then Emperor Haile Selassie. The group is said to have been led by General Mathenge wa Mirugi; the erstwhile Mau Mau general before the more educated Dedan Kimathi attained overall control of the freedom fighters. Naturally suspicion reigned in the forest between fighters loyal to the two generals. Faced by British troops and Lincoln bombers on one hand and an impending mutiny, general Mathenge opted to steal away to the North hoping to reorganize his troops for a second coming. Having fought the Italians in Ethiopia during the Second World War, Mathenge was said to have been conversant with the northern terrain and hoped to get a supply line from the independent Ethiopia. Though Ruheni does not diverge this much, he gives a number of indications that point to the same.

Perhaps it is these remnants (*Matigari*) that Ruheni seems to be giving an allegory of when he tells of a mining village in the north, a state within a state founded by former freedom fighters who decided not to go back to their original homes. As Priebe has observed, 'elite' and popular novels address the same issues from a "diametrically opposed fictional mode." While in *Matigari* the legendary remnant returns from the forest to this time fight neocolonialism, Ruheni's pop employs the same remnant but not to wage another revolution. His mode is that of a utopian state. Ruheni's is an easy adventure tale with jolly remnants though not at ease with the independence government. This works well with pop readers most who read for the thrill of it. Ngugi's 'elite' literature appears meant to ignite a revolution.

This fictitious state teaches the targeted young readers how Mau mau was born and organized. Without going back to an epoch that is not considered pop Ruheni in *What a husband!* addresses the issue by fictionalizing a modern day smugglers rooted and organized by Mau Mau survivors. He recounts the

formation of freedom fighters organization, Kago tells how the, “[E]lders came into the picture and formulated a seven step ladder which everybody interested in the struggle for Wiyathi [freedom] would have to climb. This ladder was the bond that united all” (125). The gemstone smugglers like the mining village, is also organized in seven ritual oaths. Thus the novel juxtaposes the old with the new hence teaching the pop generation the organization, genesis and remnants of Land and Freedom army.

Unlike Ngugi, Ruheni implies but doesn’t mention that his remnants are Mau Mau survivors. Interestingly, like the debate of western names adoption by Africans, Ruheni’s 1973 *What a Husband!* once again precedes Ngugi’s *Matigari* 1989 on fictionalizing the remnants.

The spirit of adventure, the protagonists Dennis Kinyua discovers this village. Though he steals gems from the former freedom fighters he is later awe struck by what he is told by the elders of this well organized village. The protagonist reveals:

I began to understand what the village was all about. I was dead in the middle of a little state with a state, a state founded and ruled by the remnants of the forest fighters (127).

It is from such remnants that the expectation of the return of general Mathenge on the Eve of 2003 Madaraka day was founded. The remnant general turned out to be an Ethiopian conman Atto Lema Ayanu who was hosted by the Kenyan government for about a week Sat 31 May – Friday 6 June. The *Nation Newspaper* in a front page Article “The puzzle remains as ‘Mathenge’ comes home” at the eve of 40th Madaraka Day celebration in part reported:

[G]en Mathenge would today be 84 years. He is reported to have fled to Ethiopia along with 28 other fighters of the freedom struggle 47 years ago, through the then *Northern Frontier District*. He is said to have gone there to seek superior military aid to continue the War against British colonialists.

It baffles that he cannot recognize his place of birth, his so called family and even his comrades in arms He is expected to be a featured guest at tomorrow's Madaraka Day Celebrations tomorrow. [Emphasis mine]

Saturday Nation / May 31, 2003 Article by Mburu Mwangi & Tigist Kassa

Reports from the surviving freedom fighters show that the legendary general was neither killed in any battle nor captured. He is believed to have disappeared to (the north) Ethiopia with a band of a few loyal soldiers. Interestingly, in Ruheni’s *What a Husband!* Laban Ngari and his men Kago and Kanyi tell of a similar story:

When the fighting was over a small group of us men and women decided not to go back to our

original homes. We decided to set up a community of our own place, a place where we believed in without interference. We left the forest in disguise and found our way into a place called Loiminange. Then into Kinyang through the Kito pass into Kolowa (127).

Ruheni's description of the mining village points to a fictitious location probably by the shores of Lake Turkana in the remote expanses of Turkana plains. However, his description of it as hilly and the kind of food crops grown there such as bananas, green maize and beans drift to a highlands climate. (Could he be insinuating the Ethiopian highlands?). Interestingly, the fictional destination of the freedom fighters borders their historical destination of Ethiopia. Since the whereabouts of general Mathenge and the band of his royalists remain unknown, it is plausible that the author was speculating such a group in his fiction even as he was telling a story of Kinyua and his chain of women in drinking joints. These are historical qualities that Newell notes makes popular literature worthy 'ethnographic and historical interest to scholar'

Thus, in as much as Ruheni 'narrates the nation' in the words of Kurtz, his three novels under this paper's research show elements of nationalism. Under the guise of flashbacks and adventures of his pop heroes, he hints on the Empire's expansion, education and its kind of justice. In truly cheerful popular literature that rarely leaves the city setting, the author succeeds to give a glimpse of Kenya, Uganda and even South Africa during the whites' domination.

2.2 Post Independence Challenges

Although independence was ushered by much jubilation and high expectations, (*Future Leaders* captures this mood), people were soon to realize that it only gave them a sigh of relief because as Mandela says in *Long Walk to Freedom*, "But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me... (751). To Ruheni's artistic observation, "many more hills to climb" came in the form of foreigner's greed for Africa's natural resources and their dominance in the financial sector not to forget our own internal wrangles. As Ruheni does this, he does not abandon his loyalty to popular novel, he 'subverts' this genre as if to echo words of Jane Bryce when in the article "Women and Modern African Popular Culture" cited in *Readings in African Popular Culture* says:

[I]n spite of the prevalent critical attitude of moral disapprobation, many of the texts categorize as popular/trivial do, in fact, subvert their own genre, against all expectations and the

requirements of the formula Kenyan popular novels of sex-and-violence... (119).

Lack of vigilance in security and guarding our resources are some of the shortcomings the writer satirizes the government with, even as he pursues the escapades of Magana in his Spear book *The Mystery Smugglers*.

The author gives us a symbolic hazard that lackluster scrutiny by government officers in charge of mines can expose a country to. Westbrook gets a license to prospect for lead but they are actually looking for uranium which they in fact find while the government does not have the slightest clue. The protagonist's words hint at the dire situation when he tells of the license issued by the department of mines, "It had a lot of small print in it, but I could see the word 'Lead' written in capitals in the middle of the document. " (36) .This is symbolic of the way many important agreements are entered into without the signatories comprehending what they are getting into, only what authors of such documents wants known let known, while the rest remain as vague as they want it to be. To worsen an already bad situation, the prospectors are let free in the field with no follow up whatsoever. The author in a literary sense is waking up the reader to the follies of letting loose prospectors unchecked. They go to the field with Magana and a Maasai Daniel Lemomo who cannot tell the difference between two metals. That the company discovers uranium without government knowledge is an indictment of the department of mines' lackadaisical attitude. Such is the kind of discovery that plunged the fictional Zangaro republic into a bloody military coup in Forsyth's *The Dogs of War*, when Sir James Manson the director of Mason Consolidated Mining Company researchers' discovered Crystal Mountain worth 500 million tons of platinum then lied to the government that only negligible quantity of tin had been discovered. Sir Jameson would rather unleash a bloodbath in the fictional republic as long as he succeeded in installing a puppet government that would grant him a free reign to platinum wealth. The same are the dangers the writer is warning against in his fast paced narrative where Westbrook, like Manson Company had discovered platinum without Zangaro's government's knowledge, discovered uranium without Kenya's government knowledge.

The free for all policy in the Mines Department was recently witnessed when a famous Kenya's politicians sold oil prospecting license for a fortune. Some political leaders are reported to be holding such licenses for speculation to sell to the highest bidder. This confirms that the situation has not changed much from the 1970s when Ruheni was writing *The Mystery Smugglers*.

On a positive note, Magana though a drunk and a failure in the city, 'steals' for the country an asset and makes the government know of the invaluable mineral wealth we are sitting on.

That the protagonist is able to outsmart the international smugglers is both a tale of courage and patriotism. Terrifyingly, the uranium is destined for South Africa, at the time under apartheid rule and a security hazard to the rest of African states. Uneducated as he is, Magana's audacity fortunately, enables Kenya's government acquire substantial uranium and even start a department of nuclear science in the University of Nairobi not to mention knowledge of the mineral reserves in Kenya.

However, in another instance of lack of caution, the less educated young man's efforts are jeopardized by the university administrators who don't interrogate motives of the foreigners they hire. Dr. Libman whose only interest is to track down Westbrook's lost uranium, applies for a vacant post in the physics department at the University of Nairobi and is hired. The interviewing panel does not seriously scrutinize the scholars interest in working in Kenya. In fact, they are taken in by his simplistic lies of "...his love for black man and how he disliked Europe and its peoples. He said that he had always wanted to work in Africa, and that he had lived in Africa for a long time" (81). The author gives a tale of gullible Kenyan Authorities (even intellectuals), akin to the intelligence and immigration officers who easily get outsmarted by illegal immigrants. Even though this reads like the usual humour of the pop genre, Ruheni seems to be warning us that unless we play intelligent, people with dubious intentions will always find their way into Kenya very easily as they have for countless times. Joyce Bryce has observed that texts categorized as pop or trivial do subvert Kenyan formula of sex and violence and the mystery smugglers here takes the formula of national security. With Prof Winter, this doctor almost succeeds in smuggling uranium out of the country. The two who were in charge of the nuclear physics in the department at the university decide to sabotage the project they were supposed to implement. They collude to cripple the department by smuggling the uranium to apartheid South Africa. The writer is allegorically cautioning that we should not entrust sensitive departments and resources to foreigners no matter how qualified.

It is frightening to know that apartheid South Africans are in the process of making atomic war heads all aimed at its African neighbors to the north.

As Colonel Schaaf tells Dr. Justus de Jung, "The day they will attack us from the north, they will be burned to cinders." (40) At a time when the front line states were weighing a military intervention option, a possibility of a nuclear war in Africa was a terrifying reality.

The mystery smugglers, a novel that Roger Kurtz has classified as 'my life in crime' narrative captures one of the oldest banes bedeviling Africa: wealth freight. Siphoning of natural resources from third

world countries especially in Africa has been going on since slave trade. In West Africa, names of countries such as Gold Coast, Slave coast and Cote d'Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast), attest to this fact. These names identified locations from where the named resources were shipped away. To succeed, the wily merchant employed force, bribe and tricks. In cohort with selfish Africans who acted as their agents, a lot of resources were shipped to the West and many lives lost. Ruheni give a modern day fashion of the same in a tale of a thief stealing from a multi-national company.

In *The Mystery Smugglers*, through the adventures of the Magana: the protagonist, Ruheni gives an allegory of modern day mineral freight to the west. It parallels the olden days when Western Merchants recruited a strong local agent who of necessity needed not to be intelligent or else they would ask a lot of questions and probably refuse to co-operate in their ivory, slaves or gold merchandise. *Westbrook Company* has been looking for such an agent in the company's trafficking of uranium from Katanga. When Miss Jennifer White recruits Michael Magana, her search is over and she immediately calls her fellow racketeers to share the good news:

As soon as I left, Miss White got on the phone. She looked a long distance call to Dr. Libman in Namur, Belgium.

"Dan, it's Jenny here. I am sure we have at last got what we wanted."

"Fine. What sort of a chap have you landed?"

"Very Strong physically, but not at all bright."

"Fine Jenny. You are sending him over on Friday, aren't you?"

"Yes" (19).

By these 'qualifications,' Michael Magana is appointed to be ferrying Uranium from Belgium via London and Nairobi to its final destination in Johannesburg. He is a ne'er do-well school dropout. The former mechanic in Kenya is sent for schooling in London and, six years later he had not passed his O-levels. Like African slave Ivory and gold agents of yore he qualifies as an agent because of lacking in intelligence and hence will follow directions without questioning. And he is strong physically like the African chiefs of that era were in a metaphorical sense. Significantly he is an African paid to work for European merchants. Resemblance does not end with the 18th and 19th century chiefs; it rings familiar with post-independence Africa's strong men who also act as agents of western companies.

Former Zairian (now DRC) dictator Mobutu Seseseko comes to meet the above qualities. Greg Lanning, in his book *Africa Undermined*, shows the excesses of president Mobutu that even extended

to his foreign cronies, he writes that, “Mobutu had become one of the richest men in the world and when he traveled to Peking in 1973 *News Week* reported that his Belgian advisers traveled with him and even took their pet dogs with them” (256).

That Mobutu was strong is not in doubt. He ruled Zaire with a heavy hand for 32 and it took concerted guerrilla war to overthrow him. What may be debatable is his lack of intellect. But considering that he allowed foreign mining company a free reign to exploit his people and country's wealth, all in exchange for Swiss Villas and enhanced Swiss bank accounts, he in that sense meets this criterion. This corresponds to what Magana in *The Mystery Smugglers*, after being offered the well-paying contract says:

The pay would be good. I would have a chance to earn myself up to twenty pounds a week, if I worked well. But Miss White did not appear too keen on telling me exactly what I would be doing. All she told me was that I would carry company property from one place to another. I would be a kind of glorified errand boy, in other words (18).

Although Magana is young school dropout in a pop novel, his story reads like an allegory for many African stooges of the West who get their bonus wired to their bank accounts mostly in the western countries “if they work well” and indeed work well they do. Their part of the bargain is mostly to ensure a secure transference of wealth to the West, that is the imperialist's companies are given a free reign to exploit resources. Taken at its symbolic level, the above excerpt resonates with Fredric Jameson quoted in Roger Kurtz's *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears*, assertion that, “Literature, including popular literature, contains a Political consciousness” that may be read as a “symbolic meditation on the destiny of the community”

In most cases, such stooges just like Magana, don't know the intricate details of the company's turn over or dealings and even when they, or their cronies are appointed as shareholders they don't know exactly what their roles are. Their role of carrying company “property from one place to another” is to ensure that raw materials move from Africa to the West. Indeed the final point of convergence with Magana's allegory is that of being “glorified errand boys”. With “twenty pounds” in their custody, the errand boys' role is over and none can tell of the whereabouts of the wealth generated.

Significantly the protagonist's role was to make sure that the consignment reached its destination safely and no more. The same is its true interpretation in the real world, for instance when Mobutu was deposed, none of the companies had been a god father to care for his whereabouts. In any case an ‘errand boy’ is not the C.E.O. Similarly while Abacha's overseas bank accounts were subject of a court

case, the petroleum mining companies maintained a studious silence perhaps waiting for the next leader to do business with. Having received their ‘twenty pound a week’ token, the errand boys fulfill their part of the bargain and that is all.

In the novel, one of the characters (a director in *Westbrook*), betrays his interest in Congo. Here, the author sheds the mask and recounts a real historical happening all in the process of telling an “entertaining story”: the Congo crisis:

Then we talked about the Congo in general and about Katanga in particular. Dr. Libman appeared to have fallen in love with that part of the world.

“It is a very rich country,” he said. But it is getting rather unstable politically just now.

“Somebody told me that they have a lot of minerals in Katanga,” I said (20).

When Jacqueline Bardolph says that Ruheni’s are ‘truly cheerful novels’, she may not have paid attention the hidden seriousness of some issues the writer addresses albeit in a cheerful mood.

In this fictional account of the Congo, Ruheni insinuates the historical Belgium involvement in the crisis from the fact that Dr. Libman the Westbrook personnel in radioactivity is a Belgian. Further he says that he has lived and worked in Congo for 10 years. Dr Libman lives in a luxurious house in Belgium ornate with African curios as a memento from Congo of which he says, “I got them from Katanga where I worked as a Doctor for almost ten years.” From the comfort of Namur, the good doctor enjoys the proceeds of his mischief in Congo.

This could probably imply that he was part of the colonial personnel in Congo who were ignominiously expelled from Congo on its attainment of independence. The luxury in which they lived can make them nostalgic. It also hints into Belgians involvement in the Congo crisis. That he was working in Katanga, the copper and uranium rich province can also explain his central role in uranium smuggling syndicate in the novel. Of course Ruheni’s ‘is a popular literature truly cheerful’ but all the same addresses the catastrophe that was Congo in the 1960s. As history records the crisis in Katanga was fueled by mineral wealth, which compelled mining companies particularly Belgium’s, to bankroll mercenaries. From *Africa Undermined* by Lamming, we learn that *Union Minere* the Belgian mining company had at the eve of independence identified Moise Tshombe to be their ‘errand boy’. He was to, “take Katanga out of the Congo when it became independent at the beginning of July and declare a republic”.(235) The company even wrote to the Prime-Minister to that effect. It is then not by a coincidence that Lamming in *Africa undermined* writes:

On 11 July (1960 Tshombe, with strong Belgian support, declared Katanga independent in these equivocal terms:

“This independence is total. None the less, conscious of the imperious necessity of an economic collaboration with the Belgian government to protect human lives, has just granted the assistance of its own troops, asks Belgium to join with Katanga in a close economic community” (236).

The novelist Frederick Forsyth in his novel *The Dogs of War* details how mining magnates in Europe wrought havoc in the fictitious republic of Zangaro in a bid to install a pliant regime that could give them a free hand in that country’s platinum wealth.

The network and monopoly, the Belgians had in Congo from the reigns of King Leopold II to independence would always make them jittery of an independent country. Worse is the bitterness of having to forfeit all that mineral wealth to the natives. This would explain why in *The Mystery Smuggler*, Ruheni portrays the Westbrook who are significantly Belgians, Britons and White South Africans never dying urge to suck African natural resources through remote mechanisms. Like Forsyth’s Manson Consolidate Company in *The Dogs of War* secret discovery of platinum, Westbrook crooks discover uranium and could unleash similar violence. Connecting the historical fact of Congo and Katanga province at the time, and the bits given by Mwangi Ruheni in his novel *The Mystery Smugglers*, we can logically deduce that the author is here giving an allegory of the European hegemonic force responsible for the crisis and smuggling of uranium from the region.

It is a brief affair of Congo, even as the writer remains loyal to alcoholism and sex that characterize popular literature. At the height of Katanga secession, western allies personified in Ruheni’s fiction by Dr. Libman and Westbrook are keen to find minerals Kenya and perhaps unleash the same fate as Katanga’s from their comfort in Europe. It is further a symbolic way to show how wealth finances luxurious living for business magnates in Europe, for as Magana says:

This man definitely did not live in poverty.... My host appeared to be a very curious type. He wanted to know in particular whether my country has any minerals and how much prospecting has been done so far. I also did not see why this man should be so interested in the natural wealth of a country with which he had no dealings (21).

In addition, the author is sounding a warning to other countries in Africa this time Kenya, that mining companies are busy prospecting for mineral wealth sometimes clandestinely. It is also revealing that mining magnates live in luxury in Europe while always exploring other regions to exploit or foment crisis. Historically this corresponds to 1964-65 Congo crises. Naturally the mining company found it

prudent to seek other fertile ground to balance their bet on the incessant Congo conflict. Greg Lanning tells us that, “The crisis came in October 1964, when a state of emergency was declared in Leopoldville and a number of opposition members were arrested... The Congo seemed on the verge of disintegrating once again”(243). This historical fact resonates well with Ruheni’s fiction in that due to incessant war in Congo, Westbrook acquires a license to prospect for Uranium in the name of lead in Kenya.

In *The Mystery Smugglers*, an allegory can be drawn of how the rich west exploit the needy situation in the third world and set country man against another for their benefit. The girls Nici Nelson calls ‘good time girls’ are shown to be lethal in more than spreading venereal diseases or stealing from their clients. The author gives the story about a common prostitute Matilda Wanjiku, and Dr. Libman that reads like an allegory of Western – Third World relation of ‘use and damp policy.’ The story shows how foreigners can capitalize on Kenyan’s joblessness and poverty especially on women. We see the Belgian spy Dr. Libman contract Matilda Wanjiku to unravel from Magana the whereabouts of the confiscated uranium. For foreigners to succeed in their designs, they need assistance from the locals, thus Matilda Wanjiku is employed by Westbrook to use her women wiles to locate the invaluable substance and then report to Dr. Libman, her employer. All along she has been earning good money as an employee of the doctor but when she delivered the coveted secret, she was given “a good pension” and laid off. The omniscient narrator says:

The doctor did not require Matilda Wanjiku’s services any more. In due course, Matilda was quietly laid off but she was given a good pension. There are extremely considerate at Westbrook enterprises. They are good employers and it was a great pity that Matilda Wanjiku had to be struck off their pay list (97).

Allegorically this can in political circles be a reference to the way the West commissions people to betray their countrymen the way Matilda did to Magana. For their service against their countrymen they are handsomely rewarded. By directing Westbrook to where the uranium was located, Matilda resembles those people who sell their country’s heritage for three pieces of silver like Judas. Further resemblance is that, after the imperialists get what they want such collaborators are dismissed without preliminaries just as Matilda “was quietly laid off” by West brook. Saddam Hussein is a good example of being employed and then being laid off after the assignment was complete. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, America “employed” Saddam to foment the Iraq-Iran war that lasted for 8 years. Having done his assignment, America required his services no more but unlike Matilda, he was violently laid off. A similar political tale would go for Afghanistan’s Taliban who were used to fight the

USSR but when the war was over they had no more use and the Americans had to lay them off. By Dr. Libman laying off Matilda, a lesson is learnt that after betraying one's countrymen and assisting foreigners loot a country resources, the betrayer has no share in such proceeds his or her heritage is in the country s/he assisted loot. Of course the writer is not telling a treatise in international relations, but a story of a 'good time bar girl' and her short-lived contract with a Belgian. Thus young reader will enjoy the thrill of titrating scenes as they experience the callousness of international smugglers.

Like Matilda in Ruheni's novel, Rawson Macharia in his book *The Truth About the Trial of Jomo Kenyatta*, knows first hand the treatment an African gets from colonialists after fulfilling one's part of the bargain. Having been awarded a scholarship to England as a pay back playing a false witness against Kenyatta, he thought that he belonged with the British. He even imagined that he would have a reservation as a guest during the queen's coronation, below, he laments how the reality dawned on him:

First, the search by the English police of my lodgings on allegation that I was Mau Mau and their interrogation simply because I was a Kikuyu left me very bitter. Then what I considered my shabby treatment at the coronation drove the point home, that the major task I had performed for their colonial interests in Kenya with my evidence at Kapenguria the British government did not respect me at all (29).

While in *The Mystery Smugglers*, the author gives a tale of foreigners interference in Third World mineral wealth, in *What a Husband!*, he narrates an allegory of another disaster wrought by mineral wealth: secession. Through a tale of alcohol and women Kinyua, in a true sense of popular literature, stumbles on the gem smugglers and consequently on the 'state within a state' in the true character of pop literature. Ruheni weaves the story of the destiny of missing freedom fighters which remains unknown to date. He further manages to thread in a speculative story of a seceded mineral rich village as a haven for the missing freedom fighters. In so doing the writer gives a hypothetical allegory of secession which had wrought untold suffering in Congo and Nigeria. Closer home Kenyan Somalis aided by Somalia had started the Shifta war with aim of seceding from Kenya and join the main Somalia and Ethiopia's Ogaden province. Though the writer doesn't dwell on secession at length such happenings could have filtered in his psych at the period. As Fredric Jameson says in *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears*:

Narrative represents an ideological and aesthetical manifestation of broader social dynamics. Literature, including popular literature, contains a "political unconscious" that may be read as a "symbolic meditation on the destiny of the community" (105).

History teaches us that secession mostly occurs when a zone is, or feels neglected, has incompatible social-cultural beliefs or has enough wealth to sustain itself.

It is instrumental that Ruheni's allegory of "a state within a state" is wealth in gemstones of different types. As such they might have felt sufficiently well-endowed financially to sustain their simple government. Either drawing a lesson from or intending to warn against the (in)famous Katanga province secession in Congo, the two bear a similar ingredient: mineral wealth. Besides political reasons and meddling from Belgian mining companies, Katanga felt that its wealth in mineral particularly copper was being used to sustain the rest of the country and hence secession came to the region as a more sensible choice since they could use the same for the region's sole benefit.

The clandestine sale of gem stones from the village, with Kago as the middle man and finally Mbaru Mathenge as the final sales person mirrors closer to even present day Congo export of minerals.

Through a chain of middle men, Congo rebels are said to finance their war by a clandestine export of minerals such as tin gold and other minerals.

A similar chain existed in civil war Sierra Leone with Foudy Sankou uneducated as he was, controlling a vast region by brute force. The film *Blood Diamonds* is indeed an enactment of this bitter reality.

Critic Bardolph in "The Literature of Kenya has noted the importance of Ruheni's novels albeit on the social angle:

Entertaining books such as *What a Life!* and *What a Husband!* are not to be dismissed. They are perceptive chronicles of the mores of an emerging middle class which is dynamic and resourceful, both puzzled and delighted by the fast changes in its life (45).

Indeed the entertaining aspect of popular literature is quite evident in *What a Husband!* and characters most in middle class appear puzzled by luxuries of modern life. Kinyua for instance doesn't care to spend a chunk of his earning in tourist-class hotels. Mbaru, Helen and their group enjoy their whiskey brandy and cognac with relish. What Bardolph might not have paid attention to is political innuendoes in the novel. We see in this fast paced novel secession and underlying causes of it. A part from economic reasons, secession also occurs when a group feels socially, culturally or politically alienated or even incompatible with the rest of the country. Again the pop writer captures this social-political reality in fiction. As the chief elder of the mining village relates, 'We decided to set up a community of our own, a place where we could practice what we believed in without interference' (127). These

sentiments illustrated in a pop novella, exemplifies South Sudan kind of feeling very well. Feeling that their religious and cultural beliefs were incompatible with northerners not to forget their racial differences, the Southerners saw the merit of secession so as to have a place they would call home.

Similarly, the former freedom fighters so as to ‘practice what they believed in without interference,’ saw the need to set up their small state. This could range from unfulfilled expectations at independence or betrayal at the eve of independence. The entertaining novel is not to be ignored as Bardolph says, but also for its political insight I should add. As the senior elder Kago says:

Our aim was to get away from everybody, from everything, and to set up our own little society, a society modeled according to our principles, according to the rules of life that we hold dear, according to what we think man is and should be. We prayed day and night and God heard our prayers. After traveling for a month and a half we discovered these hills and these valleys. We have built ourselves the sort of society that we have always wanted to build (128).

This shows a secession occasioned by lack of liberty to carry out their social-cultural beliefs unhindered. It also suggests a sense of betrayal in a less explicit way. In the forest, freedom fighters had envisioned a society they would be free from western influences. By talking of building “a sort of society that we have always wanted to build,” the former freedom fighters show their apprehension that their desired society could not be realized at independence hence the need to create such a state; one true to the aspirations of the freedom fighters. It shows betrayal of a people as one of the reasons that encourage secession. We see that the villagers have a traditional form of government, live by traditional foods and drinks. This state had its mode of democracy; we read that, “The parliament of the place consisted of the village council of elders, of which Ngarari was the unofficial chairman ... the prime minister” (129). Significantly Kinyua makes all these discoveries as a result of taking to alcoholism as a refuge from troubled marriage.

In *Future Leaders*, though narrating a story of a bank robbery as it is accustomed for this genre, Ruheni captures a chain of happenings that either by default or design reflects a near one on one interpretation to assassination schemes in the political field. The fears of a people can well be captured in popular literature because as Kurtz says, “Popular novels may be the most fertile territory of all because of their disingenuous claim to be pure entertainment” (105). Whether a normal robbery killing for self-preservation, or a tale of symbolic interpretation – the “by this I also mean this” definition of allegory by Murray, the story relates such fears of ‘silencing’ from the political assassination sense. The protagonist happens to ‘know too much’ about the robbery and thus the criminals plot to have him dead

in circumstances they would like to appear like ‘normal’ accident or poisoning. In the bid to eliminate Ruoro who like the politicians, happened to know too much about Victor Thiga the banker and his father in-law Kiraitu Njaga the school cook-cum bank robber, the two plan a road accident after a drinking party. Like it happens in political circles to people ‘who know too much’ of the ills of their colleagues, plans are made to eliminate them. Besides, like assassination victims who agitate for social justice, the protagonist happens to be agitating for criminal justice for the robbers.

The allegory has further points of resemblance to political assassinations in that the would be murders planned to have Ruoro involved in a road accident like happened to Bishop Muge or Ronald Ngala whose accident some believe were planned. That Ruoro was drunk would have been an authentication of death due to drunken careless driving. When this failed a spare plan was on the ready; poisoning in a bar for, like a true pop hero, the character was either drinking or flirting with good time girls as Nici Nelson in “Representation of Men and Women, City and Town in Kenyan Novels of the 1970s and 1980s.” refers to prostitutes. This mirrors what happened to former police commissioner Philip Kilonzo who died of beer poisoning because he had some information about the death of Kenya’s foreign Affairs Minister Robert Ouko some believe. Though Ruoro survived the two murder attempts, not many politicians do, but the stake and expertise are higher in politics. Thus political assassinations will be more meticulously implemented hence the fate of the Pintos, J.M and Mboya's of the time. In the recent past, Alexander Muge's encounter with a lorry resulted in his death. Similarly, Ruoro reports:

He[the lorry driver] had been instructed to smash my car... I was very lucky, because had he succeeded, it could have looked like a genuine accident. The drink in me would have made this look even more probable. This driver had not yet been arrested because of a lack of evidence, but a close watch was being kept on him (179).

As it happens with political assassinations it is often the lowly foot soldier who gets locked up while the master minds are either too amorphous to get hold of or there simply is no evidence to convict them. Ruheni is giving a story of a bank robbery and attempts to eliminate a key witness as a pop writer is wont to do, but circumstances and styles of elimination parallels elimination of political figures. Njenga the none-descript commoner who pulled the trigger on Tom Mboya was jailed for life while the real culprit who commissioned him has neither been identified nor brought to justice to this day. Kisilu who claimed that he had been given an assignment to scare an Asian was easily convicted for the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto but not of those who had given him the assignment.

Similarly Kiratu Njaga the school cook-cum-bank robber is identified in the parade by Ruoro the

witness. He is sentenced to 14 years and 12 strokes. But his son-in-law Victor Thiga the banker and architect of the robbery (and probably the major beneficiary), had nothing beyond suspicion to convict him – at least for the time being, a very familiar script in political assassinations. It took the efforts of Reuben Ruoro the good citizen, long after, to plant the accursed notes on Thiga to get him convicted. Even Amos Kega the hospital worker who had been tasked to poison Ruoro is convicted and jailed for Seven years but not the master mind. The author gives a microcosm of top dogs and foot soldiers in top dogs in crime schemes:

The Magistrate discussed the meaning of circumstantial evidence at length and then concluded by saying that he found Victor Thiga not guilty of any of the offenses that he was charged with. Victor was acquitted there and then. Then he read the sentences. Fourteen years with twelve strokes for Kiratu Njaga, seven years for Amos Kega. Then we stood up, bowed and left (183).

Thus *Future Leaders* with its intrigues of alcohol and sexuality turns out to mirror some intrigues in the political world.

In an allegory that echoes Odhiambo's claims that pop writer such as Maillu, Ruheni and others are more acute in their examination of social and economic realities than economic and development experts, the spend-thrift hero in *What a Husband!* shows the experiences of middle class borrowers. Kinyua's encounter with banks also reflects politics of local and foreign financial institutions. His financial woes and the treatment he gets from an imperial bank analogize third world countries experience at the hands of international money lenders. Such allegories betrays the writer's view on politics even as he, to borrow Kurtz phrase, is 'pretending to present to present an entertaining story' of a young man gone broke on account alcohol and of women exploits. Kinyua has very poor financial discipline because of his addiction to the two vices mentioned above. For instance, the reason for going to seek an overdraft is the dent he caused on his wallet and car as a result of drunkenness. Worse, he got involved in a road accident while driving taking home Helen his concubine. To this end the accusation against popular literature as undesirable because it depicts "the perverted and seamy side of human life" to use Odaga's words, is true. However, good can come from bad, Kinyua learns a Practical lesson in economics and its imperial face hitherto unknown to him. This is one of faces of pop literature that some of its critics have ignored.

Having gotten himself into a financial crisis Dennis Kinyua results to seeking funds first from his local shop keeper and then decides to try his bank. His bank denies him money ostensibly because of red

tape bureaucracy but in reality because of the insensitivity of a foreign bank to a poor man's needs. The bank is staffed with Europeans who after tossing him from one office to the other finally tell him that he is not credit worthy because he does not have security. Here, in a stream of consciousness he narrates his ordeal:

Then I head for my bank, the Kenya Ideal Bank, commonly known as the KIB. It was inaugurated in 1750 and it has never gone broke since then. Its reserves stand at many millions of pounds sterling, all in foreign exchange of course. All I want out of this is one thousand shillings, no more. Before long I am at the KIB. I head for the information desk (99).

Kinyua's ordeal at the bank is a close analogy to that of developing countries at the hands of the IMF, World Bank, and other western donors.

Kinyua is seeking a loan to repair his car which got smashed up in an accident though occasioned by drunken driving. Incidentally, many African countries seek loans from foreign banks to (ostensibly) repair their infrastructure. Further coincidence is that they more often than not have gotten themselves in their needy state due to mismanaging of funds occasioned by bad leadership and corruption

Like Kinyua at the mercy of foreign money lenders, our third world country leaders are humiliated, tossed back and forth and lastly presented with insurmountable conditions. It is telling that the word conditionality had to be coined for the conditions raised by these banks. This may explain the fact that they may not be conditions but just obstacles used to deny the borrower money.

On a literal level KIB is a typical imperial bank complete with European staff. Its reserves "all foreign exchange" inaugurated in 1750 at the height of slave trade and money in sterling pounds points to a famous European bank which exports its billions of shillings profits year after year. Jane Bryce in *Readings in African Popular Culture* has said that, "Pacesetter novels – which may superficially look a bit like Mills on Boon romances – are about confusion, survival, struggle, economic hardship, sexual and economic exploitation" (3). Although *What a Husband* is not a Pacesetters series book, it shares the characteristic of being grouped as a popular novel. Bryce's observation on the role of these writings concerning economic hardships and economic exploitation is spot on with Kinyua-Kenya Ideal Bank encounter.

Reason for Kinyua denial of funds and that of third world countries', more or less parallel each other. For Kinyua its security while condition(alities) for countries range from security to governance and human rights. Kinyua is asked for a title deed to a piece of land which he doesn't have, or shares in a

company. Kinyua is woken up from his world of hedonism. When he meets the condition(ality) of a life insurance policy he is told, the surrender value of his policy is almost negligible and that he would have to look for another security. Exasperated he says:

“Why do I need a security to raise a mere one thousand five hundred shillings? I have been with this bank for over seven years now. I have never had a cheque returned. Does my long association with you and my integrity mean nothing to you?” (101).

That he receives his salary through the same bank Kshs. 1,800 a month counts for nothing. Similarly, it matters less in the international funding institution whether a country has been meeting its financial obligations or how long a country has been a member. Instances of credit unworthiness human rights etc. will be propped up one after another leaving the borrower, reminiscent of the protagonist, humiliated. The allegory shows the social-economic duty of a writer whether pop or otherwise. The allegory resonates with Karin Barbers’ observation in the “introduction” to *Readings in African Popular Culture* when she says that, “In other words, these [popular] arts are about things that matter to people. It is not only explicitly committed art... that speaks to people about the condition of their existence” (2).

After warning the reader of the serious shortcomings of imperial institution, writer goes further to give a prescription; an allegory that espouses the merits of local financial institutions. The protagonist closes his account with the KIB which asks for security for ‘even five hundred or even one hundred or fifty,’ (102), and goes to a local bank Kenya Foundation Bank which unlike KIB considers cases on their merits. While in KIB one tries to see the Bank manager or even the loans manager but only succeeds to see the over drafts manager, things are very different in the local Kenya Foundation Bank.

The author narrates:

I headed straight for another bank which came into existence the other day. It is called the Kenya Foundation Bank. May be they will treat me as an individual in that place. This time the secretary was a black girl... In five minutes flat I was with the general manager. Not the loans manager or the over drafts manager, but the boss of all bosses in this bank.... He listened to me, he really listened (102-3).

A day after, Kinyua got the over draft. Compared to KIB this is a bank he feels valued it doesn’t surprise the reader when he swears to stick with Kenya Foundation Bank for life. Most Kenyan bankers and credit seekers have a similar tale about local and foreign owned banks. This is also symbolizes the drama at the international level. The ideal IMF/ World Bank bureaucracy, conditionalities and trading

of promissory notes versus the pragmatics of ADB/Chinese/Exim banks is now becoming apparent. It is not in vein that the frustrating bank is called ideal while the fulfilling one foundation.

The fact that Africa Development Bank came into the scene much later after IMF/World bank is a striking coincidence in the analogy. Besides it is run by Africans and their negotiations are not cumbersome. These are the 'mores of an emerging middle class dynamic and resourceful' Bardolph cites in *What a Husband!* but fails to notice their political significance. Significantly, after the favourable negotiations with the new bank, like Kinyua, borrowers get a real hearing. Kinyua will now be able to repair his car and has even money left to, "buy some shares somewhere so that I could make a start towards building up some sort of security. And believe you me, I would stay with the Kenya Foundation Bank for the rest of my days" (p103). To a large extent this affirms Tom Odhiambo's view in the paper "Kenyan Popular Fiction in English and the Melodramas of the Underdogs" that:

In a sense, Kenyan popular fiction, even now, attempts to narrate the everyday struggles of common People to integrate into new social and economic orders from which they had been excluded during Colonial rule (73).

On the international funding arena, it doesn't surprise us that developing countries and Kenya in particular are finding 'real' partners in the "look East Policy" who are providing more than promissory notes and conditionalities.

After frustrations with the West, reminiscent of Kinyua with European owned Kenya Ideal Bank, developing countries especially in Africa, are getting less tedious bureaucracy in the East and AfDB. It is thus not surprising that many in the developing countries have on metaphorical level, decided to stay with the new found friends like Kinyua literally does with Kenya Foundation Bank. The two contrasting encounters make a reader conscious that the reception and hearing one expects to get from foreigners is very different from one which one gets from those with a common national or historical link. It is such frustrations with the Western based financial institutions that informed the formation of African Monetary Fund (AMF) at the 23rd Africa Union summit held at Malabo Equatorial Guinea on 27th June 2014.

It thus can be argued that Ruheni's insight into foreigner's lending practices has remained relevant ever since, but has come to be appreciated about three decades later. Besides, his novels despite dealing with loose girls, detective narrative and alcoholism still finds space to discuss national wealth, security and even cultural identity. All challenges that dog independent African states.

2.3 Conclusion

In his three novels selected for this project, Mwangi Ruheni dwells on topics of “sex/sexuality, and man/womanhood” as noted by Tom Odhiambo, and his character “boarder on the vices of *Moll Flanders*.” as Morsberger observes. However, Ruheni doesn’t all together lack in seriousness of issues one being political consciousness. Towards, this end he gives allegories with political under tones at time subtly and at others more directly.

In *The Mystery Smugglers* the allegories appear in a more direct manner with the author using real geographical names. This may be from the fact that this novella appears to have been written with the young readers as target audience besides situating selected historical issues.

With the *Future Leaders* and *What a Husband!*, the allegories acquire a more subtle form perhaps because though of the same genre they appear to have been intended for a more mature audience. But one feature unites them all: the reader should be conscious of political shenanigans locally and globally and how they affect him locally. Further they teach the reader that one has a national role to play as an African patriot. For this reason the words of Stephanie Newell in, *Readings in African Popular Fiction* reflects the situation with Ruheni’s writings that, “Given the energy of local literary activity in Africa, it is necessary to reassess the centrality that has been conferred upon ‘elite’ authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong’o”(8).

CHAPTER 3

THE WIND OF CHANGE

3.0 Introduction

When the British premier Harold Macmillan in February 1960 made his famous “Political Wind of Change” speech in South Africa, he had in mind the African’s clamor for political rights which was evidently sweeping through Africa. In *The Mystery Smugglers*, one of Ruheni’s characters uses Harold’s political ‘wind of change’ phrase to express his fear on sustainability of Apartheid. This chapter is thus headed because it seeks explore whether the novels under review embody such changes and how they affect characters and institutions. In the 1970s Kenya’s literature experienced a boom especially from popular genre. Pioneer popular literature writer Charles Mangua with his *Son of a Woman* (1971) injected a wind of change in the literary production while David Maillu, Mwangi Ruheni and others sustained the genre with their many publications. Notwithstanding the fact that Ruheni’s novels were part of pioneer popular literature fiction, this chapter focuses its attention to the perspective that these novels inject(ed) political breeze in a genre known for its devotion to hedonism and other urban ills. However, as seen in the previous chapter, Ruheni comes out as a shy politician who disguises his politics in allegories. This chapter looks at how he subjects his characters to environments that awaken them politically. It should not be forgotten that at the time of writing, the author was a senior civil servant with the government. Perhaps this explains his choice to write under a pseudonym and probably his choice of pop genre. Besides, divergent political views were at the time being repressed; Odinga had been detained Pinto assassinated and it was about two years away from Ngugi’s detention. Therefore, the genre, use of allegories and submerging characters in environments that demand political change, were a safer bet for him to write politics.

Ruheni's novels despite variously being regarded as popular, which indeed they are, also depict scenes that transform characters politically. Further, political ‘digressions’ in these novels celebrate political change. As the African society came into contact with the West, culture was one of the main casualties of the clash. Therefore, even though ‘political wind’ will be the main focus of this chapter, it will also deal with cultural change owing to the fact that culture and politics of essence influence one another. The chapter will thus address the wind of change as it affects culture, and political persuasions of individuals and institutions.

3.1 Cultural Change

It is evident that African culture was/is under siege from Western values whose entry in Africa and imposition on them was largely a political undertaking. Reading Mwangi Ruheni, one gets a feel of political as well as cultural wind of change. Novels under this study feature characters during Kenya's most transformative years socially and politically from the early days of colonialism to a decade into independence. Socially, as Aschcroft in *The Empire Writes Back* says, a Post Colonial writer explores what happens when two cultures clash and one deems itself superior to the other? Hedonism, promiscuity, and jk display of masculinity in the novel can be explained as products of cultural changes as a result of meeting of African-European cultures. Western culture effects the African in various ways: the hitherto traditional society is gradually getting urbanized and as a result, a number of traditional values are eroded. At times, interference with African cultural believes necessitated a politically organized retaliation by Africans as is the case in Ngugi's *The River Between* and to an extent Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In Ruheni's fiction though, culture change does not galvanize people to a political course. Perhaps for the reasons cited above, the two progresses side by side but needless to say, they are interwoven for it is the political domination of the Africans by the West that brings about cultural hybridity.

For instance, Kinyua in *What a Husband!* is culturally a child of two worlds. He is raised in the Kenya Railways quarters where his father works and when it comes to marrying, he picks Rita Wanja; a rural girl. While his father is concerned with knowing the clan the girl hails from, Kinyua sees this as an archaic practice that has no relevance in today's world. So when asked what her fiancée's clan is, he says, "I really don't know, but I am sure it is a good clan. And now that you mention it, dad, what is my clan?" (21). When told to inquire Rita's clan because there are clans his Angare clan does not intermarry with, he decided there and then not to ask Rita her clan because he wanted to marry Rita irrespective of what clan she came from (22). This shows erosion of the African culture. Later this turns to be a near disaster when he discovers that he had married his 'father's step brother's daughter.' Had it not been for the revelation that his mother-in-law had numerous births before marriage, Kinyua would have ruined his family. It is as though Ruheni is telling us that such occurrences would not have happened had colonialism not eroded some cultural requirements. On a political angle though, it can further be attributed to disjoined families during the war for freedom, for it is during this period that Rita's father entered the forest never to be seen again hence, necessitating her mother to remarry. The novel though thus has a happy ending of many revelations, significantly a lost son (Ngarari, the former

freedom fighter) reunites with his mother and her revelation is a relieve to the protagonist since he knows that he is not in an incestuous marriage. It is perhaps for this reason that Karin Barber in *Readings in African Popular Culture* says of popular literature that:

Of course, this kind of text [pop novel] usually says only the things that people want to hear. But while it is true that people usually want to hear that justice will prevail and good people will be rewarded, they do not want to hear escapist fantasies.... Stereotyped characters and plots do not prevent writers from dealing with real experience, and if they wrest a happy ending from their plots, it is hard-won (2-3).

Ruheni's stereotyped characters like Ada Muthoni, the barmaid, who appear in many of his novels playing the same stereotypical roles. But the intricate family relation is a hard won happy ending in the case of *What a Husband!*

The intensity of Western influence can be attested by the fact that even conservative groups are not entirely culturally immune. For instance, though the gemstone society has succeeded to a great extent in isolating the villages from western influence, the same cannot be said of their agents without. While in the village they maintain a conservative diet of "rukuri" and the traditional hooch muratina, their lead agent Mbaru out in Nairobi doesn't; he takes whiskey after meals. Further, erosion is seen in that their city outpost though adhering to the requirements of the organization, they don't seem very keen to observe them, a depiction of the dominant culture transformative power. For example, during Kinyua's initiation into the groups "secrecy bond" he undergoes a traditional oathing ceremony akin to the Mau Mau's with skills, bananas, sugar canes, goat heads and the like. But after getting the yellow card, they sit to have a western drink, Ruheni says, "Kinyua orders brandy Breda Mbaru's wife knew what people in precious stone business prefer not beer or muratina," further, the intrusive third person narrator says, "you live on ... whiskey, gin, vodka, cognac and all the other bitter poisons that brewers have managed to make for the vain and the wealthy" (108). Politically, it mirrors the lifestyle of mineral dealers; while the miners labour and merely have enough for subsistence, the top dogs live in luxury mostly in modern cities.

In the city, pressure of western wind influence is apparently too much to withstand. The group that ought to be as conservative as the mining village seems to have given away some of their conservative stand. They don't seem keen to uphold the dictates of what they preach especially on drinking and foreign names as can be deduced from what their leader Mbaru says of the group:

How they don't use foreign names although there is nothing to stop one from doing so if he wanted. How they don't encourage too much smoking or drinking. By coincidence, Freda brought another round of drinks at that point (108)

As can be seen, the conservative villager leader's wife uses a western name even as her husband is preaching the contrary. Similarly, Ruoro, the protagonist in *Future Leaders*, has to wrestle with the meaning of his western name, itself an indication of colonial cultural-political influence.

The mix of old and new in *What a Husband!* at times produces a hybrid and at others a cultural dilemma among the characters. In the novel we see that the old take to polygamy as a natural practice e.g. Ngarari, Mutu and even the city based leader Mbaru. The same is not an easy option for the likes of Dennis Kinya and Mathew Gitahi because they have incorporated much more from the west both had contracted monogamous marriages.

Kinyua for instance, marries Rita Wanjira in a ceremony that successfully fuses the African and the western. With his father he negotiates and pays the bride wealth in the Gikuyu traditional way. His father even enquires of his fiancé's clan which is unknown doubtlessly as a result of his city influence. However, when all the customary rituals are done with, they finalize with a church wedding.

This hybrid wedding is monogamous so when Kinyua realizes that he is not getting a son with Rita and would like a second wife, he becomes restive. Since unlike his grandfather he cannot marry a second wife owing to the church doctrines, he results to extra marital affairs with Helen Wanjira. Escapism leads him to take solace in alcohol and promiscuity. Nici Nelson in "Representations of Men and Women in city and Town in Kenyan Novels of the 1970s and 1980s," says that "Sex and drinks are entwined in the representation of the wicked urban woman. There is a great deal of meeting and interaction in bars. Ruheni's male protagonist (*What a Life*) can't leave Ada, the barmaid, alone" (109). The same is the case with Ruheni's heroes; for example, Kinyua has a lot of hard time to extricate himself from Helen in *What a Husband!* Earlier, he had intended to divorce his wife so as to marry this woman who had just separated from her husband. These are some of the vices that pop literature has been accused of perpetrating notwithstanding the fact that it is, looked at critically, reflecting of the wind of social change from the west.

On her part, being legally married and without a child, Helen has to divorce Gitahi before trying her luck with Kinyua. The two with their respective problems would have had polygamy as an easier solution than the divorce they are both intending to file. Africans adoption of monogamy from the West can be said, to be where the rain of promiscuity began to beat us to borrow the phrase from Achebe.

Whereas alcoholism and extramarital affairs cannot wholly be attributed to western influence, prostitution and abortion can. In *Future Leaders* Ruoro and many of his colleagues engage in these vices. We see Ruoro with dirty magazines as he waits his girl friend. He wants to lay the two friends Pauline and Emma and when he impregnates Pauline, he induces her to abort nearly killing her in the process. In the olden society, such vices as abortion were unheard of. Odhiambo has in his paper “Sexual Anxieties and Rampant Masculinities in Postcolonial Kenyan Literature” observed that:

It is significant to appreciate the extent to which sexuality and gender are implicated and inscribed in this historic moment of the end of colonialism and the liberation of the native African populations. Yet this convergence of the politics of sexuality and liberation has not attracted due attention in African studies, especially in Kenya (652).

Odhiambo in this paper sees a relationship between attainment of independence and heightened libido among Africans as seen in Ruheni’s novels. Most popular novels of the post independence setting portray this scenario as do Ruheni’s three under this study. Read in a social perspective, *Future Leaders* reads like a tale of male characters prove of masculinity in conquering as many women as one could as if to prove that after conquering colonialism, their hitherto subdued manhood was yearning to prove itself by conquering the other gender. More or less the same can be said of *What a Husband!* Even *The Mystery Smugglers* depicts a fair share of promiscuity despite it being a tale of a young man barely out of his teens.

In two of the novel under study of this paper Ada Muthoni, features as an irresistibly attractive and destructive girl to men she comes into contact with. Since she works as a barmaid, she inevitably hooks or gets hooked to men who come for a drink and to find solace in the bar. Bardolph in the paper “The Literature of Kenya” has observed that Ruheni’s “plots are rather contrived and the characters remain stereotypes from one novel to the next” (45). In *What a Husband!* she cause of Wamae’s ruined family and nearly did the same to Ruoro. Magana in *The Mystery Smuggler* has to settle for a less attractive girl for the night after being rejected by Ada. Though not coming into scene for the first time with independence, formal prostitution is a social change that can be said to have coincidentally gained root with the coming of independence. A convergence is noted in that at the eve of independence, Ruoro gets beaten up for attempting to have sexual affair with a married woman. It is perhaps because of these vices that Robert Green in *Books Abroad* observes that:

Like Defoe, then, Ruheni writes of a people experiencing the decisive personal reverberations that accompany rapid social change in Kenya, specifically, political independence and the centripetal pull of the large city (836).

All the protagonists in Ruheni's novels under this study are either, mild alcoholics or addicts, an issue that can be attributed to the fact that with the coming of independence, Africans could then hold well paying jobs hence the convergence of heightened sexuality and political independence. Nelson has said that, sex and drink are entwined; Ruheni aptly portrays this fact in his novels. Unlike his father whose only job was to cook for a white settler, Ruoro is a young graduate whose first job is a Divisional agricultural officer, a job he bungles even before his first salary because of alcohol and attempt to snatch his white boss's girlfriend. It then can be deduced that with more income, characters tend to engage in alcohol and promiscuity. Ruoro drank his money even before he had earned it. Later, he loses his second job because of similar weakness. He cheats his girl friend with her workmate and then induces her to carry out abortion almost killing her. For this he is jailed and loses his job.

In *What a Husband!* the protagonist gets in trouble with mineral smugglers initially because he was misunderstood by a barmaid he was soliciting sex from and complicates his problems further by carrying on with the mistaken identity until it is too late like Nikolai Golgo's hero Hlestakov in *The Government Inspector*. *The Mystery Smugglers* also carries the theme of prostitution. Thus, the money economy slowly but surely brought change in sexuality as did political independence coupled with economic empowerment that came with Africanization. Of this newly acquired economic power, Odhiambo has posited that, "Inevitably, because these men had disposable income which they could use at their own pleasure, they indulged themselves in several ways. Generally these urban men had two significant modes of spending their time and money: they sought pleasure and leisure in alcohol and women (657). Kinyua and Ruoro economic enhancement that came with independence go in tandem with their heightened sexuality exemplify this observation.

Ruheni's novels under this review thus typify changes in the social-cultural fields that the young post independence generation had to contend with. It is perhaps with this in mind that Bardolph says of Mwangi Ruheni's novels that, "They are perceptive chronicles of the mores of an emerging middle class which is dynamic and resourceful, both puzzled and delighted by the fast changes in its life" (45).

3.2 Characters' Ideological Drift

Ruheni comes out as a political animal operating under the guise of allegories and 'political' pop characters. He creates characters who accidentally stumble into political reality that induces political transformation from political ignorance to consciousness. It could be for this reason that critic Robert Green has observed that some of Ruheni's characters inhabit qualities bordering on criminality and respectability. What Green doesn't mention is that some of these characters also inhabit the borderland between political and apolitical. One of Ruheni's characters in the novella *The Mystery Smuggler* uses the following words, "You Know the way the fast winds of political change are blowing these days. Our local supply is limited (39). Though the character is worried about Apartheid's regime source of uranium, it hints at the authors political world view. Significantly he is speaking from South Africa a country from which the British prime- minister in 1960 gave the historical "Winds of Political Change" speech. It is also the country that would become the last bastion of racial domination in the continent. Hence, despite Ruheni being an acclaimed popular literature writer, his novels portray elements of this wind of political change.

In addition, authorial political mentality is noted in Ruheni's character's dialogues. They often betray political innuendoes even as they are appearing to be merely humorous or satirical. His characters display a deep sense of history rare in pop literature. For example, in *What a Husband!* Kinyua complementing barmaids' sense of equality says, "I wish those girls could take over the running of the government of South Africa. Either that or they should be requested to look after the affairs of the United Nations (83). This betrays Ruheni's political opinion regarding the two institutions , but as a senior civil servant, who was barred by cord of ethics prohibiting them from engaging in politics, he can only make his characters let out such hints in dialogue. In another instance, a 'good time girl' in a tourist hotel is said to have "the bust of Cleopatra" (67) no doubt an allusion to the havoc she could case to the white patrons as did Cleopatra to Anthony. Such are the winds of political change Ruheni injects in pop character's dialogue, in other instances politics go beyond humour and manifests itself in transforming characters.

Though Ruheni's heroes like others in pop literature thrive in alcoholism sexuality and masculinity (Odhiambo 654), they are unlike Zollo in Kiriamiti's *My Life in Crime* or Chuma in Gicheru's *Across the Bridge*. They are politically conscious, a quality that can be aroused in the readers as often happens with literature. When narrating a bank robbery, Ruheni unlike Kiriamiti has the uncanny propensity to

invoke such historical events of the Second World War. He narrates, “My hand searches...for my cheque book. Just at that moment I hear some funny noises, as if somebody had attacked Pearl Harbour...Bang Bang from another direction... Lie on your belly” (129). Even world revolutionary groups of 1970s are accommodated in Ruheni’s humorous dialogues. For example, in *What a Husband!* the hero while commenting on the rough manner in which he is arrested by some two constables says they must have trained “in the Sinai with the Black September Boy or it could have been with the Tupamaros on top of the Andes” (183). Thus, in a general sense his novels reflect global political environment of the time. The authorial political voice heralds change to political consciousness of characters. Other than dialogue, the author portrays his characters waking up to political realities that transform them, or shows a generation’s change politically. This contrasts with Roger Kurtz in *Urban Fears*, *Urban Obsession* who wonders:

Can popular literature be taken seriously? After all these are stories that rely on formulas, clichés and stereotype, where suspense and shock are more important than originality or depth of thought, their explicit purpose being entertainment rather than the exploration of ideas (103).

The novels under focus in this paper however, portray changes that can hardly be thus labeled. *Future Leaders* for instance, shows originality in a pop hero who also displays deep racial-political awareness; he is an example of freshness in popular literature stock characters. Reuben Ruoro’s life is a present day tale of present Kenya’s urban ‘heroes’ chasing women, beer and good life of the city. On the political front however, education appears to have changed his worldview and symbolically his generations. While his father considers the white race claim and sense of entitlement as unassailable, Ruoro has the audacity to question, even challenge the whites. Education seems to have initiated this generation’s political transformation. Indeed, it is Ruoro’s generation that is poised to navigate the independent Kenya.

The criminal Ruoro for instance, attempts to steal his boss’ documents and later helps a girl procure abortion. His criminal tendencies make him get exposed to European racial-political stand that consequently causes him to be confrontational in political issues. The two crimes make him lose his job and get imprisoned respectively. While Ruoro’s political stand had never been complacent with whites, his experience at the hands of his white bosses opened a political trait hitherto unexposed may be because University and job environment expose different kind of European personalities.

We read of Ruoro's bosses Sidney Slater and Colonel Walker who because colonial order occupied senior positions than him academic qualifications notwithstanding. Sidney's qualification to be the District Agriculture officer was only showing interest flower gardening while in the army. In fact a

hobby was all the white soldier needed to earn the rank. These facts acquire a political and racial interpretation. He says:

In the evening you have a little leisure time. I used to water the flowers in the garden, you know, geraniums, perlargoriums, lilies, that other thing that looks like pyrethrum.... I mean chrysanthemum, that kind of thing. This interest grew until I found myself where I am now 34).

In contrast, one can see the irony in Ruoro who, paradoxically, to make it to Sidney's junior had to overcome countless exams at school and an almost insurmountable university academic hardship. These biased racial requirements radicalize his already anti-whites attitude first initiated by the state of emergency that had nearly caused him stomach ulcers during his days at Makerere. Given that he had to pass so many exams, he felt justified to disregard his less educated bosses, for instance, to transit from elementary school to primary school he had to pass common entrance examination which knocked many out he says:

Out of a class of thirty two, only two of us went to what was called the Mukaro Primary school. Only two of us, in other words, managed to pass the dreaded common Entrance Examination...The name was a big eyewash specially designed to deceive the natives that this was the sort of examination which any fool could enter and go through. Far from it, the exam was just a gimmick. When only two out of thirty-two pass an examination, then you know that there is a gimmick somewhere (13).

Thus, one is bound to empathize with Ruoro political transformation because having successfully gone through so many exams, he, in the job market, have to answer Slater a “nitwit” Divisional Agriculture Officer and a “semi-literature” Colonel Walker who is Provisional Agriculture officer as he refers to them. These experiences go beyond Kurtz’s label of lacking in depth of thoughts. The protagonist’s indignation for answering to a less educated officer made him change to a polemist. The revelation of disregard for Africans qualification radicalized Ruoro and from then on he despised his bosses and he never wasted a chance to prove to them that he was the better of the three, a thing that would soon lead him to be boxed into resignation blackmail and consequently a second re-awakening. However, like a true pop hero he embarks on drinking his first salary advance even before he had worked a single day. After two beers he immediately goes on a political offensive:

“Sid, you must be a very lucky man.”

“Why?”

“To be my boss. I have studied agriculture for three solid years after the Advanced Certificate. I

am a graduate in this subject, as you know, and quite honestly a graduate is in a class all by himself” (35).

He goes on to prove that an African can be as good as a European, and challenges his boss to give him “money, men and material” and he would see how he churns one good result after another. Presumably beer this time did not work on his libido as Nelson has noted but on his political faculty. Transformed to a real political animal, he challenges Slater to declare his stand on racial schools, “Sid do you think it is right to have Duke of York and Prince of Wales for Europeans, Duke of something else for Asians and plain Alliance or Mang’u High School for Africans?” (35) he asks. Perhaps this is what prompted Green to say that, *Future Leaders* detailed the misadventures of a young graduate” (837), for indeed the misadventure earned him a day in police custody and finally his job.

The provincial agriculture officer, the retired Colonel, is not spared either. When he joins the protagonist on the drinking table and tries to introduce a topic on Braemar Castle in Scotland, Ruoro straight away sees an avenue to corner the Colonel politically. He responds by asking him, “Do you know that Scotland was the first English colony?” (37). To the protagonist, it matters little that the man is the boss of his boss or the accuracy about English’s first colony. Unapologetic, he adds insults to injuries by saying, “So long as my agriculture is straight, my history can go to the blazes. I was very good at school on all that junk about the history of the British Empire. Do you remember the Nawab of Madras, for example? Or the Treaty of Waitangi?” (38). These in reference to how Scotland, India and New Zealand lost much of their territories and liberty. Contrasted to his father who believed that Europeans discovered Kirinyaga and that they were the first people to look at Lake Victoria, the political wind of change between the two generations becomes evident.

This new breed of Africans baffles the colonialists. The protagonist fires shots of the explosive issue of racism; he asks Sydney whether he agrees that, “this country should be ruled by the majority and not the minority” (36), a hot political issue throughout the colonized world. Prior to the discovery that Sid’s academic qualification was wanting, it appeared that Ruoro would have been okay to serve without complaints but this knowledge made a radical out of the fresh agriculture graduate. Though by the time of writing this novel Kenya was ten years into independence, Ruheni wouldn’t have endeared himself to the system by revealing his political mettle; his predecessors who had a subject for bitter lesson.

Not surprising, Ruoro’s radical stand also effects a similar change in Sid. The hitherto conservative

even reserved officer feels obliged to justify European's dominance, he retaliates:

But we should not forget that it is the Europeans who pay the taxes. It is our money that keeps this country going. Without us the African would go back to his tribal wars. Don't forget what this country was like before we came here (35).

It can thus be argued that the political wind of freedom among Africans at the eve of independence had an opposite effect of hardening of prejudices among some whites.

Apart from the fact that Ruoro is draining his first salary advance on beer in a three star hotel and with little success seducing bar maids, this section of the novel reads like a political debate. In fact one would doubt that the protagonist is a graduate in agriculture and not political science just like the author, a graduate in science who has excelled in the field of literature. Ruoro won't entertain even the Sid's realistic view that "politicians are demagogues" only interested in "lining their pockets." He can't fault politicians because in essence he is one of them besides the fact that in the period preceding independence, a politician would almost always refer to African nationalists. In fact, in a stream of consciousness the protagonist reveals his hidden self:

Politicians have either got something extra or a missing bolt somewhere in their heads. That is why they do not fear torture, prison, anything. There is nothing impressive as a fat huge politician addressing a big crowd and saying what everybody else would not dare to say. I think I have a certain amount of this fearless quality myself (36).

The way Ruoro had cornered his white bosses attest to a political wind blowing among the young generation and of his political fearlessness. Like most political liberators he is ready for any eventuality, and predictably he latter gets some of what he is attributing to politicians. As he goes on 'drinking fearlessly' as he puts it, he rests convinced that he had showed "this illiterate agriculture officer that I am no pushover" (36). This is a confirmation that his transformation to radical politician was precipitated by finding himself answering to illiterate white bosses. While he presents us with these political polemics, Ruheni is by extension also addressing issues of masculinity. It would appear like his masculinity this time went beyond conquering the female gender to the white race. Ruoro the habitual drunk however never wastes a chance to seduce a beautiful girl even while lecturing his bosses. Changing girlfriends and helping a girl abort could be some of the reasons why Tom Odhiambo in his paper "Sexual Anxiety and Rampant Masculinities in Postcolonial Kenyan Literatures" says:

In novels such as *Unfit for Human Consumption* (1973), *My Dear Bottle* (1973) and *After 4.30* (1975) by David Maillu; *Son of a Woman* (1971) by Charles Mangua; *Going Down River Road*

(1976) and *Cockroach Dance* (1979) by Meja Mwangi; and Mwangi Ruheni's *Future Leaders* (1973) and *The Minister's Daughter* (1975), the propensity by men to articulate their senses of manhood or masculinity through male characterization of 'women as goods', women as sources of pleasure for men or as 'consumables' emerges quite forcefully (656).

The evidence from the many women he deals with justifies these assertions, even as he reveals political side, portraying once again the convergence between empowerment and libido among Africans.

Like the veterans of the Second World War before him, Ruoro's is transformed politically after discovering his boss' deficiency and vulnerability.

Similarly, a mass radical transformation of African World War veterans is narrated in *What a Husband!* In this novel Dennis Kinyua, the protagonist, is transformed politically from his drunken stupor and for the first time is taken to the genesis of the Africans agitation for independence. From history we learn that fighting the World Wars made Africans dispel the myth of superiority of the Whiteman. In Ruheni's *What a Husband!* the mining village elders tutor the miss-adventuring Kinyua the hero of this novel, about Africans' grievances and the matters of the two world wars in which Africans were forced to fight for the Empire. By making these accusations the reader can detect the authorial voice that, it is from the world wars that Africans acquired ideas of overthrowing the colonialists. The author shows what a great pity it was that African's were made to fight in a European tribal war of which they knew nothing about. In the novel it is recounted how, "He [Kago] spoke with great emotion about the people who died in those two wars fighting for the Empire." (124). This insightful lecture shapes the protagonist's political and moral stand points. For example, though he had previously stolen gems from the organization, after this talk, he promises the elders to catch the thief.

The elders' revelations move the reader and awaken the hitherto apolitical Kinyua. Without stating as much, the author exposes the paradox that, while it was wrong for Hitler to propagate racial superiority of the Aryans over the British, it was right for the British to propagate the same over Africans and the rest of the world. They thus mobilized their world empires to fight German Nazism and Mussolini's fascism with no regard to the double standards played on its Empire worldwide. Kinyua leaves the village a more politically conscious person.

In *Future Leaders*, Ruheni makes Ruoro have a moral and a political rebirth. From a radical rabble-rouser we now see a potentially development focused civil servant ready to take the independent Kenya

to the level of self-sufficiency. He argues for taxing of the rich, self-reliance and against what he calls, “half-baked foreign ideologies and lazy armchair philosophies,” (212). This gives the Africanization process at the eve of Kenya’s independence a vision rather than a simple change of personnel. In popular literature, Africanization has variously been looked at from the perspective of empowering young men who in turn resulted to abuse alcohol and sex from their newly acquired power and income. Tom Odhiambo has identified the role of Africanization and its influence in masculinity and materialism, in his paper, “Sexual Anxieties and Rampant Masculinities in Post Colonial Kenyan Literature” he says:

In Kenya for instance, the process of Africanization that allowed native Kenyans to be fast-tracked into government services, the business and commercial sectors and most public institutions was reaching saturation point. Native Kenyans, it could be argued, were in control of the country’s destiny both economic and political ...patterns of behavior that signal one’s sexual proclivities and gender biases also seem to take on a similar consumptive tendencies (656).

Odhiambo argues that this process had its effects on materialism and consequently sexuality which is reflected in popular literature’s images of sexuality and masculinity. Rarely do pop genre indulge in depicting Africanization political impact on the youth but rather its effects socially especially sexuality. Apart from the womanizing character that Odhiambo has identified with the benefits of Africanization, we also see a young patriotic and focused servant. Contrary to Odhiambo’s observation, Africanization had a maturing and a sobering effect on the protagonist. The radical Ruoro changes to one who is cognizant of self (and at times selfish) interests in the global relations. He tells us that donor countries are not motivated by goodwill in assisting the poor countries to develop. This fictionalized history of Africanization process that took place during the early years of independence can symbolically refer to the young nationalists like Tom Mboya who crafted the economic policy of the young country. The protagonist has matured socially and politically. On the social front he goes contrary to Odhiambo’s argument of conquering women as he changes morally with Africanization. For Ruoro he had done it all and this was a time to settle down to serious business: he resolves to marry and forget Nici Nelson’s “good time girls.” At the political front, which is not in the domain of Odhiambo’s paper, he has mutated from an agitator to an implementer.

The atmosphere of change also affects government officials, police Superintendent Kimotho changes his views on the freedom fighters’ state and even becomes their ally in the impending confrontation

with government forces. The spy for the government observes the harmony of the village and falls in love with it. He says that the village is a model of community where human values are practiced. In this detective novel, the soldier defects and became the secessionists' spokes person courtesy of their political organization and probably what he sees lacking in the main country's government once again Ruheni immerses a character in a political environment and makes him see and say what a civil servant couldn't about the government. He says that, "The elders of the village council came and talked to me. They asked me to be part of the community, to lead the life of an ordinary villager, and to obey the simple laws of that community. I gladly agreed" (202). As their lead negotiator Superintendent Kimotho sees to it that they are incorporated in the main government. Here, the officer seems to defy the hegemonic tread ascribed to Kenya's popular literature by Jan Mohammed; to support the political and social *status quo*. The combatants also change their stand and are in the front line to initiate a peace agreement with the secessionists a perfect example of how the bane of civil war afflicting Africa's newly independent countries should be solved.

On the other hand, the crime narrative in *The Mystery Smugglers* shows more of political than moral transformation. The underdog hero Magana, not only gets to know of multi-national's underhand dealings with the poor countries but out smarts them, thus changing the usual tread and proving that even the mighty and sophisticated West can be out maneuvered by the weak and simple third world. His political awakening journey begins during his trip to Belgium; the school dropout gets curious why Dr. Libman is interested in Kenya's mineral wealth while he doesn't have any such ventures with the country. His curiosity is further heightened by his discovery of "an arthritis medicine that won't dissolve" hence his eventual discovery of the false bottom. Pursuing personal enrichment like his type in "my life in crime tales," the thief becomes an instrument in the transformation of his country politically and economically, a paradox of good being born from bad. From an apolitical criminal, he transforms to a patriot and even helps rally the country to the course.

The novel narrates an elaborate change of tides to the long established system of wealth exploitation by the west hegemony. Westbrook has an elaborate system of smuggling resources from Congo to Belgium, Britain via Kenya destined to harm African cause in South Africa. The pop novella that Kurtz labels a "my life in crime" spells out how even the poor countries can take charge of their destiny from the grip of the western European powers. This symbolic change of destiny goes beyond other crime stories in that it not only depict international network of smuggling, but also alters the policy and

political perspective of Kenya. In *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears* Kurtz says:

Classics of “my life in crime” group include the immensely popular *My Life in Crime* (Kiriamiti, 1984), *Shortcut to Hell* (Kitololo, 1983), *A Brief Assignment* (Ndii, 1976), *The Mystery Smugglers* (Ruheni, 1975),... among others. The story line typically follows the adventures of gangsters and thugs, both in and out of prison, usually with a moralistic ending that unconvincingly emphasizes the depravity and emptiness of all that has gone before (100).

Whereas *The Mystery Smugglers* has its share of crimes, what Kurtz doesn’t mention is the fact that the protagonist is a peculiar kind of a criminal whose action leads to uprooting of international mineral crooks and alters the course of the country. The thief is a Kenyan fashion of Robin Hood. Grouping *The Mystery Smugglers* with Kiriamiti’s *My Life in Crime* fails to appreciate the outcomes of the respective crimes. While Kiriamiti’s is a tale of theft and gun battles with the law enforcers with nothing but selfish criminal ends, Magana’s is one whose effects though accidental, propel the country to a higher level development wise and brings a political awakening. It leads to the development of nuclear energy project, discovery of uranium wealth and extermination of international nuclear smuggling crooks besides altering a variety of issues on national policies. This sharply contrasts to say, *A Brief Assignment* where Moody gang lives by break-ins into wealthy Nairobi houses. Ruheni’s is an oxymoron; a benign crime for the benefit of the nation while Kiriamiti’s or Moody gang harms all. To Magana, seeds of transformation were sowed when he saw the luxury Dr. Libman was enjoying in Belgium and even though his intellect didn’t afford him potential to interrogate the goings on in Westbrook, he had the curiosity to question why the Belgian was inquiring about Kenya’s mineral wealth while he had no dealings with the country. While Kurtz attributes a moralistic unconvincing end for this novel, it ends with a convincing political lesson.

Fusing a crime story with patriotism, Ruheni shows how gradually the protagonist mutates to an agent of Kenya’s security system. Granted, unlike other heroes in the other two novels Magana does not exhibit a lot of political actions arguably due to his level of education but he has presence of mind to know when his country’s interests are at stake, a new mentality for a criminal. It is for this reason that he hands over his stolen package to the university.

Hardly any of the “my life in crime” popular novels has remotely reflected the change of a criminal to a national pride. Yet even as Ruheni’s narrates the adventures of these patriots, he does it within a ‘my live in crime’ plot hence maintaining his loyalty to the popular genre. Magana acts like freedom

fighters who though lacking in education, were able to question colonialists' designs and even pool their potentials for the wellbeing of the country. A thief sacrificing his greed for national good is quite uncommon and can not only be viewed as a moral rebirth, but more also political.

Re-energized patriotism is also seen in Gitonga, the brother in the university, who though doesn't pass as non-political before being involved in the atomic power projects, his sense of patriotism is heightened after discovering that his brother had the coveted substance in his possession. He immediately informed his professor of physics and in the night they together consulted the police superintendant. It is from this dedication that the nuclear energy programme is born. After he is appointed in the nuclear programme, he is further re-politicized and works day and night to stop the foreigner's designs against his country. He later plays a crucial role in stopping the crooks from smuggling the university's substance to South Africa.

In a nutshell, the political wind wakes individuals from their apolitical and drunken comfort to chart a path for the country's development agenda. At other instances, a revelation of a country's history to an individual brings about a moral as well as political rebirth to a character.

3.3 Institutional Political Change

Novels under the focus of this paper not only narrate popular tales of Kenya's urban 'heroes' chasing women, beer and luxuries of the city and their rebirths, but occasionally, events that change the political course of a society. In *Future Leaders*, the coming of independence transforms the psych of different institutions. Where there was suspicions, trust begins to reign, where there was despair, hope blossoms and joy replaces past agony. While *What a Husband!* alters the authorities' approach in conflict resolution, *The Mystery Smugglers* transforms the country's relationship with foreign conglomerates.

At the eve of independence, the judicial system proves to have undergone some significant change. We see Ruoro in *Future Leaders* being taken before a judge and get a fair trial following a conviction in an abortion case. Not so at the height of colonialism in "courts which were not much of courts," (56) his crimes were garnished and the culprit is intimidated to appear before a partisan ex-military judge. Colonel Walker fixes the blackmail and when he comes to visit his junior staff it is to see him quit his job in lieu for imprisonment. Then the Colonel advised Ruoro:

“We shall make a compromise. A lot of these police officers used to be my juniors during the Second World War. They will take my advice without as much as blinking their eyes....But you must also play your part. You must contribute something. A letter of resignation from your job.” the Colonel’s eyes were now twinkling (57-8).

The police as shown were partisan, ready to take orders from their former boss and a court run by a former military man. A transformation is seen in that the court at the eve of independence is run by a real judge not a Squadron Commander. The accused is not intimidated and is represented by a lawyer. Whereas the case was more serious than the colonial fabrication, the accused is confident that his sentence is just. The accused says of the judge:

He admired the way the defence had presented its case. He admired my concern for the sick girl. He had also taken into account the fact that I was supporting my mother and her six children, and that I was a first offender. So he sentenced me to serve eighteen months in prison (121).

The earlier system, it was intimated, cared less that the accused had all the mitigating factors on his side; in fact the kangaroo court formed to ‘save’ Ruoro from the squadron commander law and order judge never gave him the chance to explain himself. Even when Ruoro brought his whole family to be seen by the Colonel, he relented not. Though the two courts were probably still being run by white judges, the spirit of independence is evidently transforming their sense of justice notwithstanding the fact that the first offence had a racial angle and the second criminal. The abortion crime even though reflecting pop culture treads and masculinity in post independent Kenya, as Odhiambo has variously argued, allows the court system to show its transformation.

Another institution that manifests the wind of change is the new-look police force. The populace’s attitude towards the police force is also drastically altered especially by the entrance of African officers. There is once again evidence that Africanization did more to African men than enhance their sexuality as the critic quoted earlier has observed. In *What a Husband!* it enhanced trust as well as, justice and fairness. It is for this reason that Africans now co-operate with police. For example, the former victim of colonial police injustice now has the confidence to trust the new police force to uphold the law, not the colonial force police shown in who would take a ‘civilian’s’ “orders without as much as blinking eyes” (57) that. This expectation is well fulfilled and the benefits of having senior Africans in government offices are realized. Transitional independence issues being handled in pop novel show the author’s desire to remind the readership of a ‘forgotten’ racial-cum-political reality in Kenya.

While pretending to be telling an entertaining story of bank robbery investigation to paraphrase Roger Kurtz, the author shows a growing trust in black police officers. The protagonist finds it easier to report the robbery to an African because he can trust him thereby showing what a change in personnel can do to a people's psyche and trust. To help apprehend robbers, the protagonist in *Future Leaders*, approaches the recently promoted African policemen and says:

Yes. I am a very good citizen, Kimotho. I have tried to help the police the whole of my life. Things are a lot better now because there are a few Africans in fairly senior positions in the police force. It makes it much easier for the general population as a whole to communicate with you people (155).

Weaving a bank robbery case with an African attitude transformation is a feat not common with detective novels. The same doesn't appear in *A Brief Assignment* (Ndii, 1976) for example that was written around the same period. Ruheni's novel shows not only the new trust Africans had with fellow blacks running the show but also, by extension, the distrust they had with the white officers. Owing to this goodwill the robbers are arrested and stolen money recovered. Evidently this could not have worked the same way during colonial days.

The major transformation in attitude is witnessed during Africanization. The government starts hiring Africans to replace Britons in the civil service. Understandably, after years of colonial domination it was a dream come true for Africans to be offered employment in the formerly whites only senior positions. It was like Achebe satirically said in *No Longer at Ease* that to occupy a Whiteman post or quarters was second to being a Whiteman himself. It is more than good news when Ruoro learns that there may be openings in the government for Africans. Even before this good news is confirmed, the protagonist cannot wait to share it with his fiancée he says:

‘Emma.’ I said, you know that independence is coming soon. A lot of Europeans are running away and there is a lot of likelihood that some senior jobs in government will fall vacant. I am investigating the possibility of getting back into government (148).

Of course this reflects the feeling of many Africans who had qualifications to do so. It was a national feeling even for those who weren't beneficiaries of jobs, to be free of the yoke of colonialism.

The incoming African government seizes this national momentum to fill vacancies with passionate Africans while to the citizens, the political wind of change is being realized in tangible ways. Government policy on employment has changed; jobs are no longer pegged on how well one observes British etiquette but rather on service delivery to the people and propelling the country to the next level.

The protagonist impresses the interview panel by proving that his vision for an independent government is one that can feed its population and is able to clothe and shelter its people. From a government that previously cared much on how children saluted white people the way they had learned to do during the Emergency (61), it now is interested in one's focus on development. Ruoro had been sacked by his white bosses for primarily not showing enough decorum to a wife of a senior white administrator but he is now being taken back by a government in transition to independence, all his earlier offences are forgotten. The officials are this time impressed when Ruoro tells them that, "no nation however rich, owes any other nation a living, however poor. Where international money matters are concerned, the first objective of any nation is national self-interest" (213). Although he adds that he didn't think the white members of this commission liked what he said, times were different and there was little they could do since the system had changed.

Political transformation of the populace in *What a Husband!* is not only celebrated but traced from its genesis. However, even as the writer embarks on this historic journey, he still maintains the course of pop literature genre. The hero stumbles on this history in the course of his pursuit of hedonism, which in a large way makes Ruheni's pop literature. Odhiambo observes that, "Beer drinking and sex are the two key makers of the lot of early urban Kenyan men's lifestyles, at least according to the fiction by Maillu, Mangua, Mwangi and Ruheni" (657). True, Kinyua's lust and drunken courage leads him to masquerade as a Ghanaian gemstone dealer. As a result, he encounters Ngarari and Kago former freedom fighters and elders of the mining village in the remote Northern Kenya who recount to him the history of what made Kenya's people result to armed struggle. The author, in the guise of the elder's reminiscences of the roots of their struggle and gives the genesis of Kenya's political history from the coming of the white man to liberation. In a way this can be seen as the first political transformation of Kenya's people as they united in their opposition to the colonial land grab. Thus, Ruheni tells us that, the Whiteman's land grab, and the Africans reaction to the same, was the reason why the Kikuyu Central Association was formed to champion for land and better wages for Africans. This culminated in "a big land commission in 1932" (124). This marked transformation of traditional society to political parties organization as we have them today.

In a literary way, the author highlights the genesis of political wind by informing the reader the reasons that transformed Africans from their traditional social setup to an institutionalized political society in the modern sense of the word. It was the birth of political organizations. A good slice of history is recounted including Africans sending a delegation to Europe to try and settle their grievances on stolen

land and labour. With a sense of humour, even understatement, the writer recounts.

There was this little problem of stolen land to settle. The salaries paid to the natives were not so good either. But the whites were rather amused to see the black man complaining. After all, the white man had taught a lot of people how to put on a decent pair of pants and also how to ruin their strong white African teeth by scrubbing them with a blush six times a day (124).

Through telling history in fiction, the writer fulfills his role of a teacher as Achebe has qualified. Ruheni does this while entertaining in fashion of a popular writer, for *What a Husband!* is truly a popular novel despite submerging itself in the anecdotes of history as related above, for example.

However, the desire for armed struggle was initiated by World War survivors who came back from defending the Empire in far away countries especially in the Second World War. That they lost life defending their oppressor was not lost on them neither, the fact that domination of white races by Germany was wrong as domination of Africans by the British. It is for this reason that countries under colonialism started their struggle for independence especially in Asia and Africa around this time. These are the issues that transformed agitation for better wages and against punitive taxation to an armed struggle for independence. The former freedom fighters in *What a Husband!* put it in perspective. Kago, who symbolically shares a name with the famous Mau Mau General Kago, chronicles this transformation:

Kago told me about the Great War which he referred to as the German War. Then came an even bigger war which was known as the Italian war. He spoke with great emotion about the people who died in those two wars fighting for the Empire. When the Italian war came to an end, a lot of our people came back from far off places. They brought a lot of new skills. They went round waking everybody up from their long sleep (124).

It is this waking people up that resulted in armed struggle for independence. It marked the real turning point in the agitation for freedom not only in Kenya but throughout the colonized countries. Under the guise of a popular literature narrative, Ruheni details how Africans moved from dialogue – sending delegations to England - to adopting armed struggle as a means to achieve independence (124).

In *The Mystery Smugglers*, Ruheni twists a crime story to fictionalize security and infrastructural change in Kenya. This murder detective novel is unlike other popular novels say Saisi's *The Bhang Syndicate* whose detectives arrest murderers but doesn't have political implications. Ruheni breaks new grounds not only by moving from local burglary and bank robbery to international crime story

spanning from Congo, Belgium, Britain, Kenya and South Africa, but also by giving the very crime a political implication; in a sense a literary wind of change.

After the security officers confiscate the smuggled uranium, the government takes measures to transform the country to a nuclear power generator. From a 'my life in crime' tale emerges one of the most progressive project in power development. The simple crime of theft affects the country's policies; the department of immigration is advised to be vigilant on people entering the country and that of mines to be vigilant in issuing prospective licence besides revoking the fraudulent Westbrook licence. The policy makers marshal all the financial and human resources to inaugurate Kenya's first atomic power plant. Thus the government sets up a nuclear energy committee to arrange for funds to be channeled to the University for this Project. Though the budget is exorbitant, the committee chairman pledges unlimited support for the project:

"Eighty thousand pounds? That is a lot of money" the chairman says, after which he holds his chin with his hand. He gets lost in meditation for a full minute, and then wakes up as if from a dream. "Can anybody here tell me how much money the Treasury has got?" he asks (93).

Thus, the discovery alters the country's energy, economic policies and undoubtedly politics for it originates from a multinational mining company fraudulent activity in the country. It is as though the senior civil servant is, under the guise of my life in crime story, advising the government on projects it ought to launch but way ahead of time.

Talking about popular literature Richard Priebe in his paper "Popular Writing in Ghana" says that "I have found that a consideration of the economic, social and political factors that have influenced both production and consumption of popular literature makes it exiting to study that literature in and of itself..." (81). To read Ruheni's novels, Priebe's observations are well authenticated. Though Kenya has not discovered uranium, the writer cautions of the dire consequences that have changed the destiny of countries that failed to put the necessary precautions he is cautioning and advising the government in advance. In other words Ruheni writes to blow a wind of change; project minerals as a blessing not a curse like has been the case with many countries and consequently, literature.

It is for this reason that after the Westbrook smugglers' fraudulent operations is uncovered, their licence is revoked and their operations in Kenya terminated. It is exciting to see the country transformed for the better an accidental discovery of uranium deposit, a break from the sad narratives that has become the

norm especially in Africa. The country now is wiser in the way it will be dealing with foreign firms besides taking a firm grip on its mineral wealth. The writer proves that when foreign prospectors act dishonestly, we should not hesitate to take charge of our wealth. We are told that, “Their license has been revoked and all their operations stopped with immediate effect” (73). Further the superintendent says he will communicate with the authorities “to be more careful with these prospecting firms” (74). This hopefully should alter the process of issuance of mining licence and transforms the country’s economy not to mention streamlining immigration procedures. By extension unearthing of the smugglers also saves the front line countries against Apartheid nuclear war heads that were intended to be manufactured by the same uranium. This hence means greater wealth for the country and a safer Africa.

In development, it is interesting to note that as early as 1975, Ruheni, had envisaged a project that Kenya only seriously started to consider in the 2009 when the government initiated nuclear energy programme. In the fiction, Kenya is poised to be transformed from a largely raw material based economy to a nuclear power producer through this accidental discovery. Westbrook had acquired a licence to prospect for lead meaning the mineral was to be exported unprocessed, but the competition of the two criminals result in the country utilizing the mineral it had left to foreigners to exploit. In this crime novel, Ruheni had prophetically transformed Kenya to a nuclear powered country thirty-four years ago. What is more in most unlikely of genres: a popular literature Spear Book novel. In the thrills of heroes escape and survival Ruheni initiate a vision 2030 in this novel as early as 1970's when not even the government had conceptualized such.

The novel reads like government propaganda, indeed *The Mystery Smugglers* belongs to what popular writing critic Jan Mohammed calls hegemonic texts, who quoted in urban *Obsessions, Urban Fears* says:

We can lump texts into two categories, depending on whether they are guided by hegemonic or counter-hegemonic impulses – that is whether they support the political and social *status quo* or whether they bring it into question. Hegemonic texts reinforce and justify the existing political order and dominant cultural mores. Counter hegemonic texts challenge them (105).

But closely analyzed one discovers that it is a counter-hegemonic text that is subtly questioning the administration on issuance of mineral prospecting licence, immigration policy, and advising the kind of project that ought to be initiated.

The writer may in effect be calling for a change in the mentality that Kenya and third world countries in general should adopt a do it yourself approach in the field of industrialization and energy infrastructure projects. Also, a change of tact is implied in the Kenya's security decision to exterminate the South Africans and European nuclear crooks. South African nuclear scientists together with their London and Belgium counterparts had chartered a plane to pick uranium from Nairobi to South Africa. It is as though Ruheni is advocating a military option in dealing with Apartheid system by African countries. Had things worked their way, the imperialists would have crippled Kenya's atomic energy ambition not to mention smuggling uranium under the licence of lead. Towards this end, the police department swaps the uranium parcel with an explosive to annihilate the whole team of nuclear thugs. The event changes Kenya from a pacifist country, to a passive combatant. Majority of what Jan Mohammed's calls hegemonic popular texts go only as far as showing criminals and social-misfits reform to virtuous and law-abiding citizens. But Ruheni breathes fresh air to this conventional pop tread and injects a political message to the readers especially the target audience: the youths who of essence are attracted by thrillers. Consequently, he didn't endeavor only to show Magana repent but also explore a different way Africa ought to deal with exploitative hegemonies and racist regimes. He had to make those stealing uranium from Congo pay for their crimes and indeed they do with their lives just as they might have caused loss of lives in Katanga. An explosive device designed by Gitonga the scientist and the police detonates at twenty thousand feet up in the sky skilling all on board the smuggler's plane. This though, should be good news to both Kenya and South African black nationalists.

Adopting a combatant approach to exterminate smugglers by Kenya seems justified considering that the apartheid colonel Schaaf and Dr. de Jong had intimidated apartheid's regime resolve to invade Kenya after being swindled of their uranium parcel. In disgust he had told the doctor that, "And believe me Dr. De Jong, if we don't recover our uranium in the end, we shall have to invade the country" (75). With the annihilation of the crooks such designs against Kenya and what Dr. De Jong calls banana republics in the north is weakened, consequently the course of these countries' political destiny is altered for the better. Very rarely do we encounter a popular series novel taking such a Pan African agenda.

Everything considered, Ruheni's *What a Husband!* and *The Mystery Smugglers* over and above addressing social issues like prostitution, divorce, masculinity and truancy, weave tales that influence the readers' political perspective and enhances patriotism.

Commenting on Ruheni's *What a Life! What a Husband! Future Leaders* and *The Minister's Daughter*, critique Jacqueline Barbolph in "The Literatures of Kenya" has said that, "The comedy of manners in the description of a new urban class is entertaining, but the plots are rather contrived and the characters remain stereotypes transferred from one novel to the next"(45). However, change in political persuasion by individuals and society in the novels under this study, are not contrived; they are artistically convincing and historically authenticated. *The Mystery Smugglers* undoubtedly leads the reader to rethink the need to guard our natural wealth and take security issues seriously. On the other hand *Future Leaders* traces the advent of colonialism and the genesis of national liberation. Transition to independence mirrors historical reality even as the author still maintains loyalty to issues pop such as alcoholism, abortion, dirty magazines and bank robbery.

Thus reading Ruheni's novels under this study, one gets the thrills of popular literature as well as experience change of characters' and the nation's political perspectives. The political and policy changes envisaged in the fiction works, is a wind of change not only portraying the country's changing political tides but also a fresh breeze in the popular literature genre.

3.4 Conclusion

In as much as Ruheni's fiction is about a generation caught in confusion occasioned by cultural clash resulting in urban decay, it also captures changes in economic and political spheres. Hedonism and the accompanying moral decay are the most pronounced wind of change, stretching from the advent of colonialism and gradually altering a community's way of life. However the society is not only experiencing a wind of change towards irresponsible alcoholism and sex; there is a sobering political wind of change that drives characters and social institutions to evolve towards social and political responsibility. As Ruheni the pop artist submerges his characters in situations 'warranting' hedonism such as empowerment of Africans, the shy politician also exposes his characters to environments that demand political responsibility.

Africanization for instance is a paradox that empowers Africans especially men psychologically and economically with an effect of sexual and alcoholism display of masculinity; on the political front however, characters display a surprising sense of maturity.

Though his writing is not counter hegemonic per se, the writer analyses history of Kenyan and African's by extension, through letting character say and do what his popular literature genre and position as a civil servant would not without a guise. The tread is in rhythm with his guise of a pseudonym in all his works.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

4.0 Introduction

The growth of popular literature in Kenya can be attributed to the works of Charles Mangua, David Maillu, Mwangi Ruheni, among others in the early 1970s. This genre has at times been accorded uncomplimentary labels due to what many see as its tendency to nurture vices. Popular literature however narrates a nation's adjustments in social, cultural and economic realities especially in urban centers. Probably because of this reason, the genre has often been viewed as apolitical. It is for this reason that this paper embarked to research to fill in this apparent gap.

This study took a stylistic and character development approach to issues political in the three novels under study hence, political allegories and the wind of change chapters respectively.

4.1 Summary

This project set out to investigate whether Ruheni's three novels despite being classified as pop literature maintained an indifference to political environment of the time they were written. In other words, I set out to see whether the author remained above the frays of political winds of the 1960s and 70s and just remained loyal to issues deemed the domains of pop genre such as sex and alcoholism. I wanted to investigate whether the author created characters who operates in an economic, social and cultural environment devoid of political influence. However, one of his characters in *The Mystery Smugglers*, lets out a hint by cautioning his colleague, "You know the way the fast winds of political change are blowing these days" (39). I wanted to investigate whether his works remained unaffected by such winds.

With an informed guess that a creative work has to voice issues of politics spiced with literary aesthetics, I had to factor in how the author fit in such a topic in fiction without sounding digressive. I hypothesized that the writer would employ literary features, allegories for this matter, to make political commentaries for his is essentially a literary task. For this reason therefore, I set to evaluate how political allegories portray the political situation in pre and post independent Kenya.

Since humans are social beings as well as political animals, it is only natural that human beings react to these two nurturing factors while they are being shaped by them. I had therefore secondly hypothesized that in the novels; character's that seem uninterested in politics do actually reflect the political reality in Kenya. Achebe in *There was a Country* has said the following concerning the role of a writer in Africa:

Clearly there is no moral obligation to write in any particular way. But there is a moral obligation I think, not to ally oneself with the power against the powerless. An artist in my definition of the word would not be someone who takes side with the emperor against his powerless subjects (58).

I also wanted to assess which side of power the author allies himself with in the above Achebe's estimations. Given the fact that the works were written during a period the country was adjusting socially and politically, I conjectured that the writer was encouraging readers not to give up to the challenges facing them. This was driven by the fact that the novels under this study and Ruheni's oeuvre in general, deal with social adjustments in a post colonial society.

This paper proposed to apply a number of theories. Post Colonial theory was chosen from the fact that Ruheni's fiction works were written in the post independence period. As a result, I presumed that the author addresses issues that affect post colonial society. In my research, I came to deduce that as a result of the author growing up under colonialism, many of the events he relates in fiction may have been shaped by personal experiences and observation than just fertile imagination

The theory assisted me examine the protagonist's experiences with the colonial administrators, system of justice and even colonial education policy. For instance, his father believes the British to be unassailable so does settler Creighton. Post Colonialism enabled me contextualize the Empire's expansion and decline in Ruheni's fiction, and by extension Europe's interference with Africa's natural resources after colonialism. Effects of cultural hybridity such as the significance (or lack of it) of the protagonist's western name were also very well unlocked by this theory.

Since when Ruheni adds a political angle to the traditional ingredients of popular literature he takes the reader down a historical journey, I needed a theory that would enable me counter-reference some fictionalized truths to historical facts. New Historicism came in very handy in this respect. It enabled me borrow from literary as well as non literary texts to authenticate some historical issues in the novel. For example Ruheni in *The Mystery Smugglers* insinuates the Belgian's hand in the Congo crisis and the role of mineral wealth as a factor to this. Through New Historicism, I was able to authenticate these facts from literary and significantly, historical sources. Closer home, issues like Africanization at the eve of Kenya's independence were easily close-checked from historical records. The same was the case with the genesis of freedom struggles, the two World Wars, Mau Mau and the 'lost' freedom warriors. In a word, issues of nationalism were well taken care of by New Historicism.

Stylistic theory was very crucial in interpreting narratives with political undertones. It helped me analyze what the writer had to say and how he said it to borrow Leech's words, how the author dresses his thoughts. That the author was not communicating through a history text or writing a political treatise demanded that he dress his thoughts in symbolism and other appropriate literary devices. Moreover, writing a popular literature fiction demanded an even more covert way to talk politics. Allegories and other symbols with political innuendos were thus unraveled through Stylistic theory. Even when the author is dealing with sex and alcohol, his character's dialogue and humor is often tinged with a political voice, Stylistic theory enabled me make informed deductions from a variety of features of style.

4.2 Research Findings

Besides Ruheni's works of fiction, my scope in research sort for biographical information of the writer. The facts I obtained about the cagey writer revealed that he attended Makerere University and obtained a degree in science like the protagonist in *Future Leaders*. He also worked as a teacher before being absorbed in the civil service presumably during Africanization again like the protagonist. His occupation as a senior government chemist may explain why the author reluctantly airs political narratives hence opting for techniques discussed in the preceding chapters. Significantly, Mwangi Ruheni, I found is a pseudonym the author uses Nicholas Miraguri.

The three novels superficially seem only meant to entertain in the fashion of popular culture, but I found that looked at critically, one can also infer a political interpretation from even seeming apolitical narratives. Some narratives in the novels under this study have sub-texts that mostly seem to call for a political interpretation. A foreign bank imposing unrealistic demands, on an irresponsible character may seem normal until the character senses a racial factor is at play. Such allegories have an awakening effect not only on the character in question but also on the reader. I found that through use of allegories the author's achieves a double impact; the reader is entertained while a political lesson is imparted.

To deliver political content, I discovered that Ruheni submerges his characters in sobering political environment, characters learn through sometimes not favourable experiences, but all the same they become wiser. A social, economic, moral and also political transformation was noted in characters who go through such experiences. Consequently, a community's political direction is also shaped.

In the interest of this paper, characters grow from innocence to experience, politically wiser with each

experience; in other words their political awareness is aroused and so is the reader's. Being immersed in the historical growth of Kenya's nationalism makes Dennis the non political drunkard start to play a nationalistic role. In *Future Leaders* Ruoro reveals qualities of a reliable potential civil servant during the interview at independence. It is as though the protagonist matures parallel with the country towards independence, morally becoming a resolute husband from a philanderer and jailbird and significantly, a visionary leader from rabble-rouser. This can partly be attributed to the experiences he had gathered from mistreatments he was subjected to by his white bosses earlier and serving a jail term respectively. These political realities do not only shape the behaviours of characters but also define the destiny of the country; experiences of history propelled the people to change tactics which were major turning points politically.

The writer gives lessons on moral rebirth like any healthy society would expect of a writer and on a political angle, patriotism and the fruits of determination. In Achebe's expectations of a writer, Ruheni shows solidarity with and resilience of the powerless to surmount challenging obstacles mounted by their powerful adversaries. Characters emerge victorious at the end even when poor natives are wrestling with the colonial might. In *Future Leaders* for example, the writer takes the reader through a journey where Africans like the protagonist's father were taught superiority of the white race to a time they take charge of their destiny. From being judged by how well they behaved before a European, Africans towards the end of the novel are replacing the very Her Majesty's servants. Seeing characters go through such a psychologically transformative journey instills the reader with hope and appreciation for resilience. Besides, one gets the feeling that the author is telling the reader that with determination no challenge is too immense to overcome. The young reader especially, who are the pop writer's target audience, will be encouraged to see Ruoro overcoming countless examinations, racially instigated sacking and even imprisonment to ascend to the rank of Assistant Secretary in the Office of the President.

In *The Mystery Smugglers* the same optimism is amplified. To start with, the young ill- educated protagonist outwits a group of professors and scientists and takes possession of a coveted parcel of uranium. On the (inter)national level, Westbrook which was smuggling Congo's uranium and almost taking control of Kenya's deposits is terminated. A young scientist Solomon Gitonga helps design an explosive device that extinguishes all smuggling crooks on board a privately chartered plane. The fact that a third world country can overcome machinations of Europeans shows that with determination even poor countries can chart their destinies in international circles. Thus the author, I found, gives a

message of hope to both not very educated like Magana and Kenyan scientist like Solomon that with determination and clear focus, Africans can achieve what they purpose.

The author I also found proves that there is hope for Africa's perpetual problems such as civil wars and secession. He demonstrates that selflessness and determination can solve major handicaps facing African countries without necessarily resulting to foreign assistance. Presenting a mineral rich 'state' that eventually merges with another one not so endowed is a lesson that the many civil wars caused by mineral wealth disputes can be solved without resulting to bloodshed. The never tiring group of negotiators is an indication that selflessness, resilience and patience is paramount in resolving potentially explosive situations.

In other words Africa need not result to civil wars or call on foreigners to resolve their political differences; moreover, natural wealth can be a unifying factor not divisive.

Therefore, despite the fact that popular literature appears an unlikely genre to engage in political themes, the two hypotheses were therefore confirmed and the corresponding objectives achieved.

4.3 Conclusion

The study has revealed that Ruheni's fiction though essentially of popular literature, features political events spanning from the advent of colonialism to post independent Africa. The author makes reference to real names of countries and places perhaps to situate events which to a large extent mirror such places' real happenings. The works also has a heavy presence of government's mode of operation perhaps owing to the fact that the author worked as a senior civil servant most of his life.

In summary therefore, a study in Ruheni's three novels that were a subject of this paper is a confirmation that good literature is neither activism nor propaganda but aptly serves aesthetical and educational functions. In my research of his novels, Ruheni comes out as a writer who well balances the above functions. As a pop writer, he maintains the thrill that keeps readers entertained. He addresses sex, alcoholism and such 'vices' that makes this genre earn the name popular literature. In the process of entertaining however, Ruheni imparts lessons on morality and also political awareness. He very well vents his political views guised in allegories, humour and dialogue. His characters go full circle morally and politically, to become virtuous and useful members of society. For example, Ruoro in *Future Leaders* is at the end of the novel revealed to be a visionary leader in civil service; a flip side of his drunken and irresponsible ex-prisoner. In *What a Husband!* Dennis Kinyua after a promiscuous life settles to be a truly married man. And while Magana in *The Mystery Smugglers* doesn't show full reformation, he is an admirable hero whose thieving paradoxically enriches the nation.

Political lessons drawn from the three novels were the main interest of this paper. It is significant to note that besides addressing known domains of popular novels especially sex and alcohol, Ruheni writes of 'super ordination and subordination, dominance and submission (especially of races) and governors and governed' to cite elements of politics as enumerated by V.O. Key. However, his is not fiction on political activism but narrations of characters who are all the while adjusting to cultural transformation, urbanization and bits of politics. We can read Ruheni's novels to unravel the hidden history, economy and politics even when he is simply pretending to present an entertaining story, to paraphrase pop critic Fredric Jameson,

Appropriate for vices of pop genre, Ruheni uses characters whose morals borders on Moll Flanders but through them, raises political consciousness like Ngugi's *Matigari* does albeit in a different way. His characters react both as social and political animals in a post colonial era thereby revealing the social-economic and political environment of the time. The three pop novels under the study of this paper remain faithful to Blessler's assertion in *Literary Criticism* says that, "All Post Colonial criticism, however is united to in its opposition to colonial and neo colonial hegemonies..."(243) as Ruheni narrates hedonism, he also shows a society overcoming domination.

In a nut shell, Ruheni's novels captured in this paper are formulated around sex/sexuality and manhood/ womanhood to use Odhiambo's words. They however allegorize historical cum political realities of post independence Africa. In other words to paraphrase Barber, "they aren't naïve and cheerful."

4.4 Recommendations

Areas that could prove viable for further research include Ruheni's image of women owing to the fact that his works depict women as either beasts of burden or sex objects. The image of female characters is therefore a fertile ground for further research. In addition, the author's scientific academic and professional influences manifest themselves prominently in his novels. For this reason, the author's training and career influence on his works of fiction can also be a viable area of study in Ruheni's works.

However, notwithstanding the scientific humour and jargon, Ruheni's are works of art that navigate the social, economic, cultural and also political fields.

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