

SYMBOLISM IN THE DRAMA OF JOHN M. RUGANDA

By

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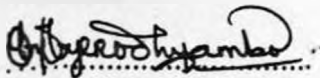
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This Thesis is dedicated to:

My Father: Benard P. Odhyambo Abuor, Wuod Otieno

My Mother: Salome Rading' Nyar, Wuon Oloo

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ABSTRACT

This study begins with a personal literary biography of the playwright, John M. Ruganda. It is established that his dramatic style is dominated by symbolism, and that his symbols are mainly derived from African folklore, political events and inter-personal relationships.

After an over-view of the position held by various scholars on the definition of "symbol" and its use - symbolism, our study proceeds into a systematic analysis of Rugandan symbolism, starting with those that specifically emanate from folklore. Within this analysis is a discussion of the metamorphosis of folklore materials when these are used in the creation of plays. An evaluation is made of the effectiveness of this technique with distinction being made where the folklore item forms the back-bone of the play, and where the items are used within the plays.

The study also examines the symbolic character types emergent in the works under four broad divisions: the politician, the intellectual, the woman and the common man. The development in the portrayal of each of these groups is traced from the earlier plays to the more recent ones. We discuss Ruganda's changing attitude towards these groups, and his social vision, judging from his choice of facilitators of social change.

In an evaluation of the effectiveness of folklore in communicating Ruganda's ideas, our study highlights the potential that folklore has for the future creation of literary texts.

This study sets out to assess Ruganda's contribution to East African and African literature by highlighting the grandeur of his work.

INTRODUCTION

John Mary Ruganda has, to date published six plays, several poems and short stories. He also has to his credit three unpublished plays. His creative style is dominated by use of symbols, for portrayal and analysis of the social and political themes. A study of the metamorphosis and use of these symbols would best facilitate a fuller understanding and appreciation of his works, however such a study has not been carried out. This study seeks to redress this anomaly.

African folklore, and the politics in most post- independent Africa, seem to be Ruganda's main source of symbols. Ruganda has stated that he is making a conscious effort to incorporate, in his art, the resources of his native language especially folklore. He states:

I am involved at the moment in an exercise where we are putting the story in drama form, trying to retain the theoretical elements and performing aspects of story telling, while writing the story down.¹

This involves conveying traditional oral folk material (myths, legends, tales etc) using traditional theatrical elements and performing aspects (like songs, chants, prayers) using the written media. This study intends to analyse the metamorphosis of folklore when employed in written creative work: the adaptations of folklore in creative work, specifically the manner in which Ruganda uses folklore to create symbols. The study will reach conclusions on his effectiveness in using the folklore to portray ideas and also on this technique as a general creative style.

Hugh Dickinson (1969) argues the case for the re-working of what he calls classical Greek myths to produce plays and other literary works. He goes further to stress the creative potential of these myths. Francis Fergusson in a short study on the utilization of myths in modern drama holds views similar to Dickinson's. He concedes that King Oedipus (by Sophocles) was simply a dramatization of a myth already handed down several generations, but in written form. Dickinson and Fergusson, however, do not appreciate the possibility of creating totally new works from these folk materials. They stop only at dramatization of the existing folklore. Dickinson while discussing a number of European playwrights who had dramatized classical Greek myths for the modern stage poses questions highly relevant to this study. He poses:

In using old matter in an original manner how do they transfer mythical plots and characters from epic and tragedy without succumbing to mere imitation? And how are they to make them acceptable and compelling to modern audiences?²

Dickinson raises two issues: creativity, when old mythical (folklore) material is used, and the effectiveness of the style. In other words, how does use of these folk materials enhance communication? For Dickinson this question arose because the authors he studied have merely dramatized myths, just as Sophocles did with King Oedipus.

Ruganda's technique of creation is centred on the deconstruction of folklore motifs. This study intends to show that the two techniques co-exist in his work.

In an Ordinary level students' guide to Ruganda's The Burdens, Laban Erapu makes very general remarks on symbolism. He states that the Regalia in Act One is 'obviously' a symbol. He argues that, these items symbolize status

and when they are removed later on his conclusion is that this shows the dubiety of Wamala's claim of ever having been up.³ He further states that this shows that, "Wamala had only a dubious claim to the status they gave. Wamala has therefore been going only on borrowed status."⁴ The context in which this regalia implies status is not explained neither is it taken into account that Wamala as a Cabinet Minister had status. Erapu seems to have accepted Tinka's derision of Wamala. The regal connotations of the regalia are not explored. Within a context where Ruganda lays blame for the chaos in his native Uganda on the abolition of the monarchies,⁵ a suggestion about former royalty deserves greater scrutiny.

The title The Burdens is interpreted as symbolic to mean the "burdens" caused by the marital problems faced by the Wamalas. These "burdens" allegorically open up a wide range of interpretations through which Ruganda's view of his society can be discerned. For instance, Wamala insists that Tinka is a big burden only good at undermining his efforts.⁶ Tinka, on her part, counters that Wamala would soon declare the children "burdens" because of their basic needs like fees and medical attention. As Tinka plays Kanagonago she refers to the common man as "a burden we have to carry. They idle away waiting for manna to drop from heaven of the men who've sweated...."⁷ Wamala answers that, the Kanagonago's are the "burdens" who strain the common man. Erapu ends up being very sketchy on symbolism, and even the symbol "burden" which he identifies is not adequately discussed.

In a review of The Floods, Simon Gikandi⁸ concurs with Austin Bukonya who interprets "the floods" as a symbol of the horror of the historical moment that is eroding human life in Africa⁹. In another review Margaretta Wa Gacheru interprets "the floods" as the death sentence on the islanders and also as floods of outpourings of emotion between Nankya and Bwogo.¹⁰ The wastage of human

lives within such a militarized context is alluded to. The symbol of "floods" opens wider interpretations, for example, when the floods are seen as the forces struggling to overthrow the regime represented by Bwogo. One has to carefully analyse the allegory to discern who these forces are - intelligentsia, common men or the military.

Bukenya (1986) identifies various symbols in The Floods, for example, symbolic characters like the journalists and the 'floods',¹¹ Nalubale, 'The Patron of the lake, the ants and the Queen Mother and the wall between masters' house and the servants' quarters'. However, Bukenya does little more than list these as symbols. There is no discussion on them. The nature of an Advanced Level study guide and its level perhaps limits a more detailed study.

In a study on "The Role and Presentation of Women in African Drama", Ciarunji Chesaina (1987) discusses only Namuddu and Matama of Black Mamba and Covenant with Death respectively. From such a narrow sample of Ruganda's women characters she concludes that his women are passive.¹² Chesaina explains this as resulting from Ruganda's patrilineal background.¹³ She goes ahead and compares Ruganda to J.P. Clark.

...unlike Ruganda who seems to be experimenting with drama, Clark is a seasoned playwright and has definite stands when it comes to his portrayal of his characters male or female.¹⁴

Chesaina does not elucidate how Ruganda's patrilineal background manifests itself in his characterization neither does she elaborate on the "experiments" Ruganda is carrying out. She does not study other women in Ruganda's work, for example, Tinka, Nankya Stella and Wairi. There is a marked developmental pattern in the portrayal of women in Ruganda's work from Tinka of The Burdens to the more sophisticated Wairi of Echoes of

Silence. This shift shows that Ruganda's women are changing with the maturing of his work. A study of these women along such a perspective is sadly lacking in Chesaina's work. Our study intends to correct this anomaly.

Symbolism in drama has received peripheral attention from scholars, despite the reality that drama uses symbols more extensively than the novel or the essay. Bamber Gascoigne (1962), in a study of Twentieth-Century drama, states that symbols are older than words in drama which has its "roots in primitive rites enacting in terms of mimes and symbols the annual cycle of birth, death and rebirth or the patterns of a hunt."¹⁵ He states that a dramatic symbol is any object that can be used in action, and further that this derives its meanings from the context in which the action occurs. He, however, ignores linguistic symbols which are also used in drama.

Charles Chadwick, in a study oriented more towards poetry than drama, states that the word can be used to describe any mode of expression which instead of referring to something directly refers to it indirectly through the medium of something else.¹⁶ Narrowing it down to a definition more useful to our purpose he states:

Symbolism can be defined as the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing them directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.¹⁷

Gascoigne and Chadwick agree that the symbol elicits ideas and emotions, and it is these that lend meaning to the symbol within the context within which it occurs. Chadwick introduces an important dimension to symbolism as discussed so far. He refers to it as an art that elicits the desired

ideas or emotions through unexplained symbols. A symbol should not be ambiguous, but at the same time it ceases to be a symbol if its meaning is not hidden at the superficial level.

In an attempt to clarify the difference between artistic and linguistic symbols, Roger Scruton states that the artistic symbol has a relationship to the alluded concept that is almost iconic. There is a degree of directness in the relationship as opposed to the linguistic symbol which has an arbitrary relation to the concept it represents:

Artistic symbols, it is often said, are distinguished from linguistic utterances in being iconic... the relation between the artistic symbol and what it stands for is somehow 'direct' in a way that linguistic symbolism is not... that artistic symbolism is not mediated in a manner of linguistic symbolism by rules of reference, but whereas the linguistic symbol is arbitrary and depends on convention agreed upon by the users, the artistic symbol does not depend on intermediate rules. The suggestion is direct, or as Scruton puts it, it is iconic.¹⁸

Rollo May, in the introduction of Symbolism in Religion and Literature, deals with symbols as they come in psychoanalysis and psychology. He describes symbols and myths as "quintessential forms of man's expression and interpretation of himself and his experiences".¹⁹ This strange lumping together of myth and symbol is explained by May's premise: Psychoanalysis. To him, myth and symbol are similar because both emerge from the human mind as it attempts to find explanations and give vent to inner contradictions. By illustrating the closeness of myth and symbol, May discusses what, we hold, explains why Ruganda, who emerges from a society that is still very orate, finds the oral tradition a better source of symbols than, for instance, the metaphysical.

Erich Kahler considers the symbol as "something concrete and specific that is intended to convey something spiritual or general."²⁰ The symbol calls attention to itself in order to convey an abstract idea. When in the opening scene of The Burdens, for instance, we are made aware of the presence of the items of regalia, our minds create a particular context for the scene because of the allusive effect of these items. Because of these items we deduce that the occupants of the house have some connections to royalty. Kahler's observation emphasizes the allusive nature of the symbol.

In a very elaborate definition of symbol and symbolism Hugh Holman begins by stating that, at the most literal level, a symbol is something which is itself, and yet stands for a particular objective reality.²¹ This again brings out the allusive effect of a symbol. Holman clarifies the difference between a symbol and an image by stating that the symbol is more complex, in that it does not only evoke an objective concrete reality, but also has that reality suggest another level of meaning. In I Will Marry When I want (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii) for example, the title deed is used as a symbol of the land belonging to Kiguunda, and all others like him. The title- deed, as a symbol for land, suggests all the connotations land has. It means livelihood, everything. Bearing these allusions in mind, the play's stage directions suggest deeper meanings;

As Kioi and his group enter moving close to one wall of the house to avoid contact with the GICAAMBAS, one of them causes the title-deed to fall to the ground. They don't pick it up. And because of their worry about seats and the excitement at the arrival of the KIOIS, KIGUUNDA and his wife do not seem to have their minds on the fallen title deed. Gicaamba walks to the title deed and picks it up (emphasis in original).²²

The action of causing the title deed to fall, the failure by the Kiguundas - farm labourers - to pick it up, and finally the fact that it is Gicaamba (a factory worker) who picks it up and restores it to its rightful place all carry multiple meanings. The concrete reality - the falling of the title deed - suggests other levels of meaning, for instance, that the working man - represented by the very enlightened Gicaamba - is the one who is and will be instrumental in the restoration of all that the fallen title deed symbolizes. From this symbol it is apparent that Ngugi et. al believe that the working class is the real revolutionary force.

Bukenya's analysis of symbolism is not very different from Hugh Holman's, he states.

Symbolism means the representation of ideas and themes through objects, situations or characters which may appear to be of little or no importance or relevance at the realistic level.²³

The actions described above involving the title deed may appear to be of little or no importance yet they represent abstract ideas and emotions which the playwright seeks to convey.

The term symbolism has also been used to denote a literary movement principally confined to France. Advocates of this movement saw immediate unique and personal emotional response as the proper subject for art, and its full expression the ultimate aim of art. Lehman describes its scope as trivial and outmoded:

By 1895, "symbolist" attached to a writer's name signifies little more than friendship and reverence for Mallarmé, to whom the honour of literary chief had reverted as an unsolicited gift; and with Mallarmé's death in 1898 it passed slowly to his grave.²⁴

Because of its obvious lack of bearing to our study we shall ignore this movement.

Our study views literature as a social product, and just as language (its raw material). It reflects and shapes the cultural heritage of its creators. The nature and functions of literature is correlated in that particular realities give rise to particular kinds of literatures. Drama is the most accessible literary form especially where a majority of the intended audience is not literate. Drama is therefore most relevant for cultural proliferation social and political conscientization, which are among Ruganda's aims. Literature within such a context is seen as dynamic, it is used as a tool for social commentary. Literature does not merely describe the reality, it intends to influence the recipients' mind and his attitude towards a particular reality thereby prompting him to agree with the author.

Nevertheless, literature should never revert to pure didacticism. It, and indeed all art, should not be overly prescriptive. It should avoid open proselytization and convince the reader by its hypnotic nature. In a study such as ours a balance must be maintained between the dulce and the utile. Our study proceeds from the theoretical promise that form and content are complementarily related and an analysis of one sheds light on the other.

Our study is guided by three basic beliefs: that through a study of form, in our case symbolism, the content of Ruganda's work is more accessible, that Ruganda uses drama as a means of social and political conscientization and as a means of cultural proliferation, that contrary to Lord's thesis on the mutual

exclusivity of the oral and written techniques of creation, Ruganda's works are examples of the co-existence of the two techniques, and that these works are not transitional texts.

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter I traces the actual and literary biography of Ruganda and gives brief synopses of his published plays. The predominance of symbols in his work is established as well as the general titles under which these symbols will be studied, and the rationale behind these divisions. Chapter II deals with the symbols that are manifestly derived from the oral traditions, for example, songs, stories and proverbs. The chapter traces the origin of the symbols within the oral traditional context to analyse the creativeness in Ruganda's interpretation of the materials. In so doing the Chapter tests Lord's thesis on mutual exclusivity by illustrating how oral elements are used in scripted drama. Chapter III discusses Ruganda's characterization. Most of Ruganda's characters are seen as symbolic and thereby representing particular attitudes and beliefs. This is divided into four sub-sections each covering discernible character types, these are: politicians, intellectuals, women and common men or the masses. Our study looks at each of these groups as possible organs of social change. The Chapter traces the portrayal of these groups in the earlier works to the more recent revealing Ruganda's changing attitude towards them vis-a-vis the changing times. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. It makes recommendations on the use of oral folklore in literary works based on the evolution of Ruganda's usage. It also assesses the effectiveness of the use of the same as a means of preserving the oral art form, and discusses Ruganda's reactions to the various social ills deduced from an analysis of his character types, and their reactions to these social ills exposed. The Conclusion finally assesses Ruganda's contribution to Africa's literature.

NOTES

1. "I want to share the truth with others." Interview with Mikaele Dolfe, New African Dec. 1980, p 52.
2. Hugh Dickinson Hugh, Myth on the Modern Stage (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1969), p.3.
3. Laban Erapu, Laban, Notes on John Ruganda's The Burdens (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1977), p.29.
4. Ibid., p. 29
5. Interview with Mikaele Dolfe, p. 51.
6. John Ruganda, John, The Burdens (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1972).
7. Ibid, p.29
8. Simon Gikandi, Review of The Floods in Nairobi University Players' production programme of The Floods at the French Cultural Centre 1st March, 1973, p.3.
9. Austin L., Bukonya, A Heinemann Literature Guide to John Ruganda's The Floods (Nairobi: Heinemann 1986), p.16.
10. Margaretta Wa Gacheru, Review of The Floods in Nairobi University Players' Pogramme of The Floods at the Festival of Small and Experimental Scenes, Yugoslavia March 28th to April 8th 1979.
11. Chesaina, Ciarunji, "Women in Africa Drama: Presentation and Role." Ph.D Thesis Workshop Theatre, School of English University of Leeds, 1987, p. 192.
12. Ibid., p. 193.
13. Ibid., p. 193.
14. Gascoigne, B., Twentieth Century Drama (London: Hutchinson & Co. 1962), p. 75.
15. Charles Chadwick, Symbolism, (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 1.
16. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
17. Roger Scruton, Art and Imagination (London Methuen, 1974), pp. 228-229.
18. Rollo May, (Ed) Symbolism in Religion and Literature. (New York: Brazillier, 1960), p. 13.
19. Erich Kahler, "The Nature of the Symbol" in Symbolism in Religion and Literature Ed Rollo May (New York: Brazillier 1960), p. 70.

20. C.W. Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: Bob-Merril, 1980), P.436.
21. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii, I Will Marry When I Want (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1982), p. 42.
22. Austin Bukonya, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
23. A.G. Lehman, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986), p. 16.

CHAPTER ONE

John Mary (Araali) Ruganda was born on 30th May 1941 at Kabarole, near Fort Portal in Toro District, Western Uganda of a polygamous father and very religious mother. (Her great belief in the Virgin Mary led her into naming John Ruganda "Mary"). He attended St. Leo's College in Fort Portal and Ntaare High School, Mbarara before joining Makerere University in 1964. Here he took the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) course graduating with an honours degree in English in 1967 whereupon, he began work as an editor for the East African branch of the Oxford University Press in Kampala, and, at the same time, co-editing Zuka with Jonathan Kariara.

Ruganda's interests and talents in acting, writing and directing received a great boost during his years at Makerere. He wrote his first play The State of Zombie in July-August 1965. The play was, in his words, "a realistic depiction of what was happening"¹ in Uganda at that time; the corruption that set in after independence. In 1966 he was elected Chief Organizer of Makerere Free Travelling Theatre (MFTT), (which he had helped found) a post he held for two years until he became Tutor-in-Charge of the group. In 1972 he became Senior Fellow in Creative Writing. Therefore between 1965 and 1972 he was directly involved in the MFTT which presented plays throughout the country in Ugandan languages such as Luganda, Rutoro/Runyoro and Lwo.

The influence of the MFTT on Ruganda cannot be over-emphasized. The MFTT was the brain child of David Cook, Betty Baker and a number of students including Peter Kinyanjui, Elisabeth Bageine and Nuwa Ssentongo. Ruganda's interest in the dramatization of folklore must be traced to this era.

Similar efforts have been carried on by Joseph Mukasa - Balikuddembe who also prepared playlets from the local languages specifically for the MFTT. Ruganda's economy on characters might also be traced to this period.

In 1971, along with poet Richard Nturu and others, he founded Makonde Group, another of several amateur theatre groups he was to help set up. While at Makerere he was Editor-in-Chief of The Makererean and Editor of The Penpoint. Apart from interest in writing plays Ruganda has from the early 1960's been writing poetry, short stories and some essays. In an interview with Leteipa Ole Sunkuli he states that he wrote his first poem while in Form Two. His poems, essays and short stories have been published in various journals like Umma, Busara and Dhana. Ruganda's apparent preference for the dramatic form is explained by his views on drama:

Since we are writers, handling words we are addressing ourselves to 20% that read and discuss (the intellectual elite). With plays it is different, because they affect people more directly.... Theatre has the advantage of being discussed communally and immediately.... After seeing the play, people discuss it or even confront the actors or the directors saying, "why did you do that? We are angry about this character, because he acted the way he did."²

In answer to another question he asserted, "you see drama speaks to the people directly; people see themselves in it."³ This unique immediacy makes drama a most viable medium where levels of literacy are still low.

In 1973, after leaving Uganda in November 1972, he joined the staff of the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi as a Lecturer. A year later he launched the Nairobi University Free Travelling Theatre (NUFTT) with a number of students including Kivutha Kibwana, Oluoch Obura, Njagi Gakunju, Betty Mahihu, Esther Gichuki, John Achungo, Lydia Kubo, Anne Atieno, Clarice Anyango, Abdu Magye and Arap Sang, who was Chairman of the Drama

Society then. The NUFTT performed plays in English and Kiswahili at various venues in Kenya. Giving the reasons for the groups formation he wrote:

African theatre ranks low on the priority list of National Planners. Between building roads and hotels, and subsidising theoretical ventures, the choice is sometimes embarrassingly the same CONCRETE. And yet talk about our culture goes on at public gatherings and after negotiating tables. Dances and musicians are dragged to champagne parties to flaunt themselves to donors and technical advisers - to prove to the world on our behalf that we too, have a culture. Thus this 'culture' is only significant when there are outsiders.

Are there occasions when we can perform our plays and dances to ourselves? Are there moments when we can laugh at our follies and absurdities without looking over our shoulders - moments when we can cry with joy at our achievements (whatever they be); and flinch at our tragedies without being prompted by those beyond our horizons? It was partly with this in mind that a number of students and lecturers decided to launch the Free Travelling Theatre last year. (All emphasis in the original).⁴

His views on art, theatre and culture are clearly articulated here. The aims of the NUFTT were: the promotion of local culture and the arousal of social and political awareness among the people.

In 1976 Nairobi University Players (NUP) another amateur group, was founded with Ruganda and poet David Rubadiri as the initiators. NUP's very important contribution to East African Theatre is summed up by Austin L. Bukonya, "NUP... played a vital role in the unparalleled development of serious African Theatre in Nairobi from the mid 1970's to the early 1980's".⁵ Indeed, between NUFTT and NUP Ruganda worked with most of the present day theatre personalities and actors who have also contributed to his creative process. For example, Odingo Hawi, Dr. Oluoch-Obura, Gachugu Makini, Dr. Kivutha Kibwana, Kenneth Watene, Mlagabezi Ka Vundla, Jimmi Makotsi-Makotsi, Mudasia Kadasia, Stella Awinja Muka, and Wakanyote Njuguna. NUP was Ruganda's attempt to harness and direct the dramatic talents around the

University by incorporating those not members of the University of Nairobi who could not join NUFTT. Thus NUP provided for actors, directors and writers from beyond the University a chance to work together, and to explore and develop various talents. The result was that NUP put up numerous plays of very high quality.

Ruganda's creative works have won numerous awards. The second prize of the 1972 Kenyatta Prize for Literature went to The Burdens. The second position in the Original Playwriting Competition, organized by FESTAC Eastern Africa Branch, in 1975 was awarded to Seasons of Drought (co-authored with Kivutha Kibwana, Oluoch Obura, Anne Atieno, Esther Mirugi and John Achungo). The Excellence Certificate awarded during the Makerere Golden Jubilee Celebration in 1972 went to Black Mamba. In 1979 The Floods won great international acclaim after it was presented at the Festival of Small and Experimental Scenes in Yugoslavia.

Ruganda's plays; The Burdens and The Floods had been on the syllabus for Kenya secondary schools since 1975 to 1980, and 1982 to 1988 respectively. The Burdens was toured around Kenya by the Nairobi University Free Travelling Theatre (NUFTT) The Floods has been performed numerous times in various venues. The NUFTT toured it in 1987. These plays have therefore reached more people than any novel in East Africa.

When Ruganda wrote his first play The State of Zombie it was as a reaction to the socio-political realities then. He says in an interview:

Where I was born in Western Uganda, we had a King, progressive in his own way. At the time of independence in 1962 the new constitution neutralized the powers of the Ugandan Kings and elections were introduced. Instead of the Kings choosing chiefs, the people now chose their own representatives, who happened to be very corrupt. The first thing that influenced me was this very visible corruption.⁶

His major concerns, since then, have not shifted from sensitive social and political issues. However, he maintains that he is not an ideologue. Answering a question, posed to him about the commitment of a writer, he replies:

There are writers that are committed only to their own writings, without caring about the outside world. I would not say that I am necessarily committed to socialism.⁷

Instead he professes a humanistic approach to life which permeates his creative works. He tries to understand society, human behaviour. In his work he paints a picture of hope despite such realities. He tries to "show what people can do for themselves, how they can share and live happily with others, without exploiting their neighbours."⁸

Ruganda has directed many productions, however, his favourite writer seems to be Athol Fugard. The Fugardian techniques: economy of characters and psychoanalysis are, not surprisingly evident in his work

In Ruganda's recent work an increasingly critical view of the socio-political realities in Africa is apparent. His earlier work are mild-social commentaries eg Covenant and Black Mamba. The later ones are overtly political, for example criticizing the inability of the intellectual elite to re-act positively to political events, despite being the most suited to do so, the development of a political-cum-economic elite in an alliance with the intellectual elite, the social position of women and other related issues.

Ruganda has managed to avoid the pitfall of obscurantism which would arise from the difficult situation in East Africa resultant from state censorship. This he has managed by extensive use of symbols, especially those derived from folktales. However, Ruganda has been accused of tending towards "more

introverted concern with the individual... in Music Without Tears and Echoes of Silence.”⁹ Gichora Mwangi has gone ahead to discuss elements of the Theatre of Absurd in Ruganda’s later work. The discussion on the absurdity of Ruganda’s work is not within the ambit of this study, and suffice it to state that we do not consider Rugandan theatre as absurdist. A general synoptic survey of the plays is important at this juncture.

The Burdens was written between 1968-1970 but first published in 1972 after Uganda had experienced its first military takeover. The main protagonist, Wamala, is an ex-school teacher, ex-cabinet minister, ex-detainee and currently a self-styled thinker, drunkard and slum-dweller. Wamala represents the semi-intellectual opportunists who rose to power after independence. He is a symbol of post-independence corruption and abuse of office. His attempt at seizing the presidency with the help of the "yankees" fails, and after serving a two year detention-without trial term is trying to survive in the slums.

His wife, Tinka, takes over the burden of maintaining the family. The couple is dogged by poverty and disease (Nyakake suffers from the contagious TB) and they take flight into reminiscences of their glorious, rich past. Their constant flights into the past is symbolic of a generation of dreamers unprepared to face the reality of neo-colonialism represented by the multinationals who are in consort with the local economic-political elite, represented by the Kanagonagos. Kanagonago’s rebuff of Wamala is symbolic of the same relationship between multinational capital and the common man.

Tinka and Wamala are unable to cope with the present, and symbolically end up getting destroyed. Tinka murders Wamala, and so will probably be hanged or jailed, anyhow, she is destroyed. Kaija and Nyakake are the inheritors of the neo-colonial legacy. They, without any hang-ups from the past are

probably more equipped to handle the present. The play ends with suspense as we wonder what will become of this boy and girl, symbols of a new generation in Africa. The uncertainty of Kaija's future, because of his disrupted education, is coupled with Nyakake's disease. Nyakake's illness is symbolic of the "sick" state of a majority of African nations as they succumb to neo-colonialism. Because Kaija and Nyakake are practically orphans (Tinka most likely heading for the gallows), their predicament symbolizes the rootlessness of the post-independence leaders and hence states. The roots, growing from traditions, for example, the Ugandan kingdoms have been destroyed.

Black Mamba was published in 1973, soon after The Burdens. It is a study of social and intellectual hypocrisy. The play revolves round the life of Professor Coarx, a relic of the colonial era, and a symbol of neo-colonialism. He has a great appetite for native women, and uses his houseboy, Berewa to get these women to satisfy his incredible lust. Berewa's action of getting his own wife, Namuddu, for Professor Coarx is symbolic of the collaboration by the locals with foreigners in "prostituting" the land and its resources. Namuddu represents the exploited class, not just as a woman, but generally the under-privileged.

Odiambo, a sociology undergraduate, represents the intellectual elite. His inability to act against the social ill he is investigating is a result of his failure to understand its full ramifications. This is symbolic presentation of the plight of his class. Odiambo's failure to expose Professor Coarx assumes greater significance when it is revealed that he is a government agent, a government that does not understand the problem of prostitution at all. This failure to expose Professor Coarx suggests he will continue with his exploits hence symbolizing the failure to break the neo-colonial strangle-hold on Africa.

Covenant with Death, published in 1973, is the dramatization of the

myth of Kaikaara, Goddess of Fruition, a tale well known in the Bantu-speaking areas of Uganda. Matama, who was conceived on condition that she was never to know any man, is on her way back home from a journey she took to flee from her people and the prophesy of Kaikaara, Goddess of Fruition. She is escorted by Motomoto, who is still in flight from his people and his self. Matama is diseased and at the point of death. As they rest so that Matama can regain her strength, they recount their past experiences.

It becomes apparent that they are both running away from the responsibility of having to face up to their societies. Matama's barrenness alienates her from her people and forces her into an affair with Bwana Duncan, a white man, and symbol of foreignness. Matama's "strange" dressing and make-up attest to her adoption of foreign values. Motomoto's sterility has the same effect. Taunts from his people, and his inability to bear them causes him to flee from his people. He ends up in Bwana Duncan's employ who bids him to escort Matama home. In the plight of Matama and Motomoto is depicted the dilemma the individual faces when at odds with society. Matama is unable to survive, barren as she is, in a society that sees women as child-bearing gadgets. Matama, more witty and more beautiful than Banura her childhood friend, is rejected by the society because of her failure to conceive. Motomoto's sterility makes him a laughing stock and he flees. By running away from these realities they attempt to cheat fate, which finally catches up with them. Matama dies and Motomoto who had seen a companion in Matama remains alone again to continue his flight.

The Floods, published in 1980, is perhaps Ruganda's most internationally acclaimed work. In it, Bwogo embodies various socio-political evils. He is "an executive", boss's cousin, head of the State Research Bureau (SRB), owner of many properties, political opportunist and a failed intellectual.

He is at once a symbol of corruption, nepotism, state terrorism and the economic-cum-political elite. Nankya represents the "pseudo-intellectual" elite who form alliances with the Bwogos for academic as well as economic benefits. She also represents a brand of feminism.

The play develops from Bwogo's false alarm that the islands are threatened by floods. His aim is to lure Nankya and her mother aboard a "rescue" boat which he has set his State Research Bureau (SRB) boys to ambush. Nankya sees through this ploy and does not board the boat. Bwogo goes to her retreat and in here a series of plays -within - the play reveal the horrors of the regime' represented by Bwogo and other socio-political ills in this society. The play ends with Bwogo and Nankya, who had formed an alliance as the "inseparable ones" arrested by soldiers, an act with multiple symbolic interpretations (these will be dealt with specifically in the following chapters).

Music Without Tears was published in 1982 and is a sequel to The Floods. Written in the wake of the "liberation war" that toppled Idi Amin Dada in Uganda, it analyses the issues that arose out of "reconstruction", more so the problem of the refugees, the "returnees" and the reactions of those who remained (the stayees) in Uganda during Idi Amin's rule. Two brothers and a sister, Odie, Wak and Stella try to live through the brutal regime after the death of their parents. Somebody then falsely accuses Wak of being an agitator and he has to flee into exile. When the liberation war is over, Wak who was feared dead suddenly shows up. Odie who shows great hostility towards Wak begins to conduct extremely sadistic experiments with ticks and ants. It eventually becomes apparent that Odie is haunted by guilt for having betrayed Wak to the SRB with the hope of being the sole inheritor of their father's estate. The play revolves around Odie's experiments. His torture of the insects is a projection of

the torture his mind is going through and hence his attempt at coping with Wak whom his deranged mind sees as the insects. The torture also shows the prevalent SRB system of operation.

Echoes of Silence was published in 1986. The play revolves round two characters waiting for another who does not show up. Okoth-Okach visits Njoroge-Njuguna's house to honour an appointment. He, however, does not find Njoroge. He and Wairi, Njoroge's wife, spend the evening waiting for his return. They keep each other company recounting their past experiences and analysing their present lives. In a series of plays-within-the-play they re-live their haunted lives. Their fears of the future, and refusal to accept their present, becomes apparent. Wairi clings on to the past symbolized by the baby cot, the doll and photographs of their wedding. Okoth-Okach constantly expects sympathy because of his withered arm; the result of some past accident. By the end of their evening encounter they have expurgated their mental fears and are more equipped to face their lives.

The Glutton appeared as "an extract from a forthcoming play" in the April 1977 issue of Umma. It has not yet been published as a full play. Man, who is also General and President, interrogates Professor, represented by a black gown draped over a black mannequin. The "Professor" ends up being executed when he stands up against the General. Matthews alias Mustaffa is General's next victim. He is sentenced to death. The state terror machine, that props up regimes like the general's, is represented by three assassins, Chui, Simba and Ndovu. Their victims: a banker, a millionaire and the Chief Justice are symbolic of the unrelenting professional or intellectual, rival economic elite and the rule of law-justice respectively. At the end of the extract shadows of the people the General had murdered return to avenge their murder. This symbolizes the forces of retribution which cannot be silenced forever.

Symbolism is the predominant technique used by Ruganda hence our

belief that an analysis of these symbols is the most viable means through which his plays can be fully understood and appreciated. The next chapter of this study deals with the symbols that arise from the traditional folklore.

NOTES

1. Interview with Mikaele Dolfe, p. 51.
2. Interview with Leteipa Ole Sunkuli in the Weekly Fraternity of Literature Students Association (L.I.S.A.), Kenyatta University Vol. II (Ed) Kisia Kidula pp.73-88.
3. Ibid., p. 74
4. Introduction in Programme for 1975 Nairobi University Free Travelling Theatre p. 3.
5. Austin L. Bukonya, Heinemann Guide on John Ruganda's The Floods (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1986), p. 2.
6. Interview with Mikaele Dolfe, p. 51.
7. Ibid., p. 53.
8. Ibid., p. 53.
9. Mwangi Gichora, Elements of the Absurd in Ruganda's Echoes of Silence and Music Without Tears B.A. Dissertation for University of Nairobi, 1989 p. 6.

CHAPTER TWO

The use of folklore¹ in drama is not a technique unique to African drama or Ruganda's work. Greek tragedy, for instance, rose out of the dramatization of myths and legends. African drama has used folklore very extensively. A story or song woven into the body of a play assumes greater significance when it is not used simply in creation of comic relief. This item of folklore, (song, riddle, chant etc) assumes significance within its new context: its function is not merely decorative, it is integral in the understanding of the play. In isolation this item would not have the same interpretation. Folklore being dynamic enables the writer to recreate: using it, to imply new and profounder meaning for the folktale within the new context created for it. Used in this way, the item of folklore becomes a symbol of some idea or thematic stance. Examples of this kind of usage in African drama can be seen in The Imprisonment of Obatala, Wovengi by Obotunde Ijimere, When The Hunchback Made Rain by Elvania Zirimu, Majangwa by Robert Sserumaga, Muntu by Joe de Graft, Aminata by Francis Imbuga, and most of Ruganda's works.

There are two basic ways in which folklore can be used in drama. As suggested by Dickinson, a playwright could use folklore as the central idea of his play and dramatize it. This is seen in Imprisonment of Obatala and When the Hunchback Made Rain. The playwright could also introduce folklore into his play to add significance to it by making the folklore item carry his theme.

Ruganda has used folklore consistently in his drama. This part of our study analyses how he has utilized folklore to create symbols through which he addresses himself to the political development in Uganda.

Out of Uganda's six published plays, folklore is used most prominently in: Covenant With Death, The Burdens and The Floods. In these he uses mainly narratives and song. Covenant with Death and The Burdens will be analysed together because of their inter-relatedness and The Floods will be treated separately though cross references are made because The Burdens, Covenant and The Floods analyse a similar subject albeit in differing times. Since we posit that these symbols are used to artistically portray the political events in Uganda, a brief survey of Uganda's early political history is necessary.

Much of Uganda's early political history revolves round the four Kingdoms, Buganda, Toro, Ankole and Bunyoro. These kingdoms had a common beginning in the Bachwezi empire, which lasted up to 1500. The Kingdoms developed similar regalia of kingship. Within this lacustrine region the drum became part of royal regalia and signified possession of power by a ruler or king. The years that followed the break up of these kingdoms was characterized by wars. The 1961 constitution allowed Buganda, which had allied with the British, a greater measure of control in her internal affairs such as schools, justice and hospitals. Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro were also given some self-control but of a more limited nature.

The Buganda Lukiko boycotted the 1961 elections because there was no assurance of autonomy for Buganda. Prior to the 1962 elections the Baganda formed the Kabaka Yekka Party (Kabaka Only) to champion the rights of the Buganda for a Kingdom. The position of the Buganda Kingdom had now become symbolic of monarchical aspirations. If Buganda managed to get autonomy then the other kingdoms could also claim for the same. The 1962 constitution allowed each kingdom its traditional ruler and semi-federal status vis-a-vis the Uganda republic. The elections that followed saw a coalition between Kabaka Yekka and Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) of Dr Obote.

The coalition won the elections and on attainment of self-rule on 9th October 1962 Dr Milton Obote became Prime Minister. On assuming full independence in 1963 Sir Edward Mutesa II, the Kabaka of Buganda became non-Executive President. Relationship between the Republican, UPC and the Kabaka grew strained until 1966 when Kabaka Mutesa II was ousted in a coup. In September 1967 Uganda got a new constitution with Dr Obote as Executive President. All the kingdoms; Buganda, Toro, Ankole and Bunyoro were abolished. Dr Obote was later toppled by General Idi Amin Dada in 1971.

Covenant With Death is centred on the myth of Kaikaara and the Goddess of Death and Fruition. The duality of Kaikaara as the goddess who gives life, and with the other hand takes it away, is embodied in Matama. She is a "child-gift" to her parents, who over the years had despaired over ever getting a child, who would continue their line by bearing them grandchildren. However, Matama is first a daughter; in this patrilineal society she cannot carry on the family name, and secondly she is barren. Since Matama carries no life in her Kaikaara has given life and death in one instance. This myth encapsulates the mystery of life: for there to be life, especially new life, something must also die. Matama is shunned by her people to an extent that drives her to flee her home with a white man, Bwana Duncan. Her flight from home symbolizes a break from traditional values. On her return she has adopted very alien values as exemplified by her dressing which shocks the country folks, "I say she wears trousers and her lips are very red. Is it dying you are, Matama."² Her flight from the ridicule of the men (arising from tradition) is symbolic of her rejection of traditional values and practices which see women as mere vessels for child bearing. Procreation is referred to using images of farming. The woman is a "farm" to be dug to produce children. J.P. Clark in Song of a Goat uses the same image of farming in reference to procreation. Zifa refers to his member as a

cutlass he uses to clear the land; his wife. However, Matama's return while bedevilled with disease, symbolizes the failure of such radical breakways or alienation symbolized by her flight with Bwana Duncan.

To a society that lays great premium on the ability to procreate barrenness is the clearest evidence of uselessness. Because Matama is barren, her noble origins did not deter even servants from pouring scorn on her. They walked past her and spat. Bamyia in accepting a daughter from Kaikaara, instead of a son, made a decision of life and death. A son, an heir, would have carried on the family name, he would have ensured the continuity of the family. He laments the end of his lineage:

My wife, my maid in desolation. I have no hope left in life I will tumble and crash into the dark abyss with no mark, no imprint, no line, nothing with which to trace Bamyia: Ruyonga's Bamyia, Bukuku's Ruyonga, Nkongge's Bukuku, Kabongonya's Nkongge and all of them, my grand, grandfathers end here.⁵

By accepting Kaikaara's gift he unwittingly marks the end of his dynasty.

Egged on by desperation, and his dejected wife, he accepts Kaikaara's offer.

Bamyia's reference to the coming gift gives hint that it is actually the chieftaincy, and not just a child at stake. Their search for a child is a symbolic search for a compromise between the traditional chieftaincy and the emergent rising younger anti-monarchists. This desire for a child becomes a vain attempt at survival, an accommodation of the chieftaincy in the new order. This symbolically brings out the conflict between the monarchists and the republicans in post-independent Uganda.

Bamya is strongly opposed to relinquishing his authority to the usurpers.

His outburst is the best indicator that the child, especially a daughter, means the end of the traditional authority and office:

People will not live my life for me. Let them do what they want or will what they will but I shall not bend to their whims. A lion roars, sheep merely bleat and fret. Should I let them play the lion's part? Never. I know the one who feeds them with wrath. He excites their mind to take my Saza. He wants to bleat in a lion's skin - let him. Where land and flood meet. It's the weeds that pay the costs.⁴

The image of the lion and sheep shows power reversal: the sheep desiring to bleat in a lion's skin implies the uppity "He", referred to as the one inciting others, attempting to take over the Saza. This implies that the traditional ruler faces threat of losing his office to a usurper. Bamya has no heir, however, it is implied that Banura's father, the Gombolola Chief would become chief on Bamya's retirement or death. There is, however, clamour for change from the traditional power relations which ensured this. Bamya's struggle is symbolic of the fight by the kingdoms of Uganda to retain their sovereignty. The usurping of this traditional power is referred to using the image of theft. Bamya says that inside his house all there are that can be stolen are stools, ancestral drums and the spears. These are symbols of office, more so of the Kabaka of Buganda. Dr Obote is therefore the "He" referred to as desiring to dress in the lion's skin - another of Kabaka's regalia. Kaikaara's offer, symbolic of the compromise that was reached in 1962 (when Dr A.M. Obote became Prime Minister and Sir Edward Mutesa became President) it is the "bond signed in a moment of despair... ill mated marriages."⁵ It was a useless unproductive compromise. The action that ended the Kabakaship was consummated when the bond was signed with Kaikaara. As Bamya and Kabooga reach an agreement

with Kaikaara, there is no signing involved, it is more of oath taking. Old Man deliberately uses the verb "sign" which has connotations of modern agreements like constitutions.

Matama is very beautiful yet Bamyia and Kabooga undertake to ensure her chastity, more so in a society where ability to conceive is viewed as proof of womanhood. This is as absurd as the attempt at a political marriage between the Kabaka and the Republicans. The Kabaka Yekka and the UPC could not get along because whereas the Republicans desired a unified Uganda, the kingdoms still sought to maintain the federal-like system, each retaining her own autonomy. The 1962 constitution gave limited powers to the traditional rulers in Uganda to appease them, just as Kaikaara gives Bamyia a daughter to appease his longing for a child.

Matama's barrenness symbolizes two things, the emptiness of the agreement between the Republicans and the Monarchists, and the barrenness of independence. The emptiness of uhuru is further analysed in The Burdens.

Whereas in Covenant With Death, Ruganda dramatizes the myth of Kaikaara, in The Burdens he uses folklore elements woven into the dramatic plot as a stylistic device. This is, stylistically, superior to simple dramatization of tales. In this instance folklore is used creatively. It metamorphosizes into a different referent. Here, therefore, is put to test Albert B. Lord's contention that there is mutual exclusivity between the written and the oral technique of creation. Covenant With Death and The Burdens have elements of oral and written creative methods.

An analysis of the image of the "storms" in Covenant with Death will be looked at in close juxtaposition to the same image used in The Burdens. Within this analysis it will be apparent that ideas mooted in Covenant With Death reach stylistic maturity in The Burdens.

In Covenant With Death, a soothsayer predicts a coming storm thus:

What's This covenant you broke with Kaikara? I fear you can no longer stand the storm... A roaring storm is approaching. It's no longer in silent pursuit... A silent storm from where you are going.⁶

Bamya similarly recalls the words of a certain "traveller-man tramping the roads", I see the storm felling big trees of the homestead; I see whirling leaves and reeds crumbling...⁷ This storm, or thunder, that causes Bamya's death symbolizes a transition from the old to the new. The image of big trees also fits into the power-relations. The big trees, which one assumes have deep roots, like the traditions, represent the kingdoms. The Republican onslaught is symbolized by the storm felling the trees.

The tragedy in which Bamya dies came in three stages. The first storm: the face of the sky darkened, turned soot-black and everybody was frightened. Then suddenly "like charging arrows, the rain came in a volley, in pillar"⁸ and only fell on the village on the hill. Next ghosts appeared and "the thunder gave resounding peal and (I thought) the heavens had been torn asunder."⁹ It was after this that everybody collapsed and Bamya died. This storm that fell the big trees in the homestead is Uganda's independence constitution of 1962 which greatly reduced the authority of the traditional rulers. Bamya laments the lack of unity among the traditional rulers that made possible their defeat.

Sterile sands we are indeed. Packed together uneasily, but scattering afar when the storm rages and washed apart when the flood masturbates. We have no root.¹⁰

The idea of self-indulgence of the usurper is contained in the image of masturbation. The attached upon the kingdoms was purely as a result of a particular person seeking to inflate his own ego.

Where the trees fell it was inevitable that the reeds would just crumble. The crumbling of the reeds symbolizes the 1965/66 palace invasion by Dr. Obote. The final storm is the 1967 abolition of the four kingdoms of Toro, Ankole, Bunyoro and Buganda.

The same image is used in The burdens. Kaija pleads with his mother, Tinka to narrate to him a story. After much hesitation she consents and begins. Kaija, however, notices that the introduction of the story is an addition. Tinka recounts that there was a big palace on the hill which was blown down by the storm. The story also has a song. though these additions might attest to the dynamic nature of folklore, in that every variant is different and can be developed, it brings in added elements: the storm, palace and the song. These elements add significance to the story and song. This is even more of consequence because these additions do not logically connect to the Ngoma story. It is the addition of these elements that suggest that Ruganda is actually suggesting more than what a superficial reading of the story implies. The inclusion of the palace introduces the idea of nobility, a dynasty destroyed in stages. The stages through which the destruction of the palace occurs has a parallel to Bamya's catastrophe. Tinka's story states that "first there was a strong wind that scared the chicks"¹¹. Next followed the storm that "wrecked the foundation of the palace, battered down the reed fence"¹², just as Bamya says above, that, the Kingdom scattered afar when the storm raged. There is great emphasis on the idea that the storm disrupted the prevailing tranquillity. In The Covenant With Death the storm is preceded by jubilation: even the first frightening downpour does not distract the celebrants from the feasting, drinking

and dancing. Only the final thunderstorm fells everybody. In The Burdens there is tranquillity, orderliness and peace before the storm. This first storm is that which reduced the powers of the Omugabe of Ankole, Omukama of Toro and Kabaka of Buganda. The hill, from which ran a maze of paths in The Burdens story, suggests Mengo Hill on which the Kabaka's place was situated. It is also the only hill upon which it was raining prior to Bamy's tragedy.

The second storm that wrecked the foundation of the palace, battered down the reed fence and scattered the thatch far and wide symbolically presents Dr. Obote's 1966 invasion of the Kabaka's palace, and the subsequent confrontation between the monarchists and the republicans. This resulted in Kabaka Mutesa II fleeing to exile in Britain. It symbolizes also the September 1967 constitutional changes, which abolished the kingdoms in Uganda, just as Bamy's death marks the end of his dynasty. Bamy's death symbolizes the end of the kingdoms since he is the keeper of the stools, drums and spears.¹³

The allusion to the battering down of the reed fence also signifies the abolition of the kingdoms and their forced incorporation into the rest of Uganda. The reed fence symbolizes the frontiers of the monarchy. Reeds were used to build the Kabaka's palace and the fence around it. In David Rubadiri's poem¹⁴ "Stanley Meets Mutesa" in An Introduction to East African Poetry Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1976, the image of reeds is used to symbolize the Buganda empire. When the reed fence is opened and "the west is let in" it symbolizes the opening up of the Buganda Kingdom to the Europeans.

Ruganda states his position in this conflict between the republicans and the monarchists. He seems to suggest a marriage between the two extremes.

The good found in the traditional kingdoms and the good in republicanism, especially national unity. Uganda is on record condemning the complete overhaul of the kingdoms.

The idea of a union between the commoner and the royals is carried in The Burdens. Tinka tells the story of the leper who climbed the Mvule tree and brought down Ngoma's beautiful gourd as beautiful as Matama. Since Ngoma has no heir except the daughter Nyenje, it is implied that she would be heir and she and her husband would rule over the father's domain. The leper competes with people of high social esteem but it is him, the lowest in the social ladder, who succeeds in the test of bringing down Nyenje's umbilical cord from the top of a very tall Mvule tree. The story of Nyenje, Ngoma's beautiful daughter who had her umbilical cord in a gourd symbolizes the struggle for power between the commoners and the royals. The leper reaching out for the gourd with the umbilical cord symbolizes the common man reaching out for the positions of the kings. Jan Vansina explains the significance of umbilical cords within this Buganda context:

In Buganda a ceremony was held at the new moon at which urns (gourds) containing the umbilical cords of all former kings, kings's sisters and queen-mothers were brought to court. As he passed before the reigning King, the bearer of each urn shouted out the name of the owner of the urn he carried.¹⁵

This implies that Nyenje was either the King's sister or the queen-mother. The latter is less probable. The leper winning Nyenje's hand in marriage therefore becomes the heir to Ngoma's throne (though in Buganda the Kabakaship was not automatically inherited since the Lukiiko had to nominate one from among the late Kabaka's sons). The union between common leper and Nyenje symbolizes the union between common man and royals in building a new Uganda. At the same time it also symbolizes the desecration of royalty by the commoners like Obote.

To a great extent, Tinka and Wamala carry on this symbolic relationship. Wamala enters at the point in Tinka's story where the leper, "stinking with leprosy and commonness"¹⁶ succeeds in bringing down the gourd. Ruganda synchronizes his entry with this reference so that it is clear that this reference applies to Wamala: he is Tinka's leper. Therefore, folklore is used to directly refer to a theme in the play. Tinka who is the daughter of a chief, like Matama and Ngoma, uses this story to show her present disappointment in their marriage. Wamala, a commoner, had managed to win the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage. Her perception of him now is that he is not suitable as a husband. This explains Tinka's bitterness and refusal to admit that Wamala was up at one time. Ruganda uses this technique of action/reference synchrony in Black Mamba. At the moment Professor Coarx is stating that it would be difficult to prove that one consorted with prostitutes unless one is caught red-handed, Namuddu bursts in and he is caught, hence exposing his hypocritical righteousness.¹⁷ The same technique is used in Music Without Tears, but will be expounded on in the next Chapter. Action/reference synchrony is a step ahead of simple spectacular action in drama, because within it there is the element of dramatic or interior action. The spectacle, because of the reference, tells us something of character, for instance that the relationship between Tinka and Wamala or Professor Coarx is built on double standards.

At one level, Wamala is representative of the common man and at the other the monarchists. Wamala, despite the odds against him, succeeds in buying a bed for Kaija. Being able to buy the bed is like a test to his manhood, and his position as head of his family, especially where Tinka has not forgotten her royal background. Acquiring the bed is an assertion that he is still head of his house despite being of common origin. In Act I Wamala comes on stage dragging the bed just as in the folktale the leper comes in dragging misery behind him.¹⁸

Ruganda's use of similar verb "dragging" to describe the action reinforces the parallels between the folktale and the play. The folktale is not simply an independent addition or embellishment but has thematic significance.

Tinka also uses images that imply leprosy in reference to Wamala, "Flattery that's what it is. Mere flattery... when a leper is around you can't talk about boils can you?"¹⁹ Wamala is a "mere" teacher who rose, like the leper, to the top. After Wamala falls from grace he is ostracized by his former associates. The "Old Veteran" with whom he fought for independence is insulated from him by foreign secretaries and security men. Wamala becomes the laughing stock in his encounter with Kanagonago. He is ridiculed just as the leper was as he sought to climb the Mvule tree. Kanagonago refers to the common-man as "penniless little men"²⁰ "a burden we have to carry"²¹ "lice squashing idiots"²² "dispensable pigs."²³ The common man's struggle to better his lot is symbolized by the leper's toil to get the gourd. Hence the leper's victory symbolizes the triumph of the underdogs over the powerful.

Ruganda shows the faith he has in the eventuality of the common men emerging victorious in their struggle. Those in positions of authority, like Kanagonago, have little faith in the strength of the common man or his ability to assert himself. Kanagonago reassures himself that as long as one has money one can "spit on their decrepit faces."²⁴

Ruganda strongly believes in the capability of the common man to turn tables against the oppressor. Wamala's rise (is) represents this possibility. However, as in Greek tragedy, Wamala's Hubris Hamatia is his greed. When he had risen up to the level of Minister he sought a higher office. Even as a pauper, Wamala's dreams are dominated by illusions of acquiring wealth and position.

In both Covenant With Death and The Burdens a synthesis of the traditional and the modern is suggested as a solution to Uganda's problems. In The Burdens the song "Guns to Play the Drums", carries this idea.

Your father, dear son, has gone away
Has gone away to the land of light
The land of Light where the earth doesn't grow

The land of light where guns play drums on the snow

They have rotted the spears in your father's hut.

In your father's hut where there's a sharp knife.

A sharp knife for cutting fresh meat. The meat of the enemies
we'll have to eat.

The meat of the enemies can be tender sometimes 10

Can be tender when the heart is full of sorrow
Your father dear son has gone away
Has gone away to bring guns to play the drums.²⁵

In this song a mother consoles her son, whose father has gone away to a distant land. The second stanza (that Ruganda states talks about Revolution)²⁶ has an element of double entendre. There is the mention of "cutting" and "eating" the meat of the enemies. This could imply cannibalism - or a fight against these enemies. The same is conveyed by stating that the meat of the enemies can be tender (as food? or for attack?). At the same time it could mean "eating" along with the enemies. This would imply a kind of fraternizing with the enemy and eventually using the "sharp knife".

The mother explains to her son that the spears in the hut have been "rotted", they have been rendered useless. These spears are the symbols of office. Being "rotted" symbolises the death of the kingdom. The Omukama of Toro was officially referred to as "The Grand Master of the Order of the Crowns, Lions

and Spears of Toro Kingdom.²⁷ The drums, which assume a central place in the song, occupied a very important position in the institution of Kabakaship: Sir Edward Mutesa II Kabaka of Buganda explains:

More than fifty are the heart of Buganda, some of them are hundreds of years old as old as the Kabakaship. To touch them was a terrible offence, to look after them a great honour. A prince is not a prince of the Blood but a prince of the drum and his status determined by which drum. They all had separate names and cannot be replaced.²⁸

The drum in the whole lacustrine kingdoms was part of royal regalia, and signified possession of power by the ruler. The drums were played only in the presence of the Kabaka. Line 12 of the song states that he has gone to seek the means with which to play the drums again, a symbol of re-establishing his authority. The father image said to have gone away seems to suggest Sir Edward Mutesa II the Kabaka who was sent to exile by Dr Obote - Sir Edward fled to Britain; The land of light where the earth doesn't grow. This image points to the land of the light skinned people - Europeans, or the land of enlightenment. The English were greatly respected during these times. This "compliment" is counter-balanced, as usually happens in oral creativity, with the image, "land of snow where the land doesn't grow". There is the idea of infertility despite their enlightenment.

Ruganda's attitude on the re-establishment of kingdoms comes across clearly. He states that there are elements in society who still cling to the memories of monarchy. This is the only reality they know. Ruganda seems to accept that the re-establishment of the kingdoms is unpragmatic but it is only a fusion of the traditional and the modern systems that assures peace.

It is significant that the opening lines of the song are similar to those used by Tinka in answering Kaija when he asks after his father. Wamala's death can be seen as symbolizing the end of an older generation, an older tradition as

in the abolition of the kingdoms. At the beginning of the Act after which he is murdered the "Big stool covered with lion's skin, Royal Drum, a spear and other items of regalia.²⁹ are missing symbolizing the death of the kingdoms. Here again Ruganda uses his technique of action/reference synchrony. The knife in the song also implies that the past must give way for the new alliance between the commoners and the monarchists. In this new scheme of things only the son, the bearer of the knife, has a place, and not the father who is still thinking of re-establishing the kingdoms. This must be what Ruganda means when he says:

Killing Wamala is killing the dreamer, somebody who is not willing to look at the facts and reality in order to see and take steps to adjust himself to the situation.³⁰

Ruganda is suggesting pragmatism as the answer to the Ugandan problem.

The disintegration of the Wamala family as a result of Wamala's murder and the resultant chaos, symbolically portrays the position of Uganda after the abolition of the monarchies. The sense of loss and rootlessness experienced by the orphaned Kaija and the sickly Nyakake symbolizes the position of the Uganda Republic; rootless and riddled with diseases like corruption, nepotism and greed. Wamala's death, which symbolizes the end of the monarchies results in floods of blood. It is the course and the effects of this flood that is analysed in The Floods.

The Floods is seen as a sequel to The Burdens in that it progresses to analyse how these floods which scatter people asunder function and how they maintain their power. In The Floods Ruganda again uses folktales to trace the history of the chaos afflicting Uganda. In Ruganda's version of the Nyamgondho tale the woman of the lake is Nalubale. The Nyamgondho tale is closely woven to the Nalubaale myth. Nalubaale is the goddess of the lake, like the old hag Nyamgondho fished out of the lake. The most important being in ganda religion

were the Balubaale (sing Lubaa^{le}) or gods.³¹ The Lubaale of the lake was known as Mukasa and he had his shrine on Sese island on Lake Victoria. Nalubaale ("Na" prefix in Luganda usually suggests feminine gender) in The Floods symbolizes the Uganda nation. The sacredness of the Uganda nation. The sacredness of the motherland is brought out by symbolizing it using a god-figure. In both tales the gods are abused thereby showing the extremity of the sacrilege committed by Obote and his army and later on by Amin. Uganda by using the gods to symbolize the nation brings out the idea that the overthrow of the kingdoms and Amin's later ascension were desecrations of the motherland. She goes through a first humiliation: being trapped by Nyamgondho. This first defilement symbolizes the Obote/Kabaka conflict of 1962 where the kingdoms lost most of their authority. Nalubale relented and agreed to be Nyamgondho's wife. This, like the pact between Bamyia and Kaikaara, marks the co-alition between Kabaka Yekka and UPC. In this union, Dr. Obote like Nyamgondho, becomes a celebrity "steadily heading for the highest stool among the straight ones".³¹ However he begins to engage in excesses. Because Nyamgondho's excesses he is punished by Nalubale. Nyamgondho becomes the Brigadier with three nails in his skull. The transition of Nyamgondho representing Dr. Obote to the Nyamgondho representing the Brigadier symbolically portrays the transition of power from Dr. Obote to Idi Amin Dada. The reference to "Brigadier" brings the idea of the military take over in 1971. The Brigadier, according to Kyeyune, is the patrol of the lake who gathers offenders into his net. The Brigadier is the psychological projection of evil in this society. The constant re-surfacing of the Brigadier from the depths symbolically portrays the constant occurrence of acts of evil in this society.

Nyamgondho is given another chance as the Brigadier, and he defiles Nalubale a second time. The defilement costs Nalubale her chastity. From this defilement she conceives of the the child to be born after seven years. This

defilement and loss of chastity is similar to the breaking of Kaikaara's bond.

Because of this defilement floods ravage the land. Kyeyune explains:

For every thrust made, we witnessed waves of destruction on the island; for every ejaculation, floods ravaged the entire island to avenge her lost chastity.³³

This second defilement symbolizes Idi Amin's overthrow of Obote in 1971. Ruganda's attitude to the toppling of Obote, whom he has strongly criticized, does not imply that he had sympathy for the military takeover. The result of this defilement is pregnancy carried for seven years before labour pains began. This represents the period of Amin's regime before being toppled by combined forces of Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the Tanzania Army. The story continues that after seven years Nalubale cannot bear the monumental weight of the straight ones. Nalubale represents Uganda under the catastrophic weight of Amin's tyranny. Nalubale's pregnancy is seen as an indication of imminent change. The birth of this child portends salvation, the birth of a deliverer. The start of the labour pains represents the commencement of signals that mark the end of Amin's regime.

Nyamgondho in the folktale narrated by Kyeyune sneaked from behind floating islands to defile Nalubale just as Kyeyune reports about the SRB boys: "behind the islands, boats emerged"³⁴ and began the massacre. Ruganda uses action/reference synchrony to give the folktale a thematic parallel that makes it a symbolic referent. The story of Nyamgondho is reworked to symbolically portray Uganda's political history.

This Chapter has shown that Ruganda uses folklore in his plays in two ways. First, as in Covenant With Death, as the backbone of the dramatic action. Here the folktale is simply dramatized and it retains, to a large extent, the plot of the tale. However, the tale could still symbolize some idea greater than the tale

However, the tale could still symbolize some idea greater than the tale in its folk setting suggests. This is evident in our analysis of Covenant With Death. Secondly, the folklore item is woven into the play to add to its thematic concerns. Here the folksong or tale is not being dramatized but being used as a linguistic/dramatic symbol. This is seen in The Burdens and The Floods. In The Burdens the song and the story within their structures encapsulate the theme of the play. The folklore items are related to the rest of the drama by the action/referent synchrony. This reference makes these items symbols.

In The Burdens and later in The Floods Ruganda uses folklore not merely as material for dramatization but, as explained above, as materials to make his drama more profound, at the symbolic level. Our contention is that this demonstrates superior ability on the playwright's part. The idea of dramatizing folklore was a feature of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre. Covenant With Death seems to arise out of this school. The later, more sophisticated, use of folklore marks a development of this technique. The Burdens and The Floods are, in this aspect, artistically superior to Covenant with Death.

It is clear here that Ruganda uses folklore materials which have no particular significance to Uganda's political history, and re-creates them such that they symbolize political issues in his plays. This proves that folklore can be recreated and given contemporary reference and thereby made very relevant. The deconstruction of the story and the song in The Burdens is a purely oral technique of creation yet is used within a written mode. The same applies to the Nyamgondho legend which Ruganda transposes into modern Uganda power politics.

NOTES

1. Folklore is used here as is done in: Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend. (New York , Leach M. (Ed), 1972).
2. John Ruganda Covenant With Death. p. 90.
3. Ibid., pp. 109-110.
4. Ibid., p. 114
5. Ibid., p. 103.
6. Ibid., p. 78.
7. Ibid., p. 109.
8. Ibid., p. 100.
9. Ibid., p. 101.
10. Ibid., p. 110
11. John Ruganda, The Burdens. p. 14.
12. Ibid., p. 114.
13. John Ruganda, Covenant. p. 114.
14. John Ruganda, Black Mamba. p. 43.
13. John Ruganda, The Burdens. p. 6
14. Kitonga and Kariara (Eds) An Introduction to East African Poetry (Nairobi: Oxford U.P., 1976), p. 17.
15. Vansina Jan, 161 152 p.
16. John Ruganda, The Burdens
17. John Ruganda Black Mamba. p. 43.
18. John Ruganda The Burdens. p.6.
19. Ibid., p. 6.
20. Ibid., p. 57.
21. Ibid., p. 59.
22. Ibid., p. 59.
23. Ibid., p. 59
24. Ibid., 59

26. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
27. Flamingo Magazine Uganda Edition Volume 1 No. 4.
28. The Kabaka of Buganda Desecration of my Kingdom (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1967), p.139.
29. The Burdens, p. 66.
30. Mikaele Dolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
31. Gibbs Jr., (Ed). Pebbles of Africa, (New York: Holt Rinehard and Winston Inc., 1962) p. 112.
32. The Burdens, p. 72.
33. The Floods, p. 51.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter discusses the character-types created from folklore, these are the politician, the woman, the common man and the intellectual

Ruganda's drama is characterized by great economy in terms of characters. Of all his plays The Floods has the largest cast; in his own production of the play he used fifteen actors. However, The Floods has only three main characters: Bwogo, Nankya and Kyeyune. This great economy with characters has necessitated the creation of multi-faceted characters who play various roles in the plays, especially through the use of the "play-within-a-play" technique. Because of this same consideration, Ruganda's characters are very well researched and developed. They are, as Gichora Mwangi acknowledges in reference to Echoes of Silence, "collages of different personalities."¹ Nevertheless there emerges from his work four groups of character types, and each group assumes symbolic significance within the total framework of his world view. These are:

- (a) The Intellectual
- (b) The Politician
- (c) The Woman
- (d) The masses or the Common man

Within the symbolic depiction of these four groups can be discerned Ruganda's assessment of the social forces at play in Africa's social milieu. The portrayal of these characters, in his work, reveals the development of his attitudes towards them in time. For instance the intellectual in his earlier work, Black Mamba, develops into the more sophisticated intellectual in The Floods who operates in a different socio-economic setup. Through tracing the development of these groups of character types, we can discern Ruganda's social vision because

Ruganda seems to view these four groups as principal actors and forces of change in Africa's socio-political arena. In each group is vested hope because of a peculiar position it holds in the social and economic setup.

a) **The Intellectual**

The symbolic depiction of the intellectual in African literature is not peculiar to Uganda. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's earlier works for instance The River Between, Weep Not Child and The Black Hermit have their main protagonists as intellectuals. Gabriel Okara's The Voice and Chinua Achebe's No Longer At Ease deal with intellectuals and intellectualism. Juliet A. Okonkwo notes (in her article "The Intellectual as a Political Activist: A Character Type in recent African Fiction"²) that the intellectual is not simply distinguished by his literacy but the ability to use his academic accomplishments "in the appraisal of events, situations and natural phenomena.³" She goes on to note that the role of the intellectual is to subject his appraisal towards arriving at solutions to the social and physical problems in his environment. After doing this, the intellectual has the task of persuading others to accept his solutions.

In a continent like Africa which has undergone various traumatic changes, giving rise to equally scarring situations, the intellectual has had to grapple with, and provide answers to very unique problems. This is more so because he is working in an environment in which he constitutes a minority. The intellectual hence assumes the task of a leader. This role, automatically, puts him on a collision course with others who claim leadership, especially political leadership, because he arises where there is no power vacuum, and where any form of new leadership implies supplanting the existing one. The intellectual has often been seen as one against the establishment; a destabilizer of the status-quo.

This is because the intellectual should serve his society. He is expected to use his academic achievements in the service of the larger society and not for those in power especially if their power base is not vested in the people.

However, Juliet A. Okonkwo's definition limits the intellectual to passivity; he "thinks" about issues, "discusses" them and uses persuasion to get people to see his viewpoint. Where the intellectual is faced with a regime as callous as that portrayed in The Floods the issues become: how far does he go in the service of his society, and what would be his position in a military solution such as that which ends The Floods or as in Music Without Tears.

It is these issues which seem to occupy Ruganda's mind as he portrays the intellectual as a character type in his works. The extremity of the times have influenced the portrayals a lot. Uganda, from where Ruganda had to flee, has experienced extremes in its socio-political development. Basing most of his plays on the Ugandan experience, Ruganda has had chance to portray the intellectual in these varied circumstances.

At independence, the intellectual was seen as the most obvious force of social change. Formal education had been emphasized and was seen as a panacea to all socio-economic problems. Those few who managed to acquire this education were seen as saviours, as in The Black Hermit. The masses relied on them fully since they had acquired the education that had enabled the colonizer to subdue the populace so thoroughly. Obviously, the hopes pinned on this group of intellectuals was astronomical. They were seen to be saviours at the cultural, political and economic spheres. The people took it for granted that their new intellectuals understood fully the socio-political machinery and would manipulate it to suit their needs. This blind faith is dramatized in the hopes that the Umofia Progressive Union had as they sent Obi Okonkwo to England (No

Longer At Ease, Chinua Achebe 1960). They wanted him to study Law so that, on his return, he would fight all their land cases for them. Odiambo of Black Mamba is a character in a similar epoch.

Black Mamba is Ruganda's first play about intellectuals and intellectualism. Through it, Ruganda depicts the first generation of Africa's intellectuals. Written around 1966-67, when the upheavals in Uganda had begun, it is an assessment of how effectively the intellectual was handling his role. Considering that the play was intended for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Makerere University, hence an "intellectual" audience, Ruganda was out to portray the developments that this group had so far attained.

Odiambo, among the main characters in the play is a sociology undergraduate student. The nature of his discipline is expected to make him very conversant with the socio-economic and political problems of his people. However, Odiambo emerges as the symbol of the alienation wrought by the western oriented education system. Through him, Ruganda parodies the education system that produces these intellectuals and the intellectuals themselves; their aloofness, pomposity and inability to appreciate and understand the problems of their countrymen. It is not surprising therefore that Odiambo cannot offer any pragmatic solutions to his countrymen's problems.

Odiambo 'prostitutes' his intellect to work for a very unpragmatic government that does not seem to have interest in its people but is too eager to project a false positive image to investors like Professor. The Vagrancy Act, which Odiambo wholeheartedly supports, is not only biased against women (who represent the exploited majority) but is also colonial in nature. Yet what demeans Odiambo most is his attempt to bribe Berewa into giving information about Professor. Not only is Odiambo, an intellectual, prostituting his intellect

but also his morals by succumbing to corruption. The moral pedestal upon which the intellectual launches his crusade is nullified. He symbolically reduces himself to the same level as the Colonel who even after his farcical attempt at arresting Berewa promises, "Berewa keep your eyes open it will pay you heavy dividends."⁴

This education system that alienates, actually prostitutes the mind of those who, receive it. In Odiambo's term paper, "prostitution is a necessary evil: Discuss"⁵ he gives examples of cases of prostitution in "Britain, France and so on,"⁶ he gives a historical account of it and the "psychopathology of prostitution."⁷ Ironically, Odiambo is in the process of carrying out studies on prostitution in his own country. He is hence portrayed as not being able to apply that which he has learnt to enable him analyse their local problems. If he had used these principles then he might have come up with answers to questions that Professor poses:

Why does Namatta belong to one classification and not the other? What sort of men go to this or that group of prostitute and why?... On whom does loose living ultimately tell? On society, tradition or the individual?⁸

These are the questions Odiambo should have answered if he was seeking solutions to the problems of his society. It is ironic that Professor echoes Berewa's doubts⁹ on the availability of the land that the Vagrancy Act, and Odiambo stipulates women should be sent back to.¹⁰ Berewa without the formal education (that Odiambo has) seems to be more knowledgeable about the people's problems. This shows the extent of Odiambo's alienation, hence the alienation of the African intellectual.

At the same time Uganda seems to pose questions as to the necessity of the likes of Professor Coarx and Miss Smith in the education system. This is prostitution at another level. The issue of expatriates, especially when their

influence is so evident in Odiambo, is a pertinent one. Professor gets more out of the country than he pumps in. He is also seen using his position to engage in acts harmful to the society.

Despite this Ruganda does not lay all the blame on Professor Coarx. Though Professor engages in these anti-social acts he emerges victorious at the end. By an uncanny twist of fate he is saved from indictment and shame, in fact it is Odiambo, the police and ultimately the government which is satirized. This is not to redeem Professor of his guilt but rather to lay greater stress on the symbolic failure of the intellectual. This explains why Professor, a foreigner, seems to be more conversant with local issues. It is also deliberate that instead of lauding Odiambo for being so alienated he actually castigates him. Ruganda takes the risk of creating such a character as Coarx to stress that the African intellectual is not prepared for the onus the masses have bestowed on him.

Ruganda has gone out of the way to portray a buffoon to be compared to the fellow intellectual Professor and Miss Smith. Odiambo's language as he speaks to Berewa is extremely stilted:

Is the Professor in residence?... Because he travels by night and sleeps at dawn, and goes hunting by noon to dine by midnight... Never mind old chap, I was trying to see whether I could talk in blank verse.... (All emphasis mine)¹¹

Odiambo continues in almost the same vein, "I'm sorry, Berewa. I'm sorry I'm so saturated with poetry that you might think I'm either bluffing or going mad."¹² Odiambo's language sets him out as a buffoon. Ruganda seems to present to us one who is more interested in impressions than communications. He is out to prove that he is well learned yet his education cannot help his

people. Odiambo emerges as a greater buffoon in his conversation with Miss Smith. When he claims he does not know who lives in the slums in his own country. He goes ahead and describes the slums very touristically:

I suppose mostly prostitutes (live in the slums) - the squatter sort of prostitutes and their agents. Those slums are quite busy centres at night: looting, raping, fighting and murder, and sometimes suicide.¹³

Symbolically, he brings out the alienation of the intellectual. Odiambo is convinced that prostitution is a "drug" for the oppressed. He believes that the root cause of society falling apart is prostitution. He even attributes the rise in crime rate to the same factor. According to him those who engage in prostitution do so to drive away frustration. Odiambo unlike Professor, is unable to link prostitution to the economic setup. To Odiambo the prostitutes are merely statistical figures "increasing the numbers of the unemployed, spreading all sorts of venereal diseases."¹⁴ Odiambo is unable to see the reason behind the oppression that he says leads people to prostitution. Through his contrast Ruganda shows why we cannot expect Odiambo to succeed.

Odiambo represents the learned elite who cannot be referred to as intellectuals because of these very glaring failures. Odiambo has become a cynic. He laments:

I am ashamed of my own country. I have lost confidence in the individual. I wish I could look without seeing everything, or see without feeling. The most agonizing thing is to see everything clearly and be able to do nothing about it.¹⁵

The irony of his lament is that he does not (emphasis mine) see these issues clearly. He is like the proverbial dog that was barking up the wrong tree. This symbolic treatment brings out Ruganda's attitude towards these intellectuals who are totally alienated.

Wamala in The Burdens fashions himself to be a thinker thereby

declaring himself an intellectual. Wamala was a teacher before joining politics.

He lives in those slums that Odiambo dare not visit and hence knows very little

about. He is therefore one step ahead of Odiambo in terms of understanding the

common man.

Wamala pretends to champion the cause of the common man only as far

as it serves his own purpose. His ambition is to revert to his former position as

an exploiter of the poor. Wamala represents the hypocritical intellectuals who

carry along very impractical ideas. He eloquently describes the problems of the

common man, but comes up with a most outrageous solution; the partnership of

the intellectual, represented by him, an inventor and the politician cum capitalist

elite represented by Kanagonago. This desire to exploit exposes him as a

socialist sham. Wamala's outburst when he discovers that Kanagonago is the

Director of Associated Matches is tainted with socialist cliches, "blood sucker!

An exploiter and 'pauper'".¹⁶ That Wamala misquotes Karl Marx¹⁷ further

portrays him as a sham as far as being conscious of this "small man". Wamala's

ambitions are for his own betterment, tearing away their "tatters" pulling down

their "hovels" and moving into a mansion complete with a limousine. In his

designs there is no mention of the masses he pretends to speak for.

Wamala is very easily convinced by the "yankees" that he would be a

better leader. Because of personal ambition and desire for the higher seat with

its attendant benefits he tries to topple the "old veteran". His action is not

guided by concern for the common man but personal aggrandisement. He shows

himself to be prepared to collude with foreign powers for personal gain without

consideration for his countrymen. The intellectual's ambitions and desire for

position is represented by this. The contradiction within the intellectual is seen

when Wamala says he is not prepared to bootlick yet he is ready to do anything including becoming Vincent Kanagonago's campaign manager so as to benefit materially. This is despite his belief that Kanagonago is not fit to be a leader.

In him, Ruganda shows intellectual hypocrisy resulting from material ambitions. To contrast Wamala is "the teacher" whose presence is always felt in the Wamala household though he does not physically go there at any time in the play. It is he who attempts diagnosis Nyakake's cough¹⁸ He diagnoses Kaija's leanness as being caused by tapeworms, and prescribes Brooklax. He is the person who informs the family of the value of the royal souvenirs. He is also the one who lends Wamala a suit for attending his meeting with Kanagonago in the hope that he would get a job. Even when the family disintegrates with Tinka's crime, he offers to keep their belongings.¹⁹ It is almost as though the teacher character is present to counter the failings of Wamala hence making them even more glaring.

Ruganda presents a picture of a real intellectual; one who is concerned about the problems of society and not material wealth. His positive actions show Ruganda's ideas of an intellectual

Ruganda's portrayal of the sham intellectual becomes most radical in The Floods. Nankya is described as a "pseudo-intellectual".²⁰ The prefix "pseudo" connotes: "artificial, bogus, counterfeit, fake, imitation, mock, phoney, pretended and spurious". Ruganda uses this description to project the idea that despite Nankya's eloquence and seeming seriousness she is fake. This description, which fits the other "intellectuals" discussed above, bears out the hypothesis guiding this part of our study that: Ruganda through a negative

portrayal of the intellectual character type, implies an opposite which would be his ideal of a real intellectual. These intellectual character types do not win our sympathy because they represent the negative attributes of this group.

The intellectual, as stated above, is one who thinks about issues, discusses them and attempt to find solutions to problems plaguing his society. He then attempts to persuade others, especially those not equally able to assess these problems, into accepting his viewpoint. Nankya is a university lecturer, holder of Ph.D i Literature. She has published papers in academic journals. She is almost being awarded a professorship in Literature. This must be why Kyeyune describes her as, "A big fish in the biggest pond of learning".²¹ However, her portrayal does not set her above any of the characters (her) despite her learning.

In The Floods there is also the use of the symbol of prostitution, albeit more subtle. As Nankya and Bwogo re-enact their first meeting in a "play-within-a-play" what emerges most poignantly is Nankya's licentiousness. When she "gyrates" her hips the stage instructions read, "she does it again, this time properly - like a coquette".²² This implies that when Nankya walks like a prostitute she is "doing it properly". It is implied that this is what she did to entice Bwogo. It gives the idea of her being experienced in seduction and sexual opportunism. The sexual opportunism of the dialogue that ensues further confirms this. As Bwogo accuses Nankya of staring at him this tussle ensues,

Nankya: You caught me staring.

Bwogo : And you turned away ...
embarrassed, sort of.

Nankya : You could'nt have noticed
I was staring unless you were
doing the same thing.
Stealing glances at me.
Now I really must be off.
(But she doesn't) (my emphasis)

Bwogo: I must confess I was staring.

Nankya: (Coquettishly) You were staring
at my hips to be exact

Nankya: Nothing else to do but
taking mental snapshots
at ladies' navels²³

Ruganda portrays Nankya as being a sexual opportunist. In Dutchman by Le Roi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) where he depicts a loose white woman, Lula, the dialogue and action in the above quoted excerpt and in Dutchman are almost identical:

Lula: Weren't you staring at me
through the window?

Clay: What...

Clay: I saw you through the window ...
if that's what it means. I don't
know if I was staring. Seems to
me you were staring through the
window at me.

Lula: I was but only after I'd turned
around and saw you staring through
that window down in the vicinity
of my ass and legs.

Clay: Really.

Lula: Really, I guess you were just
taking idle pot-shots. Nothing
else to do. Run your mind over
people's flesh.²⁴

These similarities suggest that Ruganda modelled part of Nankya on Lula who is more or less a prostitute. For one like Nankya, who is thirty seven years old and Chairperson of Women's Liberation Movement in her country²⁵ to be portrayed thus is to establish that she is a pretender and hypocrite.

There are a series of events which suggest a discrepancy in Nankya's morality. For instance, Nankya and Bwogo make love for the first time in Bwogo's office on his Afghanistan carpet. This act is very strange when one considers that it happens just after Bwogo had got Rutaro murdered for "flirting" (sic) with Nankya. That Nankya allows Bwogo to make love to her after six months of abstinence, and more so after murdering Rutaro, sets her out as being very weird. Nankya admits that she "found herself in bed"²⁶ with this same Rutaro. One wonders how many times Nankya finds (my emphasis) herself in bed with men. This portrays her as being very licentious.

The stage instructions tell us that Nankya "panics slightly"²⁷ when Bwogo begins to insinuate possible intercourse between her and Dr. Norman. The instructions go on to say: "Nankya is reliving the experience in her mind, trembling a bit",²⁸ and she replies "feebly" when Bwogo asks her what she imagines the doctor felt during the P.V. examination.²⁹ Such incidences lend credence to Bwogo's claims when he accuses her of a "zealous knack to rip off your pants in order to achieve your goal."³⁰ Ruganda's depiction of Nankya as being morally morbid reduces her credence and raises questions about her academic integrity.

In the characterisation of Nankya, Ruganda obviously intended to portray a very cheap and immoral character. Nankya's cheapness symbolically shows the willingness of the intellectuals to go along with anybody who offers

better terms. This trait is seen in Wamala and Nankya. The prostitution is also symbolic of the speed at which the intellectuals would "sell" themselves and their countries.

Nankya being referred to as "the biggest fish in the pond of learning"³¹ shows the confidence and expectation vested in the intellectual by the common man. Kyeyune's is a fishing community hence fish is used as a symbol of livelihood. This image used in reference to Nankya shows the relationship between the intellectual and the common man. The masses look up to the intellectual as those to improve their lives using their intellect. This is why when Kyeyune hears of the coming floods he seeks advice on what to do from Nankya. She is expected to understand the goings on and offer appropriate advice to the rest. However, even here Nankya is portrayed as a failure. She is not any different from Bwogo the academic failure. Nankya, unlike Odiambo, is able to describe the plight of the dispossessed³².

Like Wamala she discusses the cause of their poverty from a class perspective. Nankya makes reference to "toilers"³³ just as Wamala refers to "paupers". Bwogo tells us that Nankya suffers from "Marxist neurosis."³⁴ Nankya's reaction to the journalists confirms this description. The journalists even go as far as dubbing her a "communist".³⁵ Nankya claims solidarity with the masses yet she is passionately engaged with Bwogo who is a symbol of the exploitative class. This relationship symbolizes the intellectuals' alliance with the exploiting classes. Nankya is not ready to use her intellect to serve the masses. In a very symbolic gesture Nankya refuses to inform the islanders that the radio announcements on the floods are phoney. She is aware that they'd be no floods. She says, "mere fabrications of the weatherman: scattered showers and thunderstorms"³⁶, that's what they always say. Never heard an accurate weather report in all my life" Even when Kyeyune asks she replies, "That's what the radio

says; who can time the floods".³⁷ In her silence she sanctions the herding of the islanders off to their slaughter. She betrays the hope of salvation that the common man has in her.

That she is viewed as a potential saviour is seen in further images used to describe her, "The lady... on the coach coiled like a cobra."³⁸ The image of a coiled cobra conveys the idea of great potency. Because of her learning Nankya is seen as being as dangerous as a cobra, to the regime. This portrayal has parallels to the depiction of Segi of Kongi's Harvest.³⁹ It is this hope that she betrays. Segi is described as being as dangerous as a cobra, though her beauty beguiles the fact:

A coiled snake/is beautiful asleep/a velvet bolster/laid on
flowers/if the snake would/welcome me, I do not wish/a
softer pillow than this woman's breasts. But do not fool with
one/whose bosom ripples/as a python coiled in wait for
rabbits.⁴⁰

Ruganda symbolically suggests that the intellectuals have the potential to effect change, but are like Nankya, not forthcoming. Her inability to act portrays the impotence of the intellectuals. It also brings out Nankya's hypocrisy. The image of the snake as being a two-faced creature is reflective of the intellectuals.

It is from this perspective that her name Rutagambanabato, "she-who-never-talks-to-the-young"⁴¹ assumes significance. Her silence or her refusal to talk to the islanders makes her equally guilty of their murder. Nankya's knowhow would have saved the islanders but she is described as having marooned herself⁴² in the house. Ruganda by using the term "marooned" brings in the idea of aloofness of the intellectual who does not care to help his people by giving them information they need. Nankya holds herself isolated from the masses because of her desire to join the exploiting class. Just like Wamala, she is

a capitalist without capital.⁴³ She can only theorize about the plight of the masses but is very eager to join in the exploitation, hence the symbolic relationship between her and Bwogo. This relationship is the consummation of the "marriage" that started with Wamala desiring a partnership with Kanagonago.

Nankya's ambition is to scale the symbolic wall that divides the masters from their servants. The wall symbolizes the obstacles between the rich and the poor class. It is Nankya's ambition to leave behind her poverty ridden background and cross the other side of the "wall" where there are "cars sliding by in somnambular silence".⁴⁴ Nankya symbolically breaks down the wall and joins the Bwogo's. They arrange for a marriage, "a marriage" between the pseudo-intellectual and the exploitative capitalistic politician represented by Bwogo. The affair between Nankya and Bwogo symbolizes the union between the pseudo-intellectual and the ruling elite.

Nankya though slightly more sophisticated is like Odiambo and Wamala. Her portrayal shows, symbolically, the impotence of the intellectual when it comes to acting on behalf of the masses. Nankya describes the plight of the masses, she sees them still grovelling in the dust as she did when still a child, yet she tells Bwogo, "it wasn't your fault".⁴⁵ She is unable to see and appreciate the connection between the poverty of the masses and the affluence of the exploiters. she is blinded by her desire to also secure the material things the Bwogo's have. She is further blinded by her desire to be accepted into the class of the exploiters.

She confesses to suffering from Agoromania.⁴⁶ This underscores her hypocrisy and acquisitive spirit. Hence, like Wamala she is eager to amass wealth. The journalist with microphone (JWM) exposes her double standards.

She uses Marxist clichés but does not live the philosophy. Even her claims that she would aid the fighters down south sound very hollow. She is more concerned with making her life better. She keeps on complaining about being tired of seeing blood everywhere, yet she seems to be very comfortable amid the gore. Her reaction to Rutaro's murder, a direct consequence of her "finding herself in bed with him"⁴⁷ is surprising. She "celebrated" this by allowing Bwogo to make love to her. She talks about the disposal of Rutaro very casually⁴⁸ and uses the knowledge surrounding Rutaro's and the headmaster's death as bargaining chips to hit back at Bwogo in their "cat and mouse" game of accusation and counter-accusations. This brings out her hypocrisy, and strengthens the image of a snake in reference to the intellectuals. Nankya's hypocrisy is symbolic of the double standards of the intellectuals. Nankya is ready to be bought into silence by the regime.

What don't I know about him (Boss) you are right . I am a security risk. I could do much I not handled with care.⁴⁹

Being "handled with care" means probably being awarded the professorship she desires or, a directorship, as Wamala says of intellectuals.⁵⁰ Nankya's unpragmatism is parodied when she claims that the atrocities committed by the Bwogo regime could be exposed by articles in foreign newspapers and magazines. She even imagines a situation where subscribers would xerox copies of the articles and distribute them free of charge.⁵¹ She places all her hopes of redemption on foreign powers: the BBC, the Voice of America, the Voice of Germany, Radio Moscow, Radio Peking, CIA, Amnesty International and Interpol.⁵² The pseudo-intellectual has very little faith in the capability of the local people. The hope placed on these foreign powers is seen as being very misguided when we see the reaction of the journalists to her claims of supporting the freedom fighters in Southern Africa. These journalists who represent western attitudes towards Africa react in a very hostile manner when she says she supports self-determination among Africans. These foreign powers

only maintain pretence of civility and amiability when there is no threat to their exploitative interests. Nankya's hope in using them as allies therefore sounds ridiculous. Symbolically Ruganda is castigating the tendency of some intellectuals to rely on these foreign powers as saviours.

Nankya's relationship with Bwogo symbolically portrays the "marriage" between the pseudo-intellectual and the ruling clique in a union to exploit the poor. The failure to consummate this "marriage", and Nankya's description as a pseudo-intellectual shows Ruganda's firm belief that any intellectual unable or unwilling to use his intellect in the service of the masses is not a true intellectual. These sham intellectuals in an alliance with the ruling clique cannot deter the common man from emerging triumphant as is seen in the end of The Floods

In Music Without Tears written two years after The Floods, Ruganda's emphasis was not on intellectuals or intellectualism, but on the plight of the refugee in a foreign land. However, in it we see the character Wak who is like Nankya a university lecturer. In Wak Ruganda has moved away from his above noted style of characterization. Wak is a positive intellectual in Ruganda's terms. This marks another development in Ruganda's writing in that now he presents a prototype intellectual as opposed to the pseudo-intellectual Nankya.

Wak after trying to change the system from within and almost getting arrested, after being betrayed by none other than Odie, his brother, defects. He becomes an exile and later decides to join those actively fighting the regime that was oppressing the people. Here we see the intellectual going slightly further than the limitations set by Juliet A. Okonkwo's definition. Ruganda seems to suggest that the intellectual cannot just theorize about revolution but must also be prepared for a military eventuality.

Wak on his return from the battle-front does not crave for the spoils of war. He assures Odie, a representative of "stayees" that he has no desire for the family inheritance.⁵³ This gesture shows him as being selfless. The struggle was a sacrifice and personal gain was not the ultimate goal of those like Wak. He is therefore very different from Nankya, and the other intellectuals, who are very keen on amassing wealth. Wak joins the "liberators" with the desire to save others' lives, "not to save my little neck, but other necks".⁵⁴

Through Wak Ruganda criticizes the intelligentsia for their hypocrisy, pretended respect of academic freedom and condemnation of corruption and nepotism. Wak recounts experiences that portray the intelligentsia as fake, afraid of competition and full of intrigue. He establishes that even the academicians would use any method to discredit their colleagues.⁵⁵

Wak goes through a very symbolic transition after he flees. He had become a refugee involved in passive resistance until he realized that even as an intellectual some physical confrontation was necessary to defeat their oppressors.

Through Wak, therefore Ruganda carries the definition of the intellectual a step further. He shows that he must be ready to fight corruption and oppressive regimes that threaten the society. This is a step from the position of "armchair revolutionaries" that Juliet Okonkwo proposes.

b) **The Politician**

Most of Ruganda's plays are based on politicians and political situations. Ruganda's first play, The State of Zombie, was written to protest the political situation in Uganda. Ruganda states, The State of Zombie was a realistic depiction of what was happening⁵⁶. Ruganda recalls the inspiration behind its writing:

The first thing that influenced me was this very visible corruption. You could see neglected roads, sick people in the hospitals that were not taken care of, and you could hear primary school teachers complaining of not being paid for six months.⁵⁷

Since the writing of The State of Zombie, Ruganda has continued to address himself political issues affecting Africa in his plays. Dusaidi sums up aptly Ruganda's ability: "Ruganda is endowed with a special gift of acute insight that makes of his plays political barometers in Africa".⁵⁸

Most of Ruganda's plays are symbolic reflections of the socio-political situation in Uganda, and Africa in general. In the symbols used we discern a development in the politician from Black Mamba to Echoes of Silence. One major concern symbolically portrayed is the relationship between the politicians and those they lead. This relationship takes a pivotal position in his works. Indeed, he confesses that this relationship intrigues him, and in his work he attempts to answer these questions that he rhetorically posed to Mikaele Dolfe:

What makes them (human beings) behave the way they do?
How does an MP feel when he decides to build a KSh. 3m house, tantamount to a monument over himself. What makes the masses contribute with their money to such a thing even when they might not even have food for the next morning.⁵⁹

Ruganda's works are symbolic studies of the psychology of the leaders, and those they lead.

In Black Mamba Odiambo emerges as the spokesman for the political establishment. Though not a politician (in the actual sense) his reflections on government policy enable us to interpret the government's official position.

Odiambo's conviction that prostitution is the root of all evil (in their society) is the government's stance on the matter. This naive attitude, on the part of the government suggests its refusal to acknowledge the real problems

facing the people. The government holds that crimes are committed by people desperate to get money to pay for the services of prostitutes. The government shirks its socio-economic responsibility and uses women as a scapegoat for its failings. The women are the representatives of the under-privileged and the powerless in society. They are the ones victimized by the powerful. This symbolically brings out the power relations between the helpless women and the government. It further illustrates the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The powerless are under perpetual threat of victimization from those in power. Odiambo's attitude towards the women symbolically portrays the naive approach of those in power. Odiambo's failure to understand symbolizes the failure of the government to appreciate the problem.

Berewa's displacement from his home and subsequent employment as Professor Coarx's servant is a symbolic depiction of the common man's plight. He finds himself landless and has to work as a servant in order to survive. This portrayal suggests the greed of the politicians and the hollowness of their call: "Return to the land". Berewa laments that the "big guns" of the country have grabbed large chunks of the country and fenced it off.⁶⁰ The common man is forced into servitude by these "big guns." The image of big guns brings out the relationship between the powerless common man and the powerful. There is the suggestion of brutality in this relationship conveyed by use of the image of guns and the emphasis created by "big". This also suggests that those in power are dangerous to the powerless.

The corruptibility of the politician is portrayed when the police (the symbols of law and order) promise Berewa monetary inducements in order for him to spy for them. This corruption is further highlighted when the policeman casts a "lecherous" glance at Namuddu. This act not only brings out the hypocrisy, (he has come to arrest Namuddu for immorality) of the politicians but

also the double-standards that have bedevilled African political systems. The police are agents of the politicians.

The master-servant relationship in *Black Mamba* is symbolic of the neo-colonial control. Berewa "sells" his wife to the foreign Professor Coarx. This symbolizes the surrender of Africa's independence and resources to foreign capital by the leaders. Berewa symbolizes Africans, hungering for material gain, offering to the foreigners Africa's independence and resources (symbolized by Namuddu, the mother figure) to be exploited by foreign imperialist capital. After being exposed to these foreign ideals Namuddu is not the same again. She now wants new and expensive clothes.⁶¹ She has grown to reject her past which she now terms as "empty and so meaningless."⁶² To sum up the change in values she laments:

I was happy before I met you. I didn't have as many needs as I do now. I thought living in a hovel was natural, wearing rags a necessity, toiling away in my garden a duty. Nor did I care about my hard bed, my poor meals and the carelessness of our men. How can I go back to these things?⁶³

Though her desires represent the desires of the new African woman, refusing to be used and exploited by men, it shows her adoption of new cultural values. She has learnt many new things. She now no longer minds Professor's smell⁶⁴ and "that practice of sucking our mouths like pigs."⁶⁵ This is a rebuff to Berewa's naive expectations that they could revert to their old ways. Here Africa is represented as prostituting herself to the cultural values of the foreigners reinforced by their money. This emphatically shows that Africa after opening herself to foreign cash can never expect to be the same again. The cultural values come in with the cash gifts and is sustained by the educational prostitution (this later crystallizes in *The Burdens* as Associated Matches) symbolized by

Professor Coarx. The loss of independence is symbolized by the fact that Professor Coarx, a foreigner, is now Berewa's master (immediately after independence).

The Burdens though, focussing on the Wamala family, is a symbolic representation of post-independence Uganda and Africa at large. The animosity that splits this family apart is symbolic of the strife caused by political miscalculation. The inter-personal relations between the characters in the play proper and in the play-within-a-play scenes also symbolically show the political under-currents running in Africa.

The exploitative nature of the politician is symbolically portrayed by their lifestyle. In the face of the general poverty, the Kanagonagos live in beautiful houses, well insulated from the slum. The physical distance between their dwelling areas is symbolic of the gap between the rich and the poor. This distance extends to the extent that Wamala realizes that he cannot get access to the veteran. This is symbolic of the distance between the led and their leaders. The leaders enjoy immense wealth, "cows and cars, servants and free mansions ... ranches... and power. The politicians have "big businesses, big mansions and big bottomed wives".⁶⁶ The excesses of the politician, like Kanagonago, is portrayed using images of big guns, big fish big business, big mansion and big bottomed wives, contrasted to the small man. The image of size difference aptly portrays the difference between these two groups. The image of 'big-bottomed wives' brings out the over indulgence or exclusiveness of the property. The big man supposedly needs a wife with a big bottom. This symbolically shows the exploitation that these politicians engage in.

Wamala's fall from grace and subsequent ostracization is symbolic of the failure of a breed of politician who viewed office as an avenue towards enriching himself. Wamala was elected to office without any extra-ordinary quality. He "made his harangue effectively and subsequently found himself Minister."⁶⁷ His ambition was to attain even higher offices because these assured the so called "licensed" and "unlicensed" accessories of office. Wamala's fall symbolically suggests that this over-riding ambition (with material gain as stimulus) is a negative leadership trait.

Through Kanagonago, Ruganda flays the common qualifications that today set out leaders. Kanagonago is sixty years old, a retired Saza Chief, a drunk and a "thigh-monger". Ruganda seems to suggest that at sixty years old, a drunkard, womanizer and a retired Chief is not able to effectively lead the people. In his reverie on his days as a politician, Wamala, shows signs of all these vices. He asks after a "charming young lady in a blue skirt.... The kind that unsettles wives".⁶⁸ Ruganda seems to suggest that the African nations need the youth not sixty year olds: people of integrity to strengthen them, and to pull them out of the quagmire of corruption. Ruganda is therefore stating that the biggest problem in Africa is leadership.

Wamala's experience with Kanagonago where the latter "steals" the former's idea about matches with striking ends on both ends, symbolically portrays the role of the politicians in Africa's attempt to free herself from "these capitalistic companies and their monopoly mania".⁶⁹ The multi-nationals use the Kanagonagos (after being offered nominal directorships of the foreign companies) as the watch-dogs for their investments, and also stifle any attempt at self-improvement that the nationals think up. Ruganda symbolically portrays how the multi-nationals have managed to entrench themselves in Africa. The

failure of Wamala's economic idea is symbolic of the failure of African economies that do not win the approval of the foreign multi-nationals. The control over the affairs of the African states is symbolically portrayed. Wamala's struggle with Kanagonago and the prophesy that, "One day shrivelled fingers will throttle fat throats"⁷⁰ symbolizes the inevitability of the exploited fighting off the chains of the exploiters, the Kanagonagos. Ruganda suggests that the exploiters are a doomed breed. Ruganda envisages a political setup without the Kanagonagos; a system without swindlers and exploiters. This shows Ruganda's faith in the common man as the revolutionary force.

Tinka and Kaija engage in a play with words: "Chiefs and thieves. Thieves or Chiefs?"⁷¹ The "synonymity" between the two suggests the use of office to steal from the people. The chiefs are thieves. Kaija says that Wamala is called Chief.⁷² This is probably a carryover from his days as a leader. The conduct of the politicians is already discussed and the synonymity of chiefs and thieves is apparent. Considering also that Wamala bought his "chieftainship", this image further describes the method of attaining power. Further more Wamala still uses his superior physical strength to steal from Tinka.

Wamala describes the present day politicians as "the new breed"⁷³ who are susceptible to praise. However, we do not see any difference between the new breed and Wamala's contemporaries. Wamala himself given the opportunity would flatter the old veteran so as to get a job. His international slogan syndicate is based on nothing but flattery. He further describes the politicians as "boot-lickers" and "sycophants".⁷⁴ Wamala himself shows such traits. What these images bring out is the repressive nature of their political culture. Though Wamala describes these politicians as sycophants, boot-lickers in an attempt to distance himself from them, his portrayal leaves no doubt that

this is a malady afflicting not only the old politicians but also the "new breed". It is therefore suggested that these are the characteristics of the political elite. Ruganda brings out the negative nature of present day leadership in Africa.

The Wamala family is seen as a microcosm of Uganda and Africa. Their fear and uncertainty and final disintegration is symbolic of the chaos many African nations have ended in as a result of military coups and civil wars.

Ruganda is on record stating that he does not subscribe to socialism. In his works there is, however, a rejection of capitalism. Wamala, in a moment when he seems to be Ruganda's spokesman states that if the government had not kept the ordinary people perpetually drunk, a revolution would erupt which would ensure equality "either the gutter for everyone, or government mansions".⁷⁵ This suggests what Karl Marx called "Utopian Socialism".⁷⁶ Those who attacked the wrongs in the capitalist system, not the system itself. They suggested Utopias but are unable to say how these are to be attained or maintained. Scientific socialism sees the working class as the revolutionary force, the class in constant conflict with the bourgeoisie. Ruganda, as this and the succeeding sections will show, divides humanity into two groups: the oppressed versus the oppressor: exploiter versus the exploited: powerful versus powerless, big versus small.

Ruganda does not seem to see any "middle-of-the-road" in this struggle. His society is diametrically opposed to one another. The extremity of symbols brings out this difference very effectively. This socio-economic division of people puts Ruganda within the socialist mode of thought where these two groups are always seen to be in conflict with one another.

The Floods depicts Uganda under Idi Amin Dada. It is his most overtly political play to date. The Floods is set in a society in which the population has become very disillusioned with uhuru.

Nankya narrates the humiliating experience her mother went through at the hands of "African memsahibs" who threw their underwears and menstrual gears all over the house for their fellow Africans to clear up.⁷⁷ The rejection of Nankya's mother of this sort of treatment is symbolic negation (in principle) of the perpetuation of colonial behaviour by the new "masters". Her action symbolizes the rejection of neo-colonialism and its "dirt" symbolized by images like "underwear" and "menstrual gear".

In The Floods the image of the brigadier is a motif that symbolizes the repression and ruthlessness of the regime. Through Nankya's mental projection Bwogo is seen attacking an anthill and killing the queen termite.⁷⁸ The anthill is symbolic of the dissenters: the opponents of the regime who Bwogo, in his capacity as the chief of the SRB, is determined to crush. Nankya's mental projection ties up with Kyeyune's projections wrought by memory of the brigadier with three nails driven into his skull. Bwogo stabs the cranium of the ant-hill three times just as the brigadier had three nails driven into his cranium. Nankya and Kyeyune seem to talk at cross-purposes but Ruganda juxtaposes these references thereby connecting the images of the anthill and the brigadier. Bwogo's stabbing of the anthill is a symbolic representation of Bwogo's efforts to crush dissent. As Bwogo pulls the umbrella from the cranium of the anthill he is engaged in a "full-blooded battle" with the soldiers in the anthill. This is a symbolic representation of the stoicism and courage of those fighting against the Bwogo regime. The technique of having the brigadier constantly "resurface" in the course of the play symbolizes two things. First reference to him ensures that

the idea of repression and ruthlessness is not lost, and second, the brigadier haunts the island implying that the oppression and ruthlessness intended to end the people's popular dissent will haunt the regime until it is overthrown.

The above image of stabbing the anthill symbolically portrays the destructive nature of the regime. Bwogo kills the helpless termites. This symbolizes the destruction of the weak by the powerful; like the deaths of Mukanga, Ssallongo, the headmaster and Rutaro. The regime undervalues human life to the extent that these people are killed off as simply as one would kill an insect. The value of a human life is likened to that of an insect. The Floods is a play on power relations and the relationship between the regime and the common man is like that between man and pest (insect). This image is further developed in Music Without Tears.

The image of the ogres found in folktales is used to symbolize the greed: acquisitiveness, covetousness of the regime. Kyeyune first refers to Boss as "the ogre"⁷⁹ and the ordinary people being swallowed up as "bulls".⁸⁰ Boss's regime is literally swallowing up the people: people disappear without trace at the hand of the disciples like Bwogo and his SRB boys. Those in power also amass property. Bwogo "gobbles" up any empty space to put up estates: The Mitchel Mansions, The Aphrodite Service Apartments, The Bay of Bachelors, The Camasutra Hostels and the Rainbow Tourist Hotels. Boss is said to have money in Swiss Banks and gold ingots in Bengal. Hence, both literally and economically the regime, like an ogre, is swallowing up everything and leaving nothing for the rest. The acquisitive nature of those in power, at the expense of the ordinary people, is symbolically portrayed.

The depravity of this regime is carried in the names of Bwogo's estates: Aphrodite Service Apartments and Bay of Bachelors. The latter would imply that the services offered there are of an erotic nature, while the latter suggests some sort of nymph-colony. The name Camasutra Hostels seems to be derived from Kama Sutra, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on the art of love.⁸¹ The suggestion by Ruganda is that these "leaders" associated with these concerns are lewd. It is apparent that the level of avidity portrayed in *The Floods* surpasses that in *The Burdens*. This seems to suggest that the politician has grown greedier as the days progress. The politicians, like the ogres of oral narratives, grow greedier as they "eat up" more.

The politicians are not only greedier but also more violent. Bwogo's violent verbal outbursts, the actual physical assault on Nankya and the fact that he almost murders Kyeyune, all portray the violence perpetuated by the regime. The violence is a smokescreen hiding its vulnerability. Bwogo's fears when he is confronted by the floods (which symbolize the people's collective spirit and resolve to overthrow this regime) portrays the insecurity and fear the regimes lives under. The regime tries to cover up its own insecurity by terrorizing the people and making them very insecure. This insecurity is seen in *The Burdens*: Tinka and Kaija dare not go out into the dark for fear of Kondos. In *The Floods* Kyeyune likens their lives to that of common man's a drunkard's cockerel, that can be killed any minute. Symbolically it also implies that this government could only stay in power through terrorizing the people. The strength of the floods which increases with the waves is a symbolic affirmation of the certainty of victory by the oppressed minority.

In *The Floods*, as in *The Burdens*, Ruganda seems to lay the blame for the terrible state of affairs in Africa, on the quality of leaders who took over at independence. These leaders were quick to establish a neo-colonial situation in

the nominally independent African states. Bwogo's father is referred to as 'master' by his workers. This symbolically portrays the master-servant relationship that those who assumed power perpetuated. The positions of leadership were taken over by sons of people like Bwogo's father who had been unsuitable.

Your father. Money minded and mean. A man we had always seen in our village. No particular merit or integrity. And all of a sudden, MASTER. Just because of some historical accident. Right place at the right moment and proper connections.⁸²

These leaders set up governments where the majority (the common people) are their servants. The common men are servants at the actual and the symbolic level. The commoners do all the work, as Nankya's mother does for a meagre pay. The master-servant relationship shows the exploitation that the leaders engage in. Bwogo whose academic history is characterized by failure is appointed Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce because his cousin, Boss, is the Head of State. This is not just nepotism, but is a symbolic depiction of the independence situation where the sons of those well placed in the colonial administration (as chief, homeguards and spies) assumed leadership. At independence, in Kenya and Uganda, particularly the children of loyalists merely replaced their parents. In The Floods, Ruganda seems to suggest that these leaders have never had the support or confidence of the majority (who they treat as servants) should be overthrown by the floods (which symbolizes the resolve of the dissenters).

Music Without Tears is a particularly Ugandan play in the sense that it analyses the situation there after the fall of Idi Amin Dada. It is a sequel to The Floods which ends with the arrest of Bwogo and Nankya symbolising the end of their regime. The setting of Music Without Tears in Stella's parents' home is a symbolic presentation of the whole of Uganda. The three characters represent

various groups in the post-liberation Uganda. The inhabitants of the house are material beneficiaries of the past bloody regime. There is suggestion of abuse of office and power, symbolically presented by the acquisition of material goods from those who expect favours. It is within this setting that polemics of heroism claimed by the "stayees" and disputed by the "returnees" take place. Ruganda seems to state his attitude on the issue of those who benefited from the reign of terror at the onset. His stage instructions read: "...the kind of furniture (in the house) that comes free to men of position from favour seeking men of foreign firms."⁸³ It is clear that the occupants of the house had not suffered much during the reign of terror. Instead they were well placed enough to offer favours to foreigners in return for presents.

Odie and Stella slide into subject-leader roles and symbolically portray the way the Idi Amin government worked. The unending stock of excuses for getting rid of opposition. They symbolically re-create Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda. There is symbolic allusion to the murder of Arch-Bishop Janani Luwum, Eryano Oryema, and Oboth Ofumbi, Cabinet Ministers who died in an "accident". This shows the relationship between the leaders and their subjects. The suppression of opposition, real or imagined, is portrayed. The regime is so insecure that the security agents seek to arrest Wak merely on the basis of an informer's report. This shows the working of this regime.

The title Music without Tears is itself symbolic of strife that had gripped the country during Amin's rule. The sound of gunshots, and therefore death, has become so commonplace that it is referred to as music. Symbolically this shows the extent to which the people are butchered by the regime. It also conveys the attitude towards death that had set in this society; the apathy. They call upon each other to listen to the music without tears; without mourning. The people have become too accustomed to death and are at the brink of ignoring its

significance. Odie also refers to gunshots as "the sounds of power".⁸⁴ The implication is that violence and murder have become the means by which power is gained and sustained. The sanctity of human life is ignored by the greedy, ambitious power-seekers. Those who sit back and listen to the music without tears are those who condone it. They, in their apathy, do not do anything to end the bloodshed. They are therefore a negative group since they act as accessories to the murders.

Odie's experiments with insects symbolically portray the effect of the prevailing political culture on the people, and also symbolically portrays the relationship between the leaders and their subjects. His persistence in attempts to make the "king of the termites" speak by torturing it, shows the psychological effect that the political culture of violence has on the people. His, systematic torture symbolically portrays the determination of the regime to have its own way; to break the will of all those who defy it. It further shows the extent to which torture has been made scientific through constant use. The power relation in this country is also symbolically portrayed in the relationship between Odie who stayed in Uganda during Idi Amin's era, and those who sought refuge abroad. Odie's violence towards Wak is a cover-up for his guilt. He stayed in the country and benefited from the regime. This is considered a betrayal of their motherland, more so by the returnees. The stayees feel guilty for not having done anything to censure the regime's atrocities. They instead try to create a hero cult among those who "endured" the rule of Idi Amin.

Ruganda symbolically states that their country is in no need for hero worship, and those claiming to be heroes were the same ones who had betrayed the motherland. Odie craftily stage-manages Wak's "death" and corrupts the officials at the land office after which he gets all the father's land transferred to

Ruganda seems to suggest that military action (as taken by Wak) is commendable as opposed to waiting for salvation from other sources. The idea of waiting is symbolically treated in Odie's "wait" for the insect to cry out against his brutality. Within the symbol of power relations (the weak versus the strong) this would symbolize the weak rising up against dictatorial regimes through the "strength" of the insect discussed above. Ruganda seems to offer hope for the weak in their struggle. The persistence of the insect is the symbolic portrayal of the endurance that is needed.

Ruganda seems to suggest that the ideal nation is that where nobody would force others to flee their country and become refugees. Ruganda's portrayal of the politician (Wak) suggests an intellectual who is ready to sacrifice his life for the well being of the motherland. He seems to sanction armed struggle where the regime is as callous as the one portrayed in The Floods. At the same time he disapproves of military coups as a means of solving political impasses. The coups disrupt "the rhythm of life, (as well as) decency and courtesy with which things are done".⁸⁵ The problem, it seems, is that in Africa the democratic institutions for affecting change of government have been killed. Ruganda seems to suggest the type of leadership needed in Africa; this is the leaders who combine both the intellectual and military prowess. Wak is an intellectual and also by virtue of having fought the bush war has military knowhow. He is therefore a symbolic combination of these two groups who are power-brokers in the African scene. Ruganda seems to imply that the political future of Africa lies in the hands of these two groups.

Ruganda seems to model his new African leader on President Yoweri Museveni: an intellectual and a guerilla fighter. Yoweri Museveni graduated

him, cheating Stella in the process. At the symbolic level deceiving Stella of her birth-right is symbolic of betrayal of the motherland, especially when we see Stella as symbolic of Uganda (the land) as Nalubale is in The Floods.

Odie and Stella talk at cross-purposes and Odie mixes up the subject of his references; he speaks of Wak and the "King of the termites" interchangeably. Through this it becomes apparent that the termite is his symbol for Wak, the treatment he metes out to it is what he would like meted out to Wak. The insect is his symbolic projection of Wak and he goes on to project his aggression towards it. This aggression is wrought by guilt as a result of his role in Wak's arrest. The "strength" of the termite is symbolic of the stoicism and strong will of the returnees. The insect's unflinching attempt at freeing itself from the jar symbolizes the persistence of the same exiles who eventually succeeded against Idi Amin's government; the insect succeeds because in the end it eludes Odie's traps. Stella's action of freeing the insect is symbolic of her role as a mediator between the returnees and the stayees; she is the symbol of the motherland (Uganda).

Ruganda seems to suggest, through Stella as mother figure and reconciliator that the motherland Uganda needs all Ugandans (stayees and returnees) alike; all those with a genuine desire to rebuild the nation. It is a future in which the stayees should forget about assuming hero status and accept returnees like Wak who wants to forget the war and build a new future. However, those like Odie who were party to the atrocities as informers of the SRB must be purged. The reunification of the family is used to symbolize a new beginning for a formerly divided nation. That their parents are dead and forgotten seems to suggest that Ruganda places the hopes for a new Uganda on the generation that assumed control after the war of liberation.

from University of Dar-es-Salaam in 1970 after having studied Political Science. He later led the National Resistance Army (NRA) in a "bush" war which toppled the government of General Tito Okello.

Whereas Music Without Tears is a particularly Ugandan play, Echoes of Silence is a Kenyan play. It has been described (by Dr. K. Kibwana a close friend of John Ruganda) as the Kenyan version of Music Without Tears. Echoes of Silence draws its symbols from the Kenyan political scene. The symbolic interpretation of Echoes of Silence is what elevates it from the plain domestic, kitchen-sink drama. However, it is significant that Ruganda denies that the play deals with politics and suggest that "it merely uses the ethnic differences between the Luo and the Kikuyu as a spring-board in its exploration of alienation of the two characters."⁸⁶

There re parallels in Echoes of Silence which, we hold, are not merely for forming socio-political backdrops. The name Double-O used to refer to Okoth-Okach is a name that is used to refer to Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (Kenya's first Vice-President). Ruganda, however, claims that the name has no particular significance or connection to Oginga Odinga. Okoth-Okach is also said to have a "withered" left arm.⁸⁷ Oginga Odinga suffers from a condition known as focomelia; his left arm is shorter than the right. Both Okoth-Okach and Oginga Odinga attended Maseno School. Okoth-OKach articulates political arguments that Odinga's leftist Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) championed especially regarding equitable distribution of wealth.

Wairi and Okoth-Okach, confined in the sitting room of Njoroge Njuguna's house, symbolically represents Kenya's nationalities with their various animosities. Ruganda uses the animosity between the Luo and Agikuyu (the most prominent in Kenya) to bring out the attitudes that have plagued Kenya's

independence. Between them the animosities are trivialized, and through this Ruganda seems to suggest that these should not have been given the prominence they now hold.

Echoes of Silence is a symbolic portrayal of the landmarks of Kenya's political history. Wairi's life symbolically represents steps Kenya has gone through. There are dates used in Echoes of Silence which are significant in Kenya's political history. Wairi's wedding falls on Twelfth December 1978. This date is significant for two reasons: it is Kenya's Independence Day and 1978 marks the year that Mzee Jomo Kenyatta died, the year of "the changing of the guards".⁸⁸ Wairi's wedding is therefore symbolic of the start of the second Republic with the assumption of the Presidency by Daniel Arap Moi. This marriage had its first landmark in August 1982. August 1982 is the time Wairi has a still-birth. It was the projected birth-time of the messiah. The messiah that never was. August 1982 is remembered as the month of the coup in Kenya, led by Air Force personnel. The whole of this month Nairobi was under a curfew. The still-birth is symbolic to the abortive coup. The result of the coup was anticipated as salvation for the people such that since the child was not born it symbolizes the failure of the change.

Njoroge Njuguna's hopes are representative of the expectations of the people. This disappointment and disillusionment with their marriage is symbolic of the disenchantment the common people felt after the coup failed. Wairi's inability to conceive, and the dead child (teddy bear) symbolically represent the fruits of the symbolic marriage; a dead child and a toy. The lack of life is emphasized. Ruganda seems to feel in Echoes of Silence that the second Republic is not worthy of itself. It is however difficult to pinpoint exactly why he thinks so.

The marriage between Okoth-Okach and Grace Muthoni is symbolic of the marriage between the Luo and Gikuyu ethnic groups. This was the union that existed prior to the KANU split-up when Odinga formed the KPU party; predominantly seen as a Luo party.

The two dominant groups according to Ruganda "(are) generally assumed (to be) antagonistic to each other",⁸⁹ and these alleged differences have "been overplayed over the years to suit the whims of interested parties who, in their attempt to control Kenya, found it politically expedient to keep the two dominant communities miles apart."⁹⁰ Ruganda's attitude to this scheme comes across clearly, and he seems to suggest that this "marriage" facing some problems need to be salvaged.

The "psycho-therapy" that Okoth-Okach is take through by Wairi makes it possible for him to face Grace and his daughter confidently. Through the paces of unburdening himself to Wairi it becomes apparent that though Okoth-Okach blames Grace for many of their problems he is also party to the problems. Okoth-Okach is tormented by the hero mentality derived from the Mau Mau instead of coping with this he also tries to claim hero status because his "grandfather was one of the nationalists at the time".⁹¹ Wairi's rejection of this cult of heroism seems to echo Ruganda's symbolic repudiation of the same. Wairi declares that her kind of hero is like Marcy Muthoni Njanjiru who was "uncalculating and selfless" "confronting the opponent head on. Not hiding behind bushes like frightened squirrels..."⁹² She is in effect denouncing those who have insisted on being looked upon as heroes because of their past involvement in the political struggle. Ruganda debunks the argument of those "not particularly inclined towards national unity in Kenya"⁹³ who argue that:

the Mau Mau movement, composed of the Kikuyu mostly, fought for Uhuru: now that independence has been achieved, they should have the lion's share of the Uhuru cake.⁹⁴

Ruganda seems to state that there were patriotic and selfless people who fought for uhuru without going into the bush, and even if they did the culture of hero worship is rejected.

Ruganda explains that by bringing together Wairi and Okoth-Okach he hoped to discover if they would learn anything from each other. Ruganda goes ahead and "obliterates Wairi's past and Double O's future".⁹⁵ The two individuals are therefore not whole, they must compliment each other. Ruganda seems to suggest that the two cannot live without each other. If Wairi represents the mountains and Okoth-Okach the lake, then Ruganda symbolically seems to say that for the ethnic groups to prosper they must come together and compliment each other. This implies the forgetting of past assumptions of superiority over the other ethnic groups.

As already discussed above Ruganda seems very disillusioned with Kenya's second republic. As in Music Without Tears, Ruganda suggests that hope would have emerged from the stillbirth of August 1982. The Njoroge Njuguna's dream of the messiah ties up with the one presented in Wak. The expected messiah was to be a "boy, a big beautiful boy, a man in his own likeness, his own temperament, a carbon copy. An athlete at sixteen, a commissioned officer at twenty."⁹⁶ This boy was to rise to the level of General to become President. The new breed are to have intellectual as well as military prowess. Ruganda seems to feel that the present day realities in Africa call for a leader with a combination of these two.

However, the fact that the much awaited saviour is born dead is a repudiation of the idea of waiting. Njoroge Njuguna's wait and subsequent disillusionment are seen as escapist. He runs away from his house where

evidence of the hope confronts him. Wairi, on the other hand, wastes away her life waiting for Njoroge Njuguna (who does not seem to acknowledge her) instead of making a move towards leaving for home as she contemplates. She continues to wait for nothing in particular.

This positivity in action is seen in Wairi's mental projection of Grace Muthoni. Grace at one level is symbolically fighting the sexual exploitation of women by men; the use of the women as sex-objects. When Grace complains that her image has been stolen, at the symbolic level it is the image of Africans; their self-respect, being trampled on by foreign entrepreneurs. Grace here symbolizes Africa being abused by foreign capital symbolized by the film-makers. Grace uses the much debated Tyson case (Tyson murdered a Mombasa 'prostitute' and though found guilty by the court was sentenced to keep the peace for a period when he would be out of the jurisdiction of the Kenyan legal system. In all practical purposes he went off scot-free to show how African nations lose their self-respect by prostituting themselves to foreign powers. Sid who in this dialogue symbolizes the foreign powers, states that "they did not invite themselves"⁹⁷ to Africa. They are invited by the African governments, whose leaders then bend the law to protect the foreigners' interests. Symbolically there is the loss of African independence and the setup of neo-colonial satellite states under the guise of defence against communism.

Ruganda seems to espouse some Pan-Africanist dream in his treatment of Sid, a ^(African-American) Black-American. The image of Sid and Grace making love implies a coming together of Africans in Africa and in the diaspora in order to strengthen the African image worldwide and enhance the Africans' standing in world affairs; "There is an explosion of ecstasy and a fusion of two bodies, two hungry bodies... a fusion of two continents..."⁹⁸ These two continents are Africa and America.

Here Ruganda uses Sid at one point to symbolize the Americans parse: American imperialism both economic and political. Sid is then used as a symbol of the Africans in the diaspora.

The politician symbolically portrayed by Ruganda progresses to become more dictatorial and brutal from the time of their first entrenchment in Black Mamba. It is the Odiambos who hardly understand their country, who develop into the Nankyas of The Floods. The politician Wamala develops into the veteran and then Boss who is extremely brutal and brutalizes the people the way a monster or an ogre does.

Whereas Black Mamba, The Burdens and The Floods are descriptive parodies of the politicians and their political systems, Music Without Tears and Echoes of Silence are somewhat prescriptive. In the earlier works Ruganda hoped that parodying and satirizing the leaders would show the ideal he sought. The stylistic shift from descriptive to prescriptive portrayal is difficult to account for, we can only speculate that at the time of writing Music Without Tears there was already change taking place in Uganda and therefore suggesting what that country needed was Ruganda's prime objective. The same can be said of Echoes of Silence and the Kenya question.

Ruganda's poem "The Flywhisk" seems the best indicator of his ideal in terms of leadership. The flywhisk is seen as a symbol of power. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta the first President of Kenya had a flywhisk that grew to be synonymous to his person.

"The Flywhisk"

Fling it sharply and growl
Rebels hide their heads
Wave it gently and smile
Flies flit from pus drooping eyes
Sling it on the arm finally
Empty stomachs will drum for you.

The image of slinging the flywhisk has connotations of portliness. The saunter that Wamala shows in his reverie and that which characterizes Bwogo.

Ruganda brings out how power can be abused. The first two lines bring out the repressive capacity of power. There is implied a lack of tolerance by those or the person holding power. The choice of images brings out the violence used by this regime, "fling", "sharply" "growl" all suggest violent repression of the rebels.

The next two lines bring out hypocrisy of those in power. The help they give the poor is only cosmetic. The flies are swatted off the diseased eye but nothing is done to treat the malady. Those in power enjoy good health and can afford to smile while those without power are riddled with disease.

The last two lines summarize the picture of the politician. The difference between the powerful and the powerless is highlighted. The powerless and underprivileged drum, sing and dance for those in authority. The image of empty stomach can be seen at two levels. The empty stomachs rumbling are drums for those in authority. The people with empty stomachs could also drum for those in authority. Ruganda as already stated is constantly wondering why the powerless allow themselves to be used by those in power.

He parodies those in power and also those without power.

c) **The Women**

Ruganda's use of women as symbols is as significant as his use of politicians and political situations. It is on account of overlooking this factor that

Chesaina concludes that Ruganda's women characters are passive, and states, by implication, that he has no definite stand when it comes to character portrayal.¹⁰⁰ As already stated in reference to the other character-types he creates, Ruganda uses symbols as his main mode of communicating ideas. To an extent, therefore, a search for "well-rounded" characters in Ruganda's plays would come to naught. This is because he does not write plays built around a particular individual character, but rather he creates characters who are various individuals condensed into one. His characters are an amalgam of various characters with complementary, and sometimes contradictory traits and operating in varied situations. It is this quality that makes Ruganda's characters very complex.

Sexual exploitation of women and prostitution is used to symbolize the predicaments facing Africa. Women led into prostitution by men symbolize the economic "prostitution" of Africa; the exploitation. This is what some writers have termed the "rape" of Africa. Berewa's sale of his wife to Professor Coarx symbolically represents neo-colonialism; Africa selling herself, her dignity and resources to foreign capital. Berewa desires to "rise up very quickly."¹⁰¹ He claims that in such "hungry times" one cannot afford to be virtuous. His craving for material wealth represents the position of many African nations after independence. There is the desire to develop at a very fast rate. Little attention is paid to the means of achieving this goal, or the alliances entered into. The laissez-faire attitude of the African economies is brought out by Berewa's mercenary attitude towards exploiting Namuddu: "Think of our poverty, think of our future riches".¹⁰² They have no regard for the manner in which they "hook" these riches. Namuddu's sexual exploitation by the foreigner symbolizes Africa's exploitation by the foreign capital aided by a native ruling class.

The African leaders are under the illusion that after "opening up" to foreigners thus, Africa can regain her integrity. Ruganda symbolically depicts this using the "self" or conscience. Berewa tries to convince Namuddu that they can be "themselves again"¹⁰³ after amassing riches. The changes that Namuddu goes through after her "sojourn" with Professor Coarx are irreversible. She dreams of dressing in a different manner. Namuddu's "innocence" is lost after her encounter with Professor Coarx. This is just like Africa too is losing her identity, integrity and independence after allowing neo-colonization to take root on African soil.

Matama (Covenant With Death) goes through a similar alienating experience. Before her sojourn with Bwana Duncan she was healthy and pretty. Her beauty, health and innocence symbolize the unadulterated Africa, which is then destroyed. On her return she has adopted a strange manner of dressing yet she is nearing her death. Through her experience Ruganda seems to warn against the alienation from African traditional practices. He suggests that this alienation, which even neo-colonialism is, is the cause of most of Africa's problems. However, Ruganda is not blind to the inadequacy of some African systems that led to this alienation. Matama was forced away, for instance, by her peoples' intolerance to her barren state.

When the Black Mamba frightens Namuddu she runs to Professor Coarx for help instead of going to her husband, Berewa. Only then does Berewa realise the extent to which he has alienated his wife to the foreigner. This represents the loss of independence, and the establishment of neo-colonialism. Namuddu's flight symbolizes the loss of power by the indigenous people (represented by Berewa) to the foreign powers.

Berewa's dismissal of Namuddu's fears and disgust at sleeping with Professor Coarx represents the leaders' readiness to compromise Africa's Uhuru in pursuit of personal gain. This is usually referred to as development. Berewa urges Namuddu to only think of their poverty as she is exploited. Berewa only thinks of a future when they would be the envy of everybody (read: Nations) who would point at them with envy.

There goes Berewa and his sweet Namuddu. What a lot of money they have got. What a nice house they've built! And what expensive clothes they wear!¹⁰⁴

These accessories represent the indicators of "national" wealth: much money, built up cities and 'high' standards of living, judged from superficial things like garments. National pride is superficial and ignores the deeper morality of the society. The stigmatized wealth accrued from prostitution is accepted.

The value of human life loses significance after this erosion of independence. Ruganda alludes to the Monica Njeri/Tyson saga (Echoes of Silence) and shows that once independence is compromised the foreign powers can, with impunity, trample on the rights of the citizens. Sid retorts to Muthoni, X "I mean as far as we are concerned, we didn't invite ourselves here. It's not my fault that we are in this lovely country of yours".¹⁰⁵ He clarifies that the foreign powers have been invited by the Berewas, the native ruling class, who also protect them.

However, women are not exploited only by foreigners. Berewa also exploits Namuddu. The relationship between Nankya and Bwogo better symbolizes exploitation by the local ruling class. Bwogo considers Nankya, as indeed other women, a mere sex object. He refers to her as a "household ware".¹⁰⁶ He perverts the idiom "household-name" to uphold the image of

women as receptacles of the male desires. This pots and pan idea is elaborated in his poem "Being Fulfilled".¹⁰⁷ The "ware" image suggests that women are merely ornamental, without any feelings or intelligence. Nankya despite her advanced academic achievement is referred to as a "chick" caged in by "hawks".¹⁰⁸ The power relationship between men and women, powerful versus powerless, is brought out. The hawks' predatory dominance of the chick symbolically brings out the dominance over women and the general powerless populace.

Within the above perspective Grace Muthoni's struggle symbolizes the twin struggle of the women against sexual exploitation, and male domination, and the common man's struggle against economic exploitation and political domination.

Professor states that a good woman is like his "composed mural,"¹⁰⁹ it's balanced, polished, graceful and melodious. Never challenges nor disturbs anybody's peace of mind.¹¹⁰ He insists that she must never be "metallic and riotous".¹¹¹ He claims he likes Namuddu when she is not "raving" and falling into "frantic fits"¹¹² because then she ceases to be that which blissful ignorance stands for.¹¹³ Professor feels that a woman is only good when she unquestioningly allows herself to be used to fulfil sexual needs, when she is being exploited. Professor's views regarding women are representative of the view of the ruling class towards the exploited powerless workers. The working class are "preferred" when they do not insist on their rights. Professor's desire to suppress Namuddu and to continue exploiting her quietly represents the desire of the powerful to continue their domination of the powerless.

Namuddu rejects the male dominated society view that women are property to be bought using cows. Her question to Professor summarizes the mood of the struggle, "Do you suppose because I am a woman, I don't matter?!"¹¹⁴ This could be read to mean all the powerless asserting that they too matter. Namuddu develops progressively to assert the position of the women. At the end of the play Namuddu seeks protection from Berewa. Seen in isolation it would suggest that Uganda is affirming the inability of the woman to emerge from the shadow of male domination. Symbolically it shows the oppressed coming together to defeat the agents of oppression. This does not make her passive. It merely presents the reality of people ranging up against a bigger evil. At another level it represents the people seeking leadership against neo-colonialism from the very leaders who have sold them off. This brings out the various levels of conflict; Namuddu versus Berewa symbolizing the exploitation by the local native ruler class, Namuddu versus Professor Coarx symbolizing the people struggling against neo-colonialism and Namuddu versus policemen symbolizing the struggle of the people against the agents of the native ruling class.

The treatment of Stella in Music Without Tears is unique in that the work specifically addresses the Ugandan situation. She is a "re-incarnation" of Tinka of The Burdens, who at the end of the play leaves her children alone and directionless. Kaija's and Nyakake's abandonment symbolizes the situation of Uganda at the abolition of the monarchies. Stella symbolizes the mother figure seeking to put the scattered pieces together. She plays the part of peace-maker averting "storms" that threaten to tear the family apart once again.

Stella symbolically portrays the liberated Uganda after a decade of Idi Amin's misrule and the liberation war. She represents the spirit of unity. She rebukes the warring brothers "You are brothers whether you like it or not.

Hitting below the belt doesn't work. Two big brothers. Ten years away from each other."¹¹⁵ The ten years the brothers had been separated represents the ten years in Uganda's history already mentioned.

Stella acts as the buffer between the returnees and the stayees. Her position above the squabbles of the two brothers symbolizes the greater, nobler need for unity of Uganda which Ruganda seems to suggest is above the petty bickering between the two parties. At the same time her seeming helplessness as she is torn between the brothers represents Uganda torn by civil strife.

Ruganda seems to use the re-unification, or the re-establishment of the family unit as a symbol for the re-unification of Uganda. Ruganda alludes to Antigone with Odie and Wak paralleled to Eteocles and Polynices, and Stella parallel to Antigone. Antigone's loyalty and love for both her brothers overcomes the bitterness of civil war and state decree. She accepts both Eteocles and Polynices sacrificing her life in the process. Stella, like Antigone, does the same. Her love for both Odie and Wak represents that greater need for the unity of Uganda. She, the mother Uganda figure calls back on all her sons. Uganda is prepared to accept both returnees and stayees to build a unified nation.

Stella calms down her brothers as they construct a primer for the "revolutionary third world".¹¹⁶ Odie begins to intimidate the rest over suggestions for the primer. This represents autocratic tendencies which hinder the development of Uganda. He imposes his will on the others in the democratically elected committee using force. Ruganda parodies the dictator attitude in many African or Third World nations. Just as it causes the abandonment of the primer is how such tendencies destroy nations. The three characters in the play Odingo Hawi, Stella Muka and Wakanyote Njuguna

represent between them various Kenyan nationalities; Luo, Luhya and Gikuyu. The three are the largest ethnic groups in Kenya. The struggle between them reflects the inter-fighting among ethnic groups with reference not just to Kenya but Uganda and Africa as a whole.

Stella is the only one with a Christian name hence introducing a religious dimension to the struggle. In it we see pitted Christianity and modernity versus tradition. Considering, and as already stated that Ruganda, by the time of writing Music Without Tears, had changed his political stance with regards to the traditional kingdoms Stella's dominant position in the triad seems to reflect this political change in the playwright. He seems to state that compromise and unity in a modern democratic system is the solution for Uganda.

While in school Stella was raped by soldiers and left expectant. This is a reworking of the Nalubale myth in The Floods. Stella's rape symbolizes the rape of Uganda already analysed in Chapter II.

However, Ruganda does not exploit this symbol as fully as in The Floods. Stella's child is not referred to at all. In the Nalubale myth the child was seen as the result of this defilement the same would have held for Stella's. Seeing the various levels at which Stella's role can be interpreted, the child and its fate would have suggested a lot about Ruganda's views post-liberation Uganda.

Ruganda's women characters radically reject male domination after "finding themselves". Namuddu recognizes her humanity after being mistreated by both Berewa and Professor. She develops, and questions their designs of using her. She exposes Professor's hypocrisy and parodies his claims of honour and prestige. Namuddu is the only person who emerges from the play with some

respect and some credit. This is perhaps an indication that the social role of women is beginning to change. Namuddu is now better experienced to handle men. At the symbolic level Africa like Namuddu learns something from neo-colonialism. Africa is better suited to handle her affairs after the experience. Matama also desires some strength to face the villagers after her sojourn with Bwana Duncan. The experience makes her somewhat stronger.

Tinka is forced to fend for the family after Wamala is detained, and for him too upon his release. She "finds herself" when the dominating presence of Wamala is no longer there. This represents the break from the traditional role of the man as the provider. It shows that faced with the challenge the woman can assume a greater role in society. Like in Namuddu's case, they are assuming greater social roles.

Nankya represents the more independent women in society. For Nankya, the emerging petty bourgeoisie class and not only sex are important factors in determining social position. This is why Nankya the "intellectual" is more characterized than Nankya the woman. In her is the woman playing a definite role in the social affairs. This is now the woman whom Kyeyune refers to as a "big fish in the great pond of learning".¹¹⁷ There is now a lot expected from the women. However, Nankya has not fulfilled her potential. She is said to be coiled like a cobra. As alluded to before this symbol brings out her potential effectiveness or even danger to the Boss regime, while at the same time the image of big fish conveys that she has joined the eaters of society. She is a big fish that swallows smaller fish. This further emphasizes the hypocritical nature of her class brought out by the image of a snake. We see represented in her women who are now fully in the system and just as exploitative.

Stella in Music Without Tears is more or less in the same social position as Nankya. She is not dependent on her brothers, having also got her inheritance. The re-union of the family seen symbolically as the re-establishment of proper government in Uganda sees her play a greater role in politics, and in the destiny of Uganda. The role of the woman is no longer that of a passive observer. She is an active participant in the political destiny. Uganda seems to assign a bigger responsibility to women. The hypocrisy that blurs Nankya's vision is absent in Stella. At the end of the play, as Odie relapses into madness she emerges as the most dominant character. Considering that Wak has just returned from the bush. In re-construction the women must assume a greater role because it is they who literally held the fort as the men fled to exile or were detained, as even Odie was.

Wairi's struggle is probably the most symbolic. Njoroge Njuguna becomes indifferent to Wairi when it is apparent she cannot conceive. For a long time she broods over this rejection, which means she is rejected as a child producing gadget. Her self-recrimination is acceptance of the sex-object image. Her fight, a more mental one, is brought out as she enacts Grace Muthoni's fight against having her photograph taken. Grace Muthoni had been sexually exploited by Okoth-Okach and for a long time ascribed to the male sexist view articulated by Okoth-Okach that she should be grateful for being saved from misery.¹¹⁸ The sex-mongering American taking her photo simply portrays women as sex-objects; the "black is beautiful" image. Her refusal to be duped into this symbolizes a mental rejection of this attitude. Grace Muthoni's revolt against Okoth-Okach represents this mental change. Her demands for better things have parallels in the demands of the more enlightened Namuddu. Wairi goes through these mental paroxysms and is better equipped to handle life. One gets the feeling she is not obsessed with waiting for Njoroge Njuguna any more.

She decides to live. She is no longer going to be content with living the fag end of life.¹¹⁹ She mentally frees herself from the sex oriented mentality. Her freedom is symbolized by the reversals that her and Okoth-Okach go through.

Whereas at the beginning it was Okoth-Okach who, working at Campbells, let in Grace Muthoni, now it is Okoth-Okach asking to be let in at the "same Campbells, same here just a doze would do. In a chair or some Campbells..."¹²⁰ Wairi then opens the door for him, he enters and savours the warmth. It is Wairi's turn to offer hospitality. She in fact suggests a similar status with Okoth-Okach when she says, "Birds of the same feather."¹²¹ She has purged herself of the rituals of waiting that confined her to her sex-object derived imprisonment. She decides to have a drink, and does not care that the food for Njoroge Njuguna is charred. She does not intend to wait for him any more. She probably does not intend to wait on him any longer. Wairi manages to free herself from the mental subjugation that allowed Njoroge Njuguna to exploit her all along.

Ruganda's women develop from Namuddu of Black Mamba to Wairi of Echoes of Silence where a full reversal of roles is seen. Ruganda sees women taking a greater role in socio-economic affairs, especially after coming to terms with their potentialities. At the level of symbols, the women who symbolize the struggle of all the powerless progressively develop to become more assertive. this represents the idea that the powerless will regain his rightful position. The same applies to Africa in the clutches of neo-colonialism. After a learning process like Namuddu's the African shall regain his independence. Ruganda uses Wairi to show that mental emancipation is most important in the process of self-discovery.

d) **The Common Man**

In an interview with Mikaele Dofe answering a question on what he tries to communicate through his works Ruganda answers:

I try to show what people can do for themselves, how they can share and live happily with others without exploiting their neighbours.¹²²

In the same interview he says that human beings have been a major influence on his work, especially those in power, who use their offices to exploit others and also the masses, who aspire to be very rich. Because according to myth, you can do anything as a rich man.¹²³

Ruganda seeks to show the common man, and expose his weaknesses. He depicts the common man trying to cope with the social, economic and political circumstances prevalent in Africa.

In the Covenant With Death Ruganda establishes that even in a traditional African setup like that in which Matama grew up, those in power molested the common man. Matama reveals the relationship between her father and the servants. The servants were disdainful of Matama and her father, the Saza Chief, would flog them. This portrayal therefore shows that Ruganda appreciates that the lot of the common man has been bad prior to colonialism. Even in this society the woman was worse off than the man. She still represents the exploited masses. Banura complains that she does all the work while her husband simply drinks.

The common man in Black Mamba is represented by Berewa and Namuddu who are among those who have had to leave their rural homes to sell their labour. The amount they are paid is not enough to sustain them. Berewa's

situation portrays the common man in the more exploitative labour market. The exploiter is now not only the Saza Chief, but the Professor Coarxs.

However, Berewa's greed, that leads him to sell his wife, represents the desire by the common man to improve his economic situation. Ruganda criticizes the tendency of the common man to disregard morality in this pursuit. Ruganda also shows the common man as equally exploitative at his own level. Berewa exploits his wife, Namuddu

In The Burden the common man represented by Wamala and more so his cronies, has been fully dehumanized. He is referred to as "little-man".¹²⁴ Those in power do not consider the common men as anything significant. He is, because of this reality very insecure. The fear that characterizes the Wamala household brings out their state. Kyeyune in The Floods describes the common men as living a life "no better than a drunkards cockerel".¹²⁵ This image operates at different levels. The drunkards cockerel lives under perpetual threat of the cooking pot. The drunken owner could decide to cook it at any time. Similarly the small man lives subject to the whims of the big man. At another level the image implies that the common man is food for the powerful-drunk leaders. This brings out the exploitative relationship between the two groups. The common man fattens the big-ban by being economically exploited.

The relationship between the small man and the big is described using predator images to show that a common man is at the losing end. The fisherman in The Floods is described as being between the jaws of a crocodile in his encounter with the headman. The headman represents the regime and the relationship symbolically shows the mercilessness and extent of exploitation by the regime. The common man has very little say in such a relationship.

The common men in The Floods are also seen as floods. The floods that threaten to drown Bwogo symbolize the rise of the masses against the evil regime. Ruganda seems to get his symbol from the Book of Genesis.¹²⁶ Therein God sent the flood to rid the earth of evil. The rise of the floods symbolizes the rise of the common man to fight evil: genocide, corruption and greed. The increasing strength represents the growing power of the dissenters. It represents the inevitable success. These floods represent the forces which will expurgate from the land the "odour of massacred blood".¹²⁷

Ruganda seems to suggest that Kyeyune is antithesis of their society. His stoical stand against the headman and Bwogo symbolically brings out the fight between good and evil.

In The Glutton the floods are replaced by the spirits of those killed by the 'President'. The 'President' tries to kill the spirits but fails. He is then throttled by them. This immortality and the resurrection of the dead symbolizes the indestructibility of the forces of dissent, those seeking justice. Ruganda states that the common man will eventually overcome the oppressors.

Already oblique references to Kyeyune as the epitome of good have been made above, however, to what extent is the central metaphor around whom Ruganda's message revolves.

Ruganda describes Kyeyune as a quaint traditionalist. The common man, Kyeyune, anchors himself on traditions. In this society rootlessness is a common feature. This is symbolized by the orphan status of Matama, Berewa, Kaija, Nyakake, Nankya, Stella, Odie and Wak. Kyeyune seeks a traditional/mythical interpretation for every event. Kyeyune world-view circulates around traditional lore and wisdom. He affirms the Africa of the past,

the one he knows. He is the least evil in The Floods and through him Ruganda seems to be stating that the African world view is preferable. Where the other characters have no moral standard Kyeyune's is the traditional one. Kyeyune's victory over the headman represents the strength of tradition over modernity, and the strength of the common man.

Ruganda does not fully, however, identify with Kyeyune. The appendage of the qualifier "quaint" to his description distances Ruganda from him. The same Kyeyune who advises the fishermen that non-violence would not work between the jaws of a crocodile reacts to crises by prayer. This represents an escape into mysticism, and a tendency to seek divine or metaphysical solutions to social problems.

Kyeyune stops fishing when he was faced with the excesses of the regime: the corpse of the Brigadier. He later stops eating fish because he finds a human finger in it. Finding a finger in the fish should be seen as portraying the exploitation of the powerful by the powerless. The big fish are those in power. We see Nankya referred to as a "big fish in the biggest pond of leaning".¹²⁸ The headman is also caught like a fish by Kyeyune. The common man's refusal to catch the fish, or eat fish, symbolically suggest reluctance to check the excesses of those in power. In the situation where these big fish swallow up small fish, everything must be done to curb them. Kyeyune's action symbolizes the common man's escapism that allows the big fish to exploit the small man. The image of the fish eating humans instead of the other way round shows Ruganda's attitude to this exploitation. Those who were meant to serve the people and using them for personal gain.

Kyeyune is shown whimpering, afraid of death and pleading with Bwogo. Here Kyeyune further shows the common man seemingly overwhelmed by evil is reduced to sycophancy. Kyeyune is portrayed disgustingly when he is engaged in begging for mercy.

Please, master, listen to me (He goes down on his knees). Those are not men. They are mad. Don't go to them. (Bwogo is not impressed. Kyeyune clutches at Bwogo's trousers). Please don't go master. We need you... We need you here... (after making sure Nankya is out of hearing). Can I come along with you, master? They wouldn't touch her I'm sure, or would they? Let me come with you. They wouldn't harm an old man like me.... (He pushes him (Kyeyune) aside and exits. Kyeyune who is still on his knees, breaks out into a prayer).¹²⁹

Despite Kyeyune's adulations he does not win Bwogo's favour. Kyeyune's rejection by Bwogo symbolically brings out Ruganda's rejection of sycophancy, sneakiness and selfishness.

Ruganda constantly in his works parodies the common man's mistaken hope that he can get help from the very people exploiting them. In Black Mamba, Namuddu runs to Berewa when the police threaten her. In The Burdens we see Tinka leading Wamala off to bed for the "only thing that works these days."¹³⁰ In The Floods Nankya, though not belonging entirely to the common men's class, joins Bwogo to form their "inseparable ones" alliance. Kyeyune is also seen grovelling at Bwogo's feet. Ruganda seems to imply that this is a fallacy on the part of the common man. He is not fully conscious of whom his enemy is. He is also trying, like Berewa, to join the exploiters.

Kyeyune is very strong when facing Bwogo at the beginning of The Floods. He calls him, "disciple of the ogre"¹³¹ He accosts Bwogo and states to him that their regime is doomed, and it is just a matter of time before it crumbles. Kyeyune also traps the headman in his net.¹³² Seen in juxtaposition

to his sycophancy Ruganda brings out the unexploited potential of the common man. He seeks to show that the common man should not allow himself to be overrun by the powerful. Ruganda seeks to understand the psychological weakness that makes him unable to act. Just as in the women, Ruganda seems to state that the common man must free himself mentally. To a small extent Namuddu's awakening symbolizes the beginning of this process.

Kyeyune's strength, moral and physical, symbolizes the positivity of tradition. His positivity symbolically brings out Ruganda's preference for a system based on the strong roots of traditional religion and cosmology. Kyeyune is set against rootless characters: the fatherless Nankya, the evil, orphaned Bwogo, the headman and the soldiers. Kyeyune towers above them therefore suggesting the strength of traditions. Ruganda seems to call for a symbolic "return to Africa". He seems to suggest that the overly alienated African states can only be salvaged by reverting to the traditional African roots.

Kyeyune's moral strength is derived from being able to detach himself from the evil and watch the world around him regress. He is not contaminated by corruption. Kyeyune seems to be modelled round the figure of Jesus Christ. As the third wave opens Kyeyune is in an attitude of prayer reminiscent of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, before being delivered to his enemies by Judas, went to pray. He pleaded to his father that he be spared the "cup" symbolic of the suffering. His father rejected the pleas and Jesus resigned himself to his sacrificial role: the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.¹³³

Kyeyune like Jesus claims himself a sacrifice for others: "My head is singed to the bone by the straight ones irreconcilable folly and my hands limp with supplication".¹³⁴ Kyeyune the sacrificial lamb, though sinless, carries the

sins of the rest. Kyeyune, like Jesus, also mediates on behalf of the straight ones to God. He says his voice has gone hoarse preaching against evils like grabbing and hoarding. Kyeyune's is the only voice against evil. Kyeyune like Jesus pleads to be spared the suffering but later concedes to the sacrificial role, "I have given up irresistible one, given up and now I submit myself to the judgement of your heavy hand."¹³⁵

Ruganda seems to use Kyeyune to symbolize the common man as the conscience of a nation. The common man is still relatively clean of corruption hence he can question the conduct of the "straight ones" who represent those in power. Here again the potential of the common man is underlined. The common man is like the sacrificial lamb, who must sacrifice himself and change events in his nation. The common man is therefore the source of salvation. Jesus died on the cross to save mankind just as Kyeyune submits himself to judgement to suffer for the sins and therefore bring hope. Ruganda suggests that the common man free from his flaws is the only hope of salvation for Africa.

Ruganda gives the all important role of saving Africa from iniquitous regimes, like the one in The Floods, to the common man. Ruganda shows that the common man has great potential as the saviour of Africa.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

"Symbol" in our study has been seen as that which calls reference to something more profound than itself. This association must be implied and not direct. Symbolism is the use of symbols, it is style, a mode of literary presentation. In this study the dialectical relationship between form-symbolism - and content, formed the theoretical basis of our analysis. Our assertion that a study of Ruganda's symbolism best facilitates a deeper appreciation and understanding of the plays arises from this belief.

A people's literature reflects their reactions to social forces in operation within their environment. Ruganda's plays reflect Africa trying to cope with the socio-economic realities that came with Uhuru. Ruganda, a playwright, has greater sensibility since he seeks to, and does communicate with people of wider socio-economic spectrum, than, for instance a novelist because he uses the dramatic medium; drama is audio-visual and hence does not preclude the illiterate. In this respect Ruganda is more significant because of his view of drama as pedagogic.

Ruganda's symbols, to a large extent, derive from African folklore, traditions and inter-personal relationships. Ruganda expertly manipulates these elements to create symbols that carry his socio-political themes through. The mythological and oracle figure of Kaikaara goddess of Fruition and Death is woven into a symbol that portrays the futility of the political alliance between Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and Kabaka Yekka (KY). The KY Party was seen as symbolizing the monarchical past. The UPC, on the other hand,

symbolizes the resolve of those regions and people opposed to the conservative and tribal exclusiveness of the Baganda, and indeed Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole. The covenant between Banya and Kaikaara is the symbolic depiction of the fatally doomed alliance between these two groups. Matama hence symbolizes the stalemate arising from this alliance. The destruction of Banya, Kabooga and Matama symbolizes the end of this "marriage of convenience" between the Kabaka and Obote.

The Nyamgondho story used in The Floods is traced to the Luo of Western Kenya. Ruganda uses elements of this tale, to parody Obote's rise to power and subsequent fall. Obote, like Nyamgondho, seemed to have risen from humble political beginnings to become prominent. He then over-reached himself, as Nyamgondho did, and was toppled. Kyeyune suggests that before the Ogre-Amin, took over everything was not fine. Obote "died" politically just as Nyamgondho also dies at the end of the story.

The song, "Guns to play the Drums" mourns the end of the monarchy. The battery of royal drums (they numbered about 200) symbolized the Kingdom of Buganda. The battery, known as Mujaguzo played a central role in the Kabaka institution. Hearing the drums meant the Kabaka was present. The importance of these drums is recounted by Crawford Young who writes that, when in May 1966 Obote's men invaded the palace and apparently destroyed Majaguzo, Baganda of all walks of life, even those who were anti-monarchy found this a personal numbing trauma.¹ The drums symbolized the very existence of the people. At the symbolic level the song tells of Kabaka Mutesa II's flight to exile. There is mention of his hope to return to his throne, but this is dismissed by Tinka as a dream. The father getting guns to play the drums suggests the forceful re-establishment of the monarchy. The immediate hope for this was crushed in November 1969 when Kabaka Mutesa II died.

Among the Baganda reeds have a significant place in Kingship. The Kabaka's palace was surrounded by a reed fence. The reed is therefore another symbol of Kabakaship, especially the extent of his influence. Ruganda has used reeds in both *Covenant with Death* and *The Burdens* to symbolically portray the abolition of the kingdoms in Uganda. This symbol has been echoed by David Rubadiri in "Stanley meets Mutesa".

Inter-personal relationships, or the lack of it, provide Ruganda with symbols with which to analyse political themes. The family unit features very prominently in this framework. Among other related symbols within this category are: rape barrenness and parentlessness.

Barrenness as a symbol is adequately exploited to show the emptiness of Uhuru in most of Africa. Matama is barren and so is Wairi. Their "empty wombs" symbolize the emptiness of Uhuru. The symbol shows the disillusionment with independence; the feeling that nothing has been achieved from Uhuru. The failure to account for Stella's child symbolizes the failure of the leaders to deliver the goods of Uhuru. The bitterness at this barrenness by Wairi and Matama, and the bitterness of impotence of Motomoto and Njoroge Njuguna portrays, using symbols, Ruganda's bitterness at the emptiness of Uhuru. This theme of betrayal of independence is further brought out by Tinka and Matama betraying their obligations to remain pure. Wamala also betrays the trust the people had in him by trying to "sell" his country to his yankee allies. Odie's betrayal of Wak is the highest treachery and betrayal.

This barrenness causes the breakdown of the families. Matama is unable to get married as a result of her barrenness. Wairi's husband Njroge Njuguna seeks refuge from her matrimonial home in an extra-marital

relationship. This failure to establish family relationship symbolizes the chaos that has resulted from the betrayal of the aspirations of Uhuru.

Stellas's child is un-accounted for, this symbolizes the emptiness of the future. The bitterness at this childlessness is very well developed in the other two women as it is in Motomot and Njoroge Njuguna. Symbolically, Ruganda brings out this disappointment with Uhuru and the bitterness he feels as a result.

Parentlessness symbolizes the rootlessness of many African nations as a result of the breakdown of traditional governments. Kaija and Nyakake lose both their parents. Wamala is killed and Tinka would probably be hanged for murder. Nankya, who was conceived as a result of an assault on her mother by four soldiers, does not know her father. In a patrilineal society she is as good as parentless. Stella and Odie also lose both parents, Wak loses even the foster mother. Kaija and Nyakake are headed for an orphanage to be adopted. This symbolizes the African nations also being adopted by the world powers; either east or west. The confusion of the Wamala children symbolically portrays the confusion of the rootless African nations, at independence completely uncertain of their future, and especially their independence..

The breakup of families, like the Wamala's, symbolizes the break up of Uganda caused by the chaos arising from the abolition of the monarchies in 1967. This chaos that Kaija sees in a vision on the surface of the swimming pool at the Republic's bar. As already stated Ruganda believes that Uganda's problems trace back to the abolition of the monarchies. This was actually the final step of moves started by the independence constitution. The abolition of the Buganda, Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole kingdoms resulted in the Republic, which Ruganda accuses of mass corruption and unaccountability.

Bamya's family is destroyed by the "storms", these storms which crush the reeds - a symbol of the monarchy. Matama's death marks the end of Bamya's lineage. It marks, therefore the end of the dynasty, just as the setting up of the republic marked the end of kingdoms. The total annihilation of this family symbolizes the end of the four kingdoms.

In Music Without Tears, Ruganda uses the family trying to get together again to symbolize Uganda trying to patch itself up after the nine years of Amin's rule and the civil war that toppled him. The different experiences of the family members represent the different groups in Uganda, who need to come together to form the Ugandan family. This especially treats the role of the refugee in the liberated nation. The difficulty that Stella, Wak and Odie experience represents the difficulty that Ruganda acknowledges Uganda must face in the process of reconstruction. Wak's insistence on exposing Odie's treachery symbolically suggests that those who were guilty of such crimes need to be exposed and probably got rid of. Ruganda ensures that Wak is not portrayed as vindictive towards Odie. He does what he does as a duty, and a contribution to the reconstruction effort.

Ruganda's imagery also brings out the deep socio-economic schism dividing post-independent African nations. Those in positions of power and privilege are described as "big fish", "big guns". They are ranked against the "small man". The size difference brings out their "predatory" nature; the idea of big fish feeding on small fish and the small man facing the big guns. The over-exploitation is also brought out by the image of their property: "Big-mansions, and big bottomed wives". Their extravagance is contrasted to the tawny Kaija, and tubercular Nyakake and the common man with shrivelled fingers. Using symbols the fact that one class eats off the other is clearly portrayed.

Nankya's mother and Stella are victims of actual rape, by soldiers. However, as a symbol Ruganda under-utilizes the rape image. Rape is a cruel traumatizing experience that leaves the victim psychologically and, at times, physically maimed. Taking off from the rape of Nalubale, which symbolizes the rape of the Ugandan nation by ambitious and greedy people, he uses prostitution to symbolize the same plunder of African resources by both foreign and local exploiters. Yet, it is only in Matama that the physical destruction as a result of "prostituting" herself to Bwana Duncan is apparent. The physical deterioration greatly enhances her psychological alienation. Namuddu, Nankya and Stella who are all sexually abused show no physical effects of the assault.

The psychological effect is also not developed. Matama is the only one tortured by thoughts of her prostituting herself to Bwana Duncan. Namuddu is not very disturbed and only complains because Professor Coarx abandons her. Tinka remembers breaking her vow on the Cathedral steps with little regret. Nankya who claims she was a virgin before Bwogo's courtship does not seem to be disturbed except that Bwogo does not want to acknowledge responsibility for her pregnancy. She talks about their sexual exploits with little anger. Stella who was raped by soldiers and left expectant even has an affair with one Major Ali, and it is only Odie's taunts that makes her feel ashamed of the affair. As a victim of rape we would expect the psychological impact to be seen. The effect of rape could have been developed on both these fronts so that at the symbolic level the physical and psychological effect of neo-colonial exploitation is powerfully represented.

Ruganda's symbols evolve very definitely with the development of his characters, for instance, the changes in his portrayal of the character types of the

politician, intellectual, woman and common man. The various types seen in Black Mamba, when he had just completed university education, is not the same perspective seen in Music Without Tears when he is in exile.

In his earlier days and reflected in his earlier works, Ruganda seemed to see solution for the Ugandan politician problems as lying in some compromise between Republicans and the Monarchists. This would be realised in a system with the kingdoms retaining a kind of autonomous status within a federal republic. The progressive and democratic electoral systems of the traditional would be maintained. This was one fundamental freedom Ruganda felt the independence constitution had curtailed. This led to unsuitable people, like Wamala, assuming offices. Later on Ruganda seems to acknowledge that re-establishing the kingdoms is not politically viable. In Music Without Tears Ruganda offers his suggestion for a new kind of leadership represented by Wak.

Ruganda portrays the politician growing greedier and more exploitative. Wamala in The Burdens manages to acquire cows, cars, servants, free mansions and a ranch; Kanagonago, who is among the cream after his fall, changes cars like pants and has settees that cost fortunes and is a director of several companies. In The Floods Boss and his cousin Bwogo have amassed inconceivable wealth and even opened foreign bank accounts. Odie's father was in a position of influence and there are suggestions that he managed to amass some wealth. Correspondingly the "small man" has grown poorer with hopes of self improvement more remote. The magnitude of aggrandizement increases with every play. The development of an intellectual elite is also traced. He emerges from the time of empty idealism arising from the euphoria of independence to the politicized selfless revolutionary represented by Wak. Wak seems to be Ruganda's ideal intellectual, one who has discarded "armchair revolutionary" ideas. He has joined hands with other nationals and has a clear

agenda for the political future of their nation. Kyeyune represents the "return to Africa" philosophy which embodied honesty, integrity, industry, selflessness and tolerance. The fusion of Wak's and Kyeyune's positive traits is used to mould the ideal person for Africa's leadership. Wak is not just an intellectual, Kyeyune's stoicism is seen in his (Wak's) military training and prowess. In Echoes of Silence the awaited messiah is also visualized as combining all these qualities.

Ruganda's women emerge from traditional societies that treated them as sub-humans. They forge their way into the present society where they can play a bigger role in the national socio-economic affairs. Most important is the mental emancipation, seen in Wairi's decision to wait for Njoroge Njuguna no more. She re-defines herself using her own perspective, no longer as Njoroge Njuguna's lady-in-waiting. The woman develops and assumes a greater role, as Stella does in *Music*. This renders null the interpretation that Ruganda's women are passive.

The common man (in Ruganda's work) is not glorified as a Marxist writer would. Though himself a victim of the exploiting powerful class, the common man is also seen to be vindictive. In the traditional society portrayed in Covenant with Death the common man is seen exploiting women. Berewa also thrives exploiting Namuddu, Wamala exploits his wife by stealing from her. Kyeyune is also criticized for his sycophancy and selfishness. Through Kyeyune's portrayal Ruganda seems to suggest that the common man must shun sycophancy and stand firmly for truth. Kyeyune is very strong when he stands his ground against the headman and Bwogo. Yet as soon as he gets overwhelmed by fear and acknowledges Bwogo as "master" he becomes a grovelling sycophantic snivelling old man eliciting disgust.

Ruganda's use of folklore goes further than what Dickinson refers to a 'dramatization of classical myths'², Ruganda does not merely adapt folklore for stage but uses it to re-create. Covenant with Death is therefore not simply a dramatization of the myth of Kaikaara. For instance, the oracle and mythical figure of Kaikaara assumes a greater meaning because Matama goes off with Bwana Duncan, a white man. Since he is a foreigner the sojourn symbolizes the loss of independence and establishment of neo-colonialism.

In The Burdens, Ruganda uses a number of folklore elements: story and song. The story of Ngoma's beautiful daughter assumes a different referent because of the parallels: Wamala to the leper, Tinka to Nyenje and the test of retrieving the umbilical cord as parallel to Wamala and hence the common man triumphing over the odds. The addition of the palace and the song give the story a referent of the kingdoms of Uganda. These elements incorporated become part of the play though not the backbone of the play.

This technique has far reaching implications to African artists. In Africa where the oral art is still alive the literary artist can enrich his work using these elements. This would lend the work a unique authenticity and would immortalize the oral tradition (since drama though written is actualized as an oral art).

Though there are various inter-personal relations between characters in Ruganda's drama, most relationships symbolise different positions. In Black Mamba idealism versus pragmatism is symbolically portrayed by the difference between on one end Berewa, and Odiambo, Smith and Coarx. One group expresses intellectual idealistic solutions and analysis which are criticized by the more pragmatic Berewa. There is also the rift between the government and its subjects. The failure of Odiambo and the police to understand the realities of their society which pits them against Namuddu and Berewa symbolizes the

schism between the rulers and the ruled. The relationship between the male chauvinists Coarx, Odiambo, Berewa, the Police and Namuddu symbolizes the struggle between the neo-colonial agents and the nationalistic patriots. The fact that Namuddu is the only one who emerges with some respect in Black Mamba symbolically shows Ruganda's faith in those fighting neo-colonialism.

In Covenant with Death the struggle between the modernists: Matama and Motomoto, versus the traditionalists: villagers, travellers, Banura and Old Man symbolise the struggle between the progressivists versus the conservatists. In this struggle, bringing out the case of women in traditional society and lack of tolerance for those unable to procreate is reflected in the fight between the republicans versus the monarchists. Motomoto is the sole survivor at this stage symbolizing the partial success of the progressivists.

This struggle continues in The Burdens. Tinka with her royal background is pitted against Wamala a commoner. Theirs is a doomed relationship and only survives in their children Kaija and Nyakake, who are devoid of their hang-ups. This represents a new generation of progressivists. Ruganda suggests that it is this generation that holds the hope for Africa.

Kyeyune in The Floods is the only character with "roots". IN him is represented the element that Kaija and Nyakake lack a sense of direction as a result of being rootless. The differences between the rich and the poor is also brought out in the animosity between Boss, Bwogo and Headman and the Islanders. This opposition also brings to the fore the struggle between the revolutionary forces and the reactionary people in leadership.

In Music Without Tears the refugee problem is seen in the struggle that pits Odie against Wak and Stella. The suspicions and tensions that mark the life of refugees is brought out in the "Chemistry" bringing these siblings together. The animosity of the stayees towards the returnees is emphasized by Stella's siding with Wak, her half brother against Odie, her actual brother. The Stella versus Odie and Wak relationship brings out the need for reconciliation. The woman as a mother figure symbolizes the embattled motherland.

The relationship between Wairi and Okoth-Okach culminating in a symbolic union suggests a centrist ideology. Okoth-Okach whose name and withered left arm suggests leftist policies of Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) of Oginga Odinga and Wairi whose ethnic background seems to suggest that KANU led by Kenyatta come together as "birds of a feather". This symbolically suggests a mid stream political ideology neither leftist nor rightist. As quoted above Ruganda does not believe in radical ideological learnings. The struggle between Wairi and Okoth-Okach brings out the need to listen to one another the two ideological lines. The character of the leader that finally emerges in Echoes of Silence is a development from the moulding of the Kaija/Nyakake progressivism with Kyeyune's tradition-based stoicism and Wak's revolutionary zeal guided by intellectual prowess.

Ruganda has used folklore and other symbols to portray sensitive political events. Ruganda undoubtedly resorts to these being very aware of the possible repercussions of unveiled criticism. The social satire in Black Mamba is the most light-hearted yet biting scathing play by him. The strength of Black Mamba rests with its use of humour. The socio-political issues, are best handled, as he has done, using symbols. Hence our assertion in this study that a study of the symbols best facilitates the understanding of its work.

The use of folklore in drama is a way of preserving African traditions. This is in line with one of Ruganda's cardinal beliefs that drama can be used as a vehicle of cultural proliferation. The folklore elements used are derived from different communities in East Africa hence making Ruganda's drama culturally relevant to the whole region. The use of folklore by Ruganda, and as expounded on by this study, sets a precedent for further not only dramatic works but work in other literary genres. However, a more detailed stylistic study of the use of folklore and its transition into written works is called for. Our study has identified and done an analysis of the use of folklore in creating symbols, there are other elements of folklore in Ruganda's drama that deserve study.

Ruganda's plays are by and large political commentaries. As already stated Ruganda very ably analyses East Africa's political situation. However, Ruganda still retains the subtlety that increases the artistic impact of his plays. None of Ruganda's plays are political treatises despite the high political sensitivity. This again reflects another Ruganda's beliefs, that drama should allow us moments of introspection when we can laugh at our follies and absurdities, enjoy our achievements, flinch at tragedies hence raising our socio-political consciousness.³

As a social - political commentator using the dramatic medium only Francis D. Imbuga rivals Ruganda in East Africa. These two leading East African dramatists have worked together for long periods of time. A comparative study of their artistic reactions to similar socio-political forces in East Africa begs to be undertaken as this would facilitate an understanding of their stylistic choices.

Our study has sought to re-address the glaring absence of critical study of Ruganda's work. With this study we hope, Ruganda's exalted contribution to East African, indeed African literature, will be acknowledged.

NOTES

1. Crawford, Young, Peoples of Africa. (New York: Holt Rinehard & Winston Inc., 1966) p. 200.
2. Dickinson, Hugh, Myth on the Modern Stage (urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1969), p.3.
3. Introduction in Programme for 1975 Nairobi University Free Travelling Theatre p. 3.

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