

Symbolism in Robert Serumaga play, *The Elephants*

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Abstract

Serumaga's play, *The Elephants* uses intensive alchemical symbolism of Fire, Water, Air, Earth, Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt to depict the conflicts and changes in post-independent Uganda of June 1969. The two act play shows individuation happening in the lives of the seven characters in four main alchemist stages of transformation: blackening, whitening, yellowing, and reddening. For instance, Jenny, an American Peace Corps volunteer from a wealthy family comes to Uganda in search of her Self-worth. She gets into numerous erotic relationships, the latest one being a marriage proposal to Maurice, a refugee, and David's longtime friend, formerly a philosophy student turned painter. David, the philosopher stone, rejuvenates Maurice who in turn rejuvenates Jenny against the envy of the fiery Richard, an American literary research fellow. The suffering of both David and Maurice does not kill their hope as their moods swing between optimism and pessimism, sanity and insanity, productivity and unproductivity, learning and unlearning. This mercuric life force overcomes the hurting truth condensed over their six years together. Once the news about his dead relatives is broken, Maurice splits from David like the spider-lily leaves, leaving both men mad. The Elephant symbolizes an urge to move, love, transform, and possess. This is the riddle of the post-World War II and post-colonial, post-independent states like Uganda. Mingling with the Wild West, Makerere University produces academic layabouts that roam with the rest of the world; as the doctors and nurses, turn Mulago Hospital and their patients into permanent casualties.

Key words: Transformation, psychotherapy, alchemist, psychoanalysis, power struggle, individual, spiritual

Introduction

Robert Bellermino Serumaga (1939-1980) is one of the most outstanding post-Second World War II psychoanalytical playwrights from Uganda who depicts the state of the people and their nations in dire need of re-incarnation from trauma, manipulation, and suppression. His ludicrous drama is performed in the hostile post-independence era, calling for great care to avoid being victimized. He produces four major transformational plays in less than ten years, namely, *A Play* (1967), *The Elephants* (1970), *Majangwa* (1971) and *Amayirikiti* (1974). His novel, *Return to the Shadows* (1970), is one of the classics in the African Writers Series by Heinemann. All his plays and novel use coarse metaphor and symbolism in the forms of riddling to contest and tease “the *prima material*, raw psychic material” (Miller 1986:8) or the primary matter that causes desire to grow into change leading towards self-realization. *The Elephants* brings out the unconscious and “subconscious” (Serumaga 1971:36) process of change. It is an introspection into the Self using alchemical “symbols to depict a process of transformation” (Miller 1986:2) either internal or external of the human body. The play shows hope and hopelessness, isolation and exploitation, stagnation and power, peace and violence in post-independence Uganda.

I have categorized the symbolism into six groups with the Jungian theory of alchemy in mind. Alchemy is inspired by the belief that, “any element may be transformed into another through the quality that they have in common” (Hamilton 1985:1). It is not an historical account but an everyday “projection of a cosmic and spiritual drama ... an art, both experiential and experimental ... a worldview which unifies spirit and matter, Sun and moon, Yang and Yin.” (Miller 1986:1). It is also noted that, “Alchemy is not concerned exclusively with consciousness, but also seeks the subtle transformation of the body, so that the physical level is also brought into perfect equilibrium.” (Miller 1986:5). The embedded categorical elements are: (a) hot and dry fire, cold and fluid water, hot and fluid air, cold and dry earth; (b) spirit, soul, body; (c) food and sex; (d) mercury - word or wisdom, sulphur – desire, and salt - inertia; (e) sun,

moon, sky, clouds; (f) flower, forest, elephant, mice, gecko, cat, dog, mosquito, man and woman, and net, pot, or any other artificial forms. Of the three prime alchemical substances in category (d) mercury symbolize goodness and intelligence; while sulphur symbolizes desire, attachment and action; and salt symbolizes gross inertia of matter (Miller 1986:6). These substances are closely linked to category (b) spirit, soul and body as shown later. Alchemist rooted in ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations uses symbols to depict the process of human transformation. Serumaga employs alchemist in *The Elephants* to depict the conflicts within the post independent nation states and how their struggle for true independence is either frustrated or facilitated by the appendages of the past and present regimes. The two acts play has seven main actors. Act 1 shows the relationships between Jenny, Richard and an Old Man as a psychological commentary of the egos and super-egos of the peoples they represent. In Act II “an hour later” in the same room, “David is on the bed” and “Jenny is seated on the chair combing her hair” engage in self-purification as “both are sipping drinks” (Serumaga 1971:30) to symbolize the calming down of soul and body tensions as seen throughout the play.

The Characters

Serumaga uses only seven main character on the stage of whom six speak out. The symbolic number six (sixth floor, June, 1969, six years) is related to the six of the dominant elements Fire, Water, Air, Earth, Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt. The dramatis personae can be identified as philosopher stone and native David; the watery, airy, and fiery foreigners Jenny, Maurice, and Richard respectively; young and old an earthly Old Man; crystalline Policemen. The others are university layabouts; teachers and learners. The nations are emerging from great wars, grappling for self-rule, yearning for freedom and self-actualization. This is all not easily got since the elements at play are never stable.

David

David, a “Research Fellow in African Literature and Musicology” devotes most of his zeal to creative writing (Serumaga 1971:1). Jenny observes that David lives up to his profession and kind – with his

interest in knowledge of literature and music. He is able to tell and pronounce the word *e-nko-loo-gi* (oncology) phonemically and Jenny is impressed by this although she does not believe this has anything to do with her profession and being African. David responds to Jenny's praise and admiration in the form of a similitude: "you sound like a newspaper article: the Sunday edition bought on Saturday (Serumaga 1971:11)" meaning that she is making an overstatement too late or an understatement too early. It is not news anymore but fact already known and told about his knowledge and skills in the cancer that is eating up this society. Oncology is the study and treatment of tumours and David is a master in treating social tumours. David gives refuge to Maurice, with whom he shares a lot in common such as being orphaned and creative. David invites him to help as research assistant and in French and they have been together six years. As an artist, he learnt the skill of representing the facts without the truth in them and that gave Maurice hope. David believes this is the reality of life and that there is no need for truth if only it brings suffering. Richard refers to him as "King Kong ... with his long flute" (Serumaga 1971:29) and to both Jenny and David, as "a couple of elephants" (Serumaga 1971:29) obviously in retaliation of David calling him "a big elephant, with a little man inside him, eating away" (Serumaga 1971:32). These words signify his deep introspection into the life of the African men (as nations) herded by foreign interests. King Kong refers to his ability to turn rare personalities like Maurice and Jenny into gold and silver respectively. He has the power to rejuvenate their lives and it is only upon them to lose this elixir of life.

Maurice

Maurice, "a refugee from a neighbouring Francophone territory across the water." (Serumaga 1971:1) has now taken to painting as a symbolic transformation in his life. He was a "philosophy major" in his first year before he fled the war. After six years in exile, Maurice wants to go back home to his family, but most importantly, to get their permission to marry Jenny. He is driven by nostalgia and deception

from the letters that David has been writing his back to show that his parents were still alive. According to David, Maurice's parents were killed and he only managed to escape to safety because he looked ahead and not back to the turmoil he was running away from. A letter later came to say his "father, mother, brother and his not so little sisters" (Serumaga 1971:48) were murdered on the very day of his escape. "The bodies were recovered from downstream where the river was sluggish and choked" much like that which stood below David's own homestead. The irony is that Maurice believes his parents are still alive. He doesn't know that David is his father because David has been writing the letters in the name of his father. As a painter, he is likened to the Holy Spirit, the giver of life because his works add breath to the lives of many who come to the sixth floor.

Jenny

Jennifer, a young American girl from a very rich family, comes to the country as a Peace Corps volunteer. She is in search of true living and re-discovery of herself. She is attracted to David because of his "knowledge of African Literature and music" (Serumaga 1971:11); and to Maurice mostly because of his painting. She has lived a loose 'cold and fluid' life and her latest catch is Maurice whom she has promised a hand in marriage. Richard refers to her and David as a couple of elephants. A herd of elephants is usually led by a powerful cow and no matter how powerful a bull might be, once the cow shows interest in one bull, the rest has to quit the herd. Similarly, Jenny has had quite a number of affairs amidst all these answers and yet she feels emptier every time she thinks of it. Like the mosquito and the bullet on David's mother's neck, Jimmy too was "a bit of a weight around" on Jenny's neck and they had to part ways. After Jimmy, she goes with the girl Sally and then Richard. Switching from one sexual partner and orientation to another, Jenny finds no fulfillment until she considers Maurice her love life commentator becoming her latest catch this November 1969. She considers all including

Richard “past and gone and forgotten as so much sperm under the bridge.” (Serumaga 1971:44). This tells how promiscuous her kind is and how unreliable her “service”.

Her thinking that David has nothing to do with her is misplaced because they have just had a go while in waiting for Maurice whom she says, “everything is new, and fresh, and wholesome. It is as if life itself in its entire and sublime magnificence is happening to me for the first time and I love it, I love, I just simply love it. (Serumaga 1971:44)” from what has been obtaining, she symbolizes the absurdity of watery love life. This is beyond infatuation and madness which David calls renovated virginity. Under such compulsion, it is little wonder that Jenny is thinking of marrying Maurice. This secret of her new life likens Maurice to a divine born without a navel meaning that he has no connection with the wanton world. This is a new turning point of her life. She is nowhere near mercury and so does not believe or even understand the African concept of life eternal. She calls David’s relationship with his dead parents a living in pretense.

Richard

Richard, one of Jenny’s former lovers is an American Research Fellow studying “onomatopoeia in heroic poetry of the Bahima” and according to David, he has everything that he doesn’t need (Serumaga 1971:31). Richard is a fiery person who can be defined as hot and dry fire. He hates David and cannot let go of Jenny which makes him hot tempered. Richard discloses that an Old Man had been knocked “outside the gate ... trying to get in into the university” (Serumaga 1971:29) which sparks off a mental and material search for Old Man. David calls Richard, “a big elephant, with a little man inside him, eating away” (Serumaga 1971:32) meaning that his love, passion and compassion would soon weaken. He symbolizes the element of fire.

An Old Man

Although age is equated to wisdom, Old Man symbolizes mistaken identity of such wisdom. When he mistakes the sixth floor of the University building to be the sixth floor of Mulago Hospital where the privileged take their treatment, he is foreshadowing the precariousness of knowledge as a panacea for wellbeing. An Old Man symbolizes the salt of the earth both the past and present mistakes and mistaken identities, deeds and misdeeds in personal lives, professions and government. Just like Maurice whom he discerns as not as nice as his paintings, so are the institutions and governments.

The Old Man has misplaced his wallet and he is searching for it at David's on the sixth floor of the university instead of checking with the nurse on the sixth floor of the hospital where he was last. His reference to himself as "the fig tree" is a biblical allusion to the fruitless fig tree that Jesus Christ curses and it dries instantly (Mark 11:12-25 New International Version (NIV)). He too has seen "banana trees in this plantation (meaning country) grow, bear fruit, and get chopped down to provide food for other creatures" probably referring to the killings and bodies are fed to fish in the rivers. And for these entire years he has learnt to "funnel his ears" meaning to sieve what to hear, "peg my eye lids" meaning to close a blind eye and "catch the password" meaning acting in a way that leads to survival and no antagonism. When David feigns ignorance of the password to survival, the old man tells him that "the longer you live the more diseases you catch" which refers to why he is in the hospital and looking out for floor six where he would be entitled.

Saying that, 'there are no aspirins here' means that elsewhere in other hospitals, the patients are only treated with aspirin for all diseases. In search for preferential treatment, he ends up on "the *right* floor, but the *wrong* building." (22) This idea of right and wrong signifies the two ends of the life. Old Man laughs as he talks to show how pitiable the situation.

The parallelism between the university, hospital and their sixth floors has equal significance of privileged treatment. Even after being told the difference, Old Man does not believe he is in a wrong place because he has seen it already how even the entitled are treated as if they were not entitled even when they are called by the titles of respect. He calls for the mending of “the body lest it fail to contain the soul” (Serumaga 1971:23). David agrees, nonetheless, he holds old man’s hand and forces him out of his place to mean that he is not entitled to be there. Like Old Man, Richard is neither talked with nor listened to as “the flute wails a note of warning. (ibid 23)”

The Policemen

The two Policemen looking for an Old Man get involved in a case of mistaken identity. Only one of them speaks as the other looks on. They enter David’s room to enquire about an Old Man last seen leaving the sixth floor but they come without search warrant and have no knowledge of where they are and whom they are looking for. They symbolize a police force and army without intelligence right from their commander in chief portrayed in this play.

Setting and Dramatic Techniques

The play is set on an Island with a peninsula in a lake surrounded by fluid and light elements: water, rain, sun, sky, clouds, light, darkness, waves, earth that are symbolic of detachment, oppression, and physical distress. “Situated on the headland, overlooking an expanse of water: a university.” (Serumaga 1971:1) signifies the dilemma facing the society seeking self-discovery. The three symbols – headland (earth), water expanse, and university (wisdom) – depict a society at its intellectual best i.e. searching and researching universal knowledge from the head and land for the benefit of all. It also portrays an ambivalence of fluidity (expanse of water) and fixity (skyscraping constructions) that “rise in a series of boxes” confirming the view that this is a community of great advancement, importance and

concentration. It is intended to be a highly populated settlement in the age of reason. Surprisingly, the occupants of the skyscrapers are “layabouts from Africa, Asia, Europe and from elsewhere in the world.” (Serumaga 1971:1) This shows the play is a giant leap into the lives of many worlds with the water symbolizing both contact and barrier between them in their struggles for self-preservation, self-discovery, and self-assurance.

The elements in the setting symbolize both facilitation and hindrance of this transformation. We can tell this from Serumaga’s detailed exposition of time, that it is, “1969. Clock reads 7.30 a.m.” (Serumaga 1971:2). David says, “We have received 25 days’ worth of rain in one night. Quite an achievement for the month of June. (Serumaga 1971:2).” This attention to detail is part of the psychoanalytic philosophy of gaining hold of the past, present and future. The newspaper which David call “journalistic hide-and-seek (Serumaga 1971:4)” with its story on “Red carpet for Johnson” (Serumaga 1971:4) confirms the events of 1969. Later, Jenny confesses to David that, “so little has happened to me in my twenty-five years of life,” and that it, “fills me with an emptiness that is in dire need of purging” (Serumaga 1971:40). The mapping of time places the play in the context of Jungian and Post-Jungian psychology.

Serumaga employs techniques like the flashbacks, plays within the play, intrusion, ambivalence, subtle movement, intensive rhetorical question, repetition and alchemical choice of words, time, colour, and space that use the psychological identity of the actor and character to convey the desired message. For example, he describes the physical settings with such detail to show how the environment affects the personality of the individual. This makes the plays highly provocative, engaging, captivating but also chaotic, confusing, indirect and incomprehensible to many people. This dramatic style is used to outsmart the dictators (parent figures) that would make it safe for the stage under the repressive regimes. This paper analyses a few of the alchemical symbolism in the artistry of the play.

Symbolism of the Water and Earth

David speaks a great deal about the large expanse of water and the great rainfall: "Five inches in one night" (Serumaga 1971:2) which he says, is not much but this is a great achievement nonetheless because it is better than nothing. His repetitive use of the phrase, "quite an achievement" (Serumaga 1971:2) and Maurice's wordless "grunts" in reply set contrasting views between David's optimism and Maurice's pessimism. This is enhanced by the act of David opening the window and pulling the curtains letting in "*a gash of light*" flooding into the room and making Maurice to "*cover his head* (Serumaga 1971:2)." This also symbolizes the discomfort that the elements earth, water and light bring in their lives. Connecting with the outside world gives David satisfaction while it sends Maurice into discomfort. He 'grunts' and 'parrots' without reasoning while David 'contemplates' the situation of the clouds and makes an informed decision and fair conclusion that, it had to rain since the heavy rain clouds could not hold into the sky. His reasoning that, "water belongs to earth" (Serumaga 1971:2) gives hope for change and suffering at the same time.

The earth and the sky are not just antagonistic, they are complementary. Sky provides the earth with rain and moisture much like David and Maurice thrive on each other's providence. The heavy cloud hanging in their lives is tensed because the mails (letters) that are no longer coming in, causing exasperation or even wonder in David. It perturbs Maurice why David should wonder and yet, to say it is nothing is not reason enough to sigh (Serumaga 1971:3). This situation calls for self-examination to understand beneficence in the falling act of rain in the same light as the majesty of the gecko holding onto the ceiling without falling. Whether Maurice or David, lizard or gecko, sky or earth, life or death, speech or silence are real, life should continue. If the gecko "had as much as a nap" (Serumaga 1971:3), David contemplates, it would fall off the wall. Whether this is possible with those gummy feet is worthy finding out but the truth seems that nature allows the gecko to live happily or so we think, in that

position without falling down. Again, this is a sign of hope for man if creatures like gecko have such providence, why not people even from different walks of life living together in harmony. However, the psychological feats of jealousy and envy make this goal rather impossible.

David explains that the menaces of his life are similar to a storm or flood in a stagnant pool (Serumaga 1971:40); and Jenny says she is in search for “satisfaction that is beyond even the incestuous, that is self-exploring and within the innermost niche of one’s private existence. (Serumaga 1971:41). In between, the prominence of death from unnatural causes like accidents and bullets when life is so guarded leaves much to be desired.

Elements of Jealousy and Envy

Looking through the window of hope (gold), Maurice admires to the extent of being envious of the water and waves in the lake separating and at the same time joining him to his home. For nearly six years (since 1963), he has not touched his relatives yet the waves have a high chance of doing so.

The small waves down there in the lake, they break, sidle up the banks, lick the stones for sustenance, and then retreat. Then I think, they must do the same to the other side of the water. To my home. Sometimes I go and toss a pebble or two into the retreating waves, and hope that maybe the pebble will reach the other side; that something I have touched will float on the wave and as it breaks, the pebble will stay on the other side, my side. You never know, one day those not so little sisters might pick it up, playing on the beach. They won’t know it, but still... (Serumaga 1971:9)

This unravels the self-reflection and sentimentality of Maurice’s yearning for restoration and reunion through nature and its barriers. He reveals that he has thrown some pebbles in the water with the hope

of communication with and to his relatives whom the expanse of water has for long separated from him. The sexuality imagery contained in this riddle is that of the water that breaks the seed and yields fruit. He thinks that through this vast expanse of water, the waves would carry the sounds or messages of his longing back home and in so doing cause the rebirth and maturity of their union. The chance is quite remote as David observes but it is possible in Maurice's inner feeling and he mustn't be late in going to realize his dream.

Likewise, David is angry and envious about the rich privileged whites like Richard who live in pretense and parasitism on the Africans. The name itself suggests he is rich and hard.

David: You know he has this four thousand pound a year grant, a Sunday school knowledge of Kiswahili and an Akai tape-recorder. And what is he doing with this combination of intellectual tools is: he is doing research into the onomatopoeic function in heroic poetry of the Bahima. How is your drink?

Jenny: Fine, still working on it. (*David gets one for himself.*)

David: The University is full of them, a constipating bunch in search of pure knowledge. ... I lost my temper... anyway I told him: why didn't he go back to America and do something useful. Like bomb his own troops in Vietnam, or even the Vietcong, or scalp a few blacks in Chicago for old time's sake. (Serumaga 1971:31)

David vehemently detests "this overfed nest of academic layabouts" because they have something inside that was eating at them and "that is why he was running away to Africa to academic seclusion, to some obscure and unimportant aspects of a type of poetry." (Serumaga 1971:31). The likes of Jenny and Richard are evading a psychological war unlike Maurice who runs away from a physical war. To overcome this envy is the major turning point in their lives and that of the play. The audience must now turn to the unraveling of the entire riddle and dénouement of the play by asking whether Maurice will

get to his home and if he does, will he return to David at the sixth floor? The words, “I will be late. See you later” (Serumaga 1971:10) are very powerful words of determination and resolution to move forward, disciplined and enchanted.

Symbolism of Elephants, Forests, and Flowers

The forest, grass, elephant grass, spider-lily flower (with splintered petals) portrays a sense of green innocence and divisions within the community. The elephants symbolize the dominant and dominated people as the forests and flowers symbolize the productive and unproductive natures. The paradox of parasitism of the small short pygmy on the large tall elephants, suggests David that,

When you see a herd of elephants, eating grass and thorns, there is a pygmy inside every one of them. ... In fact elephants do weaken considerably. In the end they are no better than just mice.

(Serumaga 1971:32).

This means that no herd is strong enough to resist the destructive influences of the short term visitors like the Peace Corps who come as touristic researchers or because like pygmies (*unequal to their task*) are scavenging on the giant African university through Peace Corps for their own ends. There is futility in the search for university knowledge, privileged treatment at the hospital, and peace in the nation.

Elements of Sanity and Insanity

The clash between spirit, body and soul bring about insanity. This comes about when the body and soul need to get back into harmony to create sanity. David and Jenny philosophically contemplate this very important topic as subjects in this window of change.

David: What do you know about insanity?

Jenny: Well, the same thing that you know about it.

David: What do I know about insanity?

Jenny: I really don't know.

David: But you said that you know about insanity the same things that I know about it.

Jenny: Look, I assumed that we both knew just as much as two sane people could know about insanity. (*David has gone to the window. He looks out.*)

David: I hope he has gone down safely. Six floors up. To an insane mind that is nothing. He could get on to the ledge ... (*gets up window*) and jump! (*The pot containing the spider-lily falls inside and smashes. Jenny screams scared.*)

Jenny: David!

David: The death of a spider-lily. (*Picks up the pieces.*) Maurice won't like that. (Serumaga 1971:24)

The word "insanity" is repeated over four times to underscore the gravity of the situation. Jenny "assumed that we both knew just as much as two sane people could know about insanity (Serumaga 1971:24)" and by David going and looking out at the window, so see whether the man has gone safely fearing that he could leap out through the window. "Six floors up. To an insane mind that is nothing. He could get on to the ledge ... (*gets up window*) and jump! (*The pot containing the spider-lily falls inside and smashes. Jenny screams, scared.*)" This act proves what the old man says that the university was full of casualties.

David relates his own story as a young man abused by a teacher many years ago to the ongoing abuses in the state. Canned and abused by a teacher yet saying nothing, he remained transfixed on something invisible that whaled fear and agony making him to start and keep saying, "they've killed her!" (Serumaga 1971:25). The drama of the chaotic and dark convulsions of the unconscious world are released in this episode that symbolizes the painful transfer of powerful emotions in order to emerge as pure as gold. After the death of both his parents, David says, he went to school which was the only place

he knew and had gone to every morning. This he did perhaps to purge his fear, regain his sanity and get back to normal. The shaking and passing out as narrated by David is described by Jung as the process of disengaging with the past and the tears are there to cool off the soul and body in this volatile transformation process.

Anyway, after the teacher had shaken me I fell silent and I am sure I passed out till weeks later I began to notice people looking at me. I was in hospital. They stared at me every time I walked past. Then one day I heard a voice calling out, 'Mother, do you hear me? Father has gone out with the spear'. It was my *own* voice. It was then I knew I had been talking to myself, all this time. They let me out after a while. And when I got home I went to the burial ground and put some stones on the graves. My aunt held my other arm, sobbing. (Serumaga 1971:26)

Here, we look at the island in totality with the flowerpot, home, school, hospital, university, skyscrapers, and Kampala (the city) (Serumaga 1971:16), and the toilet as islands fulfilling the symbol of containment. Like the stage on which the drama takes place, there is a state of idleness typical on the "six floor" of both the hospital and the university. The doing of nothing, is a microcosm of the macrocosm as conceived on the world stage. The auditorium is signified as "the headland extension from the mainland" meaning that the audience is in fact, the extension of the University of Layouts that roam the rest of the world here represented by the pair of Americans, Africans and policemen. It is worse, as it is "a kind of stomach with the navel extending into a peninsula" (Serumaga 1971:1) symbolizing a community of people eating and producing waste beyond their means.

The stomach is the parasitic symbol of containment, aggrandizement, as well as unproductivity and refuse. The navel is the remaining part of a broken cord that is used to feed and release waste matter from the unborn child. It symbolizes a connection and detachment and now it protrudes like a peninsula suggesting a hanging on – hernia – causing anxiety, yearning, longing to reach out, increased

(mal)formation, ... and the statement, “you don’t see many of those anymore” (Serumaga 1971:1) is a physiological fact as it is psychological, sociological, and literary. This suggests that, chances of being conceived or born are constrained. The apparent reality of stagnation, miscarriage, and parasitic survival is eating up the entire colony. Though independent, the neo-colonialists remain like the hernia like peninsular attached to the headland and by so doing, suppressing any independent thoughts and feelings give way to insanity if the hernia is not removed.

There may be “merit in obscurity” as Maurice artistically contends, but “clarity of exposition, neatness of line...” is the best in David’s opinion. That is why; Maurice is so concerned over his misplaced pair of socks. Although it is not a natural part of his body, he needs the socks to cushion the feet “to return to the home that rejected me.” (Serumaga 1971:7); adding that, “it is my country. My motherland. And if I have to sever the cord on my navel, I must do it gently, not rupture it.” His attitude of forgiveness, prefers to forget the bad past and build a better or anew future. This sense of gentility is important as it seeks to plant that new hope amidst hopelessness. At this point, David becomes that pessimist and Maurice the optimist to show that nobody is static in their temperaments. Rightly, the natural law of complementarity needs to be applied in most if not all situation. David’s outburst to Maurice to “quit that nonsense” confirms his haunted nature and past. He argues that,

There are no such lands as motherlands: just a lot of fatherlands and we are the illegitimate sons of the fatherlands. They can accept us or reject us; disown the genes, disclaim the blood. Fathers are not like mothers. They shed no blood, and have no cords to cut.

(Serumaga 1971:7-8)

He speaks deeply about the dispossessed human nature where mothers shed blood to bring forth children but fathers disown them. He falls short of saying that it’s the fathers that kill in war leaving the

situation such as that which brought Maurice into exile obscured under natures' own obscurity as seen in the setting of the play. This mind causes confusion and misunderstanding between the two friends as David tries to dissuade his friend from getting too sentimental about returning home well knowing that he, Maurice has nowhere and nobody to return to except himself. And yet he cannot reveal this fact to him as yet except through further concealment which he says Maurice is a master of.

So, in his attempt to dissuade Maurice from returning to his home country, David contends that, "your country is that country which gives you acceptance, recognition, a chance... fame" (Serumaga 1971:8) likening Australia and America to his situation where there are many Africans but they have not looked back in the same way as he looks at it. Maurice's dramatic recovery of his pair of socks from where David has been sitting suggests that David is actually sitting on his journey. The socks are symbolic of his feet's desire to journey back home and into the future. "Maurice looks at David, then turns and sees the socks where David was sitting as David has just stood, gone to the window and looks out of the window." (8) These actions symbolize the regaining of the suppressed freedom, and looking out to the future. These riddles of silence, proximity, and space go on in their minds to invigorate their powerful emotions denoting that "the pot is getting too small for it." (Serumaga 1971:8) As David contemplates his next move to further his containment plans, Maurice, the symbolic spider-lily plant that has been contained in the pot on David's balcony has a place to grow outside the window but not big enough for full self-expression. This is also true of the things and places in life that exist in inertia without much improvement to qualify the value of their very existence.

Maurice observes the spider-lily from his own experience how "so sad and dejected; with its petals splintered and drooping..."(8) and in a way he speaks the mind of his friend, a similar mind as that expressed in the newspapers about the men who had to give in to vasectomy. What use would it be to

have bright petals if they are not going to produce fruits? So, whether the journey back home was to bear any fruits is not for him to say because, like the spider-lily, this is the first journey of its kind that he would be making. No experience at all except that beyond the spider-lily and the island and the expanse of water and lake is “his home: mother, father and children. ... He does not call this his country because “the island is only a resting place (Serumaga 1971:9).

Like an unproductive ‘flowers’, Maurice is violently uprooted from his natural environments and re-planted for spectacular reasons in a foreign space. He turn to painting a future far more beautiful than its creator. It is here understood that the blossoming of the new state, society and individual is only possible after being estranged from ‘the Old man’ who says of Maurice:

Old Man: Oh, so *you* are Mr. Maurice.

Maurice: Mr. Diop.

Old Man: Not as nice as your painting, Mr. Maurice. (Serumaga 1971:52).

This confrontation is because Maurice is impatient, intolerant and unkind to the old man. This is foreshadowed in Jenny’s symbolic action and statement when she (*Goes to the flower pot*) and says, “Why don’t you pull out this flower? It’s dying and it’s taking the rest of them with it. (She pulls it out.). Although David contemplates and says it is “Such a waste!” (Serumaga 1971:13), he has no feelings for the flower. These feigned feelings have resulted into stagnation and death of the entire society. The American Girl, Jenny, thinks it is best to uproot ‘the flower’ while the African Boy, David, thinks it is such a waste of time to plant and not to tend. Jenny thinks by uprooting the flower, there is the hope for rejuvenation for nothing lives except if it dies.

The problem though is far deeper than the mere containment in the skyscrapers, pots and posts. Jenny does not understand that the problem the flower is suffering is not a mere imbalance between the elements earth, water, fire, and air. The fundamental problem that causes David to go regularly to his own parents is to pluck the grass that “grows at home” (Serumaga 1971: 14) on their graves. Jenny’s and David’s plucking are different in nature. Both symbolize the gravity of the problem lived by the dead and the living alike. Since Maurice’s parents had not said they needed help like these “in their letters” (14), David argues that Maurice does not need to return to his parents at all. He must stay where his life is valued although it is in exile where he is ‘potted’ and not doing as well as he desires. Looking through the window on the balcony of the sixth floor and receiving an irregular letter through post office is all he can afford. His drive towards individuation is achieved through deliberate estrangement from these dominating forces of nature especially the parental figures in David. The breaking of the flower pot is the beginning of such a break away. The question is how long the flower outside the broken pot can survive or is it as David cries out, the “death of the spider-lily” (Serumaga 1971:24)?

As an outsider, the water element in Jenny finds it difficult to perceive that life and death are inseparable in David’s mercuric culture.

When rain clouds gather, when darkness tears at the hems of light. In the ground they be. Deep. Silent. But not dead. Cant’ you see? I am still alive! I must hung on. Like man; like beast; like all the creatures on this earth hang on its bosom, as it revolves, lest they fall off into the void; like all the geckos on the walls. (*Addressing gecko.*) Hey, gecko! I can see though you. Come off the wall! Come off! (Serumaga 1971:27)

This analogy of the gecko standing firmly on the wall of the roof without falling and its steady patience to wait until a fly comes its way then it strikes out its tongue is a symbolic code of Jenny (the state) as the fly falling in the bed of David the gecko (corrupted native). She is captured and eaten but not consumed

like Maurice's painting that is "not yet finished, but ready (Serumaga 1971:10)". Richard enters just in time to find the two in consummation and naturally, Richard is only concerned about Jenny.

Richard: What is he doing to you?

Jenny: It is not that. It is what he is doing to himself.

This scene is clouded with eroticism and dramatic irony. It shows the dark and light side of the foreigners. David looks out of the window as an opportunity to say out his mind that, "It looks like rain. Patches of dark cloud. Last time it tried to rain and the sun wouldn't go away." He means Richard is interrupting his right to privacy. To which Jenny responds:

Jenny: Get away from that window, David.

David: It just started at the clouds. Not one blink. Then the clouds went to relieve themselves elsewhere. But you could see they preferred the lake ... *(He walks away from the window.)*

(Serumaga 1971:28)

This conversation does not make any meaning to Richard because he is not one with the natures that he is dealing with. Instead of talking to him, Jenny walks away "to look at the paintings downstage. David takes the flute from the book shelf, sits down and starts playing: a languid theme, insistent patterns of anger and deep nostalgia crescendoing to drown the conversation which follows." (Serumaga 1971:28)

Jenny, like a true therapist, "gets up and goes to stand behind David. She places one hand on his shoulder and caresses his hair with the other." (Serumaga 1971:28) which upsets Richard.

David like the post-colonial state is in critical stages requiring 'erotic' patience and understanding from the foreign powers that be. Only Jenny seems to understand this as the necessary psychotherapy. Richard is "very anguished" (Serumaga 1971:29) that David and Jenny are having an affair. This leads him to subconsciously say of Jenny and David, "a couple of elephants, that's all you are, a couple of

elephants.” (Serumaga 1971:29). He cannot let go of his attachment to Jenny and so, like the teacher who beat David, and David who attempts to stop Maurice from returning to his parents, Richard shows unwanted anger and grief. This is how the pearl is symbolically reaped apart leaving the dismembered and split parts of the invaluable spider-lily dead broken on the floor.

Elements of Knowledge and Ignorance

The play ridicules high learning. Malformation in the mental is extended into the physical environment. That is the stage, “a room, set out in bed-sitter fashion but without the starkness of the undergraduate type... Chalsean asceticism.” (Serumaga 1971:1). The foreign décor creates a different experience and influence on the young students that enroll at the university. The wide open window upstage is the connection between the occupant of this tiny room and the world out there with all the beauty of nature and the society in the “island” and “country” beyond. Like a riddle that makes meaning only to those for whom it is intended, Serumaga conceals his message by referring to intellectuals as “layabouts” thus elevating to ordinary people and puffing them up with pride. They are confined to “the corner room in the block structure” that suggests seclusion or death. The Kisoga riddle, “*kali mu nsonda* -- it’s in a corner” interpreted as a corpse in the grave (Gulere, 2016) defines David and Maurice, the occupants of this room, living in seclusion from the truth and reality as disgustingly dead. They have lost their dear ones and yet they continue to live as if life abounds with death hanging about their heads. They are far removed from the ground by six floors and that is how far they are from the reality.

The undergraduates and graduates together with their doctors or professors are functionally dead casualties. David concedes to Jenny that, “the old man is not the only one nor is it his first day out. “You will find hundreds of them if you look in the dark corners of our social conscience.” Jenny thinks he should have been helped to the hospital and “it’s a shame” that nobody trusts even an old man

anymore. David is wondering about the identity of the old man in this “forest” and ‘darkness’ only death keeps track of him.”(24) This putrefaction is a big threat to the wellbeing of society.

Old Man nearly throws up on the mention that downstairs, there were sick young men and women casualties – hinting at how late doctors come to work and that only aspirin is given and yet it cannot cure the body and soul. “You need the needle. Mend the body. Still, in the end all is calmness ...” (Serumaga 1971:23) David shuts Old Man out and all that he stands for. There is “calmness” which symbolizes death of natural decency, knowledge and wisdom in the human mind and body. David says, “It’s not his first day out. Nor is he the only one. You will find hundreds of them if you look into the dark corners of our social conscience. (Serumaga 1971:23). It is disturbing as David says that, “only death keeps track of him (Serumaga 1971:24). The alchemists contend as Jenny puts it that, “Nature is self-protective and his semi-sanity could be an antidote to pain. (Serumaga 1971:24).

Wastefulness and self-preservation vs. creativity and productivity

Maurice, reacts rather differently by pulling the chain in the toilet even before he has used the toilet showing that wastefulness and self-preservation as psychological responses result into nothingness. Just as the cistern has no water to pour out so is hanging on something that is of no value useless. The men, it is said, were right to give up their reproductive rights to please their wives and enjoy themselves instead of keeping it and losing it and all that it was meant to help them gain in life. Similarly, keeping endlessly in antagonism with former political leaders is as disgusting as it is energy consuming. It leads to numerous loses and yet creative ways of solving human challenges exist within the reach of the human actors.

His use of “old fishnets, wishbones, and tufts of hair of unknown origin” means that Maurice recognizes the use of waste regardless of their source and origin. Everyone and everything can add to the beauty and existence of goodness in society. The completeness of a piece of art or even the completeness of a human being is not an exclusive preserve of the creator artist but a collective knowledge creation such as riddling or poetry entails. Whether he comes from French – speaking Africa or not, the ideas can blend with the right attitude. Therefore, any piece of art is always changing or in the process of being completed by the other who adds to it. Maurice says: “You talk as if the two were one and the same thing. How can it be finished? Ready? Yes, it is always ready. But finished? No.” (Serumaga 1971:6) This is because “time and space” are inseparable from creation” and as David says, “art no longer deals with revelation but concealment” adding that it is not easy to unravel leave alone explain the “space enclosed by the canvas and the unit of time in one’s reference” (Serumaga 1971:7) where one would say that it is complete or finished and yet, with time new ideas come up and the process of creating also continues ad infinitum.

In this case, the old fishnet has two holes that let the catch escape and the fisherman does not like this. When David says, “Maurice was very lucky to get away” is when Jenny realizes that actually, Maurice was portraying the journey of his life. Having solved the riddle, Jenny is depicted as making two “mildly intelligent laughs” to accept defeat at the intellectual game she was trying to engage in. She then changes the subject to “the flute” that concerns David more directly although he had forgotten all about it. The flute player, like the visual artist, also conveys meaning in rather subtle ways. And “if you like your tone mellow and rich,” David tells Jenny, “you must spend some breath.” This is typical of the Kisoga riddle precedent that, “hard work pays: what you like gets expensive on your part; if you like to laugh you must tight-fold your cheeks” (Gulere 2016) which is true of all people including Maurice,

Jenny, and David. They each struggle to please their individual egos by fighting hard to “play the sweetest music from their individual ‘flute’ -- mouths” as it were.

Jenny observes: “the patterns formed by these cords reveal such deep sensitivity, with the holes between them so clearly symbolic of the fragmented existence.” She further contends that it could be given a totally different significance by an attitude and view point clearly the artists’ own.... Yet it is as if this was the ultimate and sublime purpose to which this piece of fishnet had been aspiring.” David is reduced to an active listener without any contemplation of what he is hearing. Jenny makes a very important observation about art whether it is poetry or riddling: “the confused consensus of human opinion and prejudice had relegated the fishnet to the mere function of trapping fish.it required an artist’s vision and courage to liberate these pieces of cord and bring them to their true purpose and achievement.”(10) This is what happens in riddling where consensus building among people is only reached after much de-contextualization and de-familiarization of the object at play.

The newspaper story about Maurice Diop and the circumstances of this discourse explain this idea quite well. First, David calls out repeatedly to Maurice and urges him to listen although he is in the toilet attempting to empty his bowels of the unproductive human waste products. Maurice, the report says, would be remembered for “his inspired attitude” that “imparted a dimension of existence brought triumphantly to flower with a poet’s vision and intelligence” (Serumaga 1971:6). The article raises many issues about creativity and productivity. His mouth though cleaned says nothing, the cistern though pulled a second time it produces nothing, and although David calls to Maurice another time, Maurice does not respond. “The artists invited the gathering to “do their thing” by adding their own attitudes and materials to the collection.” What does this mean? What does it reveal about Maurice and his

origin? There is no straight answer to these two questions and that is why his attitude to let others add their own attitude and materials to the final pieces of art is quite significant to the looming insanity.

Symbolism of the death of the Spider-lily

David's apparent insanity leads him to destroy the creatively harnessed spider-lily. "The death of the spider-lily" parallels the death of many people in the country at the hands of professionals like himself. He narrates and acts the part of his own bereavement at the age of 15 when his mother and father were murdered in cold blood; the one by a bullet through her mosquito-net while sleeping at night and the other when he carried a spear outside in the dark night to pursue the killers of his wife. Dramatically, these are David's parents that were murdered and he believes they are there waiting for his service, to pull the grass from their graves. "They can't uproot the grass" means they can neither breathe nor work. David takes as cruel, Jenny's thought that he envied Maurice for having parents and wanting to visit them yet he himself was orphaned. The fact that Maurice does not know that David is an orphan or rather, his parents are dead is not important since the dead are not dead. He says, "They are not dead!! They are not. I will get to them next week, you'll see. (*He is getting strange.*) (Serumaga 1971:27) David says of his parents:

They are deep silent but not dead. Can't you see? I am still alive! I must hang on. Like man; like beast; like all creatures of this earth hang on its bosom, as it revolves, lest they fall off into the void; like all you geckos on the wall. (*Addressing gecko.*) Hey, gecko! I can see through you. Come off the wall! Come off! (Serumaga 1971:27)

This conversation tells how deeply attached the body is to the soul but more importantly, how deep the body communal hangs on to the body community as the gecko hangs on the wall and humans hang on life against all odds. "You see, it hangs on. Never falls asleep. See ... (*Jenny is moving backwards, scared.*)

(Serumaga 1971:27). The gecko symbolizes the instinctive determination to survive; and to strike out at the right moment could be interpreted as a reference to the sexual feeling going on between Maurice and Jenny and also between Jenny and David which is true to all beings in their right sense of sanity.

The symbolism in the dying flower signifies the dying relationship within this room on floor six which Jenny has come to uproot and lay asunder. David says his own visit to his parents is different because he knows his parents well enough but this is something she could not understand well. The riddle is that, "my parents need help. The grass grows at home and I must uproot it. It is not easy for them. And yet, Maurice's parents "have never said so in their letters. and they write to him often." says David further arguing that, "Maurice could make a better living hanging on to what he is doing and is already being reported in the papers." This is in his view the beginning of a great future instead of thinking about going home "across the lake into nothingness" (Serumaga 1971:12). David knows much more than meets the eye that at this point in time Maurice has nothing to gain by returning to what he calls home. "There are things here like the Shaggy Dog Shows that may not even be at his home yet they are here and he has been invited to participate meaning that he is recognized in that way." The thought that people accord dignity to animals more than fellow humans is disturbing.

The riddle is whether David wants him to go or *he* wants to go. David cannot believe that after six years of life in exile, three of them living together "working, being creative. Putting together a new self" Maurice would want to go back home out of sheer sentimentality spiting it out saying,

I wonder what people would do without their relations! Honestly. For three years you work with a man; to build something, a little territory you can inhabit with confidence and maybe ease, and suddenly he gives up, calls an end to the game ... (Serumaga 1971:13).

This is the real problem with the elephants. They take their time to build a territory but no two bulls can live in the same territory. Once a female shows interest in one of the male herd, that male has to leave the herd and found new territory no matter what repercussions that may cause to the remaining herd. Jenny does not see the point in the same way David does. She refers to her own goings back to America to see those closest to her adding that, "he will go, and he will come back." This is very much like the waves that go to and fro linking up the two banks of the rivers and lakes. Such change and distance between relations tends to take people off their balance, and David argues that any sudden change would put even the strongest person off their balance. This is parallel with Jenny's observation on the balcony, a flower in a pot that was dying and taking the rest of the flowers with it. She pulls it out and David remarks, "What a waste" to which Jenny replies, "stop moaning, will you? There are a hundred other things we could talk about. Anyway, you go often enough to see your parents, and I don't hear anyone complaining." (13) This shows clearly that Jenny does not know or understand the people he is dealing with. The marriage of convenience has quite not worked out between Buganda, Uganda, and the Colonial Government Army.

Symbolism of Time, Space, and Movement

The thoughts about time and space (Serumaga 1971:7), going and coming are shown in sleeping, waking, walking, going, and coming portraying a society engrossed in great learning, commerce, and mobility for change. Yet for some this seems not to be the case as their life is as static as the earth elements. The artifacts that Maurice paints brighten his life space and room downstairs. Regardless of the sleep and dim light, morning's dawn, the pieces stand against all odds. Unlike Maurice, David is "the bright-and-early type" whose life is about getting up and going forward and not sleeping or sitting there sulking over nothing. The year 1969 is symbolic as it is factual. This is the year when Pope Paul VI came to Uganda. It is three years after the 1966 attach on the Buganda kingdom but more literary, 69 is a

riddle signifying the cyclic nature of life. Among the Basoga of Eastern Uganda, the riddle 69 is mostly unraveled as, 'pass and I pass,' the 'copulation between a man and woman', or 'give me and I give you'. We see this happening in the play, in particular, between David and Maurice and between Maurice and Jenny.

The symbol of going and coming is critical in this play. Going out into the uncertain future can be traumatizing and yet Maurice is not cowed. He sets out to get his travel documents not for keeps but to start on a new journey of crossing the lakes and rivers, go over Islands and valleys to meet his parents, relatives and friends in his motherland. Although David attempts to dissuade him against taking the first step towards achieving his goal, Maurice not only resists him, he tactfully or intelligently out reasons him. This leaves David pensive, empty and lonely but he does not give up hope. "He comes back to the center of the room where he stands, he looks at the paintings again: picks up the newspaper and goes to the window. He looks out." (Serumaga 1971:10) These are the actions of a man who is determined to move on under any circumstances. Returning to the basics and picking up the tit-bits of information and observing what we, nature and other human being have done is the missing link in most decisions. We learn from our mistakes, learn by example and learn from nature if we are to become successful. Nature has its own way of making us to know things, and so, David goes to the window armed with news, vision and sight to again look out for hope beyond the physical space and time. It is at this moment that, "a knock at the door, followed by a second knock" (Serumaga 1971:10) call for his attention to the inside of the room. This double knock not only signifies the second coming but it also calls for double attention to the one gone out and the one coming in.

The movement and entry of the old man in an arm sling is a pointer to the broken past and immobility of the hand that moves things and writes. He has just survived an accident (*clash between flesh and metal*)

and he returns to the house to look for something he could have forgotten – much like Maurice intends to go back home to look for his parents whom he left behind. He gives the ‘purse to the nurse’ rhyme as Old man comments, “your parents must be very proud of you” as if to say his parents were the nurse that deserve the purse. Telepathy perhaps does its toll on Old man’s musing on his own loss of children and lack of family, questioning David about whether he has parents which helps Jenny to break the bitter truth to Maurice. She is no expert in circumvention or riddling unlike David who tries but Maurice is determined to return home to the good olden days. “There is too much ugliness around,” says the old man and indeed, Richard breaks the ice. First, by being the subject to know that Maurice is getting married to non-other than Jenny his former girlfriend, and two, that the letter Maurice gave to him to post (behind David’s back) had been returned as addressee is unknown.

Symbolism of Marriage

The unraveling of the intentions of Jenny and Maurice to get married is uncovered in a rather hash manner by David attacking her background and intentions of Peace Corps in general. Jenny thinks David has ‘got it all wrong’ much in the same way as the old man that enters son after their outbursts, looking for the sixth floor but in the wrong building. This conversation re-echoes the imagery of the gecko, aspirin, codeines, sixth floor, password, (Serumaga 1971:21) old man “only those who live long can ever hope to drink the calf’s milk (Serumaga 1971:22)” and “still in the end all is calmness (Serumaga 1971:23).” This means that the situation is not without hope as the turbulence in life eventually subsides.

Little Peace Corps soldier flaunting her peace to King Kong herewith his long flute. I know. But there is more to it than that. Refers to their sexual intimacy hoping to become fruitful by the use of the words peace – King Kong is like the long flute refers to the male genitals that may be joined in procreation. And

so, *“Jenny gets slowly to her knees, then sits and leans on David’s knee. Slowly”* (Serumaga 1971:29) bringing to light beyond reasonable doubt that these two had the intention of getting more intimate.

On the outside, right outside the gate, to the university, more or less like the gate to the impending sexual union, “I think he was trying to get in, (rape) into the university (Jenny, David), when he was struck. Just outside the entrance.”(29) This act leads to uncertainty, dumb founded on the part of Richard as he could possibly not believe that an American girl on mission of peace and a university don could be so entangled in matters that are so unethical and disrespectful to their professions while right at the gate of their great point of meeting and entry, an old man is hit. Richard looks back at them in anguish and quietly says, “A couple of Elephants, that’s all you are, a couple of elephants.”(29) Meaning that, they are huge animals that mean nothing but dominating all. They are beasts, monsters and giants in their fields of play like the elephants are giants in the ‘forest’ jungle. Like a herd of elephants, this ‘couple of elephants’ stay calm and engrossed into each other unbothered by this intruder. The stage directions are that, “Richard goes to the door and exits. David and Jenny turn to each other in utter silence, and dim lights.

Symbolism of Food and Sex

While life is full of “occasions and disappointments” (Serumaga 1971:42) in their number, drink, music and drugs and sex tend to fill the gap. The drama depicts the consumption of typically erotic foods such as sugar, milk, coffee, cigarettes, and codeines. Jenny is depicted as the mackerel, the mouse, and the elephant grass that grew on the path that used to be there where the mouse once moved. (Serumaga 1971:33). She jiggles as if she wants to leave but without really meaning to do so. She then creates other answers like, “I barred it I barred it to keep out mice” but know for sure that she has allowed in the mice into her path – David and Maurice and possibly Richard too. She is tickled and seduced into

screaming as the “*door opens.*” (Could these also mean the door to her privacy?) “*Two police officers enter. There is a frozen moment. Then they approach. David sort of holds out the mouse.* (Serumaga 1971:34)” This interruption is a rude intrusion that is provoked by the mood of the scene.

Maurice Diop, as David calls him, would not marry Jenny because he had not told David about their impending marriage. Their friendship, David argues, is that of full confidence; but Jenny argues that “nobody tells anybody everything” (Serumaga 1971:45). A case in point is that about Maurice’s parents – David does not tell Maurice all about it. Each keeps the truth to heart in order to save their relationship. Jenny, like the clogged river below the valley mingles with their lives and sucks the best out of each of them. She disrupts the “peace and steady progress” that they have enjoyed together for the past six years three of which together. The misunderstanding by Jenny about David’s protection of Maurice is like the storm that does not know the needs of the plants and the owners; it simply comes. She thinks David is being possessive and jealous until she learns that, “MAURICE DIOP HAS NO PARENTS!” (Serumaga 1971:46) and that they are dead, a fact that thunders disbelief in their different faces. David pushes the hard truth down Jenny’s simple mind: “I am protecting him from! Protecting him from the harsh truth. Truth that sears the brain and pierces the soul like a million porcupine quills. I am protecting him from madness. My fate.”(Serumaga 1971:47) Although this is what Jenny came to Africa to find about herself, she did not expect to find such hard truth I suppose and probably that is why her unbelief is strong.

To seal the thought, David offers Jenny some coffee and she accepts to even prepare and serve the two of them herself after declining the biscuits from the canteen downstairs. She is polite and well-mannered yet David thinks she is taking advantage of Maurice. As it turns out, Maurice feels more resolved to go back home and find out the new address of his parents. David insists on calling post office

but instead connects with Maurice's embassy. The telephone calls and David tactfully receives the news and breaks it to Maurice that his parents, brother and not so young sisters were killed last week. Only David and Jenny know the truth but they cannot be taken seriously. David has done his best to conceal the truth but Jenny opens the can of worms by revealing the letters that held Maurice in hope. In the face of hopelessness, Maurice grabs David and beats him up as he moans. This kind of madness is not easy to discern as it affects many people. David's mental health dims with the light and his madness returns as the lights go out. Neither Jenny nor Maurice believe that David could have done what he did for the good of Maurice. They think he was being selfish and malicious. Richard and the old man witness from their two worlds a society that is torn apart by egoistic 'foreign' influences. As the saying goes, the elephants have had a fight and they have left the grass suffering.

Conclusion

The Elephants depicts the four stages of alchemical transformation, namely, *nigredo* or blackening, *albedo* or whitening, *citrinitas* or yellowing, and *rubedo* or reddening in the lives of the seven symbolic characters. This is done through dramatic actions and references to the study of African Literature and Music, the playing of the Kisoga flute, watching Shaggy Dog Shows, joining American Peace Corps, and listening to Kiganda Poetry, performing stories like the little mouse game, the elephant and the pygmy, the cat and the dog jokes, engaging in painting, reading newspapers, sex, drinking, and letter writing. These are some of the psychotherapeutic ways used to purge the corrupted feelings of the people in a society signified by the island, impediments by the waters, knowledge by the home, university and hospital on sixth floor, and an Old Man. The experiences are intertwined yet each person goes through their own movements, passions, fires and cooling before they can enjoy the full integration of both body, mind and soul. At that point, the process of individuation is said to have reached its point of sublimity. The following are the stages:

Stage 1: The Blackening stage

The Old Man thinks that the University is the causality ward number six at Mulago hospital. It is the place where the privileged class get first class treatment free of charge. The occupants of the sixth floor when confronted by an equally 'mistaken' police force looking for the unidentified old man are intrigued to silence when they learn that they are equipped with the law but mistakenly on the wrong premises on the same grounds.

The sixth floor symbolizes first six years of Uganda's independence until 1966 when the Old Man, Buganda, gets involved in an accident outside the gate. A hit-and-run case. The Old Man has been taken to hospital" says "First Policeman" who in this case is the army commander. The future remains as uncertain as the past. None of the characters maintains a permanent stature. The Old Man (state) and the young Maurice and David collapse into insanity as their American lovers, admirers and word seekers (researchers) Jenny and Richard retract into confusion.

The plan by David to save his less witty friend Maurice from the useless and bitter truth about his past is aborted by the muted Jenny in search of herself knowledge away from home without a clear understanding of the material world she has come to. This is the marriage of convenience between Buganda and Uganda that ended up into the 1966 Buganda crisis. The British, here represented by the American Peace Corps has self-interests dubbed as volunteer self-service. David questions Jenny's personal intentions she confesses to her self-interests of self-re-discovery. According to her conversation with David, we also learn how Richard thinks.

He said: 'Do you want to know me? Of course not. Not you. Little Peace Corps Soldier flaunting her peace to King Kong here – with his long flute. (Serumaga 1971:36)

Jenny insists on knowing about David's parents that in knowing them "I would know more about you. (Serumaga 1971:38). In a long flashback showing how his mother and father had been killed in cold blood, David says, "I'm thankful I went mad" (Serumaga 1971:39), which is in line with the first stage of transformation where encountering earth and nature's vulgarities removes the veils of the unconscious attachments to the world so as to get a clear conscience of who we are. Hamilton observes that,

The water element symbolizes the emotions we experience in encountering and letting go of such attachments – fear, anger, grief, etc. – emotions we need to encounter and survive, experiencing them in order to become free of them and so move on to the next stage. (Hamilton 1985:5).

Jenny is the image of Eve symbolizing the marriage with the earth nature. "A sign of having worked through these earthly attachments and their corresponding emotions is the positive encounter with our inner anima (for men) or inner *animus* (for women). At the point when the physical union with the inner *anima* or *animus* is experienced, then the union or "Marriage with the earth nature" has been achieved. The anima at this stage is symbolized by Eve, the object of sensual love. The animus is symbolized by the physical "Tarzan" figure. This union paves the way for becoming free from the conscious influence of the earth nature. The very act of becoming free of this nature is seen by the alchemists as awakening of the air elements through sublimation, leading to the freeing of the soul nature" (Hamilton 5-6). The first rebirth is reflected in the images of the childhood dreams giving the details of how his mother was sleeping "under a mosquito-net, when the bullet hit her" (Serumaga 1971:38). David narrates:

Nobody is looking anymore. Sometimes it is better not to look or find out. Father looked, carried away by love, anger and pain, he flew out of the house with his spear. He never came back. He was a great man, a small man whose concern, whose territory, whose entire existence was his home: wife and child, and the goat pegged to the bedpost. I never knew what happened to the

goat. For, once grim fate had entered the room, there was only time enough to cry before God knows what savage hemorrhages contorted the brain searing senses with sounds of the wailing of centuries, of birth and death and other arrivals and departures to regions inhabited by none but those bereaved beyond repair. Sometimes it is better not to find out. In a way, I am thankful I went mad." (Serumaga 1971:38-9).

These repressed feelings flow out like a river in a storm similar to what Jenny has herself suffered in her 25 years of life "filled with an emptiness that is in dire need of purging." (Serumaga 1971:40). David affirms to Jenny that, "There is more to being a goat than having a tail and ears." (Serumaga 1971:40). The "sign of fragmented existence" (Serumaga 1971:41) symbolized in the spider-lily is related to Jenny's "apparent calmness of one's surroundings, to discover the storm within oneself." (Serumaga 1971:41) She says, "Every time I felt depressed and dejected I was provided with the same material things that had nothing to do with a want which at times was almost purely spiritual." (Serumaga 1971:41).

Stage 2: The Whitening stage

Jenny comes to Africa to encounter her "soul nature" which is the whitening stage or stage of the moon. She is conscious of her light and spiritual nature and going through the ripples of life she could become a better person. In the psychotherapeutic context, this is a period of withdrawing a little from life, participating just enough to keep things "ticking over," the main forces being inwards." (Hamilton 1985:6) Through Peace Corps, drinking and sexual pleasures, Jenny and to some extent David, goes through the second alchemical marriage.

Here the anima figure corresponds to the moon woman, an object of romantic love. This is the goal of Eros, not of sex, a classical example being Helen of Troy. The corresponding animus

figure (in women) becomes the romantic hero, the poet (Byron) the film star (Harrison Ford), author (Ernest Hemingway), explorer, political liberator, etc. (Hamilton 1985:6)

In effect, the creativity that is being celebrated in the form of human nature, physical nature and artifacts is a continuum of the journey to completion of major works that the sky and the earth were created to be. "The ability to mystify and confuse" as apparent is all worthy life and this is what Maurice and David seem to be enjoying from two different perspectives and it is these variances that also bring them together just like the sky and the earth, the water and the land, the man and the woman have natural affinities because other differences. So, Nixon and Johnson and all the other political leaders in Africa should emulate nature and the American president for being exemplary.

Stage 3: The Yellowing Stage

The stage of the sun or the dawning of the solar light also known as the yellowing stage illuminates purity, creativity and intelligence. It comes after great knowing and strong search for this knowledge. Jenny asks this of David and David too attempts to search for greater knowledge. Only Maurice is kept in the dark until he decides that in order to graduate into the second stage of marriage with Jenny who herself has consummated this stage along with David, he too dives into the "yellow death" when he refuses to see the greatness of the days and years that he has had with David. He is determined to go now. He no longer regards David as an important element in his life. He is ready to move on and so he goes to his embassy to get a new identity. This is like a schizophrenic decision and experience that David finds difficult to take in. Maurice is burning like *Citrinitias* mental and his purification is focused on the removal of the water barriers that stands between him and his mother land. The acquisition of the passport is one of the ways that he overcomes the waters. The other is to get estranged from David, a parental figure, and get married to Jenny. Like the spiritual search that Jenny is engaged in, this an

equally mystical stage for all the characters. Jenny and David go through fire and steam when they light cigarettes, smoke and drink (Serumaga 1971:43) while she is sharing her love experiences.

David: Richard, the silent love-maker.

Jenny: (giggles.) In a way. But all that is past and gone and forgotten as so much sperm under the bridge. Because now, right now in November the year of our lord nineteen Sixty nine, I have Maurice.

David: And where do I come in?

Jenny: Nowhere at all! It's different level altogether. With Maurice everything is new, and fresh, and wholesome. It is as if life itself in its entire and sublime magnificence is happening to me for the first time and I love it, I love, I just simply love it.

David: You sound like a kind of renovated virgin. (Serumaga 1971:44)

Then Jenny tells the secret of her marriage to Maurice symbolizing the marriage of the elements fire, air and sulphur in sublimity. The rebirth of the moon child is symbolic of a new state of consciousness, which is fragile, innocent, and receptive to the current nature of the soul.

Stage 4: The Reddening Stage

The last stage of this transformation is the *rubedo* or reddening through another very strong and burning fire or desire that coagulated the spirit and matter. The characters must come from their spiritual realms of consciousness to reality with the body in which the transformation takes place. Jenny says she will get married to Maurice "as soon as he is back from his parents and they have given him their blessing ..." (Serumaga 1971:45) which David quickly interrupts as "deception, this destructive involvement." (Serumaga 1971:46). They are both in a split state of mind and body and they each have to be "materially spiritualized" (Hamilton 1985:7). David now has to tell the truth about Maurice and the fact that He and Maurice were "two men tied together by a common loss. (Serumaga 1971:47).

In this final and most important alchemical stage of marriage, the spirit/soul and mind/body combine with the *anima* becoming the Mother of God and object of mystic love, which David fulfills saying, “He doesn’t know that I am his father”(Serumaga 1971:48). The sad letter explaining the gruesome murder of Maurice’s “father, mother, brother, and his not so little sister” (49) was concealed then but now it is necessary to have its content revealed to dissolve the anticipated marriage. This is necessary as the soul at stage three is incompatible with the incarnated personality at stage four. As it turns out, the body and mind, first in Maurice and then David gives way into madness revealing incompatibility.

They each are not yet ready to be spiritualized. Neither is Richard nor Jenny able to. Instead, “Richard cannot take in any more. *He exits quickly.*” (Serumaga 1971:58) and as David pleads that, “I did it for him, you see? I did. What good would it have done him to know?” Jenny so exasperated asks to be left alone as she cries out loud.

David tells Maurice repeatedly, “I did it for you. See?” to which Maurice makes no response. (Serumaga 1971:58) With the light dimmed, David returns to madness to prove his own understanding that, “if on the other hand I crawl within myself and commune with nothing but my own spirit, the silence is a sign of depression. No, once mad, always made.” (Serumaga 1971:40). David insists that these acts, especially the concealing letters was done for Maurice and the common good. The truth, he insists has no good of telling since it only leads to madness, further loss and suffering. The breakdown of morality and social fabric is depicted in the relationships between the giants and the underlings only to realize that the elephants are just big mice. The elephant symbolizes the urge to move, love, transform, and possess even when their size and pace could be challenged and manipulated by the short, weak, but wiser mortals.

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