Richard Makhanu Wafula

Allegory to Allegorization
The Development of Shaaban Robert's Prose

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Preface

This book is a study of allegory in Shaaban Robert's *Adili na Nduguze, kufikirika, Utubora Mkulima* and *Siku za Watenzi wote*. From the description and analysis of the concept, it merges that allegory is a technique of creating, translating or interpreting literary works so that they convey more than one level of meaning simultaneously. In so doing allegory becomes the quintessence of the dialogic text.

Allegory operates at four allegorical levels of analysis in Shaaban Roberts prose. These are the personification, narrative, metaphorical and fabulous levels. Personification allegory is the use of the proper-nouns in a descriptive way. In conventional language usage, proper nouns lack literary semantic content. Most proper-nouns in Shaaban Robert's texts, however, are used to describe qualities of persons and places. They do not necessarily work as labels that make those persons and places different from one another. At the level of narration, Robert portrays allegory as the search for meanings other than literal ones. This book therefore, demonstrates the ways in which various allegorical elements combine in Shaaban Robert’s prose to sustain their logic both at the literal and literary levels. Extended metaphors are used sparingly. They are also allegorical because their form is narrative and they are invested with the element of kinesis. Lastly, the profusion of fabulous characters and situations helps the writer to evoke a typically allegorical world.

As in all figurative language, allegory depends on the transference of meaning from one object or idea to another due to a collation of similarities between them. A hint of tenor created by the author facilitates the reading, comprehension and interpretation of an
allegorical work. Allegory is also a para-linguistic literary device. Consequently, the identification and comprehension of the various ramifications of its context is important in interpreting and appreciating it.

This study reveals that the use of allegory leads to a deep insight into the author's work and world view. Moreover, it shows that the author is in communion with various perspectives simultaneously. Shaaban Robert's use of the mode is at its best in his early works, Adili Nduguze, Kusadikika and Kufikirika in which all aspects of allegory already outlined above are exhibited preponderantly. Here the author predicates the allegory to his religious beliefs and uses it to preach an ethic based on his Islamic faith. Within this frame of reference, Shaaban Robert moulds flat characters who are representations of ideas in a public space in which values are relatively stable and static.

This trend dramatically changes in Utubora Mkulima and Siku ya Watenzi Wote. In these latter works, the writer gradually but firmly moves away from allegorical characters as they are conventionally known, whose driving force is automation, to more realistic characters. The significance of these characters lies in the reader's allegorization of their implications and connotations. While the ultimate 'articles of credo' of these realistic and allegorized characters from the reader's vantage point subscribe to the writer's idealist vision, they are immediately guided by their free will to act the way they do. The change of mode of presentation from the writer's construction of allegory to the reader's reading allegory in otherwise relatively realistic works is consonant with Robert's changing perspectives of the world. As he faces new and greater challenges wrought by the grim reality of his society, he questions more radically the morality on which that society is based. In the earlier works, Shaaban Robert does this through engaging in
dialogue with the texts and public discourse in his neighbourhood. Unlike in these earlier works in which he does so through allegorizing the realistic situation, in the latter works Shaaban Robert allows the reader to read allegories into his fairly realistic fiction. Ultimately, a reading of Shaaban Robert's fiction through time provides a viable orienting perspective for reading Kiswahili prose fiction in its entirety as presently crafted. For Kiswahili prose fiction tends to oscillate between the allegorization of the writer on the one hand and the allegorization of the reader on the other. These creative processes are neither natural nor inevitable; they are merely a reflection of the exigencies of time. The book is in five chapters. Chapter traces the use of Allegory in Kiswahili prose in particular and in literature in general. In the second chapter, the literary biography of Shaaban Robert examined. Chapter three describes and analyzes the use of allegory in the early works of Robert. The fourth chapter shows how Shaaban Robert gradually sheds the allegorical mode from his writing. Chapter five summarizes the main concerns of the work

R. M. Wafula

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