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KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

A LITERARY STUDY OF DISLOCATION IN SELECTED PLAYS BY JOHN  
RUGANDA

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NJOGU JACKSON GIKUNDA

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL  
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Njogu, Jackson  
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dislocation in*



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## DECLARATION

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

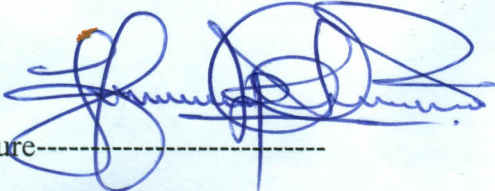
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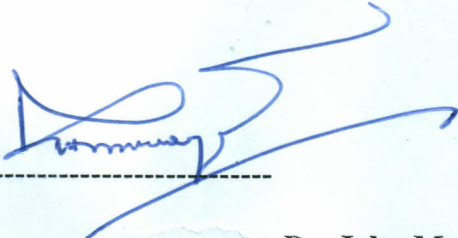
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## DEDICATION

To: Koffi Annan;

Robert Njogu;

Ireen Gatwiri

Nyanya

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This work is an end product of a life-long vision. Such a vision has not been actualized in an isle. Let me express gratitude to every one who made this work what it is.

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I'm grateful to my mother, Isabella Tirindi, for weaning me and thereafter pausing her own living to see me, and all her seven children through school after the death of our father, Robert Njogu in 1992 (God rest his soul in eternal peace). May God grant her abundant happiness and a long life. I also remember the late Willys Gatinku Mukobwa for offering to take me to form one at Kiini Secondary School after my father's death. God rest his soul in eternal peace.

I thank my fiancé, Salome Kinya, and my daughter, Prudence Mukiri, for their perseverance. May God make their life fulfilling. Special thanks go to my elder brother Martin and his family for the financial support during the study. May God grant them wealth and greater joy in life.

I thank my classmates Faru Gaitho, Paul Nderi, Makau Mutua, Musumba Obala and Kipkorir Tonui for the inspired unanimity we nurtured in the face of prominent challenges. You're not jelly; or else you'd not bear the fire. Finally let me show appreciation to my brother, Tony, and my four sisters; Lucy, Faith, Makena and Grace for who they are to me. As we do in our mother's hearth, let me share with you this my hard earned yam:

*Calculate thy steps, my kinfolk, amid the haste  
Fear not; for emotion is greater than its object.  
Crave not for attention; a hero of you it'll create  
Play with the cards life with you has dealt.  
Stop listening to noise; put effort -  
Because Money and happiness stalks sweat!*

## ABSTRACT

John Ruganda is undoubtedly one of East Africa's most prolific playwrights, going by the volumes of plays and sensitivity to the human predicament widely acknowledged by critics of his drama. Imbuga and Kyallo serve as prominent examples. Writing from the 1970s to the 1980s when Uganda was undergoing one of its most restive socio-political moments, the epoch's influence on him is not in doubt as one reads the plays. It is however unfortunate that scant criticism has been accorded his works in relation to dislocation which is a major concern for the playwright.

This study seeks to fill this gap by a literary analysis of three of his plays in relation to this theme. The study acknowledges the breadth and complexity of the theme by unpacking it into constituents of socio-cultural aspects, political causations and exile. The texts selected for the study are *Covenant with Death*, (1973), *The Floods* (1980) and *Shreds of Tenderness* (2000). Although each of these texts is being analyzed in relation to a specific objective, the three are seen as connected in the realm of their socio-historical influences and the playwright's commitment.

Chapter One discusses the background and the research methodology while Chapter Two discusses the socio-cultural aspects as seen through the experiences of one Matama, the protagonist in *Covenant*. Chapter Three argues that a hostile political environment in the region is a major contributor to dislocation as proven in *The Floods*. *Shreds of Tenderness* is treated in Chapter Four. Wak Witu, the symbolic

refugee, is the subject. Through him, Ruganda presents dislocation through the exile dimension. In Chapter Five we establish textual interwoovenness, makes a summary, draws conclusions and makes recommendations for further studies.

The study is library- based owing to the textual nature of primary and secondary sources of data. The study argues that the texts delve into the theme of dislocation in a combination of literary, historical and autobiographical patterning. Textual exegesis takes a form of reading guided by a synchronization of theories, drawn from Isaac Yetiv and Anne Gagiano. We conclude that dislocation is a product of interlinked variables, which enjoy a physical as well as a psychic quality.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Hellven:** Because some critics of exile paint it as malevolent while others paint it as pleasant, I have coined this word from the words 'Heaven' and 'Hell' to refer to the in-between of these two states.

**Mindblasts:** This term has been used to refer to psychic disturbances arising from dislocation.

**Music:** Ruganda has used this term in *Shreds of Tenderness* to refer to the physical and psychological pains inflicted on the people by the military regime. This term has been adopted to mean the same in this study.

**Bracketed words in quotations:** Words bracketed and/or italicized within a quotation are used by the researcher for either elaboration or emphasis.

## ABBREVIATIONS

**Text titles:** The titles of the three texts have sometimes been shortened to clip redundancy as follows:

*Covenant with Death* will be abbreviated as *Covenant*.

*Shreds of Tenderness* will be abbreviated as *Shreds*.

*The Floods* will be abbreviated as *Floods*.

**SRB:** These initials stand for ‘State Research Bureau’, a terror gang of Idi Amin’s reprisals.

**SPCA:** These initials stand for ‘Society for the Prevention of Cruelty on Animals’.

**UNHCR:** This is an abbreviation for ‘United Nations High Commission for Refugees’.

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## CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL FOUNDATIONS

*The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled.*

*John Keats- English poet (1795 - 1821)*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Drama has always been an integral part of the African heritage, functioning within the oral tradition through ceremonial and festival occasions; and addressing themes threatening the African man's harmony with nature. Joe De Graft traces the origins of African drama to rituals performed by the ancient people in apprehension, propitiation and purification against threats to humanity associated with elemental phenomena within the society and the environment. These rituals were characterized by impersonation, which is a major element of both traditional and modern drama.

In addition to the oral quality, the drama was marked by what Dathorne<sup>1</sup> calls 'group concept' which ensured that African peoples share, in a basic way, their collective attitude and philosophy to their literature, deriving from the concept of life itself. This concept presently accounts for the fertile enclosures of culture and the artist's specific responsibility to his society in the emerging drama from the region.

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<sup>1</sup> *African Literature 20<sup>th</sup> century*. 53.

The written drama of English expression in East Africa may be traced to the late 1960s and the early 1970s shortly after political independence. By this time colonization had gained notoriety for its dehumanizing, deculturizing effect. The drama of this era therefore focused on themes of colonization and cultural emancipation. For instance, there was the emergence of the satirical poem pioneered by Okot P'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* in 1966. The 'song' is a hilarious critique of African apemanship, and a defense of the integrity of indigenous culture.

The drama has been undergoing transformation in line with the forces that continue to affect the African cosmology. One of the most prominent of these has been politics. The East African political environment has been scarred by political dictatorships and coups which have only served to maim both physically and psychologically, by killing or sending its own people to exile. Political drama with these thematic biases basically tells of man's inhumanity to man, human pettiness, duplicity and greed. However, there are also examples of man's altruism, notably his willingness to sacrifice for his society, unmatched hospitality, compassion and devotion to an ideal.

Modern drama from the region has of late ceased to cast blame on the colonizer. It has become introspective, tracing the continent's problems to the continent itself. The critical eye is turned inward, and Africa is made the epicenter of quaking satire.

Themes of socio-political dislocation have thus served to underscore the fragility of the African civilization, especially when subjected to the kind of irreversible devastation wrought by both cultural and political brutality. By dislocation we mean the process of destructive forces of an individual's world that range from forced expulsion from one's home due to 'uprootedness' from one's society, outbreak of wars or separation of man from nature and the rest of his community. It may result from a devastating upheaval of one destructive weight or another, which puts the individual in a tragic situation which he neither understands nor controls. This leads to a depersonalization that shatters his emotional harmony with himself, his experience and his society.

In dislocation the people are either pummeled into oblivion by forces too powerful to withstand, or else try heroically to resist the cataclysmic dehumanization resulting from the cruelty of man against men. In resisting, a struggle ensues, but it has nothing to do with man on men, but rather a war between good and evil.

In analyzing dislocation, various approaches may be adopted. The texts may be examined in relation to other texts, or they may be studied against the backdrop of the times, traditions and circumstances. Bearing in mind the dynamism of society, the latter approach is preferred in this study. This is because it demands recalling the context which, as we have said, influences creative material. The background alludes to the socio-political environment that informs on our understanding of the texts.

The purpose of this study is to analyze *Covenant with Death*, *The Floods* and *Shreds of Tenderness* in relation to dislocation. In so doing, we look at the texts as forming an intricate pattern, so we try to establish the thread that binds them together to constitute the broad theme that Ruganda seeks to address. Ruganda wrote from the early 1970s and so did for the next three decades, which form an important period in Uganda's history. Let us examine aspects of political history that shape Ruganda's drama. Thereafter we shall look at the life of the playwright

### **1.1 A Political History of Uganda**

Literature cannot be divorced from the environment of its origin. An understanding of the context is therefore obligatory. Uganda is a relatively small nation in East Africa with a population of approximately 31 million people, according to internet sources, four per cent of whom live in the capital Kampala. It attained its independence in 1962 under Milton Obote as the president. Before then the country was organized into tribes and kingdoms. The Buganda kingdom was ruled by a Kabaka, while tribes were led by Chiefs. In 1967, Uganda had a new constitution which abolished all traditional kingdoms. In 1971, the government of Obote was ousted in a military coup led by Idi Amin. Amin's eight-year rule produced economic decline, social disintegration and massive human rights violations. Upon ascending to power for instance, Amin ordered all foreign investors especially the Indians to leave Uganda. It is also estimated that by the time of his fall over 100,000 people had been murdered, and thousands others displaced.

In 1978, Tanzanian troops repulsed an incursion by Amin's troops into Tanzania; Kampala was eventually captured and Amin fled the country. Obote was restored until 1985 when Yoweri Museveni took over and embarked on restoring the country, and all who had fled during Amin's repressions trooped back home.

## **1.2 Ruganda the Playwright**

John Ruganda was born on May 30, 1941 in the village of Kabarole, near Fort Portal, western Uganda. He attended St. Leo's college before joining Makerere University in 1964 where he took a BA degree in English. He graduated in 1967 and was soon employed by Oxford University Press of Eastern Africa, rising to become their editorial and sales representative between 1968 and 1972. From 1972 to 1973 Ruganda was awarded the creative writing senior fellowship in the department of Literature at Makerere University, a prestigious award offered to authors to complete ongoing creative projects. It is during this period that three of his earlier works were crafted; that is *The Burdens* (1972), *Black Mamba*(1973) and *Covenant with Death*(1973). Before him, the fellowship had been held by distinguished authors such as VS Naipaul, Robert Serumaga and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

The political situation in Uganda started to become capricious. Ruganda moved to Kenya where he got a teaching job at the University of Nairobi. He worked here until 1982 teaching, writing and directing both stage and screen

performances of plays. It is here that he scripted *Floods (1980)*, and *Music Without Tears*, which later changed its title to *Shreds of Tenderness (2001)*. While at the University of Nairobi, Ruganda was a known workaholic. However, as an exile, he did not find peace in Kenya. He angrily laments - through Wak in *Shreds of Tenderness* - about the experience he underwent at the University where he had to do with disparaging statements like “ *cokai kwanyu, mathaamira kwene maya*” (go back to your homes you refugees).

Ruganda went to Canada in 1983 for his masters and PhD studies at the University of New Brunswick. His doctoral dissertation was “Alienation and Leadership Figures in the Plays of Francis Imbuga”. He later developed his thesis into a text *Telling the Truth Laughingly: The Politics in the Drama of Francis Imbuga(1983)*. While at New Brunswick he also wrote *Echoes of Silence(1986)*. Later in 2002, Ruganda wrote *Igereka and other African Narratives*. He has also written a poem entitled “*Barricades of Paper Houses*” featured in the *Poems from East Africa* anthology. He later moved to South Africa as a professor of literature at the University of North. In July 2006, Ruganda was diagnosed with throat cancer. He passed away on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2007 at the Kampala International hospital.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The sensitivity and commitment of Ruganda’s drama to issues affecting humanity has been widely acknowledged by his critics as shall be shown in our

literature review section, but scant critical attention has been given to the works in relation to dislocation which is a major concern for his plays; of course deriving from his socio-political environment. Even when scholars (Imbuga; 1991, Kyallo; 1992) acknowledge that his plays provide one of the most complete, wide ranging and vividly original treatment of the themes he picks to explore, they have often tended to overlook dislocation through its components of socio-cultural aspects, political banishment and exile.

Broadly speaking, dislocation is a major social and consequently literary issue in East Africa where political coups, civil wars and refugee flows have been witnessed. Ruganda himself sought asylum in Kenya during the peak of Amin's reprisals. We therefore need to understand how Ruganda inscribes it in his drama because it is important in understanding his literary bearing with regard to this matter. This study is therefore important since the concepts he explores constitute a central theme in both society and literature, going by the old maxim that literature mimics life.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze socio-cultural aspects of dislocation in *Covenant with Death*.
2. To analyze political causations of dislocation in *The Floods*.
3. To analyze exile as an aspect of dislocation in *Shreds of Tenderness*.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The study is anchored on the following research questions:

1. How does Uganda inscribe dislocation through socio-cultural aspects within the East African environment in *Covenant with Death*?
2. How does politics influence dislocation as presented in *The Floods*?
3. How does Uganda present dislocation through exile in *Shreds of Tenderness*.

## 1.6 Justification of the Study

There are no accidents in literature. A writer's selection of themes, style and setting among other constructs is deliberate.

Our first justification derives from Jones & Jones'<sup>2</sup> observation that "the mass displacement of peoples resulting from internal feuds which have plagued the African continent in the last twenty five years or so have yet to produce a significant body of literature".(1) They for instance recognize that an ephemeral refugee culture that emerges from exiled communities has often managed to produce patriotic songs, stories, skits and reflections which might lead to a more abiding culture, but such material has not yet been subjected to systematic literary study. There is need to engage in systematic analysis of literature of East African origin to establish a distinct tradition on dislocation in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> Jones & Jones, *Exile & African Literature*.

Another justification derives from Wellek & Warren's<sup>3</sup> affirmation that "art is sweet and useful; giving pleasure by the skill with which it articulates what people take to be similar to their own reflection, and by the release experienced through artistic articulation"(31). Literature is thus seen to possess both a didactic and therapeutic quality. In the plays, therefore, we need to establish how Ruganda presents cosmic relations; how societal discomforts impart on peoples choices in their environment. This way, we obtain a deeper understanding of the intricate intercourse between modern drama from East Africa and modern African way of life.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

The study analyzes the texts; *The Floods*, *Covenant with Death* and *Shreds of Tenderness*, all written in a span of two decades which are significant in Uganda's history as we have shown in our background. The texts are analyzed in relation to the dislocation theme as well as their broader socio-historical significance.

The study deliberately excludes other plays by Ruganda. This is because we perceive them to address relatively different themes from the one's identified for this study.

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<sup>3</sup> Wellek & Warren, Theory, 31.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A lot of research has been done on Ruganda and his works. Such is the truth with the three texts under this study. This review section first looks at studies which relate to the nature and philosophy of dislocation, and tries to establish whether a similar study to this one has been done. Secondly we shall examine what other critics have said about the theme and the playwright. This way, we shall be able to situate the lacuna that this study hopes to fill.

## **1.9 Literature and Society in Africa: Philosophical Foundations**

Wellek and Warren (1985), Wa Thion'go (1981), Carrol (1980), Selden (1987), Ngara(1985) and Kyallo (1992) argue that society is central to literary activity, and that African literature is philosophically functional. Broadly speaking, literature is seen as having a dual nature in this respect; representing social reality and secondly, arising from society, the reason it has often been called the 'mirror of society'. In sociological criticism of literature therefore, the text has to be studied against the background of the social situation which determines its creation, as well as its function.

Wellek and Warren espouse the thesis of relation between art and society with an assertion that "literature is an expression of society" (94). The relation between the two is such that the writer is not only influenced by society, he too influences it. They say that "Art not merely reproduces life but also shapes it" (102). Wellek and Warren further expound the thesis with an assertion that "the social allegiance,

attitude and ideology of a writer derive from both his literary and extra-literary sources" (97).

The writer therefore has to begin by internalizing the notion that is his theme, so that his text's is a contemplated discourse with a social sanction. In this process, he requires the capacity to project his ideas into the consciousness of society because a work of art is determined by the general state of mind and one's surroundings. The social milieu is significant in producing a state of mind necessary for creativity to thrive, and this state of mind is determined by one's environment and epoch.

The thesis of Wellek and Warren is re-affirmed by Wa Thiong'o<sup>4</sup> with the observation that the writer is a product of an actual social process (6). Ngugi argues that writing is an attempt at persuasion, either directly or through influencing the attitudes, feelings and actions of one's audience. He observes that "Literature as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being" (5).

Carroll argues that the writer works for his community against a great tradition. He notes;

The modern African writer has an organic mandate to be the eye, ear and sensibility of his society. The modern African writer is thus called

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<sup>4</sup> *Homecoming*

upon to continue the long tradition of the traditional African carver, dancer, sculptor and seer; whose role is essentially communal, functional and utilitarian. (21)

Selden<sup>5</sup> argues that literature is an expression of one's experience in a given society, which has to be done in an appropriate style chosen by the writer. He affirms that;

Major literature does not work directly by expressing ideas or attitudes, but by embodying an experience of life in a form and diction necessary to convey the experience. The 'poetic' element cannot be abstracted from the poem without destroying the 'moral' significance of the poem (490).

To be meaningful, therefore, any discussion of African literature implies a responsiveness not only to the text, in its inherent capacity for suggestiveness through a unique structure of signs and meanings, but also those areas of experience, of feelings, attitudes and insight, which that structure evokes to take on significance. African literature has distinctive lines of articulation and essential connections to the total configuration of the environment. A proper understanding of the text, therefore, implies elucidation of its multiple elements expressing a unified intention. The text cannot be understood in isolation from the context. To understand it, the knowledge of African metaphysics is necessary. This involves understanding the people's attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which they think act or speak in different situations in life.

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<sup>5</sup> "*Literature & Life*" in Theory.

Kyallo concurs with this argument when he says that “Today’s literature ought to be appropriated by the burning issues of the day. It ought to address the current social trends and the artist must operate within the same spatio-temporal consciousness with his society” (4). He affirms that the idea of art for art’s sake in Africa is simply repellent, and that African literature is by nature functional. A socially aware writer therefore needs to engage in sensitive dialogue with his community.

### **1.10 Studies on dislocation**

There is substantial critical literature which may be related to philosophical aspects of the dislocation theme in African literature (Wanjala, 1980; Royce, 1959; Inyama, 2000; Akwanya, 2000; Arce, 2000; and Nkosi, 1965). Much has also been done on the works we are analyzing. (Bukenya, 1986; Imbuga, 1991; Nazareth, 1984; Dusaidi, 1982; and Kyallo, 1992). This is in addition to many other creative works dealing with themes of alienation, ostracism and exile. We begin this review in the order in which we have listed the critics and try to establish their areas of concern.

Wanjala<sup>6</sup> sees alienation as emanating from “an intense individual and social crisis”. (7) Alienation begins with a conflict developing within an individual attempting to exert his personal will against the social will, with the individual firmly convinced that the existing social order and philosophy is faulty, and that it needs to be corrected for him to accept and belong to it. The individual wages

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<sup>6</sup> *Home & Exile*

a struggle to change his society. In the process, he encounters forces least anticipated. Eventually he finds that the social forces are firmly entrenched, and that they are not merely strong, but also on the path of annihilating him. He realizes that he has to make a decision either to conform or get destroyed in the already heated war of survival. Two options present themselves: conform or perish. But the individual is so strongly convinced, so he creates an 'ideal' cosmos different from that of his community. It is by so doing that he ends up in alienation.

Royce is in agreement with Wanjala with regard to the conflict between the individual and his society as a cause of alienation. He observes that each one of us gains self consciousness by first opposing the social will. Before fully accepting the existing social norms, one naturally exposes the time-old philosophy to critical evaluation. This is merely a search for an ideal that is often elusive. The individual momentarily forgets that he is a socially trained animal. In the process he registers substantial losses which train him, once again, to value and respect the social will. If he entirely disregards the social schooling, he experiences a psychological impoverishment which leads to both mental and physical disharmony. Eventually the fellow ends in pessimism, disillusion and narcissism that even if he later decides to run away, he still remains 'alone in the crowd'.

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Inyama<sup>7</sup> explores the concept of exile in two aspects: Being an exile at home and on return. He observes that where an individual has come face to face with the destructive forces of dislocation, he may choose to run away or put up with them. He is, however, conscious of the conflict existing between himself and society. Inyama observes that:

If he chooses to stay, the loneliness he experiences makes him feel an exile right at home. He finds that physically he is in society, but emotionally, socially, intellectually and psychologically he is fundamentally alienated from society (45).

His flight is necessitated by a realization that his decision to assert his will to change society so that he can begin belonging to it will result to failure. Such an individual begins with a 'principled' stance that society must change. His stand gradually degenerates into loneliness; and this loneliness is "an intense loneliness which is in no way similar to that of the physically far removed, but the more intense loneliness of one who is at home, yet in exile"(48).

Where the individual is already physically in exile, the experience teaches him to manage those aspects that made him flee in the first place. The experience becomes a form of expiation yes, but also a form of training in self-mastery. It is a space for shaping one's new destiny with the society he formerly rejected. The events affecting an individual's course of life are either

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<sup>7</sup> Inyama, "shades of Home & Exile" in *Exile & African Literature*.

set up by him inadvertently, or they simply happen to him; having been set in motion by other people. However, though one might have made good of himself, the social circumstances that made him flee, if not addressed, nullify any lessons acquired in the process of experience.

Inyama provides the example of Baako the main character in Armah's *Fragments* who makes up his mind to return after a devastating stint in exile, but his decision is presented as suicidal since he is still not in tune with social expectations. He spends his time in exile learning the ways of the host, rather than trying to fill the voids that originally forced him out of home. His hope of empathy from his family becomes another source of disillusion, for the family ironically withdraws emotional support and finally sends him to a mental asylum. He becomes both socially and psychologically fragmented.

Akwanya looks at dislocation from the point of alienation. He sees an individual alienated because society regards him alien. The question of whether one belongs is a preserve of the society which judges him according to its established traditions. Where an individual feels nothing queer for the choices he makes, his society may feel perpetually pricked by what it regards 'blindness'. Alienation thus becomes a cultural construct in which an individual who disregards the tried and tested ways is alienated.

In his analysis of John Munonye's *Obi*, Akwanya observes that Joe's lack of children owing to the barrenness<sup>8</sup> of his wife Anna becomes a public issue, rather than an individual one. Tradition demands that Joe should marry another wife, but the man is already too engrossed in Christian ethos, so that his personal decision to keep the sterile Anna stands in contrast to the expectations of his society. When Joe for instance decides to put up a big house for himself and his barren wife Anna, family members see the house as a symbol of prestige, but it does not quell their unease. They say behind his back that the house will be haven for rats, lizards and snakes. What Joe sees as a useful investment is on the contrary seen by his society as foolish and meaningless. They feel that the barrenness of Anna requires more urgent attention. Joe is thus set apart from his community by his Christian background. Akwanya therefore sees society as a domineering force that controls its members, and alienation as a deviation from the social expectation.

Arce sees dislocation as a shattering of one's self-defined centre of beliefs and attitudes. The individual begins the journey to exile by attempting to define existence through a set of ideals. In establishing this centre, the individual gets entirely absorbed in pessimism and self confidence. He manifests absolute loyalty to his own culture, so that other cultures appear faulty. Dislocation becomes a challenge to any of the pillars making up these beliefs. Arce

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<sup>8</sup> Barrenness is still regarded an abomination in most African societies. Among the Ameru of central Kenya, a barren woman is called *Nihata*. A man who marries a *Nihata* is required by tradition to marry another wife.

advocates for a synchronization of the various cultures that one comes into contact with.

The syncretism approach involves a conscious process of picking and rejecting, reaching compromises and creating new symbols which belong to none or all of one's experience. For instance, Ngugi in *The River Between* draws parallels between Joshua, Kabonyi and Waiyaki to illustrate the necessity of cultural blending. Joshua is presented as a blind follower of the Christian faith while Kabonyi on the other hand has a similar blindness in his approach to tradition. Waiyaki emerges as a central figure that has successfully blended the antagonism of Kamenno and Makuyu in the new world order brought about by a hybrid culture that factors in both African and Western values.

Nkosi<sup>9</sup> has also made an interesting contribution to the concept of dislocation. Exiled from South Africa during apartheid reprisals, he finds that Britain is more fulfilling than his native country. Writing about his experiences in exile, Nkosi adopts a deconstructionist approach to the popular 'fallacy' that exile is all pain, and return inevitable. He observes as follows:

Exile is not all pain. There are unexpected bonuses. One gets an opportunity to purchase, however temporarily, the private freedoms taken away at home. These freedoms include the ability to buy books, to enter a restaurant of one's choice, a bar, a night club, indeed to enter into relationships which would have been both unthinkable and strictly forbidden in South Africa (viii)

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<sup>9</sup> *Home and Exile*.

As a banished writer, exile to him is a complex fate which, besides the well-known deprivations, lead to new discoveries, new acquaintances and new friendships which, though seemingly small, makes one ultimately human.

From the critics we have reviewed, it is evident that the construction of dislocation is relative, the reason we call it a state of 'Hellven' to cater for the divergent attitudes expressed by each critic in his environment. It is also evident that the critics we have reviewed so far deal with the philosophy of specific components of dislocation, rather than analyzing specific texts in relation to the theme of dislocation. Creative works have only been mentioned for exemplification, rather than exegesis. Secondly, the critics do not see the isolated elements they discuss as constituting a broader concept that is dislocation. We expect to get Ruganda's contribution shortly. Let us first look at some studies done on Ruganda's works.

### 1.11 Writings on John Ruganda

Austin Bukenya has analyzed *The Floods* in which he notes that the play derives from the political situation in Africa, especially in Uganda in the 1970's.<sup>10</sup> He refers to "an advent of murderous political dictatorship which turned on their own citizens, killing and brutalizing them with the viciousness of preposterous

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<sup>10</sup> *John Ruganda's Floods.*

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monsters' (8). Out of this, he notes, thousands were displaced. Bukenya reckons that:

What turned the attention of the world towards Amin's beastly regime was his expulsion from Uganda, in 1972, of nearly 50,000 residents of Asian origin, whose property he seized and later distributed to his relatives and henchmen. What followed was mass flight of Ugandan citizens, now turned refugees. (9).

Bukenya's analysis is significant because it links politics to mass flight of Ugandans after the coup, but he does not analyze dislocation and its various constituents which form the backbone of this study. We believe that his study is limited by the audience he was writing for, considering that his ideas are contained in a high school literature guidebook.

Francis Imbuga<sup>11</sup> in his doctoral thesis has analyzed the three texts under this study, among others. In a biographical background of the playwright, he observes that Ruganda migrated to Kenya in 1972 owing to the volatile political situation in Uganda his motherland. He reckons that the academia, government critics and other persons of conscience were targeted for execution by Amin's regime; and this was the reason why Ruganda fled.

In his chapter titled 'Political Commitment', Imbuga looks at Ruganda as a socially aware playwright who explores themes on the political events of his

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<sup>11</sup> "Theme & Circumstance".

time. Thereafter, he looks at the stylistic elements and Furgadian influences on Ruganda's character architecture.

Imbuga does not isolate dislocation as a distinct theme for analysis, other than acknowledging Ruganda as a socially sensitive writer from his handling of politics in his plays. Secondly, the stylistic and Furgadian influences he analyzes do not form part of this study.

Peter Nazareth has also analyzed *Floods*.<sup>12</sup> In his essay '*Waiting for Amin: Two Decades of Ugandan Literature*'. Nazareth observes that Ruganda produced *Floods* "...by which time the brutalities and murders of the Amin regime had filled Uganda with blood" (15).

Basically, he looks at the play in relation to the playwright's sensitivity to social and political issues on the prism of violence. We agree with Nazareth that dislocation is a human and consequently social issue arising from violence, but he does not analyze dislocation as a theme in the text.

Dusaidi, C.B in his MA thesis takes a comparative approach to the works of Elvania Zirimu, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Francis Imbuga and John Ruganda. In this study, Dusaidi compares the literary constructs such as style, characterization, and themes. In his chapter on themes, he fails to see dislocation as a major

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<sup>12</sup> Killam, ed. *Writing of East & central Africa*.

theme worthy of critical analysis in the texts. The comparative approach also compares and contrasts the literary constructs he considers universal to the three writers, meaning that only those aspects common to the writers sampled are isolated for analysis. Even then, dislocation is not one of the themes he analyzes.

So far, this review affirms a lack of systematic study of dislocation in Ruganda's plays selected for this study. Our business is to analyze how Ruganda constructs dislocation through its various components, clearly showing how these elements are intertwined to bring out the broader theme. Because of the obvious gaps that we have identified, there is need for a comprehensive analysis of the texts in relation to dislocation because we believe it is a major social and consequently literary concern in East African drama.

### **1.12 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In analyzing the portrayal of dislocation, this study applies ideas from two scholars, namely Anne Gagiano<sup>13</sup> and Isaac Yetiv<sup>14</sup>. We shall interrogate their concepts, synthesize them and apply them in textual analysis and interpretation. Let us begin by examining the ideas of Gagiano which, as we have already said, occupy a seminal place in our theoretical framework. Thereafter we shall discuss Yetiv's ideas.

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<sup>13</sup> Gagiano, "concepts of Exile" in *Exile & African literature*, 1-12.

<sup>14</sup> "Alienation Modern Novel" in *Exile & Tradition*. 86-94.

### 1.13 Gagliano's dimensions

Gagliano provides a rather comprehensive framework for analyzing dislocation experiences, which she categorizes as either autobiographical (narrator's own) or anecdotal (those of his acquaintances). Gagliano identifies 'dimensions' through which dislocation could be analyzed, but she calls them dimensions of 'exile'. This however does not impede us from adopting them since exile, as we have already stated, is an aspect of dislocation. The dimensions, she elaborates, are to be applied in the analysis of 'experiences'. These dimensions are ontological, political or colonial, social, autobiographical, mythical and psychological. Let us interrogate each of these in turn. Thereafter we shall show how they will be applied in analyzing Ruganda's plays.

The ontological dimension, she argues, has to do with the nature of human existence. Man is by nature inquisitive and curious. These attributes lead one to venture out to explore the meaning of life, to compare his circumstances with those beyond the present and consequently, seek better terms of living than presently endowed. Dislocation is in this dimension seen as a consequence of man's explorative nature. The distancing of oneself from the environment is thus seen as a metaphysical condition of humanity.

The term 'dislocation' implies a destructive 'uprootedness' from one's community. Critically examined, one is *pushed out* of his native environment by a dream of a more fulfilling life. When, for instance, an intellectual leaves the

continent to work in foreign universities, he is dislocated by the low wages in his own country. In the ontological dimension, such a move constitutes rejection of one's own.

The second dimension is the colonial/political. She traces dislocation from the colonial experience in which the African man became psychically and socially disemboweled, changing his language, dress and other cultural aspects, which included a new philosophical dispensation. Most of these however ended up destroying the African man who embraced them without realizing that there was actually nothing wrong with his way of doing or imagining. According to Gagliano, dislocation becomes that process of rejecting one's culture to conform to the demands of a 'superior' colonial culture; which ultimately leaves the individual uprooted from his customs.

The experience of Modin in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest*,<sup>15</sup> best illustrates the warped perception by most colonized people's in Africa that America and Europe are places of enlightenment and pleasure. Through him we are let into the reality of the Western society; the humiliating patronage, physical brutalization, moral depravity and spiritual decadence. The Western society is presented as filled with varied dangers for the African black man who embraces it; the 'bait' of knowledge being only a disguise for luring him into his own

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<sup>15</sup> Armah, 1986

destruction. The Westerner lures him away solely to remould him for his purposes.

From colonization, the African metamorphoses into a neo-colonialist. He uses the imperialist's tools of control, which include economic exploitation and political violence. Gagliano sees the political class as a making of artists and academia who fail in their social responsibility, becoming complacent in the process of mass alienation, exploitation and disillusion.

In the social dimension, dislocation is a product of rejection and disapproval by one's community; which leads to a condition of wretchedness. It has to do with an individual's inability to fit in the immediate social set up. The individual finds the confines of his society limiting, seeing the social philosophy entrenched for ages inferior. He decides to withdraw from what Fanon calls the 'idiocy of the masses' and get into a new world which has no restrictions presently marking his people. This is best illustrated by Dr. Thomas Stockmann, the main character in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the people* who makes up his mind to board Captain Horster's ship and disappear into an imaginary new world where the foolish majority who make up his society will not be able to set foot. He argues that the masses are only raw material from which 'people' are made. In the new world he hopes to raise a new generation unpolluted by the hypocrisy and mediocrity of society as it stands now.

Social dislocation may also arise due to non-conformity to the established social norms. The individual is actually expelled from the community for breaching the social code either through incest, rape, murder, barrenness or such other condition disregarded by society. The social dimension enables us to analyze those aspects from within the culture which cause dislocation.

In the autobiographical dimension, Gagiano argues that a link should be sought between the work and those experiences in the background that shape it. This involves drawing parallels between the events of the work and the life of its creator. The text must, therefore, be read and criticized against its social and historical background, as well as the writer's life history.

In the autobiographical dimension, dislocation refers to those anxieties and difficulties occurring to the writer himself by the experience of alienation, expulsion and exile; and how these are reproduced in the text. The work, from characterization, tone of presentation and the broader thematic concerns are all seen as informed by personal experiences, which have in turn shaped the writer's attitude towards the environment in which he writes.

In supporting the relevance of this approach, Gurr<sup>16</sup> argues that the approach is inevitable because "The conditions of life largely determine the creative products. Without exile, the material produced by writers would produce a

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<sup>16</sup> *Writers in Exile*

radically different, even lesser body of work" (143). Gurr sees that much of exile literary material is a product of distance which enables the writer to look critically at his life, his country and his social circumstances. In a literary analysis of Ruganda's plays, the autobiographical dimension implies looking at text against the sub-text; which includes his life history, as well as the life of his country.

Gagiano further discusses the mythical dimension. Myths, which are stories corresponding to people's rituals and beliefs, carry a people's values and philosophy. Myths arise from a people's attempt to externalize and communicate their inner intuitions. These attempts issue from a consciousness that the human person exists in a cosmic totality.<sup>17</sup> The philosophy of the text is thus the philosophy of society. The externalization of this philosophy is basically realized through nostalgia and references to the society's folklore. In analyzing the plays, the interpretation of the social philosophy by the characters as well as nostalgia becomes aspects of focus.

Finally, Gagiano looks at dislocation as the psychological imbalance occurring to an individual from physical dislocation. She argues that where forced eviction from home occurs, a mental upheaval is inevitable. Dislocation is in this dimension the trauma, resulting from introduction to a surreal environment which 'others' the individual from himself, causing anxiety. She contends that

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<sup>17</sup> Soyinka, *Myth, Literature & African World*, 2.

bombardment of the psyche with painful experiences makes dislocation 'a spiritual journey equivalent to thousands of physical miles'. This dimension helps us to interrogate the psychological effects of dislocation arising from physical dislocation in the selected plays.

Gagiano presents these dimensions as self contained, independent entities. It is however unfortunate that she does not see a possibility of causal relationships where one dimension leads to another. She, for instance, fails to establish that the ontological dimension may lead to deculturization, which may in turn lead to social rejection. This model, therefore, requires to be supplemented with a model that spells out causal relationships if dislocation is to be seen as a complete, complex phenomenon that it truly is. We, therefore, introduce Yetiv's 'Stages of alienation'.

### **1.14 Yetiv's Stages**

Yetiv, unlike Gagiano, sees dislocation as a process with distinct stages. The first stage is what he calls 'discovery'. The individual makes an enthusiastic discovery of a new world, which he admires for its glamour. The enthusiasm he sees is propelled by a deficiency on his part, or the community in which he lives. It is like a sick man who has just discovered an herb for an erstwhile incurable ailment.

In the second stage, the individual makes an effort to identify with the new, integrate and assimilate its values. The person often moves away from his home environment; or welcomes the new into his. In assimilating, the individual moves with an optimistically pre-set mind, but unconsciously selecting those aspects of the new culture which seem ultimately superior to his, often ignoring the destructive ones.

In the third stage, the individual develops a negative image of his own culture and everything it professes. These attitudes manifest through a violent scorn of his culture and escape. He feels that his culture must change in tune with the new so that he may begin belonging to it. On the other hand, the 'other' does not take these affectations seriously, welcoming him with open hands.

In the fourth stage, the individual begins to discover the bulk beneath the iceberg. It soon dawns that the weakness of the new is as strong as the glamour. He is also elevated so that he can see the beauty of the culture he initially rejected; and this sets in disillusionment and a strong desire to return home.

The final stage is characterized by return. The individual hopes to carry on with life as before, acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of his imperfect society. However, it occurs to him that the wheel of time has not only moved, but that his society has developed an attitude against him. Reintegration

becomes a nightmare, leaving the fellow physically among his people but psychologically and emotionally alone.

From this model suggested by Yetiv, we conclude that he sees dislocation as a process beginning with a feeling of loss and ending in an individual's devastation. The concept of a process is significant in establishing the inter-relationships necessary in classifying the texts together as we attempt to do.

### 1.15 Tabular synthesis of Gagiano and Yetiv's ideas and their application in textual analysis

Dimension/Stage	Proponent	Characteristics of dislocation	Application
Ontological	Anne Gagiano	a) Sheer exploration of the meaning of life b) One is 'pushed out' by glamour of foreign culture	Study of the motivation to flight in <i>Covenant</i>
Colonial/Political	Anne Gagiano	a) Deculturation by colonization b) Political violence of neo-colonization	Study of causations in <i>Floods</i> and <i>Covenant</i>
Social	Anne Gagiano	a) Rejection for non-conformity to norms b) Escape from social 'weaknesses'	Analysis of causations in <i>Covenant</i>
Autobiographical	Anne Gagiano	a) Text reflects author's personal experiences b) Text reflects a country's history	Study of the sub-text that informs on the texts
Mythical	Anne	a) Textual philosophy	Study of

	Gagiano	is society's philosophy b) Myths enhance entrenched belief systems	textual philosophy in relation to evident social philosophy
Psychological	Anne Gagiano	Traumas, anxieties and mental disharmonies resulting from physical dislocation	Analysis of psychic effects of physical dislocation in the three texts
Discovery	Isaac Yetiv	Enthusiasm of discovering a new world	Analysis of causations in <i>Covenant</i>
Assimilation	Isaac Yetiv	Attempts at identifying with the new	Understanding the process of losing identity in <i>Covenant</i>
Scorn	Isaac Yetiv	Development of negative attitudes towards own culture	Understanding justification of the dislocated
Disillusionment	Isaac Yetiv	Discovery of the weaknesses of the new	Understanding the pains of dislocation in the three texts
Return	Isaac Yetiv	Attempts at return to own culture	Analysis of voices informing return in <i>Covenant</i> and <i>Shreds</i>

The two models supplement each other because the various elements making up dislocation are seen as intricately inter-related and inter-twined. For instance, Yetiv's first 'stage' carries the same philosophy as Gagiano's ontological dimension; and it is shown to develop into the social. It also leads us to its own

applicability in dislocation. We hope the two models will provide a comprehensive framework to analyze the selected texts.

### **1.16 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Owing to the textual nature of the primary sources of data, this study is library based. The researcher had access to Kenyatta University Moi Library, University of Nairobi Main Library and Laikipia Campus library. This section looks at the methods used in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data from the texts.

### **1.17 Sampling techniques**

The texts under our analysis were selected through purposive sampling. The choice was specifically informed by our knowledge of Ruganda's own history as a Ugandan citizen writing about retractable events in the country's history<sup>18</sup>. After reading critical works, it was further established that the study would fit within established literary paradigms, enhancing the continuity in existing studies on exile, alienation and banishment.

### **1.18 Data collection**

Data was collected from the three primary texts, as well as critical works and the internet. The primary texts here refer to the plays selected for analysis.

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<sup>18</sup> Kyallo, 1991

Secondary sources were the critical works and the internet from which we sought information on previous reviews on the dislocation, either in entirety or through its constituents. The data was collected with a bias to its applicability in analyzing the plays in relation to the dislocation theme.

### **1.19 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data was then analyzed by focusing on the relationships between the content of the texts, the objectives and the theme. Interpretation was done in line with the objectives of the study.

### **1.20 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have tried to establish a foundation upon which dislocation may be understood. It is here that we have located both the texts and the theme.

We have stated that each of the texts is being studied in relation to a specific objective and constituent of dislocation. For instance, *Covenant* is being analyzed in relation to socio-cultural aspects, *The Floods* in relation to political causations while *Shreds* is being studied in relation to exile.

In the background, we have affirmed that an understanding of the history of the country in which these texts emanate is inevitable because the East African writer works within the context of his society. The biography of the writer has been referred to because the experiences of a writer often influence his creative products. We have also affirmed that the texts are seen as forming a threading between the life of the playwright, his epoch as well as his own commitment to address the theme.

Basing our argument on the literature review, we have established that the three texts have not been studied in relation to dislocation, despite wide acclamations by critics on Ruganda's commitment and sensitivity to the human predicament in his hostile environment that the East African man finds himself in. Our broad objective is thus to interrogate how Ruganda inscribes dislocation in the selected texts.

To effectively address the objectives, we have synchronized ideas from Anne Gagiano and Isaac Yetiv to come up with a comprehensive framework upon which the texts may be analyzed. We hope this model will be effective in the study of dislocation in the plays.

To give credence to the exhaustive requirements and spirit of research, we have shown our research methods. The research, as we have indicated, is library

based owing to its textual nature. The selected texts provided the primary data, while secondary data obtains from critical and relevant creative material.

In the next chapter we focus on *Covenant*. We analyze the text in line with the first objective; which focuses on the socio-cultural aspect of dislocation. Thereafter, we shall proceed to show how it relates to the next play to establish the connection that betrays the playwright's commitment to the theme across the plays.

## CHAPTER TWO: DISLOCATION AS SOCIO-CULTURAL BANISHMENT IN *Covenant with Death*

*How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*

*Psalm 137*

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the social and cultural elements of dislocation in *covenant*. We seek to analyze those aspects within the one's society that compel one to become derelict for non-conformity to social norms, or rejection of one's culture. We also attempt to establish how these qualities produce alienation, and how this may in turn yield physical as well as psychological flight.

### 2.1 Dramatis Personae

Matama: Bamyā's daughter

Motomoto: Her escort

Traveller: a diviner who meets the on the road

Banura: Matama's villagemate

Old Man: Banura's father

Bamyā: Matama's father

Kabooga: Matama's mother

Kaikara's voice: Goddess of fruition

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**Setting:** The story is set in a country road, in an African countryside. It is divided into two parts, called 'Movements'.

## 2.2 *Covenant with Death: A Synopsis*

When curtains rise, an owl-cry startles Motomoto who sees their journey to Matama's ancestral home as bound by calamity. Motomoto is a young man escorting a sickly twenty three year old girl Matama home at the request of one Bwana Duncan who has been living with her in the city for the past five years, and now a departed tourist.

Motomoto constantly threatens to go back, abandoning her on the way. Other than the owl-cry, he is worried that Matama's clan might blame him for her severe illness. To encourage him, Matama praises his gentlemanly nature calling him handsome. Motomoto prods to discover Matama's background, after which she reveals that "...if our men were kind, then I would not have gone to the city" (76).

A 'Traveller' comes by and at once recognizes Matama's alienation from the community in her manner of dressing. She is dressed in 'man's clothes' and sunglasses. The Traveller at once lays his wares of divination on a Columbus monkey skin and performs a ritual to interpret the meaning of Matama's condition. From his divination, he reveals that her sickness results from a breach

of some code with Kaikara, the goddess of fruition. He actually foresees a storm!

Motomoto is stiff scared. He at once demands to know more about Matama's background before he can proceed with this blurred journey. Matama explains that her conflict with her society is 'mutual', and reveals that the society could not accept her owing to infertility. At conception, her parents contracted a bond with the goddess, but she has no idea about the contents of the bond. She also reveals that her society had no problem with her as a person, but her condition. She says; "Some people said I was beautiful, beauty could not bring me the harvest I wanted, the harvest the village wanted" (87). Before fleeing, she had tried all the famed traditional medicine to no avail, and even suicide but someone always rescued her.

Motomoto reveals he has faced similar contempt from his community for the same condition, so that their meeting is a dramatic coincidence. He actually says that they are "tied together by the same fate" (87).

Banura, a village girl of Matama's age comes by. At once Motomoto notices that she is "monstrously ugly" (88). Matama also notes that she has a noticeable "lameness and big breasts" (89), which they regard indicators of physical ugliness. Her English is also 'pathetic', full of repetitive structures arising from direct mother tongue transcription.

Banura, just like the Traveller, notices that Matama is dressed in men's clothes and that her lips are decorated with lipstick. She however enhances the contempt of the village men towards barren women, general laziness and physical violence towards the feminine gender. All the same, she welcomes her home and offers to call her own father to speak to Matama about some important news.

Once Banura leaves, Matama continues to explain to Motomoto that it was at the height of this social contempt that Bwana Duncan came by, asking her to escape with him to the city. Motomoto, absorbed in the depth of this coincidence, tries romantic seduction on Matama, so that together they can sail in the will of fate. He observes; "You and I are strangers, although you are now in your home land. We are like two babies thrust into closed baskets, one in each, and then hurled into a raging storm". (96).

When Banura returns with her father, here called the 'Old Man', Matama sees her as a ghost, a shadow. Banura makes Matama feel dead, and wishes Motomoto would agree to go back with her to the city. She is tormented by the difference between herself and this ugly girl: Banura is highly regarded by the society for her ability to parent.

The Old Man explains that Matama's parents are dead. Her father was struck dead by lightning during a celebration of birth for a fellow villager, a "twin ceremony for Kabyanga's twin sons" (100). Before breathing his last, his words were "Kaikara's bride" and no more. Her mother, on learning of the disaster gorges herself dead with a spear blade. It is here that Matama herself collapses in death. Motomoto blames the Old Man for the death and threatens him, until the Old man offers to take him before Kaikara's shrine for the re-enactment of the day Matama's parents sealed the fateful bond with the goddess of fruition.

In the 'Second Movement', Matama's parents are brought back to life by Kaikara's spirit for the enactment, as Motomoto and the Old Man eavesdrop. The enactment begins with Bamyā, Matama's father reminiscing the Traveller laying his cowries and saying; "I see black shadows mating with daughters of men...I see tiny hands pulling Kabooga's nipples" (109).

It is revealed that the couple had reached a point of desperation, having lived for a whole thirty years of searching and searching. Bamyā is afraid that his family line will end with him. He wonders why reptiles and worthless worms should have young ones, and not him. Having sacrificed all his fattest bulls to the gods, he is determined to sacrifice no more. His wife Kabooga, like the Biblical Eve, becomes a force to tempt him to keep sowing the seed and sacrificing to Kaikara.

It is in the midst of this discussion that Kaikara comes knocking. Represented here by 'Voice', the goddess promises them a beautiful baby girl - despite their request for a boy - on condition that she is to know no man all her life. She is to become a priestess of Kaikara's shrine, and the parents in their desperation, promise to enchant her with those roles. The goddess instructs them to go to bed at once to sow the seed.

The play ends with Motomoto's conclusion, having witnessed the exploits of first the gods and secondly a community in its own folly, that "the gods are too wicked for mortals" (120). He vows to love and remember Matama forever.

### **2.3 Inscribing Dislocation in *Covenant***

Ruganda presents alienation as a process, rather than a condition. It is that gradual loss of identity, and the effort to recapture this lost identity which leaves his characters in an identity crisis. Identity itself is a dynamic phenomenon often threatened by certain psychological, social-political or cultural viruses. Like a sick person, an individual suffering from an identity crisis fights ferociously, guided and sustained by some instinct of preservation. If he wins he recovers his health and leaves the battlefield immunized and enriched. If he loses, he 'dies' into a hybrid of sorts, and only recaptures his inner peace in the calm immobility engendered by disillusionment.

The principal character in Ruganda's work that carries his message on alienation develops through identifiable stages as discussed by Yetiv in our theoretical framework. First, Matama makes a discovery of a new cosmology through Bwana Duncan. We call this 'discovery' because we understand society had initially rejected her owing to barrenness, itself a social abomination. She explains to Motomoto that the problem between herself and her society was 'mutual'; that the men in the village despised her before Duncan comes along only to find nothing wrong with her condition. She explains that "it didn't quite start as hate- it was their contempt first, then my hatred and finally their"(85)

For purposes of clarity, let us examine the content of this contempt as Matama explains;

...they believed it was useless to own a barren Shamba. The Shamba was these you see, ready for any farmer, young or old. People sowed and sowed. But there was no harvest. So they left the shamba fallow permanently. (86).

Ruganda uses the metaphors of the 'shamba' sower and "garden' to refer to the barrenness of Matama and the village men who wanted her as a wife . It is understood here than the men tried to impregnate her without success, and finally discarded her with disparaging statements like 'a barren shamba is best left to children to turn into a playground'. It is at the height of this contempt that Bwana Duncan, a visiting tourist comes by her. His acceptance of her gives instant renewal, a new lease of life. Matama explains;

My renewal came when Bwana Duncan called at my father's house. He heard the gossip, but decides to take me with him secretly. I felt life crawling back into my veins. I felt victorious over petty village ideas... I flew away like an eagle determined never to cast my eyes homewards again, and never to wallow in the mud. (93).

The discovery ushers Matama into the next stage in which she makes effort to identify with the new world, assimilate and integrate its values. After evaluating the double pressure of the 'archaic', weak civilization of her people against the prestigious world of Duncan, Matama has to make a choice. The two cultures cannot co-exist; blending them is impossible, and it becomes necessary to do away with the old and substitute the new. There is no juxtaposition, but rather an imposition of the new culture over the native culture which has to be banished from all memory. Her acceptance of the new culture is seen in her manner of dressing and doing as revealed by the Traveller and Banura. After laying his wares of divination on his Columbus monkey skin, the Traveller laments her appearance and its semantics thus;

She is Mimisabu, is she? Hmm... with her red lips and trousers and glasses. Where I come from there are no Mimisabus. A woman so stay with a white man is a crime. It means death ... Hmm, our ancestors can be rough sometimes (78).

The encounter with Duncan makes Matama acquire new mannerisms unacceptable by custom. First, she does not regard the wisdom of the elderly as seen her dismissal of the Traveller's Prophecy. Instead she retorts; "Would you like him to run away and leave me at your mercy; at the mercy of birds, and beasts of prey? Shameless man! You cheat your grey hairs" (80).

These aspects of alienation are noticed by Banura on seeing Matama, for she at once observes; "Bachwezi help! You have a kind heart, you have, to give your men's clothes to Matama"(90). Banura also notices that her lips are red-painted, and sees in it death. Motomoto attempts to explain that the trousers are merely for any gender, but Banura becomes irritated posing;

You are telling a lie stranger. What do you think my eyes are?  
a bats? Mine, the like of a cat's ..... Can see even in the dark and I say  
she wears trousers and her lips are very red. Is it dying you are,  
Matama? (90).

In the next stage, Matama develops a violent scorn for her own culture, traditions and people. By accepting the new ways of Duncan, she is condemned to be a spectator of her own painful metamorphosis as her 'I' becomes more and more 'another'. The gap between herself and her own people who are not affected by the intense acculturation she has experienced becomes deeper each day and more difficult to bridge. She becomes a stranger in her own land, and within its traditions.

Motomoto actually tells her;

Your and I are strangers, although you are in your home land. We are like two babies thrust into closed baskets, one in each, and then hurled into a raging storm. We hear voices round us, see through chinks, objects moving to and fro, but we are neither part of them nor for them (96).

To illustrate further, Matama develops an attitude against her former friends, partly because they are different from her. Through stage whispers, Ruganda makes her

wish Banura death for she is a mother to two. To Matama, this is a ghost coming to haunt her. She prays; “strike her- strike the ghost, strike the shadow. She makes me feel dead. Let’s go back to the city; (98).”

Meanwhile, the intruding culture doesn’t bother to understand the cultural implications of Matama’s condition in the society that has nurtured her; so Duncan welcomes her with open arms. Matama admits that Duncan’s world was ‘heaven itself’ she says;

You know I was happy with Bwana. He was a man, a real gentleman. He understood my problems; he understood it was not my fault; and he gave me his love, his sympathy and his attention. That was heaven itself. It was real heaven for me. (93).

Soon affection breeds contempt, and soon after rejection sets in. Disillusionment follows her, followed by a strong self-affirmation and a spontaneous desire to find once again herself, and her origins. In his study of alienation in the novel of the French North Africa, Yetiv observes that the black population in America came to a discovery that the American environment was limiting to their aspirations and somehow developed a slogan of ‘Black is beautiful’.

Matama’s disillusionment sets in when she discovers that Duncan was merely having a good time on his holiday in Africa, and had no affection whatsoever. She reminisces;

But, but as Bwana approached his time of departure, somehow or other I learnt that I had served his purpose very well; and that's why he had liked me so much. I was the kind of women he needed in a foreign land. "... I wonder whether he will remember the few years, the few good years, we spent together (93-94).

Through the experience of Matama, Ruganda further affirms that the new culture only provides temporary happiness, and that it does not actually address the problem because as we noted earlier, the new culture did not in the first place seek to understand the culture it comes to colonize.

For Matama, the suffering she experiences is in no way merely social. It is suffering emanating from the splitting into two parts of her being, to her cultural schizophrenia. It is not a suffering about against time and space; it is the suffering of a specific person that she is, clearly situated within unique circumstances of existence.

Alienation however teaches as individual vital lessons which enable him to survive the new hybrid state in which he finds himself. Ruganda presents the alienation experience as an arena for enlightenment. However, because he has created a complex conflict which involves the gods, we are bound to ask; how does an individual learn to deal with the gods? For Matama, alienation actually goes to the extent of negating the supreme power. She denies knowledge of Kaikara's code. The question of coping is best asked by Motomoto himself;

What will you do when you reach home? Are you going to sit at home and wait for your end? Or perhaps experience the same bitterness, the same disgust, the same contempt and then fly away to some distant city? (95).

One of the obvious resolutions at this point is to return home. But how will Matama for instance, manage the contempt that made her flee, yet her condition, has not improved? Ruganda carefully weaves his way out of these complex questions he raises by presenting Matama's opposition to traditions and her eventual alienation as a process of identity. His alienated character is made to come to terms with herself in relation to her traditions, and to realize the infallibility of custom. Matama personally acknowledges learning to respect society, rather than condemning it. She says; "... I have rather learnt to live with reality, with my past. A past in which my parents are the chief character, a past in which man is the instrument of torture and is the tortured". (95).

Most often however, return to one's original state proves impossible, for the wheel of life has been moving as one hops from one experience to another. This failure results to alienation. In covenant, Ruganda denies his characters the strength to push the world of their society. They are left with the option of changing or getting annihilated. Matama for instance says;

Beyond this I have no plans. But what I'm determined to do, however, is to have more flights. One was enough and I shall live to remember it. I shall recreate it through my dreams, my thoughts and my feelings, so that it may be permanent and real and alive (95).

It is from self examination that Ruganda's characters discover the void that sets them apart from society. A discovery dawns that alienation is unconsciously modeled by oneself through a search for a new, ideal world.

In covenant, Ruganda further presents alienation as deracination, the process of uprootedness from one's society arising from combined forces that constitutes colonization which leads one to acquire a distorted view of himself and his society. He sees this condition as arising from the destruction of values which have for ages helped the African man to create and maintain a cohesive society resting on customs and traditions.

To effectively illustrate the predicament of the African in the face of foreign ways, he brings in a juxtaposition of Banura, a less exposed, less beautiful girl of Matama's age, but who is able to bear the children needed by her society. Through her, Ruganda leads us into the African metaphysical concept of feminine elegance. Banura is noticeably ugly, but she is placed way above Matama in social regard. On seeing her for instance, Motomoto observes that "She is not as beautiful as you are, my lady, despite your ill-health. She looks monstrously ugly"(88).

Her looks notwithstanding, she perfectly fits into the scheme of society unlike Matama who was born and brought up in affluence, endowed with physical beauty by the goddess of fruition but dried in the inside. Matama desperately explains; "My father was rich, but his riches could not buy me the respect I wanted. Some

people said I was beautiful, beauty could not bring me the harvest I wanted, the harvest the village wanted.”(87)

Juxtaposition further comes through Motomoto himself. Motomoto is initially presented as a helper and sympathizer with Matama’s condition. Shocking revelations however emerge that he too is a character in flight, for he too is sterile and has been despised by his society. After understanding that he is not alone in the abyss of social contempt he reveals himself; “You know my lady; I have experienced the very things you are talking about. I have had to flee my country, to flee from shame and torment”.(87).

Ruganda revisits his ‘Shamba’ and ‘farmer’ metaphors, this time to highlight the predicament of the male gender. Motomoto explains;

I had a garden to cultivate. I had a hoe. I had everything. When it was later found that the hoe was blunt, my fellows expressed me to the world and my garden was taken away from me... Rumour had it that I had no hoe at all. So I fled away (93).

The images created by these metaphors are not difficult to infer, within the African metaphysics. We only need to relate them to human reproduction to get their full meaning.

## 2.4 Mind blasts of rejection

Both Matama and Motomoto are victims of psychological torment, despite their physiological variance. Whereas Matama is severely ill, Motomoto is full of energy and vigour. Matama visualizes her mother quipping; “Who’s this handsome man with you? Your husband?” (74). The mother’s pride reveals that Matama harbours admiration for Motomoto’s perfect state of health. However, both have suffered psychic imbalances emanating from both their social and exile experiences. Matama is perpetually daydreaming and this terribly shocks Motomoto. He laments; “...with this speed of ours, this snailing over inches, and your ill-health...and your daydreaming...” (73).

The mental disturbance revealed here is partly due to sickness, and partly due to psychological torture she has undergone in exile. Her emotional condition and her age present to us a kind of paradox. At 23 she thinks retrogressively. There stands no future, and hers is a desire to return to the cradle to be nursed by the mother; rather than looking forth to conquer the challenges at hand to a promising future. Ruganda consciously presents the parallels of age and mental disposition to foreground the magnitude of psychological disturbance. He also enhances the melancholic mood set off in the beginning of the play.

For Motomoto, suicide becomes an inevitable alternative to the derision he receives when it dawns on him that his problem is not merely physiological, and that flight will only satisfy his physical absence, not the emotional festering

within. He says; "I resorted to the knife. And you can see the indelible mark on my neck up to this time. But some man intervened before I did myself in" (88). The derision shatters his esteem and self worth so that death becomes not just an escape option, but a necessity.

Matama compares her own nature to "a full grown calabash, shimmering on the outside and rotting on the inside" (96). The calabash image reinforces the magnitude of psychological festering within. It also presents Kaikara, seen here as a microcosm of the African metaphysics, as too strict and unforgiving, leaving her to wonder aloud how the gods would bless a worthless worm with young ones and deny the same to a beautiful woman that she is. It is a conglomeration of all these internal pressures compounded by the news of her parents deaths that she collapses in death marking the denouement from the apex of mental torture.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

These are at least two senses in which *Covenant with Death* can be said to stand out as an exemplary work on dislocation. First, the art that informs and shapes it proceeds from an imaginative spirit that heavily borrows from the African metaphysical plane, and secondly, it brings a distinctive treatment to a problem that is central to contemporary East African writing and to modern African awareness, namely the problem of socio-cultural alienation.

The severe austerity of the style Ruganda uses, the soberness that marks the presentation of the human circumstance and the moral and spiritual issues with which the play is concerned, the careful architecture of characters and situations employed in the play to translate ideas from dialogues serves largely as a framework of the development of a stronger, superior East African tradition on drama and literature as a whole. A combination of all these factors reflects an intention behind the work, directing its meaning towards a larger statement upon the African situation. We see this text as an allegory derived from a tranquil meditation upon the African man's cosmology.

In this chapter, we have attempted explicating dislocation from its component of alienation, itself a socio-cultural dimension, and we have shown it is a process rather than a state. With reasonably sufficient data from the text, we have shown that alienation in *Covenant* has both a physical as well as a psychic element, all brought about by demands of tradition and custom; and that the individuals within society are mere players in facilitating societal will. This conclusion conforms to Gagiano's social dimension, as well as Yetiv's process of alienation.

We have analyzed the manner Ruganda uses to weave the concept of alienation; namely comparison, juxtaposition and the use of metaphors easily accessible to any socialized African. His affirmation that alienation is an eye-opening, enlightening experience has also been discussed.

In this chapter, Ruganda's characters are struggling with the forces of society defined by the supreme rule of custom. The text thus recalls the period shortly after political independence when Uganda was seen as a relatively stable nation with great prospects of economic prosperity and political stability. In the next Chapter we attempt to situate dislocation from the perspective of our second objective; that is political causations in Ruganda's *The Floods*. Written in 1980 shortly after the fall of Idi Amin's military regime, this text is seen as a retrospection of society during the dark days of the despot.

## CHAPTER THREE: POLITICAL CAUSATIONS OF DISLOCATION IN *The Floods*

*And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.*

*Genesis 7:10*

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In his analysis of Ruganda's plays, Imbuga observes that they emanate from Uganda's socio-political environment. It is therefore reasonable to say that in *The Floods* Ruganda examines the political events of Amin's reign that led to massive deaths as well as physical and psychological dislocation. The regime was reputed for torture, murder and cover-up of its atrocities on its own citizens, and Ruganda skillfully creates an atmosphere and tone that aptly captures the human predicament in *The Floods*. In this chapter we analyze political violence and seek to establish how it causes dislocation.

### 3.1 Dramatis Personae

Headman: A military dropout

Two boys: Non- speaking

Kyeyune: A quaint traditionalist

Fisherman: A man in his early twenties

Bwogo: An executive

Nankya: a pseudo-intellectual

Journalists

Soldiers

**Setting:** The play is set in an island in Lake Victoria. It is divided into three acts, called 'waves'.

### **3.2 *The Floods: A Synopsis***

When the play begins, the sky is dark with clouds of rain; there are shouts and cries from the stampede caused by fleeing masses after the village Headman announces that soon a big downpour will engulf the island. He moves around with a loudspeaker informing the people that according to the state metrological department, the skies will open up in just ten minutes to let down devastating rains. He also notifies the islanders that the state, in a most hospitable gesture, has availed a boat to rescue the islanders to safer grounds.

✓ Kyeyune, an old man of slightly over sixty years appears in supplication. It occurs to him that in total disregard of the angry flashes, someone has actually tied a red cloth on his back. The Headman seems to force Kyeyune into the boat. Kyeyune engages him in an argument before we see a fisherman making entry into the scene carrying a basket of fish that would sustain him in the boat for the time he will be in sail. The Headman snatches the basket and empties its contents into his own.

Kyeyune shows open contempt to the Headman's demands, which makes the Headman threaten to drag him into the boat. First, he rejects an offer of fish offered to him by the Headman from the Fisherman's lot, and secondly, doubts that there is rains coming. He poses; "Do you think I have lived this long not to know the wind that carries the floods? Sixty years on this island and you think the radio that was brought yesterday knows any better? The radio – what mockery!" (8).

Kyeyune recounts how in one of his fishing expeditions he fished out a dead military man with a big stone tied round his neck, belly ripped open, three long nails drilled in his head and genitals stuffed in his mouth. On another occasion, he found a human finger in the bowels of fish and from then he quit both fishing and eating fish.

As the islanders troop to the boat, Bwogo comes looking for Nankya, and at once Kyeyune recognizes him as a "disciple of the ogre" (11). Bwogo wants Nankya, his girlfriend, and her mother to board the boat at once.

In the 'Second wave', Bwogo arrives in Nankya's house to woo her into boarding the boat. He finds her listening to the radio announcement from the Ministry of rehabilitation that the sea levels will rise in three hours and that the Republican Navy would come to the rescue of stranded inhabitants. Nankya,

just like Kyeyune in the previous wave, is indifferent to this news. In fact she finds them irksome and bangs her transistor.

Bwogo reminds her of the Biblical floods that wiped out the defiant and urges her to heed the weather warning. Finding no easy way, Bwogo adopts a romantic poise, reminding Nankya of the hey days of their love, reciting to her a sexually explicit poem 'Being Fulfilled' but Nankya brushes these entreaties off.

Nankya reveals that the SRB headed by Bwogo who doubles up as a first cousin to Boss has been committing atrocities against the populace, from raping nuns at the mission to having Nankya herself impregnated by the SRB boss on a office carpet. Nankya also recalls how Bwogo personally got rid of one Rutaro, an intellectual of repute for merely dancing with her on a dinner outing. And despite Bwogo's insistence that Nankya should heed the weather alarm, he admits that the lake has been transformed into a slaughterhouse. He also reveals his psychological discomfort as he poses; "Do you know that ghosts of the departed prowl this island at nightfall?"

Kyeyune makes an unexpected entry, almost getting shot by Bwogo who fires without aim. After regaining his poise, he reveals that the boat into which the masses were forced to board has been riddled with bullets, capsizing in mid sea

and killing all on board. He also reveals that the Headman was killed in the 'tragedy'.

With the tragic news, Bwogo is uncontrollably shaken. He sees a nightmare in which the dead come to life and besiege him, demanding to take their revenge against him. It is here he reveals his own misgivings towards Boss' way of doing things. Machine guns and Bazookas are heard from the outside. Bwogo reveals that Boss is indeed out of the country, probably the reason someone has taken advantage of the absence to kill and maim. Bwogo wonders; "Just because Boss is away; does that give them the licence to terrorize the citizenry?" (48). Bwogo insists on going out against Kyeyune's advice hoping to take over and control the madness outside.

The 'Third Wave' opens with Kyeyune in supplication, seemingly scatterbrained by images of 'the one with the three nails stuck in his skull', the military man he once fished from the lake. He sees the suffering of the islanders arising from Nyamgodho's abuse of Nalubale her from the lake and later abusing her after getting her wealth. Kyeyune thinks that Nalubale still hovers beneath the waters ready to take her revenge against mortals for having canal knowledge with her.

Nankya recalls that her mother was once an Ayah for an African Memsajib, but had to quit the job despite her poverty for having to wash underclothes and

menstrual regalia. The two decide to demolish the wall of materialism that has separated them, they fall into a romantic posture, before the door is violently opened and Kyeyune, Nankya and Bwogo are led out by liberation soldiers who have already taken over the government from the dictatorship.

### **3.3 Floods of Blood: The politics of dislocation in the text**

Our analysis of *The Floods* basically adopts Gagliano's political dimension of dislocation. A mood of turbulence is set in the stage directions at the beginning of the first wave. The inhabitants are in a topsy-turvy flight, and Ruganda reckons that "there are shouts, cries and all manner of noise from stampeding men, women and children-the last batch that is fleeing the island". (1); and this atmosphere of helplessness pervade the entire play. The floods image by implication represents the magnitude of the human woe.

However, the floods are given a sacred face. Through the Headman, information is relayed that the flight is urgent and extremely necessary, as seen in his countdown before the waters ravage the island. He says to Kyeyune; "Now dash off to the boat at once...Nine minutes to go; don't say I didn't warn you...Eight minutes...the floods are coming."(2).

The necessity and urgency is further enhanced by Bwogo in his entreaties to Nankya to board the boat. He equates the coming floods to the Biblical floods

where those who disobeyed Noah were wiped out of the face of the earth. He warns

Nankya:

Did you hear the lunchtime news?... 'I do bring a flood of waters to destroy all flesh, for flesh has corrupted man's way upon the earth'. Should have thought the old man was joking. But no! He did actually bring the flood upon the earth... I met them, men, women and their children. Herded together like beasts in Noah's arc (16).

In the Biblical story narrated in Genesis 6-9 however, God vowed never again to punish the earth by flood waters; and the SRB boss is either ignorant or harbours a sinister motive. Secondly, the Headman restricts the Fisherman from bringing any food into the boat, contradicting the spirit of Noah's time. Instead he grabs the Fisherman's basketful of fish and empties its contents into his own, a clear indicator of dispossession and deprivation.

Right from the beginning, Ruganda sets a mood that indicates that the islanders must perish by all means. It becomes evident that someone takes advantage of the strong lightning flashes to tie a red cloth on Kyeyune's back. Materials with colour red are believed to attract the wrath Kagoro, the goddess of lightning in this community. It means that someone wishes Kyeyune death. On noticing the trick, he suspects that the floods are man-made, and vows to resist attempts to get him into the boat. He tells the Headman:

Your head is no better than a fish net. ...Must we flaunt our red banners when Kagoro has mounted his throne?...This is clearly a bad omen.

Look at this banner! He could have struck me dead, were I not Kyeyune the fire-eater, the midwife of the flame tree (3-4).

In this deadly trick, Ruganda shows that not even the most innocent get spared. The Headman for instance, in full knowledge that he's being used to lead people into the jaws of the crocodiles, commands the two boys playing on stage to board the boat at once. It eventually emerges that most of those killed in the boat mishap later in the play are the ordinary citizens, the poor and the gullible.

Through the characters Kyeyune and Nankya, Ruganda reveals the motivation behind this flight, and consequently betrays his own vision as a writer. Through Kyeyune for instance, he reveals that the state has made murder a habit, and he personally defies the Headman's order to board the ill-fated boat. He asks:

Do you think I have lived this long not to know the wind that carries the floods? Sixty years on this island and you think the radio that was only brought yesterday knows any better?...What did the radio say about Makanga? That he was run over by a tractor. And didn't all of us see them dragging him from his hut?...As for me, I'm here to stay, floods or no floods. I'm not ready to cross paths with any destiny yet (8-9).

To enhance his thesis that this regime has a tendency to murder, Kyeyune recalls that not once, but twice, that he has fished human bodies from the lake before giving up on fishing or eating fish products. On one occasion he fished out a dead military man, and on another he came by a human finger in the bowels of a fish. He recalls:

It (fishing net) weighed down the right side of my boat. I knew it was a big catch. Do you know what it was, son...A military man. Dead. Three long nails in his head, his genitals sticking out in his mouth. A big stone round his neck. His belly ripped open and the intestines oozing out (10).

Ruganda confirms that Kyeyune's defiance of the weather warning arises from his experiences on the island, and his resolution never to cast his nets in the waters indicates that the regime has denied the people the opportunity to earn their living. Kyeyune, formerly a renowned fisherman no longer engages in his trade. He explains:

...I found a human finger in the bowels of a fish...I went out and threw up. Came back and said to myself. Why me of all people? Why should these strange things happen to me? That too, is why I don't eat fish...I can't face the lake once more, son, I can't (10-11)

Kyeyune represents those forces that have resisted the murderous exploits of Amin's regime. Ruganda equips him with age, which is to be associated with wisdom and equal grasp of age-old metaphors. He for instance refers to Boss as an ogre and the masses as its kindred. He tells the Headman:

Leave us alone. We have lived on this island tolerably well before the ogre came on the scene, heralded by fronds and frenzied shouts...But now we are no better than a drunkard's cockerel-unsure of ourselves any one moment. The ogre has turned against its kindred (12)

Kyeyune further delivers his prophesy that the regime will soon crumble and Boss vanquished. He says; "There are worthier men who have gone before me. Many

more will go after me. But that will not stop his sun from setting when the time comes” (12)

The density of violence is further re-affirmed through Bwogo himself. Being the SRB Boss and first cousin to the head of state, Ruganda uses him to foreground the helplessness and guilt of even those assigned a duty to kill. He does not come into the scene with a tone of denial, but rather that of confirmation. He personally admits that the entire island is littered with dead bodies, and the environment is nauseating. He observes that “The air here is absolutely unbreathable. It’s stale and stinks of rotten fish and human corpses”(17)

He feels that he has to carry out his mission, the truth notwithstanding. He, like Odie in *Shreds*, has opted to collaborate for survival. Time and again Ruganda paints him as a man living his cousin’s life, one whose every doing is a dictation from ‘the ogre’. Sometimes he is even surprised at what the international media says about the regime he faithfully serves. He says; “This lake can’t complain, though. It has been the tomb of many men...lorryfuls of wailing civilians, driven to their deaths, over the cliff, at the point of bayonets. The crocodiles have never been more thankful”. (19)

Ruganda uses Bwogo to reveal that the floods announced by the Headman are actually floods of corpses, and it is here we discover that Ruganda alludes floods of human blood shed by the dictatorship, and not floods of water. The reader is made

to realize that both the Headman and the masses did not understand the radio announcement after all. Bwogo reveals to Nankya:

You don't have to offer yourself to the spirit of the lake. Brimful as it is...brimful with rotten corpses. No wonder the damned place stinks; flood victims, mutilated bodies of army deserters, unidentified corpses of the enemies of the system...The list is endless (34)

In his wisdom of age, Kyeyune further reveals that the thunder claps witnessed in the beginning of the first wave actually represent gun shots. Having witnessed the boat riddled with bullets he reports:

The suddenly, spouts of gun-fire and fierce arrows of brilliance penetrating the body of the lonely boat. Thunder claps bouncing off the body of the boat and sending reverberations of death across the island and beyond. Men, women and children toppling over from the boat into the lake (38).

### **3.4 Psychic wounds of Dislocation**

As noted by Yetiv, one dimension of dislocation often yields another and yet another. We recall that physical expulsion from ones habitual environment may yield a psychic disturbance often manifested in trauma, day dreaming, soliloquies streams of consciousness or simply madness. In *The Floods*, Ruganda exploits this notion through the characters Kyeyune and Bwogo.

Kyeyune is pre-occupied with the image of the military man he once fished from the lake, one with 'three long nails in his head, genitals sticking out in his mouth and a big stone round his neck'. He often in the play wonders:

Here was a man, a military man, who had probably a wife and children...possibly a mother too. What had he done to come to such an unmourned-for end? Had he, perhaps, in a moment of enthusiasm, uttered an unwelcome word to his masters? (10).

From this experience, Kyeyune has resolved to neither engage in fishing activities nor eat fish. This is a difficult decision considering that fishing is his economic occupation, and that fish is the major source of food for the inhabitants of the island. The pollution of fish with human flesh implies that their food is poisoned, and death therefore becomes inevitable.

Bwogo also recounts to Nankya how he met Kyeyune scatter brained on the village path. He says; "One caught a corpse of an army brigadier in his fish net. I met him. Scatterbrained. Poor fellow. He never recovered from the experience. Goes about talking to himself all the time. Sometimes talks to trees and buildings" (35)

This observation brings out the permanence of the brain-wrecking experience of dislocation, and how it changes the character. Ruganda, by this explication, shows that though Kyeyune manages to resist physical flight unlike the other inhabitants who met their end in the sea, he is unable to resist a visitation of trauma. The

experience has left him more wretched than those who actually took a physical flight.

The traumatic experiences he has witnessed in the island are further enhanced in his monologueic supplication at the beginning of the Third Wave. His stream of thought betrays a preoccupation with 'the one with three nails stuck in his skull'. He finds that the military man must have died in a most inhuman manner.

Bwogo on the other hand is used to re-affirm the old maxim that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Ruganda uses him to state that Amin's violence had ramifications to both the system and its agents. Bwogo despite being the epitome of vice is made to suffer psychological torture. At one point he quips; "Do you know that ghosts of the departed prowl this island at nigh nightfall"(35) A gunshot from the outside sends him in tremors further revealing that he's as insecure as anyone else. Nankya observes that "...the boss of the SRB is trembling like a leaf. Kyeyune, come and see your master's pneumonic tremors. The official mark is falling to pieces. And behind it? A desperate desire to cling to life...like anyone else"(45).

This maxim is further confirmed with Kyeyune's revelation that in the boat tragedy, the headman was the first to fall. Perpetrators of violence against the citizens are thus depicted as both the agents as well as the vulnerable of their own atrocities, at least on the psychological plane.

The vices of the regime are further shown as brief and absurd, and this truth haunts Bwogo. Nankya attacks Bwogo with the information that in the end, all the looting and killing will not save him and the regime. She asks:

Where would your stolen wealth go' To the grave with you" You are not a pharaoh. To your tarts? You are not a philanthropist. No, man. It would go back to the state. All the seven years of sweating and stealing will come to nought (77).

### **3.5 A Tradition of Vice**

Ruganda traces the roots of the violence in the continent to the African man's upbringing. Right from the cradle, one learns that success in life is defined by the material possessions, which in turn creates dangerous competition for scarce resources. The children of the rich in particular are inducted into treating those from less fortunate sections of society as sub-humans. These children grow up with their paths clearly beaten, their inadequacy being compensated for by violence which characterizes their relationship. They grow up in belief that they must acquire as much wealth as possible, and because they have not been equipped with the knowledge to look for this wealth, dispossession becomes the way of survival.

Nankya recalls that her mother was a servant of the Bwogo's, and right from childhood Bwogo would charge dogs at her, threatening to shoot her with his toy gun. She recalls; "...you'd call the dogs and charge at me with your toy gun. 'Hands up you good for nothing bastard. Hands up before I shoot', you'd

say". (71). She further recalls that her late mother would always advise her never to venture into the masters compound, so that the two grew up in different pigeon holes. She would tell her; "Keep your distance, my child. We shouldn't annoy master. Never get between the hammer and the anvil". (72)

The rich, therefore, grow up in their own world in which they disregard the lives of their servants. Nankya, for instance, recalls how she wailed when her grandmother's death. Her mother had to slap her, because 'master does not like noise'.

The rich are also presented as avaricious and callous, taking up all the available space, so that there is no space to bury even the dead. The use of the lake as a dumping site for corpses enhances this notion. Nankya describes the grabbers as suffering from the agoromania complex. She reveals that Bwogo has acquired a large section of resources by his association with Boss, property of which he has no use for. She says,

...place to call your own. ...agoromania. ...the Bwogo estate everywhere in the country. The Mitchell Mansions. The Aphrodite service Apartments. The Bay of Bachelors. The Camasutra Hostels and the Rainbow Tourist Hotels: you name it. You are not the chairman of the Building board for nothing. Always on the look out for open space. To leave your imprint on it (76).

The guilt of misdeeds compels Bwogo to become apologetic. Ruganda however presents this demeanor as hypocritical and just like that of Odie in

*Shreds*. Ruganda does not spare Bwogo from paying for his misdeeds. The collapse of Boss' reign confirms that his characters have no room to get away with impunity.

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have analyzed dislocation in *Floods* from the causative perspective. We have established that this play draws its raw material from the events of the military regime of Idi Amin; and we therefore conclude that it would be difficult to study the play in isolation from this historical background.

We have analyzed the techniques used by the regime to drive people into the death trap that is the rescue boat headed to the middle of the lake. It is evident that the regime has made murder a habit, and we reasonably conclude that the atmosphere in the text provides a necessity for flight.

It has also emerged that physical dislocation leads to psychological disturbances, manifested in trauma, day dreaming, insanity and soliloquy. Even those characters that are able to survive physical dislocation, they are eventually more or less the same as those who flee.

It has been established that Ruganda traces the violent tendencies among the political class to a tradition in which the political class carves a niche of non integration, permanently secluding the poor and fighting to retain a system of caste

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in the African society; their key objective being to amass as much space as there possibly is, by means of elimination.

Finally, Ruganda affirms that political dictatorships have no future in East Africa. This is seen in the way he drives his villains to the guillotine, making them pay for their misdeeds.

The next chapter analyzes dislocation in line with the third objective. Writing in the year 2000, Ruganda looks back at exile as a consequence of flight from the political upheavals related in *Floods*. Those who fled, here represented by Wak, are returning to their motherland after the fall of a dictatorship.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISLOCATION AND THE EXILE DIMENSION IN *Shreds of Tenderness*

*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fattest calf.*

*-St. Luke 16:30-(Holy Bible)*

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

*Shreds of Tenderness* deals with the problem of returning refugees after the overthrow of the repressive regime that made them flee their motherland in the first place (Imbuga, 10). It is a retrogressive diagnosis of the society created by Ruganda in the floods, exploring the effects of state brutality on both the leaders and their subjects (Kyallo, 66). From the observations of these scholars, it is reasonable to say that Ruganda continues his mission of inscribing dislocation established from the previous text, where dislocation per se was alluded to by death, betrayal and violence. The text explores with relatively deep sensitivity the human problem of exile through the eyes of a character who experiences political reprisals, moving into asylum and back to his motherland, such that his experiences capture not only the depth but the temporal breath of dislocation.

### 4.1 Dramatis Personae

Odie: Brother to Stella, stepbrother to Wak.

Stella: Sister to Odie, stepsister to Wak.

Wak: Stepbrother to Odie and Stella.

Setting: The action takes place in a mansion in the rich end of an African city that is slowly recovering from a dictatorship.

#### **4.2 Synopsis**

The play opens with an elaborate description of a rich part of an African city, shortly after an end to a war. Odie emerges with a termite caged in a glass jar, a pesticides can, ice cubes and a Bunsen burner. He intends to set up an experiment to establish a scientific explanation to the question 'What makes a murderer tick?'

Odie begins torturing the insect, referring to it as 'Your Highness,' 'Your Majesty' and so on. The first torture mechanism he applies is what he calls 'Operation Frost', involving placing ice-cubes below the glass jar. The insecticide can and the Bunsen burner are used to scare the insect to speak or else face his wrath.

Stella, sister to Odie, does not understand what the experiment is all about. She reveals that Odie has been seeing a psychiatrist, and that probably his mental condition has not improved. She sympathizes with him, advising him to return to hospital.

Events take a turning point when a phone call is made into his house. The call is from one Wak Witu, a former university lecturer and step-brother to Odie and

Stella. Wak calls to inform that we would be coming home in the evening, ten years after he went into exile.

The news of Wak's unexpected arrival causes a stir on Odie. He begins to accuse Wak of running into the pleasures of exile when the country was bleeding under the grip of a military dictator, leaving the family to face the music. Odie orders that Wak should not be given any meal or drink, and that Stella should openly isolate him.

In the second part of the play Wak makes an entry into the house. He tries the ordinary niceties but Odie is suspicious that his step-brother is coming to spy on him; because he only comes to see the family a whole two weeks later arriving in the country. Odie levels a stream of accusations against Wak and asks him to use his foreign currency to establish himself back in the country.

After listening to Odie's accusations, Wak finds his understanding of exile warped. He offers to explain the horrors of being banished, and the plight of refugees in the process of immigration and in the country of asylum.

Wak also reveals that upon return, he has been able to peruse the SRB files and found out that Odie actually betrayed him to the terror gang, that he betrayed their father who was later executed, and that since Odie personally believed Wak had actually been killed, he went ahead to publish news of his death in both print and

electronic media. This revelation shocks Stella who now sees the motivation behind Odie's experiments.

It further emerges that the forces of the liberation movement are now in control of the nation, and that their first priority is to arrest all the SRB spies. Odie is apologetic, but reluctant to reveal all his other vices. He only admits readiness to pay his penance.

### 4.3 A Reflection on the 'Ogre's' Era

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, this play borrows by inference from the violence witnessed in *Floods* in which Ruganda compares the military regime to an ogre; and he revisits the violence there witnessed time and again to confirm that it is a causative to the dislocation he creates in this play. To effectively analyze dislocation, we rely heavily on Gagiano's political, autobiographical and psychological dimensions. However, we also need to establish continuums of inter-relationships established by Yetiv. This text must therefore be seen to borrow from the previous if this continuum is to be actualized.

Stella for instance recalls that the "ten years of genocide" (10) of the now fallen regime were characterized by; "The Music, Death at dawn. Death at noon. Death at dark. Shroud of darkness not needed not nowadays"(7)

Ruganda further confirms that violence and death had become a way of life, and one could die any time, for anything. When for instance Stella threatens to secure the caged insect by calling the Society for Prevention of Cruelty on Animals (SPCA), Odie confirms that the institution has no space even to protect itself. He replies; "Bums. If they can't protect themselves, why should they be bothered? The guerillas gunned down their patron the other day. What did they do? Nothing. So?" (11)

This assertion leaves one wondering why anyone would be bothered by the patron of an organization concerned with preservation of animals. This kind of violence recalls the brutal killing of Rutaro in *Floods* for 'accidentally' dancing with the mistress of the SRB boss in his drunkenness.

From the play, it is understood that Wak fled his motherland to escape death after his own brother betrayed him. The accusations leveled against him are replayed in Odie's mind and they are understandably malicious. Odie had reported to the SRB thus:

Is that the SRB? Number triple one triple three calling...put me through to the major-General...I've got a curious case on my hands. One Wak Witu.....he is becoming a bit of a nuisance. Threatening, to give a talk on democracy and all that...Yes, always seething with discontent...like all the rest of his intellectual colleagues...They must be hirelings of foreign forces. Marxist, I should say. Externally dangerous. Will arouse the public against the government...he says Boss is a big ignoramus; that he is a village pumpkin...that he is dragging the economy to the doldrums, to utter chaos and ruin (123).

Wak does not come to learn of the behind-the-scenes goings-on. His sense of escape comes when the three men looking for him within the university premises ironically come by him and inquire whether he knows one Wak Witu. It is then he discovers that the strange men are looking for him, and informed by the daily killings and mysterious disappearances of the academia, he quickly gets out of the university to begin a long trek to exile. Wak recalls; "I met the trio. In the corridors of the Social Science Building at the university. They had been sent to pick me up. I was going for my classes. Excuse me, sir,...we are looking for a Mister *Wak*".(122)

Upon discovering that it is him they are looking for, his brains work for him and he directs them to a room used as a store in the second floor of the building, as he prepares to leave. He recalls:

Second floor, Office number 213. He is out at the moment. Salaries section. Main building. Or just in case he doesn't show up, check him in the main hall at 5.00 pm. He is giving a public lecture on 'THE INEVITABLE ROAD THAT WILL LEAD US BACK TO DEMOCRACY', so my gamble worked. I dashed home, put a few things in a plastic bag, got some money from the family kitty, left a note for Beth to lock up and go to the village, and I began the long torturous trek into exile (122).

The physical violence of the army exploits is also manifested in the killing of their father. His death, like the others we have witnessed, is founded on betrayal. It is alleged that Odie actually informed the SRB that his father had committed treason.

Wak reveals:

You should read the files, man. At the SRB. Incredible. Absolutely nauseating. The reports, the false statements. Christ!... 'Pepe spat on the president's portrait in a public bar'. Judgement: 'Let him face the music at once. And report back its been done'. No investigations carried out. No witness called. No! Just the auctioneer's final hammer on the bloke (119).

Beyond the family circle, Odie is discovered to have betrayed his friends as well. A report from the SRB files shows that one Daudi met his death in most queer situations. His dog is alleged to have yapped while the president's motorcade was rolling by, and what the state does is to fabricate a queer litigation against him and his dog. Wak reads from the file; "Daudi's dog yapped at the presidential motorcade...The dog, the first respondent is charged with treason and Daudi, the second respondent, with concealing his dog's intent' (127)

Ruganda's description of these scapegoatist accusations confirms that the military regime had developed into the viciousness of a cannibal to maul the people, and that physical violence had become a way of survival for the regime.

Other than the physical violence, the regime involuntarily unleashed structural violence on the masses. Structural violence alludes to the pains arising from high inflation, lack of basic commodities and the rampant moral decay.

The basic commodities of living such as food, security and shelter become scarce because of the political uncertainties ensuing in the country. Stella for instance

recounts that not long ago, one had to queue for food and take paths unbeaten by the police. She recounts:

Queuing for milk and sugar?...Dodging the countless roadblocks?...Rape and forced marriages...and the once-a-day meager meals, if any...Endless searches for imagined plotters in hovels, offices and homesteads...empty markets and broken down stalls and shops...with hospitals screaming for doctors and emergency vaccines (14-15).

The lack of essential commodities had serious ramifications especially to the Stella family. Her mother dies from an inexplicable miscarriage because there are no doctors to look after her. Other than lack of goods and services, structural violence is also witnessed in the magnitude of moral decay in the society during the reign of the military. The officers of the army, under Major General Ali besiege a school and rape the students and the nuns with impunity. Odie recalls:

And besides, Stella...have you forgotten what his platoon did to you, the nuns and the other girls when they raided your school? A month before exam time? Drunk and lascivious, they plundered and left behind them a wreckage of piteous things whimpering for life. You, three months in hospital, brutalized and ashamedly expectant (31).

The doctor's are lacking in the hospitals because some have been killed, and the lucky ones have fled. The remaining have refused to work. The callousness of the officers is recounted by Odie himself thus; "Charlatans. Five of them dragged from the operating theaters and gunned down in front of their patients. And what do the others do? Doctors, nurses, the lot. Down their tools." (28)

In many ways Ruganda goes again and again to the violence we witnessed in *Floods* to show that death and exile are inevitable, and that the actions and decisions of his characters are presently informed by what has forgone.

#### **4.4 Thorns of Exile: The Plight of Refugees**

Ruganda describes the plight of the dislocated, seeing it as a process of experiencing, just like Yetiv. He presents exile as a journey with physical and psychological incidents. In highlighting the plight of those who manage to escape to exile, Ruganda assumes the role of an educator rather than a narrator. This he achieves by drawing parallels between what he regards as popular misconceptions, and goes ahead to correct them. His approach is that of deconstruct and then reconstruct. His intent is spelt by Wak, who upon listening to Odie's warped accusations poses:

...Can't think beyond the obvious, can you...if you Odie, my brother, are so suspicious, God knows what the ordinary man on the street thinks and feels about us. The hatred he harbours in his heart must be incredible. The bitterness insurmountable (75).

It is important to examine the conditions of exile against a framework of ignorance shown by Odie in accusing Wak of all manner of ills. First, Odie believes that Wak is returning with a lot of foreign currency. When Stella informs him that Wak will be dropping for dinner, he yells:

There will be no dinner here. Not for him at any rate. Tell him so. He can use his foreign currency...They all brag about it, that's why. 'How much can my ten dollars fetch in your local currency?' The bastards. So does he. He's no exception (16).

Another warped belief by those who have never had an experience of exile is that once in exile, a refugee has an easy life, with lots of fringe benefits and allowances. Odie for instance feels that while the country was bleeding, Wak was having an easy time 'abroad'. He laments; "And what did he opt for? Easy life in exile. Secure job, free education for his kids and maybe expatriate allowances while we, here, suffered."(15)

Through Odie, Ruganda continues to explore the belief by the ignorant that once one goes to exile, upon returning he's heavily compensated by the government. Odie thinks that Wak's return has nothing to do with patriotism, but rather the greed for the monetary inducement offered by the government to encourage professionals displaced by violence to return home and help in reconstruction. Odie laments; "Each family will be given forty thousand dollars to rehabilitate itself from the ravages of exile and disorientation...forty thousand dollars is no chicken feed" (74).

Odie ironically refers to Wak as Chaka Zulu returning at his own bidding 'itching to reconcile, reconstruct and rehabilitate' (53). From these illustrations, Ruganda delves deeper into enlightening his readership that 'political banishment' and 'migration' are in no way synonymous, for a migrant is controlled by somewhat regular social and economic forces that are amenable to theoretical analysis and

control, while refugee flows are unruly in that they result from events considered singular and unpredictable, such as civil strife, abrupt regime changes, arbitrary government decisions or international war. Through Wak he explains; "Self-exile is another matter. One has made up one's mind to take chances. And besides, he or she can always go back home without being asked questions. But a refugee, God! It's hell, man" (80).

Ruganda deconstructs these myths in the second part of the play by gradually muting Odie and giving voice to Wak, who in our view, carries the author's message in the play. Wak begins by informing that "People who have never lived through a coup d'état have romantic ideas about it." (116).

He continues to explain the predicament of the exiles, presenting exile as diabolic, and in what appears as the playwright's lamentation of the treatment he was accorded while working at the University of Nairobi he says:

There is nothing as abominable as being a refugee...shouted at, your dignity lowered. Hell, man ...from the sweeper to the highest official they subtly remind you that you don't belong...a third rate non-citizen, always associated with hunger and deprivation and cheap labour...sometimes no one wants you to work. Your very presence is an irritant...if you do more than the nationals; they say you are buying your stay. You're living in perpetual fear of losing your job...You can never do anything right once you are a refugee. You are always a marked man or woman (80).

Through Wak, Ruganda further explains that the problems of an individual seeking asylum in another country begin with a first hurdle at the border where the

immigration officers torment, rather than assist the desperate souls. Wak reveals that most often the immigration officers will refer to a refugee as a 'tornado of stench approaching' because the fellow hadn't had a bath for a long time. Even water for one's bath is an issue once one experiences political banishment. Once in the arms of these officers a refugee is always a marked man or woman; accused of all manner of ills. He is exposed to a humiliating body search for guns and illicit drugs, and if the person happens to be a woman, she is sexually abused without regard for her education or social standing. An example is given of one Dr. Rugendarutakaliretigaruka, an academic of repute who is grabbed and taken for a quickie', an euphemism for 'cheap sex' by the officers. Wak observes:

If you are a woman every blinking idiot wants to paw you. The short term solution is to be permanently obsequious. They love that. It gives them the feeling that they control your life and that they can do anything to you if they choose to (81).

He also confirms that the treatment of refugees in the country of asylum is founded on malice, and Ruganda firmly exposes the so called African hospitality into questions especially from those who profess academic freedom. Wak says:

The academics are the worst' Always engaged in endless prattle on lofty subjects which they half-understand...worst of all, they profess academic freedom but the moment you open your mouth or challenge their views, they feel threatened (81).

#### 4.5 Lamentations of Disenchantment

In *Shreds*, Ruganda exposes the disillusionment of displaced persons but first he interrogates the place of international bodies mandated with nursing the wounds of exile caused by political as well as natural disasters. In particular, he singles out the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and presents it as crippled by the lack of will and resources to keep to the needs of the underprivileged. The sensitivity and capability of the UN to respond to human cries has in the past been questioned, especially after the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda where the UN allegedly failed to respond to the crisis, only to admit guilt after the woman, children and the crippled had been reduced to corpses. Ruganda accuses the international body of subverting African resources to the service of wealthier nations, which he regards a painful irony. Through Wak, he laments:

In this little space, this little tattered shack really, in which he(*refugee*) finds himself after crossing(*the border*), there are ten tired, exhausted and hungry bodies slouched in there, waiting for manna from reluctant donors. This tattered shack is all the UNHCR can afford for now. Most attention is focused on Kosovo, and Chechen fighters in Grozny. Dollars have a tendency of flowing towards temperate zones. Who cares for the Hams of the world? (86).

Ruganda feels that African refugees have been neglected, both before and after flight through a programme of rich nations to support dictatorships in Africa so as to rape the continent of its natural resources and minerals. Through Wak, Ruganda castigates the tendency by the exploitative nations to marshal international press against the people. He laments:

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But then, all of a sudden, you get the first rude shock from both the local and foreign press. Headlines alone are enough to tell you their thinking processes. 'MARXIST TYRANT BOOTED OUT BY A POPULAR ILLITERATE SERGEANT - MAJOR'...WE RECOGNIZE STATES NOT INDIVIDUALS'...Congratulatory messages and statements of recognition start pouring in. Even from countries you least expected (82).

In an allusion of Western nation's congratulation of Amin upon his successful coup, Wak reveals what Ruganda considers the motivation behind such a strong anti-people move; "...the regime had the minerals that the West and the East wanted and were willing to cast a blind eye on one buffoon of a nigger trashing other niggers"(82). To Ruganda, the continent's resourcefulness becomes its undoing in the face of foreign manipulation.

#### **4.6 Universal Susceptibility**

In this play, Ruganda delves into the psyche of nations that have experienced relative stability with what appears as a tag of caution: that anyone is vulnerable to political dislocation through exile. He affirms that the situation an exile finds himself in is no way his creation, or a creation of any ordinary citizen; and that any nation is susceptible.

Ruganda illustrates this by introducing a mock play within the play, in a country where everyone thought a political ripple of reasonable magnitude would never occur. Mr. No-fear-No-favour is shown abusing a refugee with disparaging statements like, 'its not our fault your country is in tatters'; 'You grabbing our jobs

and using our women,' 'Get out you dog, am ordering you to leave', 'But one thing I'm definite about is that I will never be a refugee' and so on.(103 – 107). In the midst of such assertions, a loud bang from the fireworks on the streets ironically leaves him with wet pants and sagging bottoms after he's fooled that an unexpected coup of unimaginable proportions has actually occurred in his motherland.

#### **4.7 Shriek of Nerves: The Pains of Return**

In his study of alienation, Yetiv observes that dislocation has a component of return to one's home, one's being, which he equates to a process of self-discovery and enlightenment. It is, therefore, reasonable for us to see 'return' as a critical part of exile. In our analysis of *Shreds*, we look at the meaning of return to the principal character Wak, who has been in exile for a decade, and Odie, who supposedly remained and improved his life amidst the political turbulence.

Ruganda presents Wak's return as largely physical. Having experienced the pains of immigration and exile, he joins forces of liberation to wage war against dictatorship as he had done through public lectures in the university. He recalls the hardships of the liberation movement thus; "Out there in the bush, man: the heat and the rain beating our backs, lions roaring around us. Every one of us asked to tighten our belts for motherland. One was not doing it for gain or gratitude "(117).

His return is therefore portrayed as a sacrifice for the nation that restores the sanity recalled by Kyeyune in *Floods* before the 'ogre' invaded the beautiful island. His

return is thus symbolic of the people's victory against military dictatorship in the country, and by extension the continent.

Ruganda further uses Wak's return to foreground the irony of materialism in the country. Morality and intellect have been trashed by a desire for land, houses and money, or what Nankya in *Floods* refers to as agoromania. Wak for instance discovers that his brother had taken advantage of his flight to convert all family property to his name; and he actually offers to leave them to Odie after all. He says; "And this house, Odie, this house, the Nile Apartments and whatever other properties father owned, keep them...keep them. I have no need for them: (118)

Ruganda confirms that the military dictatorship has no regard for ideas. To Wak for instance, it is an irony that the military regime has endowed the most of the illiterates with much of wealth. The regime banishes the academia to provide looting space to its illiterate collaborators. Upon arriving in his motherland for instance, Wak is shocked at the prosperity of Katalikawe, Ruganda's chosen character to illustrate the vanity of the coup. Wak explains:

Katalikawe, do you know him...The man is stinking rich. He is a millionaire...Big mansion, a fleet of cars, a dairy farm, a poultry farm...five years behind me in school. Always on the tail-end in class, never went beyond form four. But look at him now! A millionaire (55-56).

Ruganda emphasizes this message by showing Odie himself as an academic failure. At the university, he leads a strike, gets expelled and blames his father for not

fighting to place him in another university. Asked why he didn't put the picture of his late father in the papers, he explains:

I'll tell you. The man never loved me, that's why. He always thought I was a disgrace to the family, a bit embarrassment...He never bothered to find out why I was not doing well at the university. Our strike was the last straw. Good excuse for him to wash his hands of me. He could have found a scholarship for me if he had wanted...He chose to do nothing instead (64).

On the other hand, Wak's return is presented as a trauma for Odie, who all along wished his brother had been executed as he had instructed. This trauma is manifested by the symbolic experiment Odie performs at the beginning of the play. From what has happened these ten years since Wak fled, we can now conclude that the insect caged in the glass jar represents an enemy Odie is set to break. His treatment of the termite confirms that he now feels that he has finally arrested an evasive enemy. He says:

Your Highness, did you hear those shots and the big bang? Did you...You almost jerked out of your slumber too, my lord, but remembered just in time that you are royalty. So you simply twitched your antennae in concealed fright and went back to sleep. You are shrewd; I can say that of you (3).

From this we deduce that he regards his insect to have feigned fear when the first shot hit the air, and to him fleeing is tantamount to going back to sleep. The experiment therefore reflects the same accusation Odie has levelled against Wak that his escape was a mere pretence to run into pleasure abroad. His reference to an insect as 'Your Highness,' 'Your majesty' and 'King' all point to mockery of

Wak's cowardice and pride, especially now that 'he is returning with a lot of money' from a foreign country.

Through the experiment, Odie further sees exile as a deliberate move by an individual fuelled by ambition for which exiles should take responsibility. Odie looks as his insect struggles to scale the glass walls of his jar and says:

Perhaps one fall is not enough for you...And down His Majesty came, tumbling down to the base of humiliation, all the way from the tower of ambition. Broken your own back, Your Majesty, have you...Royalty is not for hazardous heights (5).

Through Odie, Ruganda develops a popular misrepresentation that the exiled deserve no clemency for problems they have sourced for themselves. To Odie, there is no need for the insect to try time and again scaling the walls of ambition, for he will have no mercy if things turn sour. He says:

Fold up wings and antennae Whilst there is still time for dignified surrender...Look at the pathetic figure you cut with your insistence on trying and trying again ... Well, at least you have the guts. An iron will and an unbreakable spirit...It will induce the most ingenious torture mechanism out of me (5).

The experiment serves to foreground the lies that Odie manufactures to be able to cope with the return of Wak. Having betrayed him, published his death and taken all family property; having betrayed his own father and his mother dying of lack of medical attention, Odie does not know how to cope when he sees Wak; and from the hypothesis for his experiment, we understand his wish for a final blow to the

efforts of the liberation forces, and probably an early incarceration for Wak. Using strategies reminiscent of the now fallen SRB, he wishes to extract every truth from Wak before exterminating him. He vows; "I will definitely make him break the silence...Incriminate others...expose the ring leaders of this underground movement of theirs...He definitely will talk"(9)

The psychological torment within Odie is confirmed by Stella. She reveals that her brother has been in and out of hospital for a mental condition since Wak arrived in the country some two weeks back. She says; "He needs to see a doctor...He is a psychiatric case, Wak, Can't you see...A little trot to a psychiatrist will do, Odie, darling. It has worked once, hasn't it? It's bound to work again" (125-126)

Through Odie, Ruganda seeks to foreground the psychological festering experienced by collaborators and traitors during the dark days of dictatorship. They now have to integrate the same people they sought to eliminate; sharing out the property they stole and serve long jail terms. The psychic distress Odie undergoes could be compared to that of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. In this Russian novel, Raskolnikov commits a murder on purpose and manages to get away with it, only to torment himself later with the knowledge of his wrongdoing. Ruganda, just like Dostoyevsky, demonstrates the anguish of guilt-ridden men and women, seeing it as a critical element in dislocation.

#### **4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has analyzed the concept of exile and return as presented in *Shreds*. To establish a sequel amongst the texts, we have revisited, as Ruganda himself has done, the concept of violence as a precipitant to flight. Political violence leaves the people divided, and in the texts some collaborate, others flee, and those others who are disinterested in the latter and the former risk their own lives.

In this play, those who maintain a belief in the dignity and inviolability of human life, and manage to flee receive humiliating treatment in the host countries; and when they return to their motherland after the fall of dictatorship, they are treated with hatred and suspicion by those who remained to survive the music. Ironically however, it is those who collaborated, looted and propagated the dictatorship that screams loudest to cover their misdeeds.

Ruganda in *Shreds* commits himself to address the plight of those dislocated, as he castigates the vices of those who partake in vice. Through the situations he creates, Ruganda projects dislocation in both physical as well as psychological domains.

In the next chapter we attempt to re-affirm our earlier assertion that the plays can be read as a historical sequel that betrays Ruganda's own commitment to address the problem of dislocation. We shall then summarize the study, draw conclusions and make recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: TEXTUAL-CONTEXTUAL UNITY, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

### 5.0 Textual-Contextual Thread

As we have shown in the background, it is difficult to study Ruganda's drama by isolating it from its social context because a form of literature that critically explores the human condition has to be evaluated within a given epoch and against the setting of its cultural peculiarities and social situation. Such literature acquires its originality by considering the peculiarity of its socio-political influences.

It is therefore imperative to establish this link if we have to hold on to the affirmation that Ruganda presents dislocation in the three texts from a perspective of personal experience in a given time, or what we have consistently called an autobiographical approach. It will be recalled that he wrote most of his plays in the 1970s and the 1980s. *Covenant* was written in 1973 when the exploits of the Amin regime had not become pronounced, and the country was full of optimism for social and economic prosperity. This time, dislocation is largely seen from a social prism, informed by forces of tradition, ambition and custom.

*The Floods* on the other hand was crafted in 1980, two years after the fall of Amin's military regime. The text provides a radical shift from the cultural dimension of dislocation; of course informed by the dynamism occurring to the country itself on the political plane. From the author's life history, we know that Ruganda escaped into Kenya because of the political reprisals propagated by the military regime, thus

giving this study a biographical bearing. His alleged tribulations in Kenya as an exile are comparable to those of Wak, his protagonist in *Shreds*.

It is therefore prudent to see the texts as closely interwoven with each other to form one connected story, despite the fact that each one constitutes a unified and self-contained structure. Among the connecting features may be the incidents, which form a temporal sequence, such that the three may be related in terms of beginning, middle and end. There is also unity in the domain of action and tone of presentation for the broad concept of dislocation yields, on the part of his characters, converging resolutions that simply betray the playwright's vision and social commitment. We find the texts forming a weave of space and time relationship because the themes explored delve not merely on the so-called African experience, but also into the social practice and philosophy of the East African society.

### **5.1 Summary**

✓ Rene Wellek<sup>19</sup> reckons that a literary work is not a simple object, but rather a complex organization of stratified character with multiple meanings and relationships. In this study we have attempted to analyze how Ruganda presents dislocation in *Covenant, Floods and Shreds* by establishing the historical as well as the philosophical foundations upon which the theme may be conceptualized, establishing connections between variables that make up dislocation.

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<sup>19</sup> *History of Modern criticism*. 3.

We have analyzed the concept of alienation in *Covenant*, Political causes of dislocation in *Floods* and exile in *Shreds*. In *Covenant*, we have established that dislocation results from non compliance to social demands that judge an individual against a framework of his own customs. It has also emerged that a character runs away from home with a hope of living a better life outside society, and that this often leads to disillusionment and a desire to return home. Even then, the individual finds that society does not welcome him back, leaving him psychologically removed from his community.

In *Floods*, we have established that dislocation is caused by political violence that drive people away from home in search of safety, or in obedience of the domineering, exploitative voice of the political class. Specifically, we have found out that political violence is motivated by an ingrained tendency by the ruling class to dispossess, and that the agents of violence are motivated by sheer sycophancy which drives them into killing fellow humans; and which in turn leaves them in trauma.

We have established that exile in *Shreds* is a product of the violence witnessed in *Floods*. Ruganda has presented the plight of refugees, individuals who experience dislocation. In the definition of the text, a refugee is that fellow who is both physically and psychologically disjointed from his community by forces beyond his control. His protagonist in *Shreds* is a character that has moved from moments of his country's relative stability to political reprisals that drive him to exile, and

thereafter returns to experience the pain of the once peaceful home. Through him, we have been led to the misery of dislocation, and an affirmation that each one of us is susceptible to the experience. The text is however not devoid of a moral: that political dictatorships have no future in Africa. This message is Ruganda's concern, for all atrocities are eventually castigated through punishment.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

From *Covenant* to *Shreds*, inscriptions of dislocation through the constituents we have isolated may be the most recurrent motifs, but these motifs do not merely occur as themes to be explored; rather they constitute an individual's situation which consequently influences his attitudes and outlook to life. However, the action Ruganda creates is closely interwoven with identifiable socio-political crises. What he describes helps in giving orientation to the conflict and enhancing his attitudes and outlook.

The theme of dislocation may be broad and sensitive, and Ruganda's astuteness in handling it is not in question. His writing records the working of a mind both incisive and subtle, as well as profound, socially responsible sensitivity; in his engagement with the theme of dislocation from the alienation seen in *Covenant* to the exile we see in *Floods*. In the sequel he architectures, there is no difficulty in profiling the complex, intertwined concepts of dislocation. He successfully shows how the arduousness of dislocation might be understood, in the deeply considered nature of his expression of ideas and experiences he relates.

The characters Ruganda creates in each of the three plays may be few, but truly he gorges powerfully into the social ills of his epoch, so that the catharsis he aspires for brings with it a therapeutic effect on the ills inflicted on human beings in the process of living. Because of this, his drama lacks spectators, everyone becomes a participant; the walls of the stage dissolves as one reads , and in its place is the open stage, the space of life, which is life itself.

### ***5.3 Recommendations for further study***

We have tried to explore dislocation as Ruganda constructs it in his plays, but we believe that this is not all that can be said about alienation, political causations of dislocation and exile. These are merely categorizations we have constructed to be able to analyze the plays, therefore there is need to identify other suitable categorizations that may address dislocation within the East African experience. There is also need for further research on other genres of East African origin by other writers to establish whether there are generic variations in presenting similar experiences.

There is also need for comparative studies between drama from the East African region and other areas. This will serve the purpose of establishing how experiences of different regions influence approaches in creative material.

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Studies should be done on how Ruganda communicates with his largely illiterate population in the region by the use of the English language; itself a foreign language to the majority of his audience. There is need to establish how he manages to reach his audience if ever he so does.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Refugees on flight

Following the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, an estimated 250,000 Rwandans swept into Tanzania over a period of 24 hours. (UNHCR/P. MOUMTZIS/1994)



Courtesy of The State of World's Refugees. UNHCR Report - 2000

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DN. Thu. Feb. 28, 2008

# Why reporting on refugees in Uganda is risky

Families uncertain on how neighbours will receive them and how they'll relate

# Traumatized Sudan refugees take shelter in Chad's desert

DN Sat. March 8, 2008

BRIEFLY  
CHIKWAWA, MALAWI  
Thousands displaced by floods in Malawi

# Uganda rebels say they are not in rush for deal

DN. Thu. Feb. 28, 2008

SURVEY

# 1.7m displaced back in Sudan

Sat. Novem, Oct. 25, 2008

POLITICS

Refugees form a part of the four million who fled their homes during years of war

# Refugees fear returning to their homes

DISPLACEMENT I