

Womanly Iconoclasm versus Intransigence: Tragic Realism in the Enunciation of Rebeka Njau's Drama: A Case Study of "The Scar"

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Abstract

Every writer has his or her way of looking at various realities. Tragedy can also be a vision of life, one shared by most Western cultures and having its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Despite the fact that theoretical approaches on tragedy can be traced as far back as the days of Aristotle, the term tragic realism came much later. This term was a coinage of Auerbach Erich who lived between 1892 -1957. Tragic realism portrays the irreparable loss of the human, either actual or possible in the lives of its characters. Yet, unlike the Classical, Medieval and Shakespearean tragedies; it operates with a guiding idea of proximity in content to the contemporary social life. Tragic realism unlike classical tragedy is realistic in the sense that it is not built on antique mythology. Aristotle suggested that it was much better for a playwright in choosing a subject, to look to myth and a fantasized reality than to society, history and factual reality. Tragic realism attempts to reflect hard realities of human life. However, we should resist the temptation to discuss it as if it is real life. Realism alludes to works that seek to provide a convincing illusion of life as we normally think of it. A realistic work looks like a clear window on the world where the readers become fully involved in the characters and events. The tragic lies in the irreparable loss occasioned by the experience the hero has undergone. Many people have come to mistake tragedy with a scene where the main character meets his or her death ultimately. In modern tragedy the loss lies not in the character or hero but in the events themselves. William Raymond aptly remarks in *Modern Tragedy* that tragedy is not what happens to the hero. The ordinary tragic action is what occurs through the hero. Thus, the tragic is embedded in the web of social relationships of which the hero is the focal point. It is in this regard that this paper examines Rebeka Njau's play "The Scar"; a tragedy that contravenes most conventions of the traditional tragedy. Not only is the tragic figure a woman (in traditional tragedy, the character was inevitably a man), but also an ordinary woman (not high stationed like the tragic characters of the classical tragedy). That Rebeka Njau puts women centre stage in the whole drama, this paper endeavours to dissect the underlying themes relayed through the plethora of female characters enmeshed in the subverted tragic form.

Introduction

In order to apprehend the status of women as depicted in not only Njau's works but also other artistic writings, it is imperative to understand theories which contributed to the inferiorization of the woman. Traditionally there have been numerous sources which were used to legitimize the dehumanization of the woman and the superiorization of the male throughout the ages. Basically, these sources could be put into four major categories. First, the justification for patriarchal rule is biological in that it emphasizes the greater physical strength of the male animal. One of the earliest and most authoritative biological rationalizations emanates from Aristotle (Fifth century B.C), who unlike his predecessor and teacher Plato, had a different position about the subject of male domination and female subjugation.

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At the very outset, Aristotle's **Politics** states that the world is a hierarchy composed of ruling and ruled elements and that the female gender fits naturally in the latter category. Aristotle asserted that women lack the crucial quality necessary for ruling, the deliberative or rational faculty. Women like children and slaves, can achieve full goodness and virtue in their lives only by union with the 'naturally ruling element' which is male. The male is 'naturally fitter to command than the female and women will benefit most by being subject to male 'royal' authority. Only thus can they attain the limited degree of virtue of which they are capable. Aristotle's view of male ruler-ship springs from a purely biological foundation. From his study of the animal world, he concluded that the female had no other role in the generation of children than to serve as the vehicle or incubator in which was nourished the germ of life, the sperm entrusted to her by the male; which was viewed as the core of life-propagation. In **The Generation of Animals**, Aristotle claims that while a woman only provides the matter for the child's body, the father provides the soul. The male principle represents form, motion and activity while the female is equated with matter and potentiality. The superior principle is the male and thus the offspring is deficient in whatever faculty the male principle lacks. As Aristotle puts it: "We should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature" (Book I Chpt 20). Hippocrates, another classical thinker and George Hegel, a medieval Philosopher, held a similar view of male and female biology, declaring that there were two kinds of seed: weaker – female and stronger – male. Though modern science has discredited such views and it is now recognized that in most species males and females co-operate equally in reproduction, other biological arguments continue to support the patriarchal status quo. The central argument used to warrant male rule has no doubt been the male's greater strength and consequent 'natural' superiority.

Plato was one of the first and, ironically, also one of the last thinkers until well into this century, to suggest that biology was not a sufficient basis for role differentiation. Plato wrote **The Republic** at a time of upheaval when war was being waged between Athens and Sparta. The defeat of Athens by its supposedly less civilized neighbour, Sparta in the Peloponnesian war led to debates on women's nature. This is because apparently the victor in the war was a country known for its liberated treatment of women. Using animal imagery in a positive way thus, Plato recommends in **The Republic**, Book V, that human beings might profitably emulate the dogs among whom the females do not simply bear and suckle puppies but hunt and guard as well. Pushing his argument to its logical conclusion, Plato states that if the difference between the sexes consists only in women bearing and men begetting children, then both sexes should receive an equal education designed to train them for the same roles. Plato argues for the total political and sexual equality of women, advocating that they be members of his highest class, the guardians, those who rule and fight, activities that are still considered the most masculine of preserves. Plato is willing to implement his theory with a system of child care that alone is able to free women to be philosophers and soldiers. But Plato also has his blemish – his plan has nothing to do with the individual and everything to do with the state. Plato is only concerned about what the state wants of its citizens rather than what each individual person desires for his or her own well-being. A second justification for patriarchal rule has been cultural and anthropological.

Anthropologists argue that, primitive societies, in the process of evolving towards civilization, moved away from matriarchy towards patriarchy, and anthropological evidence demonstrates the universality of the patriarchal family. The sexual power of the patriarch was based on the widely accepted view that women were only created to reproduce. The female role was to perpetuate the male line and, by extension, his tribe and race. Sex within the family to propagate the male line was immensely esteemed and even sanctified. Illicit sexual activity, particularly by women, was a grave crime deserving the noose, the scaffold or whatever form of capital punishment. Female adultery was anathema because it threatened the patriarchal family. If women had the right to select sexual partners at will, the male power-structure would tumble. Adultery clouded the purity of the family, name, property rights, and titles – all the prerogatives transmitted by fathers to their heirs. This was an intolerable threat to the male power-structure. Accordingly, women were kept under tight social controls ranging from Harem and Purdah to banishment, economic dependence and other more subtle psychological constraints. Thirdly, changes in the mode of production and distribution, particularly the shift from communal to private property are used to explain patriarchal developments. Property of all kinds in the new system was in the hands of male heads of households. Women were excluded from ownership and disposal of property. Instead, women were considered part of the property of man. Lastly, in most societies all over the world, religious authority has been cited as incontrovertible proof of the rightness and inevitability of male rule. Holy writs have always been taken to be God-inspired and thus unquestionable.

The tenets of all major religions reflect the attitudes and moral values of the male priests and scribes who enunciated them. Patriarchy is evident throughout the Old Testament, beginning with the creation story. The Bible indicates that God first created man. Creating the woman was simply an afterthought. Superiority of man is thus established from the very commencement of the Bible. Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions share the view that woman with her moral imperfections and weak virtues was solely responsible for the fall of man and each of these religions continue to perceive women, the progeny of Eve, as a source of danger. Women, sex and sin are interconnected in religious teachings. The scriptures propagate that due to woman's sin man's insubordination of her was then approved by God: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children: and thy desire shall be thy husband and he shall rule over thee.

(Genesis 3:16)

Women were regarded unclean and impure in Old Testament days, refused entry into the holy places of the temple, and denied participation in religious rites. The emphasis was on female chastity and fruitfulness; women could best fulfill themselves as dutiful wives and loving mothers. Religion rationalized and legitimized patriarchal practices already well established in economic, social structures and in political systems. The heritage of beliefs discussed continues to provide a rationale for the subordination of women even in the contemporary world.

The Play "The Scar"

In this play Njau looks at the way certain traditions such as female circumcision have continued to make the woman play a subservient role due to the underlying negative implications of such practices. Njau shows how some women are rising up and rejecting traditions that are meant to inferiorise them. The writer thus reflects on an era when women are demanding to be heard and are asking for fair play in all facets. Njau also addresses other evils perpetrated by men against women such as rape. Njau reflects on the adverse psychological effects rape has on the victims concerned. Centre-stage in this play is Mariana, a revolutionary woman in her early thirties who is a community worker and a leader of repute. Mariana has organized the youthful women of the village of Kanyariri into a club in a bid to educate them on how to evade the traditions that dehumanize their lot. She is committed to the emancipation of the younger generation of women from the suppressive forms of meaningless Gikuyu traditional practices. As the play commences, it is all triumph for Mariana. She has amassed a reasonable following. She is particularly opposed to the practices of female circumcision and she assists young girls such as Mbui to escape this retrogressive and empty custom.

Despite the protest lodged by the elderly obdurate women of the village, the guardians and conservators of traditions who perceive not virtue but abomination in this revolution, Mariana intrepidly succeeds in her venture. But just when she is at the peak of her noble enterprise, Pastor Yohana, Mariana's penitent boy friend of her teenage days comes into the scene. Not only having received salvation but also having been a pastor, Yohana comes to put things right between him and Mariana and unburden his conscience. In spite of Mariana's vituperations and protestations, Yohana insists on publicity confessing his transgressions notwithstanding the damage it would do to Mariana's reputation and her position. Yohana insists on disclosing his 'misdemeanours' of yesteryears ignorant of the gravity of his sins as he is unconscious that when he raped Mariana, she conceived. On hearing that there was a child, a daughter whom he had met but whom he was unenlightened was his progeny, in overwhelming bewilderment, Yohana dashes to the church and confesses his cardinal transgression to the congregation, parading the daughter to all so that they may believe. The avowal marks a turning point in Mariana's life for the intransigent elderly women who were opposed to her iconoclastic 'anti-tradition' enterprises have a reason to hit back at her. Mariana loses her respect. She cannot further pursue her noble cause with such a besmirched reputation.

The Heroine and Iconoclasm; the African Woman and Tradition

Mariana is a woman who is really dedicated to the cause of perceiving her lot jump over the fence of tradition. She is committed to seeing girls unchain themselves from traditions that demean them such as circumcision. Mariana gains a lot of popularity and support from the girls who esteem her and trust in her every word. She organizes for the escape of young girls who did not desire to participate in the initiation ceremony. Such a girl is Mbui, Nai's daughter. In fact, as a women's leader, Mariana's preoccupation is the freeing of women from what she thinks are irrelevant customs. Her task is indeed a herculean one as some of the traditions such as female circumcision or the kitchen-role played by women were not only so much ingrained in the society but were also practiced world-wide. For instance, in Africa, female circumcision was traditionally practiced by the Galla of Ethiopia, among the Somali, among several groups in Tanzania, Kenya, northern Sudan, Egypt and some countries in West Africa (Murray, 1974).

In Kenya, female circumcision was practiced among the Gusii, Kuria, Maasai, Akamba, Ameru, Agikuyu and Aembu among others. Where the practice was existent, female circumcision was highly esteemed. Generally, circumcision for both boys and girls had societal significance. Firstly it qualified one to graduate from childhood to adulthood. No matter how old or big one was, one was looked at contemptuously and viewed as a child if he or she was still uncircumcised. There are other East African playwrights who have written on the subject of female circumcision. These writers include Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Austin Bukenya. In Bukenya's *The Bride* for instance, Namvua is disregarded by her circumcised peers such as Mtuta simply because she is uncircumcised. As a foreigner, Namvua could not be initiated with her age-mates; something which condemned her to her 'eternal childhood'. The operation symbolized separation from childhood and was paralleled to the cutting of the umbilical cord when a child was born (Mbiti 1969: 122 – 123). Thus before circumcision, boys and girls were given lessons and instructions on what the society demanded of them after attainment of adulthood. In other words, they were well coached in the onus of an adult male and female respectively. The second significance was that of acceptance in the society. The first and second factors were closely knitted together. When a man or woman was accepted as a socially mature adult, he or she had to be taken or accepted in her society. The first significant consideration was that only the initiated could hold responsible positions in the society. At the termination of the initiation ritual, one was already introduced to one's ancestral spirits. Whereas men were permitted to hold such positions as key military posts, eldership in the elder's council, *inter alia*, women could join the women's council. The initiated woman was also allowed to marry and own her property among the Agikuyu. Several myths were created and disseminated among the Agikuyu in rationalization of female circumcision. One; it was strongly held that an uncircumcised woman could not bring forth children; whereas procreation was crucial in propagating the tribe. The initiated woman did not only prove her fertility biologically but also portrayed her participation in propagating the tribe.

It was believed that if an uncircumcised woman managed to get children, they would all be retarded either mentally or physically. Circumcision was perceived as imperative for successful child-bearing. The living evidence that an uncircumcised woman could bear not just children but healthy ones notwithstanding, the Agikuyu still regarded an uncircumcised woman as immature, a social anomaly and unable to participate fully in adult relationships. The deep-rootedness of this custom which has yet to be totally eradicated even after more than a hundred years of exposure to Western education and Christian teaching is reflected in the reluctance of people to discard it. Circumcision was esteemed among the Agikuyu such that parents of a boy who married an uncircumcised girl would refuse to be re-incarnated through their grandchildren, even though the Agikuyu naming ceremony involves giving the first born son the name of his paternal grandfather and the first daughter that of her paternal grandmother. This way, the parents put an imprecation on their son for breaching their norms by marrying an uncircumcised girl. The society also subjected the uncircumcised woman to general abuse. Girls were socialized to believe in the falsehood that uncircumcised women had a certain mark of unpalatable behaviour. That they remained less than mature, were unable to cope with their female peers, were disrespectful of elders, uncouth, in a nutshell, an uncircumcised woman does not observe the mature woman's duty and "does not observe the mature woman's code of behavior in manners, modesty, respect towards seniors and proper respect towards juniors" (Murray, p. 348).

By advocating the discarding of female circumcision, Mariana is therefore tampering with one of the deepest-felt customs embedded in the complex of emotions and attitudes. Muthoni, in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* is a further illustration on how female circumcision was esteemed. Muthoni's insistence on being circumcised, her background notwithstanding, is a remarkable demonstration on how through grinding incessant indoctrination, women themselves came to believe in circumcision. Muthoni rejects her father's way of life at home and runs away to be a rebel. She rejects her roots, her upbringing and decides to embrace the Agikuyu traditional customs. That female circumcision was regarded highly even by women themselves such as Muthoni in *The River Between* and the girls of the Albino group in *The Bride* who did not consider themselves women but as 'girls' until they were initiated, then Mariana comes out as an iconoclast. An uncircumcised girl was contemptuously referred to as 'Kirigu' among the Agikuyu while the circumcised girl was respectably called 'Muiritu' or plurally, 'Airitu'. 'Kirigu' had contemptuous connotations just like the term 'Kihii' for an uncircumcised boy. Mariana has realized that such customs as female circumcision are ill-conceived and are only meant to inferiorize the woman ceaselessly.

Female circumcision is condescending in the sense that by cutting the clitoris it was expected that the woman's sexual instincts would not be provoked easily - as if by implication, without circumcision, the woman would be emotionally untrammelled free, controlled by her 'congenital' overriding sexual urges. This may explain a case of some communities in Africa where women were circumcised while men were not. Hay (1964) argues that man has been suffering from overwhelming apprehension which compels him to try and curtail the freedom of the woman. Hay attributes man's anxiety as emanating from a recognition rightly or wrongly that a woman's sexual performance was limitless compared to his own; thus man has been enveloped in disquietude, reels with misgiving because of the belief that she may turn to other potent males. Such disquietude gives rise to fanatical desires as that of seeking ways of controlling woman's sexual activity. According to Hay, this fretfulness accounted for the fact that the perfidious woman was made a stereotype while the disloyal man was esteemed. Indeed, this could elucidate on the phenomenon of female circumcision. It is simply a brain-child of patriarchy with condescending implications. Rebeka Njau thus feels that such atrocious customs as female circumcision (now christened 'Female Genital Mutilation' – FGM) are not only antiquated but ill-intended and therefore should be discarded. Furthermore, whereas the whole initiation of both sexes in Agikuyu traditional society was an elaborate religio-initiatory rite within which the surgical operation was just one of the many aspects, when Mariana talks of a physical operation being as 'empty as a cave', it may imply that at that particular period of time, as a public ritual, circumcision had evanesced, leaving only the residue of the physical operation; hence its meaninglessness. Jomo Kenyatta indicates that 'Maambura' (the religion- initiatory rite) traditionally harboured prodigious educational, social, moral and other implications diverse from the operation itself. 'Maambura' was educational in all aspects and was carried out ceremonially. Hence, before the surgical operation, a lot of formal education was carried out by experienced people. Women who belonged to the 'Women's council' ('Ndundu ya Atumia') educated girls on marriage and generally all their duties and obligations to the society. The Play "**The Scar**" is reflective of a time when the Christian Missionaries Society (C.M.S) organized a major campaign against female circumcision, a move that made this custom be stopped by some Kikuyus while those obdurate ones who still preferred to practice it did that in the form of a private ceremony with little or no ritual. The traditional context within which the custom was practiced thus ceased to be and what remained of the whole rite was only the physical operation. That only the surgical operation remained rendered initiation worthless since Kenyatta claims that what was more valuable was the initiation process itself where the neophytes were taught their norms and how to become responsible adults.

During Mariana's time thus, even disregarding the bestiality inherent in the whole exercise of clitoridectomy, the whole thing is rendered irrelevant since the fundamental social functions concomitant with that operation could not be applied to the neophytes. The whole custom had been overtaken by time. Using Mariana to reflect her vision, Njau thus espouses a different form of initiation, one that would make women tough physically, mentally and psychologically, an initiation "that will make no man or even woman shake them"(25). The type of initiation envisioned by Njau would relieve the young women of all the burdens, yokes and superstitions which tradition has used to harness them through the past. Mariana tells the elderly women off: This is a new land; it is not the land of your birth. The old has gone with its teachings. The young girls must learn new things; they must receive something deeper ... something to uplift them, something to raise their drooping heads. A 'physical operation' is as empty as a cave. It is meaningless. They must go through a different initiation that will make no man or even women like you shake them.(25)

Due to her iconoclastic ideas, Mariana is perceived by the elderly intransigent women and even men such as Erasto, as a disseminator of rotten seeds. She is viewed as a cultural renegade, a dubious character and a trouble-maker who would like to change girls into 'men'. She is perceived as notorious spinster who has failed to get a husband and children for herself and is therefore maimed. To the conservative women, Mariana is a putrifier who is bent on enticing their daughters to forgo marriage.

First woman: What does an unmarried woman like you know to teach others?

Second woman: You have taught our girls to talk and laugh and argue with Men

Do you want them to remain unmarried like you (25)

These elderly women have been socialized to believe that for a woman to be respected, she has to be married. Such an attitude is ingrained even in the psyche of the modern people.

If a woman is unmarried, society does not spare to call her a whore yet a man can stay without a partner for as long as he wishes and still be considered upright even where he gratifies his sexual urges by lecherously gallivanting and veritably messing around with not just one woman but a chain of them, some of who might even be other men's spouses or even minors worth to be his daughters. Njau scoffs at the double-standards employed in our judgment of the two sexes. In patriarchal societies, women have been socialized to believe that some behaviour is not meant to be exhibited by females in public whereas it is acceptable with regard to men. In the traditional African society, some meals were even taboo for women. Such traditions are the progeny of man's apprehension of woman's potential which might threaten his position and overriding selfishness. For instance in my community (Samia), women were expected to eat very little in public especially when guests were around. Alternatively, they would eat nothing until the guests had left. Eating little was viewed to be womanly whereas over-eating was extolled where men were concerned. It was argued that to be strong, a man had to eat well. It is as if women had 'no business' getting strong. Such an attitude explains why when Mariana's girls attend a meat party, they are accused of eating as if they had never seen meat before and behaving in front of men in an unwomanly manner. But Mariana asserts that times have changed and thus humanity should also change with the times. A woman is just as human as a man. What, hence, makes a woman's appetite different from that of man? What, therefore, makes a woman's appetite different from that of man? Antiquated customs should be left to die and interred. Mariana insists that it is women, who can liberate themselves from such hideous, irrelevant, gratuitous traditions:

Women must be free to eat, talk and walk
 Freely. Who will free us except ourselves?
 Do you want to remain in bondage forever? Do you want to die a slave of man? (26).

Rather than waste their time trying to accomplish such irrelevancies as initiation or marriage just for the sake of it even where the marriage is devoid of fulfillment and bliss, through Mariana, Njau avers that women should preoccupy themselves with progressive enterprises that will ameliorate their lot. The first step towards self improvement will be for the women to come together and form clubs or organizations such as the one Mariana heads. From there, 'Maendeleo' leaders should teach the women on how to improve both their socio-economic and socio-cultural status. In her judiciousness, Mariana appreciates that the success of the women's wish of advancing socio-economically will have to start from improvement of their socio-cultural status. This is because, as long as women believe that their purpose in this world is just to procreate and be the beasts-of-burden for men, then the dream of ameliorating their individual socio-economic status will come to naught. Mariana asserts that it is high time women realized that they were not created to play the part of foolish lackeys, but rather, to be equal partners of men. Women have been over-burdened in this era of patriarchy which is favourably disposed towards the male gender. All the challenging and menial domestic chores have been reserved for women. Women's life is but a life of toil. They dig the farms, look after children, rear the animals in the homestead, fetch water, fire-wood and cook. Their days are occupied with incessant laborious duties. As a defender of the women folk, Njau feels that the time has come when women should overcome the pusillanimity incalculated in them through patriarchy to their own detriment, and assert themselves. Women should make an upfront struggle for their rights. Njau desires a revolution of equality. Mariana says:

I want them to free themselves from
 Slavery; I want them to respect their bodies and minds.
 I want them to break away the chains that have so long bound them. (25)

Mariana realizes that changing the attitude of women will be a woefully arduous enterprise because women have been indoctrinated for too long to accept their subordinate position: "Their joy is in the load, the hoe and the cooking pot" (27). They have been nurtured on patriarchal falsehoods throughout their lives such that they have even come to worship the untruths. They believe in these lies. The first woman tells Mariana:

Do you want them to be like men?
 Show me one man who can stand a woman who keeps arguing with him. Don't you know that a woman with a hot tongue dies unawares like a man-eating lion?
 Leave these girls to grow like their mothers
 Don't put into their heads privileges denied to them by God. (25)

The womankind wallows in dire fatalism. The elderly women believe that God decreed their subordinate place in the world. In this regard, the elderly women see Mariana as an infertile, unmarried woman who should have nothing to do with the girls as she is 'ignorant' of the pains of bringing forth a child. Mariana therefore knows that the only way to achieve her aim of changing the attitude of women, she has to start with the youths in the wisdom of folding a fish while it is still moist, raw and flexible ('samaki mkunje angali mbichi' – a Swahili saying that means 'fold the fish while it is still fresh'). She has to educate the girls on new ways before they get firmly rooted in the antediluvian traditions. The old people have been socialized in outmoded customs, are dead-dry in them and cannot be folded. Mariana decries some illogical customs which dictate that the woman should handle herself in a defined manner such as: eating in a particular way, talking in a certain manner, walking in a defined manner, in defined places and with particular company. Women must be true to their individuality and autonomy and must enjoy their inalienable liberties such as the freedom to eat, talk and walk freely. On marriage, Njau espouses a society where women do not just get married for the sake of fulfilling tradition which expects a woman to be married on attaining a certain age. Marriage has become the worst prison for females where their rights are curtailed with impunity and they are subjected to all kinds of brutality. Women who would wish to be married should exercise patience, confidence and ample circumspection and marry men worthy of them: men who will respect who they are. But such men, Mariana asserts, are as rare as church mice for men have haughtily imposed themselves onto a pedestal which is only comparable to God's. They never humble themselves before women. When they do so, it is out of sheer hypocrisy.

Believing so much in myths that were created in order to rationalize and safeguard a patriarchal system, men have become too hoity-toity to treat their spouses as equal partners. With such an appalling attitude towards women, marriage has become no better than a living grave. Mariana insists that marriage should not be conditional for women. Just as men, women should have the right to decide whether to get married or lead a celibate life. Women should only plunge into marriage if they envisage attaining happiness and self-fulfillment.

Mariana has come to learn of the mistreatment of women by men through experience. Having had a boyfriend who deceived her that he loved her dearly then dumped her after forcing her into a situation which resulted in pregnancy, Mariana no longer trusts men. She perceives the male gender as a lot that exploits the biological nature of women merely to gratify their lust. Mariana's tragic end is piteous since it derives from misdeeds perpetrated unwillingly during her youth. The end of Mariana's career is brought by pastor Yohana's blatant avowal. Albeit Mariana experiences difficulties in trying to redeem the youthful girls from the manacles of archaic traditions, she does manage to achieve partial triumph and establishes a respectable reputation until pastor Yohana appears. The latter is the harbinger of doom who brings about a reversal of fortunes. With Yohana's confession, Mariana's world is shattered. She loses esteem among her numerous followers. The termination of Mariana's career is tragic. It comes as a shock to the audience of the drama. The phantasmagorical exposition itself leaves us unbelievably flummoxed albeit the brevity of the play necessitates a rather artificial exposition. That no allusion is initially made to the fact that Mariana was once a victim of not only defilement but also unwanted pregnancy gives the exposition colossal impact. It makes this denouement very effective. This, compounded by pastor Yohana's 'Sophoclic' proximity to somebody with whom he shares consanguinity (the daughter sired through rape of Mariana) yet ignorance of his kin is indeed cathartic as the enigmatic exposition elevates our pent up emotions to the utmost level.

With the eventual descent but repentance and mending of broken fences, our emotions revert to the anti-climatic level, purged, even though we still empathize with the catastrophic annihilation of Mariana's career. Mariana's tragic end comes at the peak of her career. When the truth about her background surfaces, we sympathize with her especially when it becomes apparently clear that a man had simply taken advantage of her. Although Mariana had tried to forget about the issue such that she had given out her daughter to a friend to grow up in secret; the secret of her youth is unveiled when Pastor Yohana comes into the scene. The 'spirit of God' purportedly moves Yohana into unmasking his own transgression. But since in revealing his atrocities pastor Yohana has also to uncover Mariana's, her blemished past is put bare, her 'scar' is wounded afresh. Disaster thus overtakes this heroine despite her noble defiance of fate. Despite the fact that Mariana and Yohana have prospered in their different capacities, they cannot elude the repercussions of their misdeed of yesteryears. Mariana's flaw was that she was too believing during her youth, something that prompted her boyfriend to take advantage of her. But then, is Mariana to be blamed for trusting her boyfriend too much? Yohana is surely to blame for capitalizing on her overwhelming love for him. Njau's world, how-be-it, does not allow depravity to go uncovered.

Subsequently, although Mariana gives out her daughter to grow up in secret lest her (Mariana's) sins be exposed, she cannot run away from reality. Yohana might have been the villainous defiler. Nonetheless, in exposing his sins, Mariana also has to be mentioned, her innocence disregarding. Like Gaciru and Karuga, In Rebeka Njau's other text *Ripples in the Pool*, Mariana suffers not because of personal reasons but societal reasons. All the three characters are engulfed in the atrocities of the world such that they are also afflicted with the guilty. The reversal of fortunes on Mariana's part starts when Yohana appears. Yohana is an emissary of bad news. Mariana's friend Katarina, under whose custody Mariana's daughter was placed, is deceased. That Mariana has lost her daughter's foster mother is not enough, Yohana is out to unfurl her peccadillo. With Yohana's confession, Mariana has to relinquish her leadership role because the women she leads would no longer have much faith in her as they did initially. Mariana's reversal of fortunes thus comes with the denouncement when Yohana appears. When Yohana had raped Mariana, she had suffered psychologically. However, with time, she had learnt how to live with this psychological scar as long as she did not get reminders of her dark past. With the coming of Yohana and his burning desire to settle things between him and Mariana, then the latter's scar is reopened as what she had all along been dreading - a reminder of her past, ensues. With Yohana's avowal, Mariana cannot hide her scar any more. She realizes that she cannot proceed with the battle of freeing the womankind from the bondage of tradition because she will no longer be taken seriously:

MARIANA: My life has been a Dream;

I have been floating in the air and clinging to things like a bat; but now I'm down, my wings are broken; I can float no more. (28).

Conclusion

Mariana's tragic end notwithstanding, she comes out as a true iconoclast. Mariana desires to change her fellow women. She endeavours to elevate them both socio-economically and socio-culturally. Dissimilar to Selina in *Ripple in the Pool*, Mariana is not self-centred. What is of utmost importance in her mind is how to change her lot rather than her individual position. That is the essence of candid iconoclasm. Like the Albino group in Bukenya's *The Bride*, candid iconoclasm is all-encompassing. Like the 'rika' of the Albino, Mariana cherishes changes that will push the whole society forward. The Albino group rejects retrogressive traditions. The older generation desires to mould them as they would wish but these youths want to go another way. Consequently, there is conflict as each group tries to assert itself. People of the plains and those of the hills had fought each other for a protracted period of time. Indeed, each area's people had been brought up to consider the other group as not only different but hostile and were socialized into regarding them as such. The people of the plains are inward-looking and seem incapable of accepting others wholly. Namvua is a daughter of a man who used to live in the hills but moved to the plains and married there. How-be- it, Namvua is still considered a foreigner and is not initiated with the others. That should have been something to quarrel over with the parents. The children should be left free to integrate with the others and there should not be a problem as to Namvua getting initiated with the others. There is veritably certain parochialism in the village which labels people from the hills strangers.

Although Namvua's father has always identified himself with people of the plains to the extent that he fights for this community when it is besieged by strangers, he is still not accepted. Bukenya thus criticizes society for having double standards. The Albino group is reflected as a group which is out to break the antiquated cultural icons such as that of not accepting Namvua simply because her father was a foreigner, or that of fighting any strangers simply because they come from a different community. The Albino 'rika' accept Namvua as one of their own and refuse to kill innocent people. As a 'stranger,' Namvua is not expected to be married to any man of the plains since she is also uncircumcised. Nonetheless, Lekindo goes against the norms and falls in love with her, eventually marrying her. While the Albino age-group desires to cast off all obsolete traditions, the elderly people want these to continue. Like the elderly women who trouble Mariana, such a scenario is not unusual since as each group sets to fight, there is always some kind of rigidity. Both *The Scar* and *The Bride* raise the question: To what extent should the new generation reject the old and bring new ideas and to what extent should they accept old traditions? In both dramas, the playwrights covertly and overtly profess that not everything in the traditional African society was rosy. Life was not entirely ideal. We should look at traditional Africa, appreciating its beauty as well as its problems.

We should not be blinded by our nationalism into turning a blind eye to what was happening in those societies and we should be firm enough to reject what is not good for us. Like Bukenya, Njau envisages a society where humanity has the right to shape both individual and collective destinies without feeling nailed down to tradition but at the same time has a choice to accept what is applicable to people's lives. The two playwrights also espouse flexibility - recognizing the place of change in history and consciously breaching those traditions that are not applicable to the modern life. The two playwrights denigrate rigidity. An intransigent society would stagnate and the one that embraces change would flourish. The culture of our people is to be accepted on merit and what does not merit ought to be discarded. After all, culture is meant to serve man and not vice-versa. Boas (1951), defines culture as embracing all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individuals as affected by the habits of the community in which he lives and the products of human activities as conditioned by these customs. Firth defines culture thus: If ... society is taken to be an organized set of individuals with a given way of life, culture is that way of life. If society is taken to be an aggregate of social relations, then culture is the content of those relations. Society emphasizes the human component, the aggregate of the people and the relations between them. Culture emphasizes the human component, the aggregate of the people and the relations between them. Culture emphasizes the component of accumulated resources, immaterial as well as material which the people inherit, employ, transmit, add to, and transmit. Having substance, if in part only ideational, this component acts as a regulator to action from the behavioural aspect, culture is all learned behavior... It is necessary as an incentive to action. (27).

A factor inherently clear in the above references is consensus on culture as a conditioned pattern. Culture was created by man in order to regulate him. As a patterned behaviour, culture can be changed to commensurate with the needs of a particular time. Culture is design for living. Just as with a design for a house, garden or a dress, *inter alia*, culture has only a programmatic and conceptual existence which should tally with the needs and tastes of the time. Subsequently, culture has also to change in order to suit different times. Nonetheless, continuity and change have to be harmonized. The new generations like that of Mariana and her girls and the Albino age group, respectively, therefore, have a task of maintaining a certain type of continuity while implementing indispensable transformation. Mariana's tragedy is not a product of wickedness on her part but emanates from the fact that she is irrevocably harnessed to an iniquity perpetrated by someone else – Yohana. This tragedy should therefore not be viewed with pessimism. Heralding an arduous move of emancipating the woman, Mariana is bound to encounter great difficulties as an iconoclast, but with more women emulating her, there is bound to be victory. Most revolutionary iconoclasts do not triumph personally but only kindle a fire; a flame which if triumphant in razing through the psychic forests of humanity, will conceive a firestorm; a revolution which will necessitate an eventual victory. Njau could not have been more truthful to reality.

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