

Defamiliarizing Marriage in a Patriarchal Socio-Cultural Context: An Analysis of the Novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi and Said Ahmed Mohamed

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Abstract

A major objective of this paper is to uncover ideological assumptions on marriage that are embedded in the defamiliarization techniques that are utilized by Euphrase Kezilahabi and Said Ahmed Mohamed in their works. The controlling question is: Under what circumstances are defamiliarization techniques used and what effect do they achieve? The paper therefore discusses the aspects that defamiliarize marriage in a patriarchal socio-cultural context in the works of the two authors. It therefore explores the relationship between the defamiliarization techniques and the socio-cultural structures. The paper further discusses the meanings, aesthetics and effects of defamiliarization devices on the readers. I argue that one of the fundamental motivations of use of defamiliarization techniques is to ideologically put forward a definite moral value. The analysis of the defamiliarization techniques makes inferences from the works under study while constructing indicators of worldview, values and attitudes, which construct and deconstruct the popular ideological and cultural beliefs and practices. Significantly, the paper directs inquiry into the relationships between power, status and solidarity, which have been ignored in most linguistic models of communication but which are fundamental to the understanding of literary texts. It is my view that normal usage of language has the important role of establishing normative concepts that define social reality, which in turn has a controlling power over individual identity. It is within this understanding that this paper discusses how defamiliarization techniques are instrumental in exposing and questioning some of the popular ideologies, at the levels of cultural beliefs and practices especially in relation to marital confinement, gender roles in marriage and parenthood with a view of establishing their cultural and ideological underpinnings.

1.0 Introduction, Theory and Method

The term 'defamiliarization' means to make something strange, less known and conspicuous. It broadly refers to any situation in which the familiar is rendered in an unusual way. According to Stacy (1977:178), defamiliarization is a wide term and in order to recognise its applicability, it is good to take cognisance of the fact that human being seem to long for a new and different vision of things and the

world. She argues that the theories of great thinkers such as Galileo, Harvey, Darwin, Freud and Einstein defamiliarized and ultimately replaced traditional views. Stacy contends that defamiliarization may be used for many purposes such as to amuse, sadden, anger, astonish, ridicule, enchant, and puzzle the reader. In some cases, defamiliarization may herald discoveries that change our lives, perception and later history. Defamiliarization, therefore, is always intended and purposeful when it is applied, be it in literature or in any other field.

The term defamiliarization, as used in literary circles, has a long history. Its devices have always been used in literature even as early as the Greek the Hellenistic and the Alexandrian period. However, the 17th Century is the climax of defamiliarization in literature, during which its devices manifested themselves in various forms (Stacy, 1977:168). It is, for example, notable that the language of poetry depended, not at all upon logic, but rather upon defamiliarization of ordinary language.

From its inception, defamiliarization was seen and meant to have broad implication on aesthetics and meaning in literature. Through the ages, various critics have stipulated that language itself involves defamiliarization. George Steiner, for example writes, "Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is" (Steiner, 1976:217-218). In a sense language is used to deconstruct meaning and create new possibilities of seeing the world.

Specifically, defamiliarization as a literary term can be traced back to Russian formalism. The Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, coined the term 'Ostranenie' which was rendered in English as 'making strange'. It was later translated as defamiliarization. Shklovsky believed that it was the function of art to render the familiar in a new way. He asserted that the function of art was to evoke emotional reaction. Art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. To Shklovsky, 'Ostranenie' includes all techniques through which a writer portrays or describes something familiar in a fresh way.

Shklovsky, in clarifying the concept, stressed that defamiliarization devices do more than convey meaning. Their function is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object in contention. It creates a vision of the object instead of serving as a means of knowing it (Shklovsky 1965). This does not mean that defamiliarization is only used in literature. It can be used in other texts such as scientific or political texts for the sake of familiarization. But, when they are used in literature, they make us to see phenomena from a different unusual point of view. This is when they become defamiliarization techniques. In this

view, they are employed in literature for specific purpose of creating a special perception.

Defamiliarization can be related linguistically to 'semantic shift.' This notion refers to the technique of taking concepts out of their usual semantic setting and transferring them to another setting. The strangeness of the object is consequently felt in its new setting. Defamiliarization, therefore, evokes feelings and these feelings guide the process of 'refamiliarizing.' This constitutes the interpretive effort on the part of the reader. Defamiliarization techniques strike readers and capture their attention. They oblige the reader to slow down allowing time for the feelings created to emerge. The feelings then guide formulation of an enriched perspective.

Defamiliarization techniques are many and diverse. They include: metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, neologism, parallelism, juxtaposition, analogy and proverbs. An author can defamiliarize through minute observations, excessive detail and description, dream or metamorphosis. The formalists' analysis of defamiliarization involved systemic naming and classification of these techniques. Their way of analyzing literary texts was criticised by various theoreticians. Michael Bakhtin, for instance, differed with the formalists' inability to consider the ideological meaning of literature in their analysis. His point of departure was that, in viewing the principle of defamiliarization as just a device *per se*, one misses the fundamental point that the device is ideologically motivated. It advances a definite moral value. Bakhtin's perspective, which I agree with, is that external social factors can become an intrinsic factor of literature (Bakhtin, 1967).

It is within this context that this paper perceives the analysis of defamiliarization techniques as the study of literary phenomena in relation to socio- cultural contexts. I contend that, critical analysis has to take into consideration ideological perceptions of the society if literary meaning has to be discerned. I envisioned that defamiliarization devices draw attention to the strangeness of a text and develops, in the reader, the desire to understand its meaning.

In the analysis of defamiliarization devices, I take cognisance of the fact that a text is a mode of discourse. This treatment of a text as discourse stretches the capability of the analysis by viewing the selected texts as systems that use language and need to be analysed for meaning. It is within this context that I invoke Critical Discourse Analysis Theory (CDA). Indeed no significant study has examined defamiliarization techniques within the post-modern Critical Discourse Analysis Theory. CDA is viewed as a shared perspective encompassing a range of approaches having different emphasis. Some of the proponents of CDA are: Kress

(1989); Fowler (1979) (1991) (1996); Fairclough (1995) (1989); Van Dijk (1981) and Wodak (1989). All of them, though stressing different aspects, treat language as a social discourse. Kress (1989), for instance, concentrates on the political economy of representational media and attempts to understand how various societies' value and use different modes of representation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach in the study of discourse. CDA regards language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1989). It focuses on the ways social and political domination is reproduced in both written and spoken texts. CDA studies the structures of texts and considers both their linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions in order to determine how meaning is constructed (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). The theory proposes that relations of power in our society affect and shape the way we both communicate with each other and create knowledge.

2.0 Defamiliarization Techniques and Marital Confinement

Euphrase Kezilahabi and Said Ahmed Mohamed have depicted the institution of marriage through various defamiliarization techniques. But, before the discussion of these techniques, I wish to explore issues about origin of marriage and societal expectations of the institution. Some of these issues are seen to have influenced the authors' depiction. Engels in *'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'* shows how changes in the material conditions of people affected the organization of family relations. He argues that before the family was structured, there existed a primitive state of promiscuous intercourse, a total free for all. In this state, both men and women were essentially married to all; but as fewer and fewer women in the tribal group became available, men began to put forcible claims on individual women, as their personal property or possession. This resulted in the pairing family in which one man is married to one woman. This could have been tenable in European society.

In African traditional societies, marriage was constituted as a permanent union between a man and a woman or several women (Kenyatta, 1978:163). Through a marriage ceremony, a man acquired the sole right of sexual intercourse with his wife although the contract between the two was also seen to be a contract between their kinsfolk. Among the Swahili, unmarried people were referred to as 'watoto' (children). Husband and wife had a duty to procreate and provide for the children. In most African communities a woman left her home and joined the family of the man in marriage. In the works under study, the family institution is depicted within Swahili and the African context through a number of defamiliarization techniques.

2.1 The Rock and the Caterpillar

Mohammed seeks to depict marriage as a consummation of love through the metaphor of the rock. In *Asali Chungu*, Zuberi is demanding to be given Mboga, Omari's daughter, for a wife in exchange of Omari's inability to pay crop to his landlord. He writes:

Akawa anasema na moyo wake juu ya wazo la kumpeleka Mboga kwa Bwana mkubwa ili kufidia analonuiya. Angalistahabu kufa kwa njaa kuliko kujivua nguo kwa kumpeleka binti yake kwa jabari yule (Mohamed, 1977:20). (He was thinking about the idea of taking Mboga (his daughter) to the landlord in exchange for the crop (which he was expected to give). He would prefer to die of hunger than to undress in public by giving out his daughter to that rock).

In this case Mboga's father, Omari, is toying around with a traditional practice whereby a girl child is regarded as source of wealth and property. Her father has the authority to marry her off to the highest bidder. But, it is intriguing that, although this is acceptable in his society and would relieve him of the headache of having to give crop to the landlord, Mboga's father refuses and in fact compares such an action to undressing in public. Undressing in public is tantamount to humiliating oneself. His argument is that he does not want to give out his daughter to a 'rock'. The metaphor of the rock signifies coercive power, immovable, lack of feelings, cruel and inhuman. This is suggestive that Mboga's father would like his daughter to get married to a loving, humane and caring person. According to him, Zuberi lacks these qualities. Although the metaphor overtly refers to Zuberi's financial power, Omari is not willing to release his daughter to him in marriage.

The strangeness of the old man's utterances lie in the fact that they insinuate that marriage has to be a relationship in which there is love, warmth and care. These utterances, to some extent, contradict marriage in the traditional sense. Arranged marriages were practiced widely in most African communities and a girl was married to a man she had never loved or met before. Notice that the author reveals the power relations between the prospective husband and Mboga's father through the words 'Bwana Mkubwa' (Landlord). This suggests that he had money to pay for the dowry as expected traditionally but Mboga's father is not willing to release his daughter to him in marriage. Against this background, the metaphor seems to challenge the patriarchal practice of arranged marriages in which there is no love even in the initial stages.

The patriarchal position of an arranged marriage is also contested in the metaphor of the caterpillar. Mohamed writes:

Mzee Omari alipokwisha kuondoka, Zuberi jicho lake likapiga kwa Mboga, utashi wake mpya. Hivyo akajidhihirishia funza anayerukia viala vya majani machanga na kuviangamiza (Mohamed, 1977:21). (When Omari had left, Zuberi's eye fell on Mboga his newfound passion. That way, he appeared as a caterpillar that was about to destroy the delicate leaves of a plant).

The author's vision on the issue of arranged marriages comes out clearly in this metaphor. Mohamed symbolically compares this practice to destruction caused by caterpillars while devouring the young leaves of a budding plant. This paints the elderly men, exemplified by Zuberi, who lavish in taking young girls in marriage as destroyers of the young, tender and innocent lives. The metaphor seems to suggest that the young girls should be protected against such men. The metaphor presents a contestation over arranged marriages as practiced in most African societies such as the Swahili. The image of the caterpillar's destruction of the delicate leaves reinforces the author's disapproval of the practice.

The poor socio-economic status of women is seen as being the root cause of unfair treatment in marriage. A woman is viewed as man's property through the semantic shift of the word 'sold'. In *Dunia Mti Mkavu*, Kazija tells Fumu:

Amesema dada umsamehe, ameshaolewa kwa nguvu; ameuzwa na baba (Mohamed, 1980:26). (My sister has said she is sorry. She has been married off by force. She has been 'sold' by our father).

In this statement a daughter is seen as property of the father who decides who becomes her spouse. The verb 'sold' signifies that Kazija's father has given her out for marriage in exchange of financial gains. In this case, the seller has authority to sell his wares to whoever he wishes. This shows the immense power and authority that traditional Swahili society bestows upon a father regarding his daughter's choice of spouse. This has its roots in patriarchy.

In African traditional societies, women do not own land and when they get married, they move into their husbands' homes. The bride price, which is paid, is given to her father (Kenyatta, 1938, Mbiti, 1969). She is not an equal partner in her new home and her stay there is exclusively dependent on the whims of the husband. The female child, therefore, is socially regarded as an economic investment. Unfortunately, this patriarchal ideology that depicts a woman as either the property of the father or husband is an aspect of African way of life. An unmarried girl is known by her father's name and when she gets married, she takes on the husband's name.

Stemming from this ideology, a father has the duty of handing over his daughter to a husband. Tegemea echoes this when she asks her daughter's husband 'Huyu msichana ulipewa na nani?' (Kezilahabi, 1974:190). (Who gave you this girl?). In modern Christian weddings, the father is the one who hands over his daughter (bride) to the bridegroom in the presence of the priest or religious leader. Most men interpret this to mean that they have been given the woman to be their property. In my view, this is what may lead men into mistreating their wives as evidenced in wife battering prevalent in many African communities.

2.2 The Permanent Handcuffs

Marriage is metaphorically depicted as a permanent union through the metaphor of handcuffs. In reference to exchange of vows during Kazimoto and Sabina's wedding in *Kichwamaji*, Kezilahabi writes:

Kanisani mambo yalikwenda sawasawa. Yale maswali ya maana tuliyajibu bila kusita tukapata pingu za maisha. (Kezilahabi, 1974:166). (Things went on smoothly in church. We answered those important questions without reflecting on them, then we were handcuffed for life).

In this description, the joining of Sabina and Kazimoto in marriage is compared to being put into 'permanent handcuffs'. Handcuffs are normally put on the hands of criminals to inhibit their freedom. In the case of criminals, the handcuffs may not be permanent. This metaphor depicts marriage as a permanent relationship and yet it is very undesirable. It is undesirable because the handcuffs do not allow for freedom of association anymore. With all its discomfort and misery, one has to remain in it for life!

The metaphor of handcuffs echoes the Christian teaching whereby marriage is meant to be permanent until death, (1 Corinthians 7:10). A Christian marriage has no room for divorce. In African traditional societies, such as the Luhya, divorce was only allowed in very rare situations such as in the case where one of the partners practiced witchcraft. Otherwise, marriage was meant to be permanent. It is important to take note of the sarcasm in Kazimoto's words when he talks about marriage vows. He says that he responded to the marriage vows without reflecting on their import. The vows had serious implications, and needed his reflection. He is sarcastic and skeptical about marriage and life. It becomes clear that vows taken in marriage may never be reflected upon which makes the whole ceremony a joke. The author could be questioning the whole idea of taking marriage vows, which are never fulfilled. The sarcasm, coupled with the symbolic reference to marriage as permanent bondage paints a gloomy picture of marriage. The author is, in

essence, laughing at the whole ceremony since in the end it does not carry the weight, which it should.

2.3 The Valley of Tears

Marriage is depicted as an institution characterised by suffering and mourning. In replying to Charles' offer for marriage, Rosa says:

Mpenzi, uchukue mkono huu na uniongoze katika bonde hili la machozi (Kezilahabi, 1971:76). (Dear, take my hand and lead me through this valley of tears).

It is strange that one would want to be led into a valley of tears and not a valley of happiness. A valley symbolizes trouble, which is so deep and difficult to come out. Coming out of such a valley is strenuous and would involve sacrifice, energy and perseverance. Marriage is therefore symbolically depicted as an institution in which one has to be ready to exercise endurance and sacrifice. In comparing marriage to a valley of tears, Rosa could be inferring this, from her own mother's marriage, which was full of misery and suffering. The metaphor is an over exaggeration although it succeeds in unveiling Kezilahabi's existentialist view of marriage and life in general.

Kezilahabi depicts a similar image in *Kichwamaji* where Tegemea and Kabenga's marriage is full of challenges. Kabenga is seen battering his wife for not going to cultivate land, and even after this, she is seen apologizing and kneeling before her husband. In the same novel, the marriage between Manase and Sabina is horrifying. The couple gets a strange looking child who is a result of an infectious disease, which Manase contracted during his earlier sexual relationship. The child's health condition cannot be treated or reversed and so the family is depicted as leading a miserable life. The fore grounded message is that marriage is not a bed of roses, but a union full of challenges and one needs to face it with this fact clear in their mind.

2.4 The Eight Stomachs

The issue of gender roles in marriage is further addressed in the metaphor of eight stomachs. In *Asali Chungu*, Zuberi, the landlord wants to kick Omari out of his farm. This is because Omari has not honoured the agreement in which he is to surrender part of the proceeds from the farm to Zuberi. While pleading for understanding from Zuberi, Omari says:

Tafadhali bwana angu! Usinione mimi, ila waone walio mgongoni pangu. Nikitoa mazao yangu yote niliyopanda matumbo manane

nitayalisha nini Mimi? (Mohamed, 1977:18-19). (Please, my Lord, do not look at me, but those on my back. If I give you the produce, what will I feed the ‘eight stomachs’)

In the above pronouncements, Omari pleads to the landlord by referring to him as ‘bwanangu’ (My Lord). This reference captures the feudal set up and reveals power relations in this society. Those who owned land were the ‘Lords’ and this relation had to come out clearly in their conversation.

By withholding the names of the people he is talking about, Omari presents his predicament in a strange defamiliarized way. In most African traditional societies, children are referred to discreetly. It is a taboo to count or mention the number of children that one has. It is believed that this would portend a misfortune. Although the metaphor reveals the insensitivity and inhuman nature of the landlord, it alludes to the general belief that a married man should provide for his family. As earlier pointed out, among the Swahili, a husband is the provider. His wife and children should eat from his sweat. Christianity and Islam support this patriarchal perspective of marriage. In Islam, for instance, marriage is seen to have been ordained by Allah as the correct and legal way to procreate and replenish the earth. To show the importance of marriage, Prophet Mohamed is quoted as saying that when a servant of Allah marries, he has completed half of his religious obligations (Phillips and Jones, 1985). Husbands are consequently commanded to support or shoulder the responsibility of supporting their wives and children. This seems to be the root cause of the misery of women in marriage. However, through the metaphor, Mohamed is alluding to both Islamic teaching and Swahili cultural practice, thereby exposing the patriarchal ideology more forcefully. The plight of Omari is highlighted and the reader’s sympathy is drawn towards him.

2.5 Women’s Submission to Male Authority

The aspect of submission has also been addressed. The idea of whether or not women have to submit to men has a lot to do with gender relations. According to Brittan (1997), the way men and women confront each other ideologically and politically depends upon the existing social relations of gender. Social relations of gender draw from the social ideology that exists in various communities. At every one given moment, gender will reflect the material interests of those who have power and those who do not. In most African societies such as the Swahili, women have the duty to show respect to their husbands by submitting to them. This aspect is addressed in *Dunia Mti Mkavu*. In commenting about the men who are on strike to force their employers to improve their working conditions, one of the women says:

Mimi nimelia we, hata macho yamenivimba kwa mume wangu, ati kukataa kupeleka mazao mjini na kuwajibu askari ufidhuli, lakini halafu nimeona haina maana kulia. Bora tufunge vibwebwe na sisi tuwasaidie kucheza ngoma (Mohamed, 1980:107). (I have cried until my eyes are sore over my husband's refusal to take the produce to town and his rude response to the police. But I have realized it is not useful. It is better we tighten our belts and join them in the 'dance').

The defamiliarizing statement in the above episode is: '*Bora tufunge vibwebwe na sisi tuwasaidie kucheza ngoma*'. 'Kibwebwe' is a type of clothing for women, which is usually tied at the hips. One of the reasons as to why women wear this type of cloth is in preparation for physical hard work. It is therefore a symbol of hard work. But, in this instance, the women decide to join the men in the 'dance'. They, however, do not believe in the cause but they are forced to submit to their husbands.

The woman is portrayed as having no alternatives, but to weep in her effort to convince her husband against his decision. But when she fails to convince him, she advises her fellow women to support the men by joining in their struggle for liberation. Women being considered the weaker sex are therefore, expected to submit to the whims of their husbands. This serves to confirm Brittan's (1997) argument that masculinity does not exist in isolation from femininity. It is an expression of the current image that men have of themselves in relation to women. In this example, women have accepted the position that they can only cry in order to try and appeal to the men's emotions. But if they are unsuccessful, they then have to submit to the men by way of accepting their standpoint. Men are here depicted as leaders while women as faithful followers. Again, this solidifies the argument that patriarchy, in all its manifestations, elevates the man over the woman.

A similar presentation is depicted in *Utengano*. Makuudi becomes violent when he arrives home, only to find his daughter missing. Besides, he suspects that his wife, Tamima, has been helped in delivering a baby. While battering his wife, one of his workers, Biti Kocho, tries to intervene by reminding him that Tamima has just delivered a baby. Makuudi retorts:

Mwanamke huyu anataka nini? Mbona anakuja kwa meno ya juu? Sasa ameshaingia bahari nyengine na mazungumzo yake kuyaelekeza pabaya. Wanawake kama hawa wameenea siku hizi... Wanajuaje siasa hawa wajinga, watu. Eee katafute kifuu na mchanga uchezee (Mohamed, 1980:51). (What does this woman

want? Why is she so loud? Now, she has moved into unfamiliar domain and her talk is headed in the wrong direction. Women such as this one are all over nowadays. How can these idiots have knowledge of politics? Eh! go and find a coconut shell so that you can play with sand).

In the above instance, Maksuudi cannot listen to a woman arguing with him. It is ironic that he does not understand why Biti Kocho is stopping him from battering his wife. He believes that he is right to discipline his wife for her mistakes. In fact to him, Kocho is attempting to enter an unfamiliar and restricted domain (*ameshaingia bahari nyengine*). He seems to be uncomfortable with women who have such mannerisms as Kocho's. He says such women are becoming commonplace these days. Notice the sarcasm invoked through the rhetorical question; '*wanajuaje siasa hawa wajinga*' (how can these idiots have knowledge of politics?).

Maksuudi's line of thinking is motivated by patriarchy and male chauvinism. Women are to remain quiet, submissive and respectful before men. They should not argue, even when their rights are being violated. Such action could be interpreted as disrespect and may invite punishment. The awareness of human rights by women is hereby alluded to but again with a lot of sarcasm. Therefore, Maksuudi has to remind Kocho about her position in society, which is not different from that of a child. Among the Swahili, politeness and good manners are taken seriously. Children are taught to relate with older members of society with utter respect (Harris, 1965, Salim, 1978). At best, like a child, Kocho should display this kind of respect towards Maksuudi or play with a coconut shell with sand. Zanzibar, from where Mohamed is writing, is known for growing coconuts. Children are the ones who play with coconut shells on sand. But, in this case, Biti Kocho, a mature woman is being asked to indulge in a child's game. This sarcasm is meant to send a strong warning to Biti Kocho that Maksuudi is not ready to listen to her talk, since he considers her as a child. Thus, before Maksuudi, Biti Kocho is just like a child and should not argue with him. Children are not allowed to argue with adults in this culture.

Women are only supposed to take orders from men without questions even when they are being beaten up. Maksuudi's actions and attitude is a manifestation of aggression. The men exemplified through Maksuudi, are seen to be having excessive power over the woman and the only option left for the woman is to obey. In most African communities, men are supposed to express their masculinity by exhibiting aggression. Aggression is learnt through socialization, in which men are made to believe that it is rewarding and is a sign of assertiveness. By Maksuudi

belittling Biti Kocho to the point of seeing her as a child, he is voicing a popular ideology that calls for aggression on the part of men and submission on the part of women.

The inferior position that women are relegated to is also depicted in *Gamba la Nyoka*; Chilongo is admitted in hospital after being shot by policemen while resisting forceful relocation to Ujamaa Villages. He demands that a nurse attends to him and as the nurse explains to him that she is still attending to another patient he quips:

Funga domo lako! Ninao wanne nyumbani! Hawasemi neno nikipikohoa! (Kezilahabi, 1979:53). (Shut up your mouth! I have four (wives) at home. They do not say a word when I cough).

In the above pronouncement, Chilongo withholds mentioning the word 'wives' by just saying that he has four of them. He says when he 'coughs' they do not say a word. This can be interpreted to mean that Chilongo's wives are so scared of him that they do not answer back when he 'coughs'. Coughing is here used as euphemism for talking or scolding. Language in this case is used to defamiliarize the idea of communication. The women are not allowed to say anything before him. He cannot therefore understand why the nurse at the hospital has the audacity to argue with him. But it is ironical that although he seems to disrespect women, he is seeking a woman's services. This could be seen to be revealing the futility of his attitude towards women. This is another manifestation of patriarchal ideology whereby women are not supposed to speak, answer or argue with their husbands or men. This is interpreted as disrespectful. They are supposed to be submissive and docile, stupidly respectful towards their husbands, even when they are being mistreated. Some irresponsible, disrespectful utterances from men towards women are partly as a product of this ideology.

2.6 Intertextuality and the Process of Subordination

Woman's subordination to man is depicted through intertextuality. Intertextuality is a term that has been used widely by literary critics. A key proponent, Julia Kristeva coined the terminology and gives several illuminating definitions. For example, she explains: 'Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (Clayton and Rothstein, 1991:20). She also goes on to say that in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. It is then clear that the contention of Kristeva is that intertextuality is an instance where a text depicts a reading of another text.

According to Leitch (1983:123), intertextuality is when a text finds its way into a current text, a chip or piece of an older monument appears as a source, influence, allusion, imitation, archetype or parody. While depicting subordination, Mohamed alludes to Mwana Kupona's poem, which is an old poem expressing Swahili culture.

Mohamed explains that whenever Kudura was miserable and feeling low, she would sing the poem and would be encouraged. He says:

*Bi Mosi mamake alikuwa akipenda kuimba na wimbo wake
maarufu ambao umemuachia taathira kubwa Kudura hadi leo ni
wimbo wa Mwana Kupona.*

Bi Mosi aliuimba kwa sauti yake:

*Keti naye kwa adabu
Usimutie ghadhabu
Akinena simjibu
Itahidi kunyamaa*

*Kilala siikukuse
Mwegeme umpapase
Na upepo asikose
Mtu wa kumpepea*

*Baada ya kumpitikia au kuimba wimbo huo, Kudura huchangamka,
huona raha. Huhisi ameinuliwa juu kabisa kupuliziwa nguvu mpya
ili aendelee kumtumikia bwana. Na kwa ajili hiyo hachoki ingawa
hukerwa. Haoni kinyongo ingawa huonyeshwa (Mohamed,
1988:47-48).*

*(Mosi (Kudura's mother) liked singing and her favourite song
which has left an indelible mark on Kudura's life up to this day was
the 'Mwana Kupona' song. Mosi sang it herself:*

Stay with him (husband) in respect
Do not annoy him
When he speaks do not respond
Make sure you are silent.

When he sleeps do not wake him up
Move close to him and caress him
And he should not lack fresh air

Nor somebody to breeze him

After singing this song, Kudura is happy. She is uplifted and strengthened in a new way so that she can continue to serve the master (husband). And because of that she does not get weary although she is irritated. She does not keep a grudge although she is hated).

In the above exposition, the author refers to the poem 'Mwana Kupona' and reproduces two stanzas. The two stanzas reinforce the importance of subordination in marriage. Kudura's misery is depicted and she admits that, it is only after singing the poem that she gets energized. She says that despite all that, she has to serve her 'master' (husband). The poem being alluded to here is about a mother advising her daughter on how to succeed in marriage through submission and honouring her husband. The poem reveals the subversive nature of women. They are seen to use tactics to make the man to behave the way they want. In this case, then the woman is depicted as using language and submission as a power instrument to control man. Ironically, even as she struggles to submit to her husband, Kudura continues to suffer while her husband, Juba, does not seem to care, in fact he deserts his family.

Although Mohamed is depicting marriage in a patriarchal setting, it is clear that patriarchy could easily lead to enslavement. By depicting the ironic fact of a rich husband who does not provide for his family, Mohamed is questioning the whole idea of women's submission to their husbands. He seems to wonder whether men should remain masters, even when they are not providing for their families. This is contrary to Islamic teaching, which Juba professes (Doi, 1996, Quran 4:34). Mohamed seems to be questioning the type of faith practiced by the likes of Juba.

3.0 Conclusion

This paper has examined defamiliarization techniques, used to depict the institution of marriage and family within a patriarchal socio-cultural context. The analysis has revealed that in order to understand the meanings of the various techniques, the socio-cultural context has to be analyzed. The techniques have been seen to draw heavily from patriarchal ideology which has its roots in African culture as well as Islam and Christianity.

The authors under study have utilized defamiliarization techniques in discussing marital confinement, gender roles in marriage, submission and subordination in marriage. The defamiliarization techniques which have been used here include: metaphors, irony, intertextuality and symbolism. The authors have successfully

uncovered the patriarchal ideologies, socio-cultural beliefs and practices as well as challenged and questioned the validity of some of them. In questioning the validity of some of these beliefs and practices through defamiliarization techniques, the writers' have succeeded in drawing the reader's attention to a fresh and new interpretation. The techniques have effectively and vividly communicated the various messages which the authors intended.

4.0 References

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