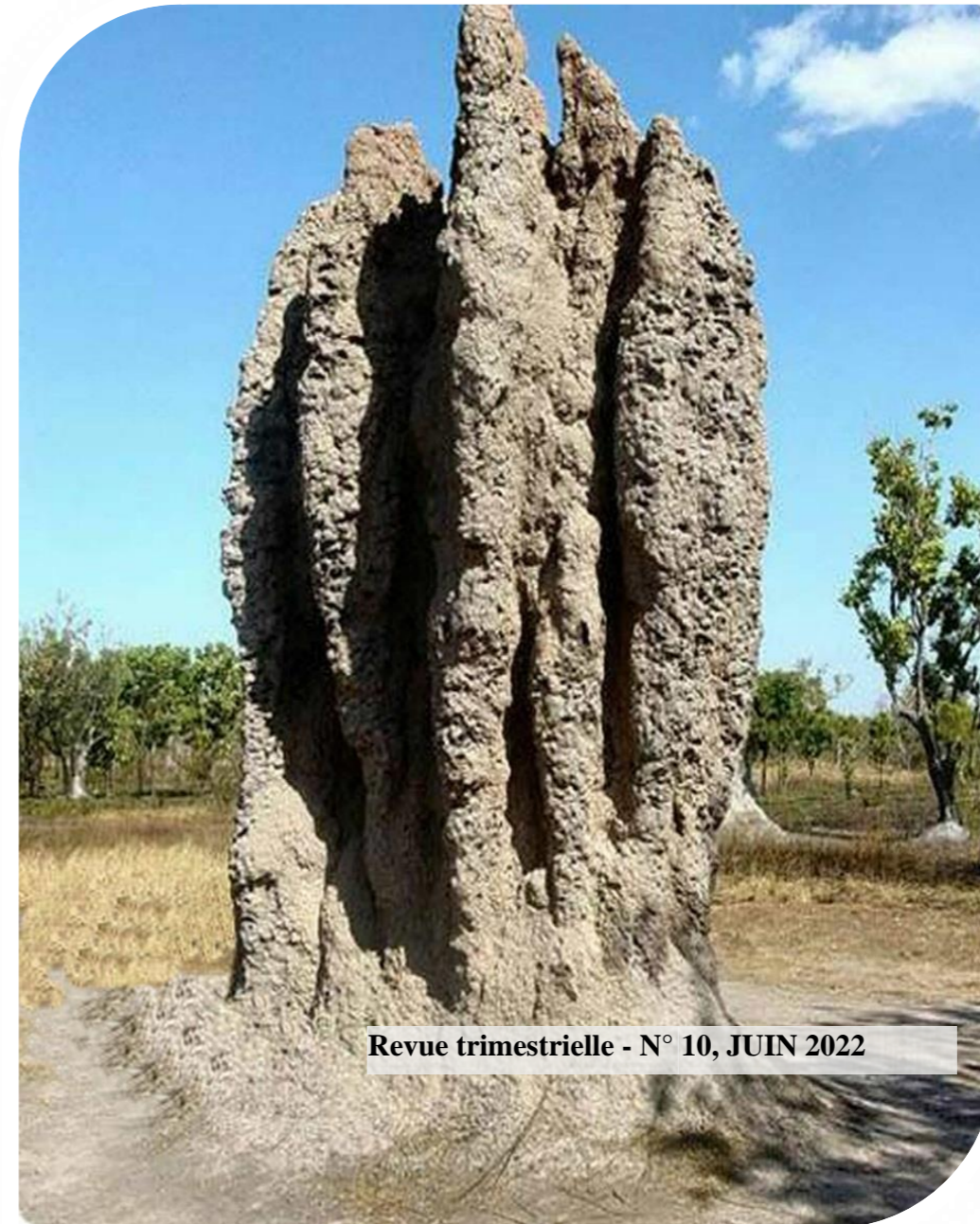


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"Dama Ninao" est une revue scientifique interdisciplinaire qui accepte et publie tous les articles relevant des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines. A cet effet, elle s'intéresse aux études et théories littéraires, linguistiques, sociologiques, philosophiques, anthropologiques et historico-géographiques. La Revue "Dama Ninao", entendu "L'Entente" en langue kabyè du Nord Togo, est créée dans l'intention de matérialiser la mondialisation ou la globalisation qui s'opère avec l'esprit d'équipe et d'échanges et la désuétude du monde autarcique. Le monde scientifique universitaire ne peut échapper à cet esprit d'équipe qui fonde un creuset où « le fer aiguisé le fer », les échanges se croisent, puis s'entremêlent pour aboutir à une reconstruction des connaissances scientifiques individuelles dans la collectivité.

La Revue Dama Ninao nous renvoie à la Civilisation de l'Universel du poète sénégalais Léopold Sédar Senghor, qui prône la porosité des âmes avec l'acceptation de l'autre, de ce qu'il dispose d'utile pour mon avancement : sa civilisation, sa culture, sa langue ... Elle se fonde notamment sur la philosophie de Paul Ricœur qui préconise la perception de Soi-même comme un autre. Considérer soi-même comme un autre aux yeux de l'autre, nous amènerait à faire taire nos distensions et ressentiments afin de redimensionner notre espace, reconstruire notre histoire et notre société.

La Revue Dama Ninao s'est inspirée de la nature. Des insectes en miniature nous produisent de bels chefs-d'œuvre architecturaux, conjuguent leur génie créateur et leur force dans la patience et dans la tolérance. Ils créent des œuvres monumentales qui dépassent l'entendement humain, les termitières. A cet effet, la nature semble nous parler, nous guider, nous instruire dans le silence. Seules ces créations nous interpellent sans autant faire de nous des disciples. Comme la termitière qui, pour la plupart du temps, est une composante de maillons surgissant de la même matière, la Revue Dama Ninao se veut une termitière scientifique dont les enseignants-chercheurs en sont les maillons.

Au confluent de diverses sciences, la Revue Dama Ninao se propose de promouvoir la recherche scientifique et universitaire en impulsant le dialogue interdisciplinaire, le dialogue entre divers champs disciplinaires et divers contributeurs du monde universitaire.

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Dama Ninao est une revue scientifique internationale. Dans cette perspective, les textes que nous acceptons en français ou anglais sont sélectionnés par le comité scientifique et de lecture en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 10 à 15 pages ; interligne 1.5, police 12 pour le corps du texte et les courtes citations; police 11 pour les longues citations, Times New Roman, les références des citations doivent être incorporées dans le texte. Exemple : Guy Rocher (1968, p. 29), pas de référence en foot-notes à l'exception de quelques commentaires.

Ordre logique du texte

- Un **TITRE** en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;
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- Un **Développement** : les articulations du développement du texte doivent-être titrées comme suit :
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 - 3- Pour le **Titre** de la troisième section (si l'auteur de l'article le souhaite)
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**MARRIAGE AND WIDOWHOOD AS A DOUBLE YOKE TO AFRICAN
WOMEN: AN APPROACH TO NESHANI ANDREAS' *THE PURPLE
VIOLET OF OSHAANTU***

**Panaewazibiou DADJA-TIOU/Université de Kara/Togo.
Monfaye KOFFI/Université de Kara/Togo
Ablavi Mandirann AMEGNONKA/Université de Kara/Togo.**

Abstract: Using womanist critical approach, this paper has examined and found that marriage is compelling and sometimes perilous to most African women. Women face many challenges in their homesteads due to their marriage which becomes abusive and which restricts their liberties vis-à-vis their husbands. Women in Andreas' fiction are victims of physical as well as emotional violence orchestrated by their macho husbands. Though they are victims, these women dare not leave such marriages at the risk of being rejected by their families and the society. In addition, this work has revealed that women after undergoing the various ills related to their status of married women, become once more victims of widowhood rites at the death of their spouses. Widowhood rites dehumanise and deprive widows in this Namibian society of their inalienable rights.

Keywords: marriage, widowhood, solidarity, inhuman treatments, unity, violence

Résumé : S'appuyant sur la critique womaniste, cette étude a examiné et a relevé que le mariage est contraignant et périlleux pour la plupart des femmes africaines. Les femmes sont confrontées à de nombreux défis dans leurs foyers en raison de leur mariage qui devient abusif et qui restreint leurs libertés vis-à-vis de leurs maris. Les femmes dans l'univers fictif d'Andreas sont victimes de violences physiques et émotionnelles orchestrées par leurs maris machos. Bien qu'étant victimes, ces femmes n'osent cependant pas quitter ces mariages au risque d'être rejetées par leur famille et la société. En outre, ce travail a révélé que les femmes, après avoir subi différents mauvais traitements liés à leur statut de femme mariée, sont à nouveau victimes des rites de veuvage à la mort de leur époux. Les rites de veuvage déshumanisent et privent les veuves de leurs droits inaliénables.

Mots-clés: mariage, solidarité, unité, traitements inhumains, veuvage, violence.

Introduction

Over the decades, many African writers are interested in addressing issues related to the struggle to improve the condition of women and the widows in African societies. Marriage and widowhood are considered as some of the scourges that prevent most African women from thriving socially. According to a recent research on domestic violence and gender bias, marriage and widowhood constitute a double yoke to African women. Andreas Neshani addresses this issue in her *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, highlighting the hardships, the maltreatments, the oppressions women are subjected to in their various marital lives as consequences of patriarchal dictates prevailing in the Namibian society. Her novel is about the plights and the inhuman treatments of women, especially widows in the Namibian society. Andreas' society is the one in which sexual violence, women's oppression, women's abuse, domestic violence coupled with widows' predicaments, their deprivation of inheritance rights are inherent. In his work devoted to this novel, A. T. Christiana (2018, p.9) has it that "Violence in marriage affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, irrespective of their socio-economic status". A. Aremu (2004, p.44) in the same perspective reiterates that: "cultural and religious barriers, impeding the rights of women to participate fully in society". Conscious of the extent to which African women in general and African widows in particular are oppressed and dehumanized, it is important to suggest ways and means to help eradicate this issue in African society. It is in the perspective to address the same issue that this work is framed as follow: "Marriage and Widowhood as Double Yoke to African Women: An Approach to Andreas Neshani's *the Purple Violet of Oshaantu*". This work aims at highlighting and analysing the compelling nature of marriage as perceived in the novel. Also, this paper seeks to show how widowhood dehumanizes and oppresses women. Furthermore, the paper shows how solidarity and rebellion constitute aesthetics of revenge for women. The analysis of this work will be done in the light of Mary E. Modupe Kolawole's Womanism. Womanism according to M. E. M.

Kolawole (1998, p.24) is: “totality feminine self-expression, retrieval, and self-assertiveness in positive cultural ways. It combats the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that women of colour face. It is a global ideology for African women and embraces racial, gender, class and cultural consciousness”. This theory will be of great importance in the analysis of Andreas’ *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* in which Women as well as widows remain vulnerable to life threatening condition and abuse of physical and psychological integrity. To come to this end, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the compelling nature of marriage as perceived in the novel. The second one deals with widowhood as dehumanizing and oppressing women. The last part is about solidarity and rebellion as aesthetics of revenge.

1. The Compelling Nature of Marriage in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*

Marriage related issues are the core concern of Neshani Andreas’ novel, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. The plot of the novel is successfully built around the stories of women in their homesteads with their different adventures and fates. **Marriage as it appears in this community of Oshaantu is essentially based on patriarchal assumptions. Women in this fictional world are married not compulsory out of love but to be in compliance with the traditional views upon marriage.** In *African Literature*, Safoura Salami Boukari accounts for how important marriage is in African societies as follows:

In many African societies, marriage is looked at as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. By failing to do so, one is, in effect stopping the flow of life through the individual, and hence diminishing mankind upon earth.....Therefore, anybody who under normal circumstances refuses to get married is committing a major offence in the eyes of the society, and the society will in turn look down on him. Everything possible is done to prepare people for marriage and to make think in terms of marriage. (S. S. Boukari, 1983; p.73)

It is clear from the above excerpt that, in Africa, marriage commands respect and because of this, African married women are compelled to stay in their homesteads

no matter what they may endure in the hands of their machos husbands. This did not escape the critical attention of Neshani Andreas, who has well illustrated it in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* by the following comment made by Mee Fennie, the aunt of Kauna, the second main character of the novel. Mee Fennie, explaining to Kauna, her unmarried uncle's uselessness has it that: "He is so useless. Doesn't have a wife, never married, doesn't have a girlfriend. I don't know, what is wrong with him. (...) What a waste of manhood." (PVO, p.79). This clearly indicates how unmarried people are disdained in Andreas' society.

It is important to scrutinize the perception of marriage as it appears in the fictional community of Oshaantu. Throughout the story, it is evident that marriage is not an individual matter; it rather involves the two families and even if parents do not choose partners for their children, they have the right of inspection and the community as a whole strongly impacts the lives of the spouses especially women. The same point is made by the Ghanaian critic Florence Abena Dolphyne, who states that: "the institution of marriage is a very important one in all African societies. It is primarily a union between two families rather than two individuals" (F. A. Dolphyne, 1991, p.2). She goes on to say that: "Through the institution of marriage has existed in all societies under various practices, the union of a man and a woman has often brought about controversy, depending on the society. (1991, p.66). As highlighted in the above two extracts, conflictual relationships between spouses and their in laws especially women and their mothers and/or sisters in laws can constitute a serious problem in the homesteads. As a matter of fact, in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, when a woman is happily married and gets the support, love and understanding of her husband, it is considered as abnormal. Mee Ali, the protagonist of the novel is a good illustration in this respect. She is lucky enough to be married to understandable Michael who never beats or mistreats her; this caused her mother in law and her sister in law to accuse her of having used a charm to conquer her husband's love. When the sister in law says: "I swear she has given my brother some mountain *mutakati*. He is

abnormally in love” (PVO, p.17). The mother in law replicates: “my son has a wife who has bewitched him” (PVO, p.25). Another illustrative example in the novel is the case of Kauna, Mee Ali’s best friend who confides herself to her friend as follows: “the first days were difficult. I cried every night (...) I would look for every chance to get away from my in-laws. I would go to fetch water, wood or whatever, just to be able to cry alone” (PVO, p.20). The forgoing analyses clearly show that in the fictional village of Oshaantu, marriage is not made to be a happy experience for women. There is a kind of “myth that a woman can’t be wealthy, successful and happy in the domestic domain”. (E. M. Kolawole, 1982, p.161) This attitude and understanding of marriage is crystallised by a female character in the novel, Mee Maita. The narrator explains the latter’s conception of marriage in the following words:

She is a respected and somehow powerful member of the village because she is an elder in the church and Sunday school teacher... what I most dislike about her is that she does either little or nothing for the women and widows who are mistreated by their husbands and in laws, despite her position. She believes that marriage should be one miserable, lifelong experience. Husband and wife should fight everyday, he should abuse her and the children (...) She never has anything good to say about marriage. ‘That is what marriage is all about. This is the real world. You have promised to stay in this thing till death do you part, are her usual responses to marriage problems. (PVO, p.4)

It is then clear from the above analyses that this way of considering marriage makes it become a perilous undertaking especially for some women who bend under the weight of social restrictions and expectations on marriage which prevent them from self-fulfilment and self-realisation. Thus, once a woman gets married, it is expected from her to remain with her husband whatever situation she comes across. A marriage’s success or failure is measured by the woman’s endurance to support the different situations that she may face. This brings in the issue of divorce which is seen as a sin or a very bad thing in the eyes of the community. Whatever happens, there is no room for divorce especially when the initiative comes from the woman.

That is the case of Kauna who has the ill fate to get married to a very violent man, Shange, and thus suffered physical and emotional violence in the hands of her husband. On whatever occasion and for a yes or no, Shange will beat her in full view of all. One of the numerous beating sessions of Kauna by her husband is narrated as follows in the novel:

Was he embarrassed or angry? He was irritated. He started to fume and couldn't wait for Kauna to return from the well. Then it all happened so fast. Kauna and her basket full of water landed on the floor. Kauna tried to escape Shange's rage, but h was too fast for her. He caught her. She screamed. I have never heard her screaming like that (...) she moved like an old cloth as Shange's shoes struck her mercilessly all over her tiny body. The heavy mine shoes sounded as if they were breaking every bone. (PVO, p.58)

It is important to underline here that beating of wives by their husbands is common and accepted by the community of Oshaantu because the whole village was aware of the mistreatments that Kauna is undergoing in the hands of Shange but no one is helpful and talk sense to him in her favour; instead, the sufferances that she was undergoing were blamed on herself as stressed by the narrator: "It was as if the failure of their marriage was her fault. They laughed at her and stigmatised her. It was her fault that her husband looked at other women. It was her fault that her husband beats her, it was her fault that her husband did this or did that. Oh it was just too much."(PVO, p.51). In these circumstances, the only one person who stood by Kauna, supporting and encouraging her was Mee Ali but as woman, her voice was not strong or loud enough to help her friend out the hell of marriage in which she was. There is a kind of conspiracy and passive tolerance of women sufferance in their households. Men and women as well could easily understand without being offended that Kauna's husband was mistreating her. This is considered as the normal unfolding of things. Patriarchal violence and injustice on women are so pervasive in the society that even women consider the beating and the sufferances as normal. Consequently, despite all these, Kauna could not think of leaving her husband because even her mother will

not tolerate that. When her aunt Mee Feenie divorced her husband, the whole family was against her, as she confided to her niece:

your mother will certainly not approve of you wanting to divorce your husband, because when I divorced, she was angry with me. She gave me this long lecture that marriages are not easy and what did I expect, bla, bla, bla, bla. She claimed that I embarrassed her, our parents and the rest of the clan. For a long time shed did not want to be seen with me in public. (PVO, p.66).

This is later confirmed when Kauna tries to discuss the issue of her unhappy marriage with her mother. She could not support or advise her daughter into a divorce just because this will bring shame on their family. She could neither understand why MeeFennie advised Kauna to leave her husband. Accordingly, she declares: “Ntowele, how do you expect your little mother to advise you? She is divorced herself. I hate to say this, but divorced people can give no advice. Talk to married people, people who know how to handle marriage problems, not those who ran away from them” (PVO; p67). As far as Kauna’s divorce is concerned, even the understandable husband of Mee Ali could not support her when she suggested divorce as a means to end Kauna’s sufferances. He scolded his wife in these terms: “Ali, I think this time you went too far. For you to ask the church to end Shange and Kauna’s marriage. Are you crazy? You are not God” (PVO, 9).

In the end, Kauna, as many other women in the fictional village of Oshaantu are trapped in unhappy marriages just because they are not courageous enough to break chains from compelling and patriarchal restrictions on marriage. No wonder Buchi Emecheta writes the following about that issue.

I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. I have no sympathy for a woman who deserts her children; neither do I have sympathy for a woman who insists on staying in a marriage with a brute man, simply to be respectable (200, p.553)

2- Widowhood as Dehumanising and Oppressing Women in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*

In most African societies, widows are a category of people associated with pains, grief, humiliation and depression. Most African societies deprive women in general and widows in particular of their inalienable rights. This issue has been the main concerns of the Namibian female writer, Neshani Andreas, in her first novel *the Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. In this novel, Andreas highlights how widows suffer from emotional, psychological and physical abuse, depression and loneliness in the name of cultural and traditional practices. Widows in this fictional Namibian society are discriminated, humiliated and are isolated from the society. Widows in the novel are these women subjected to inhuman treatments perpetuated by their society which is dominated by the patriarchal dogmas. Florence Orabueze, for instance, notes that:

Widowhood is a word that every woman dreads to mention. In Africa, it brings to a peak all the humiliation, subordination, degradation and oppression which an African woman goes through in her life time. From the time of her husband's death to the time of her own death, his family and society blame her for the passing away of the much needed male. She is indirectly asked why she should survive the man. (F. Orabueze, 2004, p.140)

From this excerpt, it is clear that widows in Namibian society suffer a lot due to the traditional laws governing African societies. In Andreas' fictional society, Kauna and her mate *Mee Sarah* undergo untold sufferings from their society. These widows' rights have been violated by their patriarchal society which privileges only the men. As a matter of fact, they have lost their social status, sense of belonging and identity as well. These two widows according to A. Skyere (2014, p.410) are "made to go through physical and mental torture. Some of them are denied food, limits put on their freedom of speech, movement and association. The unbearable and infringements on human rights." This shows the extent to which Namibian society constitutes hindrances to women's development. Kauna and Mee Sarah are under the strains of cultural and religious practices, beliefs and norms. This deplorable situation has been

discussed by many novelists who delineate the difficulty they undergo in their social intercourse because they are stigmatized in the process. As a result, their status of single parents with limited financial and economic resources prevent them from giving decent education to their progenies and cater for the family. The society is made in such a way that superstition prevails at each level of it. Widows are victims of ill-cultural practices and norms as delineated in the character of Kauna and Mee Sarah.

Once a woman loses her husband, she is subjected to every kind of false accusations. A woman who loses her husband is automatically deemed as being at the source of her husband's death. Mee Sarah and Kauna, two widows from this novel, undergo the same situation of humiliation and rejection at the death of their respective husbands. The narrator in the following bemoans that:

You cannot allow these people to take away her belongings. She will not get anything from her husband's property, so why do you want her to lose her own as well? You know how few rights we have around here, especially after the death of a husband. (PVO, p.39)

This passage shows how society becomes hostile to Kauna when she lost Shange, her husband. At this very moment, Kauna being in a mournful moment should have received a moral support from her society but it has not been the case. It is awful to notice that Kauna's environment turns to despise her. She is denied her rightful inheritance by her in-laws and rejected by her society on the basis of false accusations. Some of the relatives of her late husband accuse her of being the one who killed Shange, her husband, in spite of her innocence. Reiterating the widows' predicaments in African society, Teddy Kuyela as quoted by Eunice Ngongkum observes that:

In most of the African society, widowhood represents a 'social death' for women. It is not just that they have lost their husbands, the breadwinner and supporter of their children, but widowhood robs them of their status and confines them to the fringes of society where they suffer discrimination and stigma. [...] Widows are generally trodden upon, poor and least protected as their lives are determined by local, patriarchal interpretations of tradition, discrimination and stigma. (T. Kuyela, 2014, p.140)

Teddy in this extract sheds light on the various predicaments of Namibian widows as a result of the patriarchal assumptions governing African society. Widows suffer from stigma and repression. They are targets of repression and hostility, forever leading a life of aloofness, subdued and humiliated. Widows' rights are trampled upon by the custodian of tradition (A. Skyere, 2014, p.390). In Andreas' fictional society, the two widows are dehumanized, discriminated and isolated from the society. Widows in Namibian society are denied the inheritance right as reiterated by Mee Ali, the narrator in the novel as follows: "That was terrible, terrible. This inheritance thing. I don't know where it will lead us, I am sure they took all her animals" (PVO, p.41). In addition, Kauna's suffering continues increasing in the hands of people who were supposed to comfort her. She is despised and scorned for not weeping at the death of her husband: "There is a rumour that apparently you are not behaving like a widow... That you are not mourning the death of your husband... You are not crying...No tears...Your face is so dry" (PVO, p.48). This accusation deteriorates the sorrowful conditions of Kauna who has only her best friend Mee Ali to sympathise with her. Apart from Kauna who has been victim of false accusation, Mee Sarah, another widow also has endured the same predicaments. Mee Sarah, who, like Kauna, was accused of having caused her husband's death by using witchcraft, while in reality he died of AIDS, and who, after the latter's death, was stripped of all her earthly belongings, according to the rules of customary law in force in this community, and Mee Nangula, prosperous business woman and owner of several supermarkets, who nearly lost everything when her husband and his jealous relatives could not cope with her success and accused her of witchcraft.

Kauna and Mee Sarah have been treated like a pariah because as the tradition advocates, they are suspected of being responsible for the death of their respective husbands. The sufferings and the hardships of these two widows have been possible because they belong to a society characterized by male dominance which dates back to Africa's pre-colonial past when gender hierarchy was taken for granted (N. Namhila, 1997, p.198). Kauna and Mee Sarah mourn every night on their bed. The pressure coming from their society traumatized each one of them to an extent that they are totally lost. Apart from their

rejection by their family in-law, the society imposes on them a certain number of treatments which affect them psychologically. Mee Ali, the narrator from the novel unequivocally lays emphasis on the inhuman treatments African societies impose on the widows:

The whole confrontation reminded me of the funeral of Michael's cousin, Victor. I still vividly remember how they tore that poor widow apart. I thought that because they lived in a town, Victor's relatives would be embarrassed to be so greedy. But what I saw at that mourning house had scared me. The way they treated Victor's widow, Mee Sarah, was inhumane. (PVO, p.102), my emphasis

The above excerpt clearly depicts the inhuman treatments Namibian widows are inflicted after the death of their husbands. Women in Namibian society are subaltern subjects and are bound to endure whatever their society imposes on them. Kauna and Mee Sarah are circumscribed by the prescriptions and the taboos of traditional patriarchy and are compelled to live within male-defined parameters. Rose Acholonu made the same observation in the following: "widows are subjected to a whole gamut of obnoxious widowhood rites aimed at making her die within the mourning period about one year. Most brothers-in-law are ever ready to disinherit her and [...] drive her out of her marital home" (E. Ngongkum, 2016, p.140). Mee Sarah, Victor's wife suffered innocently in the hands of the family members of her deceased husband though she was not responsible for her husband's death, because the latter died of AIDS as a result of his infidelity to his wife. Widowhood rites devalue and degrade widows in most African societies. They are vulnerable subjects in the societies and undergo all kinds of inhuman treatments. Their rights are snatched by their relatives. In Namibian society, widows are meant to be seen, not heard. The prevailing atmosphere is hostile towards women, especially widows. Widows are suspected to have caused the death of their husbands by their sins. As consequence, they are bound to undergo all kinds of treatments society finds appropriate for them. African societies in general and the Namibian society in particular think that when a widow accepts without any question the treatments society imposes on her, this widow is likely to be forgiven by her late husband.

3- Solidarity and Rebellion as Aesthetics of Women's Revenge

Neshani Andreas' Kauna lives in a society dominated by patriarchal dogmas, a society in which women are compelled to do sacrifice for the happiness of their husbands. The traditional patriarchy coupled with the Christian assumptions are put together to create hell to women who are supposed to respect all the requirements that define them as goodwives and daughters. Once married in that Namibian society, women in this society lose all their freedom and their voices so as to please their husbands. Women as they appear in this society passively accept to be physically and emotionally abused by their men. Marriage in that society does not contribute to women's social thriving but it rather puts them in a perpetual suffering. Kauna, the protagonist from the novel becomes a victim of marriage abuse as her husband constantly beats her and exerts emotional abuse on her and nobody in her family is there to help her. Marriage becomes a social burden to women in this Namibian society whereby the women's beating becomes normal and a duty for women to accept. Kauna in a couple of times endured many sufferings as result from her husband, Shange's beating. Before this physical abuse, the only thing Kauna's mother could say is to remind her about the marital requirements. In the following words, Kauna's mother has it that: "besides, you forgot a very important thing. Shange is the man God has given you and you must accept him as he is. You have made a promise before him and the whole congregation to love and cherish your husband till death, do your part. You cannot break your words now" (PVO, p.67). Kauna's mother faithfully played her role by coaching her daughter not to divorce her husband, for in her own views, this will constitute a shame to the family. She unequivocally reports that: "Mother told me that a divorce will have a really bad effect on Daddy's preaching" (PVO, p.67). Kauna's mother believes that once married, there is no way out and a woman who dares walkout of her marriage is a shame to her family. She even despises and treats her junior sister Mee Fannie like a pariah just because she divorced. Kauna is bound to endure and accept the hardship Shange inflicts on her in

order to be in compliance with her society and by extension to save her father's image as a preacher. Kauna's mother has succeeded her mission because she has been capable of convincing her daughter. Kauna in this perspective has it that: "that was the end of the discussion. So, I just gave up. I'm tired. Now, when he beats me, I simply nurse my wounds. Maybe my mother was right, this is the man God has given me and I must accept him, bad as he is. (PVO, p.67). This passage shows how Kauna lost hope that one day her plight will change. Helped by her mother, Kauna rejected the idea of taking action against the brutality of her husband. In her society, a woman's respect and consideration is linked to her capacity to stay in a marriage and her ability to bear children. This depicts the predicaments in which women live in some African societies. Through marriage, a woman is honoured in her society and through it also, most women are physically and psychologically abused. Laying emphasis on this issue, Otokunefor maintains that:

the marriage paradox lies in the fact that it is both sublimating and subsuming. Through it a woman attains a status acclaimed by society and fulfils her biological need of procreation and companionship. Through it too, the woman's place of second rate is emphasized and too easily she is lost in anonymity to the benefit and the enhancement of the household.
(H. Otokunefor and O. Nwodo: 1989, p.5)

Kauna's plight epitomizes that of many African women in their marriages due to the various pressures from their societies. Though surrounded by millions of relatives, Namibian women suffer from loneliness and depression. It is thus in the background of such female self-dedication to the traditional and Christian patriarchy that Neshani Andreas decides to break the canon by elaborating ways and strategies to challenge their societies dominated by men's chauvinistic dictates. Although women in *the Purple Violet of Oshaantu* are constantly humiliated and erased from the group of humans who must be respected, they use solidarity to recreate and reaffirm themselves as respectable humans. Thus when Shange takes it for granted that it is normal for him as a man to constantly beat his wife, Mukwankala, an elderly woman seizes that opportunity to redirect his mind as follow:

I heard you beat her again and this time I heard you almost killed her.....why did you beat the child like that? If you don't want her any more, why don't you send her back to her parents, because whatever she is doing, you don't seem to beat it out of her? She looked him up and down from head to toe. Have you ever looked at yourself, your body, your weight, your height? She asked, as if it were possible that he had forgotten these things. How do you feel when you beat a person who cannot beat you back? How do you feel afterward? (PVO, pp.62-63)

The above passage depicts the frustration of Mukwankala who feels the pain that Kauna undergoes in the hands of her macho husband. From this, it is clear that Mukwankala's attitude vis-à-vis Shange translates her total commitment towards women's liberation from the yoke of marriage. This liberation can be possible if women decide to work hand in hand. Revealing all this in her fictional work, one can say that the writer invites other women to promote women's solidarity for their effective liberation. Solidarity, commonness and togetherness are in the view of Andreas, some key weapons for women's success over patriarchal thrusts. Mukwankala's threats to Shange bear fruits since he was compelled to stop abusing Kauna. Amazingly, Shange did not touch Kauna again. The narrator buttresses:

My fears that all hell would break loose once she was discharged from hospital were forgotten. He did not even confront her, at first, Kauna did not trust him; she thought it was just a matter of time before her husband beat her again. But it did not happen. From that moment, Mukwankala that.....Mukwankala (PVO, p.72)

In the forgoing passage, it is clear that Shange has taken into consideration what Mukwankala said on Kauna's behalf and stopped beating her. The result of Makuwankala's confrontation with Shange is a tangible proof that solidarity is important for women's liberation in a society governed by traditional assumptions. Making Mukwankala's solidarity with Kauna change Shange to the benefit of Kuna's peace shows that women in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* have realized that unity is strength. The value of solidarity and friendship among women is once more reiterated in the following when Mee Ali decided to take Kaun's defense before her family -in-Law after her husband's sudden death:

I couldn't stand it anymore. I felt I just couldn't sit there and watch them tear her apart. I decided to say something. I chose my words carefully. ' I am sure the doctors and nurses at the hospital can help us find the cause of Shange's death. These days people can look healthy and strong and then suddenly...' (PVO, pp.98-99)

This passage shows how a friend finds herself in an obligation to interfere in a family problem in order to speak on the behalf of the oppressed widow who is being innocently accused of killing her husband. Just as the way her friend could no longer take it and decided on Kauna's behalf, Kauna at a certain moment could not take the abuses on herself. She decided to let the world know about what she undergoes. The plight and the predicament Kauna endures in her husband's hands could not leave her aloof, she was in obligation to let her aunt know who, in her turn, encouraged her to leave her abusive husband for her total freedom.

Leave him, she told me again and again. Leave him. If you think you deserve more than what you get out of your marriage, divorce that man. it is not an easy thing to do and nobody enjoys a divorce, but sometimes it is a decision that needs to be taken. Do it before you add another one, "Mee Fennie said (PVO, p.66)

Kauna's aunty Mee Fennie challenges the religious and the traditional assumptions which maintain African women in their abusive marriages. In the case of Kauna, women have joined their hands and supported her and all this has helped her to break silence which is no more a gold. Kauna defies her mother and talks with admiration about how her aunt achieved great things without any man's help. In Namibian society, women are honored with regard to their capacity of bearing children and of enduring the hardship of their marriages. Due to this situation most women are obliged to accept any kind of sacrifice to save their marriages even if it may be lethal to them. Contrary to other women, Kauna's aunt refuses to stay in an abusive marriage. She prefers to be a single and happy woman and mother, a self-fulfilled woman. She stands as a role model for Kauna who calmly is looking for ways and means to free herself from her unhappy marriage. Thus, following the

footsteps of aunt, Kauna decides to act differently. Silenced for long, she decides to find her voice and talk to her society at the death and funerals of her husband.

In Kauna's society, a woman is expected to mourn her husband's death, she is expected to weep and sing the praises of her man. Kauna decides to challenge that tradition which does not consider her feelings. Kauna openly exposes her husband's infidelity as a sign of her new acquired identity. When she is asked to know what happened to her husband, she replies: "I told you, he did not sleep at home, he... 'we don't need to hear that. You have told the whole village that already'" (PVO, p.98). In that conversation, the reaction of Kauna's interlocutor shows that Kauna is wrong by revealing this secret that she was supposed to keep. She is breaking a social norm. Kauna did not stop on that act of exposing her husband's unfaithfulness; she furthermore let her society know that her marriage was not a happy one. Kauna was expected to mourn her husband's death but she later refuses to be in compliance with her tradition which constitutes a stumbling block to her self-fulfillment. The narrator in the following reveals that:

But, Ali, can you imagine what I have to say about that man? Can you picture me saying ... No! I am not going to tell the lies that widows tell at their husbands' funerals. I am not going to say what an honorable, loving and faithful husband he was? I will not make a laughing stock of myself. No, not because of Shange or anyone else, she said with finality. 'Shange does not expect me to do this. I realized that Kauna had made up her mind and that nothing would change it. (PVO, p.139)

The above passage reveals Kauna's self-determination in a society governed by patriarchal dogmas. The attitude of Kauna shows her total determination to challenge the traditional ways of viewing African marriage. This attitude of Kauna has been viewed as a challenge to traditional ways of living. The narrator substantiates:

You are doing this on purpose, aren't you? Mee Kiito said with forced calmness. You want to disgrace our clan. You want to demonstrate to the world what a horrible man my cousin was. You want this, is that not so? Haven't you done enough damage to his name already by running around like a crazy freak broadcasting for everybody to hear, that Shange had not

slept at home the night before he died? I feel sorry for you, terribly sorry, Mee Kiito went on with a cynical laugh. (PVO, p.138)

One can read disappointment in the passage above. Kauna's behavior has left choc and dismay. Those who were coming to see her crying in self-pity are disappointed and those who armed themselves with words to abuse a widow are also disappointed because Kauna refuses to create an occasion for them to continue abusing her and depriving her of her freedom after the burial of her husband. Before their disappointment, Kauna was serene and confident because she did nothing wrong. She has come to realize that she has to love herself and please herself instead of pleasing her society which has no regard to widow. Kauna becomes a self-realized and a self-defined woman who has nothing to do with her tradition that impedes women's self-fulfillment. She vehemently explains her position in the following:

well, I'm sorry you all feel uncomfortable about my behavior, but I cannot pretend, 'she shook her head. I cannot lie to myself and to everybody else in this village. They all know how I was treated in my marriage. Why should I cry? For what? For my broken ribs? For my baby, the one he killed inside me while beating me? For cheating on me so publicly? For what? For what? Ali? (PVO, p.49)

Although Kauna did not leave her husband till his premature death, she has been able to challenge her society and all that is related to widowhood. She becomes aware that the respect of her tradition is no more important if she really wants to be a self-defined woman. She openly acted to show the opposite of what society expected her to do. She therefore succeeds in challenging her tradition and this contributes to the definition of her new identity.

CONCLUSION

This study on Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* has examined and presented the various ills related to marriage and widowhood inherent in Oshaantu's community. The study lays bare a whole body of challenges that women face in their homesteads, in the fictional community of Oshaantu. Furthermore, the work has scrutinised how compelling and perilous marriage can become for women

who bend under the rules and social norms which tradition places on the female. Neshani Andreas shows how abusive marriage becomes for women in that community because of the physical as well as emotional violence that they are victims of. These women dare not leave such marriages at the risk of being rejected by their families and the society. The work then has shown how dehumanising and humiliating widowhood can be for some women who go through it. They are expropriated from their husbands' property, subject to abusive rites and in the worst cases falsely accused of the death of their deceased spouses. These treatments harm and hinder their emancipation and self-fulfillment and deprive them as well of their inalienable human rights. For women facing such situations, female solidarity then becomes an imperative for surviving the different tools of subjugations set on them by patriarchal restrictions. It is in this context that the friendship between Mee Ali and Kauna takes on its full meaning. The findings show that togetherness and unity can serve as prime mover to rebel against certain male-made rules, in a perspective of revenge. All things considered, moving from Neshani's fictive setting and thinking about "concrete life experiences and contemporary situations", (S. S. Boukari, 1983; p. 69) it is possible to say that the walk toward women's full realisation in marriage is still long and not easy.

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