

**Patriarchy as Infraction in Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* and Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu***

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**Abstract**

Feminist writers protest against dehumanisation, political enslavement, and social oppression which are violations of fundamental human rights guaranteed by the law. Existing feminist literatures of African focus privilege a utilitarian and collaborative approach to the plights of women in Africa. Using Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* and Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, this study interrogates patriarchal subjugation immanent in African cultural spaces. Andrea Dworkin's radical feminism is employed to account for the characters' radical actions that are geared towards a holistic liberation of the woman from the shackles of oppressive patriarchy. In *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna's refusal to mourn her late abusive husband marks the height of radical protest of gender discrimination and oppression. Not even the conspicuousness of the fruits of her marriage to the late husband was enough to persuade her. She is abused by the late husband,

brutally, psychologically and physically. In *Wounding Words*, Hayate who is a radical metaphor of freedom in the conservative Tunisian society transcends religious barriers to fight for and demand the liberation of women who were working under indecorous conditions in textile factories. In her activist consciousness, she defends a female victim who does not feel the pain of losing her husband to adultery and promiscuity. In both texts, the writers create awareness of the damaging effects of oppressive patriarchy on the wellbeing of women. They call for an attitudinal change that is gender friendly and guarantees the fundamental human rights of women which are assured in the law.  
**Keywords:** Dehumanisation, Protest, Violations, Law, Liberation

**Introduction**

During the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, between 1715 and 1789 precisely, an intellectual movement sprang up emphasizing reason, individualism, scepticism and science. The period also signified the time women began to stand up for their rights and benefits in the society. They began to assert that all persons were born equal and there should not be any discrimination based on gender. The enlightenment age was a period of female consciousness. It was a time when women began to write to air their views. They wrote to express their dissatisfaction with the plights of women in many European societies. Female writers who engage in such quests for liberation are called feminists. In other words, a feminist is someone who supports the idea that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men – someone who believes that the fundamental human rights of women should be respected.

Charles Nnolim, in his *Feminism in African Literature* views “feminism as a movement and ideology that urges in simple terms, the recognition of the claims of women for equal rights with men in legal, political, economic, social and marital

situation"(135). For Modupe MaryKolawole:

Feminism is a rejection of inferiority and a striving for recognition; it seeks to give a woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual, and contributing human being. It is a reaction against such negative stereotypes that are targeted at women" (29).

She further points out that feminism is based on the theory of individuality, recognition of the personhood of women and equal opportunity for development (37). From its etymology, "femina" (meaning female), feminism conveys the ideology of womanhood – that is, any organized social or political philosophy about women. Does the world or the different societies of the world have a concept of womanhood? Is there a body of ideas about the female gender? The word, "feminism" entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1894, long after the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment era as mentioned earlier, but ever before then, there had been an ideology of women in the Western world as well as in other societies of the world.

According to R. Bossan, feminism is, "a socio-political awareness that stirs up in women the agitation for equality in all forms of rights and privileges between sexes" (230). Bossan believes that feminism embodies the idea that it is necessary to struggle against the oppression of women on the social, economic and ideological planes. The struggle comes in various forms and with different objectives, which is why Goring, Hawthorn and Mitchel describe feminism as "a broad church, one within which many different emphases and persuasions ... can be found." Thus, as an ideology of women's emancipation, feminism has enough rooms to accommodate the various types of feminisms. According to Javeed Ahmad Raina:

The fundamental belief behind feminist theory is that from the beginning of human civilization, women have been given a secondary status by masculine dominated social discourse and western philosophical tradition. The history of every civilization shows that women have always been subordinated to a position where they have no means to re-claim their unique identity unless and until they re-visit the history, explore it and finally re-establish it through their own experiences and insights (3373).

It is worthwhile to note that the term "feminism" was not there originally. It emerged much later to be used to describe women who come together to examine the prevailing societal ideas about women, assert women's roles in the society, discuss how women are being treated by fathers, husbands, boyfriends and brothers, and seek a shift from the norm. Feminist writers, therefore, began to protest against dehumanisation, political enslavement, discrimination, imbalances and social oppression. They began to demand equal rights for both male and female genders. This began to raise serious questions about cultural orientations and traditional stereotypes that had created gender imbalances. Margaret Walters affirms that sense of individuality which is often mistaken for misandry. She argues, "I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute"(1).

Another factor that prompted women into writing was the belief that men were not in the right position to write exhaustively on the life of women; and even when they do, they cannot or may not write effectively on the subject. Take the issue of barrenness: the major problem that a woman faces in the world especially in Africa is the pain of not being able to bring forth a child from her

womb, a feat that no man can perform. The pain is great if she is denied this function and this is why the theme of barrenness is explored by many African writers, particularly the female ones. A wife is more often betrayed and abandoned by her husband if she does not have a child. Therefore, the desire to be pregnant, to procreate is an overpowering one in the life of a woman. She is ready to do anything to have a child, single or married. To the women writers, it is practically impossible for men to adequately capture, refract and reflect women's conditions in their writings. Women writers believe that it is only the person who wears the shoes that knows where it pinches the most. They believe that no man can adequately write on the feelings of a barren woman, a prostitute, a divorced woman, a widow or a pregnant woman. It is only a woman that can express these feelings through writing. Although a few male writers have written on feminist issues, they have often done so to portray how women are politically enslaved in a particular society but have failed to capture the inner feelings of women.

Women have, therefore, enriched the existing knowledge base by writing about their own experiences within the African context. It is deducible from Flora Nwapa's works that a woman's role in Africa is crucial for the survival and progress of the race. This is of course true of all women across the globe, be they black or white. In most of her works, Nwapa tries to project a more balanced image of African womanhood. Recent changes in Nigeria from the Civil War era, economic changes, and an emphasis on the education of women, have affected men's views about women. Women have started to redefine themselves; they have started projecting themselves as they feel they should be projected. More than anything else, Nwapa gives examples of the crucial roles Igbo women play in their traditional communities. The African female creative writers are very much alive in Africa today and occupy an important place, breaking new grounds by

“exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history, protesting the ongoing degradation of women, celebrating their physical and intellectual capabilities, and above all, unfolding a revolutionary vision of role” (16). It is left to the creative writers, male and female alike, to explore this new awareness, this new image of women's sensibilities, possibilities and realities and produce works which the modern African woman can relate to.

With the affordance of Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* and Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, this study, therefore, interrogates patriarchal subjugation and objectification of women as immanent in African cultural spaces. It also gives reasons why oppressed women often react to subjugation in extreme ways. Finally, it creates awareness about the plights of oppressed women and discourages such oppressive tendencies streaming down from patriarchal structures so as to encourage a harmonious co-existence between men and women in the society.

### **Andrea Rita Dworkin's Feminism**

Andrea Rita Dworkin, a radical feminist author, speaker, and activist, is best known for her scathing criticism of pornography and prostitution and for being vocal in condemning oppressive tendencies of patriarchal institutions and cultures. In her 1983 speech entitled “I Want a 24-Hour Truce in Which There is No Rape”, she is acclaimed to have declared thus: “The power exercised by men, day to day, in life is power that is institutionalised. It is protected by law. It is protected by religion and religious practice...” (1). In a nutshell, Dworkin's writings are purposed to assert the universality of oppressive patriarchy and decry the injustices in institutionalized and normalized sex-based harm against women. This paper is therefore mainly anchored on her viewpoints. For instance, she sees pornography as an oppressive practice which enables suppressive men to possess women as objects and commodities. Her radical views are

privileged in this study because they reflect on domestic imperatives and marital sexuality. The central concern in Dworkin's work is re-evaluating the culture and politics of the male gender against the female. She does this by creating a prism of men's sexual violence against women in a patriarchal context. Her concept of radical feminism is evident in her examination of subjects historically written or described from men's perspective. She goes further to theorise the sexual politics of intelligence, fear, courage, and integrity and weave it around presumed biological superiority (Dworkin: 1987, 127-128). She, indeed, submits that male supremacist political and cultural ideology is made manifest in rape, battery, prostitution and pornography (Dworkin: 1976:25).

Consequently, the authors foregrounded in this study create male characters who violently abuse the dignity of women within the marital space, and immediately evoke a condemnation of sexual violence against women. In Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna suffers physical, psychological and sexual abuses in the hands of her late husband. She loses her pregnancies due to constant beatings. Similarly, in Evelyn Accad's *Wounding Words*, Hayate becomes an advocate in a largely conservative society defending oppressed and abused women.

### **The Nuptial Entrapment in the *Purple Violet of Oshaantu***

*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* is set in a village in northern Namibia. It reflects on a number of issues – marriage and widowhood, economic status of women, reproduction rights, domestic violence, religion, and (dis)inheritance rights – to critique an oppressive patriarchal system. In this novel, the author explores the different views on marriage held by various women. This is a story about a young woman called Kauna. Kauna's story is narrated by her older friend Mee Ali, who unlike Kauna enjoys a good marriage. Kauna's husband is abusive. The novel is about the

reality of the choices open to Kauna and the path that she takes to understand and deal with her predicament. Africa is replete with stories of marital abuse which often have men as preys and women as victims.

Mee Ali is married with four children and enjoys her marriage because she married a man who loves and adores her. For her, marriage should be enjoyed and not endured and it is not worth staying with an unfaithful husband. She fears for her friend and does all that she can to bring attention to her friend's plight. Mee Kauna is also married with five children and her marriage is not a happy one because her husband in addition to beating her every now and then also cheats on her without trying to hide it. She sees marriage as something that should be endured and even though she no longer loves her husband, she has chosen to stay with him. Marriage in the traditional sense is the union of a man and woman that is based on mutual consent and love. When love and consent suffer inequality in marriage, violence becomes the order of the day.

The third woman, Mee Maita, who attends church with Ali and Kauna, believes that whatever joy that is to be derived from marriage is in the first few years. After that, the honeymoon is over and a woman should accept whatever comes her way. Mee Ali and Mee Kauna are best friends. In their friendship, Kauna finds respite from most of her marital problem. Mee Ali and her husband, Tate Michael help in saving Kauna from many a fight with her husband, Tate Shange. Other women, notably Kauna's aunt, speak for Kauna but the reality is that Kauna's options are few. As a married woman, she cannot go back to her parents' house. Kauna's aunt tells her that the ball is in her court and she can decide whatever it is that seems best to her. Her mother's advice to her is to appreciate the man that God has given her. With time and prayer, Shange will change. She has little sympathy for her daughter, believing that

whatever has happened to Kauna is her own fault and she should not bring shame to their family by leaving Shange. This is essentially the goal of oppressive patriarchy, to perpetually keep women subjugated. In her mother's thinking, a good wife must stay to make her marriage work irrespective of the kind of circumstances surrounding such a marriage. This is what women in many cultures of the world are trained to imbibe religiously. They are made to believe that choosing to leave the marriage to protect themselves from harm is akin to disgrace. Hence, many women have had to suffer in their marriages until such marriages take their lives. Dworkin's Feminism challenges depraved structures that oppress women and dent their dignity. It is quite ironical that a woman is urging a fellow woman to continue enduring victimisation. On the surface, one might see culpability in Kauna's mother's advice but the fact is that she is only responding to the culture of subservience that she has learnt. Oppressive patriarchy uses control to subjugate women. The oppressive system makes a male-inclined system that is called culture and uses it to stifle the voice of women. They create gender identities and roles to shortchange women. The village community and the church are both unsympathetic. But there is an acknowledgement of Kauna's suffering when almost all the village women, including children, join hands in preparing Kauna's large farm land for the planting season. They all sing different songs of victory, friendship, sorrow and love.

When Shange dies all of a sudden, accusing fingers are pointed at Kauna, especially since she does not cry or show any sign of bereavement. She only keeps telling everybody that Shange just came home and did not touch the food she had prepared. Mee Ali does not like the fact that Kauna does not mourn the death of her husband and when she tries to reason with her, Kauna retorts that she has no interest in pretending she misses her husband. Kauna does not cry and refuses to speak a word of tribute

to her dead husband. Instead, she is vocal about her suffering in the marriage: "Well, I'm sorry you all feel uncomfortable about my behaviour, but I cannot pretend. I cannot lie to myself and everybody else in this village"(34). Kauna realises her victimhood and the need to fight for emancipation. It is quite ironical that a wife loses her husband and all she feels is resentment instead of a solemn feeling of loss.

Kauna's attitude is realistic because human beings naturally respond to the effects of actions. While positive actions are likely to get positive responses, negative actions get negative responses. Her husband gave her doses of negative actions while alive and she will not pretend to respond with positive actions in his death. In fact, she relishes the wind of freedom she feels. She goes further to say, "...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 what" (53)? This is a very radical break from the required traditional demeanour that would have her pretend or show some squeamishness even contrary to her true emotions. It is at this point of rebellion to the existing order and self-assertion that she begins for the first time to imagine herself as an individual, and not as a woman in relation to a man.

This and a combination of other things make Shange's family angry with Kauna, especially when she tells them that she doesn't know anything about Shange's money. They suspect that she is keeping the money for herself. After the funeral rites, they ask Kauna and her children to leave the house. Kauna goes almost too willingly because she is ready to live a life, ready to start afresh as a free woman. Kauna's refusal to mourn her husband among other acts of defiance shows that she has, finally, got a bit of her self-worth back. This is a radical protest which signals psychological freedom from oppression. Shenge's family's attitude to Kauna's pains says something critical about the

oppressive patriarchal culture in many parts of the world especially Africa which sees culpability only in the woman in every instance of nuptial hitch. Even when it is clear that a woman has done her very best to make her marriage work, the hegemonic culture has a funny way of shifting blames to her. Kauna is not ready to continue living with the identity of servitude. She has been pushed to the wall and she is now turning to fight back. She is grateful to her friend, Mee Ali, who has stood solidly by her during her stay with Shange. Thus, psychologically liberated, Kauna confesses how she has desired and always wished she were married to Tate Michael, Mee Ali's husband. Aside from the fact that Tate Michael is very loving and caring, she feels that she deserves the best of all men. She feels that she is supposed to have married a good man as a reward for keeping her virginity till marriage. But the reverse has just been the case with her. She is at last able to express her frustration at respecting a sexuality code that fails to compensate her with an equally chaste, kind, and caring husband. This is one instance of inequality in codes of many patriarchal cultures. What favours a man will be coined not to favour a woman. While it is cultural and normal for Kauna to keep her virginity, the idea of chastity is not even conceived for a man let alone being ethically enforced. The concept of virginity is only defined in relation to a woman's conducts. That is inequality of human dignity. Although Mee Ali is very angry at Kauna's open interest in her husband, she later pardons her in the understanding that her friend's misery is a factor of socially approved sexual conduct for the males that robs women of kindness at home from their husbands. Mee Ali only happens to have been fortunate with her own husband, Tate Michael, otherwise she would have been in the same unfortunate state as Kauna herself.

One would indeed conclude that the power exercised by men against women in the fictive world of the novel is so firmly entrenched that at no point in the narrative is Kauna allowed by the

community to perceive herself as a victim in her marital relationship. She is rather expected to accept her experience as something normal within the marriage institution. There are, at any rate, several female characters whose voices, friendship, and support remind Kauna of her worth and also provide respite, however brief, from her situation. The latter help her to regain her dignity and humanity. She soon realises that she is a being with right to personal thoughts and perception, a being with intentional capacity to reason and make good and bad decisions which she and she alone should be responsible for. Kauna regains her freedom. On the other hand, the vicious attitudes of the enablers of the patriarchal cultures infringe on her right to personal dignity guaranteed by the natural law and that of the United Nations. There are many vulnerable women in Kauna's shoes in many parts of the world. Many of them find it difficult to find and assert their voices for the fear of being labeled disrespectful women. Many thanks to the different waves of the Feminist Movements which have consistently helped women to speak out on different cultural issues affecting them as a social group. They have over the years won the right to vote and be voted for in many progressive climes – even though this right is slowly being enforced. They have also won the battle on segregation in the corporate and academic worlds, social organisations, to mention but a few. However, the road to the paradise of gender equality is many miles away. The awareness created by movements like the Me-Too has also helped tremendously in foregrounding the plights of women in many strata of the society. Kauna's experiences constitute a definition of women in many oppressive cultures of the world.

### **Womanhood as Solace in Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words***

The novel is a clear autobiographical exploration of women's concerns in the contemporary Tunisia. Evelyne Accad is a feminist writer born in Beirut. As a Lebanese-American with Arab root, Evelyne's perception of her ancestral society and the

world view therein is represented in the idiosyncrasies of her main character, Hayate. She is certainly not given to inequality and oppressive tendencies hence, her firm position as portrayed in the character of Hayate. Being the protagonist, Hayate's feminist ideals are put to the test during her stay in Tunisia. Her friends face the choice of leaving the Arab country to live where women can find more freedom, or stay to work for a better society. The women in Accad's novel fight against male oppression. The protagonist is a Lebanese feminist who spends a year on a research grant from an American university, meeting up with Tunisian feminists.

The story opens with Hayate's visit to Nayla. Nayla's wall was covered with posters and photos, calling for the liberation of the oppressed. She seems very excited at the sight of Hayate. She pleads with Hayate to help her prepare an article on women textile workers in the area, whose working conditions are inhumane. She says, "They have to be talked about, even if it's dangerous. If we don't have the courage to reveal injustice, who will? People are so apathetic" (112). Hayate responds positively and agrees to help her. Hayate is a messianic figure for the oppressed women in the Arab nation. Nayla cannot hide her joy in sighting Hayate. They forge friendship with other women like-minds and discuss ways of bettering the lots of women in the regimented cultural space. They hold their first meeting, where one of them, a psychiatrist, explains an article which establishes the link between sexuality and identity. The article's ideas contradict her sexual life and her professional life. The other women take the floor; they express their uneasiness and difficulties, the sexual problem they have encountered and what these may signify for the Tunisian society. They plan to create a publication for women, a magazine in which they would finally be able to express what torments them. In this way, they could make their voices heard, unveil and reveal society's ills. Through Hayate's experience and resolve, Accad opens an uncomfortable conversation on the rights of women and

their experiences. Hayate mobilises an army of aggrieved women who are ready to take back their humanity and dignity forcefully taken away by hegemonic patriarchal cultures. Nayla symbolizes the voice of many women which has for long been stifled by oppressive cultures. The Tunisian society of the novel is not open to progressive changes and ideas which favour the progress of women. Hence, just like the biblical Jews who for many years hoped for the coming of a saviour who would liberate them from the claws of the Roman Empire, the women in this fictive Tunisian society eagerly anticipate the coming of saviours like Nayla and Hayate. Their bondage in the patriarchal culture of the novel kills the poise in them and Hayate is not happy about the reality. She and her friends functionally become the messiahs the vulnerable women in Tunisia have long been waiting for.

The most pressing concern is finance; where can they obtain the fund to begin? They decide to refuse all help from institutions or individuals to whom they would be accountable. They do not want to see themselves limited in what they have to say by economic pressure, however friendly. They decide to contribute, even at the cost of enormous sacrifice. For some of them, fifty dinars is more than a quarter of their monthly salary. Even so, they give it whole-heartedly. They organise themselves into committees assigned to cover different experiences with men and how their society treats them badly. It is important the goal of a project is understood and carefully understudied from the beginning. The women who are constituting themselves into change agents understand clearly what they want to achieve with their project. Hence, the need to shut all opposing or would-be opposing doors. Shutting such doors will allow them to focus on the crux of the project which is to liberate Tunisian women from the shackles of patriarchal culture. On the willpower that enables a revolution of this nature, Hayate motivates Aida, "The sea has a power to renew that always surprises me. I chose to live here for

just that reason, even though for a woman alone, staying in such an isolated house by the sea is risky.”(2) An isolated space is indeed not ideal for a revolution that is intended to overthrow a tyrant. Hayate encourages her army to build safe zones from where they will launch out.

The propelling force for the movement of emancipation as far as Hayate is concerned is urgent and critical. She outlines the plights of women in the Arab society, “women singing through the darkness of their time, women crying out so that others may hear the call, women writing to denounce fear, cowardice, and injustice...” (7) The stifling culture of oppression creates the thick cloud of darkness, the loud cries and flowing ocean of tears, and the fear and cowardice which all come together to deny women of their dignity in the novel. The oppressive culture contravenes their basic human rights. Hayate's diary is detailed in narrating the experiences of women in the Tunisian society. As a tourist to Tunis, she is careful to observe and see the conditions of living of women in the city. She marshals her observations:

The damp dust of your walls clings to the skin  
Like the insistent eyes of your men  
On women's bodies and faces  
Violent glances which incite revolt  
Cries of rage, a call to action,  
A walk in the forbidden city  
A table in barred restaurants...  
Solidarity of women approaching spaces closed to them...  
The story of these women  
Silent and strong  
Daring to challenge.  
Women have become 'mere objects' for the fascination of men (7).

She realises that their conditions of living suggest that they are seen as “mere objects” who have nothing else to offer except the “forbidden city”. The sexualisation of women in Tunisia reeks of the parochial mentality slavish cultures have about women. Accad protests this ideation of the woman. Redefining the sexuality of women will in the words of Hayate mean that her army of women's activists will have “scars in their words, open wounds in their hearts, tears in their writing, cries in their tears...light a thousand fires of rebellion and hope” (17). Their fight requires perseverance and consistency. Dworkin's Feminism corroborates the fact that patriarchal ideology drives on the wheels of rape, battery, prostitution and pornography – the sexualisation and objectification of women.

Aida never likes doing household chores. She values her job a lot. Her husband befriends her girlfriend for a very long time without her knowledge. At a point her husband announces that he is going to live with her friend. She allows him go, and in a way, it was a relief. They don't get along on a physical level, nor on emotional or psychological level. They divorce and she gets through the trial with the help of the women's group which is being formed. All the women have similar experience which takes little effects on their private lives. Fortunately, there is a group association where they could talk about their odd experiences and try to overcome the suffering. Halima tells of her life story, the death of her husband, and her conflicting feeling of liberation as well as guilt. Each of them speaks of how they came to feminism. Zahra takes the floor first. To her, feminism is a personal and political response to her situation and relationship with power. For a long time, she has refused to go out with a militant. Living the life of a militant feminist would mean not refusing all of her family's pressure regarding marriage. Feminism helps her to establish her identity and to be independent. The latter, of course, are the hallmark of feminism. It helps women to de-objectify

themselves and assume an identity of independence and responsibility. If women are independent of men, it is not equal to insubordination. It simply means that they can relate better with men and be more useful to them. In fact, it is vice versa. Men's independence should also enable same amiable relationship.

It is equally interesting to know that oppressive cultures use religion as a contrivance of hegemony. The women are surprised to realise in their first meeting that religion which should ordinarily protect the interests of women who are vulnerable is used effectively to oppress them. Samia narrates the experience of a group of women who protests the many injustices against women in Monastir. They were “silenced with a reminder that the Koran had proclaimed that nothing good could come from a woman leader, that women are too emotional, do not have the intellectual capacity of men...” (14) This is nothing but circumscription of inferiority to women. While patriarchal norms of cultural leaning oppress women, religious doctrines equally canonised by men do further harm to them. Kevin Harrison and Tony Boyd corroborate that, “Feminism...attempts to analyse the social position of women, explain their apparent subsidiary role in history and offer the basis for reform and the advancement of women in all areas of society” (296). Patriarchal cultures leave nothing but subsidiary roles for women.

Samia speaks of how women are oppressed. She learns of how girls who are not virgins are killed in her small village. Her father beats her mother. Later on, she learns of her mother's trials and resolves that she will not live like her. She decides not to get married. She wants to study. Some of her illiterate cousins die under the blows of their husbands, and she says that she will never accept that fate. At age twenty two, she does the opposite of what she says, gets married but later divorces her husband. She goes back to continue her studies. When she discovers the club and no

longer feels marginalised and alone, she becomes comfortable. The club therefore becomes a symbol of freedom for the women who seriously feel caged and oppressed. They see it as a platform for expressing themselves and cooling off. The oppressing Tunisian culture is choking. They all in one voice acclaim, “We won't allow repression to become established” (14). Control is used effectively by the hegemonic culture to make women subservient. Their feeling of insecurity makes them brandish control as a tool of oppression. According to the female psychiatrist, “the Arab male is afraid of the female orgasm...afraid she will be unfaithful to him. In a relationship, the man's stakes are higher than the woman's...Men are therefore very afraid, for in losing their sexual identity, they can lose everything” (16). The sexual control they usually have over women against their consent is one tool they will never want to lose.

To Dalale, religion prevents her from moving forward. But when a woman drags her to the club, she begins to blossom. After God, it is the club. At the club, Samia talks about her research on the image of women in the society; she gets people from different areas to speak to her. She speaks to one woman who narrates how she has refused to have intercourse with her husband for the last seven years because he refuses to give her money to feed the children. The activities of the activist women create awareness of the need for total emancipation for the woman in Tunisia.

The novel is basically a journal of meetings and ideas dotted with numerous accounts of women reworking their society. It is less a novel, more of an exploration of the complex issues that confront mainly middle-class, Arab feminists. It becomes an avenue for narrating tales of women's struggles in the societies and against conditions that threaten their well-being.

## Conclusion

This study has been able to show that literatures of Arab origin also explore themes of women concerns. The two novels – Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* and Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* are characterised by oppression and subjugation. Most of the female characters live under the oppression and suppression of their husbands. Most of the male characters are portrayed as oppressors who deprive the female characters of value-defined lives. In *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna suffers victimhood in the hands of Shange, her abusive husband. When Shange eventually dies, Kauna refuses to mourn him because she has not recovered from the gory memory of her late husband's abusive actions. Unsuspecting persons who do not really know what she has passed through in the hands of her late husband see her actions as wicked, vindictive, and unreasonable. Hayate in *Wounding Words* assumes the responsibility of an activist going about preaching in conjunction with other like-minded women the need for women to be free from every form of oppression. Abusive patriarchy is portrayed as a dangerous societal ill which must be discarded for the freedom of women and the society, to the end that the fundamental human rights of women must be respected. The authors, therefore, have successfully exploited the instrumentality of literature to protest against as well as seek amelioration for the difficult circumstances women suffer within their societies.

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