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Nkiru Doris Onyemachi
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4590-6776
Edwin Clark University (Nigeria)

Silence, a Yell from Self towards Nothingness in Neshani Andreas' *The purple violet of Oshaantu* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple hibiscus*

ABSTRACT. Beyond voice lies a sound laden with dread. Dread, as Heidegger points out, is encountered in a feeling of nothingness. But nothingness is not an automatic existent; it is built up through actions that gradually breed detachment of self from a whole. This paper explores the journey of self towards nothingness in Andreas' *The purple violet of Oshaantu* and Adichie's *Purple hibiscus.* This journey is undertaken by the characters, Kauna and Mama, as they communicate with their spirits—silence. The silence of these characters is so shrieking that its echo is strongly heard in the lives of those around them. But are these characters able to liberate themselves after identifying selves or did they drench further into the helpless state they were before discovering selves? This is one question this paper answers as it traces these characters' journeys towards self-identification through nothingness.

KEYWORDS: Voice, Silence, Self, Nothingness, Being

Introduction

Silence, inarguably, is a recurring vocal role assigned to female characters in most African novels. This is due to the patriarchal domain through which these novels are probable. Several readings done on silence depict trenches of inequality, oppression, and subjugation meted out on the female gender by either their male counterpart or their homogenous specie. In Adichie's *Purple hibiscus*, silence as a thematic study has been subjected to a bildungsroman assessment of the protagonist, Kambili. Andreas' *The purple violet of Oshaantu* has few critical analysis done on oppression and subjugation with nothing much rendered to the presence of silence as a technique. This is to say that no study has been dedicated to the vibratory kernel of silence as a transitory mode for the

characters, Mama (Beatrice) and Kauna respectively. These novels share similarities in subject matters and character presentation but are set in different geographical locations, Nigeria and Namibia respectively. They are adorned with realism as they depict situations such as dysfunctional family life, corruption, oppression and subjugation. Unlike *Purple hibiscus* that has attracted a wide range of criticism both nationally and internationally, little analysis has been done on *The purple violet of Oshaantu*.

It has been noted by some critics that Andreas' residency in north Namibia inspired her to write *The purple violet of Oshaantu*. Born in 1964 at Walvis Bay in South-West Africa, Neshani Andreas grew up in the port city, Namibia, where her parents worked in a fish factory. She obtained training as a teacher at Ongwediva Training College located in the northern region of Namibia were she taught for five years. She later earned a Bachelor of Arts and post-graduate diploma in education at the University of Namibia. She worked for American Peace Corp for four years and as a programme officer for the Forum for African Women Educationalists. She died at the age of 46 in May 2011 after being diagnosed with lung cancer. Her novel *The purple violet of Oshaantu* remains her only notable novel as it reflects real situations of women in the northern Namibia. Ogbeide expresses the travails and woes of wives in the hands of abusive spouses in the novel. In an article titled "Violet without purple: The Colour of Spousal Violence in Neshani Andreas' *The purple violet of Oshaantu*," Ogbeide investigates wife battering and victimization of women by their spouses. He points out that "at the beginning of the marriage, Kauna is considered as beautiful, as the purple violet that grows in Oshaantu village. Her beauty, however, soon varnishes after a series of battering and abuse by her husband, Shange" (p. 255). He further examines Kauna's resolute spirit towards the end of the narrative:

> Although Kauna's resistant silence does not change discriminatory social practices, although the social hierarchy has not shifted, she is able to establish an autonomous voice for herself within that structure. Shange's death has freed her from her years of unhappiness and physical battering. True, she is walking away with only her children and without any means of sustenance. But she is determined to build a new and better life for herself and her children (p. 58).

Weiss (2004) analyzes racial and gender subjugation with voiceless state as a means of subversion in her article "Shades of Utter(ing) Silences in *The purple violet of Oshaantu*, *Maru* and *Under the tongue*". She

points out Kauna's show of disobedience through "a woman's silence." Weiss sees Kauna's silence as a moral victory where Kauna "could carry through her will of uttering silence and hence making the unspeakable visible: her year-long disgrace and oppression." Beukes (2011) in "Prime Focus Magazine" reviews the novel through a postcolonial/apartheid perspective; she investigates the novel as "a personal account of two dynamic women in the village of Oshaantu in the northern part of Namibia. The book plays itself off in a post-apartheid Namibia with HIV/AIDS still a myth and domestic violence justified by elders as a part of any normal marriage setting" (p. 1). Furthermore, Beukes (2011) evaluates the settings of the novel:

> The fact that Andreas does not romanticise rural life but depicts village life in its complexity brings many lessons such as the conflict between men and women but also the competition between women in the village, as well as cooperation and friendship. There are women who try to impose old values that oppress other women, and who gossip and accuse each other of witchcraft, which is never proven. There is the reality of hard physical work in the fields and the juggling which women face all over the world, trying to fit in all their daily tasks, on the land, in the home, looking after children and elderly relatives, maintaining a relationship with their husbands (p. 3).

For Beukes, the novel represents the travails of women in the world at large which includes subjugation and oppression by not only their male counterpart but also by their fellow women.

A close reading of critical works on *Purple hibiscus* also reflects gender subjugation and exploitation as major themes in the novel. Critics have potentially explored characters such as Kambili and Eugene as pivotal agents that wield the changes in the novel, but little attention is given to Mama whose journey towards the realisation of self brings about a sharp turn in the outcome of events. While investigating the subject-matters present in the novel which include effects of colonialism, religious tolerance and domestic violence, Ogwude takes a swipe at the character of Eugene which she describes as "a socially and financially successful but fatal flawed personality. This is in itself an apt summary of the ambiguous gains of the 'converted African' who while acquiring socioeconomic gains on the one hand, accepts a truncated cultural matrix on the other" (Ogwude, 1976, p. 115). This shows the imperfection of Eugene whose character is flawed by his act of domestic violence, which like a tragic hero, orchestrates his downfall (death) and disintegrates the family

which he holds steely together. Also Ogaga depicts Eugene as Janus-faced where "he urges his editor, Ade Coker to ensure that the *Standard* speaks out, yet he continues to muzzle his wife and children" (Ogaga, 2007, p. 247). In his article titled "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple hibiscus*" Ogaga carries out a bildungsroman reading on the character, Kambili:

> The novel traces the physical and psychological development of the protagonist, Kambili and her brother Jaja. A development which designates their struggle to define themselves, beyond the stiffened, and funless world their Calvinistic father has fashioned for them. Their fussy mercantile father builds a world stuffed with materialistic wholeness, a world that lacks ventilation, which guarantees a steady relationship with the outside when the inside becomes too suffocating (Ogaga, 2007, p. 246).

Ogaga also explores the growth of these characters as influenced by the socio-economic and patriarchal dominated African society. Udumukwu focuses on the representation of a modern African patriarch in Eugene and reiterates:

> Helen Chukwuma contends that in spite of Eugene's negative attributes, Adichie presents him as a monstrous representation of the Modern African male. Chukwuma's worries are formed by the fact that Eugene seems to be a confirmation of the old colonialist assumption about Africa's backwardness. Inspite of his success as an entrepreneur, there is the possibility of perceiving Eugene as a chip of the *Old tribal block* (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 195).

He points out the three perspectives present in the novel are "Eugene's perspective is the thesis which is also dominant patriarchal position. Aunty Ifeoma constitutes the antithesis [...] Kambili's perspective functions as the synthesis" (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 154). Furthermore, Udumukwu examines Kambili as a subject:

> [...] the speaking voice here is Kambili's. The echo of her voice resounds through the uses of forms of the first person pronoun, namely: "My" and "We". The possessive form "My" helps to establish a link between her and her brother, Jaja. But as a form of the first person, it also allows us to hear her as a subject in her own right and also as a female who has a brother (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 192).

Still on Kambili, Ogaga asserts that "the function of Kambili's tongue is so constricted so that her struggle to express herself usually termina-

tes with a stutter, making her classmates observe her with familiarity laced with contempt" (Ogaga, 2007, p. 247).

In her analysis, Nutsukpo investigates gender-based violence in an article titled "Domestic Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple hibiscus*". As echoed by Nutsukpo, "Eugene Achike, revered as a model citizen and family man, turns out to be extremely abusive in his home—he dominates, subjugates, batters and inflicts injury on his wife, children, sister and father, physically and psychologically" (Nutsukpo, 2017, p. 119). She analyses the conflicting characteristic traits possessed by Eugene and classifies his bestial acts as monstrous. Nutsukpo further investigates the symbolic effect of the figurine on Beatrice:

> The destruction of the figurines can be viewed in a positive light—it signifies the removal of the protective shield that Beatrice has built around herself and her emotions. Thus, she can now discover a more positive avenue to deal with her pain and humiliation through self-assertion (Nutsukpo, 2017, p. 121).

Responding to the symbolic representation of the figurine in *Purple hibiscus*, Kabore concludes that "the figurines personify Mama. She is changing" (Kabore, 2013, p. 35).

These analyses show that Mama's role in the development of actions that lead to the major change in *Purple hibiscus* has been ignored by most of these critics as much attention is given to other characters. This study repositions the propellers of changes in the two novels by focusing on Kauna and Mama's reception of actions that threaten their existence at the family and societal level. With the diverse volume of criticisms from both novels, no critic has critically looked into the immensity of silence as a passage towards nothingness in the lives of Mama and Kauna; the same way they have not recognized silence as a resounding voice that vibrates through these characters. This study carves out the path of silence not as voiceless but a yell, not as a static mode but a movement or journey of self towards nothingness, towards realization where nothingness represents a mode of becoming. The journey of self is only recognized when self is identified; thus, what is self.

The Self

The concept of self lies in the perception of personality traits that characterize a Being. The self is an individual being in motion towards unravelling his/her potentiality which includes self-determination,

development and actualization. For Bandura, "the self, therefore, is not an entity but a set of cognitive process and structures concerned with thought and perception" (Schultz, 1976, p. 453). Bandura's definition of Self shows that the self passes different developmental stages that finally build it up as a whole. Allport identifies the self as "proprium" and traces the different stages which the self undergoes towards actualization whereby the "Propriate striving is the final stage which occurs when the person realizes the existence in himself or herself of long-range purposes, goals, and intentions. The individual's view is clearly toward the future, for which he or she begins to plan" (Schultz, 1976, p. 240). Consequently, Allport stages of development imply that self-realization and actualization rely on the physical and mental growth of an individual. In explaining Roger's analysis of self-development, Schultz interprets:

> As an infant develops a more complex experiential field, as a result of more interactions with other people, one part of his or her experience becomes differentiated from the rest. This new and separate part is defined by the words *I, me* and *myself.* It is the self or self-concept, and it involves distinguishing what is directly and immediately part of oneself from what is external to oneself. The self-concept is the person's picture or image of what he or she is, should be, and might like to be (Schultz, 1976, p. 355).

Bernstein, Roy, Srull and Wickens, emphasize Roger's perception of *Self* by stating that "to Rogers, personality was the expression of each individual's self-actualizing tendency as it unfolds in that individual's uniquely perceived reality. If unimpeded, this process results in the full realization of the person's highest potential. If the process is thwarted, however, that potential may be distorted as various problems appear" (Bernstein, Roy, Srull & Wickens, 1988, p. 533). Bernstein et al goes further to define personality as "the pattern of psychological and behavioural characteristics by which each person can be compared and contrasted with other people" (Bernstein et al., 1988, p. 504). Therefore, the Being of self is revolutionized through motion and transition as analysed by Heidegger.

Heidegger's Concept of Self

The conceptual framework which this study is founded is Heidegger's concept of self in *Being and existence*. Heidegger identifies Self as the "who" of the Dasein whereby the Dasein is "essentially always my own"

(Heidegger, 1949, p. 29). Self, for Heidegger, exists in two modes—the authentic and unauthentic mode. The authentic mode is realized in communality with other Beings; the self exists "not as an 'Ich' (I), but as a 'Man', i.e. as 'one like many'" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 45). He elaborates the identity of the authentic self by positing that "the averageness of the way in which the 'self' is together with others in daily life, the sway which these others hold over it andthe resulting levelling tendency in community life are emphasized" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 45). But the unauthentic mode is "a potential mode of Being of itself; in it Dasein catches itself up and entangles itself" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 57). In these two modes, the Dasein is concerned with "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 57) and nothingness remains central to Being-in-the-world where "the transposition into 'nothingness' is thought to be the preliminary and indispensable state, one of 'transcendence', to open up the realm of the multitude of beings in the whole and of Being itself of which nothingness is the veil" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 62–63). Nothingness, which Heidegger points out as "the ultimate reality of things," is achieved in a state of dread (Heidegger, 1949, p. 228). Dread, for him, enables self-actualization of potentials:

> The dread isolates the Dasein for its own innermost Being-in-the-world, it opens up to Dasein as "potentiality", namely as what it can be uniquely out of itself as anisolated one in isolation. It can now project itself into potentialities by way of its understanding (Heidegger, 1949, p. 64).

Nothingness is not given or present in the self from the beginning of the Being-in-the-world. It is a mode which gradually emanates through constitutive situations. One of the situations which the characters under study journeyed towards nothingness is through silence. Silence is a means of communication that often speaks volume more than speech. Jaworski (1997) affirms that "silence is not to be understood as ordinary silence. Silence can be full, all-encompassing, indeed, it may even be loud. Silence and sound are both present at the same time" (Jaworski, 1997, p. 47). Silence witnessed among Mama and Kauna in the novels under study is not just loud but deafening. It is a yell for liberation as these characters slip into nothingness to realize there potentiality.

The silent self: The oppressed alienated from self

In the two novels under study, the journey of Kauna and Mama towards actualizing their potentialities is initiated through oppression and subjugation mostly inflicted by their spouses. These characters embark on this journey through silence. Just like other means of communication, silence communicates different meanings, ideas and thought. According to Leone "although silence is a transhistorical and cross-cultural feature of human communication, its quality varies depending on the various communicative contexts" (Leone, 2017, p. 161). Silence can function as both a cause and effect of a context; its magnitude is determined by the observer. It also functions as a positive and negative communicative device depending on the context. Silence as negative communicative device is mostly present among the dominated group as an escape from subjugation by the dominant group. As Jaworski rightly puts it "silence is a mark of oppression. Silence and oppression are linked; for instance, the silence of the marginalized which is more telling. The word 'telling' resonates especially deeply in this context for they can never 'tell their story' and are thus doomed to a perpetual silence" (Jaworski, 1997, p. 51). These oppressed women are unconsciously alienated from their potential self while living life as fashioned by their dictators. Tyson informs that "the *unconscious* is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them (Tyson, 2002, p. 12). As alienated selves, there is a halt in self-determination, development, and actualization; these women fail to recognise their Being-in-the-world as they gradually move towards nothingness through dread. Heidegger points out that:

> What is dreaded is that what is threatening is nowhere It is somehow there and yet nowhere very close and oppressing and yet nowhere. What is dreaded reveals itself as "it is nothing and nowhere"; but the atmosphere of profound averseness and oppression implied in the 'nothing and nowhere' indicates that what is dreaded is yet 'something', namely 'the world as such' (Heidegger, 1949, p. 61).

What is dreaded for these women are not their abusers but the non-recognition of selves as Beings endowed with potentialities and this threatens their Being-in-the-world.

In Andreas' *The purple violet of Oshaantu*, Kauna observes two degrees of silence. As presented by the first-person narrator, Mee Ali. The first degree of silence is generated from violence and oppression; the inability to speak up against an abusive husband. Kauna, a mother of four children experiences an oppressive marriage which starts right from her early married years. She tells Ali, her close friend, her ordeal as a wife without a homestead:

> It was especially difficult when I did not have my own kitchen. Cooking times were my worst nightmare. Everybody disappeared, leaving me to cook more often than anybody else. We are about eight women at the homestead, but cooked at least four or five times a week for at least twenty people, and that excluded the neighbours who were often around at mealtimes. I simply wanted to do my own cooking just as I had done back home. But my husband was in no hurry to build kitchen. "You must be patient. If we hurry, my relatives will think you don't like their food" was his usual excuse (Andreas, 2001, p. 20).

Kauna's major oppression is from her husband, Shange, who changes from an impressive husband to an oppressive one that beats his wife and cheats on her with other women. Mee Ali expounds that "they were like day and night. Two different human beings" (Andrea, 2001, p. 51). Mee Ali recounts one of the inhumane treatment meted out on Kauna by Shange:

> I will remember this sight of Kauna for as long as I live. Blood mixed with sand all over her face, in her mouth, nose, eyes, ears, head and clothes, and the sight of her children crying helplessly. 'Oooh!' called out the onlookers, awoken from their state of shock. I ran to Kauna and knelt beside her (Andreas, 2001, p. 59).

Amidst the maltreatment she receives from her husband, Kauna remains silent and hardly tells her best friend Ali; Ali gets to know when she notices "a bruise or when weeks later, she mentioned it in a conversation" (p. 61). Though she attempts divorce thrice, but she develops low self-esteem and thinks "maybe if I had been a nurse, a teacher or any of those office workers, he would have treated me better" (p. 51). Kauna's failure to liberate herself is not only rooted in her weakness but also in the functionality of the society where divorce does not conform to the norms. Her mother frowns at divorce and chides her for taking advice from her aunt who is a divorcee:

> 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 other advice. Talk to married people, people who know how to handle marriage problem, not those who ran away from them. Besides, you forget 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 you part. You cannot break your word now (Andreas, 2001, p. 67).

The above extract shows that the journey of Kuana towards self does not require standing aloof but existing as "one like many" in her environment (Heidegger, 1949, p. 45). By blaming herself for a miserable marriage, she attempts to repress her pains but "however, repression doesn't eliminate our painful experiences and emotions. Rather, it gives them force by making them the organizers of our current experience: we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow us to 'play out,' without admitting it to ourselves, our conflicted feelings about the painful experiences and emotions we repress" (Tyson, 2002, p. 12–13).

In Adichie's *Purple hibiscus*, silence is a dominant trait running through the novel. Before the Palm Sunday, silence is the dominant means of communication in Eugene's house where Mama, Kambili and Jaja speak mostly with their spirits than their lips. But among these three characters, Mama's silence stands out as it is so deafening that it shapes the lives of other characters. Unlike Kauna whose silence is reserved to her marital affairs with her husband, Mama's silence stretches through her activities. The narrator, Kambili, presents her as one who is feeble and sustains the functions marshalled out by her husband (Eugene); in fact "there was so much that she did not mind" (Adichie, 2004, p. 27). At Kambili's tender age, she is able to recognize the master-slave union between her parents that she expresses "I could not even think of her and Papa together, on the bed they shared, custom-made and wider than the conventional king-size. When I thought of affection between them, I thought of them exchanging the sign of peace at Mass, the way Papa would hold her tenderly in his arms after they had clasped hands" (Adichie, 2004, p. 29). Kambili's brother, Jaja, sees through Mama's weakness as a mother and this is why he keeps coming to her defence. Jaja believes that the protection of their unborn brother rests on him and Kambili; it is this knowledge that prompts him to say "We will take care of the baby; we will protect them" (Adichie, 2004, p. 31).

Mama's attempts to stir away from the family norm earn her inhumane treatment. Her suggestion that Kambili eats cereals to sustain drug intake before going to church fetches them beating which Kambili likens to a bestiality:

> Sometimes I watched the Fulani nomads, white jellabas flapping against their legs in the wind, making clucking sounds as they herded their cows across the roads in Enugu with a switch, each smack of the switch and precise. Papa was like a Fulani-nomad—although he did not have their spare, tall body as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja, and me, muttering that the devil would not win (Adichie, 2004, p. 110).

Also Mama' attempt not to visit Father Benedict after Mass results to a bestial punishment by Eugene:

> I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had got stuck and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined it hard enough, then it would be true. I sat down, closed my eyes, and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty. I was at nineteen when the sounds stopped (Adichie, 2004, p. 41).

Kambili's subtle presentation of such inhumane act is either attributed to her love for Papa or her age and inexperience to narrate such torture. This animalistic treatment 'earns' her a miscarriage which is painted as a journey towards self-awareness.

As Heidegger observes "the dread isolates the Dasein for its own innermost Being-in-the-world, it opens up to Dasein as 'potentiality', namely as what it can be uniquely out of itself as an isolated one in isolation. It can now project itself into potentialities by way of its understanding" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 62). Since what is dreaded, is the non-recognition of the potentiality of self, an understanding of self by a Being helps in revealing his/her potentialities that could be recognized by others. For Mama, Self-awareness gradually develops from a maternal instinct to tend and protect her family which is symbolised in the étagère:

> Mama stood hugging herself in the centre of the living room, near the glass table, until Sisi brought a plastic bowl of water and a kitchen towel. The étagère had three shelves of delicate glass, and each one held beige ballet-

> dancing figurines. Mama started at the lowest layer, polishing both the shelf and the figurines (Adichie, 2004, p. 43).

Mama's dedication in polishing the étagère reveals her awareness of her failure to stand up for her children that face domestic violence meted out by their religious fanatical father— Eugene. This awareness infuses in her the maternal instinct to protect Jaja and Kambili that are as delicate as the étagère. Freud believes that the development of instinct stems from stimuli to satisfy a need:

> These instinctual stimuli arise within the body and can best be described as needs. When a need such as hunger is aroused, it generates a state of physiological excitation in the body—a physiological energy. This somatic energy, or need, is transformed in the mind into a wish. It is the wish—the mental representation of the body need—that is the instinct or driving force that motivates the person to behave so as to satisfy the body need [...] (Schultz, 1976, p. 48).

Mama's weakness affects her children to the extent that Kambili begins to see a portrait of Mama in any helpless female. She indirectly expresses this when she witnesses a woman maltreated by soldiers:

> I thought about the woman lying in the dirt as we drove home. I had not seen her face, but I felt that I knew her, that I had always known her. I wished I could have gone over and helped her up, cleaned the red mud from her wrapper (p. 52).

The feeling of recognition is derived from a familiar situation of helplessness which she sees and experiences in Mama's situation. Mama's acceptance of Eugene's treatment is internalized in her perception of marriage. As she praises Eugene for his refusal to marry another wife, Aunty Ifeoma reprimands her to "stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the loser, not you" (p. 83). Aunty Ifeoma's remark is an attempt to decongest Mama's dysfunctional perception of marriage by instilling a sense of self subjectivism in her. Udumukwu in *The novel and change in Africa*, interprets the role of a subject in his reading of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) where "ideology interpolates individuals as subjects… In addition, the subject has the value either as a free subjectivity, a centre of initiative, or as a subjected being that submits to a higher authority and is, therefore, stripped of all freedom" (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 54). Mama's idea of mar-

riage reduces her to a subjected being whose identity is stripped off from her by Eugene—the centre of initiative. Though Mama and Kauna communicate silence differently, at what point did they realize that they are Being-towards-death? At what point did they begin to form a concept of self and recognize themselves as Beings-in-the-world?

The daring self: Repositioning the identity of self

The daring self emerges from the awareness of self as an individual with capabilities. Such awareness is engraved in Being-towards-self; the realization of the concept of self. This realization of the capabilities of Self reflects the authentic mode of Being. As opined by Heidegger "Dasein is 'authentic' only when it is primarily concerned with its own potentiality of Being, and not with that of the 'one like many', while taking care of things and of one's fellow-men" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 76–77). In realizing self, Kauna and Mama pass through the mode of nothingness which is derived in the mood of dread; in recognizing themselves, they drift into Care and unleash their capabilities by positioning themselves as *subjects* in their own capacity subjected to a higher being who does not exist in the same level of existence. According to Schultz (1976) "Rogers predicted, on the basis of his theory, that people will defend themselves against experiences that are incongruent with their self-image. They do this by denying or distorting the aspects of reality that are inconsistent with their self-image" (Schultz, 1976, p. 370). The second level of silence experienced by Kauna is a daring one borne out of the recognition of self. Kauna defies the order of the society through silence. She refuses the usual *widow cry* which the society expects of every woman mourning a husband as a sign of respect for the husband:

> First they said it was the shock. 'You know some people are like that. When they're in shock, they don't cry. But once they come to terms with reality, they act differently,' one of the mourners remarked. The first day she did not cry, the second day she did not cry, the third day she did not cry and still, today, the fourth day, she had not cried. Mourners were getting tired. Rumours that Kauna was not crying or showing any emotion towards the sudden death of her husband spread like wild fire. People started to whisper and Shange's relative got mad (Andreas, 2001, p. 48).

Kauna's recognition of self as an individual emerges after Shange's death. She establishes herself as an individual in her own right with her

own feelings and not as a societal structured self. Against all odd, as a widow, she refuses to shed a tear for Shange whom she believes deserves no more tears:

> Well, I'm sorry you all feel uncomfortable about my behaviour, but I cannot pretend [...] I cannot lie to myself and to everybody else in the 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? (Andreas, 2001, p. 49).

Shange could be likened to the famous General in Samuel Johnson's *An elergy to a famous general* who draws much tears from widows and orphans while alive that none accompanies him to his graveyard. The questions raised by Kauna gear toward Shange's actions (while alive) that have sapped the tears she would have shed for him. Mee Ali draws her attention to her provocative action and its effects on those around her:

> I'm not saying you must pretend, all I'm trying to say is that you should also think of the rest of us your children, relatives and friends. Your behaviour is affecting all of us [...]. Even if you hated him, do not behave as if you want the world to know that you are happy he is dead. If you do this, you will give people reasons to accuse you of being responsible for his death (Andreas, 2001, p. 49).

But as Jaworski puts it "there is the silence in which one courteously engages so that one might be heard;" For Kauna to establish her identity as a victim of domestic violence, she employs silence where her cry is required (Jaworski, 1997, p. 42). She undertakes the journey of establishing self by sacrificing her feelings as a widow, a mother and a kinswoman. This is a journey of the authentic self where "the averageness of the way in which the 'self' is together with others in daily life, the sway which these others hold over it and the resulting levelling tendency in community life are emphasised" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 5).

For self to be established, sacrifices ought to be made. Kauna sacrifices her expected role as a widow in her bid to be heard. She makes no attempt obscuring her pains as a violated wife and she cares less of its reception by those around:

> I have been angry my whole life. I have been angry about this marriage and with this man, so at this stage I really don't think I care what happens to me if I don't cry for him. I really don't care. I have nothing to lose (Andreas, 2001, p. 50).

Though Mee Ali chastises her for her emotionless attitude towards her widowhood societal role, she nevertheless admires her behaviour which she summarizes as "some new strength" (p. 143). Kauna is moved to shed tears only on the arrival of her mother and aunt; but her cry is not for Shange, it is more like a moment of bonding and sharing women's travails as the three of them "formed a circle as they embraced one another and cried" (p. 121). Kauna's silence extends to the presentation of speech as the widow during Shange's burial. She decides not to present a speech since her reflection of Shange as a husband will taint the people's expectation of a loving speech:

> 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 lies that widows tell at their husband's funerals. I am not going to say what an honourable, loving and faithful husband he was, while everybody in the village knows what type of a man he was. No, I will not make a laughing stock of myself. No, not because of Shange or anyone else […] (Andreas, 2001, p. 139).

By standing out from the stereotyped widows, Kauna establishes her individuality; her attempt to stand out from the 'others' by remaining true to self makes her 'the devil' and Shange 'the victim.' Kauna remains defiant in revealing herself that "even the sight of her children did not make her emotional" (p. 162). By standing aloof and refusing to cry like others, she slips (a bit) into the unauthentic mode where she portrays herself to the world as a being devoid of affection and sympathy. Heidegger avers that "this self-estrangement which denies to Dasein its authenticity and best potentialities, as it were, locking it up from what it genuinely can be, does not hand it over to something which it is not itself, but presses it into its unauthenticity, a potential mode of Being of itself; in it Dasein catches itself up and entangles itself" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 57). Kauna's disposition towards Shange's burial is used by her in-laws as a necessitated weapon for ripping her off her homestead. Though the practice of relatives inheriting a man's homestead and sending the widow out is common amongst the people, in Kauna's case her in-laws rely on her action to justify this ill practice:

> Why do you want to stay here and enjoy Shange's wealth? You didn't even shed one tear for him. Do you think we don't know how you disrespected Shange? Now you want to stay here and behave like a poor widow. You will not stay here and bring other men into Shange's bed. If you think we would allow this we won't (Andreas, 2001, p. 166).

Kauna vacates the homestead with a glimpse of hope and willingness to explore as a "self-Being" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 58).

In *Purple hibiscus*, Mama's attempt to establish self as an identity, does not end with the expectation observed in Kauna's quest. Mama's silence as a subjected being unaware of self is broken with the shattering of the figurine by Eugene:

> He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, toward Jaja. It missed Jaja completely, but it hit the glass étagère, which Mama polished often. It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then landed after them. Or rather it landed on their many pieces (Adichie, 2004, p. 15).

The breaking of the figurines, which signifies the shattering of the family unity, ushers in Mama's awareness of her demanding role as a mother which is threatened by the reprobated patriarchal domination. The shattering of the étagère also awakens Mama's quest of liberating her family from the shackles of domestic slavery; this is attributed to her recognition of self and her capabilities. Kambili affirms this new spirit in Mama when she refuses replacing the figurines:

> Maybe Mama had realised that she would not need the figurines anymore; that when Papa threw the missal at Jaja, it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything. I was only now realising it, only just letting myself think it (Adichie, 2004, p. 23).

Mama's metamorphosis into an identified self is felt by those around her, Kambili testifies that "even the silence that descended on the house was sudden, as though the old silence had broken and left us with the sharp pieces" (p. 261). This shows that silence in the novel is experienced in two degrees: silence as a means of oppression and silence as a means of liberation:

> The running forward in thought reveals to Dasein that it is lost in the 'oneself' and brings it face to face with the potentiality of being itself, primarily unaided by the care of others, but itself in the passionate, actual Freedom-towards--death (Freiheitzum Tode), being certain of it and dreading it, yet being independent of the illusions of the cone like many (Heidegger, 1949, p. 78).

Mama's yell towards liberation makes her take rash decision without caring its consequential effects on others. After coming to a full awareness of her identity as a mother, Mama goes ahead to liberate self by

eliminating that which threatens her existence as a Being by poisoning Eugene's tea. Kambili echoes the grievous effect of poisoning Papa through his tea which they usually share a love sip:

> For a long, silent moment I could think of nothing. My mind was blank, I was blank. Then I thought of taking sips of Papa's tea, love sips, the scalding liquid that burned his love onto my tongue. 'Why did you put it in his tea?' I asked Mama, rising. My voice was loud. I was almost screaming. 'Why in his tea?' (Adichie, 2004, p. 294).

The second question by Kambili shows that she is more concerned in the method of Papa's execution than in Papa's death. Mama moves towards self-estrangement by detaching herself from others; Kambili observes that "not even when Jaja wrapped his arms around me and turned to include her but she moved away" (p. 295). In a way, Mama satisfies her quest for self-identity by moving towards unauthentic Being, "But this appeasement by itself intensifies the 'Verfallen', driving to a restless activity and bringing Dasein into a state of 'self-estrangement' (Entfremdung) in which its own innermost 'potentiality of Being' becomes concealed to it […]. This way of inner movement of Dasein in its own Being is termed the "fall" (Absturz): the Dasein falls from itself to itself, namely to the groundlessness and irrelevance of unauthentic everydayness" (Heidegger, 1949, p. 56–57). Mama fails to liberate herself as an independent Being but entangles herself as she falls to herself:

> She does not seem to mind that she looks this way; she doesn't even seem to know. She has been different ever since Jaja was locked up, since she went about telling people that she killed Papa, that she put the poison in his tea. She even wrote letters to newspapers. But nobody listened to her; they still don't. They think grief and denial—that her husband is dead and that her son is in prison—have turned her into this vision of a painfully bony body, of skin speckled with blackheads the size of watermelon seeds. Perhaps it is why they forgive her for not wearing all black or all white for a year. Perhaps it is why nobody criticised her for not attending the first and second year memorial Masses, for not cutting her hair (Adichie, 2004, p. 300).

Conclusion

Both Kauna and Mama experience two major degrees of silence as the oppressed self and the daring self. Both women also attempt to institute self as an individual whereby Kauna defies the tradition of widow's

cry and the religion of delivering a perfect speech in church as a godly and dutiful wife during her husband's burial; Mama eliminates that which threatens her fulfilment by poisoning Eugene. While Kauna fiercely establishes herself as an individual with her own rights, Mama's attempt to establish self-identity, does not liberate her as she drenches deeper into a different kind of silence which is borne out of guilt. Her children which she attempts to liberate become bounded by the shackles of the law (as seen in Jaja's imprisonment). The silence of these two women contribute to both the development of other characters and events in the novels. Kauna's inability to stand up to Shange's violent act while he's still alive makes her to keep swapping roles with her daughter, Kandiwapa, who cleans her bruises whenever she is brutally beaten up by her husband. It also gives Shange room to openly have a mistress at the "white house" and disrespect her in the presence of people. One can say their master-slave relationship also contributes to Shange's careless death whereby his health status would have been detected by his wife if she was treated as a wife, an equal and not a slave. For Mama, her feeble attempt in playing the role of a wife and mother encourages Eugene bestial acts which lead to the character formation of her children and later to the death of Eugene. In their quests to realise self-identities, both women pass through the state of nothingness as realised in dread through silence; at the end, Kauna emerges fulfilled and hopeful while Mama ends up unfulfilled and quite hopeless.

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