

Positivising Men's Image in a Feminist Text: A Reading of Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*

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Abstract: African female writers are often blamed for promoting negative portrayals of men in their fictions, a replica of the disgusted way in which men are regarded in the African society. However, a scrutiny of the literary field reveals the emergence of a new trend regarding male portrayals. Thus, this essay examines Neshani Andreas' portrayal of a "good" man in her *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*, arguing that her art has not only positivised the male image but has equally sought to instill change in the behaviour of the latter in real life.

Key words: African society, male, change, female writer.

Résumé: Les écrivaines africaines sont souvent accusées de promouvoir des représentations négatives des hommes dans leurs fictions, une ressemblance à la manière dégoûtée dont les hommes sont considérés dans la société africaine. Cependant, un examen minutieux du champ littéraire révèle l'émergence d'une nouvelle tendance concernant les représentations masculines. Ainsi, cet essai examine la représentation d'un homme "bon" dans *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* de Neshani Andreas, arguant que son art a non seulement positivé l'image masculine mais a également cherché à inculquer un changement dans le comportement de ce dernier dans la vie réelle.

Mots-clés : Société africaine, mâle, changement, écrivaine

Introduction

In an introduction to his *Literature and National Consciousness*, Ernest Emenyonu (1989: v-vi) asked a series of questions pertaining to the roles assigned to the writer relating to nation-building: Is the writer the mouth-piece of his/her country or is s/he the moral conscience of his/her community? Is the writer the defender of the cause of the common man in his/her society? Is the African or the Third World writer more charged with social commitments than his/her counterpart in the more advanced parts of the world? Answering the above questions, Emenyonu considers that the African writer must lead in the struggles against oppression, neo-colonialism, power abuse, exploitation of the common man and the negation of fundamental human rights. Every writer, consciously or unconsciously, depicts problems from a given ideological standpoint which leads to different types of criticism.

Among the socio-political issues dealt with in African literature, men-women relationships have always been a bone of contention. Hence, women need now to tell their own side of the story. As Adeola James (1990: 6) holds in her *In their Own Voices*, “Our problem is that we have listened so rarely to women’s voices, the noises of men having drowned us out in every sphere of life, including the arts. Yet women too are artists, and are endowed with a special sensitivity and compassion, necessary to creativity.” So, women resort to this creativity to paint their men the way they see fit, to present a realistic picture of them as is reflected in their day-to-day relations with these men they deal business with, either as a boyfriend or a husband.

Compared to most female writers who barely portray a single man of honour in their novels, Neshani Andreas, a Namibian female writer, makes the difference in portraying a “good” man in her piece of fiction, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. So, this essay argues that Andreas has positivised the image of male gender in her novel and has sought to instill change in the behaviour of the latter in real life. Using womanism, a global ideology which claims freedom for African and African American communities by connecting people and cultures through dialogue and solidarity, this reflection seeks to illuminate how the author discards men’s domineering will to power and attempts to promote a reconciliatory mood within the domestic sphere in a Walkerian vision. While different shades of feminisms maintain that marriage is not the only alternative for women’s fulfillment (Afagla, 2011: 14), the womanist, Alice Walker, believes in women’s freedom and strives to change men’s selfish attitude for a satisfying relation between spouses. In his re-assessment of womanism, Ataféi Pewissi (2017: 16) argues that this theory does not purport to humiliate the phallus but rather “interrogates intellectuals on the use of the knowledge bestowed on them by education.” In fact, Walker stated her thematic concern in coining the term womanism: her womanist preoccupation is the survival of the whole of her people, male and female. Beyond that and by her own admission, Walker is “committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women” (in O’Brien, 1973: 192). Emulating Walker as a fighter and a militant writer engaged in the liberation struggles of (black) women (Afagla, 2011: 10), Andreas feels her focusing on the violent reality of women’s condition can best serve their causes.

1. Traditional Image of Men in Women's Fictions

Generally, female novelists have been accused by their male counterparts to negatively portray male characters in their fictions. Normally, "What women writers have to say about their societies should receive serious attention, instead of the general disregard or head-nodding that is usually the case" (Adeola, 1990: 2). A cursory assessment of works by African American and African female writers reveals that these female novelists heap negative images on men.

Most African female writers present their principal male characters in negative light. They are irresponsible fathers and lazy husbands like Adizua in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*; or rapists like Oko in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Akobi, Mara's husband, in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. Elsewhere, they take the shape of exploiters, predators, monsters, tyrannical and abusive men like Francis in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, or Papa Eugene in Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus*. To crown it all, Jeremiah in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is not simply a "lazy and self-pitying semiliterate but also a shameless alcoholic cadger" (Mugambi, 2010: 208).

The above observation seems a worldwide trend, at least when it comes to African American literature. Komla Messan Nubukpo's analysis of the representations of black men in some early fictions of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Toni Cade Barbara speaks volume to this assertion. Quoting Hortense Spillers, Nubukpo (2018: v-vi) concurs that Morrison, Walker, and Barbara have negatively labeled them in the American context, further contending that most male characters are psychologically crippled in the fictions produced by their sisters: "Although most of them start out purposive, the representation they usually have, at first, of their objectives in life emphasizes the negative nature of some of the forces at work around them" (2018: 3). They seem totally detached from the general social malaise and moral decadence, but are rather congenitally, inherently and pathologically predatory, sexually depraved, perverse and evil. Along the same line of thought and despite her acknowledgment that the general image of men in the African traditional society epitomizes power, strength and authority. Ayélé F. D'Almeida (2011: 123) holds that female writers definitely portray them as weak and incapable people. Forerunners such as Ezenwa Ohaeto (in Emenyonu, 1987: 214), countering the myth of male chauvinism in African literature, charges that African female writers "fashion their own myths of female superiority." Clearly, the male is deprived of manhood in their novels, becoming a lifeless being in their creative world. Put differently, female novelists craft weak, powerless, lazy

and irresponsible men in their novels whereas they create strong, powerful and determined women. Needless to say that these female characters “champion a feminist cause,” though this attempt to present a “corrected” view of “the female image in literature amounts to a replacement of myth with myth,” in Ohaeto’s judgment (1987: 216). Simply put, female writers metaphorically assassinate the male characters in many of their writings. In their pieces of fiction, women are mainly visible while men are made to live by the hem of their wives and girlfriends. This considered observation might have prompted Mary Modupe Kolawole (1997: 99) who, speaking on behalf of female writers, holds that female writers reject women as underdogs, “as underdeveloped subdued individuals incapable of asserting positive influences” in the said novels.

Women occupy important spaces and are central to the narrative in Andreas’ *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*: they are dominant characters who challenge the patriarchal norms. Tracking the trend, Akoété Amouzou (2006: 99) comments that “female characters accept themselves as women, but new women, different from the stereotypes with negative images that the reader is familiar with in male-authored texts” are emerging. In line with the most serious charge raised by feminists in *Women Take Issues* (1978: 27), i.e. women “have been defined negatively in relation to the culture into which we have been born: our experience has tended to be made invisible, and in the face of male definitions we have, until recently, kept quiet,” female novelists are breaking away from the dominant male stance “by depicting *women and women’s experiences*, women’s ways of knowing in women’s spaces and locations” (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997: 35-6; italics in the original). Therefore, Mee Ali, Mee Fenni and Mukawankala are strong female characters endowed with power and authority to give a positive image of womanhood in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*. It is important to underline that this representation of strong female characters is in line with a practice adopted by Paule Marshall, an African American female writer and a forerunner whose deployment of feminism centrally relies on the role performed by the latter:

I’m concerned about letting them speak their piece, letting them be central figures, actors, *activists* in fiction rather than just backdrop or background figures. I want them to be central characters. Women in fiction seldom are. Traditionally in most fiction men are the wheelers and dealers. They are the ones in whom power is invested. I wanted to turn that around. I wanted women to be the centers of power. My feminism takes its expression through my work. Women are central for me. They can as easily embody the power principles as a man (Washington, 1981: 324; italics in the original).

Nevertheless, the deeds of these powerful female characters did not eclipse the male characters, that is, they did not achieve their goals to the detriment of the male characters in the novel. So, to make room for a positive man in her fiction, Andreas contrasts two types of men and their marriages in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*: Shange and Michael. The Shange couple has five children, while Michael and his wife have seven.

Kauna, Shange's young wife, has never experienced happiness and self-fulfillment in her marriage in their traditional locale. To emphasise the centrality of traditional practices and their influences on women, the novel is set in a rural environment, with a celebration of harvest as its opening event:

It is that time of the year again. The season when our village, Oshaantu, camouflages itself in a rich green carpet and provides a breathtaking sight...We had good rains this year and are promised plenty to eat...I gently stroke the rough surface of the omahangu millet in appreciation of the abundance of Mother Nature.¹

Shange is portrayed as a careless and an unfaithful husband who has numerous extramarital affairs. Mee Ali comments:

I should be used to this by now, I think, but I feel angry every time I see Shange behaving like this towards his wife. His latest extra-marital affair is with a young woman from the nearby village. He is often seen with her at the *cuca* shop belonging to his friend... Shange has built her a two-roomed blockhouse, painted white.... Shange does not even bother to conceal his relationship (PV: 3).

Furthermore, beyond this disrespectful attitude toward his wife, he is a physically abusive husband. The author has used Mee Ali, a fellow woman, to tell in a series of flashbacks how Shange used to brutally abuse Kauna, his wife, through regular beatings:

Then it all happened so fast. Kauna and her basket full of water landed on the ground. Kauna tried to escape Shange's rage, but he was too fast for her. He caught her. She screamed. I have never heard her screaming like that. ... Kauna was lying on the ground covered in a blanket of sand. She moved like an old cloth as Shange's shoes struck mercilessly all over her tiny body. The heavy mine shoes sounded as if they were breaking every bone. She had covered her face and part of her head with both her arms and hands.... I will remember this sight of Kauna for 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 (PV: 58-59).

¹ Neshani Andreas, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (Essex: Heinemann, 2001), 1. Subsequent quotes are from this edition, with page numbers parenthetically included in the essay, and preceded by PV.

It is beyond question that Shange is a violent husband and a faithful adept of domestic violence. Heather Duerre Humann (2014: 9) defines domestic violence as “Any number of problematic behaviors that range from emotional abuse like mocking, insults, and other types of putdowns, to various types of physical abuse such as punching, pinching, and kicking, but these terms can also refer to even graver offenses such as rape, maiming, attempted murder, and murder.” Years earlier, Sheila Minkah-Premo (2001: 7-8) has broadened violence against women by including the following features in her definition of the concept:

When one talks about violence against women, it refers to a wide range of acts of violence directed against women because they are women. The issue of violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon. Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse...

In a classical traditional society, widows must mourn their late husbands through crying and behaving sorrowfully; however, to many people’s wonder, Kauna refuses to mourn her deceased husband this way. She supports her attitude with the following discourse:

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? What do you want, Ali? You want to see me rattling in the sand like a snake pretending to be devastated by Shange’s death? (PV: 49)

The excerpt states the reason behind Kauna’s refusal to condone her late husband’s immoral behaviour. In all likelihood, the novelist rejects the image of women as powerless and voiceless victims in the traditional African community through this refusal. Charles Fonchigong (2006: 138) charges that “an obnoxious and pestiferous culture provides clauses that inhibit the progress of women and maintain them permanently in the suffocating stench of submissiveness.” Mee Ali, used as an outsider/observer, understands well Kauna’s reaction. In a personal diatribe, she elaborates on the reason sustaining Kauna’s emotionless attitude – her stoic stance – regarding her husband’s passing: “I thought as I looked at her and realised that Shange would not receive a drop of her tears. When I thought of how Shange treated Kauna, I understood her reaction. He controlled and virtually ruled her life. He decided whom she should befriend and when she could visit her relatives and friends” (PV: 50-51).

This controlling husband cannot deserve any fitting mourning from a wounded wife as is the case in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976: 50-51) which portrays a genuine mourning in the African context through Ma Blackie's loss of her husband:

Then Ma Blackie was being ushered into the room. There was no need now for anyone to tell her what had happened. Busy hands unthreaded her hair. She was stripped of her clothes and given an older, torn set to put on. A place on the cemented floor was cleared for her to sit and cry and mourn for her dead husband.

Everybody in the village is expecting Kauna to show her sorrow and love for her late husband through cries and laments as a compensation for Shange's violent behaviour. "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 that some people say they are embarrassed" (PV: 48). Kauna's reaction amounts to a pay-back situation: she seems to retribute her late husband for all she endured in his hands.

Arguably, Kauna's story is a replica of the modern African woman's struggle against patriarchy, violence, injustice and social custom that have literally jailed her. The author's quest consists in representing and re-enacting the true value of the African woman in her society.

For Andreas, battered women can only find peace within the arms of their fellow women. Subjected to persistent physical violence, Kauna cannot liberate herself from Shange's jaws. Therefore, the novelist creates Mee Ali – a woman full of generosity and compassion – who acts on her behalf by seeking help from a female church elder and a Sunday school teacher, Mee Maita: "Mee Maita, I am really not happy with the way Shange treats his wife. He mistreats her time and time again. The other day he almost killed her when he beats her. The whole village knew about it" (PV: 8). However, as one should expect from a church elder, Mee Maita proved to be a disappointing character, help-wise. Indeed, she is for oppressing women.

Unceremoniously, Andreas rejects the idea of creating a woman as victim of society regulated by cultural and abusive traditional values. Before the death of Shange, the author has him meet with a powerful and respectful woman, Mukwankala who confronts the latter. Gifted with the stature and grace of royalty, Mukwankala reminds one of "personalities in the many royal folk tales I have heard from my grandmother [...] As a result [sic] she is popular among women, especially young women, and in no time women had gathered around her like bees

around an exotic flower” (PV: 147). By the heroine’s own admission, Mukwankala and Mee Ali are sources of motivation, inspiration and encouragement to weak, abused and assaulted women in their society:

I wanted to run towards all those women, and hug and kiss them all. I wished the spirit would last forever among us. Although this *okakungungu* lasted just one day, a feeling of sisterhood and communal responsibility enveloped us in a strange and cheerful sense of oneness. I felt connected to these women, these sisters, these mothers, these aunts, and grandmothers. As we parted, I looked at them and thought, yes, girls, you have done it again (PV: 119).

Women need a voice to talk on their behalf and help them fight for their rights. Mukwankala is well known for speaking her mind. Furthermore, women often depend on her to speak on their behalf. Having found Shange, she walked straight up to him, ignoring everybody:

‘I heard you beat her again and this time you almost killed her,’ she said coldly and with contempt. It was clear to everyone that Mukwankala was on the warpath. ‘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 afterwards?’... ‘Men who beat women are the ones who cannot stand up against other men’ (PV: 62-63).

Surprisingly enough, Mukwankala’s lecture works, for “amazingly, Shange did not touch Kauna again... From that moment, Mukwankala became Kauna’s goddess” (PV: 72). Indeed, Shange did not beat her again until his unexplained and untimely death (PV: 10-11).

In sum, men are poorly represented as husbands in Andreas’ fictional universe. Other prominent examples feature besides Shange: uncle Peetu, Kauna’s maternal uncle, “a drunk, useless, waste of manhood” (PV: 79), uncle Joshua who is incapable of caring for his wife and children (PV: 80), and Kauna’s own father, a real irresponsible father, who fails in educating his children (PV: 68-70). Shange, the epitome of abusive man and husband, might deserve this mysterious death to free Kauna from oppression and destruction. Thus, Andreas resorts to this poetic justice– Shange’s death– to warn that such men must die in Africa for women to live. She then grants a tiny space to a “good man,” her way of promoting a healthy marital relationship.

2. Positivising Men's Image in Female Fictions

A new portrait of men is sprouting in female fictions lately. Like Shange and Kauna, Michael and Mee Ali are also spouses with seven children in the novel under study. They are enjoying a happy marriage. Michael could be regarded as the epitome of a kind, respectful and good man. He works in the city whereas his family lives in the village. Nevertheless he visits or sends “goodies” anytime he has the opportunity. His wife portrays him as a caring man: “I don't mention all the goodies that Michael sent us,” Mee Ali confesses (PV: 2). A novice reader will misinterpret this statement as housing Michael in a small room. However, hearing that powerful and positive statement from a wife, a summary of a long marital interaction, says it all: it signals the beginning of a desire in this female author to see “good” men depicted in modern African novels. The basic intention of Andreas is to positivise the image of African men through her pen. The author probably comes from a culture where the role of the female is traditionally subordinate. Michael is working in the city as an educated man. This is not incidental or accidental. It helps him reeducate himself in his treatment of the opposite sex. Being in contact with the city is an advantage to his marital life. He understands that loving one's wife does not equal emasculating or castrating oneself; it is a sign of self-respect, instead. He also comes to realise that showing respect to one's partner is not a sign of weakness but a sign of love. Symbolically, Michael is made to stop women's oppression by men in African marriages. At times, the traditional society hampers male-female relationships. People are not simply happy when husbands behave well toward their wives. Mee Ali witnesses moral and psychological harassments from people in her society from time to time. The following excerpt records the Oshaantu people's complaints:

‘Oh, you must thank gods, a lot of men abandon their girlfriends when they impregnate them.’
 ‘You are lucky, it is not always that a man marries a woman with a child, even if it is his own.’
 ‘A man of Michael's caliber marrying an uneducated woman? Mmm, you are lucky.’
 ‘Michael must love you...’
 Now this. ‘Oh, he doesn't beat you? You are lucky.’ I am really tired of it all. Yes, Michael is a good man and I am grateful for that. I just don't know what people want me to do... I am not lucky. I simply do not deserve to be treated like a filthy animal (PV: 65).

In the same vein, Kauna, Mee Ali's best friend, once wondered why Michael does not treat her like a mule: “your husband doesn't beat you?” ‘Nooo,’ I answered, totally surprised by the question. ‘Has never beaten you?’ ‘Has never beaten me.’ ‘Not even a slap?’ ‘Not even a slap.’ ‘You are lucky,’ she said, giving me one look and turning her back on me to face the mud wall”

(PV: 65). This conversation between the two friends is telling about Michael's personality: a non-violent and caring man, in all respects.

As is hinted previously, Mee Maita, the representation of the traditional image of marriage in the novel, holds that marriage must be oppressive to women. For her, "marriage should be one miserable, lifelong experience. Husband and wife should fight every day, he should abuse her and the children, he should go after other women.... She never has anything good to say about marriage" (PV: 4). For this female church elder, violence within marriage is business as usual in most African societies.

To a great extent, Andreas has gone against the tide by endowing Michael with positive qualities, since most women are upset when their fellow women are in a happy marriage. Witness: Kauna's confession to Mee Ali that Michael is not a "real man" is astounding: "he is not a 'real' man, because he does not sleep around, does not get drunk and silly, and does not neglect his children" (PV: 169). This trend is in vogue. For instance, in Aidoo's *Changes* (1991: 37), Nana, Esi's grandmother, roughly depicts a real man as the one who beats his wife, drinks, stinks, and does not give her money.

Above all, Michael is patient in advising his wife, compared to Shange who mainly used violence to address his wife. Beyond that, Michael reproaches his wife gently as in the episode where Mee Ali goes too far to talk about Kauna and Shange's marriage to Maita:

For you to ask the church to end Shange and Kauna's marriage. Are you crazy? You are not God. You will not solve the problems of all women in the village.... Now promise that you will not interfere in the Shanges' problems again and that you will never ever try to fix them. Do you hear me? Look, I have always admired the way you care about people and I love this about you (PV: 9).

Most African female novelists portray African men as decision-takers and -makers – decisions which are ultimately detrimental to women. But Andreas depicts Michael as a husband whose decisions please his wife. Most of the time, marriage in Africa is a family affair, as parents must have their say in the choice of their children's spouses. However, Michael confronts his family, especially his mother, in his choice to marry Mee Ali. He has an uncompromising attitude to right and wrong, he is a good man, considering his impartiality (PV: 169 & 172).

To his family's opposition to marry Mee Ali, he retorts: "'I am sorry if you don't like her. I love her and she is the woman I am going to marry,' he said with finality and left" (PV: 17). Furthermore, Michael takes a stand in the choice of his life partner. For him, what matters most

is his feelings toward the woman he would like to marry: “‘Mother, please, please,’ he said. ‘Ali is not a whore. She is the mother of my son and I will not let you talk about her like that’” (PV: 17).

Michael stands up to his mother. What does this stand represent to African men? A man is supposed to marry any woman of his choice provided the woman makes him happy. Husband and wife are to complete each other. Michael has an understanding of this in honoring his wife Mee Ali. By refusing to comply with his mother’s demands, Michael subverts African tradition that empowers the family to have a say in their progenies’ marital affair. As countless African marriage-related accounts make it abundantly clear, marriage in Africa is a family affair, first and foremost. Florence Abena-Dolphyne’s (1991: 1-2) definition of marriage cements the above view when it primarily pinpoints marriage as “a union between two families, rather than between two individuals. Traditionally, marriages are arranged between two families.”

Arguably, Andreas is seeking to create a space within which African men must take their own decisions without a powerful implication of their own family (mother and sisters, in this case). His mother’s following complaint is an ample illustration of the war fought for cultural change regarding this crucial issue:

‘Why are you doing this to me, to us, to your family?’ his mother challenged him, apparently hurt. ‘Why do you want her? Her of all people? Her with those hands that look like chicken claws. ...Why, why my son? There are so many good girls around here, decent girls who will make you happier than that woman ever will’ (PV: 16).

As is previously demonstrated, men are negatively represented in Andreas’ novel under scrutiny. So, by endowing Michael with nice and positive qualities, the novelist is giving the opportunity to men to revisit their behaviour toward women in their societies. Hence, Michael is making the difference as a man in a society where women are not respected by their husbands and, above all, are victims of violence. Mee Ali, pondering on the whole issue, confesses: “Why are people suspicious about a loving husband? What is strange about a good father? What is evil about a man who does not abuse his woman and children? These are questions I have asked Kauna and myself on numerous occasions; usually we don’t find answers” (PV: 5).

Mee Ali is even confident that if anything happens to her, Michael will take care of the children: “Michael will not neglect the children” (PV: 37). As Michael shows himself a caring man, his wife shows her concern about his safety and takes upon herself to pray for him. “I pray

for Michael's safety too. But I worry about him all the time, especially since that terrible minibus accident three years ago" (PV: 37).

Even if Michael is not given enough space in the novel, the blooming state of his wife – Mee Ali – is telling. Firstly, her equilibrium helps her stand on her own feet. Secondly, she lends her elbows to her friend Kauna in time of sorrow. She is of a tremendous support to her friend in time of need. From Shange's death to his burial, Mee Ali spends all her time and energy comforting and supporting Kauna. Women's equilibrium is a must in our societies. The character Mee Ali is the epitome of strong female bond. As one critic contends in Ann Oakley's *Subject Women* (1981: 265), "Female solidarity is one of the best-kept secrets of patriarchy. It is to the advantage of patriarchy to deny that emotional support, understanding of our lives and needs, skills and knowledge, and love" that women can obtain from other women – at a better price than from men.

Conclusion

A staggering number of critical studies have abundantly shown the negative portrayals of men in female fictions, a conclusion backed by even a cursory review of the production of African female writers. Seeking to turn that around, Andreas has projected a new (and positive) image of an African man in her novel. After contrasting Shange and Michael, she poetically kills the abusive and violent husband and promotes the emergence of responsible, caring and loving men in her fictional realm.

Definitely, this study has shown that women are longing to see the emergence of "good" men in their fictions and, to a large extent, in their real life. As this study has demonstrated, a paradigm shift has been occurring lately – the gradual emergence of positive image of male in women's fictions: from drunkard, abusive and violent men, the African female novelists have started inaugurating caring, affectionate and patient men in their create writings.

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