

Depiction of Cycles of Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women in Mia Couto's "Baralho Erótico"

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Abstract

*The representation of the plights of women in literary works has always been an interestingly relevant theme that is discussed in academic and non-academic settings. This is because women have been submitted to different forms of inhumane treatments, in one way or another, which have led to physical and psychological trauma and consequently death. In this regard, this essay aims to provide a textual analysis of an extract from "Baralho Erótico" in the book *Contos do Nascer da Terra* written by a renowned luso-mozambican biologist and writer, António Emílio Leite Couto, popularly known as Mia Couto, who through his publications has treated different subject-matters on sociocultural, historical and political lives of Mozambicans. The essay which reflects on the theme of domestic violence and on aspect of Mozambican Literature and society is informed by feminist ideas defended by Annette Kolodny (1980), Chris Weedon (1987), Davies and Anne (1986), Simone de Beauvoir (1989) among others, depicted the violent and abusive relationships between the two central characters in the story by stressing the harrowing and traumatic experience of the female character who is highly brutalised and dehumanised by the male character. It demonstrated the interplay of gender and underlined patriarchal ideologies which encourage and facilitate misogyny and violence against women. It also emphasised how women passively struggle to overcome these abuses.*

Keywords: domestic abuse, cycles of violence, patriarchal ideologies, misogyny, silence.

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Introduction

This essay focuses on the cycles of domestic abuse and violence against women in Mia Couto's "Baralho Erótico" extracted from *Contos do nascer da Terra*. Its objective is not to examine views of different schools of thought of feminism against one and other but to demonstrate how feminist theory can be used to analyse domestic abuse and violence against women.

Femicide, an aspect of feminist theory will serve as the theoretical basis for the interrelationship between violence, culture, and power structures. This is essential because it discusses the binary of male and female and highlights the women's vulnerability as well as the volume of abuse and violence directed against women and girls. This theory has influenced other scholars and researchers who have used it to analyse violence perpetrated against women. According to Grech, 2015, gender violence is considered and linked to femicide in the Britain legal discourse published by John Wharton's Law Lexicon in the eighteenth century (Grech, 2015 p.851) but was not regarded as a feminist theory until its reemergence in the 1970s when the term was used by Diana Russel (1977) at the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women. Heyes, (2013, p.201) opines that violence is intrinsically interrelated to power and there is doubtfully no violent action that does not interconnect with gender. Conversely, feminist approaches that analyses violence against women likely remain under the umbrella of the male female binary. She further affirmed that since feminist theory facilitates the understanding of violence, the feminist space must, as a matter of necessity, be opened to include the analysis of violence that victimised individuals (Heyes, 2013, p.207, p.211).

Divided into three different but inter-related parts, the first, which is the introductory part, examines domestic abuses as it affects women, socially and physiologically; the second theorises the feminist concepts from the view of Annette Kolodny, Chris Weedon among others; while the third brings to limelight the problems faced by women regarding violence and domestic abuse they suffered. The short story, "Baralho Erótico", depicts

the uneasy and tensed interrelationship between two faceless male and female characters that were faced with frustrated family life due to abject poverty caused by unemployment. Although, Stephen Heath (1984) is of the opinion that men's relation to feminism is an impossible relationship because they have the tendency to re-proliferate the same patriarchal idea of repressive domination of women, the essay submitted by highlighting the roles of Mia Couto as a committed writer who seeks to protect the human rights of the citizen(s), irrespective of their creed, race and gender.

Due to the frequent recurrence of casualties all over the world in recent times, particularly during the COVID-19 confinement period, domestic violence has become one of the major concerns to individuals, groups and governments of our modern societies (VOA PORTUGUES 2020). It is a problem that affects mainly women irrespective of their sociocultural and economic status. Investigations carried out by Silvestre (2020), WHO (2019), Kabore (2019), Strønen Åsedotter & Nangacovie (2016), Quaresma (2012), Bréhima (2007), Barroso, (2007), and other scholars from different parts of the globe demonstrated the persistence of this problem despite efforts made by private individuals and different governmental parastatals aimed at combatting and eradicating it.

It is one of the unnoticed and unreported crimes committed at home either by husbands against wives, wives against husbands, parents against their children or vice-versa. In the view of Machado and Gonçalves (2003), it usually occurs inside the home, which should have been a 'safe-haven' for victim(s). To Costa (2003), the aggressor is usually someone who has an intimate relationship with the victim. According to UNO (2019), it could be "physical, emotional, sexual, economic or psychological actions or threats" which can negatively affect the victim. And it may be in any form that "frightens, intimidates, terrorises, manipulates, hurts, humiliates, blames, injures" or causes bodily harm, traumatic and/or emotional damage to the victims" (UNO, 2019).

Strong, *et.al* (2010) submitted that domestic abuse/violence is among the most underreported crimes worldwide for both men and women. In this regard, Ko Ling Chan (2011) stated that they tend to underreport this

incident. In his review of the Hong Kongese society, he posited that men, on the one hand, underreport the perpetration of their brutal action against women by attributing the blame to their wives, being shameful and fearful of their action and desire to avoid legal persecution. On the other hand, women underreport the brutality they suffer but overestimate their own violence perpetration principally because they are financially dependent; they consider violence as normal occurrence in their private family life and above all, blame themselves for the brutal action perpetrated by their hubbies, Ko Ling Chan (2011).

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women describes domestic abuse as “a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between men and women” CEDAW, (1992). It is considered a form of gender-based violence, which is directed against a woman because she is a woman. The Brazilian Penal Code known as “Maria da Penha Law” defines it as “any action based on gender that causes death, injury, physical, sexual or psychological suffering and moral or property damage”. Both the Brazilian (Lei n. 11.340 (2006) and Portuguese laws (Lei nº 65/98, of 2 September) condemn such action as unacceptable abuses. Irrespective of its guise, gender-based violence does not only expose the social imbalance of any society but also demonstrates the imbalance of power relationship in the household between, principally, male domination and female submission, Bourdieu (2014) and Pateman (1988).

Excluding the Akan people (the Asantes) Matrilineal Society of Ghana and the Umoja of Kenya, where a woman is the head of the family (Roslyn 2018), the majority of African societies including the Yoruba of Nigeria, Ovambo and Xindonga of Angola and, Hopes and Macondes of Mozambique are patriarchal societies with male-dominated structures controlling all aspect of lives leading to ubiquitous inequalities between men and women. In the view of some feminists like Sultana (2012), Adrienne Rich (1986) and Hunnicutt (2009), patriarchy as a concept describes the power dynamics between men and women. They considered it as an artificial societal practice and as a powerful social structure that men use

to oppress women, (Walby 1990, p. 20). Based on this, one can deduce that it is a continuous subjugation of women through the legitimisation and incorporation of regulative and repressive norms and practices through legal, religious, social, and cultural sanctions. These aforementioned reasons facilitate the examination and comprehension of gender roles in the patriarchal society as a social construct, a situation where men are superior to women in all ramifications. In the view of Jodelet (2001), cultural and traditional practices serve as a favourable breeding ground which provides credence to these representations and at the same time, constitute the space where these nebulous acts are carried out (p.24-26).

Harway and O'Neil (1999) reviewed the possible causes of men's violence against women in order to curb it. He identified some factors which trigger this barbaric act – some of which are religious beliefs and attitudes; stressful situations.

Theoretical approach

It is common knowledge that women in various parts of the world have been object of injustice and repression, and have been relegated to the position of the “*other*” (Ashcroft *et.al* 1998) that is, dominated and subjected to various forms of patriarchal oppression. Based on this, feminist theory aims to reinstate the oppressed in spite of the oppressors. Kolawole (1997) informs that gender oppression is a plague that has its origin in religion, tradition and politics. She states further that some aspects of the society have been organised and structured by the dominating patriarchy in order to marginalize and silence women who represent more than half of the world's population. Mia Couto's works can be placed broadly within the feminist approach. According to Miller (1998), it remains less important whether texts were written by men or women. Feminist criticism, cannot, she argues, locate and/or describe gender differences within writing, if it concentrates not on the production that put the “feminine” into play – the feminine then being a modality or process accessible to both men and women, Miller (1998, p.96).

The short story, “Baralho Erótico” describes the daily activity of a

turbulent family life of a poor couple in Mozambican society. It treats themes of frustrated hope, domestic abuse and its traumatic effects from feminist perspective, which is the remark of Kolodny (1980) in her essay, “Dancing through the Minefield”, is a controversial one. As a concept concerning women, some degree of recognitions are sought for women to make positive contributions towards the progress and development of their society. According to Harold Smith (1990), feminism as an ideology attempts to improve the status of women. In the opinion of Weedon (1987), feminism as a form of a political stance aims at changing the status of women in the society:

Feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relationship between women and men in society. These power relations structure all area of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become. (Weedon 1987, p.3).

Davies (1986) views the significance of feminist theory to majority of African women, in asserting that “women seek to liberate themselves from various types of oppression and exercise individual choice; and as Lloyd Brown notes, women do so by “striving to achieve a fulfilling sense of themselves, as distinctive human personalities while remaining loyal to all the encompassing community around them.” In this sense, African wo(men) writers in detailing the submerged realities of African women’s lives are participating in the struggle to achieve the correct balance. One can conclude from these three definitions that the objective of feminist movement is to change the existing status quo between men and women in the society and contribute to altering the difficulties facing them.

There are examples of domestic violence and extreme limitation of women rights in different parts of the world—genital mutilation, stoning of women to death for adultery, trafficking of women and sex slavery, among others. All these inhumane treatments against women served as catalysts for agitation and a clarion call for change in the status quo.

According to Baer (2006) feminists all over the world are making efforts to change the system but they are faced with different sociocultural and political barriers. For example, mainstream feminists are censured by minority and third world feminists for “unexamined and unrecognized biases of their own” (p.2).

Domestic abuse against women and feminists clarion call for redress

The growth of the women’s movement between 1960s and 1980s in European, American and Asian countries created an increased awareness against domestic violence. Amy and Russo (1999) encouraged feminists and non-feminist should bring into limelight the problems of male violence against women in order to put an end to it, (p. 19).

Consequently, women started demanding for equal right at private and public places and equality according to Hanser (2002) turned to issues which later became an expectation in conjugal relationship. In this regard, feminist theory provided, on the one hand, theoretical basis for the comprehension and resolving the problems of domestic abuse, and also justifications to explain the ill-treatment and subjugation of women in a patriarchal dominated societies control by men and on the other hand, explains the social categorisation and differentiation of male and female children which encourages discrimination, violence and abuse at home, (Frances 1995).

One of the major concerns of feminist approach is to protect women against all forms of violence and abuse. In the views of marriage Ada, (2011, p. 264), reformist feminist stress the need for the liberation of women from domestic abuse, women’s victimisation and matrimonial oppression

Thus, feminism, in the views of Healey, Smith, and O’Sullivan (1998), became essential implement to raise awareness about sex role conditioning which promote and justify sexism, male privilege and gender socialization. So, it is through the propagation of this way of life that validates domestic abuse in the patriarchal dominated society, where men exact force and domination over women, (ibid).

These ideas on domestic abuse influenced different schools of

thought, principally the radical feminism which posited that it is the violence perpetrated by men that keeps women subjugated at home in particular and in the society in general. Violent acts like rape, sexual assault are similar in two ways: The culprit is most often male and the casualty is most often female. Additionally these perpetrated actions aim to exploit and control the sexual and social liberty of women to have a lifestyle of equality at home and in the community, because these violent activities were often committed by men against women, feminist theory becomes relevant. Feminist theory exposes the evils of the patriarchal power structures which give authority to men over women and subjugate women in the day-to-day running of the sociocultural, economic and political events of the society, (Corradi et al, 2016, p. 981). This approach has been used in therapeutic intervention for women and has served as basis to empower women. It also helps to educate the offenders – through the provision of psychoeducation on the right of women and enforcing accountability in the recognition of those rights. Through their activities, the movement has been able to impact positively which fight against all acts of domestic abuse and oppression.

Most literary works produced by Lusophone African writers such as Luandino Vieira, Manuel Rui, Ba Ka Khosa, Lilia Mompole, Lina Magaia, Paulina Chiziane among others depict this patriarchal domination of women by men either to promote the *status quo* or condemn it - in order to elicit a positive change for the betterment of women's position in the society. I will specifically focus my attention on a famous Mozambican writer, Mia Couto, who through his numerous literary productions has promoted and projected the Mozambican traditional cultural heritage and patrimonies. So, in this essay, focus will be on how he specifically portrayed gender violence in "Baralho Erótico" to challenge the status quo which supported and legalised the perpetration of violence against women.

From the beginning of the narrative, the intention of the author is crystal clear on the issues he wishes to address. He used pun-matrimônio/"maltrimônio", (matrimony/maltrimony) to indicate a

mismatched and calamitous marriage. Through the inter-relationship and inter-action between the male and female central characters named “Fula Fulano” (husband) and “Dona Nadinha” (wife). In one of the Mozambican local dialects, his first name “Fula” is used to depict a temperamental and ill-mannered person while his last name, Fulano is a Portuguese noun that refer to an uncertain person, or when one does not want to name someone, or when the individual’s name is of little significance in any situation. In this regard, “Fula Fulano” can be regarded as any uncultured man who violently assaults his partner. While the name of the wife, “Dona Nadinha” represents what doesn’t exist, emptiness, silence, downgraded or subdued personality. The use of the diminutive (Nadinha) reinforces its meaning of an absolute absence – in other words – a woman to whom no value or importance is attributed.

These two characters are unemployed so they lived in abject poverty. The husband spends most of his time at home – he only goes out at night to gamble while the wife who is generally confined at home, does her domestic activities at night and spends her morning and afternoon at home by flipping through magazines and newspapers dreaming to become like the models she sees there. According to the author, “A mulher era muda durante o dia. Mesmo qu pretendesse não lhe saía palavra. Só de noite ela falava” (Couto, 2014, p.135). “Dona Nadinha” is mute in the day time and only speaks at night when the husband is not around. Even “if she desires to speak –, no word(s) would come out of her except at night”² (Couto, 2014, p.135).

Beauvoir’s (1989) views man’s domination over woman to be the same that Mia Couto depicted in most of his fictions, especially from “Baralho Erótico” which is under review. The readers are informed that she suffers continuous attacks from her husband. So in order not to suffer, she keeps silent: “Mesmo sendo noite [Fula Fulano estava em casa], Nadinha rodopiou sem falar”[5]. “But if he is at home at night – she also keeps silent: (Couto, 2014, p.137). The irony of the matter is that she is isolated so she speaks alone to herself. It is worth noting that Mia Couto doesn’t advocate

2 This text and others were free translation from Portuguese to English by me.

divorce - but instead exposed the women's marital predicaments and also demonstrated that African societal expectations keep some women in perpetual bondage. For illustration, Mozambican, Nigerian and Togolese traditional injunction orders the women to always obey their husbands and make their husbands their own concerns because their fate and that of their children depends on it. And that if they carry out all their wishes they will be successful and if not, they will be cursed from heaven, and consequently become a failure.

This type of silence is one of the characteristics of women who suffer different forms of humiliations from their husbands. Because of their inability to face the challenges squarely or react to the aggression, they develop certain survival strategies like silence. Psychologically, avoiding discussion is a sort of escape strategy to stay alive in an adverse and life-threatening situation, which they cannot control – even if it involves giving up their voice and desire and adhering to isolation and mutism. It was observed that when Nadinha tried to speak (about three times in the text, she was violently brutalized twice by her husband (*das três vezes que se atreveu a falar, Nadinha apanhou duas. Na primeira vez que sofreu violência física, ela recriminara o marido pelo fato de ele possuir um baralho erótico*). In the first occasion she suffered physical violence when she recriminated her husband because he possessed an erotic and sexual parcel because she felt that the items are not made for married men. From her perspective, it was uncalled for and a shameful and disgraceful attitude for a married man who most often refused to perform his matrimonial obligations to now derive sexual pleasure with such a parcel. Worthy of mentioning is the predominance of patriarchal laws in the contemporary Mozambican society – one wonders the type of values that they have inculcated in women's mind who strongly condemned him for looking at the pictures of naked women but refused to censure him for the inhumanly and barbaric ill-treatment she suffered. Because she has been silenced by the patriarchal authority, represented by her husband, any attempt to speak out is violently crushed – leaving her battered and humiliated on the floor swimming in a pool of blood. Pais (1998) in his book, *Homicídio conjugal*

em Portugal: Rupturas violentas da conjugalidade, highlighted four types of violent marital breakdown: “homicide maltreatment”; “homicide violence-conflict”; “murder abandonment passion” and “homicide possession-passion” which he situated or linked to domestic abuse perpetrated against women within the family cycle, these are well buttressed and depicted in the story.

Regarding this issue, Stratton (1988) uses the metaphor of the shallow grave to explain African female experience who she considered as living dead, struggling within the enclosure of their lives which is nothing but shallow braves. In her words:

Their female characters are enclosed in the restricted spheres of behaviour of the stereotypes of a male tradition, their human potential buried in shallow definitions of their sex. Silence, by blows, either to their bodies or psyches – they are forced to submit to the necessity of conforming to the externally imposed requirements of their masculine societies. Living in bondage to men, but deserving to live freely and fully, they bewildered by, or seethe with inner rage at their servitude to a structure of values matched to the needs of others... They are schizophrenic, their personalities fragmented by their desire both to accept and reject their condition” (p.147)

Noticing his barbaric and callous act, moved by pity, the husband promised that if she stopped crying, he would not go out to play but stayed at home to perform his marital responsibilities as husband and head of the family. Everything indicates that she believed him – but unfortunately the next night he stayed home the cycle of violence resurface: (“inicialmente há a fase de agressão, seguida da fase de desculpas e, por fim, de reconciliação”) (Couto, 2014, p.136).] (Phase of aggression followed by phase of apology and finally reconciliation) begins again (Couto, 2014, p.136).

The husband’s show of pity and remorse referred to earlier is quite questionable because there is no proof of repentance throughout the narrative, on the contrary, however, it is in the only moment that he reflects on his aggression on his wife whom she blamed: “Existe, existe, anuía o

marido em sono. Coitada, a mulher. Devia ser que apanhou demais, tenho que abrandar a socaria. Eu lhe bato não é desamor, é só porque você é uma criança, entende Nadinha? Está a ouvir, Nadinha? Ela não entendia, parvinha que era, olho pregado nas fotos. (Couto, 2014, p.135).

As Simone de Beauvoir (1989) pointed out, marriage incites man to capricious imperialism: the temptation to dominate is the most universal, the most irresistible one there is; to surrender the child to its mother, the wife to her husband is to promote tyranny in the world. p.480.

This is the fundamental tyranny Mia Couto's art highlights. It is towards the reformation of the Mozambican (African) social organisation and the anachronistic ideas emanating from it that Mia Couto centres his attention. His objective is to end tyranny that in agrarian society seemed adequate that Mia Couto makes the biggest contribution to the Mozambican literature.

Through the short story, marriage is seen as a veil of submission and deception which limits the sense of perception of women. It leads to pure obscuration of women's self-identity as demonstrated by Nadinha who wished to have a happy married life but ended up frustrated until they are unable to bear it any longer. She suffers in silence. Additionally, it is observed much later in the narrative – the husband informed that his wife's cry almost wet and ruin his erotic parcel. Through this, the reader deduced that the husband asked her to stop crying not out of sheer pity but probably because he does not want his neighbours to know that he was a violent -wife beater. It is also noted that he feels neither guilt nor remorse. So, there is no point in the story that he apologises, since he feels that he is doing the right thing because he is always right at all time and it is always the wife's fault – as illustrated in the excerpt above. It is important to stress here that this type of habit is extremely sexist in nature – considering that the woman is regarded as fool and stupid, incapable and inferior, which is a ploy to mistreat the woman psychologically. Being able to repress this woman psychologically and physically, he exercises an

absolute control over what she does, feels and thinks, even in the most intimate of her being. So, the reader can deduce that moment of “regret and remorse” is not real. It is only part of the cycle of violence.

It is important to stress that the night that the husband decided to stay home was the same night she was beaten for the second time. Her silence, as well as her voice (clamor) bothered him. The self-centredness, a peculiar characteristic of the aggressor, makes the woman to behave exactly according to his will. Thus, Fula Fulano wanted, in an atypical way, to talk, but she was not used to having dialogues with her husband (or anyone else), because her safety zone was precisely silence. However, she felt lonely, she felt like talking to someone, with other women, friends, so much that she talked alone in the absence of her husband, but whenever they are together and he talks to her if she didn't want to talk, she answered yes or no depending on the context of the dialogue.. The cycle of violence restarted with a new aggression. After the beating, he did not stay home to make peace, he went straight to meet his gambling friends. Thus breaking the promise he made to his wife in the last reconciliation. His colleagues found Fula Fulano's behaviour strange that night, described as abrupt by the narrator. It is noted, therefore, that he was “Fula” only with her. It is common for aggressors to have a pleasant and nice behaviour in their social circle, not raising suspicions of their repugnant conduct in the intimate family conviviality. This negative picture of the marriage institution cuts-across societies in Africa and beyond. The imageries of women as a *mule* and hostage are prevalent in the Western world as well – notably among these are Maya Angelou's *I Know why the Cage Bird Sings*, Toni Morrison's *Sula and The Bluest Eye*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

In the opinion of some feminist scholars like (Dobash & Dobash, 2017) domestic abuse came about as a result of patriarchal oppression which promotes male predominance through the attribution of absolute powers to subjugate and control women. And it has been attributed to a set of interlocking factors such as patriarchy, cultural beliefs, community norms, unemployment and low levels of education by Jewkes and Morrell, 2018. In addition, domestic abuse is closed linked with the masculinity ideology,

an endorsement of patriarchy related attitudes, beliefs and behaviours assigned to men through socialization. (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017)

In one of Fula Fulano's nights out with his friends, one of the erotic cards he distributed to his friends was, in fact, the naked picture of Nadinha, his wife who reluctantly handed it back to him. In the excerpt from the narrative, there is an image constructed by the patriarchal social ideology in which women should live to please men, because, although Nadinha is enamored "*das mulheres das capas, que [são] lindas, [que] nem transpiram, nem enrugam com o tempo*" (Couto, 2014, p.135), "of the women of the covers, who are beautiful, who neither sweat, nor wrinkle with time" (Couto, 2014, p.135), she shows disapproval and disgust about the erotic deck, however, in view of the interest that her husband showed to those images, to the detriment of the image of Nadinha herself, she photographs herself and places the photograph among the card of the deck. This is a form of subservience, for she behaves in a certain way only to please her husband. Perhaps there is even guilt, a feeling shared among the victims of violence, for not being as attractive as the women made who made up the deck.

The last part of the tale is quite contradictory, upon arriving at the house, Fula Fulano, in anger, does not beat his wife, as expected, but kisses her with passion. But if we go back to the second cycle of violence narrated, we realise that its last phase was aggression, therefore, the next would be precisely reconciliation, and that is exactly what happens. Thus one cycle of violence ends along with the narrative, ready to start others. Mia Couto has built a female figure linked to subordination, fragility and silence. And there is no happy ending, nor an idealisation of the situation, since Dona Nadinha does not break free from the aggression. On the contrary, she is a hostage of that situation that afflicts her domestic space. Moreover, there is no resistance on her part, given that she does not even question the context of violence in which she is inserted, acting with extreme naturalness about it. This woman, like many others, who live in silence, is as invisible, as is her suffering, even if the violence that is invested in her is not, since it is stamped on her body, but this body

does not complain by voice, but by tears and blood. In this short narrative, the author leads the readers to reflect on the extent to which a woman's life is dehumanised and violently subjugated, just as it is preached by patriarchal ideology, in which male power is imposed over the rights and wills of women, subordinating them to the personal needs of men. Lastly, he also desires that women fight for their right, not passively but actively by challenging their oppressors.

On the whole, the application to violence and domestic abuse demonstrated in this work enables the public readers to recognize the dimension of suffering women experienced at home. Additionally, it also situates the female character within the patriarchal power structure of poor economic and bad leadership, thereby facilitating our understanding of the connection between patriarchy, masculinity and women.

The two main characters are unable to rise above their debilitating sociocultural and economic circumstances. The theoretical situation for the growth of feminism in the story was understandably hostile. The male character is coldheartedly insensitive and callous while the female is ideologically inarticulate and isolated. The pessimism towards women by the patriarchal authority is so overwhelming as to influence even the conduct of woman who was bitter and frustrated due to the violence and subjugation she experienced. Finally, by exposing the ill-treatment of men against women through this text, Mia Couto makes a significant contribution to modern Lusophone African literature written by men to promote women's cause. What appears as a simple short story of four pages is indeed an ambitious work by a pro-feminist male writer who is as much at home in his calling as a writer.

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