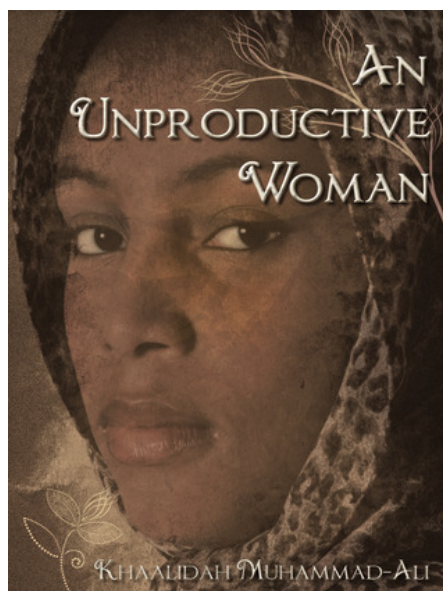




An Unproductive Woman

Khaalidah Muhammad-Ali

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An Unproductive Woman Khaalidah Muhammad-Ali

An Unproductive Woman tells the story of family, faith, and marriage, and above all else, hope.

Adam is desperate for a son, but after ten years of marriage he and his wife Asabe remain childless. Despite the obvious heartbreak this causes Asabe, Adam marries a second wife, the very young and beautiful Fatima. Double tragedy prevents the realization of Adam's hope and Asabe stands firm with her husband to gather the broken pieces of their life.

But, Adam isn't prepared to count his losses. He compounds their difficulties by marrying the cunning and deceptive divorcee, Sauda. This choice yields anguish and confusion, and Adam loses more than hope, but a piece of his spirit.

Neglected and living in the shadow of Adam's desires, Asabe yet again proves her worth as the true bedrock in his life. Asabe becomes the catalyst that brings Adam's life full circle.

Read An Unproductive Woman to learn what secrets Adam has withheld that would explain his unreasonable longing and pursuit of a son at all costs.

An Unproductive Woman Details

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From Reader Review An Unproductive Woman for online ebook

Hilary (HilyBee) says

Khaalidah Muhammad-Ali did an incredible job with this novel. The characters drive the plot forward and are definitely the main focus in this novel. I formed strong opinions of the characters very early on. Adam is a complete jerk, but makes the story interesting. Asabe is such a sweet, caring and beautiful woman who just wants to give her husband Adam everything he wants, but when that isn't enough she even helps him with his other wives. Asabe tries everything to keep her husbands attention, but he always falters and acts like a child. Adam...he's very frustrating - all he cared about was having a son because he gave up the only son he already had. Asabe had the patience of a saint to put up with Adam for sure. Khaalidah wrote both of these characters as if they truly were soul mates! d'awwww....

This novel is like looking into the still-practiced religions that believe in polygamy, rely heavily on having a son, and the various marriage ceremonies/practices that come with them. Khaalidah really developed each character to the fullest - you can really see these characters coming to life. I felt bad for the characters, wanted to strangle and knock some sense into other characters, and sniffled away tears a few times. Khaalidah showed the perspective of each character beautifully and flawlessly. She shows you exactly what Adam, Asabe, the wives, their extended family, friends, neighbors, etc feel about everything that happens. It's an incredible novel, and a must read for anyone who enjoys looking into different religions, romance, marriage, or simply what happens when you're obsessed with having a certain gender of a child.

Alesha Escobar says

This story begins with Asabe's heart-crushing confrontation with her husband: Adam wants a son, and he has grown frustrated and disappointed with her barren womb. He's taking a second wife.

Asabe doesn't leave Adam, but neither does she sit around and quietly accept his decision. It was interesting to view the dynamics of their relationship, and how the arrival of the second wife, Fatima, both altered and tested it.

To be honest, I wasn't sure how Asabe would hold up, but her strength, intelligence and character really aided her in navigating these tough waters (view spoiler).

Asabe is definitely my favorite character, and I couldn't help but admire her throughout the story (view spoiler).

Adam, in his quest for a son (and the misfortunes involved with it) reminded me of Henry VIII. Asabe is right--God doesn't like ugly!

The secondary characters are well-rounded (and I loved the change that occurred in Attiyah, Adam's sister), and I know I keep raving about the prose, but I LOVE it :)

My only complaint would be that I didn't get a complete sense of setting (where are they? Is this now, or ten years ago? etc.) but other than that, this was a fantastic read!

If you like character-driven stories, if you like drama, and especially if you like female protagonists/main characters who are NOT doormats and NOT idiots, then you will love Asabe and An Unproductive Woman.

Jane says

Where I got the book: free copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Going to Smashwords, where I originally got the book, I see it's been unpublished: I hope this means that the author has pulled it for editing and re-issuing. Because it needs both. Can I hope that she's been signed by someone? Because this writer is definitely a diamond in the rough. Anyway, this review comes with the warning that it may not pertain to the version you, Dear Reader, eventually read, but to an earlier incarnation.

First, the whole issue of "good writing" vs "technically correct writing". There were many technical flaws in this novel, from structural snafus to unstable POV to incorrect word usage, but that's very common in a first-time writer who hasn't used an editor. If you hang around writing groups you'll see flawed writing that's just plain ol' bad writing and is pretty much unsalvageable, and flawed writing that's still good writing. *An Unproductive Woman* is in the latter category, which means that my rating knocks off a star for not using an editor (or subjecting the writing to a rigorous but encouraging writer group) but is high to indicate my overall enjoyment of the story and the author's overall abilities with the written word.

The story is gripping, if a little over-the-top and soap-operaish in places. It's set in Senegal: one of my peeves is that it took most of the book to work this out, and I would have liked more scene-setting at the outset and some more description of locales and environments. This is not only an African setting but a Muslim African setting, and Western readers may receive many small culture shocks and a less-than-flattering view of themselves. I loved that; one of the beauties of literature is this ability to challenge our ideas and worldview while emphasizing our common humanity.

I won't over-discuss the plot, as it may have changed a little when the new edition comes out. Adam and Asabe have been married for several years but remain childless. Even though Adam always promised Asabe that he would never take a second wife, he is now aging and desperate for a son (view spoiler) His desperation leads him to seek out a 14-year-old girl as his bride, and he is eventually forced by circumstances to accept a third, more difficult wife. And lots and lots of things happen in the birth, death and marriage departments...but the story is ultimately one of redemption through love, the focus of which is the long-suffering Asabe, who turns out to be far from unproductive in many senses of the word. It's a family story, and the emotions will resonate with readers who are able to stuff their own cultural prejudices under a blanket and learn something about the world outside their own experience.

Talking about learning something, I would have loved a glossary of the Arabic terms used and their religious overtones. And I was curious about which language the characters were speaking; would it have been French or an ethnic language? I see from the author's bio that she's American-born, so perhaps that explains why the only non-English terms used were generic Muslim terms (a bit like the way the Catholic church used to use Latin), but this speaks again to the need to ground the story more firmly in its setting.

I would love to see this author write about the experience of growing up Muslim in America, by the way, without sugar-coating or over-evangelizing (if I can use that term in a Muslim context) the message. I did detect a teeny bit of the "our way is better" rhetoric common to writers with strong religious views; this always runs the danger of alienating people of different faiths (Christian authors take note!), and imho the best approach is simply to paint the picture without applying labels to it. Intelligent readers will have their ideas sufficiently challenged by a clear, unadorned description of a life they don't know.

Lisa says

This was just my kind of book. I have a love of books relating to other cultures like "A Thousand Splendid Suns", "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan". Although these books are possibly still in a different league to this and I gave them a 5* rating being my favourite books, I still gave this a 5* rating because I loved it.

The story is about the marriage of Asabe and Adam and his hidden secret. They have been married for 10 years but have not been able to have children. Although Adam loves Asabe and said he would never take another wife, he really wants a son and heir. He therefore takes a second wife Fatima, who is just a mere child. Fatima and Asabe actually become good friends and develop a good relationship. Fatima does eventually give birth to twins, but both her and her son die and Asabe willingly brings up the daughter as her own. Still wanting a son and heir, Adam takes another wife, who he doesn't really love but comes to an "arrangement" with her father. Asabe and this wife definitely do not get on, despite being friends in their childhood. I won't tell more, for fear of leaving spoilers.

I really liked Asabe, and although I found Adam somewhat weak I did feel for him. Asabe to me, was written as a strong character and I really admired her. Despite not liking the character Sauda, the third wife, I had such an amusing picture of her in my head. For those who watch the soap Eastenders in the UK, I pictured her as Kim Fox, brassy and over the top with lots of cleavage and heavily made up. That may not be how the author portrayed her but that is the image I got of her. I love a book when you can form a real picture of the characters in your head. I enjoyed reading about the culture of the polygamous wedding which is alien to a westerner.

All in all the book was descriptive, fun, full of content and well written.

This book was provided to me free of charge by the author, but this did in no way affect my opinion when reviewing the book.

For an interview with the author and a free e-book international giveaway please see my blog.
<http://bookalicious-traveladdict.blog...>

Sara says

An interesting story. It was entertaining, but not realistic.

The entire focus of the book is on pregnancy, childbirth, nursing children that you didn't give birth to, emotions and relations between rival women and the one man that they all seem to think is worth fighting over, and hoping that people you have abandoned will someday come back into your life.

A lot of fairy tale wishing going on, though it is entertaining for sure. I'm not much into fiction though, so for someone who enjoys fictional stories, it might be a good choice.

Sanaa Iona says

Excellent. Brilliant. Amazing, Capturing. This by far has been the best book I have read since returning to

reading at the beginning of the year. It raised my faith, the character of Asabe the main figure in the story with all her traits made me reflect and ponder and look at myself and compare. All characters were wonderfully expressed and brought to life. Whilst reading I laughed, I cried, I got emotional, I got involved in the characters as if I knew them with my outbursts. I am amazed at the flow of the story and how it NEVER got boring or long winded. I didn't mind it was over 400 pages. I was enjoying the read and I didn't want it to end. I was full of anticipations with my own predictions how things might turn out which made me excited whilst reading. I want to say so much about this book but I can't without spoiling it for others. EVERYONE needs to own a copy of this book. I couldn't stop reading it yesterday and today and my husband is reading it now because he saw my reactions whilst reading and became jealous he was not filled in!

I loved it. I am not borrowing it to anyone.....unless I love them!!!

Khaalidah is a wonderful writer mashaAllah and I can't wait to read more of her work.

My only sadness was that I wanted more at the end as the epilogue for me was not enough. I wanted another three or four chapters to quench my excitement! lol

Skylar Burris says

An Unproductive Woman is billed as “women’s fiction,” and it is (centering as it does around domestic life and emotions), but it might be even better categorized as a work of “inspirational fiction.” The theme of forgiveness pervades the novel. The template is similar to that of much Christian fiction, except, of course, that the characters are Muslim (in a polygamist, highly patriarchal culture). The object is reconciliation and the spiritual growth of the characters, and we see an eventual improvement in them. You have your stock almost-too-devout-to-be-true character in Asabe. (She does reach a breaking point, however, when she strikes her husband’s junior wife, that shows her imperfection, but she is given plenty of excuse for that.) You also have your clear antagonist in need of spiritual transformation (Sauda), and your more nuanced protagonist who is meant to be sympathetic but also clearly in need of spiritual transformation (Adam).

I say the reader is meant to sympathize with Adam (while loathing parts of him), but I had some trouble doing just that. For much of the book, the regret that haunts him is expressed in anger and unkindness and desperation rather than in repentance. Asabe loves her husband Adam, but it is unclear why. He’s angry and self-centered and sometimes unkind to her, but she tells us she loves him. If it were just a matter of time and familiarity and family affection and duty, that would be understandable, but I never felt like I got a clear sense of why she was attracted to him as a man, and she claims to love him in that sort of romantic way. I think Asabe is in some sense supposed to be the ideal model of a Muslim woman –submissive (without being a complete doormat; she leaves Adam once and stands up for the weak), forgiving, faithful, devout, and assured that whatever her current troubles or mistreatment, Allah is still to be trusted.

I had no sense of what country this book was taking place in for quite some time. Perhaps the author mentions the country toward the beginning, but if she did, I missed it. The country’s name does come up a few times closer toward the end, but I would have liked more scene-setting in the beginning.

As with many Old Testament stories, An Unproductive Woman gives one a concept of why polygamy is such a bad idea through the depiction of its inevitable perils, jealousies, and pain. The author lets us into the characters’ heads, but I never felt like I could fully relate to any of them. There are many characters, and some are better developed than others. We are given a backstory for everyone, even if he or she is introduced relatively late into the novel. The writing is generally good, though the author sometimes states the obvious instead of letting the reader grasp it from context. I found it fairly easy to read the book, though there were moments when the pace slowed.

I think this book might be just the book for a Muslim reader seeking inspirational fiction, but perhaps a bit less so for the secular westerner wanting to read a work of literary fiction about another culture (though it may satisfy some of that audience too). Think less Khaled Hosseini and Jhumpa Lahiri and more...I can't think of a representative Christian fiction author, but that's the comparison I'd go for. This is not to say *An Unproductive Woman* is overly didactic – it's not, though the religious messages are clear enough. It's just to say that there is a clear spiritual message and object in the novel that is more in keeping with inspirational than literary fiction.

Note: I received a free copy of this book from Story Cartel in exchange for an honest review.

Melanie Adkins says

Asabe was married to the man she loved, Adam. She never wanted to be married to any other man. The only thing missing from their happy lives were children. Try as she might Asabe wasn't able to conceive. She didn't know at the time that Adam had a son by a Western woman. All she knew was Adam craved a son. Adam married twice and though he tried, he was given daughters. Asabe goes above and beyond as his first wife. She cooks, cleans, launders his clothing and keeps things running smoothly. His second wife was just a child when she first came to him and although it was tough, Asabe and Fatima became sisters. Adam's third wife was a selfish, arrogant, spoiled woman. Asabe and she had known each other as children. Now it would take every ounce of patience and faith Asabe had to deal with her. When it seems as though tragedy and heartbreak are all Adam's household will know, a miracle happens.

Heartwarming, enriching and full of wonderful life lessons, this book should be on your list. The messages contained in this story are ones everyone can learn something from. Love, marriage, children and doing what's right are all included in this story. One woman endures so much to make her husband happy and to keep her life as peaceful as possible. I recommend this book to everyone. You will be amazed at all she goes through in her lifetime.

I didn't find anything wrong with this one.

I gave this one 5 out of 5 books because it was amazing.

Kasia James says

I found 'An Unproductive Woman' compelling reading. I'm an eclectic reader, but even so, this is perhaps my outside usual fare. However, I found myself wanting to sneak back for a few more minutes in this world. Telling the story of Asabe, a woman in a polygamous Senegalese family, it is thoroughly infused with the Islamic faith, and I found this made me really think about what that meant for these people. Adam, Asabe's husband, I found to be the most irritating, and yet perhaps the most human of the characters. He is not a strong man, but rather weak, selfish and thoughtless. His first wife, by comparison, is necessarily extremely patient and sensible throughout. I kept wishing that she would just throw in the towel and go off to be a painter or something far away from her spouse, but of course that just isn't the way things are done in

this society. Adam is treated as if he is her personal god, after Allah of course. It's a fascinating insight, full of melodrama and action, and I'd highly recommend it.

Sarah says

I'm a little torn with this book. It started well, and the story is engaging. I suspect for many Western readers, some of the concepts and ideas explored in the book are alien, by Muhammed-Ali does a great job of setting these in context, and you quickly accept it.

The story is essentially about the marriage of Asabe and Adam. Asabe is unable to give Adam a child, and Adam is harbouring a secret. Adam takes another wife who later dies, leaving a daughter who Asabe raises. The story progresses and Adam marries again, although this time Asabe doesn't get along quite as well with the second new wife as she did the first.

Asabe is a likeable character, and many women will find her position difficult to relate to, but that said Muhammed-Ali does a good job, and she feel her anger and her sadness.

The reason I struggled with it was that, at times, it felt a bit like the story wasn't progressing very far. There felt like a lot of description that didn't really move the story along. There were times when I found it hard to pick up this book and really get into again.

That said, the book is a good and easy introduction into what is, for most Westerners, a completely unknown culture and I'm sure many readers will find this book an interesting and engaging read.

Shannon says

This book is full of heartbreak and sadness. It is also full of family and love and understanding and faith. I know that this one is outside the genres that I normally post about here on Books Devoured but when I got an email from the author, I read an excerpt of the book online. There was no way I could stop after that and not know what happened next. I am so glad I made that decision.

If there was ever a woman to look up to and aspire to be like it is Asabe. She is Adams first wife and his steadfast partner in life. She loves her husband but she can not give him the one thing he wants the most, a son. I love that Asabe is written so well that even though I look up to her she is not perfect. She has some hard times in the story and she often reacts out of hurt pride just like any one else would. What makes her so amazing though is what she does next. She is not afraid to admit when she is wrong but she is also not a doormat to be walked on and mistreated. I loved Asabe.

Where Asabe's actions are motivated by faith, her husband Adam's actions are motivated by grief and regret. There were times in the story that I wanted to dislike Adam but I just could not. He suffers so much and does what he feels he must to take care of his family. Fatima breaks my heart from the first moment we learn about her. I cut the synopsis short this time because I think it give too much away, especially about Fatima. I urge you to read the first chapter that I linked to instead of the synopsis.

The only thing that kept me from giving this story a 5 was the end. It felt so rushed and I felt a bit cheated out of the emotions because of it. Everything else in the story was told so honestly and openly and I felt that the end was glossed over and it broke my heart. Still though, I did get closure. I just wish I had gotten more details.

I could write pages about this story but you know how I hate to give anything away that you could discover while reading. What I will say is that I think this story is a great example of how families are similar no

matter their religion. Even though Adam does marry more than one woman it does not change what is important. Love, faith, communication. This family is put through some serious heartbreak and they do what any family wants to do, they get through it together. I really enjoyed my time with this family and I hope that many readers discover them.

BOTTOM LINE: An unexpected gem of a story, I loved it.

a cup of coffee and a fairytale says

i received this book in exchange of an honest review on amazon. so here it is.

i have been reading a lot of women's fiction these days and most of them are pretty feminist. so when i came across this book i could not really digest the wrongdoings of Adam again Asabe. the entire time i was thinking "why?" well now i know it is author's creative freedom so i do not question the contents of the book.

now technically speaking, the book is well written. the characters in the book are very well designed. i liked how with so many negativity around someone could actually focus on positivity that hope brings along. i loved Asabe's character in the book. it is very well sketched out. the author is a good story teller. not a writer. i would recommend it to someone who loves reading women's fiction.

Rita Monticelli says

Scroll down for the English version.

Affascinante ma deludente

Sono sempre molto attratta da libri ambientati in luoghi lontani e i cui protagonisti vivono culture profondamente diverse dalla mia. Sono storie che aprono la mente, che ci insegnano a vedere il diverso e a rispettarlo, per quanto ci appaia estraneo e contrario al nostro modo di vedere, a ciò che noi consideriamo giusto. E, da donna, mi piacciono le storie di questo tipo raccontate dal punto di vista di una donna, che spesso mi portano a notare che, sebbene nelle differenze, esistono comunque dei punti in comune, che sono universali.

Con queste aspettative mi sono cimentata nella lettura di "An Unproductive Woman". Dal titolo si può immaginare di cosa parli. È la storia di una donna che non riesce ad avere figli, ma è allo stesso tempo molto più complessa di così.

È ambientata in Senegal, in un contesto musulmano, con una figura di donna intesa come madre di figli e in situazioni di poligamia in cui spesso il marito è molto più vecchio delle sue mogli.

È già un argomento difficile da trattare per una donna occidentale, ma ha un suo fascino. È interessante apprendere il modo di pensare di queste donne per le quali è normale sposare un uomo ben più grande di loro, per le quali la presenza di altre mogli è qualcosa che può accadere, sebbene non vadano matte per l'idea, ma tendono comunque ad adattarsi. È interessante vedere questo tipo di dinamiche familiari e tutti i problemi di gelosie, discussioni e litigi che vi si possono osservare.

C'è da specificare che non siamo di fronte a situazioni che implicano abusi. Le donne raccontate in questo romanzo sono donne libere di fare ciò che vogliono. Gli unici limiti che hanno sono quelli dettati dalla loro stessa mentalità.

Il libro è scritto molto bene, lo stile evocativo dell'autrice ti porta dentro la testa di queste donne e dei loro uomini.

Eppure non ne sono stata soddisfatta.

La trama abbastanza complessa aveva degli spunti interessanti. Adam dopo aver vissuto un lungo periodo in America dove aveva una moglie e un figlio maschio, torna in Senegal per “dovere”, perché la sua famiglia, che non sa nulla di questa moglie e questo figlio, vuole che lui prenda moglie nel suo Paese.

E lui lo fa. Per poi passare il resto della sua vita a pentirsi di aver perso quel figlio maschio. Sì, avete letto bene, il figlio maschio, non perché ha abbandonato la sua famiglia.

Il motivo del suo pentimento è soltanto che la sua nuova giovane moglie, Asabe, sembra non essere in grado di dargli alcun figlio, tanto meno maschio. In caso contrario appare evidente che mai si sarebbe pentito. Mentre Adam si affanna a trovare una moglie capace di ciò, una serie di sfortune, morti, nascite di figlie femmine, malattie e così via gli impediscono di raggiungere questo sogno. Qui l'ironia della sorte, o il karma, o il suo stesso Dio lo stanno punendo per il suo comportamento. E questo è forse l'aspetto più equilibrato della storia.

Dal canto suo Asabe, che non sa nulla del suo passato, continua ad amarlo e subire quel suo desiderio che lei non può esaudire. Mentre il figlio perduto da adulto scopre che il padre lo cercava.

Tutto ciò ha le potenzialità di un grande dramma e, invece, si sgonfia in un insulso buonismo davvero difficile da mandare giù.

Non c'è vero pentimento laddove ci dovrebbe essere, e c'è perdono laddove pare del tutto impossibile che ci sia.

Onestamente non so se la storia possa essere realistica. Da occidentale non lo sembra, ma cercando di aprire la mente ad altre culture le concedo il beneficio del dubbio e dico che forse la sospensione dell'incredulità potrebbe aver retto.

Ma ciò non impedisce l'esistenza di due aspetti veramente deludenti.

Il primo è il tentativo di presentare una situazione controversa per poi farla piegare al conformismo dell'ambiente in cui si sviluppa. In tutto questo dov'è la crescita dei personaggi? Non c'è. Sono tutti statici, fermi sulle loro convinzioni o, peggio, invece finiscono per regredire. La riconciliazione è di una prevedibilità disarmante.

Nella vita reale sono convinta che succeda così, la gente per quieto vivere lascia correre, perdona, va avanti. Ma questa è finzione. Se nella finzione il conflitto non porta a una crescita e a una risoluzione inattesa, i fatti sono due: non funziona lasciando il lettore perplesso o semplicemente lo annoia poiché non offre nulla di nuovo.

L'altro aspetto che proprio non riesco ad accettare è questa immagine della donna che come unici pensieri ha fare figli, avere cura di loro, del marito, i loro sentimenti, i pettegolezzi, le gelosie... ecc... solo e unicamente queste cose. Nonostante il romanzo entri nel dettaglio in tutti questi aspetti, raccontandoci anche la quotidianità di queste donne, mai una volta che in loro riesca a trasparire un benché minimo interesse per un qualsiasi altro argomento. A parte forse Asabe che vediamo qualche volta curare il giardino (ma pare più che altro un aspetto di contorno), possibile che non abbiano altri interessi nella vita? E, badate bene, non parliamo di una famiglia che vive in condizioni di indigenza in cui le donne non si possono permettere “frivolezze” (ovviamente non sono veramente frivolezze, visto che gli interessi di una persona ne definiscono la sua essenza), tutt'altro. Adam è un imprenditore. Le sue mogli hanno tutto quello di cui hanno bisogno. Capisco che tradizionalmente si occupino di faccende “da donne”, okay, ma oltre a questo il nulla. O sono donne di una pochezza di spirito pazzesca (tutte?) o, come penso, l'autrice ha deciso di volerci mostrare dei personaggi la cui continua preoccupazione è quella di ottenere l'attenzione di un uomo codardo ed egoista. Sembra quasi che la sua sia una provocazione nei confronti del mondo occidentale in cui lei vive. Niente mi convincerà che una cosa del genere possa essere realistica. E purtroppo, benché io possa apprezzare il suo intento, ne sono rimasta delusa, poiché, in poche parole, non me l'ha data a bere.

Fascinating but disappointing

I'm always attracted to books set in distant places and whose protagonists live cultures very different from mine. These are stories that open your mind, which teach you to see what is different and to respect it, even if

it appears alien and contrary to the way we see, to what we consider to be right. And, being a woman, I like the stories of this kind told from the point of view of a woman, which often lead me to note that, although the differences, however, there are points in common, which are universal.

With these expectations, I ventured into the reading of “An unproductive Woman”. From the title you can imagine what it is about. It is the story of a woman who cannot have children, but at the same time it is much more complex than that.

It is set in Senegal, in a Muslim context, with a figure of a woman seen as the mother of children, and in situations of polygamy in which often the husband is much older than his wives.

It’s already a difficult subject to deal with for a western woman, but it has its own charm. It’s interesting to learn the way of thinking of those women for whom it is normal to marry a man much older than them, for whom the presence of other wives is something that can happen, though they do not like so much the idea, but they tend to adapt anyway. It’s interesting to see this type of family dynamics and all the problems of jealousy, quarrels, and fights that can be observed.

I must specify that we are not faced with situations that involve abuse. The women told in this novel are women free to do what they want. The only limits they have are those dictated by their own mentality.

The book is very well written, the evocative style of the author takes you inside the head of these women and their men.

Yet I was not satisfied.

The plot was complex enough and had interesting ideas. Adam after having lived a long time in America where he had a wife and a son, he returned to Senegal for “duty”, because his family, who knows nothing of this wife and this son, wants him to take a wife in his country.

And he does so. And then he spends the rest of his life in regret of having lost his son. Yes, you read that right, just his son, not because he has abandoned his family.

The reason of his repentance is only that his new young wife, Asabe, does not seem to be able to give him any child, let alone a son. Otherwise it seems obvious that he would never regret it.

While Adam struggles to find a wife capable of this, a series of misfortunes, deaths, births of daughters, diseases and so on would prevent him from achieving this dream. Here the irony of fate, or karma, or his own God is punishing him for his behaviour. And this is perhaps the most balanced aspect of the story.

In the meantime Asabe, who knows nothing of his past, continues to love him and suffers his wish that she cannot fulfil. While the lost child as an adult discovers that his father was looking for him.

This has the potential of a great drama and, instead, will deflate in a vapid doing good-ism which is really hard to swallow.

There is no true repentance where it should be, and there is forgiveness where seems quite impossible that there is.

Honestly I do not know if the story could be realistic. Being western, it doesn’t seem so to me, but if I try to open my mind to other cultures I give it the benefit of the doubt and say that maybe the suspension of disbelief might have endured.

But this does not prevent the existence of two really disappointing aspects.

The first is the attempt to present a controversial situation and then to bend it to the conformism of the environment in which it develops. In all this, where is the growth of the characters? There is not. They are all static, firm on their convictions, or worse, they tend instead to regress. The reconciliation is disarmingly predictable.

In real life I suppose that it can happen, that people let it go for a quiet life, forgive, go ahead. But this is fiction. If the conflict in fiction does not lead to a growth and an unexpected resolution, the facts are twofold: it does not work leaving the reader puzzled or simply bored because it does not offer anything new.

The other aspect that I just cannot accept is this image of the woman whose only thoughts are to have children, take care of them, her husband, their feelings, gossip, jealousy ... etc ... and only these things.

Despite the novel enters the detail in all these aspects, even telling the daily lives of these women, never once a slightest interest in any other subject manages to shine in them. Aside from perhaps Asabe, that we see sometimes tending the garden (but it seems more like a contour), is it possible they don’t have other interests in life? And, mind you, I’m not talking about a family living in conditions of poverty in which women cannot afford “frivolousness” (obviously it isn’t really frivolousness, since the interests of a person define

their essence), anything but that. Adam is an entrepreneur. His wives have everything they need. I understand that they traditionally deal with “women” matters, okay, but other than that ... nothing. Or they are just plain boring women (all?) or, as I think, the author decided to show characters whose continuing concern is to get the attention of a coward and selfish man. It almost seems that hers is a provocation against the Western world in which she lives.

Nothing will convince me that such a thing could be realistic. And unfortunately, although I can appreciate her intent, I’m disappointed, because, in a nutshell, I don’t buy it.

Irene says

Khalidah is a brilliant story teller, graphic in her description, she drew me into the lives of her character. The story is about redemption by love and faith. It is about forgiveness and long-suffering. It demonstrated the outcome of desperate bid for a child, a male one in particular in an African setting.

I loved her creative use of word; "that name drifted into her head like a ribbon on the wind" got stuck in my memory and fired my imagination. The book was interesting to read and it engaged by my attention and kept me up until 4:00am!

My favourite character is Asabe, who displayed a remarkable strength of character in the midst of trials, severe enough to test anyone's commitment and loyalty. She is by no means an unproductive woman, she showed productivity in different spheres of her life. Underscoring the notion that a woman's value and self-worth should not be determined by her reproductive capacity.

The story was heavily infused with the Islamic faith, a bit distracting. I skipped most of the detailed description of this. While I am not a believer in the Islamic faith, I learnt from the way Khalidah wove faith into the story. A glossary of the Arabic words used would have been useful.

I will recommend it to other readers.

notRahimeanymore says

An incredibly absorbing read. I stayed up til 2 am reading and then finished it the next morning. The story was interesting and I felt the characters were especially well-developed - I especially liked how even though Adam was a jerk, I was still able to kind of sympathize with him bc it was so clear that his actions stemmed from his own weakness and insecurity and deep down, he was ashamed himself. At least I didn't want to throw things while reading his perspective, which has happened to me with other things.

Shortcomings: common to a lot of Kindle-published reads, some clunky writing in places which pretty much boils down to 'needs a better editor.' It was slight in this one, nowhere near enough to interrupt my enjoyment of the story, and I definitely didn't finish it feeling sorry for the money I'd spent on it (which has happened to me with other Kindle-published writing). I would jump at a sequel or another similar story by the same author. I can't say how much I enjoy reading fiction with Muslim characters. (For anyone who's read the books by 'Umm Zakiyyah' - I would say this is less preachy and more centered on an actual plot with stuff happening more than a vehicle for 'let me tell you about my religion' or 'let me convince you on some certain aspect of my religion.')

