



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

INTERROGATING NEGO-FEMINISM IN SIX NIGERIAN NOVELS

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

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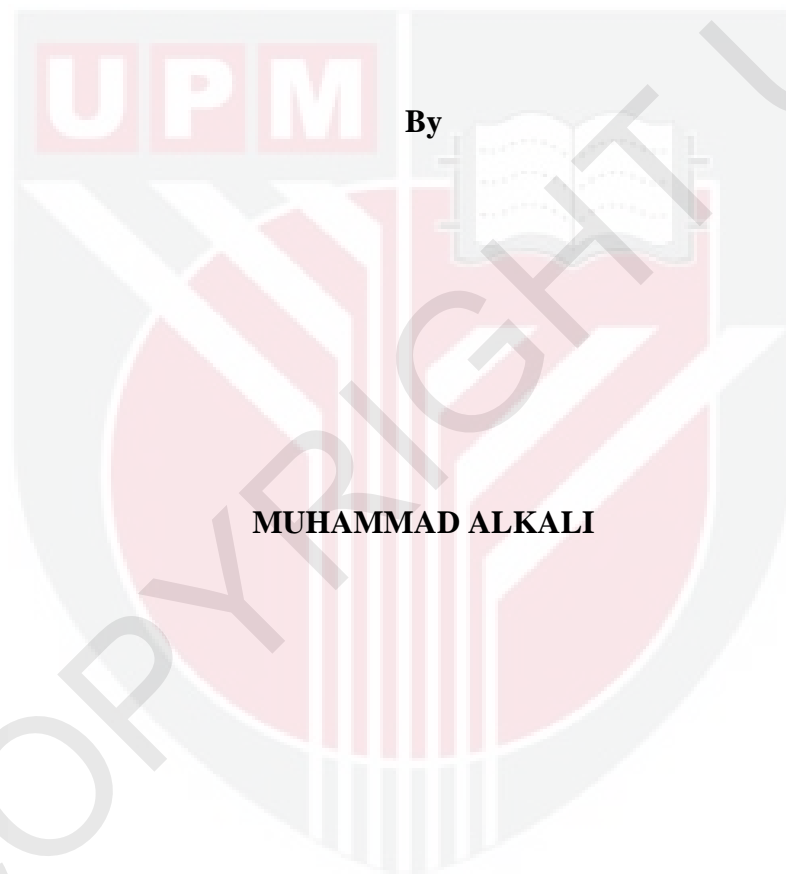
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INTERROGATING NEGO-FEMINISM IN SIX NIGERIAN NOVELS



**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2013

Abstract of thesis presented at the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in the fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

INTERROGATING NEGO-FEMINISM IN SIX NIGERIAN NOVELS

By

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

December 2013

Chair: Rosli Talif, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

The study explores the syndrome of domestic subjugation closely through a progression of already established three generations in Nigerian literary life. While the first generation of writers subjugated women, the efforts of feminist novelists in second generation have arisen, in consequence, to free woman's trampled life, and yet the challenges persist. The study argues, the oppositional feminist approach evident in such novels may have also been overdone and therefore, not adequate in charting a relieving course, hence, fixation of Nigerian woman's plight from the historical disadvantage relative to patriarchal novels.

There is the need for an alternative paradigm, Nego-feminism, in which to assess and provide healthier relationship models for those in, or wishing to, understand conventional, heterosexual, and particularly Nigerian male-female relationships. The

study proposes, therefore, the exploit of the emergent third generation novels through negotiation-feminism as framework for adequate reconciliatory effort of lively-partnership. It recommends further that once teachers and identifiable new Nigerian writers are separately put together in workshops and seminars for mental shift towards the framework, chances are that the Nigerian feminist world would be happier for sexual co-existence.



Abstrak tesis ini dibentangkan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENYIASAT RUNDINGAN-FEMINISME DALAM ENAM BUAH NOVEL
NIGERIA**

Oleh

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

December 2013

Pengerusi: Rosli Talif, PhD

Fakulti: Bahasa Moden Dan Komunikasi

Kajian ini meneroka sindrom penguasaan domestik secara terperinci melalui tiga generasi sastera Nigeria yang telah wujud. Dalam generasi pertama penulisan adalah tentang penguasaan wanita, yang mengakibatkan kebangkitan penulis novel feminis untuk membebaskan kehidupan wanita yang tertindas, namun cabaran ini masih berlanjutan. Saya mendapati ada bukti yang pendekatan feminis dalam novel-novel yang berkaitan agak berlebihan, dan ini tidak cukup untuk mengurangkan penindasan yang berlaku, seterusnya menamatkan penderitaan wanita Nigeria yang diwarisi dalam novel-novel terdahulu yang dikaitkan dengan novel-novel patriaki.

Justeru ada keperluan paradigma alternatif bagi menilai dan menyediakan model-model hubungan yang lebih sihat bagi mereka yang sedang, atau ingin memahami hubungan konvensional, heteroseksual dan khususnya hubungan lelaki-wanita

Nigeria. Oleh yang demikian kajian ini mencadangkan rundingan-feminisme sebagai kerangka dalam usaha penyelarasan perkongsian yang lebih bermakna berdasarkan novel-novel generasi ketiga yang baru muncul. Seterusnya dicadangkan apabila guru-guru dan penulis baru Nigeria yang dikenal pasti menghadiri bengkel dan seminar yang berasingan untuk mengubah pemikiran mereka mengikut kerangka baru ini, peluang feminis wanita untuk hidup gembira bersama-sama dengan lelaki adalah lebih besar.



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All thanks are singly, solely, and entirely due to Allaah (SWT) for His blessings and guidance in allowing this thesis to fruition. The travel log of this three-year thesis is better termed my gender-journey. I have sought fulfilment in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and set my foot on Malaysia exactly on January 18, 2011. It is now over in December 16, 2013. To Allaah be the glory.

I am glad to be able to extend a few words of thank you to my Supervisory team, Assoc. Prof. (Dr) Rosli Talif, Assoc. Prof. (Dr) Roselezam Wan Yahya, and Dr Zumilah Zainalaludin, who do me the honour of review that shapes this thesis. Certainly, they have given me their time and insights, and I am deeply grateful for their generosity.

I trust them: they understand where I am heading in my theoretical arguments which inspired the already old philosophical statements by African thinkers on the need to step-up the conditions of womanhood; they have discerned in their plausible discussions a feminist evolution. My Supervisors have realised with me that it is in the direction opened by the indications particularly in the last two texts studied here, *Sacred Apples* and *The Triumph of the Water Lily* that I now feel it necessary to pursue an investigation which I began in a 2001 conference when I did an article, “Generational Themes in the Nigerian Novels: An Evaluation”, which was published in 2004 in the *Journal of School of Languages (JOSOL)* of the Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, 2(1), pp.200-5.

If I wished to sum up the peculiar object and ambitions of this present investigation in a few words, I should say, *first*, that at a time and in a world which either stubbornly fights against feminism or covers it in academic honours while distorting womanhood through various interpretations through various models, I have tried to re-emphasise the fact that we owe feminism the greatest discovery of (wo)man history: the discovery that opens for both sexes the way to achieving true womanhood devoid of gender bias.

I should *then* say that this feminism cannot be a feminism like any other, a feminism for 'roughness'. Precisely because it reveals the mechanisms of resolving sex exploitation, it cannot be recognised by *everyone*. This feminism, Nego-feminism, which brings the two sexes face to face with their lyrical truth, is unbearable for the radical feminists and their allies, who may reject it and take refuge in their so-called 'bole kaja' ('come down lets fight', a Yoruba language phrasing): it is only acceptable to the thinking men and women, whom it 'represents' (nego-feminists). That is why these thinking men and women have recognised it as its own property, and have set it to work in its practice: in the hands of the novelists and critiques. Nego-feminism has become the theoretical weapon for regenerating woman.

I should say, *lastly*, that *sex regeneration in theory* had to be achieved for Nego-feminism to be able to conceive and carry out its *feminist* work. So long as feminism remained on 'gender-war' position, Nego-feminism was still subject to the ruling ideology, whose function it is to mask the mechanisms of other regenerations. But it is only from the point of view of proper regeneration that it is possible to *see* and analyse the mechanisms of lively partnership and therefore to produce a knowledge

of it. The story of feminism's earlier theories and their rupture with their "erstwhile philosophical consciousness" prove this. The African world has now abandoned those theories or models of 'roughness' and are adopting the nego-feminist position. My Supervisors saw me through this new identification. I appreciate them.

Particularly to Assoc. Prof. (Dr) Rosli Talif, my main Supervisor, I remain eternally bankrupt in gratitude. I do. Here is a fellow whom, from my first contact with him as my confirmed Supervisor, I am not aware of any friction between a student and him. My intended number of study novels was only three. But he arranged for his students a thinking class where we (both Master and PhD students) all present our findings and lively critique the presentations. From the discussions, he saw the reason to increase to four and to six, as it were presently. He is a motivator and incidentally, I have always aspired to be inspired because I cherish inspiring others. He has inspired me in many ways. He will live to be remembered. May Allaah grant him eternal pleasures.

My second Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. (Dr) Roselezam Wan Yahya incidentally was responsible for my coming to the Department of English. She was the Head of Department then. As a gender specialist aspirant, I sought admission not in the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication but in the Faculty of Human Ecology where I was offered PhD in Gender and Development. But I needed to do literary analysis via gender since this has been my teaching engagement in my mother University (Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria) which kindly allowed my PhD. My cross-carpeting to the Department of English owes to

her, and for particularly asking me to look to Assoc. Prof. Dr Rosli Talif as my supervisor. She has been my Malaysian mother as I was in a state of psychological disturbance while I was seeking to transfer the studies: this apparently implies that I have lost one whole semester at the Human Ecology. I thank her for seeing me through in cross-carpeting and therefore, in my PhD dream.

Dr Zumilah Zainalaludin is my third Supervisor from the Faculty of Human Ecology. From her I have been thankfully enriched on gender. Further, she was responsible for my attendance of the one-week international workshop at her financial expense. The workshop, “Empowering Vulnerable Stakeholder Groups Workshop at the Felda Residence, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, February 6-10, 2012, was an eye-opener to me in genderising fishing. The workshop has tremendously shaped my thesis. She also encouraged us to do a paper for the 2012 International Conference on Gender in a sister university, the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). Our paper was titled, “Exploring the Discourse of Early Marriage in *Sacred Apples* through Islamic Feminism”. It was later reworked and submitted for *Journal of Administrative Science* on the title, “Correcting Nexus of Wrongful Coupling in Faith: The Nigerian Novel Industry Example”. I thank her too.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 December, 2013 to conduct the final examination of Muhammad Alkali on his thesis entitled “Interrogating Nego-feminism in Six Nigerian Novels” in accordance with the Universities and College Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Chan Swee Heng, PhD

Professor

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

Shivani Sivagurunathan, PhD

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

Arbayyah Ali Termizi, PhD

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

Scott Slovic, PhD

Professor

University of Idaho, USA

(External Examiner)

BUJANG KIM HUAT, PhD

Professor and Dean

School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Cultural and Literary Studies). The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Rosli Talif, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Wan Roselezam Wan Yahaya, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Zumilah Zainalaludin, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

Date: December 16, 2013

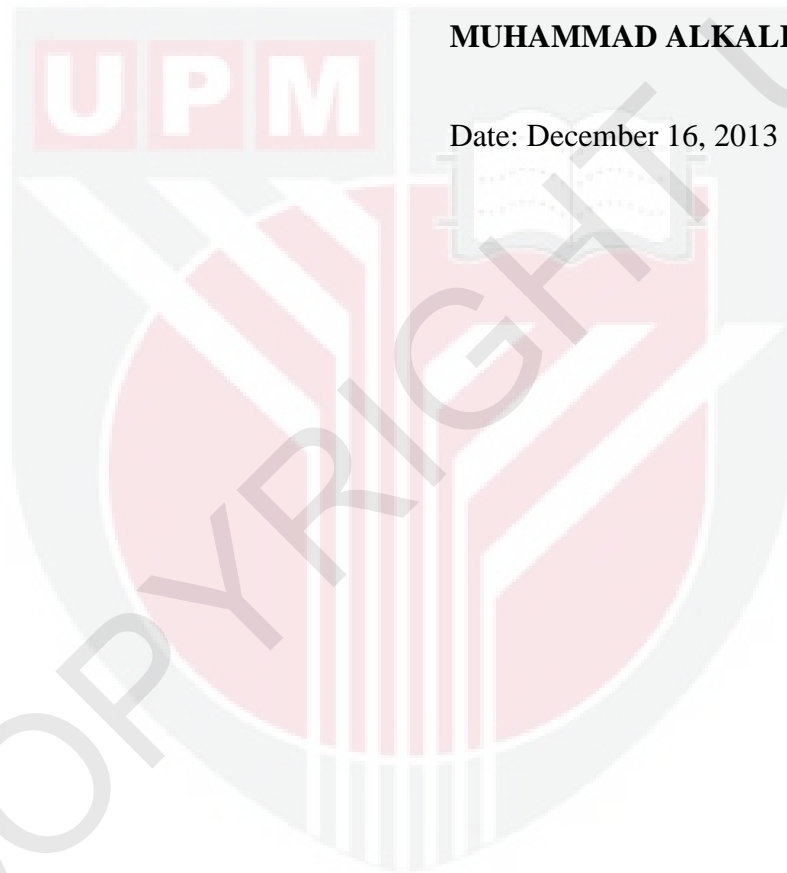


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