UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

INTERROGATING NEG-O-FEMINISM IN SIX NIGERIAN NOVELS

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

FBMK 2013 36
COPYRIGHT

All materials contained within the thesis, including without limitation text, logos, icons, photographs and all other artwork, is copyright material of Universiti Putra Malaysia unless otherwise stated. Use may be made of any material contained within the thesis for non-commercial purposes from the copyright holder. Commercial use of material may only be made with the express, prior, written permission of Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Copyright © Universiti Putra Malaysia
INTERROGATING NEGO-FEMINISM IN SIX NIGERIAN NOVELS

By

MUHAMMAD ALKALI

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


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 runtungan-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.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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.

I am grateful to a number of people whose support has been indispensable to the completion of my PhD. First of them is my family members who have always been there for me throughout my fortifying experience. My success owes to their prayer, encouragement, and financial support. I am practically aware of their cherished
efforts. I thank them all – my mother, siblings, darling wife, darling children for being a beacon of patience! No words can express my gratitude on my absence. I pray that Allaah (SWT) will reward them bountifully here and there.

People whose support I also enjoyed will certainly include, but not restricted to, both my Department and Faculty staff of my home University for coping with my absence. I will remain indebted to my University for releasing me. Then my financier, Tertiary Education Tax Fund (TETFund) truly made this PhD possible. Without its financial support, this programme might not come to fruition. I thank TETFund.

I am indebted to colleagues in Malaysia for their academic support and for being a fellow ‘soldier’ in the research journey. Prayers and casual discussions have been helpful. My sincerest appreciation goes to those colleagues who have been a careful and supportive reader of this thesis. I thank every one of them.
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 Neogo-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
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT                      ii
ABSTRAK                        iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS               vi
APPROVAL                       xi
DECLARATION                    xiii
LIST OF FIGURES                xvii
LIST OF APPENDICES             xviii

CHAPTER

1.0 INTRODUCTION
  1.1 Problem Statement         3
  1.2 Objectives of the Study   7
  1.3 Significance of the Study 7
  1.4 The Scope of the Study    13
  1.5 The Limitations of the Study 22
  1.6 Research Methodology      24
     1.6.1 Conceptual Framework  27
     1.6.2 Theoretical Framework 32
          Nego-feminism Theory  32
  1.7 Definition of Terms       38
     1.7.1 Domestic Subjugation 38
     1.7.2 Nego-feminist Frame  39
     1.7.3 First Generation Writers 39
     1.7.4 Second Generation Writers 40
     1.7.5 Third Generation Writers 45
     1.7.6 Polygyny              48

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
  2.1 Feminism                   49
     2.1.1 Preliminary Statements 49
     2.1.2 Feminism in Brief      50
     2.1.3 Feminism: An Imperfect Journey 54
  2.2 Negotiating what? A Lookback into Negotiated Order Researches 60
  2.3 African Feminisms          72
     2.3.1 Preliminary Statements 73
     2.3.2 Womanism               77
     78
2.3.3 Stiwanism 84
2.3.4 Motherism 87
2.3.5 Nego-feminism: A Brief on Its Birth and Creator 95
Nego-feminist Woman Exhibiting Difference 99

3.0 ENDANGERING PATRIARCHY: THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD AND THINGS FALL APART
3.1 Preliminary Statements 102
3.2 Amos Tutuola, The Palm-wine Drinkard (1952) 107
  Preliminary Discussion 107
3.3 The Palm-wine Drinkard, A Brief Storyline 108
3.4 Aspects of Feminist Conflicts in The Palm-wine Drinkard 109
3.5 Discussion 114
3.6 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (1958) 122
3.7 Things Fall Apart, A Brief Storyline 122
3.8 Achebe, A Feminist? 126
3.9 Aspects of Feminist Conflicts in Things Fall Apart 132
3.10 Summary 145

4.1 Preliminary Statements 146
4.2 Flora Nwapa, A Brief Biography 149
4.3 Efuru, A Brief Storyline 152
4.4 Preliminary Discussion 153
4.5 Aspects of Feminist Conflicts in Efuru 159
4.6 Buchi Emecheta, The Joys of Motherhood 169
4.7 Buchi Emecheta, A Brief Biography 171
4.8 The Joys of Motherhood, A Brief Storyline 172
4.9 Aspects of Feminist Conflicts in The Joys of Motherhood 175
4.10 Summary 183

5.0 MUSINGS OF NEGO-FEMINISM, SACRED APPLES (1994)
5.1 Preliminary Statements 184
5.2 Characteristics of Nego-feminism 188
5.3 Sacred Apples, A Brief Storyline 198
5.4 Aspects of Feminist Conflicts in Sacred Apples 200
5.5 Summary 209

6.1 Preliminary Statements 209
6.2 The Triumph of the Water Lily, A Brief Storyline 212
6.3 Aspects of Feminists in *The Triumph of the Water Lilly* 214
6.4 Summary 224

7.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
7.1 Summary 225
7.2 Conclusion 228
7.3 Recommendations 231

WORKS CITED 242
APPENDICES 262
BIODATA OF STUDENT 263
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 266