

## **A Radical Feminist Reading of Murjanatu Alkali's *From the Eyes of a Spinster***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research explores the assumption that underpins the conception of African feminism held by Nigerian female writers. The majority of feminists hold the view that women should always be put in the same position of competition as their male counterparts in terms of political, economic, and social roles. This concept originated from the aspiration to demonstrate to the rest of the world that a woman's biological make-up ought not to be the one and only factor that is used in the process of discriminating against other women in social settings. Radical feminism is seen as a position within feminist discourse that aims for a fundamental reorganisation of society in which male dominance is eradicated in all social and economic situations while acknowledging that other social divides also have an impact on women's lives. In her novel, *From the Eyes of a Spinster* (2018), Alkali, a radical feminist, portrays her male characters, such as Habeeb and Mansur, as inhuman who derive pleasure from bringing agony to the women they come across, such as Sakina, in an effort to demonstrate that men are inhuman and lack empathy when dealing with women. The study also intends to portray the radicalism of such writers in their writings in other ways, such as by voicing out their frustration against males in general. Alkali was successful in bringing out the malevolence that existed in the male characters in the novel. Her female characters, such as Safina and Nafisa, are presented as oppressed victims of the situations they find themselves in. She portrays the folly of the female characters as a mistake that they have made in their lives, which is a clever technique for defending the female characters. The study found that the author's decision to cast the male characters into disfavour and to canonise the female characters even after death is an example of a kind of radical feminism that is intended as a form of payback to males generally, especially those who are regarded as being incapable of doing anything except bad things. The finding of this study is that the novelist intends to portray the male characters as unreasonable and indifferent to the plight of the women in their surroundings, notably.*

**KEYWORDS:** Radical Feminism, Alkali, and African Women Writers

## INTRODUCTION

With the end of colonialism, cultural and gender issues that are still widespread on the continent have dominated debates in African literature. African writers feel it is their duty to write on a variety of themes, including feminism, poverty, military interference in politics, corruption, and bad governance. The texts' conversation mainly focus on subjects that an author has been debating in an effort to discover answers to the challenges that plague society and threaten to wreck it. Many writers who regard themselves as moral artists, who must educate their readers, also take on the role of moral teachers who must impart moral principles through their writing. This is so that they can fulfil their responsibility to inform their audience. According to Atanga, (2013), there are other possible origins for feminism in Africa than the European women's movement. The history of colonialism and postcolonialism in Africa, as well as the nationalist conflicts on the continent, as well as historical and social factors, are all covered in this category.. The idea of feminism as a method of resistance to male dominance was well-established in Africa at the start of the 20th century, but it did not achieve widespread acceptance in literature until the middle and later years of the century. In Nigeria, a few female writers, such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Zainab Alkali, and others, have fought for the rights of feminist writers. One of the primary purposes of the Nigerian feminist literature is to liberate the Nigerian woman from the chains of male supremacy in society. For every woman to recognise herself and start down the path of freedom, it is important to amplify this great responsibility. It is also vital that they shoulder this obligation since they are aware of the enormous weight, which they carry in releasing African women from toxic masculinity. In the same manner that other feminist women writers have done, Alkali intends for her novel *From the Eyes of a Spinster* to portray a tale of patriarchal tyranny over women. She did, however, end up talking about the radicalism of African women in particular and of women in general. Robinson (2003) argues that radical feminism's representation—his assertion that many male theorists place more emphasis on a deified personality than on interested masculine practices—can help in explaining why this specific branch of feminist theory has been disregarded or disparaged. No matter how stupid the male characters are, the majority of the female characters unintentionally destroy their own lives.

Critics of African origin find a way of contextualizing the issue of feminism to suit their own peculiarities. They, therefore, resolved to call it such names as motherism, nego-feminism, snail-sense, African feminism, and so on. Be it Motherism, Snail-sense Feminism, Nego-feminism or African Womanism, majority of the strands constituting African Feminism were coined by Nigerians (Acholonu, (1995), Adichie, (2014) Ezeigbo, (2012), Amadiume, (2015), Amaefula, (2021), Eboh, (1999), Ezeigbo, (1966), Hudson-Weems, (2019), Alkali. et al. (2013), Nnaemeka, (2004).

Being a new novel by a new author, *From the Eyes of a Spinster* has received little literature written about it. This article makes an effort to review other literary works that deal with themes

that are related to those discussed in the current conversation in order to fill in any gaps that may still exist and bring something new to the discourse. In this research study, the novel is analysed as a fallacy in which the female author attempts to promote radical thought in order to illustrate how her male characters oppress and control the female characters in the novel. Specifically, the research focuses on how the author's male characters oppress and control the female characters. Due to the fact that the novel is the focus of this research, a fallacy analysis of the novel has been included. The research investigates the lives of three beautiful ladies who had happy childhoods but whose lives were eventually damaged by the men who came into their lives at various points in their lives. The women were brought up with a good upbringing, but their lives were later shattered. This research has led to a number of conclusions, one of which is that African women writers, and Nigerian women writers in particular, have been seen to have lied about feminism to get people to feel sorry for them.

### **SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXT**

According to Ebony Publishers (2018), the plot of the novel *From the Eyes of a Spinster* centres on three sisters who are forced to confront a harsh reality as a direct result of the various life lessons they have received from the men in their lives. These sisters are forced to do so as a direct result of the various life lessons they have received from the men in their lives. These women have been pushed to behave in this way as a direct consequence of the plethora of various life lessons that they have gotten from the men in their lives. This is a direct result of the myriad of different life lessons that they have received from the males in their lives. The novel focuses on how the life lessons that these men have passed on to these women have influenced them and how those teachings have moulded their viewpoints. In particular, the story examines how the women's relationships with the men who came into their lives at some point shaped their perspectives harsh reality as a direct result of the various life lessons they have received from the men in their lives. These women have been pushed to behave in this way as a direct consequence of the plethora of various life lessons that they have gotten from the men in their lives. This is a direct result of the myriad of different life lessons that they have received from the males in their lives. The novel focuses on how the life lessons that these men have passed on to these women have influenced them and how those teachings have moulded their viewpoints. In particular, the story examines how the women's relationships with the men who came into their lives at some point shaped their perspectives. The ups and downs that the women face serve as challenging lessons for them to learn within the context of their often-chaotic lives, which serves as a background for those experiences. This study's objective is to investigate the manner in which Alkali presents the male characters in *From the Eyes of the Spinster* as being irrational and unconcerned with the situation of the women who are a part of their lives. The study seeks to fill a gap by applying the concept of a radical feminist's approach to studying the text under consideration.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Doude & Tapp (2014), radical feminism developed as a response to the focus that was put on liberal and Marxist feminism in the 1960s. They added that this was a turning point in the history of feminism. The oppression of women at the hands of males in both the private and public realms is a central tenant of the radical feminist ideology. From the perspective of radical feminists, the enslavement of women by males inside the household and political spheres is considered to be the primary issue in the 1960s. They added that this was a turning point in the history of feminism. The oppression of women at the hands of males in both the private and public realms is a central tenant of the radical feminist ideology. From the perspective of radical feminists, the enslavement of women by males inside the household and political spheres is considered to be the primary issue. This subordination is most clearly seen in the rhetoric that surrounds rape and places blame on the victim. In the 1970s, radical feminists argued about whether or not rape was caused by a biological predisposition among males or by the socialisation of men, which portrayed women as objects. Specifically, the discussion centred on whether or not rape was caused by a biological propensity among males. They came to the conclusion that the second possibility was the more probable one. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, radical feminists, along with liberal feminists, worked to reform rape statutes in all states to reflect the sentiment that rape was not just a crime against virginal women, but rather against all women because of the fear of rape. This sentiment was driven by the belief that rape was not just a crime against virginal women but rather against all women. This view was mirrored in the reformation of rape laws, which came about as a result of the reformation. At the core of radical feminism is the rejection of the patriarchal assumption that the private sphere (for women) is centred on childrearing, marriage, and the administration of the family. They continued to discuss how the political sphere of patriarchy is responsible for causing women to endure harm in the form of rape, domestic violence, and prostitution. This is because of the private realm of patriarchy. It is against this background that modern African authors like Alkali borrow a leaf from Western feminists to paint women as victims of society's gender-based oppression. The vast majority of these authors are oblivious to the significance that certain African civilizations place on female members of their society; in fact, several of these African societies are characterised by a patriarchal social structure.

According to Robinson's (2003) argument, radical feminism opens up crucial questions and perspectives on masculinity. It examines how feminist theory is approached in this context, which must be a persistent, primary feminist concern. The research investigates how various masculine theorists interpret feminist discourse in relation to radical feminism. Similarly, Rowland & Klein(1996) postulate that radical feminism is woman-centeredness, in which women's experiences and interests are at the centre of their theory and practice. It goes on to explain how all women are part of the oppressed group, and as such, they live in perpetual fear

and insecurity. The present study takes the claim from this study and aligns it with how the writer is paranoid about men generally. The institutionalised discrimination of patriarchy, which is to the advantage of males, is the same oppressive social structure that holds women in subjugation as a group (Mackay, 2015). According to McVey & Tyler (2021), radical feminist theory, in particular, is the framework that has been essential in naming and theorising the structures of male dominance as they relate to men's violence against women. They make this assertion based on their belief that radical feminist theory is the framework.

Olayini (2016), in an effort to bolster the illusion of the radical African feminist, explains how the feminist critical standpoint has undoubtedly provided a vista for a cross-cultural critique of gender discourse. This was done in order to reinforce the image of the radical African woman. In order to shed light on the philosophical underpinnings of feminist epistemology, the feminist preconceptions and critical attitudes that serve as its foundation have been pushed to the forefront of this discussion. He contends that despite its unimpeded but widespread invasion throughout the world in post-war capitalist cultures, its western middle-class lining has rendered its polemic superfluous, particularly to a mind that is discerning. He makes this claim by stating that despite its unimpeded but widespread invasion throughout the world in post-war capitalist cultures, the reason for this is that its upper-class lining has made its middle-class lining obsolete. Alkali has learned from this way of thinking about how African women writers feel left out and come out to challenge the status quo.

Although similar to what is available in the Western world, the African creative writing circle was dominated by mostly men who had had the opportunity to tell their stories, reciting what they thought was more pertinent to write about and not bothering to write on themes such as feminism. For instance, the African creative writing circle primarily comprised men who had previously been given the opportunity to write about their experiences and recount what they considered to be more significant to include in their work. Furthermore, the majority of the participants in the African creative writing circle had been given the opportunity to write about their experiences. The majority of women in the country did not have the opportunity to speak out about the way in which they had been mistreated by men in the years following the country's independence, with a few notable exceptions of female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, and Zainab Alkali, to name just a few. These women were able to speak out about their experiences, but the majority of women in the country did not. This assumption is still held firmly by the contemporary female writers, despite the fact that there are now the same number of male and female writers, and they vow to continue with the narrative of women's subjugation. This is the case despite the fact that there are now as many female writers as there are male writers. Not those who have already established themselves as notable figures, such as Chimamanda Adichie and Lola Shoneyin, and not almost every aspiring author who decides to write on feminism. Murjanatu Adam Alkali's writing is not an exception to the general trend of writing on the subjugation of women in today's society.

With the amount of energy that most contemporary female writers write with, one would think that in a society like Nigeria women are not given any consideration. According to Olaniyi (2016), women are given unique benefits in both the political and social areas of the nation. This is the case in both the political and social spheres of the country. The existence of ministries of women's affairs at both the state and federal levels, each of which is led by either a commissioner or a minister, depending on the circumstances, demonstrates how women are accorded preferential treatment. These ministries are led by a commissioner or a minister, depending on the circumstances. This does not imply that the widespread maltreatment of women in the home as well as in politics should be overlooked; on the contrary, this is something that must be addressed. Everyday, it is possible to hear on the news that a woman has been raped on the street or has been abused by her husband. These are only two examples of the many ways in which women are subjected to violence. It is quite possible that this will be covered in the news by many outlets. A sizeable proportion of women are now enduring extraordinarily unpleasant experiences as a direct result of the subjugation by males in the past. It is possible that this is what drives Alkali to write in order to relay the tale of the enslavement of women.

The concept of radical feminism has been used throughout the course of this research for its usefulness. The extent to which this theory was able to explain the findings of the research was one of the aspects that contributed to its acceptance. The research is mostly feminist in perspective. Hence, the idea of radical feminism is applied as the appropriate theory. The reader is better able to grasp the research because of the concept's insights into it. Many people, including liberals, Marxists, socialists, culturalists, postmodernists, and others, may consider radical feminism to be one of these other types of feminism. Although it acknowledges that other social divisions, such as race, class, and sexual orientation, also have an impact on women's experiences, it is considered a feminist perspective because it advocates for a radical reorganisation of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts. According to studies, the concept first gained traction in the 1960s and has since spread around the world. African writers, like Alkali, have taken a leaf out of other forms to criticise the perceived marginalisation of women.

Radical feminists have claimed that women have a right to be furious, as noted by Olaniyi (2016). This rage can be communicated through activism in a variety of ways, including the building of shelters for abused women and health facilities; the promotion of sex education in an effort to improve people's ability to give and receive consent; demonstrations against pornography and beauty pageants; support for abortion; and many other causes. Additionally, radical feminists may choose to protest in more extreme ways, such as by deciding not to get married, have children, or even have any kind of interaction with males at all (separatism) (reference). In the same vein, they are also in favour of non-mixed activity among lesbians or females in general. The wearing of bras, dresses, and skirts, which radical feminists believe serves to further objectify women, are examples of patriarchal beauty standards and traditional

gender roles that are disapproved of by many members of this group. As was said previously by Olaniyi, it is not out of place to suggest that the author under review has, in the novel, redressed her beliefs in a manner that is similar to the methodology used by earlier radical feminists.

Waters (2001) asserts that the public sphere is hierarchical, exploitative, built on odious divisions between categories of people, and driven by subjectivities that are either dominating and scornful or submissive, ingratiating, jealous, and resentful. This assertion is meant to highlight the trend of radicalism in women's writing. He continues by outlining how women's ascent to status and positions organised by the demands of male power and prestige amount to nothing more than the reproduction of current demeaning gender disparities. He argues that this is because women's ascent to status and positions is organised by the demands of male power and prestige. He continues by stating that feminism's resistance to women's exclusion is not without nuances and that this is something that feminism advocates. Feminism, on the other hand, condemns the involvement of women in projects designed to serve the interests of males as advocates and representations of meanings and values connected with male dominance. This is something that is glaringly obvious and cannot be mistaken in any way. In light of this information, Alkali decides to begin writing in an effort to "liberate" the womenfolk from the tyranny of the male patriarchy.

## DISCUSSION

The radical feminism that can be seen in the writing of contemporary Nigerian women writers is the subject of this research paper, which takes a detailed look at the issue. The author of the novel is seeking to demonstrate that the man is more dominant than the woman in their relationship by depicting both male and female characters in the same shot. This is done to emphasise the equality of the genders within the relationship. Alkali tells the story of how women are treated in a society that is emblematic of Nigeria from the perspective of a third-person point of view. According to Willis (1984), every feminist has, for a variety of reasons, helped to falsify and denigrate radical feminist concepts. He explains how radical feminism in its original sense is almost non-existent today, which only adds to the confusion. They thus believe that the main objective of feminism is to liberate women from the imposition of so-called "male standards" and to establish a different culture that is based on female values. When looking at the text under review, the adoption of a radical approach by the writer further exposes her radicalism towards her male characters.

As previously stated, Alkali employs her narrative to demonstrate how foolish and heartless her male characters can be. This is something she strives to do throughout the novel. She does not care about the plight of Alh. Ibrahim, Imraan's father. Even though the calamities that befell him and his children were not solely their own doing, they were victims of circumstance. Even Alh. Bello Gada, the triplets' biological father, is not spared from the author's retribution. Based on

the author's style of narration, it is evident that she is sympathetic to all the female characters in the story, despite the fact that they all have flaws. This conclusion may be drawn from the viewpoint of a radical feminist. She does not show any compassion for the male characters, despite the fact that they often exhibit actions that are not entirely their fault.

Throughout the whole course of her existence, Sakinah, who serves as the primary character of the novel, has been plagued by nothing but unfavourable circumstances. Much like her two triplet sisters, Safinah and Nafisah, she has been involved in one terrible occurrence after another ever since she was eight years old and all the way up to the time that she got married in her twenties. They felt as if they had lost a mother figure in their lives as a result of their mother's hectic schedule, which prevented her from caring about what her children did. They were only able to feel at ease when they were in the company of their stepmother, Mama Rabi. She did not, however, survive long enough to comfort them and be the mother they missed in their original mother. She did not outlive their biological mother. Mama Rabi's life was tragically cut short when she was involved in a tragic car accident in Kano while she was on her way to see her family there. Growing up in a household that included male and female siblings in addition to relatives of both sexes was challenging for Sakinah. When she was ten years old, she was the victim of a terrible tragedy: her cousin had sexually abused her when they were at their house, and her mother was too preoccupied with her other responsibilities to recognise what had happened. Sakinah's stepmother, in whom she found peace, passed away, and she has been saddened and has no idea what she wants to do with her life. Since she clings to the idea that men are, on the whole, corrupt, she has a deep-seated animosity against the males in her life. She went through a major mental breakdown as a direct consequence of the fact that he warned her that he would murder her if she ever informed anybody else about what he had done to her. She started displaying the abnormal behaviour very shortly after it began, and she continued doing so right up until she turned twenty years old. This was the direct result of the aberrant behaviour. Alkali employs this persona to show the radical views that she has against males in general. Despite the fact that there is no justification whatsoever for what Habeeb did to her, Alkali put all of the blame on Habeeb. In spite of the fact that it is frowned upon in Hausa tradition for children of different ages to engage with one another, Alkali did not hold Sakinah's parents, and especially her mother, responsible for allowing the children to play together. Even her mother had a nonchalant attitude towards her children, and she put up with the abuse of her children for a lengthy period of time. After some time had passed, it was brought to our attention that Hajiya Siyamah had been avoiding her children in order to avoid infecting them with tuberculosis (TB), which is a chronic condition that Hajiya Siyamah suffered from. This was done in order to prevent Hajiya Siyamah from infecting her children with TB. In any event, the writer gives the impression that it is solely Habeeb's fault that he put his cousin Sakinah in all of her predicaments by making him out to be the one who is responsible for doing so. This is done by

making him out to be the one who is responsible for putting Sakinah in all of her difficult situations. The aim of the article, when considered from the viewpoint of a radical feminist, is to provide evidence that Alkali is attempting to portray the depraved nature of men in general in comparison to the nature of their female counterparts. She is so emotionally invested in the persona of Habeeb that she caused him to lose everything, even his life, because of her emotions towards him.

Alkali portrays one of the characters, Mansoor, who is described as a nice person until it is shown that his true colour is evil. This is done with the intention of portraying the evil that is present in her male characters and making it seem as though they had no redeeming qualities whatsoever. It has come to light that all he is doing is acting as if he loves Sakinah in order to get vengeance on her father for the betrayal that her father perpetrated against his own when they were both very little children. The writer inflicts agony on him because he is a man and an evil creature in order to seek retribution on him for his kind, and to teach him a lesson for his kind. He was the architect behind the rape of Sakinah, a young woman with whom he had been close enough to win the girl's trust and, as a consequence, her love. On the other hand, given that he is a malicious person, he rather breaks that trust and strive towards making her life a living hell than do the former. The father of the triplets, Alh. Bello Gada, is not exempt from the punishment. Alkali forces him to take responsibility for the struggles that his children have been forced to endure. He snatches a girl from his childhood friend while they were both still young, but now his children have to pay the price for the crime he committed when he was younger. The author gives the idea that the children's lives are filled with misery because of the acts and choices taken by their fathers, and this is the image that the reader is left with. Imran is required to make restitution for the wrongdoings he committed against Safinah as a consequence of the fact that he betrayed her. At the end, he is arrested by the drug traffickers' officers.

The culture of rape in most African contexts encourages male dominance as well as torture, repression, and a negative attitude towards females. Alkali portrayed these aspects of the culture, along with the negative attitude towards females. In addition, the text highlights the carefree attitude of parents towards their children, especially those who are taken away by a materialistic and unrealistic life of luxury. In particular, the text focuses on depicting the attitude of parents who are swept away by a life of luxury. When examining the work from the standpoint of radical feminism, the writer should have directed her anger against Hajiya Siyamah for her nonchalant attitude towards her children, which results in the suffering of the children. This would have been the appropriate channel for the writer's anger. Since she has neglected her children, Hajiya Siyamah should be considered somewhat accountable for the pain and anguish they have endured as a result of her actions. The text is undeniably a reaction to the so-called masculine oppression that is seen as the root cause of the culture of rape. Despite this, those people who have been subjected to such circumstances have gotten an understanding of the difficulties that are associated with such conduct as a result of their experiences. It is largely the case that

children are the ones who bear the brunt of their parents' negligence when it comes to parenting. Despite this, Alkali has taken it upon herself to lay the responsibility for the events in the novel on the shoulders of the male characters. As a result of the sexual assault that Habeeb had inflicted on Sakinah ever since she was ten years old, the author opted to depict her narrative as a sorrowful one to convey Sakinah's anguish against males in general.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we can see how twenty-first-century African female writers such as Murjanatu Alkali try to portray male characters in their novels, like most of her contemporaries. Alkali portrays the character of Habeeb as unreasonable and indifferent to the plight of the women in his surroundings, notably Sakinah. This is particularly true of Habeeb's mistreatment of Sakinah. Although the female characters are made to seem as if they are victims of the men's atrocities, this is done despite the fact that the female characters also perform horrible deeds. Despite this, the female characters are made to look like they are victims of the men's violence. The novelty of this research is based on the fact that it offers a new perspective on the piece of writing that is being analyzed. This is done by taking a more in-depth look at the methods that the writer employed in order to illustrate the significance of parental care in the upbringing of their children, particularly females. This helps to show that parental care is critical in the raising of children. This novel is a protest, written as retaliation against the so-called male supremacy that has sought to relegate them to the background. It does this by using the concept of radical feminism as the instrument for analysis in this study.

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