

Male Virility under the Microscope in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* and Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

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Abstract. Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* and Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* have over the years received some critical attention. This paper adds to existing scholarship by exploring how patriarchal construction understands infertility with regard to both men and women in both novels. Premised on machismo, a type of masculinity, the paper aims to investigate if childlessness is solely a woman's problem as she has been made to believe. Through the delineation of childless marriages in both novels, the paper demonstrates that though the wives feel culpable and suffer physical and emotional distress as a result, it is the husbands that are proven sterile when their so-called virility is brought under the microscope. The paper concludes that infertility is a medical problem and not a woman's problem as this study has amply dramatised. The paper therefore recommends that husbands and wives should avail themselves of thorough medical examination if confronted with childlessness and that the patriarchal myth that denies the existence of male infertility needs be demystified to forestall unjust social castigation levied on wives as a result of childlessness.

Keywords: Okoye, Shoneyin, virility, machismo, childlessness, microscope

1. Introduction

Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* and Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's*

Wives have received a good number of critical attention especially that of Okoye. Anyadike (2004) in his assessment of *Behind the Clouds* posits that Okoye achieves two objectives in writing this novel. One is the creation of 'a saint in skirts' here on earth in the person of Ije and the other is making Dozie 'an angel in pants', a husband worthy and deserving of a wife like Ije (p.182). Achufusi (1994) on his part avers that Okoye's heroines make choices for themselves and that they also "display some measure of assertiveness though they cannot be regarded as "radically assertive" (p.173). Nutsukpo (2017) submits that "...Okoye successfully explores the theme of feminist consciousness and female assertiveness as avenues through which women can rise above their limitations in an oppressive system and change the way in which their gender is perceived (p.26).

Oni & Mosuro (2019) undertake a study of semantics and ideological perspectives in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and conclude that lexical choices deployed in the novel "serve as conveyor of the ideological stance" (p.11). Pam (2012) carries out a stylistic reading of Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and argues that "aside the simple diction and enormous obscene words and expressions used, the author borrows from a wide range of registers like that of the medecalese" (p.93). Baloyi (2019) analyses African woman's dilemma in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* and posits that the

consequences of infertility in most rural communities include “stigmatisation and ostracism at the hands of their in-laws, other women, their husbands and the society (p.8).

Machismo, a type of masculinity serves as the framework of this study. The term machismo according to Bilmes, 1992; Mayo & Resnick, 1996 “is a Spanish word usually used pejoratively in describing an attitude of male dominance and superiority which is legitimized through patriarchal social systems and reinforced through cultural values and norms (qtd in Segrest et al., 2003,p.16). Machismo is defined as “a strong exaggerated sense of manliness; an assumptive attitude that virility, courage, strength and entitlement to dominate are attributes or concomitants of masculinity” (Dictionary.com, n.d). Generally speaking, machismo is associated with man’s traditionally bloated ego and his propensity to protect it. The analysis of the texts will begin with Okoye’s *Behind the Clouds*.

2. The Agony of Childless Women in Okoye’s *Behind the Clouds*

2.1. Ije Apia

Ije is childless after about six years of marriage. Made to believe through patriarchal constructs that she is culpable, she makes a round of herbalist and medical treatments to no avail: “She remembered vividly all the doctors who had treated her – the tests, the minor operations, and the major one that almost killed her. She remembered also the herbalists she had approached for help” (p.2). Ije approaches the end of every month with expectation and becomes miserable as she watches her dreams dissolve into nothingness as the months come and go (p. 8). She becomes “a pessimist, not by design, but because each ray of hope had been dashed by the events that followed it” (p.13). Judging her childlessness through the lens of patriarchy, she tells her husband with tears in her voice: “How I have failed you” (p.15) in spite of the fact that she is the pillar behind his success (p.63). This recalls Efuru’s statement in Nwapa’s *Efuru* (1965) who in spite of her huge economic achievements still feels a sense of

failure because of her barrenness: “It was a curse not to have children. Her people did not just take it as one of the numerous accidents of nature. It was regarded as a failure” (p.207). This gives credence to Ezeigbo’s assertion that “in African societies, barrenness is a sign of failure, and no matter how capable or successful a woman is in other spheres, she is never recognized or valued if she is childless” (1990, p.151). This accords closely with Orabueze’s opinion that “despite a woman’s high economic profile in her husband’s family and society, she is still regarded as nothing if she fails the test of motherhood” (2004, p.107). In the vein of Ezeigbo (1990) and Orabueze (2004), Baloyi (2019) avers that a childless’ woman’s feeling of being a ‘failure’ is derived from the constructs of society and the level of comprehension on the meaning and role of women in society” (p.6). It is obvious from the foregoing that that the African woman’s humanness is subsumed in motherhood. Accordingly, Ije’s whole being is consumed by the desire to have a child: “Her only obsession was to have a child and nothing else meant much to her...” (p.21). She confesses to Ugo Ushie, her friend: “I can’t help worrying...it is not easy for me to take my mind off my misfortune” (p.30).

In spite of “her fruitless visits to so many doctors” (p. 2), Ije musters courage to consult Dr. Melie upon hearing that he performs miracles on childless women. With tears in her voice, she says: “I want a baby, doctor” (p.7). She runs some tests with Dr. Melie hoping that the results will show the cause of her childlessness so she can be treated. But to her dismay, “the reports indicated that her fallopian tubes and uterus were normal. Her heart sank” (p.32). Her heart sank even though the test result is good because she accepts the definition of motherhood imposed on her as a stereotype. However, Dr. Melie places her on some medication which she takes with great expectation. Again, her hope was dashed: “This month of all months she had thought that her wish for a child of her own would be granted her...Crestfallen, she confined herself to her bedroom...” (pp.46-47). This corroborates Larrier’s assertion that “the absence of children ...brings emptiness and suffering” (2003, p.194).

Compounding Ije's predicament is Mama, her mother-in-law. She abuses and curses her because she sees her as one who has deprived her of grandchildren. She tells Ije to her face that her "childlessness was a punishment for her unchaste life as a spinster" (p.42). She swears: "whoever denies me the opportunity to have a grand-child will meet with misfortune all her life" (p.164). Mama's attitude confirms Ezeigbo's argument that "the inability to produce children on the part of a woman provokes physical assault, verbal assault, repression and contempt in her husband and even his relations" (p.151). In another development, Mama tells Ije that she would not visit them again until Dozie "takes his time and behaves like a man" (p.59). What Mama means here is until Dozie affirms his machismo by taking another wife who would give her grandchildren. Ije is so frustrated that she begins to question God: "What have I done to make God deny me even one child?" (p.60). Ije's devastation confirms Nwapa's assertion that "...women are what they are because they can give life, they can procreate. So in African societies, when this unique function is denied a woman, she is devastated" (p.531).

Beatrice, another victim of childlessness but now pregnant visits Ije and shares with her how a "faith healer succeeded where the doctors had failed" (p.49) and suggests to Ije to give him a try. Ije does not think much of faith-healers "but her desire for a child was so great that it had always made nonsense of both her religious faith and her reason" (p.50). She eventually meets the faith-healer, Apostle Joseph, who among other things tells her to take a fast for one week. She follows Joseph's instructions strictly. In their next meeting, the so-called Apostle reveals his identity. He says to Ije:

Some men for some reason, are unable to father children. Wise women who are married to such men tactfully find other men to give them what they desire. This is not adultery in the eyes of men. It is not adultery in the eyes of God. Think about this Mrs. Apia. I have gladly done it for some women. I can do it for you too. (p.55)

Ije retorts: "*To hell with you and your church!*" (p.56).

Ije's misery intensifies with the intrusion of Virginia into Dozie's life. She introduces herself rudely to Ije in their first meeting:

I'm Mrs. Apia too. I'm carrying Mr. Apia's baby and I've come to take my rightful place in this house...You are his childless wife, aren't you? I can't live outside with his baby while you, who have given him no child all these years, stay in and enjoy everything. (p.75)

Mama excited at Virginia's pregnancy congratulates her son on his machismo in Ije's presence saying "now you have acted like a man, my son. At last you have done what has been expected of you..." (p.93). She welcomes Virginia with joy saying "welcome, my new wife...God bless you my new wife. So it is true you're pregnant already" (p.92). Fondling Virginia's belly, she says: "I'm sure it is going to be a carbon copy of my son, Dozie. So these my eyes will see a grandchild, eh?" (p.92). Upon Virginia's complaint that Ije is not making her feel at home, Mama rejoins: "Don't mind her...You have more claim to this house than she does. Don't let her upset you" (p.95).

In the course of time, Dozie's heart is gradually won over by Virginia. "He had become closer to Virginia and further away from Ije" (p.99). Dozie's attitude confirms Nwapa's observation that "a wife is more often than not betrayed and abandoned by her husband if she does not have a child" (p.531). Dozie and Virginia heighten Ije's agony by talking about the baby in her presence. She laments: "Neither he or Virginia had experienced the agony of a childless woman listening to other people discuss what she was pining for but could not get, otherwise they might have spared her the heart break" (p.99). Virginia in a bid to discredit Ije, accused her of sprinkling some poison into their food and to her utter dismay, Dozie believed the story. For he asks: "Why did you do such a thing, Ije" (p.106). Ije disappointed retorts: "Does that mean you're condemning me without hearing from me? Has it come to the stage where you doubt my integrity? Do you now see me as a diabolical woman... You are no longer the man I married" (p.106). To prove her innocence "she went to the dining room, turned the soup vigorously with a spoon, put some soup in her

plate, and scooped into her month” (p.106). Consequent upon Dozie’s betrayal, Ije gets a job and moves out of the house and out of his life with the resolve: “One thing I am sure of, I am not going to marry again. A barren woman is useless as a wife, at least in our country” (p.114).

2.2 Beatrice

Beatrice has been married for eight years without a child. Feeling culpable, she like Ije “had been to many gynecologists and to several herbalists but none had been able to help her” (p.4). She intimates Ije whom she met at Dr. Melie’s hospital: “My husband is worried to death...He’s getting fed up with me. He flares up at me most of the time” (p.4). Beatrice’s husband adds to her misery and anguish by exercising his masculinity over her. She intimates Ije: “the many quarrels she had had with her husband because of her childlessness. She talked about her mother-in-law pouring abuse on her” (pp.4-5). Not only that, like Dozie’s people, Beatrice’s husband’s “parents, his relations, his friends, all keep telling him to get himself another wife to bear him an heir” (p.4). This resonates with Orabueze’s argument: *Africans generally believe that the main reason for a man to marry a woman is for procreation. Any woman who cannot fulfill that primary function ought to be shown the way out of her husband’s house... And where her husband is magnanimous enough not to send her back to her parents, he chooses a second wife, or his mother or relations will do so for him.* (2004, p.107)

This is because the African woman is defined by her fertility and the absence of it makes her worthless to her husband and his relations as Ije rightly observes: “A barren woman is useless as a wife” (p.114).

Beatrice confides in Ije when the latter intimates her of the evil suggestion of Apostle Joseph:

This baby is Apostle Joseph’s...I don’t regret my action. My infidelity has saved me my marriage, for my husband was at the verge of sending me away and taking a new wife. If my marriage breaks down now at least I’ll have a

child who will look after me in old age. A childless woman in our society does not realise the extent of her handicap until she grows old. (pp.61-62)

Beatrice’s treachery recalls Nwapa’s Ojuigo (*Idu*) who lamenting her childlessness says “I could do anything to have one, anything” (p.56). Also, Nwapa’s Amaka (*One is Enough*) in her desperation to be pregnant says: “I would have gone to a beggar in the street if he could make me pregnant” (p.104). The desperation of these women confirms Nwapa’s remark that “the desire to be pregnant, to procreate is an overpowering one in the life of the woman. She is ready to do anything to have a child...” (2007, p.531). The readiness of these women to do anything to achieve motherhood places an urgent call on the need to dispel the myth surrounding motherhood.

3. Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives*

Iya Segi, the first wife of Baba Segi, also craves for motherhood. Her husband subjects her to herbal treatments and frequent love-making to no avail: “My husband and I tried everything. He did not let my thighs rest but leapt between them every time dusk descended upon us. Even his mother was hungry for his seed to come” (p.215). Desperate, she seduces Taju, her husband’s driver and sleeps with him. Within a few months of their affair, “her belly swelled like a boil” (223).

Iya Tope, the second wife of Baba Segi is also having difficulty in conceiving. Becoming impatient, Baba threatens: “If your father has sold me a rotten fruit, it will be returned to him” (p.84). Iya Segi steals into Iya Tope’s room to advise her: “Get pregnant quickly or he will start to force-feed you bitter concoctions from medicine men until your belly rumbles in your sleep” (p.83). So with Iya Segi’s evil advice coupled with the pressure Baba Segi is mounting on her, Iya Tope sleeps with a meat-seller who gets her pregnant. Iya Segi also revealed the secret of Baba Segi’s sterility to the third wife, Iya Femi, oblivious of the fact that Iya Femi has already helped herself by getting pregnant for

Tunde, a man she knew before she married Baba Segi. The moral turpitude of the *Iyas* confirms Ambrosini & Stanghellini's submission that "infertility is considered a woman's worst fate, a "flaw" that can exacerbate the vicious side of her personality and bring her closer to the devil" (2012, p. 278). This therefore places an urgent call on the need to debunk the myth of motherhood. This is because it may constitute a problem the society may not be able to handle.

Bolanle is the fourth wife of Baba Segi who is also having difficulty in conceiving. However, she refuses to avail herself to herbal treatment as requested by her husband. Displeased with her attitude, Baba Segi complains to his friends, Teacher and Olaopa, how she refuses to go to the herbalists for treatment and the agony that her barrenness has caused him (p.4). On hearing this, Olaopa suggests to Baba Segi to "drag her to a medicine man if she doesn't follow..." (p.4). Olaopa makes this suggestion because a woman's infertility is subjected to the controlling gaze of the macho. Bolanle also turns down her husband's suggestion of going to see a prophet who would lay hands on her belly and perform a miracle (p. 43). Angry, Baba Segi explodes:

Does your blood not boil when you see other women carrying babies on their backs? Do tears not fill your eyes when you see mothers suckling infants? ...Offspring make our visit to this world complete. Do you want to remain a barren maggot? (p.43)

This resonates with Ngcobo's submission that "the basis of marriage among Africans implies the transfer of a woman's fertility to the husband's family group. There is a high premium placed on children and the continuity of lineage..." (2007, p.534). In the course of time, Baba Segi takes Bolanle to the hospital to investigate her presumed barrenness. Convinced that Bolanle is the cause of their childlessness, he says to the doctor: "I would have had more than ten now if this woman's womb was not hostile to my seed" (p.37). Eventually, Bolanle and Baba Segi avail themselves of medical examination. The result shows that Bolanle has no medical problem. The doctor intimates her: "I cannot see any immediate reasons why you

shouldn't be able to conceive" (p.170) while that of Baba Segi shows that he does not have "a solitary sperm swimming around" (p.194).

4. Revelation

It should be recalled that Ije has moved out of Dozie's life. Dozie is crestfallen as a result because despite her childlessness, his "love for his wife was noteworthy..." (p.50). Virginia feels threatened by the effect Ije's departure has on Dozie: "She had not expected him to feel Ije's absence at all. She did not like the turn of events and so decided to pursue her own plans before her grip on Dozie slackened" (p.111). Accordingly, she mounts pressure on him to give her a large sum of money she has been trying to get from him. Dozie refuses to give her the money. She threatens to walk out on him as a result (p.111). Dozie warns her: "That baby you're carrying is mine...so wherever you go I'll come and claim it" (p.111). Virginia rejoins: *How can you claim the baby is yours?...I had better tell you the truth now...The baby is not yours. I chose you as its father because you're the richest of the lot – and because you wanted a child so badly. Do you call yourself a man? Look here, if you don't give me that money I'll tell the world about you.* (p.111)

Virginia continues rattling and in the process uses "a derogatory vernacular word to accuse him of sterility" (p.111). Dozie could not believe his ears. He ponders: "Did she mean all that she had said? ...Did she mean it, when she said the baby was not his? Was she trying to blackmail him or was she speaking the truth? (p.112). Consequent upon this, Dozie left for England for medical examination and the result was "rewarding and revealing" (p.115). He tells Ugo Ushie on his return that the baby Virginia is carrying is not his (p.116) and begs her to coax her friend, Ije to allow him see her. Ugo Ushie pleads with Ije saying: "Dozie is repentant and wants to come back to you. I'm sure he has had a revelation but he won't discuss it with me or any other person but you. You must give him another chance..." (p.117). Dozie apologises to his wife as they met:

I'm extremely sorry for all I have done to you, Ije...I don't want to defend my actions because I

can't. I've wronged you in every way. All I ask of you is to forgive me. I've made a grievous mistake in life but I promise you I'll never do such a thing again. I've learnt my lesson and I've learnt it the hard way. (p.118)

He continues by telling her how he travelled to England and the outcome of his journey. He apologises to her for the numerous treatments she avails herself to saying: "I'm sorry that you've subjected yourself to all kinds of treatment, unpleasant and dangerous ones, when I have all along been the cause of our childlessness" (p.118). Ije is startled upon hearing this. He explains further that "the tests had revealed that he had a minor blockage, but the doctor had assured him that the fault could be corrected by a simple operation" (p.119). He adds: "I've come, Ije...first to ask for forgiveness and second, to take you to London so that you'll be with me while I undergo the operation" (p. 119). He muses: "Virginia's episode was a blessing in disguise...without it he would not have submitted himself for a test" (p.119). Dozie would not have submitted himself for a test as he rightly puts it because he is a product of a socialisation process that denies the existence of male infertility.

Bolanle's arrival to Baba Segi's home is also a blessing in disguise. Until now, Baba Segi was confident of his virility with seven children to his account. This is why he brazenly accused Bolanle in the presence of the doctor that her womb was hostile to his seed (p.37). However, the result of the medical tests shows that Baba Segi is sterile: "Not a solitary sperm swimming around" (p.194). Curious, Dr. Dibia asks Baba Segi to bring one of his wives to see him to complete the investigation. He takes Iya Segi to the hospital and oblivious of what is awaiting him, proudly introduces her: "Doctors, this is my first wife. No man could have a better one" (p.214). Dr. Dibia introduces the subject matter and Iya Segi without hesitation rattles: "I know the reason why Bolanle has not conceived...and it is not one that a thousand doctors can cure..." (p.215). She continues:

I was a young wife when I found myself in a cloud of sadness. I was childless and restless. Every time I saw a mother rocking a baby on her back, my nipples would itch to be suckled. My husband and I tried everything... Then I had an

idea. It was a sinful idea but I know it would bring my sadness to an end. In fact, it was more than an idea; it promised to be a solution. If my husband did not have seed then what harm could it do to seek it elsewhere...So I found seed and planted it in my belly. (p.215)

She categorically states that Baba Segi is not the biological father of her children. (p.216) neither is he the father of the other children in his household. She confesses:

I misled them. Perhaps if I had not shown the second my way, this shame would have come out sooner. But you see, they were so desperate to be fruitful. They knew that my husband valued children above all things so when I saw their desperation, I took pity on them and shared my secret. They also followed the same path. (p.216)

On hearing this, "Baba Segi's head was bowed...His tears hit the floor with a quiet splat" (p.216). Baba Segi's bloated ego as a macho is hereby deflated.

It is the assumption of this paper that Beatrice's husband too is sterile. This is because like Baba Segi's first three wives, Beatrice also looked for seed elsewhere and planted it in her womb. Nutsukpo argues that "Beatrice reacts to this predicament through the choices she makes. Her level of awareness, however, manifests in her shrewd analysis and questioning of a situation where women are always blamed for a couple's inability to conceive a child" (2017, p.22).

5. Comparative Analysis of Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* and Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

Here, an attempt is made of a comparative analysis of the two novels beginning with the similarities. One area of similarity is that all the wives in the two novels crave for motherhood and feel culpable for the absence of it while their husbands have a strong conviction that the problem lies with their wives. This recalls Orabueze's submission that "to Africans, it is immaterial whether the inability of the couple to reproduce stems from the man ...the fault must be the woman's own" (2004, p.107). Thus Dozie tells his wife: "Next summer you'll go overseas for treatment...I am sure the doctors there will discover where the trouble with you lies" (p.48).

The emphasis on 'you' is significant. It automatically takes him out of the crisis. Beatrice's husband considers marrying another wife to secure an heir for himself. Baba Segi rains abuses on Iya Tope for her failure to give him heirs on time and accuses Bolanle of denying him of offspring that would make his visit to this world complete. This corroborates Ngcobo's argument that "failure to immortalize the ancestors is a taboo and a shame that a man cannot bear. As a result, childlessness is associated with women, for the alternative is unthinkable" (2007, p.534). The in-laws also blame the wives for their sons' childlessness because male infertility is unfathomable. The offshoot of this myth is wives' unfaithfulness to their husbands which is a serious moral dislocation. Beatrice and Baba Segi's first three wives found seed elsewhere and planted them in their wombs to escape patriarchal judgment on their childlessness.

Another area of similarity is the revelation of husbands' sterility. Dozie traveled to England and discovered through medical tests that he cannot father a child. Also, Baba Segi through medical examination got the revelation that his "big testicles were empty and without seed" (p.242). Dozie and Baba Segi came to know their real estate as men through new arrivals to their homes, Virginia and Bolanle respectively which is another area of similarity.

Rivalry of wives in polygamous marriage and its attendant plans to discredit one another to obtain husband's favour is also captured in both novels. In *Behind the Clouds*, Virginia accuses Ije of poisoning their food and Dozie believes her to the disappointment of Ije. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Iya Segi and Iya Femi accuse Bolanle of planting juju in their husbands' room to kill him. He also believes them and almost killed Bolanle (p.62). The vulnerability of Dozie and Baba Segi throws some light on the inability of the African man to checkmate excesses of wives in a polygamous household.

One area of difference is that while wives see themselves as the cause of their childlessness in *Behind the Clouds*, in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Iya Segi by intuition feels that her

husband is culpable. That is why she says: "If my husband did not have seed then what harm could it do to seek it elsewhere...So I found seed and planted it in my belly" (p.215). Not only that, convinced of her husband's sterility, she intimates her co-wives what to do to please Baba Segi who loves children.

Another area of difference is that in *Behind the Clouds*, it is Dozie that pleads with his wife for forgiveness while in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* it is the wives that plead with their husband for forgiveness. Dozie says to his wife: "If you'll forgive me Ije, I'll arrange for you to have your inoculations as soon as possible and we'll be able to leave for London in a week's time" (p.119). When Baba Segi sends his wives packing because of their infidelity, Iya Segi on behalf of the two other wives pleads:

Who is the father of our children?...You alone have been their father, for it takes more than shedding seed to be a father...I take the sins of these women to myself...If you want to punish us for our misdeeds, let me single-handedly carry the waste bucket...let us not allow the world to see our shame. Let us keep our secrets from those who may seek to mock us. (241-242)

Baba Segi accepts their plea because as a macho "it was more important to him... that his manhood be protected" (p.243). Accordingly, "...an agreement was drawn up: they could stay if they promised to be wives he wanted them to be" (p.243). Ije also forgives her husband because "...the current of love and understanding which used to pass between them before Virginia arrived to disrupt it began to flow again in a familiar way" (p.119).

6. Conclusion

Baloyi (2019) avers that "although infertility is traditionally situated within the compass of medicine, it has a greater influence on how social construction understands the phenomenon with regard to both men and women" (p.6). Nnu Ego's statement in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1980) is in this connection, very perspective: "She had been brought up to believe that children made a woman" (p.219). Undoubtedly, the African woman's quality of womanhood is tied to her fertility. So the absence of children makes the African woman

less woman and she takes the blame for it because she has been indoctrinated to believe that it is her womb that is hostile to man's seed. On the other hand, the African man believes that infertility is alien to his genetic and biological make up. Consequently, he sees childlessness as a denial of his machismo and seeks to showcase it by all means as demonstrated in this study. This confirms Mason's argument "...that giving birth stands as a signifier of manhood and the opposite is perceived as failure of masculinity or manhood" (qtd in Baloyi 2019, p.4). Accordingly, Dozie welcomes Virginia the impostor, to his home because her pregnancy is a proof of his manhood. This also explains why Beatrice's husband threatens to take another wife if she fails to showcase his machismo while Baba Segi abuses his wives over their presumed childlessness. All this corroborates Beatrice's statement: "I don't know why in this country of ours it is always the women who take all the blame..." (*Behind the Clouds* p.5). Ironically, the husbands are the ones who do not have seed in their testicles to plant in the women's womb as this paper has amply dramatised. This lends credence to Achufusi's assertion that "...the cause of childlessness in a great number of marriages can be traced to the husbands rather than their wives" (p.172).

The paper concludes that infertility is a medical problem and not a woman's problem. The paper therefore recommends that husbands and wives should avail themselves of thorough medical examinations if confronted with the issue of childlessness and that the patriarchal myth that denies the existence of male infertility needs be demystified to forestall unjust social castigation levied on wives as a result of childlessness.

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