

## A FEMINIST READING OF LOLA SHONEYIN'S THE SECRET LIVES OF BABA SEGI'S WIVES

Martha Chia Nguwasen<sup>1</sup> & Ifeoma Mabel Onyemelukwe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of French, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

Received: 16 Mar 2022

Accepted: 24 Mar 2022

Published: 26 Mar 2022

### ABSTRACT

*Feminism is an intellectual, political and ideological movement that aims principally, no matter its type, to fight male dominance, exploitation and oppression of woman so as to better her condition in the society and promote her liberation. This struggle for women liberation has been a dominant theme in many literary works including Lola Shoneyin's novel titled The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives. Our present study sought to address such research questions as: What factors of oppression against women and girls has Shoneyin depicted in her debut novel, The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives? Its major objective was to analyse critically women oppression and liberation as depicted by Shoneyin in the said novel using the feminist theory. Our findings showed eight forces of oppression against women and girls in a patriarchal African society namely: rape, child abuse, forced marriage, lack of inheritance rights for women/girls, polygamy/co-wives' conflict, co-wives' deadly conspiracy against the last wife, sterility-induced oppression and assault and battering. The first three wives agreed to keep Baba Segi's infertility as a secret between them and to have recourse to adulterous life so as to produce children for him. They constituted a united front against the fourth wife, not letting her into their secret and making her suffer unjustly for perceived sterility. When eventually the cat was let out of the bag, she had to quit the polygamous marriage. It would seem that Shoneyin recommends to the oppressed African woman married to a polygamist with infertility problem to produce children through illegal means or be liberated by quitting the marriage. This made us conclude that Shoneyin is a radical feminist.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Feminism, Male Dominance, Oppression, Women Liberation, The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives, Lola Shoneyin*