

Polygamy in Dramatic Texts: A Discussion around Postmodernism

Abstract

This study looks at the representation of polygamous marriage in selected dramatic texts from Nigeria and juxtaposes it against global discussion on the acceptance of the “otherness” in the society. It concludes that monogamy and polygamy (polygyny and polyandry) are systems of marriage practiced in different cultures, most especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In the continent, marriage enjoys, cultural, religious and constitutional backing. However, the focus of this paper is on polygamy in dramatic texts in relation to the social reality of the environment from which the texts emerged. The paper further narrows its interest down to three levels of contractual marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. It reveals that the traditional and religious marriage systems in sub-Saharan Africa embrace polygamy while state institutions or legal marriage system frowns at it. It is against this backdrop that this work adopts postmodernism as a theoretical framework to examine the place of polygamy in four African dramatic texts. The paper argues that postmodernist worldview has reinvigorated the practice of polygamy beyond the boundaries of Africa, Asia and of the adherents of Islamic religion.

Keyword: Postmodernism, Monogamy, Polygamy, Polyandry, Marriage, Transculturalism, Drama

Introduction

It is our goal to situate the discussion of polygamous marriage as found in Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Ahmed Yerima’s *The Sisters* and *The Wives*, and Bunmi Oyeyemi Julius-Adeoye’s *Ajarat* within a larger frame of global narrative. Though this paper is particular about the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, we are not unmindful of the debate going on in the West regarding the reunification of Muslim refugees from Iraq and Syria with their families in Europe. Whereas, Germany maintains its legal stance on non-acceptance of polygamous union within its border, a BBC (2016) report states, “in practice polygamous relationships are often quietly tolerated, the paper reports. For example, if a man dies, his inheritance may be distributed between his two wives” (online). Campbell (2005), in a research on the law against the practice in Canada argues:

Current legal approaches to polygamy have not responded adequately to the multi-faceted experiences of women in plural marriages. More specifically, global responses appear to be premised on the presumption that polygamy is either universally harmful or benign to women, without any real analytical justification for this. It is argued here that legal and policy approaches in Canada must target factors detrimental to women (such as abuse, poverty, coercion and nefarious health consequences), rather than the practice of polygamy on its own (iv).

The ground on which the hostility towards polygamous union is based in the West and some other places is narrow, as observed:

... the global community of women in polygamy is quite heterogeneous and it is, therefore, impossible to draw a single, unqualified conclusion as to whether polygamy harms women. ...responses to polygamy must be sensitive to the diversity of experiences women in polygamy might encounter, which are largely shaped by social and cultural forces (2).

We have decided to refrain from proffering any definition of postmodernism in this work for two interrelated reasons: (1) the paper inherently regards every definition as a perspective rather than a declaration of an indubitable meaning of a term or a subject matter. As a result, any attempt to define postmodernism here will amount to lording a meaning of postmodernism over other possible meanings of it. (2) Our genuine refusal to define postmodernism accentuates the level of our commitment to its core premise which states that no objective truth exists, especially when it comes to the issue of marriage in the society. This supports Gary Aylesworth's (2015) claim against defining postmodernism.

Meanwhile, postmodernism is not a term that emerges from *ex nihilo* (from nothing). It is a reactionary movement (which later metamorphosed into a theory) against modernism. While modernism emphasizes adherence to established rules, authorities, traditions and nationalism, postmodernism is the opposite, for it preaches a breakaway from any form of absolutism or finality in human thought and understanding. Transculturalism is a phenomenon of postmodernism. In this sense, postmodernism is against the determinate, rigid, uncompromising and teleguiding disposition of the modernist scholars. It frowns at the way modernism has eroded individual uniqueness by collapsing subjectivism and spontaneity into the objective whole. Thus, freedom of thought, celebration of passion and emotion over rationalism and reflection are the cardinal virtues of postmodernism. As Best and Keller put it while citing Kierkegaard, "it is passion, not reflection that guarantees a decent modesty between man and man [and] prevents crude aggressiveness. Take away the passion and the propriety also disappears" (Best and Keller, 1997: 49; Kierkegaard, 1978: 64). We interpret this to mean that without the continual existence of the subjective mind, the so-called objective reality is ephemeral.

The foregoing has paved the way for us to look at the influence of postmodernism on the phenomenon of marriage, especially in Africa, and how much it reverberates on dramatic literature. Marriage is a complex relationship in Africa, in ways that the term is becoming more and more difficult to define. However, for a typical African, marriage is defined based on its intended purposes – procreation, family, and for the building of the society. In this case, it is not on how it is contracted, or on how many women are involved, but more on how the union is fulfilling its role as the focus of continuation of the life of the community. In the words of Mbiti (1969),

For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the

living and those yet unborn. All the dimensions of time meet here, and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator (133).

Marriage was previously a family or even a community affair. However, as the composition of the societies change, so are the concept and the practice of the marriage institution. Therefore, composition of marriage has assumed not only a religious dimension but also political instrument of oppression. On moral ground, one may agree with the argument that, “The definition of marriage is plastic. Just like heterosexual marriage is no better or worse than homosexual marriage, marriage between two consenting adults is not inherently more or less “correct” than marriage among three (or four, or six) consenting adults (Keenan, 2013: online).

Understanding Marriage System in sub-Saharan Africa

The marriage system in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa is contracted around three distinctive levels or systems, and two of them allow for polygamy to be practiced:

1. Community or Traditional marriage system
2. Religious marriage system
3. State institution or legal marriage system.

1. Traditional or Community marriage system is contracted between families for the intending spouses. In this case, it is not just the union of the man and woman, but for the celebration of a new relationship between two distinct families or autonomous communities solidified through the symbolic exchange of financial and other material gifts including livestock in some cases from the groom’s family to the family of the bride. The bride’s family plays the role of good host by making available foods and drinks to the groom’s family. Polygamy is permitted in this marriage system, as the man being the one saddled with the responsibility of providing for his family, may opt to marry as many wives as his economic status can permit. There is no divorce in this order of marriage, especially when the wife had given birth to children. This buttresses a popular Yoruba maxim *Obirin t’oti bi’mo fun ni, ti kuro ni ale eni* (the woman that has blessed a man’s family with a child, is no longer a concubine). Even when there is a separation in the union at a point, there is always a room for the woman in the house of the husband.

According to Awolalu and Adelumo (1979: 172), “The Yoruba attach importance to child-bearing. Unfruitful marriage is not only a misfortune but also a curse since the couple have not contributed to the community of the family and therefore, to the society. A barren woman, however rich, famous or prosperous, is a shame to her race.” As Ogoma (2014) states, “African traditional conception of marriage is teleological. It is primarily for procreation. Marriage can be dissolved on the ground of childlessness” (96). In fact, men and women who have no child of their own are often treated with little or no respect in the community (in traditional extended family, adopted children are not considered part of the clan) as they have not contributed to the regeneration of not only the clan, but the race as a whole. However, since there are many ethnic nationalities in

sub-Saharan Africa, and practices differs from one place and people to another, it will be appropriate to state that this research relates more to the Yoruba communities. Even among the Yoruba where one might postulate a sense of commonality, there are some differences in the practice from one community to the other or from one family to the other.

2. Religious marriage system is contracted between a man and a woman that often practices the same religious belief. The head of the religion or the representative presides over this marriage ceremony and assumes the role of the parents of the couples when they are not available to perform the function. Religious is a complex subject in most African communities. Although there are three notable religious practices among the indigenous people - African Traditional Beliefs (ATBs), Islam and Christianity - however, there are variants of these notable religions and others minority ones. In some instances, the state is divided along these three religions.

Polygamy can be contracted under religious marriage system, especially among those who belong to ATBs and Islam. This does not rule out the practice of polygamy among Christians. While the Euro-American missionary churches will not conduct polygamous marriage, many of the African Independent Churches will. Divorce is often not sanctioned in the marriage contracted under the religious system, except when any of the party involved renounces the religion and embraces another, or in order to follow the religious demand as contained in the religious book for the practitioners of the faith. In the case that the one who remain in the religion is no longer comfortable with the decision of the deserter, divorce can be tolerated. This type of marriage can be contracted in the Shrine, Mosque, or Church as occasion demand.

3. State Institution or Legal marriage system is the type bequeathed on Africans by the colonial West. It is contracted in the presence of a court Registrar and registered as legally binding on the couples after the exchange of vows between the two and the presentation of marriage certificate to the wife. It is the same as in the Western society, and polygamy is not allowed in this case. Anyone of the party who contracts another marriage while the first one is still valid will be prosecuted and punished for violating the marriage order. The court is the legal institution to be approached for the dissolution of the marriage if the parties involve so desire. It adjudicates over the sharing of the properties involved and or children that exists between them giving custody to any of the party or shared evenly.

Concept of Polygamy Marriages in African Society

Polygamy – especially polygyny – a marriage system that involves one man marrying to two or more wives at a time, happens in most of the continents of the world. It is cross-cultural and transnational in practice. According to Heinrich, Boyd and Richerson (2012):

The anthropological record indicates that approximately 85 per cent of human societies have permitted men to have more than one wife (polygynous marriage), and both empirical and evolutionary

considerations suggest that large absolute differences in wealth should favour more polygynous marriages. Yet, monogamous marriage has spread across Europe, and more recently across the globe, even as absolute wealth differences have expanded (657).

In many parts of the African continent, marriage system that involves one man marrying two or more wives, has almost never been an issue. Arguments against polygamy are influenced directly and indirectly by Western nations, through its ideology of cultural supremacy, Western driven concept of education and religious practice. For example, in colonial Africa – a period that spanned over half a century (from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s when many African countries attained political independence), colonial masters or empires used Western system of education and the Euro-American Christian missionaries to aggressively pushed on the people, the idea of monogamy. In one way, the ideology of monogamous marriage became part of the instruments used in entrenching colonial rule in the continent. Since monogamous marriage is the norm in colonial countries, it becomes a mandate for the missionaries and colonial political office holders to finagle it on the colonies. In fact, this idea of homogeneity of marital culture espoused by both the church and the school was the reason for the expulsion of some important African elites from the mission churches and schools in Lagos. The action led many indigenous Africans to the formation of their own African Independent Churches and subsequently established their own schools (Julius-Adeoye 2013: 30-31). This occurrence in part of West Africa that became Nigeria, marked the beginning of the nationalists' movement in the area (Adedeji 1973: 388). As contained in Encyclopedia Britannica, "By the early 21st century more than half of the sub-Saharan African population was Christian" (Online p. 140).

Polygamous unions are becoming more unpopular among societies in Africa. Whereas the continent earlier considered in Western literature as the home of polygamous union (Fenske, 2013), is changing its narrative as the people are fast embracing monogamous union, the subject of polygamy or plural marriage is now occupying a vantage position in political, social and legal discourse in the West. This seemingly recent popularity of the subject is informed by the widespread approval that same-sex marriage is currently enjoying in many parts of the world since the turn of the twenty-first century. As more countries in Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia are granting legal backing to the acceptance of same-sex marriage, many hitherto closeted practitioners are coming out to embrace their sexual orientation. The legal and constitutional acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) groups in the West, has become the booster for people who are in polygamous and plural marriage to push for approval in the societies that formerly considered their relationship unnatural and immoral. Keenan (2013) argues:

While the Supreme Court and the rest of us are all focused on the human right of marriage equality, let's not forget that the fight doesn't end with same-sex marriage. We need to legalize polygamy, too. Legalized polygamy in the United States is the constitutional, feminist, and sex-positive choice. More importantly, it would actually help protect, empower, and strengthen women, children, and families (online).

Keenan's position emphasizes the level of prosecution and litigation that polygamous members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the US and in Canada are up against (Crawley 2019: online). Based on this, one can opine that the problem being faced by those desirous of polygamous union in these countries is not on the ground of morality, but legislation.

Representation, Synopsis and Analysis of Polygamy in Dramatic Texts

Discussion around polygamy in dramatic text is often not the same as its occurrence in reality. The world of drama is what Wynn (2005: 2) and Yerima (2013: 1) referred to as "Alternative Reality." Therefore, the dramatist acting as god, creates a society, creates characters and makes them perform his created functions. He creates dialogue for the characters and controls their existence including everything they relate with within the world of the texts. This role of creation follows that of Biblical or mythological God of different societies. In fact, the whole account of Genesis chapter 1 of the King James Bible is on the creation story. In it, God created everything, the heaven and the earth including men and women. This is why Yerima states, "The man who has most expressed God's creative gift is called an Artist or as in early days was described as the Creative Poet" (2013: 4). His position can only be valid if we are in agreement with Genesis Chapter 1 verse 1, which states, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" and Chapter 1 verse 27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female created he them." Chapter 2 verse 7 of the same book of Genesis explains the process through which God carried man, "And the LORD God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils, the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

The texts for analysis are randomly selected as we are guided by thematic relevance. Four plays are considered for this study. They are: Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Ahmed Yerima's *The Sisters* and *The Wives*, and Bunmi Oyeyemi Julius-Adeoye's *Ajarat*. These plays relate to polygamy differently but with a clear understanding of the subject. This buttresses Bamidele (2000), "the artist of whatever form, medium and style sees the society from his own subjective view" (27). Arguments subsist among some critics that literature does not exist in a vacuum but is given impetus by the happenings in the environment of the writer. Polygamy is a social material available within the society for the dramatist to engage as a thematic preoccupation in his or her text.

Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* – a satirical comedy presents the domestic, public and political life of Major Lejoka-Brown – a retired war veteran contesting for a political post in the country for the sole aim of enriching himself and his cronies. He is legally married to Liza – a Kenyan-America nurse whom he met and married during his military service year in the Congo. Lejoka-Brown on arrival home from the war front, inherited Mama Rashida - the wife of his late elder brother, and married Sikira – whose mother is the president of the market women in order to be assured of the women's votes. Lejoka-Brown becomes disillusion when Liza suddenly arrives in his country home while he is waiting for her at the airport. His plan of finding the appropriate time to explain his polygamous state to Liza backfires as she meets the

other women before her husband arrives. Liza enters the house and educates her co-wives on women empowerment and self-sufficiency for the women not to be under the domination and control of their aggressive husband. At the end, Mama Rashida moves away from the house to the countryside under the guise of needing more space to practice her poultry business on a large scale. Sikira leaves the house, returns to her mother and becomes the party candidate to contest for the same position as her husband. At the end, Liza remains the only wife in Lejoka-Brown's house after he has given up his political ambition.

Yerima's *The Sisters* is about the lives of four sisters, Funmi, Toun, Taiwo and Nana born to a former Nigerian ambassador. The sisters had believed they are three, only to discover from their father's will that they have an older sister from another mother. And without her being present, it is not possible for them to share his properties. Unknown to them, Nana, who they thought was just a help in the house while they were growing up is their oldest sister. She sacrifices her personal ambition in life to take care of her younger siblings.

The Wives by Yerima is a dark comedy and talks about Angela- first wife, Cecilia- second wife, and Tobi - wife, of late Otunba Gbadegesin and his sister, Antimi. Gbadegesin died at the age of 70 and his body is at the verge of being interred, but his will, must be read first. In his will, he instructs that he must be interred as soon as possible without delay, before then, his first son who he willed all his properties, must be present. The arrival of two elderly men from Otunba's hometown of Itesi Odo where he was made a High Chief (Traditional Aristocrat) and senior member of the secret society reveals some hidden truths about the deceased. The elders claim that his death is as a result of a taboo committed by him. It comes to light that Otunba while still a young man, took to alcohol consumption having been sacked from work and in one of the nights, molested his younger sister, Antimi, who got pregnant afterwards. He lied to her that her child was a stillbirth while he secretly trained him to be a lawyer under the guidance of another woman.

Ajarat by Julius-Adeoye is a tragedy that talks about the marriage between the 14-year-old eponymous character and Mallam Kura an elderly polygamous man of around 60 years old and the father of Habiba her best friend. Ajarat is a brilliant young girl desirous of education with the dream to become a medical doctor, but the debt her father Alhaji Abdulahi owes to Alhaji Dandaura is paid off by Mallam Kura who demands for the daughter as the only way to settle the indebtedness to him. Ajarat becomes pregnant for Kura and dies from the lack of care when she is about to give birth.

These selected plays look at polygamy from different perspectives, using religion, economic status, power, societal demands, and status symbol or male ego boost. In *Ajarat*, women are seen as commodities to be purchased or acquired, used to settle debts and to be used as domestic servants. Under this circumstance in the play, polygamy is negative. In agreement with Omoruyi (forthcoming) "one can say that the Nigerian woman is oppressed, because she is not free to make her own choices, she is restrained from getting to her full potential because the society she lives in determines the height that she can reach in all spheres of her life." Ajarat is not able to attain her full potential of becoming a medical doctor as a result of the marriage as can be seen in the conversation between Abdulahi and Dr Lami:

Abdulahi: Ajarat, my daughter was the one being married off as wife to Mallam Kura.

Dr. Lami: That can't be true. I just brought with me result of the examination she did. And here is a letter from the donor agency granting her scholarship from secondary school until she becomes a qualified doctor (Julius-Adeoye 2010: 28).

The way Mallam Kura acquires wives is contrary to his religious demand which many people believe limits the numbers to four if it is possible for the husband to love the wives equally and provide for them the same thing at the same time. Before marrying Ajarat, Mallam Kura already has five wives.

Faruk: Haba, Mallam Kura, not with your five wives and the battalion of children you have and Ajarat is just as young as one of your children (Julius-Adeoye 2010: 4).

In *The Wives*, Tobi the 19 years old third wife of Otunba Gbadegesin enters into the union on her own accord without undue pressure from the man. She was working as an Air Crew Executive and abandoned the job to marry:

Antimi: A flight Stewardess? God forbid. My late brother's wife? God forbid.

Tobi: But that was how we met. Tiger and I. He was on my flight. I served the first class cabin that day. It was a flight to London. My first international flight. And behold there was this handsome elderly man, singing Christian praise song. He must have been scared that day, because the flight was very turbulent. I offered him tea, coffee or ... (Yerima 2007: 25)

Auntimi: But he chose you.

Tobi: Huum ... yes. He asked me to sit with him for a while. We got talking, and by the time we got to London we knew everything about each other. He asked me to marry him that night (Yerima 2007: 25).

Tobi was married to Otunba for about two years before his death. For young Tobi, the union is based on love for the man and not for economic gain. She was consistent in the declaration of her love in every situation to the extent of severing her relationship to her mother. In Tobi's explanation to Antimi who is prevailing on her to return to her mother:

Tobi: I am sorry really. I was too much in love with him to think about it until the interrogation at the Police Station. They kept thinking I killed him for his money. I really loved that man Mummy ... from the bottom of my heart. And when she was nagging me all the time, about forcing Chief

to give me my own things, I cut her off. I was too much in love to listen at the time. I just loved him too much (Yerima 2007: 25).

This is the same situation with Otunba Gbadegesin's first wife, Angela. She did not seek divorce from the former when he married the second and third wives. She could have left if she so desired since all her children are grown up, well-educated and reside in Europe and the United States, but she stayed married to him for thirty-five years. In her conversation with Cecilia, the second wife of Otunba Gbadegesin and a very successful Bank Executive whom everyone thought chose career, freedom and female empowerment over marriage. Unbeknown to the public, Cecilia was still married and enjoying marital life with her polygamous husband secretly.

Cecilia: I was young, and besides I had to hurt him so that he would release me from the yoke of marriage. I had to hurt him ... I wanted to go.

Angela: I could never do that. When Theo married you, my first instinct was "you don't need this hassle, leave". But each time I packed my bag, I never could find the key or the courage to lock it. So I left it open, and stayed. Thirty-five years ...and even now that I am free ... I just can't go. I guess I was born to marry (Yerima 2007: 41).

Ifagbayi – the Diviner, reveals to the other members of the family that Cecilia never left her husband.

Ifagbayi: Yes, because your name appears here. See, you just slept with our son. See both of you, naked in your room. It is a blue room. Very spacious. Haa, you are giving him a piece of paper. He is smiling touching your mouth with his.

Cecilia: Baba, stop. You are prying into my privacy.

Ajagbe: Privacy? Has a wife a privacy where the husband and his family are concerned? Our tradition is that my brother's first son will marry all the wives left behind by his father (Yerima 2007: 49).

As Lejoka-Brown explains in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, the only woman he married according to state institution or legally is Liza, but married the other wives are out of obligation and necessity. Lejoka-Brown's marriage to Sikira is to secure him the votes of the market women being the daughter of their President. She becomes a means to an end for him. Mama Rashida is an inherited wife – in order to fulfill cultural and family demands for him to take for wife the widow of his late brother. While Sikira accepted her position in the union based on the perceived notion that she is the favourite Lejoka-Brown, Mama Rashida only accepted new status without an objection because of the cultural position regarding widowhood practices in her society. This is in tandem with biblical injunction to the Israeli nation in the book of Deuteronomy Chapter 25 verse 5:

Verse 5. If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife,

According to the Bible verse, the woman becomes the wife of the dead husband's brother. In the new testament of the bible that serves as the premise of Christianity, Jesus Christ did not condemn the practice or ask for its abolishment, Matthew chapter 22 verses 24, 29 and 30, records Jesus Christ responding to the question regarding the widow and her late husband's brother:

Verse 24. Saying, Master, Mo'ses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Verse 29. Je'sus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scripture, nor the power of God.

Verse 30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

If it happens that the dead husband's brother is already married to a wife before the incident, the new woman becomes his second wife. Therefore, it is probable to conclude that polygamy is biblical and sanctioned by God.

In *The Sisters*, the delay in childbirth on the part of the loved legal wife of the Ambassador, was his reason for negotiating a relationship with another woman. It is not stated in the play if he married her, but being a Yoruba man, the position of any woman who blesses a family with a child is sealed by her being regarded as wife of the family.

Nana: All the time Papa wanted to have a child at all cost, but also wanted to keep his marriage. He met this lady, I cannot remember her name now, but she died at childbirth. They were friends for only one day. Papa did not know her either. They just met, and like Papa said the devil took over (Yerima 2001: 45).

Funmi: It must have been the devil alright.

Nana: When he learnt that she was pregnant, he sent her to live with his brother, Pa Feyi. It was with Pa Feyi that she lived, had the child and died (Yerima 2001: 45).

The Sisters central character, Funmi, discovers on the day marked for her late husband's national burial, that he fathered five children by five different women. He was a powerful President of the country – a despot- who ruled for twenty years and died as he was planning a re-election bid to continue in office.

Taiwo: (She bursts into a wild laugh.) Who could have even guessed that our saint was busy making children outside while sister hung diligently by his side ... Madam First Lady ...you have been had. And all he was, was a

bloody no good, two-bit politician. He was not even smart in Law School. I hated him, and that was what you told me you felt about him also, until the day you said you wanted to marry him. He was never good enough for you. (Gives another wild laugh.) I suppose love must be really blind (Yerima 2001: 22).

The third time polygamy is raised in the play is in Toun's response to Taiwo as she tries to pacify Funmi.

Toun: (Goes to her.) I am sorry Funmi. I swear you don't deserve this. His Excellency had no right to hurt you this much, no right at all. But you are still better than the case of Mrs. Ibeh. Yours had his kids scattered. Mr. Ibeh in his lifetime had kept two perfect homes, one with seven kids at Enugu, and the other again with seven kids at Aba. He had great family photographs taken, and as he was loving to both of them, neither of them suspected. On the day of his burial, both wives came with children, cursing Ibeh's corpse as the church proceedings took place (Yerima 2001: 22).

While it may be explained that Funmi's inability to give Dipo –her husband- a child caused him to meet with other women since he needed children to affirm his contribution to the continuity of the community and his bloodline, the same can not be said of Mr. Ibeh.

In all the texts treated in this paper, one can affirm that economic influence on the side of the man, allows him to acquire more women into matrimony. The financial position and educational level of the women before the marriage notwithstanding, they enter the polygamous relationship without objection. While the first wife may feel aggrieved that the husband is negotiating another marriage after hers, the incoming wives are often aware of the type of marriage they are getting into.

Conclusion

In Africa, the idea of monogamous marriage espoused by the mission churches and the mission established schools found itself strong, among the Christians and many of the educated elites who passed through the system. To reinforce this idea since the 1980s are the hugely popular evangelical and Pentecostal Christian churches in the continent that are so vociferous in preaching against the idea and practice of polygamy. These churches and their leaders regard it not only as sin but also an act of adultery hated by God. The West African Pentecostal churches are inspired and fashioned after its kind in United State of America. Though, there are other factors that have contributed to the decline of the practice on the continent in recent time. Some of these factors are; urban migration and economy. Whereas, polygamy is still very much popular in rural communities where more women work on land and have few men to choose from for marriage as most able-bodied men have migrated to the city in search of source of income and economic empowerment thereby leaving behind older and younger men who

cannot survive the hustling and bustling demands of the urban settlement. Many of the men often do not return to the countryside after the shift in location to the city.

In a recent research conducted to counter the misrepresentation of polygamous marriage by both the Western media and scholars, Lawson et al, argues:

Polygynous marriage is commonly regarded as a harmful cultural practice, detrimental to women and children at the individual and group level. We present counterevidence that polygyny is often positively associated with food security and child health within communities and that, although polygyny and health are negatively associated at the group level, such differences are accounted for by alternative socioecological factors. These results support models of polygyny based on female choice and suggest that, in some contexts, prohibiting polygyny could be costly for women and children by restricting marital options (2015: 13827).

To support the argument of choice and human preference in marital decision is the fact that many educated women in Africa are willing participants in polygamous marriage. In the words of Fenske (2013) “The distribution of polygamy in Africa does not fit an explanation rooted in the gender division of labour. I find no evidence that educating women in the present reduces polygamy (Online).

In this work, we have isolated how religious, socio-cultural and trans-national practice of polygamous form of marriage is presented in four different Nigerian dramas. We have discussed the negative position of underage girls’ marriage to older men who hide under religious and cultural practice to view and acquire women as property for self-aggrandizement and status symbol. In the same vein, postmodernism is discussed in relation to marriage to be negotiated based on the power of choice and acceptance of both parties involved. It is necessary to state that power of choice and acceptance of polygamous union by women that are in *The Wives* and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* are not present in both *Ajarat* and *The Sisters*. Whereas, coercion and intimidation are used against the backdrop of religion and economic advantage to promote the practice of polygamy and male domination in *Ajarat*, men in *The Sisters* hide under monogamy to secretly maintain two families or father children with different women without the knowledge of the legal wife. Monogamy in Sub-Saharan Africa that is built on Christianity and Western system of education may help to maintain a level of economic advantage for those in it, but it may also create a system where many professed monogamous men will father children through their mistresses without showing responsibilities towards them. Since the traditional essence of marriage in sub-Saharan Africa is procreation, continuity of community and maintenance of family name, the numbers of partners involved in the union may be subject to the choice and acceptance of the people concerned.

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