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**CITATION: The presentation of gender and sexuality in Wole Soyinka's
"Lion and the Jewel" and "Volpone"**

The presentation of gender and sexuality is one of the major themes found in modern comic work. In the current context of social roles are being deconstructed and woman are now taking up position in public space(workplace and administration),it is of a practical use to question some literary works so far considered as masterpiece in some of the aspects of the social realities they deal with. We see these in Volpone and Lion and the Jewel.

In Volpone, female sexuality is examined in the characters Celia and Lady Would-be.

These characters portray and reflect the misperception and low status of women in Renaissance Literature. Celia is known in the play to be religious, good, submissive and faithful to Corvino her husband who seems to control her and watch her movements. Corvino treats her far less like a lady and far more like a prisoner by keeping her locked in her room. He thinks of her as his most prized possession. We see that she was sexually harassed by Volpone and because of his act; the matter was taken to court where she appeals to heaven to expose him. She represents the Renaissance ideal of a woman: chaste, silent and obedient. Celia finally stands for herself in Act 3, when she protests Corvino prostituting her out to Volpone in order to gain his riches. After

pleading with Corvino not to let this happen, her defense lies in Corvino again locking her away.

She says to him, "Sir, let me beseech you, affect not these strange trials; if u doubt my chastity, why lock me up forever..." in this situation, Celia only hopes for a noble knight to rescue her from this situation. Luckily for her, one exists. In the Character of Lady Would-be, she is a repulsive female stereotype. She is Sir Politic's wife. In contrast to Celia, who is confined to her home, Lady Would-be is given a lot of freedom, roaming Venice freely. Lady Would-be also contrasts with the Renaissance ideal of a woman, since she is an extreme talkative and well educated. She is skilled with language and makes constant literary references, but most of the men in the play (in particular Volpone) find her exceptionally annoying.

In the village of 'Illunjinle' women play a subservient and domestic role.

This is shown through the character Sadiku who is the wife of King of the village, Baroka. Women are expected to be obedient to the men of the village and to cater to them by all means. The way they dress, behave and speak are controlled by the men. Sadiku does this by maintaining the household and raising the children and catering to her husband's needs. For example when he was pretending to be sad from allegedly losing his manhood she massaged his feet. It was even her duty to fetch new wives for her husband. Sadiku can only speak when given permission. This was shown when she entered the Kings bedroom and addressed him as 'My Lord' and only continued speaking after he said 'You have my leave to speak.'

Men in the village are seen authoritative and educated. King Baroka is a fit example. His intelligence is seen through his ability of successfully ruling a village thus far and in return this brings great authority to his name. His authority is also shown in the way he has great control over all his wives and the way in which they obey without hesitation. As seen in the scene where Baroka and 'favorite' laid in bed and she was plucking his armpit hairs desperate of his approval and when she hurt him he sent her away abruptly. His intelligence also is depicted when his cunning plan to capture Sidi is revealed.

Men are seen as authoritative and educated. Baroka, for example, at his old age has many wives and is still known as the King of the Village. He shows his authoritative behavior with his wives. He demands and receives; instructs and shuns. Proof of this is when he told his youngest wife to pluck his arm pit hairs. She did not do it right and was asked to leave him. The wife had no choice but to obey. Furthermore, Baroka proves that he was educated by the way he seduced Sidi into intercourse. He used his wits and wisdom to catch Sidi's attention and in the end his intelligence allowed him to successfully conquer the jewel.

In 'The Lion and The Jewel', in the story's village 'Ilujunle', women are subjected to playing a subservient and domestic role, as opposed to the men

who are expected to be authoritative and educated figures. This statement can be easily proven using two main characters 'Sidi' and 'Lakunle'.

Lakunle was the village school teacher which meant he was quite well educated as opposed to Sidi, who was like many women in the society

Lakunle referred to as 'Bush girls' because of their illiteracy. We see here the

imbalanced spread of education between men and women in this society,

men had the upper hand in education, while women were expected to look

after the home and husband. Lakunle continuously belittled Sidi, by making

constant remarks about how she was less intelligent and weaker than he was,

simply because she was a woman, and he felt no remorse in saying such

things to her because he felt justified in what he was saying and did not even

see it as offensive, it was a common known fact to the men in their society;

women were worth less than men, they were uneducated and all they were

worth was reproduction and servitude to the man and his household. The

most unorthodox part about these conversations that Lakunle had with Sidi

is that they were in an effort to obtain her as a wife. He insulted her and

begged her to marry him in the same breath.

Sidi on the other hand did feel a bit wounded by his remarks, she responded

by reminding him of all the work women were expected to do in the

community like pounding yams and carrying children and how it was

ludicrous to call women the weaker sex. This shows how Sidi truly felt about the role of women in their society, she truly felt that there was nothing wrong with living in servitude to the men and she even felt a bit proud of the fact that women were able to endure so much; she did not feel oppressed in the slightest bit. She felt that Lakunle was out of place and disrespectful for thinking of it from that angle, in her opinion the men deserved to be served and have the highest authority because that was just the norm, but that did not mean that women were worthless. Despite Lakunle's insults, Sidi still agreed to marry him if he paid the price. It was as simple as that in their society, there was not a lot of love and romance involved in marriage. A man simply had to pick a girl from the community that he liked and pay her family a certain price if she was a virgin, (if she wasn't then he did not even have to) and a few years or even months later he could go out and repeat the same process again and obtain as many wives as he so desired.