

## **MODERN COMEDY ASSIGNMENT**

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### **GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

Gender refers to the social identities, expectations and privileges different cultures construct for members of the different biological sexes. Gender expectations, which vary greatly between cultures, establish the boundaries of acceptable individual and social behavior such as dress, marriage, property rights, household duties and “sexuality”.

In literature, gender and sexuality refers to the way a writer depicts the male or female folks in their works, their duties, and roles in the society, their relationship as well as their social and cultural differences depending on the genre if the play. Sexuality and gender are used as a form of propaganda, a tool of manipulation or sometimes both.

In whole Soyinka’s plays women are built on the African traditional step. Though they are considered as an interior subject in Africa, Women are equally treated as men.

In whole Soyinka’s play the Lion and the Jewel is sprinted on the first world ideas, and the power of men against the influence of women. We find this in the character of Lakunle who describes women as weaker sex because they have a smaller brain compared to the men. According to him, without the permission of the men, the women have no thought of their own because their brains are too small to do the thinking and the decision making. Baroka in the play describes women as something that should be changed when you get tired of it. We see the commoditization of women whose primary use is just to serve as house wife or rear children and nothing more. Here women are portaged as properties or even clothes that can be replaced when it’s old and worn out. Also, Wole Soyinka also uses the character of Lakunle to satirizing the mentality of the society where their marriage to women is on the basis of child bearing and domestic chores and not based on love.

#### **Women as Evils and Negativity**

Gender and sexuality can also be seen in wisely Soyinka’s “the trials of Brother Jew where among is portages in a negative light. Here quarrelsome nature which drives her husband almost to the point of insanity is what is known to be her outstanding

characteristics. There is also the young girl who always passes before the prophet on her way to take a swim and comes back remarkably transformed from being duty to “clean, wet, shiny face and hair” which is usually a distraction to the prophet. This happens during his time of machination and mediation. We even see this when he (Brother Jew) prays:

“Burn this lust for the daughters of eve”

Women are seen as seductresses and agents of destruction just like we have in Okoro’s *Prof Zemzi’s last Rehearsal*

“Women are like whirlwind they carry and destroy”.

### **Women as an instrument of power and Authority**

In Oscar Wilde’s “importance of being Earnest, the question for each gender role in the society often centers on power.

In the Victorian world, men have greater influence than women. Men made the decisions for their families, while the women implemented them.

Wilde raises interesting questions about gender roles in “the importance of being Earnest” by putting women (Like lady Bracknell) in position of power and by showing that men can be irresistible and bad at decision making. The traditional view of gender relation in the Victorian era was that men were active, manly

Assertive and economically independent while women were assumed to be passive, pliant dependent. The two main male characters Jack and Algernon cannot really be regarded as masculine neither does them for the criteria for what characteristics a stereotypical Victorian man would be. Algernon and Jack ‘Ungentlemanly’ behavior and trivial pursuit can be seen as comic and deliberate in making men seem powerful and serious.

Algernon is a little too concerned with clothing to come across masculine. This can be seen when he criticizes Jack by saying that he had “never known anyone to put so much effort into dressing and to produce so little effort”. Lady Bracknell is strong and blunt and intimidating; we feel that even Algernon is afraid of her as he would rather make-up a fake man than tell her that ‘he Gwendolyn on the other hand can be seen as more masculine than Jack because she is quite assertive. Gwendolyn is also breaking stereotypes as when her mother tells her to wait in the carriage, she defies her, whereas most girls then won’t dare to disobey their mothers.