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MODERN COMEDY: MOLIÈRE TO SOYINKA

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TOPIC:

THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
ANY TWO MODERN COMIC WORKS.

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GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN MODERN COMEDY: THE LION AND THE JEWEL AND THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA.

Gender and sexuality explores the roles the society gave to the women to play. In the society the women are relegated just to child bearing, going to the farm and other household chores. They have no say in political matters or even in family matters that concern them too. In the society the males feel superior and thus subdue the women to live by their dictates as the superior gender.

Gender and sexuality could be seen in the work the lion and the jewel. In the play we see the place of women relegated as mere property that the males could acquire or possess as much as they want. This could be seen in the character of the Baroke who even as old as he is and despite all the wives he already had he still wanted to have Sidi a young beautiful girl who he is old enough to give birth to. In the play we were able to see that Baroke was not single but in love with Sidi but because he felt a woman should be in a position to lock heads with him he decided that he was going to acquire her just like a mere property. It all started when some press people came to the village and took some pictures and when eventually they released their magazine and Sidi's picture being that she is a very beautiful occupies almost all the almost all the cover page and the Baroke's picture was allocated just a small space on the magazine, he became jealous and vowed within himself that he was going to have her for himself because

marrying her would make him lord over her which is a way of subduing her. Thus the extract from the play

You waste your breath
Why did Baroke not request my hand
Before the stranger
Brought his book of images?
Why did the lion not bestow his gifts
Before my face was lauded to the world?
Can you not see? Because he sees my worth
Increased and multiplied above his own
Because he can already hear
The ballad makers and their song
In praise of Sidi, the incomparable,
While the lion is forgotten
He seeks to have me as his property
Where I must fade beneath his jealous hold.....

From the above extract we could see that Baroke's intention was to keep Sidi below himself where the society sees the women folk to belong which is under a man. So when he sees that Sidi wasn't going to let him to subject her as a mere property he devises a corny way of having her which is by having sex with her, thereby disvirginating her which would leave her with no other option other than marrying him. Also we see the way Baroke discarded his last wife who he had preferred and favoured above his other wives just because he was about getting a new wife. From this we see that the female folks were kind of seen as a thing of pleasure, you cherish her when you need her and when you are done you discard her like a piece of rag. In the play we see that the male folks saw themselves as lords over the women and that was why they married as much as much women as they could

so that the women wouldn't have any reason to feel like they were important to the men rather they struggle with each other for the love and attention of their husbands.

This place given to the women in the society can also be seen in the character Lakunle. In the play we see how he was able to prove that the women are seen as having a smaller brain than their male counterpart just because they are women and not because they can't make good judgement more than the males. He even went further to say that science recognises the fact that women have smaller brain than the male and are therefore regarded as the weaker sex. From this it would be understood that despite all the hard works the women are subjected to by the society like bending down all day to pant millet with a bay strapped her back or pounding the yam, she would still be regarded and seen as being weak.

Gender and sexuality can also be seen in the "Volpone". In the play we could see how also the place the woman was relegated to the backyard. The women in this play were objectified and treated without respect and also presented as mere object that the owner can use and treat as he wants. In the play we see this in the character of Corvino who sees his wife as his property that he can use as pleases him. This could be seen in the play when Mosca Volpones servant told him (Corvino) that his master (Volpone) who is sick can only be cured can only be healed when he sleeps beside a young beautiful woman, then he (Corvino) being so much interested in being the one volpone

would name as his heir decided to use his wife as a bait. From the above character of Corvino we are shown a glimpse of what the life of a woman was about. We see from the above that the women has no say whatsoever concerning what their husbands choose or decide to do with them. In the play Celia (Corvino's) wife was not given any clue by her husband as to why he was taking her to Volpone's house rather he just took her like his property which he can do as it pleases him without regard for her feelings and emotion. Coming to the character Volpone we could also see how women are merely seen as a tool for sexual pleasure (sexuality). In the play we see how he (Volpone) sees Celia as a mere sexual object and thus he wants to have sex with her by all means. It all happened that after Corvino takes his wife Celia to Volpone so that by lying beside her he can be healed from his sickness and so name him (Corvino) his heir for his good deed. But after trying to convince her to have sex with him by promising her riches and the rest of them, he resulted to rape her. From this we could see that Volpone doesn't see Celia as any other thing other than a tool he can use to satisfy his sexual pleasure which is exactly how the society views the women.