

INTRODUCTION

Until the late 1960s and early 70s the term gender and sex has been used interchangeably. It was during this period that the term 'gender' began to be more thoroughly defined and spread throughout the literature within the field of psychology. Gender, therefore represents how an individual feels and expresses their gender typically through masculinity and femininity. However, psychological research in this area has tended to follow three modes of looking at gender:

- Looking at gender through difference in presentation, actions, and traits,
- Looking at gender versus individual difference in individuals who identify as male and individuals who identify as female, and
- Looking at how gender influences how both men and women operate in society.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, sexuality is the feelings and activities connected with a person's sexual desires. Hence, sexuality refers to all sexual attitudes and behaviours in an erotic, or lack of erotic, nature. However, Foucault argues that "sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct."

However, gender and sexuality are related but that relationship is not static but fluid and changing. Sexuality is intertwined with gender, because categories like homosexual and heterosexual depend on dimensions of gender for their definitions. There is therefore a tendency to view gender as well as sexuality in terms of binary opposites, such as male being what female is not and homosexual being what heterosexual is not.

In a study conducted by McCabe, Tanner, and Heiman, they discovered that men and women do talk about sex and sexuality in gendered terms, at least in the Western world. According to their finding, the most frequent categories of gendering sex/sexuality conversations were:

1. Sex is only physical for men and emotional for women
2. Sex is more important for men than women
3. Women's physical appearance is important
4. Sexual desire and/ or pleasure does not significantly apply to women.

Numbers 2 and 4 agrees with gender stereotype which has riddled the interpretations of sexuality. Such as men holding more permissive attitudes towards frequent sex and multitude sexual partners, where as women are more conservative.

Gender and sexuality can be viewed from sociocultural perspective which holds emphasis on the idea that men and women are social being informed by social group of which they are a part and that the social and cultural aspects of these groups influence the traits, which are deem performative, prescribed to male

and female. To appropriately judge sexual behaviours from the sociocultural perspective one has to look at it from four areas of social interactions:

1. **Behaviour-related Aspects:** The behaviour that is evaluated must positively will determine what sexual behaviours are most acceptable in relation to gender. In regard to gendered sexuality, Vanwesenbeck suggests that gendered sexual behaviour if positively accepted by a social group, is more likely to occur within that group in comparison to if it was negatively evaluated.
2. **Situation-related Aspects:** This refers to how gendered behaviour is encouraged by the sexual situation with one's direct social community. These have a different meaning of what is considered as 'normal' depending on the situational construct.
3. **Partner(s)-related Aspects:** Different sexual interactions will determine how much an individual is concerned with conforming to positive societal influence of gender.
4. **Subject-related Aspects:** This rests on the individual, or the subject, and how much a person strives to meet societal gender norms.

In the two works that will be discussed, I will be using the first two aspects to appropriate gendered behaviours and sexual behaviours in the plays.

Gender and Sexuality in Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest*

In the Victorian society according to Jennifer Terry there were three key assumptions: that only two sexes exist, that the two are fundamentally different and mutually exclusive, and that men are superior to women. This made reproduction the defining role of women. Contrary to that, in Wilde's *Importance of Being Ernest*, women were rather superior to men. This is seen when Lady Bracknell rejects Jack as a potential suitor for her daughter, Gwendolen. She handles the matter as she deems fit and takes a decision without the awareness and consent of her husband, Lord Brackness. With an air of finality she tells Jack that "you can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter – a girl brought up with the utmost care – to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Good morning, Mr Worthing!" Gwendolen and Celicy also assume control of their proposals. Before Jack even proposes to Gwendolen, she tells him that, "and to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you." Celicy on the other hand, proposes to Ernest three months before she meets him; and breaks off the engagement and reconciles again; all in her diary. That when she eventually meets Algernon, who claims to be Ernest Worthing, she assumes that they are already engage. Despite the fact that Jack tells her that his brother, Ernest, is wicked she still goes ahead to engage him.

The women in *Importance of Being Ernest* are all educated and Miss Prism also has a job as the governess of Cecily unlike the women of the Victorian society that intelligence and the ability to bear children were considered mutually exclusive for (Terry).

However, the male gender are a little cynical toward the female gender. Jack and Algernon's discussion shows this when they discuss the meeting of Gwendolen and Cecily:

Jack: ...half an hour after they have met they will be calling each other sister.

Algernon: Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first.

Jack's statement that, "the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl" shows how he sidelined the female gender.

Sexuality in the play is strongly represented. While the male goes all out to satisfy their sexual desires, the women, even though bold, mostly indulge in fantasies and keep diaries where they writes all their wild imagination that the society may not accommodate. Both Jack and Algernon create Ernest and Bunbury respectively to escape the uptight Victorian morality that expects them to lead a hypocritical life. Nevertheless, Jack is willing to kill Ernest and vows that "I certainly won't want to know Bunbury" if he marries 'a charming girl like Gwendolen' but Algernon says:

"nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic,

you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.”

He also assures Jack that his wife will know Bunbury if he does not and states emphatically that “in married life three is company and two none.” Algernon detest the way women flirt with their husbands in the public and do otherwise in their homes. He tells Jack that “the only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else, if she is plain.”

The women in the play have sexual ideas that they think the society will not tolerate so they rather fantasise in their diaries than get rejection from society. Gwendolen says that she would rather travel with her diary so as to keep herself company with something ‘sensational’ to read. While Cecily prefers the relationship she has with Ernest in her diary to the romantic talks of Algernon. However, Gwendolen’s attitude toward extramarital affair proves her a Bunbury and affirms what Algernon tell Jack that if he doesn’t know Bunbury, his wife will. She tells Jack that “although she, her mother, may prevent us from becoming man and wife and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.”

In both women we see that they both love the men in their imagination as regard to the individuals. Hence, they are obsess with their creation.

Gender and Sexuality in Machiavelli's *Mandragola*

In *Mandragola*, the male gender is superior to the female gender. Hence, masculinity rules the society of the play. Sex is seen as a need and a quest to satisfy man's lustful flesh. The woman is a sexual object from whom the man gets his satisfaction. The man is allowed numerous sexual partners and the social construct indulges a man even if he wants to get his pleasure from a married woman whose husband is alive.

In the play the lust of Callimaco for Lucrezia is successful because of the help from Ligurio and Friar Timoteo majorly. A Reverend Father consenting to adultery shows a society that lack morality, since the supposed moral leader has failed