

NAME:OFOEGBU, CHIKA OLIVIA.

DEPARTMENT:ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES.

REG.NO:2015/198052.

COURSE NO AND TITLE:ELS 240 MODERN COMEDY:MOLIERE TO SOYINKA

THE PRESENTATION OF GENRER AND SEXUALITY IN SHAKESPEARIAN COMIC WORKS,AS YOU LIKE IT AND MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

GENDER: This means the mental analogue of sex, one's maleness(masculinity) or femaleness (femininity),a sociocultural phenomenon such as "male" and "female", with each having associated dress, roles, stereotypes.

SEXUALITY: Characterized or distinguished by sex, sexual activity, sexual identity, sexual potency, sexual orientation, sexual gender, sexual receptivity.

Both characteristics, can be found in Shakespearian comic works, listed above.

One of the most intriguing aspect of the treatment of love in As You Like It, concerns the issue of gender, and this issue for obvious reasons, has generated a special interest in recent times. The principal reason for this is the cross dressing and role playing. It features a cross dressing heroine whose disguise allows Shakespeare to explore the fluidity of gender. When Rosalind flees into the woods for safety, she disguises as an attractive young boy" Ganymede ", challenging traditional ideas about what it means to be a nan or a woman. The central love interest between Rosalind and Orlando calls into question the conventional wisdom about men and women gender roles, challenges our preconceptions about these roles in courtship, erotic love and beyond.

At the heart of this courtship is a very complex ambiguity which it is difficult fully to appreciate. Here, we have a man(the actor),playing a woman(Rosalind), who has dressed herself up as a man(Ganymede), and who is pretending to be a woman(Rosalind), in the courtship game with Orlando.

The most obvious issues raised by the cross dressing is the relationship between

gender roles and clothes (outer appearance). For Rosalind passing herself off easily enough as a man and in the process, acquires a certain freedom to move around, give advice and associate as an equal among other men (this freedom gives her the power to initiate the courtship). Her disguise is, in that sense, much more significant than Celia's, for Celia remains female in her role as "Aliena" and is thus largely passive in a male world (a stranger or outsider, is an interesting one). The fact that Celia is largely passive in the Forest of Ardenne, (especially in contrast to Rosalind), and has to wait for life to deliver a man to her rather than seeking one out, as Rosalind does, is an interesting and important difference between the two friends, as the role of gender dressing differs them.

These points raises some interesting issues. If becoming accepted as a man and getting freedom to act that ,comes with that acceptance is simply a matter of presenting oneself as a man, then what do we say about all the enshrined natural differences we claim as the basis for our different treatment of men and women?. Given that Rosalind is clearly the most intelligent, active and an interesting character in the play, and that these qualities would not be likely to manifest themselves so fully if she were not passing herself off as a man, the play raises some interesting questions about just what we mean by any insistence on gender differences as more than mere conventions.

But the issue is much more complicated than that .For Rosalind's assumed name, "Ganymede", is a very deliberate reference to the young male lover "Zeus", carried up to Olympus, and it points us to what might be s very strong element in the courtship game between Orlando and Rosalind and in the feeling Phoebe has for Rosalind, namely homoerotic desire.

In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare wasn't afraid to poke fun at the absurdity of gender roles. In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the male characters reign supreme exerting their dominance over the female characters through their acts of violence maintaining control over the fairer sex. In this comic works, a gender tensions that arise from complicated familial and romantic relationship. When the play opens, a

young woman fights her father for the right to choose her own spouse, a Duke is set to marry a woman he recently conquered in battle, and the King and Queen of fairies are at war with each other, enacting a battle of the sexes so intense that it disrupts the natural world.

Shakespeare also questions some stereotypes about traditional gender roles, when it comes to romance. For example, while men are usually expected to remain passive and docile, of course, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, shows us that this isn't necessarily always the case especially when both fairy and mortal plots deal with an attempt by male authority figures to control women. Oberon and Titania's fighting is described as the ultimate "battle of the sexes". Titania, Hermia and Helena, defy traditional gender stereotypes by aggressively pursuing love. Women, are subject to a different view of reality when it comes to love. Egeus attitude towards his daughter and women in general, is one of a domineering father, whose law on the daughter, can't be lenient, because she is a female, his wanting Duke Theseus to enforce the death penalty on Hermia his daughter, not minding that fact, is one of "I Don't Care" attitude towards the female. Though Theseus and Hippolyta appear to share a healthy loving relationship, it is a love built upon a man asserting power over a woman.

In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, notions of war between the sexes, taboo sexuality, can be seen. The play itself is rather lusty. Set in the lush Athenian forest on a summer's night, tempers and passions run high among all three of the sets of characters. The young lovers, of course are already charged with their love, the fairies all, but ooze sexuality.

Helena's impassioned plea to Demetrius to allow her to continue to love him, even if he doesn't return the favour, she begs to be "used as you use your dogs". When Puck, the fairy, King Oberon's faithful, mischievous servant sets out to magically make Demetrius love Helena and Titania love Nick Bottom, sexual puns are thrown about the stage. The humour of this work is found in the sexuality of the play.

In *As You Like It*, the strong instant desire that Phoebe finds for Rosalind/Ganymede, which seems at first not, unlike the feelings Orlando has for Rosalind. Phoebe of course, abandons her love as soon as she learns that Rosalind is a woman, but the play confronts us with the validity of those feelings. If a set of men's clothes is the only thing distinguishing conventional sexual arrangements, we are to wonder, about the extent to which this arrangement do not exhaust sexuality.

Rosalind and Orlando, demonstrated sexuality, the two falling in love, and their love articulated in love poetry, and in carvings on trees, shows sexuality. Orlando, had to overcome many obstacles in order to be married, his love is tested by Rosalind and proved genuine. Touchstone and Audrey act as a foil to Rosalind and Orlando's characters, at first they are happy to be married straight away under a tree, which reflects their primitive desires, sexuality here differs. In this work, female characters are seen as not accepting just anything, they stand up to their male counterparts. The male folk, has to put in more power/effort, in order to win her favour, this shows the high knowledge of the females sexual insights.