

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

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DEPARTMENT OF ART EDUCATION

(ENGLISH)

TOPIC:

**PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
MODERN PLAYS**

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INTRODUCTION

Sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955.

Gender and Sexuality have proved highly productive categories of analysis in interdisciplinary studies of early modern England and continue to inspire work that challenges the most. Fundamental paradigms of historical and cultural understanding.

In studies of early modern England, gender emerged first as a question focused on women challenging the assumption that men are confident, autonomous and self-determining, recent work argues that masculinity in early modern England was not only divided by differences such as religion, status and age, but was also anxious, man have dilemmas, masculinity is always in question.

David Halperin's work on ancient Greece has been extremely influential in early modern studies of sexuality because it has helped to give us a vocabulary for understanding how social status and age, as well as gender, figure in evaluations of sexual conduct.

In spring, 2008, the Department of English and the program in women's and Gender studies sponsored a symposium on sexuality, Nation and Diaspora.

Definition of the terms

Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relationships between men and women.

Sexuality

Sexuality is an integral part of who we are, what we believe, what we feel and how we respond to others.

Sexuality includes our gender identity (the core sense that we are female or male).

PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN MODERN PLAYS

In *Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka has represented male characters as strong, powerful and meta-phorically as a lion, a symbol of irresistible power. They are also portrayed as initiator, doer of something, and commander in chief, the king while their female counter parts Sidi and Sadicon are represented as goals and or beneficiaries of men's actions and associated with processes of sensing and of emotion.

In the *Lion and the Jewel*, women are really considered the second sex, essentially created for serving men and in the road there is no female character at all.

Soyinka dramatized womanhood, he sees them as the Yoruba goddesses Oya, Yemoja and Oshun which represent beauty and love for example Sidi is seen as the goddess of beauty. Side is the jewel, beautiful lady who will choose one of the men for husband.

Sidi understands that her virginity as a treasure. Initially, she is not willing to marry Baroka because of his age, which is a modern view of marriage, but eventually becomes his bride after he cunningly seduces her.

In lion and the Jewel Sidi views her as a weapon to get any man of her choice. Sidi presents how she views her sexuality as a weapon to entice and bring doom upon men who become infatuated with her beauty. She mentions that she is looking forward to breaking men's hearts and views them as her opponents. In Yoruba culture, the bride-price is a very important custom.

The play also presents gender discrimination in Illunjinle village, females were not allowed to go to school where as the males are assigned to go to school to get an education. Women are a sign to the play as subservient and domestic role as opposed to men who are expected to be the authoritative and educated figures. The role of the women is to fetch water, child bearers and to pound the yams. Men can have as many wives as they like, like Baroka but women cannot have more than one husband at a time. In Illujunle's society, women are not supposed to be as educated as men.

Women are to be educated in domestic areas. Baroka seduced Sidi with his wise words which shows how educated and knowledgeable he is. Sidi coming onto the stage with a pail of water on her head which indicates preparation for house work. In the play, women are expected to clean the house, take care of the children and prepare food for the family while men are out at work. Sidi is walking with pail on her head while Lakunle is at work.

Women are seen as inferior, this is why they play a subservient and domestic role in the Illunjunle village. Sadiku, Baroka's eldest wife for example. Her job was to meet her husbands every demand. Sadiku was convinced that she caused Baroka to become impotent; this is proof that one of her jobs was pleasuring her husband.

The play also has a male dominated society this displays gender inequality. Women are treated as servants who had to cater to all the needs of the men.

In Ben Johnson's Volpone, Celia, the wife of Corvino has entirely conformed to the feminine role of a proper married woman. Mosca introduces her character in the play.

Also in the character of Lady Would-Be Politic, Johnson reveals how women are caught in a double-bind within the patriarchal structure of

Renaissance England; they must either conform to their feminine roles or risk being alienated from their communities.

In the play Celia represents the femininity in Renaissance literature. She is beautiful, submissive, quiet and helpless to resist her husband's control over her every movement.

In this play also women are seen as inferior and men superior. We see this in the character of Celia and her husband Corvino. Celia does not have free movement. Men are stronger than women, we see this when Volpone wants to rape Celia because of her beauty.

CONCLUSION: From these plays we see that the women are present as beauty, love and inferior and men are superior.

REFERENCES

Wole Soyinka (1963), *Lion and the Jewel*, Gender and Sexuality

Ben Johnson. 'Volpone, Gender and Sexuality