

“Gender” refers to the socially-constructed roles of and relationship between men and women. Gender concerns men and women, including conceptions of both femininity and masculinity.

Gender does not mean focusing solely on women on females, but rather on the inequalities between male and females, and should not be confused with feminism or women’s studies.

Analyses of gender difference often show a disadvantaged and weaker position of women and girls in social political, economic legal, educational and physical issues. This is when there is a tendency for gender discussions and intervention to focus on correcting these imbalances by specifically targeting women and girls.

“Sexuality” describes the whole way a person goes about expressing himself or herself as a sexual being describes how important sexual expression is in a person’s life how one chooses to express that sexuality and any preference one may have towards the type of sexual partner they choose.

The way we choose to have sexually is as individual and complicated as the ways we choose to dress or earn a living. Human sexuality rarely falls into neat categories and is a complex area of human experiences.

Sexuality involves many aspects of being human. The four major components of sexuality are:

1. Sensuality
2. Intimacy and relationships
3. Gender/sexual identity
4. Sexual health

Sexuality is important in being earnest.

In *Importance of Being Earnest*, food and eating play a surprisingly large part in the play, frequently expressing appetites and emotions that it is not respectable or polite to air openly. In Act I, Algernon orders a plate of cucumber sandwiches and bread and butter for his expected guests, Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen. He proceeds absentmindedly to devour all the sandwiches before the guests arrive. Jack joins in, eating the bread and butter so greatly that Algernon accuses him of behaving "as if you were married to her

already". In these incidents the act of eating seems symbolically to stand in for gratification of the sexual appetite, an interpretation reinforced by Algernon's comment about marriage. The fact that there are no sandwiches left for lady Bracknell when she arrives and the fact that Algernon invents a "Bunburying" trip in order to get out of dining (eating) with her uncle line he exclusion the young couples.

In Acts 2, food becomes part of the polite cat fight between Gwendolen and Cecily. Gwendolen declines sugar and cake on the grounds that they are no longer fashionable, and Cecily deliberately gives Gwendolen huge amounts of both. Her action expresses an anger and aggression that upper class ladies could not admit to feelings.

When Algernon and Jack's deceptions are exposed to Gwendolen and Cecily and the women scornfully walk off into the house, both men begin greedily to devour muffins. This can be seen as an expression of thwarted sexual

appetite; for Algernon, as he says it is also on attempt to console himself.

They “double life” both Algernon and Jack lead allows the two men to misbehave while seeming to hold onto the duties and responsibility given by society. For Algernon this is known as “Bunburying” and for Jack, he becomes Earnest. As the name Earnest can be seen as another name for gay and “Bunburying” could be seen as a physical homosexual act.

Algernon asks of Jack’s double person “what about the profligate Earnest”. The word profligate, meaning recklessly extravagant, dissolute, or unprincipled. In sexual matters indicates Earnest’s promiscuity, treading to the possibility of homosexuality. While it is never directly stated here, it is certainly possible with the word “profligate” “Unprincipled” in sexual matters, could indicate homosexual acts, as homosexuality was against Victorian issues of morality and societal norms.

Another instance is when Algernon meets Cecily disguised as Jack's brother Earnest.

Cecily: I hope you have not been leading a double life pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time that would be hypocrisy.....

Algernon: (looks at her in amazement); Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless Cecily I am glad to hear it.

Algernon: In fact now you have mention the subject I have been very bad in any own small way.

Algernon refers to his "recklessness that he had been "very bad" in his "own small way" and yet it must have been "very pleasant" By saying "it is much pleasanter being here with you". Algernon suggests that he has been bad in other ways beyond disguising himself and deceiving a girl he is engaged to after barely just meeting her. And yet it is a small way" in which he has been bad noting that really harms

anyone else in any way. Algernon, referring to his act when “Bunburying” could very well be talking about homosexual acts that are bad” in other words acts that go against what is acceptable in society but are at the same “pleasant” a word, indicating pleasure, that gives his reckless behavior a physical connotation.

Gender in importance of being earnest

While it seems clear to me that the play is a satire of Victorian morals and values in the absurdity of the characters and the plot what I find more interesting is Wilde's use of gender role reversal. By having his female characters take on the roles of men and his male characters take on the role of women, it seems to me that Wilde does a good job of turning Victorian values on their heads and showing their faults.

Lady Bracknell seems to embody this role reversal more than any other character. Lady Bracknell has complete control over her daughter Gwendolen's future. She says in Act 1, “when you do become engaged to someone, I, or your

father shows his health permit, will inform you of the fact". While she is acknowledging that her husband should be part of the decision, she places herself before him and belittles him by commenting on his poor health.

Clearly lady Bracknell values society and its values saying "Never speak disrespectfully of society" but she goes against these values by playing the role of her husband in her daughter's life.

The girls Gwendolen and Cecily also exhibit similar reversed roles. While it seems obvious that the two girls take some (masculine) control of their lives by accepting the proposals of Jack and Algernon without consulting their guardian, there are also deep reversals within the both. When Algernon proposes to Cecily, her immediate response is that "we have been engaged for the last three months" and proceeds to tell him, a completely passive player in this part of the scene, about the fake love affair she was having with him while he was unaware (32). Cecily has the control here of their (fake) past relationship and of their future which

Algernon merely nodding his head and going along with the story -he doesn't even try to take control back for himself. Gwendolen on the other hand expresses her reversal more through her opinions and values. She describes her father's life, that he is a home body and that she thinks he is right and manly to be so going as far as to say, "And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate" (35). This seems to be a clear indication of role reversal in the plot, where Gwendolen, a woman, clearly states that men become effeminate when they abandon their "domestic duties" which are usually seen as a woman's sphere.

Jack and Algernon also take on more female roles in the story, although they are continuously commenting on their own masculinity and being praised for it by others the play opens with the two of them sitting and waiting for the women (Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen) to show up and it is not only that they are waiting to chat Jack is waiting for Gwendolen to propose to her. Instead of actively seeking her out, he takes a more passive role and waits and later he

even asks her if he can propose to her (11) Algernon, as I described before, passively allows Cecily to dictate their love for each other in. in an interesting moment, the two couples mirror each other.

Gwendolen (To Jack). Darling

Algernon (To Cecily). Darling

Illustrating the reversed and confused roles that each character plays in each relationship (44). Is Gwendolen being manly or is Algernon being womanly?

Seems to me that throughout the play all the main characters assume roles of the opposite gender, especially as far as activities and passively go, and thus create a critique of the societal standards for each gender.

Gender in Tartuffe

Some characters (especially female ones) behave in a way that would have shocked the society in their day. What Moliere does is to show us one character that does act as

society would expect (Marianne) and then shows a contrast with other female characters such as Elmire and Dorine.

Marianne is the best example of the girl of the day-sweet and obedient. When her father told her she will marry Tartuffe. She didn't argue with her father, is accepted it although it wasn't her will to marry Tartuffe. The other two women are representing girls in the society who are try to break free. Dorine's character in this play is very honest and blunt. She did not hold back what she was thinking she had no problem telling, Marianne, Orgon and Tartuffe how she felt. This was very unusual behavior. For women in this time. Example is when organ is trying to have private conversation with his daughter she walked in and interrupts.

Sexuality in Tartuffe

Sexual encounter in lust is the primary vice that both Tartuffe and Madame pernelle lambast (Tartuffe when he refuses to look at Dorine's bosom the latter in criticizing the however hold's lax morality). However, sexual desire also causes Tartuffe downfall. In actuality, he is defined more by his body

for the audience than by his soul. He is a glutton, a drunkard, a slough and most of all, a libidinous creature who cannot control himself with Elmire. It is only this final vice that provides the family with ammunition with which to destroy. The play seem to suggest that sexuality is a natural part of humanity and one most dangerous when we pretend it does not exist and hide instead behind flowery, empty rhetoric of abstinence and virtue.