

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION

(EDU/ENGLISH)

TOPIC

**PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ANY TWO COMIC
WORKS (LION AND THE JEWEL AND WIVES REVOLT)**

AN ASSIGNMENT

**WRITTEN IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE COURSE: ENGLISH
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Wole Soyinka examines several gender issues throughout the play *The Lion and the Jewel*. One of the most significant gender issues in the play concerns the role of women in society. Soyinka depicts how women are treated as property in Yoruba culture through the payment of the bride-price. Men are free to buy as many wives as they can afford and women occupy a lower social status than men. Throughout the play, women are valued for their outward appearance and sensuality. Sidi becomes relevant only after her beauty is displayed in a foreign magazine, and Sadiku reminisces about her days as a young woman, when she was the Bale's favorite. Women are also portrayed as the less intelligent gender, which is evident in the way that both Sidi and Sadiku fall for Baroka's trick. Sidi is portrayed as a naive, beautiful young woman who is rather conceited and vain throughout the play. At the beginning of the play, Sidi is open to the possibility of marrying the village school teacher, Lakunle. After she learns that her image is displayed throughout a foreign magazine, she becomes conceited and believes that she is the most prestigious individual in the village of Ilujinle. She cherishes her physical appearance and begins to make fun of the Bale by calling him old and ugly. When Lakunle and Sadiku attempt to humble Sidi and talk some sense into her, Sidi ignores and ridicules them. After Sadiku tells Sidi that Baroka is impotent, Sidi decides to mock Baroka to his face and visits his palace. Sidi is depicted as being ignorant and simple because she does not think her actions through. Baroka

is able to seduce Sidi by telling Sidi that he will put her image on every stamp leaving Ilujinle. Sidi is fascinated with the idea of becoming even more famous and willingly sleeps with Baroka. Following her interaction with the Bale, Sidi decides to marry Baroka instead of Lakunle. Her decision to marry Baroka reflects her affinity for traditional Yoruba culture.

In the village of 'Illunjinle' women play a subservient and domestic role. This is shown through the character Sadiku who is the wife of King of the village, Baroka. Women are expected to be obedient to the men of the village and to cater to them by all means. Their way of their dress, behavior and speech are controlled by the men. Sadiku does this by maintaining the household and raising the children and catering to her husband's needs. For example when he was pretending to be sad from allegedly losing his manhood she massaged his feet. It was even her duty to fetch new wives for her husband. Sadiku can only speak when given permission. This was shown when she entered the King's bedroom and addressed him as 'My Lord' and only continued speaking after he said 'You have my leave to speak.' Men in the village are seen authoritative and educated. King Baroka is a fit example. His intelligence is seen through his ability of successfully ruling a village thus far and in return this brings great authority to his name. His authority is also shown in the way he has great control over all his wives and the way in which they obey without hesitation. As seen in the scene where Baroka and 'favorite' laid in

bed and she was plucking his armpit hairs desperate of his approval and when she hurt him he sent her away abruptly.

Baroka, the king of the tribe, is an example of one of the men expected to be superior. In the village, the people live in a polygamous society which allows them to have many wives and husbands. Baroka has numerous wives which he gives equal attention and time. In the play, one of Baroka's newly chosen wives is plucking the hairs from his underarm and asks if she improves after calling him her lord. He replies that she should be sharp and sweet not just gentle as if she is afraid to hurt him. Eventually he becomes angered by her hopelessness and commands her to go away since she cannot 'soothe the smart of his misused armpit'. His first wife, Sadiku, enters and calls him her lord, and like his favourite wife, he commands her or rather gives her permission to speak. Because he is the male and it is a male dominated society he is allowed to tell the women who are considered his chattels what to do. Sidi, the village jewel and virgin, is an example of one of the women considered illiterate and weak. In the play, Lakunle, the teacher who wishes to colonize the village of Ilujinle tells Sidi that she is as stubborn as an illiterate goat. He says this to her because he always admonishes her not carry loads on her head because of the end result which is the shortening of her neck. She is doing domestic work which is carrying the pail to her house. She is doing what is expected of her and because Lakunle wishes to colonize the village, he tries

to break her from the habit of doing domestic work.

It is ridiculous to refer to women as the "weaker sex" and the "inferior beings" since men and women were made to be equal. Whatever a woman is given, she makes greater, therefore, women should not be made fun of just because they deal with life situations and live life differently from men.

In **WIVES REVOLT J. P CLARK** there is inequality, highhandedness, oppressive social structure imposed by laws and nature, poor crisis management and inequitable distribution of resources. Opening with Okoro, the town crier informing the people of Erhuware that the money given to the village by the oil company operating in its community has been shared into three equal parts among the elders, the men and women and that each group is to get their share according to their age-group, the announcer returns home to be greeted by the vexation of the wife, Koko. Koko, who represents the women, challenges the husband on why the largesse should be share in such formula, knowing too well that the elders are the men. She sees the formula as being unfair and says that it would have been much better if it had been shared just between the male and female folks. Her argument is that by the sharing formula, the men folk hold the two-thirds of the oil revenue. Why women agitate for a fair sharing formula, some men reported to the council of elders that the womenfolk have resulted to using witchcraft, turning to goats, to harm them at night. This leads to the council of elders to come up with a

law that banishes goats in the village. The new law ignited fire in the heated polity, as the women saw it as anti-women, especially as goat is the one of the domestic animals they are allowed to keep in the village. To stop the men folk from carrying out the oppressive law, the women plan to stage a protest with the central authority. At a said date they left the village marching through Otughieven, Eijophe, Igherekan, Imode to Eyara, leaving their children and husbands to fate. They made their husbands do the domestic chores such as babysitting, cooking, sweeping, taking the children to school and other tasks considered the prerogative of the women by themselves. Not batting an eyelid at their wives' absence, the men frolicked with the free women in the village with the swollen purse. And since their husbands are not coming for them, the women pressed on to Eyara, where they were accommodated and cared for by Ighodayen, a notorious prostitute. Hearing that their wives have got to Eyara and in the hands of Ighodayen, the men plead for their return, but unfortunately the women, all, have contacted venereal disease.