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**TOPIC: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ANY TWO COMIC WORKS
(VOLPONE AND TARTUFFE)**

Comedy refers to any discourse or work generally intended to be humorous or amusing by inducing laughter. In comic work we encounter prevalent themes, but in this two plays Volpone and Tartuffe, Gender and sexuality will be discuss.

Gender is a state of being male or female, that refers to the social and cultural difference rather than biological one .It also refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women, while Sexuality refers to gender identity, gender role, our sexual orientation, our sexual experience, thoughts, ideas and fantasies .It refers to how we experience intimacy, touch, love, compassion, joy and sorrow.

Discussing the aspect gender in volpone and Tartuffe .In volpone, the character we encounter are men who operate in the traditional male sphere of commerce .At time in which this play is set, men were wholly responsible for finance and they were expected to have power over women in relationships.

In the text, we see the Italian marriage between Celia and corvino. Though Celia is virtuous, she is kept under corvino extremely careful and cruel control. Convino keeps her indoors almost at all times ,and forbids her ,at one time

from even venturing too close to a window .Here we see the extreme control that Corvino has over Celia ,who seems to be silent ,chaste and obedient . In court Celia's sterling reputation gives her credibility ,but her testimony is quickly undermined ,since as a woman ,she is considered to be an unreliable witness ,even to a crime of which she was a victim .The power of Celia's reputation cannot stand up to the stereotype that women are too hysterical and emotional to be trustworthy and rational ,even though the men who argue against her are known to be deceitful .The cruelty in which Celia finds herself in court illustrates the 17th century women couldn't win no matter how virtuous ,women were still considered to be untrustworthy and inferior .

In the text, we see how Corvino and Volpone try to exhibit male authority over Celia through sexuality .This is seen when Corvino attempts to whore Celia to Volpone, and Volpone on the other hand attempts to rape her. In this incident, we see how society has placed women, to the extent that, they have become tools in which the men use to achieve their selfish interest.

In Volpone, we see the opposite character of Lady Would-be marriage to Sir Politicks, to the marriage of Celia and Corvino. Lady Would-be is more independent, and is able to wander Venice on her own. Lady Would-be is described as a talkative in the play ,this is seen ,when she visits Volpone ,who jokes in an aside ,who says ,she is so long-winded that he (Volpone) is tortured by her "flood of words," and that ,though he is pretending to be sick ,she is actually making him ill by talking ceaselessly. Here we see the stereotype that women talk excessively. We therefore see the societal roles for women in Italy and England, which depict that gender roles are culturally contingent, rather than biologically determined.

In Tartuffe which is written in 1664, during this period women were at much differently than they are today. Women were supposed to be subservient to the men in their lives. In the text, we encounter the character of Dorine and Mariane, who display opposite characteristics making the traditional role of women conflicting throughout the story.

Dorine character challenges the traditional roles for women. She is considered to be Mariane's servant or lady in waiting, who is very honest and blunt. She did not hold back what she was thinking. She had no problem telling Mariane, Orgon and Tartuffe how she felt. This is seen between Dorine and Orgon. Orgon is trying to have a private chat with his daughter and Dorine walks in and interrupts. This was very unusual behavior of women in this time, especially for a lady in waiting.

The next encounter is between Dorine and Mariane. Even though this is not a male/female encounter it still shows Dorine's bluntness. Dorine is supposed to be Mariane's maid but yet she is very honest with her. The last encounter is between Dorine and Tartuffe in Act Scene VII. This is the mildest outbursts we see from Dorine, but yet she is still there putting her two cents in. We see Dorine say: "how he exploits the name of Heaven! It's shameless." She has no fear to speak what is on her mind. Again we see her chime in and say: "all that we most revere, he uses to cloak his plots and camouflage his ruses." It seems that whenever there is an argument going on Dorine is magically there putting in her comments. She depicts the complete opposite of how women in the time were expected to act.

Mariane on the other hand, represents the traditional stereotypes during this period. Mariane is Orgon's daughter and is very willing to do whatever her father asks of her. Mariane is a quiet character, which is described by Madame

Pernelle in Act 1, scene 1 when she says: “and you, his sister, seem so pure, so shy, so innocent, and so demure.” Mariane is also a person that is been controlled by her father, this is seen when Orgon pushes Mariane to accept the marriage to Tartuffe. Even though Mariane is in love with Valere and wants to marry him, she does not stick up for herself and protest. Instead it is her maid Dorine that is trying to convince Orgon to change his mind.

Also in Act II, scene III, we see Mariane speak about not wanting to go against her father, “A fathers power is great.” A women role during this time is to be subservient to their fathers and then to their husbands. Mariane doesn’t want to go against her father, thou she listen to the advice of Dorine but yet did not want to follow it .She seems to act very dramatic and helpless, and demonstrate the quality of being gullible .In Act II, scene IV, we see Mariane asking Valere for advice, who says he thinks it’s a good idea for her to marry Tartuffe, in which she believes.In the end we see that both women are opposite, as Mariane fits the traditional role of women, Dorine challenges the traditional role of women during that time.

In the area of sexuality, in volpone, we see volpone, who uses religious imagery in the description of gold, but has found a “better angel” in Celia. And the “gold plate” and “jewel,” in which volpone addressed in tone of worship at the beginning of the play , volpone gives mosca so that he can use them to woo Celia ,in which all the important gold has been subordinated to her conquest . Volpone desire for her is instinctual, not refined or rational, we therefore see the lustful and hedonist side of volpone.

The language in which volpone describes his love for Celia is considered grotesque, it is a language of sickness, not love. Volpone feels a fever, “a flame,” trapped inside his body. “My liver melts,” he exclaims, and mosca

describes his situation as a “torment.” Mosca says that the “sick” volpone now suffers from a lovesickness. Also volpone light hearted, lustful ways is seen to be innocent as they appear, since they can easily develop into unhealthy and unnatural sexual obsession.

Corvino also has a pathological, grotesque response to Celia’s body. Corvino’s description of the handkerchief-tossing incident is rife with intense, sensual imagery suggesting that Corvino may be in grip of some sort of sexual psychosis; he feverishly describes “itching ears,” “noted lechers,” “satyrs,” “hot spectators” the fricace” ,before he imagines Celia and scoot Mantua engaged in act of intercourse .By contrast with Corvino ,volpone earlier outburst tame .Corvino ends his first diatribe with a threat of murder ,indicating that sex and violence are thus firmly linked in his psyche . Like volpone, Celia’s body causes a sickness in him. Corvino grotesque sexual obsession is firmly linked to his sense of property .When he says “I will make thee an anatomy /dissect thee mine own self and read lecture /upon thee to the city and to the public,” the vocabulary of science –“anatomy,” “science”, and “lecture” convey the grotesque image.

This scene, therefore serves to link Corvino materialistic values to grotesque, unnatural and violent sexual obsession. In Volpone, we can depict gender role played by women and men in the society, and the placement of women in the society is of no value, and also the sexual obsession of men.

In Tartuffe, the sexuality seen in this play is the lust that both Tartuffe and madam Pernelle lambast (Tartuffe when he refuses to look at Doriens’ bosom, the latter in criticizing the household’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 slouch ,and most of all ,a

libidinous creature who cannot control himself with Elmore. It is only this final vice that provides the family with ammunition with which to destroy him. The play therefore suggests that sexuality is a natural part of humanity.

In conclusion both texts explore gender and sexuality.