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**TOPIC: THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN  
“OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN” AND “THE WIVES  
REVOLT” BY OLA ROTIMI AND JP CLARK RESPECTIVELY.**

Gender refers to the social identities, expectations and privileges different cultures construct for members of the different biological sexes, it also concerned with the social attributes and opportunities concerned with being male or female. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and accessed in a woman or a man in a given setting. In most cases there are conflicts and inequalities between women and men in decision making, opportunities, responsibilities assigned. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, obligations and opportunities for adult females, human races, girls and male children. But in most cases, gender inequality is the order of the day, which is gotten from the mentality that “men are superior to women, and therefore the weaker sex”. This has always made women to be portrayed as being inferior to men, this gender inequality rouses the revolt from women folk.

Sexuality is seen as that which is characterized of sex or sexual activity. In most cases, the female gender is subdued and reduced as sex object or seen as object of sexual satisfaction

Sexuality and gender are prominent themes in comedy plays. Sexuality and gender are used as either a tool of manipulation, a form of propaganda or sometimes both. There is a construct of gender and sexuality from the old to now, there is a hierarchy of sexes and each had their own role in society. Men were masculine, they were not ruled emotion, and they were strong and hardworking. Women belong in the home, they were ruled by men and by their emotions and therefore were thought to often make bad decisions.

The difference between men and women is seen as a biologically determined fact that ordained separate sphere the person could occupy. Women defining role was that of reproduction, intelligence and the ability to bear children, women were ruled out from the male domain of reason and the public sphere which required its use .

During the period of old comedy, there were social norms about gender and sexuality that existed similarly as they do today, of the old, women's place was within doors, her business domestic, women themselves accepted this divorce between the private (feminine) and public (masculine) sphere. Modern comedy sought to defeat these norms, it sought to show that sexuality and gender are ambiguous and mutable, because it attempts to deconstruct the unwritten rules about gender and sexuality within the modern comic plays.

Comedy provides a safety net that allows the unfamiliar or the unacceptable to be presented in public, because the stakes are perceived to be lower than in tragedy. Consequently the outrageousness or unthinkability of some images their potential for queasiness can be excused as inconsequential playfulness. Some sexual taboo which are seen as offensive by the audience is forgiven because it is comedy. The modern comic plays challenge the social norms of gender roles, thus, sexuality can be a tool of manipulation. The manipulator uses sexuality and gender to twist the action of the play in their favor, sexuality as it is known in the context of society is broken, it no longer becomes about love or lust but for the gain of power, in this instance the comic plays could show men as women and vice versa. Gender roles could be reversed and that no social norm is concrete. In essence sexuality and gender is a powerful tool that could be wielded by one to gain power.

The contest for equality between men and women in the social domain has remained at the front burner of social interaction as well as academic inquiry for quite a while now. The place of theatre in helping to find answers to the burning question of gender equality cannot be discountenanced. This assignment thus set out to establish the truth value of the proposition that men and women are created equal as asserted in the play *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*, by Ola Rotimi through one of the female character, Liza.

*Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* is the story of a cocoa farmer turned politician, it reveals a situation in which men that rule the world through their oppressive and power self-allocation have to bow to the dictates of women that learns to assert their rights, authority and self for political negotiations. Many of the scenes in the play suggest that men make use of women for their end for as long as women continue to agree to be used. At the end, when women realized that, with their number, they could negotiate and determine the part they play in political outcome, they asserted themselves and took over political power. Sikira the former wife of Lejoka-Brown, becomes the new candidate of the party as he (Lekoja-Brown) became discredited as wanting in the requirements of a political leader to lead the party to victory. Madam Ajanaku appeared to have just realized that the political marriage to his daughter was exploitative, moreover, the other members of the party now acknowledged that Lejoka-Brown's way are crude and not likely to be of positive impact on their party's fortunes at the polls. In addition, the women's ultimatum requires the party leadership re-strategizing in order not to lose the market women's support.

In this way, the women are able to overturn the power balance. Through their new consciousness of the power inherent in their numerical strength, they used strategic negotiations to upturn the political force to be reckoned with. All of these grew out of the realization by the women that without the women's votes, the men controlled parties are vulnerable to opponents.

The proposition that men and women are created equally in the play arises from the statement made by Liza, Rahman Lejoka-Brown's legally married wife, expressing her frustrations at the unfaithfulness of "their" husband to the marital vows they shared years ago in Congo to her "sister in marriage", Sikira.

### **The Text**

**Liza** (losing control): Well it goes to prove that Mr. Rahman Lejoka-Brown does not have any respect whatsoever for my feelings. Why, I believe a Woman must try to be a loving, loyal wife and all that. On the other hand, the husband must try to show some respect for the wife. After all, when we boil it down, men and women are all created equal.

Sikira: I like that

Liza: like what?

Sikira: men and women are created equal.

Liza: of course, we are all created equal. Why, there is nothing so strange about that fact- even though most men fail to accept it ... (page 54)

The proposition that men and women are created equal marks a turning point for womanhood in the play. The notion that men and women are created equal is a strange proposition to the “local” traditional African woman exemplified by Sikira and Mama Rashida. This is a fact taken for granted by Liza even though she acknowledges that “...most men fail to accept it ...” (pg. 54). This proposition, of course, becomes the liberating lever for Sikira and also eventually led to the women’s political self-assertion and liberation in the play. The consequences of this seemingly innocent assertion by Liza in the play are so grievous that one would not be wrong to say that it is the pivot and watershed of the play. It marks the climax of the play.

Lizzy uses her power of sexuality to save her marriage she is not afraid to chase her husband, even after she learns about the other two wives , at the end Lizzy obtains her desire: Lekoja-Brown to herself. Lizzy is now Lejoka-Brown’s one and only wife. Lekoja loves the eccentricities Lizzy brings into the household and into the marriage relationship.

Manifestations of gender and sexuality abounds a lot in “Wives Revolt” by JP Clark, in the play due to stereotype notion about the women in the society as less and their place is at home the money from an oil money given to the community by an oil company operating in their land. Erhuwaren as an oil company is made up of the descendants of Udemede and Meghwere in four

wards- Ikemeghwre, Ikikimedi, Wjesaba Urevwodo. The oil money is divided into three parts in the community Vis a Vis elders, men of particular age group and women. But this arrangement does not go down well with the women who hold the view that the money should be divided into two equal parts between men and women. In protest, the women abandon their responsibilities in the home leaving the homes and streets of Erhuwaren littered with dirt and roaming goats.

In the play Clark awakens the issue of gender, men's disrespect and distrust of women, and also the sexuality of women. In the play Okoro represents the deepest kinds of misogyny: when men don't help their wife to the chores, don't give their wives enough money for food yet they complain the soup is not tasty, but the women had to devise a mean for their voice to be heard, thus the protest and leaving of their homes, while the protest lasted, the men learnt the importance of the role women play in the society and agreed to share the compensation equally with the women folk and in addition, pay compensation to them.