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Presentation of Gender and Sexuality in Oscar Wild's *Important of Being Earnest* and Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*

Gender refers to the social identities, expectations and privileges different cultures construct for members of the different biological sexes. Gender expectations, which vary greatly between cultures, establish the boundaries of acceptable individual social behavior such as dress, marriage, property rights, household duties and "sexuality," one's self-expression as a sexual being. Sexuality on the other hand describes the whole way a person goes about expressing himself or herself as a sexual being.

Oscar wild is a 19th century writer, and one of the issues 19century writers intends to correct is the issue gender in the society. Medieval age has placed male sex above female sex. Men were considered as superior over their women counterpart. Women were seen as those whose major role in the society is to reproduce children and cook for their families. They were seen as people with low thinking faculty and whose education should end in kitchen.

Wild pointed and corrected this issue by assigning male role to the female characters in his texts. *In Important of Being Earnest*, Wild has not forgotten to hint the changing status of women in the society. women have already moved in the part of education. With the considerable level of education, women have already started heading towards the direction of freedom. They have

broken different kinds of constraints and barriers imposed upon them. Wild has presented lady Bracknell talking about the position of man. In the 19th century women had reached to the point of giving their traditional place to men, and taking the professional position of man. She says, in her talk with Gwendolyn that house is the proper place for men. This bit of conversation reveals women have also begun to move freely in the occupational world. Lady Bracknell also makes decision for the family. Wild used Miss Prism as an awakened woman who serves as a governess of Cecil, and writes novels. Wild pointed out this issue of female gender limitation in the society and corrected it by given them opportunities to write fictions and acquire education.

In the play, Cecily and Gwendolyn discuss, changing gender roles in their conversation about male domesticity, indicating their belief that "home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man".

In Wole Soyinka's "*The Lion and the Jewel*"

In this play Soyinka presents women in a degrading picture. Women with little brain to understand simple thing, as in the case of Sidi, a female central character in the play and Lakunle a male central character also in the same play who tags Sidi as a woman with smaller brain than him, since she refuses to marry him unless he pays the bride price: Lakunle states thus: "A natural feeling, arising out of envy; for as a woman, you have smaller brain than mine". And when Lakunle senses that Sidi is not happy with his

attitude, instead of consoling her, he worsen the situation by saying, "Please don't be angry with me. I didn't mean you in particular. And anyway, it isn't what I say. The scientists have proved it. Its in my books. Women have smaller brain than men thats why they are called the weaker sex". Again, Soyinka considers women as property that men can inherit. It is known that from both Christian and Islamic religions children and wives inherit the property of their father when he dies, but not the wives that the deceased person leaves behind. This is confirmed through Sadiku, who tries her best to convince Sidi to marry her husband Baroka (the Bale) so that Sidi would be the last wife. And when he dies she will be the first wife of the new Bale who inherits the deceased Bales property including all his wives. Sadiku tells Sidi thus: "Sidi, have you consider what a life of bliss awaits you? Do you know what it is to be the Bales last wife? Ill tell you. When he dies- and that should not be long; even the lion has to die sometime- well, when he does, it means that you will have the honour of being the senior wife of the new Bale. And just think, until Baroka dies, you shall be his favourite" .

Finally, Soyinka relegates women as marriage march-makers. Not only marriage matchmakers but wives whose husbands are tired of them and their only importance is to find other wives for them, as in the case of Sadiku a wife of the Bale who almost throughout the play keeps ups and downs in order to woo Sidi for him.

Soyinka evidently in this play does not have so much regard for the women folk and presents them in a degrading position and makes their brain porous in thinking.