

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN JP CLARK'S *WIVES REVOLT* AND ROTIMI'S *OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN*

INTRODUCTION

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. Gender and sexuality are examined as they intersect with race, class, nationality, and ethnicity. The program strengthens a student's ability to gain knowledge of contemporary feminist theories and research methods, and provides interdisciplinary perspectives from which to study the diversity of the human experience. In Jeffrey Weeks's words, sexuality is "related not only to the physical body but also to beliefs, ideologies, and imaginations" (364). It is a "social construction," a historical invention, which of course draws on the possibilities of the body, but whose meanings and the weight we attribute to them are shaped in concrete social situations" (366). Gender, on the other hand, "refers to ways of seeing and representing people and situations based on sex differences . . . It is a social or cultural category, influenced by stereotypes about 'female' and 'male' behavior that exist in our attitudes and beliefs" (Goodman vii). Weeks emphasizes that gender, as related to "the social differentiation between men and women" (367) must be understood as different from the term sex, which "refers to the anatomical differences between men and women" (367).

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ROTIMI'S *OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN* AND J.P CLARK'S *WIVES REVOLT*

The term sexuality refers to sexual practices and interests, while gender refers to the division of social roles based on sex difference. Notwithstanding the difference between the terms, these definitions emphasize the condition of both sexuality and gender as constructed categories, used to classify people and to prescribe a specific code of conduct.

Firstly in *The Wives' Revolt* wifedom and motherhood are inseparable as captured below: OKORO. ... Our women-folk, led by a few reckless ones, fed up with doing simple duties for their husbands and children as befits good housewives... (1) To Okoro, a woman's greatest achievement is to be a good housewife, that is, one who uses all her natural endowments doing simple duties for her husband and children. Furthermore, motherhood is often used to scare women away from maximizing their potentials. The fathers often leave the feeding of the children to the women and see it as unbecoming when a woman tries to take certain steps that might better her lot in life.

Ola Rotimi also presents a group of dumb, docile women who are rendered inactive not by an express command of the gods but by a long period of subjugation under patriarchal culture that has made their oppressed state to look like a natural way of life. The man of the family, Lejoka is the god of his own household. His orders are as potent and final as that of the gods. In fact he handles them as perfect as he does his other possessions. He is a traditional African family that is anchored in the culture of his people and the exigencies of the time. Though he lives under the same roof with his wives but the women are far removed from him emotionally and otherwise. His communications with them are mostly in the form of commands and orders to which they unreservedly respond "yes, my lord". For them, it is a natural state. They do not agree

for another state because they are unaware of an alternative way of life for wives within a traditional family. Lejoka=Brown's attitude is a good example of patriarchal attitude =that which makes men believe that they must be on top of women in all things, especially in their relationship with their wives. This is believed to be a sure way of retaining one's supremacy and authority at home. Gender and sexuality is against patriarchal attitude that for a man to be a man and for him to be on top, he must be measure up with or out measure his wife that makes Lejoka to meddle in politics, marry Sikira and do many other things so as to measure up or out measure Liza with her degree in medicine. Liza's presence in the house exposes the enslavement of other women. She has refused to be doomed to becoming one of the three sacrificial slaves" as Lejoka has planned. In the end, the traditional family breaks up because the husband fails to make necessary adjustments to accommodate the new woman instead he uses violence and intimidation to force a new woman into an obnoxious old traditional family.

Today, well into the 21st Century, many men still see women as weak. Regrettably, some women accept that acronym as a succinct representation of womanhood and allow that to determine their lot in life. Our study of Clark's *The Wives Revolt* and Rotimi's *Our husband has gone mad again* has enlightened us on the contemporary perception of womanhood in Nigerian drama. Firstly, womanhood could be virtuous or immoral, good or evil as in Rotimi and Clark's portrayal of subjugated women who live in fear and suppression, being totally denied of their right to life by men. This leads to the revoking of the obnoxious law against women brings to the fore that no matter their educational background or lack, some can enjoy their rights only through a fight.

Works Cited

- Bartky, Sandra Lee. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." In *The Politics of Women's Bodies*. Ed. Rose Weitz (Oxford 2003): 25-45.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- . "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." In *The Judith Butler Reader*. Ed. Sara Salih with Judith Butler. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004: 119-137
- Hausman, Bernice. "Recent Transgender Theory." *Feminist Studies* 27.2 (Summer 2001): 465-490.
- Martin, Biddy. "Success and Its Failures." In *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*. Ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka. NY: Columbia U P, 2001: 353-380.