

NAME: ASOGWA, BLESSING ADANNA

REG. NO.: 2015/203106

DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

COURSE CODE: ELS240

COURSE TITLE: MODERN COMEDY: MOLIÈRE TO SOYINKA

TOPIC: PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN TWO COMIC WORKS

INTRODUCTION

Gender and sex (sexuality) are two words that are used quite often in place of each other. It is true that the two words are linked and it can even be said that until the sex is known, the gender cannot be determined. In simple words, the word sex refers to the physical, biological and chemical makeup of an individual. Differentiating two individuals on the basis of sex will incorporate all differences due to chromosomes, genes, hormonal profiles, sex organs (both internal and external) etc. Gender, on the other hand, includes the roles that people of each sex have in the society. It describes all those characteristics that are attributed to males or females by the society or the culture. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender roles can vary across different cultures, religions, societies, countries and so on. Usually the gender roles attributed to males are known as masculine whereas those attributed to a female are known as feminine. The concept of gender and sexuality have had distinct conceptual and lexical histories in psychoanalytic theory and in the culture at large. Sexuality was not articulated as a unique aspect of individual psychology until late in the 19th century, whereas the concept of gender emerged as a site of critical awareness much later, with the publication of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1949. It was not until John Money's

empirical work on hermaphrodite children in the 1950s that gender and sexuality were formally connected as separate and distinct categories of analysis and experience. But for the sake of this work, we will examine the works of J.P. Clark's *Wives Revolt* and Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*, as this issue is being portrayed by the characters.

ISSUES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN J.P. CLARK'S WIVES REVOLT AND EFUA SUTHERLAND'S THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA

Though wordy, *Wives' Revolt* goes beyond the spectacle to a very rich content that calls on opinion moulders and custodians of the African culture to revisit some of our value system and come up with standards that give the male and female folks their real place. 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 shared 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 menfolk hold the two-thirds of the oil revenue. Though, nature appears to assign women with the role of home-keeping and other not too tasking duties, the society, rural or urban will get no better if the women are not well cared for.

The play depicts themes such as inequality, highhandedness, oppressive social structure imposed by laws and nature, poor crisis management and inequitable distribution of resources. To stop the menfolk 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 contracted venereal disease. And it became a case of had we known.

Though, nature appears to assign women with the role of home-keeping and other not too tasking duties, the society, rural or urban will get no better if the women are not well cared for. Also, it is a call for the womenfolk to cooperate with their husbands, seeing them as not just their head, but as partners they need to work together for the progress of the family and advancement of the society. Here the male and female folks saw their shortcomings and blame themselves for it. While the male blamed themselves for pushing their women to the extreme with their laws, the women call for caution, realising that they, the women, ought not to have gone to the extent of allowing their anger to take the better part of their emotion. The play evenly apportions blames to both gender, highlighting the complementary roles each play to the other.

Efua Sutherland's '*The Marriage of Anansewa*' is a well-crafted drama with hints of folk-tale, littered with amusing scenes that will make you reflect on traditions and their

loopholes as regard gender and sexuality. Soaked up in the culture of consumerism, crafty Mr. *George K. Ananse*, uses emotional blackmail to initiate his daughter *Anansewa* into his plan of auctioning her by exploiting aspiring suitors. 20yrs old *Anansewa* has been out of school for lack of fees, she acknowledges that the burden of her need is on her father. Hence, he identifies and capitalizes on her need for education to manipulate her. *Anansewa* is subtly pressured by her father to go behind the camera for a click. *Ananse* then goes on a tour, covering miles with different postured pictures of *Anansewa* to market her. Reluctant but helpless *Anansewa* speaks:

*‘...Oh, my Father is selling me, he is selling me...I will not let
you sell me like some parcel to a customer, I will select my
lover myself, I will not take part in any photograph
engagement’.*

Ananse aims to fulfil his ridiculous ambition, and *Anansewa*'s marriage was a means to his successful ending. *‘The Marriage of Anansewa’* is a work of fiction that focuses on the marriage market framework, expressing marriage as a strong polarizer.

Ananse has good knowledge of the traditions and the loopholes therein, hence he exploited it. Until a suitor's bride price is accepted, and the *head-drink ceremony* is conducted, he cannot be given the privilege of a husband. Hence any appeasement suitors do is considered a gift with no emotional invoice; it is unaccounted for. He knows his daughter *Anansewa* can be married to only one man despite his enticing so many rich suitors, so he builds a net of competition for intending suitors to pay their way with gifts. In an intricate way, *Ananse* exploited the laid down procedures for establishing a marriage, using it as a means of securing upkeep for himself. One is lured to read through the drama to understand how he extricates his self from the pending conflicts of his greed. With the help of Christie

his girlfriend, *Ananse* eventually fakes his daughter's death, using her resurrection as a selector of husband from the many chiefs he exploited.

CONCLUSION

It has long been recognised that 'sex roles'-the differential participation of men and women in social, economic, political and religious institution vary from culture to culture. It has also long been recognised that the degree and quality of social asymmetry between the sexes is also highly variable between cultures. What has not been generally recognised is the bias cultures that often underlies studies of both sex roles and male dominance-an assumption that we know what 'men' and 'women' are, an assumption an assumption that male and female are predominantly natural object rather than predominately cultural construction. These works present the natural features of gender and sexuality as some writers like J.P. Clark in *wives' revolt* and Efua T. Sutherland in *the marriage of Anansewa* has presented in their various works.