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TOPIC: PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN WOLE SOYINKA'S THE LION AND THE JEWEL AND THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO.

Gender and sexuality are prominent themes in Shakespeare's plays. Depending on the genre of the play, sexuality and gender are used as either a tool of manipulation, a form of propaganda or sometimes both. During the time of Shakespeare, there was a social construct of gender and sexuality norms just as there are today. There was a hierarchy of sexes and each had their own roles in the society. Men were masculine, they were not ruled by emotions, they were strong and hard working. For women, they belong in the home as they were ruled by men and by their emotions and therefore were thought to often make bad decisions. Shakespeare sought to defeat these norms he sought to show that gender and sexuality are ambiguous and mutable.

Citing Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, it can be stated that Soyinka consciously or unconsciously has presented male characters as strong, powerful and metaphorically as lion, a symbol of irresistible power. They are also portrayed as initiators and commander in chief, the king while their female counterparts [sadiku and sidi] are represented as beneficiaries of men's actions and associated with processes of sensing and emotion. In the village of Illujinle women were presented to play a subservient and domestic role as opposed to men who are to be authoritative and educated figures. Here women are not allowed to go to school to get an education. In Illujinle, Lakunle is the village teacher, who speaks to sidi on how women are to be child bearers, they are to pound the yams, to fetch and carry water. Also because it is a male dominated society, men can have as many wives as they like but women cannot have more than one husband at a time. This gender discrimination is also seen in Sadiku who can only speak when given the permission. This was

shown when she entered the king's bedroom addressed him as my lord and only continued after he said you have my leave to speak.

The lion and the Jewel is quite oppressive in its gender roles as well. In the rant from Lakunle about modernization in a fight with a traditionalist old woman, Sadiku, he says "within two years, I swear this town shall see a transformation. Bride price will be a thing forgotten and wives shall take their place by men"[soyinka36]. This sound oppressive and in the next page he says that he will buy saucepans for all women... no man shall take more wives than one. This apparently shows that Lakunle still want women in the kitchen and doesn't want monogamy for equality, but so men will stop being infertile.

In another work of Soyinka, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, he presented the characters as being bound to their gender roles with many personality traits clearly attributed to a character's sex. In this work, men constantly struggle to overcome temptations of sin posed by women: Brother Jero himself admitted to the fact that his one weakness is women and this stand as the basis of the central conflict between his desired self-image and reality. Brother Chume also fight his constant urge to beat up Amope because of her constant nagging. Here women are described as "fickle," "the plague" and "daughters of discord". This characterization by Brother Jero and Chume places blame on women for the burden they place on men and their sinful nature. The women of the play, on the other hand feel tied to the will of men and therefore their freedom is limited. Amope rills out series of complains about women's life saying that "it is a tough life for women" as she must depend on Chume and what he provides, which seems insufficient for her needs. This barrier between men and women causes lapses in the understanding and stained relationships.

In conclusion, women have not been given the adequate respect they deserve. Sophocles once said that "silence gives the proper grace to women." Men were often perceived as the dominant sex; women were just asked to perform in the kitchen, and please their spouse. According to feminist criticism, the root of the prejudice against women have long been embedded in western culture. The female feminist Virginia woolf wrote "A room of one's own," in which she declares that men have treated women as inferiors. She states that society believes that women are inferior to men; men controls the income, while women just seat at home and this is exactly the case in *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*.