

NAME: NWAKPOKE IFEANYI RAPHAEL

REG NO: 2015/204598

DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

CITATION: Presentation of Gender and Sexuality in *Volpone* and *Lion and the Jewel*

Gender is the fact of being a male or female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, not differences in biology. Gender is also way of talking about men and women. Gender role is the idea that people should behave in certain ways because of their gender. For instance, it was traditionally the role of the man to earn money and the role of the women to educate the children. Observed behavior can either come from the person or be a result of social and cultural factors a person is exposed to. This role is dependent on the culture and history of the society that they are part of. It is a set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviors which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for the people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality.

On the other hand, sexuality encompasses nearly every aspect of our being, from attitudes and values, to feelings and experiences. It is influenced by the individual, family, culture, religion, spirituality, laws professions, institutions, science and politics. Sexuality is inborn.

In the Lion and the Jewel, women are really considered as the second sex, or weaker sex essentially created for serving men. Baroka and Lakunle are presented as professionals in the work. Their trick to persuade Sidi show that Baroka represents the old culture and the authority in the house. There is no real husband and wife relationship in his marriage to his wives. He is the head and the dictator.

None of his wife dares challenge him. His wives are denied every right to live free. Their attitudes show that they are not free from him. For instance, when Sadiku tells him about Sidi's respond, he arrogantly backs at her. He tells her that she has not done her best to convince her. The relationship there is too official. When he tells Sadiku about his manhood failure, she feels pity for him and comes out to rejoice over female's victory on men. This simply tells us that she is not comfortable in her marriage as a wife. His wives cannot take decision for themselves.

On the part of Favourite, another of Baroka's wife, her movement is not guaranteed. For instance, when Sidi goes to Baroka's house, he asks her to check if

Favourite is not in her usual place. Favourite is indirectly made the gate woman. She stays there to inform Baroka “the Bale” about someone’s arrival. Honestly, from my own perspective, this is not love. This is not respect as well but living in bondage. The type of comment he made because Favourite is not in her usual place should also tell us that they cannot stand to take decision. Even when Favourite is massaging him, he lies down and she stands up to do that asking him if she has improved. In a marriage if the both parties exercise equal freedom, both should romance each other and not like the way Baroka does his own.

On Sidi’s part, Lakunle doesn’t want to pay the bride price because he sees it as barbaric, obsolete, outdated etc. but on the other hand, I see it that he does not respect the feeling of Sidi. He wants his opinion to prevail but it does not work out the way he planned it. Sidi finally falls prey to the Bale “Baroka”. He uses his position, material things to win her.

All these portray women as the weaker sex. They are on the losing side.

In *Volpone*, the character we encounter are men who operate in the traditional male sphere of commerce. At time in which this play is set, men were wholly responsible for finance and they were expected to have power over women in relationships.

In the text, we see the Italian marriage between Celia and Corvino.

Though Celia is virtuous, she is kept under Corvino extremely careful and cruel control. Corvino keeps her indoors almost at all times, and forbids her, at one time from even venturing too close to a window. Here we see the extreme control that

Corvino has over Celia, who seems to be silent, chaste and obedient. In court Celia's sterling reputation gives her credibility, but her testimony is quickly undermined, since as a woman, she is considered to be an unreliable witness, even to a crime of which she was a victim. The power of Celia's reputation cannot stand up to the stereotype that women are too hysterical and emotional to be trustworthy and rational, even though the men who argue against her are known to be deceitful. The cruelty in which Celia finds herself in court illustrates the 17th-century women couldn't win no matter how virtuous, women were still considered to be untrustworthy and inferior.

In the text, we see how Corvino and Volpone try to exhibit male authority over Celia through sexuality. This is seen when Corvino attempts to whore Celia to Volpone, and Volpone on the other hand attempts to rape her. In this incident, we see how society has placed women, to the extent that, they have become tools in which the men use to achieve their selfish interest.

In Volpone, we see the opposite character of Lady Would-be. Her marriage to Sir Politicks, to the marriage of Celia and Corvino. Lady Would-be is more independent, and is able to wander Venice on her own. Lady Would-be is

described as a talkative in the play ,this is seen ,when she visit volpone ,who jokes in aside ,who says ,she is so long winded that he (volpone) is tortured by her “flood of words,” and that ,though is pretending to be sick ,be she is actually making him ill by talking ceaseless. Here we see the stereotype that women talk excessively. We therefore see the societal roles for women in Italy and England, which depict that gender roles are culturally contingent, rather biologically determined.

In the area of sexuality, in volpone, we see volpone, who uses religious imagery in the description of gold, but has found a “better angel” in Celia. And the “gold plate” and “jewel,” in which volpone addressed in tone of worship at the beginning of the play , volpone gives mosca so that he can use them to woo Celia ,in which all the important gold has been subordinated to her conquest . Volpone desire for her is instinctual, not refined or rational, we therefore see the lustful and hedonist side of volpone.

The language in which volpone describes his love for Celia is considered grotesque, it is a language of sickness, not love. Volpone feels a fever, “a flame,” trapped inside his body. “My liver melts,” he exclaims, and mosca

describes his situation as a “torment.” Mosca says that the “sick” volpone now suffers from a lovesickness. Also volpone light hearted, lustful ways is seen to be innocent as they appear, since they can easily develop into unhealthy and unnatural sexual obsession.

Corvino also has a pathological, grotesque response to Celia’s body. Corvino’s description of the handkerchief-tossing incident is rife with intense, sensual imagery suggesting that Corvino may be in grip of some sort of sexual psychosis; he feverishly describes “itching ears,” “noted lechers,” “satyrs,” “hot spectators” the fricace” ,before he imagines Celia and scot Mantua engaged in act of intercourse .By contrast with Corvino ,volpone earlier outburst tame .Corvino ends his first diatribe with a threat of murder ,indicating that sex and violence are thus firmly linked in his psyche . Like volpone, Celia’s body causes a sickness in him. Corvino grotesque sexual obsession is firmly linked to his sense of property .When he says “I will make thee an anatomy /dissect thee mine own self and read lecture /upon thee to the city and to the public,” the vocabulary of science –“anatomy,” “science”, and “lecture” convey the grotesque image.

This scene, therefore serves to link Corvino materialistic values to

grotesque, unnatural and violent sexual obsession. In Volpone, we can depict gender role played by women and men in the society, and the placement of women in the society is of no value, and also the sexual obsession of men