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REG NO: 2015/198026

DEPT: ARTS EDUCATION (ENGLISH)

COURSE: ELS 240/MODERN COMEDY

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PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN WOLE SOYINKA'S 'THE LION AND THE JEWEL' AND 'OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN' BY OLA ROTIMI

The term gender is relatively new in such disciplines as Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociolinguistics, let alone with Literary Linguistics. As opposed to sex which refers to biological characteristics, gender is culture based. Nowadays, it is actively recommended to include aspects of gender in whatever project we undertake. The present article is an attempt at probing the language used by male and female characters in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* to see how gender issues are grounded in the play to let it play its didactic role. The aim is to pinpoint the way female and male are represented through a lexicogramatical analysis with a special focus on its transitivity system as suggested by Halliday to enter Wole Soyinka's characters' inner and outer world as they use language to enable them to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them. That Soyinka considers or does not consider women or just recounts the situation of women in Yoruba traditional societies is what is at stake in this study. The results of the investigation in the light of transitivity and Critical Discourse Analysis shows that Soyinka, consciously or unconsciously has represented male characters as strong, powerful and metaphorically as a lion, a symbol of irresistible power. They are also portrayed as initiator, doer of something, and commander in chief, the king while their female counterparts (Sidi, Sadikou) are represented as goals and/or beneficiaries of men's actions and associated with processes of sensing and of emotion.

In the current context of social change in which men and women's social roles are being deconstructed and women are now taking up positions in public space (politics, administration,

workplace, etc.), it is of practical use to question some literary works so far considered as masterpiece in some of the aspects of social realities they deal with. That is why we have chosen through this article to read Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* between the lines so as to explore gender issues.

Wole Soyinka's works can also be criticized from a feminist view; in *The Lion and the Jewel*, women are really considered the second sex, essentially created for serving men, and in *The Road* there is no female character at all. On the other hand, Euba claims that when women appear in Soyinka's works they appear in a dramatized womanhood, because they are manifestations of the Yoruba goddesses Oya, Yemoja, and Oshun, which represent beauty, love, sensual power, etc. In actual fact, Zargar after unveiling traces of afrocentricity in the play, at the end of his analysis, is now suggesting other possible angles under which a linguist/literary analyst can proceed on to view Soyinka's fiction. We take this remark for granted and posit that *The Lion and the Jewel* cannot only be considered about representation of African customs and traditions in some of their aspects and the influence of the modern world on Africans, but also about gender. Epistemologically, we are more aware than ever before that there is always a room for constant questioning and discussion of literary works whenever it is possible to come out with useful findings that could help understand social realities. In fact, if a literary work can be seen as works of women/men who are specifically sensitive to the language of their time, its social and cultural embodiments, and who use the skill of language to make their vision of life permanent, then any attempt to critically appreciate aspects of female and male representations in works by the iconic figure of African literature will be of useful interests and very fascinating.

In his well acclaimed play, Soyinka portrays a post-colonial Africa in which modernity and tradition are in constant rivalry. In so doing, he creates characters who challenge themselves in an atmosphere punctuated with dances, songs, with defenders of modernity in one camp (Lakunle) and those who are strongly rooted in traditions and customs on the other side. But still, the way Soyinka has represented women makes them male-dominated creatures and/or creatures to whom things are done (goals and beneficiaries). The aim is to have a critical look at the character's idiolect viz the way language is used by male and female characters through a lexicogrammatical analysis in order to pinpoint in one way or another the ideological positioning of Soyinka towards gender issues, at least, as it is construed in *The Lion and the Jewel*. In this

article, we consider the writer's idiolect analysis as a tool to assess his ideological positioning towards a particular issue.

Coming back to the issue of gender, we can consider that the participant roles are played by Lakunle, Baroka, Sidi and Sadikou in which the first two are represented as actors, doing something tangible and Sidi and Sadikou, most of the time as characters who are the goals or the beneficiaries of those actions performed by the male characters. In the opening scene entitled morning, the analysis has shown how each character, viz. Lakunle and Sidi, has used material processes, processes of tangible actions to express their representation of the world. It can be seen that men are presented as more active and dynamic than women. All men's actions are directed to women who are the goals or/and the beneficiaries. In the same vein, Baroka' & choices of processes in his exchanges with Sidi, Sadikou and his other wives portray a man of authority and/of action most directed towards Sidi, Sadikou, and other characters. Another striking observation that is worth mentioning here is the use of material processes of make, do, and teach by both male characters. The material process teach identifies Baroka and Lakunle as professors. Creates (1995) quoted in Gallardo (2006) presents this process as ascribed to the talk that takes place between professional and client . This kind of language, he contends, is used in the public domain and that this encounter between professor and students is asymmetrical and helps to keep and build power relation. That the play characterizes women as object of male character's attention is evident. All in all, women in *The Lion and the Jewel* do not take initiative, they undergo it. Men take it. They are the doers of the actions. Most of their actions are designed to occupy the public space (teacher and chief). They act overtly. Most of the time, whenever men are actors, the female are the goal and/ or the beneficiary.

In Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, women are naïve, ordinary and foolish. Women are also portrayed as illiterates in the characters of Mama Rashida and Sikira who are viewed as uneducated and uncivilized about people, places and issues. Rotimi is however, supportive of the feminist cause in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. He distances himself from inferior viewpoints held about women in society. Women are not considered highly in state matters. In the play, the advocacy for women's liberation is advanced by Sikira in her conflict with her husband, Lejoka-Brown. Rotimi seems to agree with Sara Delemont's position that: "Cliches and myths such as a woman's place is in the home. Women only work pin money and women are too emotional and even the right place for women in the movement is prone underlie a great many theories in sociology. Rotimi's alignment with Delemont's is evident in the way he treats women in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. Sikira's rebellious stance and theory of equality of the sexes is the result of Liza's pedagogic role in the play. Liza is seen as the transporter of sexual equity from the western scene to the African setting. Sikira's quest for self-identity is vividly conveyed in one of her caustic responses to her husband Lejoka-Brown: "Do as you say, do as you say! It is always do as you say. Always command, command, command! Why don't you show some respect and let me do as I want, just once". Queen Ojuola in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* has no capacity to protect herself from the gods' will, she is a passive recipient and victim of the decree of the gods. She is too passive to avert the destiny that is to befall her and her son Odewale while Mosadiwin's contribution in *Kurunmi*, is merely culinary.

But when it comes to real political arena this kind of resolve dissolves due to a plethora of factors but mainly cultural and our social value system that tend to subjugate the will and desire of a woman when it comes in conflict or contest with that of the man. The tender heart of the woman to love and care often weakens their resolve to stand and fight. Men exploit this weakness often, unfortunately it is the women's nature and it is doubtful if they can ever overcome this weakness. A woman would rather support her husband to become a Governor than to support a fellow woman (say her sister) to become a Governor. It is also this same nature of support that the mothers, sisters and daughters would give. With this kind of primordial sentiment, ideological standpoint can hardly stand which is the core of feminist struggle that emphasizes internal group cohesion and individual self assertion; alliance and effective coordination for mass movement for the desired change.