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ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

The presentation of the issue of gender and sexuality in Ola Rotimi's 'Our husband has gone mad again, and Efua Sutherland's 'The marriage of Anansewa'

Throughout history, one of the most painful issues of the day has been claimed by gender inequality. Gender inequality can be perceived as the differences in relation and roles of a sex, it also captures the discrimination or marginalization meted out to such group or sex. In examining texts that satirize dealings of gender and sexuality, one actually must in the most evaluative mode expose the shortcomings and abuses experienced by such group or sex.

Ola Rotimi employs the theme of gender inequality in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* to satirize the attitudes of the masculine gender over the feminine. Ola Rotimi presents and at the same time slams the inability and insatiability of man in his society, as man is taken as an autocratic and final ruling power in the society, this is seen at the initial part of the text as Major Lekoja-Brown takes on two wives, and almost immediately another to the affirmation of his society.

In this work Lekoja-Brown is seen as the chief violator, as he thinks women have no intelligence until he meets his foreign wife. First he marries Sikira, who he plans to use as a scheme to win the elections, of course he thinks that this will be actualized when Sikira's mother, Madam Ajanaku rallies the market women to vote for him as she is the market women's chief, but soon enough he fails in his plot. In between the humour in the play, there is gender conflict. As a Western woman who believes that women are not in any way subservient to men, Liza mobilizes her fellow wives to organize their own faction to stop the madness of their husband. What Ola Rotimi seems to be saying is that politics is not only the preserve of the men. Using the mouth of Sikira, he makes this

point clear that men and their counter parts the women are created equal. As a medical doctor and an experienced educated lady, Liza can compete favourably with any man. There is no doubt that sometimes women are used as puppets in order to fulfil men's ambitions. This is exactly what Liza does not want to see or hear. The play can also said to be revolutionary in the sense that a national issue is looked at from the women's angle. The issue of gender and sexism is again captured and laughed at when major lekoja-brown under-estimates Madam Ajanaku, when she came out to vie for the same post as major lekoja-brown, this is when she out of disgust of how the major treated her daughter, sikira as she Madam ajanaku later wins the election.

In this same sexism vein, Sutherland writes to expose the threat of gender inequality and sexuality to the society at large. She aims at criticizing the issues of sexism from a feminist point of view, In some parts of Africa, daughters are used to raise money for the family's survival as they are practically sold to their husbands to improve the family's financial situation or solve some pressing needs or issues. According to Sutherland this issue is tied to cultural traditions that see the women as a tool for material possession. Forced marriages as an aspect of sexism have led to maltreatment of women by men who feel that after paying such huge amount as dowry the woman has become a property at the mercy of the purchaser. Forced marriage has also led to escapades by girls who detest such act, only to escape into more dangerous situations such as rape, prostitution, and worse still, women and child trafficking. They are forced into this as an aftermath of escape from home which must have hitherto exposed them to hunger, accommodation and upkeep problems.

The issue of forced marriage to solve financial problems or to raise the family's status is the theme of Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*. Ananse sees his daughter Anansewa, as a means of amassing wealth or at least making life more comfortable for

the family. Therefore, he decides to trade his daughter among four chiefs. The following excerpt substantiates this: Ananse: Don't frown, my daughter. Have patience with your father. You are a child yet, in spite of your body development, you cannot see as far as your father

George K Ananse, Anasewa's father, is a crafty man, as well as he knows the tradition he works behind to take Anasewa's pictures to auction her away to suitors, he also capitalizes on her need and want for education to manipulate her. This is symbolized by the old overpriced typewriter that he gives her. Mr Ananse fantasizes over what he will acquire after the eventual 'sale of his daughter', how he will attend funerals in fine clothes, open donations at the church and how he will finally be buried at a private hearse as he calls it and not a public one.

Efua Sutherland's work aims at erasing these beliefs and culture of the superiority of one gender over the other.