

THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ANY TWO MODERN COMIC WORKS

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Gender can be defined as the fact of being male or female. It is either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.

Sexuality can be defined as the things people do, think and feel that are related to their sexual desires, It describes the whole way a person goes about expressing him/herself as a sexual being.

What separates the men from the women in the two stories is the feeling of vulnerability with which the women are repeatedly left. From a young age, learning dependence and helplessness, rather than self-assurance and self-reliance, becomes one of the primary tasks of female socialization. Males instead, learn early in life to view aggression as a resource that can move them toward targeted goals in the public arena. They are conventionally trained to use competition and aggression as a means to accomplish their goal. Whether it is through scheming or pure violence, the male's end goal is to claim the object of his desire. The idea that society has determined that aggressiveness is a natural, and therefore acceptable, masculine role has permeated false notions of masculinity.

In Wole Soyinka's "*The lion and the Jewel*" male characters are represented as strong, powerful and metaphorically as lion, a symbol of irresistible power. They are also portrayed as initiator, doer of something and commander in chief while their female counterparts (Sidi, Sadiku) are represented as beneficiaries of men's actions and associated with processes of intensity and of emotion.

Lankunle depicts this in his attempt to conquer the heart of Sidi "...for as a woman, you have a smaller brain than mine." When Sidi ask what gives him these thoughts of manly conceit, he replies "And any way, it isn't what I say. The scientist have proved it. It's in my books. Women have a smaller brain than men that's why they are called the weaker sex."(p.4) he goes on to say that "a man must prepare to fight alone. But it helps if he has a woman to stand by him... (p. 6). Baroka in the same vein, portray a man of authority and/of action most directed towards Sidi, Sadiku and other characters. This is exemplified in his speech as he talks to Sadiku

"Did I not, at the festival of Rain,
Defeat the men in the log-tossing match?
Do I not still with the most fearless ones,
Hunt the leopard and the boa at night
And save farmer's goats from further harm? (p. 28)

He also changes his wife when he has tire them(p.43), no wonder he says its been long he took a wife "Yes, Yes... it is five months since last I took a wife... five full months...(p. 18). It is Baroka's current Favourite Ailatu that plucks the hairs from his armpit, she has her usual place beside his door, This can be read as an expression of Baroka's authority and domineering

power over his wife since she should be present whenever the Chief is there at a prescribed place(beside his door)p. 39.

How Baroka and Lankunle treat their female counterparts is quite telling of how they perceive themselves; intelligent, powerful and incarnation of authority. While male characters are interested in how they are, it is what they look like that seems to interest the female characters. Sidi is presented as a girl gifted with beauty in the play. That is what Lankunle resorts to when he refers her to the jewel; "for that, what is a jewel to pigs? (p. 3) It is upon this metaphorical attribute of which Sidi is the carrier that Lankunle and Baroka have fought all along till the end of the play. Sidi is conscious of this attribute ascribed to her. She is the jewel of the village. "If that is true, then I am more esteemed than Bale Baroka, the lion of Ilujinle. This means that I am greater than the fox of the undergrowth (p. 11)

The women are considered as second sex, especially created for serving and satisfying men sexually, this is portrayed as Sadiku cajole Sidi to marry Baroka "will you be his sweetest princess, soothing him on wet nights? What answer shall I give my lord?"(p. 20). Baroka wants Sidi because "...that, with a virgin young and hot within, my failing strength would rise and save my pride."(p. 29)

Towards the end of the book, Lakunle still hopes that Sidi will marry him, but Sidi prefers a sexually active man

Marry who...? You thought...
Did you really think that you, and I...
Why did you think that after him,
I could endure the touch of another man?
I who have felt the strength,

The perpetual youthful zest
Of the panther of the trees?
And would I choose a watered-down,
A beardless version of unripened man? (p. 63)

In Niccolò Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*, Lucrezia's life is controlled by feelings of weakness, fear and intimidation of being seen, not as a woman, but as an object to be possessed, she is to be conquered and won, she has nothing to do with the success or failure of Callimaco's plan. She has no say in the matter. Although Lucrezia is the central figure of *La Mandragola*, she has the fewest lines of any character in the play

Lucrezia's only desire, the reader is told, is to live an honest in the grace of God. Were it not for all the pressure from outside forces, Lucrezia would never have sinned. At this point in the story all of the forces are working against her. In order to do what she thinks is right; Lucrezia would have to go against the wishes of her husband, her mother, her doctor, and her priest. If she continues with the plan they have laid out for her, she would be forced to make a cuckold of her husband. Yet as authority figures emanate an aura of rightness and their actions cannot easily be challenged, what else can Lucrezia be but wrong if she resist the will of those around her? As socialization teaches that men know best, Lucrezia eventually gives in. The only reason, however, that the opportunity arose for her to go against what she believed to be was because of her unparalleled beauty. (We first hear about Lucrezia in France through a discussion of whether French or Italian women are more beautiful. Callimaco is so moved by the argument in

favour of the Florentine woman that he feels compelled to go and see her for himself Act 1, scene 1).

Lucrezia's power comes from giving in to a man's sexual advances. After Callimaco poseses her body, Lucrezia holds the key to his happiness and it becomes something that she can give to him, or take away, whenever she pleases. She is the object that Callimaco must have and will stop at nothing to possess. Her life is ruled by those around her and it is not until she allows herself to be possessed by Callimaco that her situation begins to improve. In exchange, however, Lucrezia gives up her humanity. Her status is reduced to that of a mere sexual instrument.

When Lucrezia cannot become pregnant, she alone must suffer the blame. Her husband, Messer Nicia tries everything possible to cure his wife of her supposed infertility and yet he will not consider the possibility that he could be the cause of their pregnancy problem. For Lucrezia, her problem comes from her inability to become pregnant. She is seen as a lesser woman because she cannot provide her husband with an heir. In accepting Callimaco, Lucrezia establishes the ground rules and tell him. "Therefore I take you as Lord, master, guide. I want you as my father, my defender and as my dearest God". (Act 5, scene 4).

Lucrezia finally has a chance to gain some control over her own situation and it is an opportunity that she will not slip away. She expresses her newfound boldness by tricking her husband into giving Callimaco a key to their house.

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