

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

TOPIC:

**REPRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN WALE
SOYINKA'S THE LION AND THE JEWEL AND J.P CLARK'S
WIVES REVOLT**

**AN ASSIGNMENT WRITTEN IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE: ELS 240 (MODERN COMEDY:
MOLIERE TO SOYINKA)**

BY

OME PEACE ADAEZE: 2015/204314

LECTURER: MR. ODO ONYEKA.

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**Presentation of Gender and Sexuality in Wale Soyinka's The Lion
and the Jewel and J.P Clark's Wives Revolt.**

As opposed to sex which refers to biological characterization, gender is culture based. It refers to the widely shared set of expectations and norms linked to how women and men, girls and boys, should behave. It is a socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that are assigned to men and women in any given society. These expectations are not fixed but are continually being consummated and reinforced through social relationships and economic and political power dynamics.

The aim of this work is to present the language used by male and female characters in wale Soyinka's lion and the jewel to see how gender issues are grounded in the play. In his play, Soyinka consciously or unconsciously represent male characters as something, commander in chief and the king, while their female counterparts (sidi and sadiku) are represented as goals and/or beneficiaries of men's actions and plans, and are associated with processes of sensing and of emotion.

The lion and the jewel is a play about a girl, sidi, over whom two men are fighting in order to win her heart. The first one- Lakunle, symbolizes modernity and western culture. The second- Baroka, the village chief, symbolizes tradition. The both plays all tricks to convince sidi to accept their marriage proposal as well as style. Baroka wins and marries her at the end.

Her, we see culture being placed side by side with the proposals of the men, leaving the female gender at a state of indecision at first. Lakunle comes in first with his own plan. He, being a school teacher and well learned, proposes to marry sidi without paying her bride price. This is because that is how it's done in the western culture. He also makes so many promises to change the society around as soon as he marries her; perhaps with his wild learning of the western way of life. The fact that sidi likes Lakunle cannot be disputed, she actually wishes to marry him but for his plans. Here, we see a conflict between the

western culture and the people's way of life in illunje. Their culture of marrying without payment of bride price is in direct contrast with what they have here. Here, for one to marry he must pay fully for the lady in question; else the people might take it that she is not a virgin at the point of marriage. This plan leaves sidi on the fence. She suffers the effect of the both cultures- accepting the marriage will be going contrary to the original plan of her society, and putting off the offer will be losing all she is in the position to get if she were Lakunle's wife.

Baroka surfaces with his own proposal when he sets his eyes on her. He vows to marry sidi whatsoever be the cost. He makes promises which are obvious in the play that he might not be able to fulfil it. He is just using to lure sided to himself. He actually accepts to pay her bride price in full, but doing that will be exposing sidi to polygamy which she is too young for. We are told that he has many wives, and almost all of them are tired of him. It is only Sadiku who is still with him because she is the eldest wife. This is exactly what sidi will face if she eventually marries him.

In all, she must get married, and the culture must not be broken- at least not from her own side. She throws in the towel when she realises that it is better to be polygamous with the right things done than to be monogamous with her bride price not paid. Maybe this is as a result of Baroka's sweet tongued nature and with the persistence of his eldest wife Sadiku. She is made to go against the wish of any average young girl- to be the first lady of any home with her price fully paid.

In J.P Clark's wives revolt, a similar thing is seen, though in a different way. Here, the rules of the society are made in such a way that women have little or no advantage of them. The money generated from oil is shared unequally so that the men get greater share in it. The reaction of the women to this formulae

shows that they are not happy with it. Again, we see the issue of gender manifest. Women are here seen as the weaker gender and so should not have equal share as the men. Well, they make a move to counter that notion. They first start littering the environment with goat dung. An attempt made by their husbands to stop them set them on the run, and to crown it all, their race is to an enemy community. Their god Eyara uses them, (the women) for whatever he pleases, and before their husbands gets them back, they are all infected with a disease. This is what these women suffer because of the rules made by their husbands.

Though their husbands go through a lot of difficulties in the absence of their wives, their own suffering is as a result of their own choices.