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FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ART EDUCATION
(ENGLISH)

AN ASSIGNMENT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE
COURSE: ELS 240 (MODERN COMEDY)

TOPIC:

THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ANY TWO MODERN
COMIC WORKS USING OSCAR WILD'S

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND"

AND WOLE SOYINKA'S

"THE LION AND THE JEWEL"

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2015/204739

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JULY, 2017

Introduction

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* (first published in 1963) between the lines so as to explore gender and sexual issues. Moreover, the idea that 'a work of art, consciously or not, reveals and is determined by both the writer's view and the socio-historical development of its time, so much so that even those writers who apparently invent their own literary terms still deal with pressing contemporary issues' (Koussouhon 2011:16) has prompted in this study our questioning of 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 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.

Lakunle, as it can be seen, is the actor of most of the actions expressed by the material processes and Sidi is the goal and/or the beneficiary. Most of the material processes are strict actions directed towards Sidi.

All in all, though Lakunle in this opening scene is dealing with love affairs in his attempt to conquer the heart of Sidi, he still uses processes totally detached from feeling. On the other hand, the actions taken by Sidi are not the straight and directions which can bring about changes. They are rather actions designated to avoid men's tricks and behaviour, a kind of escape and self-protection against men's preposterousness. In the same vein, Baroka's choices of processes in his exchanges with Sidi, Sadikou and his other wives portray a man of authority and/or action most directed towards Sidi, Sadikou, and other characters.

All the material process identified in the work utterances can be read as presenting Baroka in a dominating position, the beneficiaries of his actions (swear to take, raise his manhood) being Sidi and Sadikou. He even boasted professing his invincibility in the objective that both women will be influenced which is, to some extent, a selfish attitude.

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. Lakunle and Baroka appear as the actors and the professionals on the one hand and Sidi, Sadikou, and the Favourite on the other hand. The question of the Favourite to Baroka by using the process "improve" can be read as a typical question of a student who wants to learn more.

A quick analysis of how the processes 'make', and 'do' are used in the play reveals important findings. Wherever these processes are used and Lakunle and Baroka are actors, those processes express a kind of control, transformation, and domination over/of the female gender according to their projects. But whenever women are actors, it is to express the sexual influence they have over the male.

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. But when it comes that women take action, it is the negative aspects of it that are shown like in the reply of Lakunle to Sadiku.

Mental processes are now to be analyzed in the process of the current study on gender issues in *The Lion and the Jewel*. We analyse those processes to show the power relationship, the asymmetrical relationship between male and female characters from the premises that as one feels, thinks, conceives and perceives things, so he/she is classified as dominated or dominator in the social and political arena. Mental processes are, in fact in the words of Halliday (Halliday, 2004), processes of cognition (think, understand, etc.) perception (see, hear, taste, etc.) and affection (love, like, hate, etc.). Unlike the material processes, these imply necessarily two participants: the Senser, which must be a conscious being, and the phenomenon. For example in the play, "wonder that they let you run the school", realizes the Senser,

'that they let you run the school' realizes the Phenomenon, the thing that is sense.

The attempt in the following is to illustrate how ideology has been realized by the actors of the play in their use of relational processes. In fact, there is a sort of patriarchal ideology as it will be demonstrated thereafter in Lakunle and Baroka's choices of relational processes to describe female characters and therefore the picture of how male and female are represented by Soyinka in the play, But before we proceed on with the analysis and discussion, it is important at this level to highlight the relational process system as suggested by Halliday (1994, 2004). The first aspect of the characters' use of relational processes is how each constructs meaning to describe himself/herself in relation to others. Lakunle will be the first character to be analyzed in this perspective. Indeed, Lakunle is one of the major actors in the play. In his attempt to win the heart of Sidi, the Ilujinle most celebrated beauty; he resorts to all sorts of rhetorical strategies to convince her. A close analysis of how he uses language shows that he is more privileged than Sidi and Sadikou, his female counterparts in the play. He is described as intelligent, modern, and wise:

“ A prophet has honour except in his own home.

Wise men have been called mad before me, and after, many more shall be so abused” (p. 5).

Who else could represent the prophet and the wise man in the foregoing quote? Lakunle, while positioning himself as an illuminated man, takes a terrible stance towards Sidi and Sadikou and the villagers. Evidence of this can be seen through the attributes he uses to describe them. As it can be seen, Lakunle uses some possessive attributes a smaller brain than mine, a smaller brain than men, intensive attributes Ignorant girl,

bush-girl, uncivilized and primitive-bush girl to describe Sidi and how he conceives women in general, and a huge list of intensive attributes to describe his people's culture {a savage custom, barbaric, out-dated, rejected, denounced, accused, excommunicated, archaic, degrading, humiliating, unspeakable, redundant. Regressive, remarkable, unpalatable). It is evident that Lakunle derides women and his own culture. Sidi is not the only one character to undergo Lakunle's degradation. Sadikou is also one of his victims. The following instance is quite telling: In the same vein, Baroka does not consider women otherwise. Let's consider the following two utterances by Baroka: That Baroka derides women and considers them as his subordinate is an open secret in the play but this can go beyond human understanding. In (14b), the relational clause, the intensive relational process 'is' with the attributes eye's

delight, vain, feather-light, giddy with trivial thought in which Sidi is the carrier shows at length how far he could go to describe women by playing on their intelligence and by considering them as an exoteric object (eye's delight) and unable to think for better. In play, the Favourite (Baroka's latest wife) is the token and the circumstance at her usual place, beside my door is the value. This can be read as an expression of Baroka's authority and dominating power over his wife since the later should be present whenever the Chief is there at a prescribed place (beside his door).

How Baroka and Lakunle treat their female counterparts is quite telling of how they perceive themselves: intelligent, powerful and incarnation of authority. But while male characters are interested in how they are, it is what they look like that seems to interest the female characters. Nobody can deny the fact that Sidi is presented as a girl

gifted with beauty in the play. That is what Lakunle 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 Lakunle 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. She is the carrier of the attribute beautiful. But what is quite intriguing is the fact that she considers this as something that confers her all the necessary notoriety due to her regard.

Consider the theme 'Women in Society'. It can be stated that in the village of Illunjinle women play a subservient and domestic role as opposed to men who are expected to be the authoritative and educated figures. Women are seen as inferior; this is why they play a subservient and domestic role in the Illunjunle village. Take Sadiku, Baroka's eldest wife, for example. Her job was to meet her husband's every demand. Sadiku was convinced that she caused Baroka to become impotent; this is proof that one of her jobs was pleasuring her husband. Also, Baroka admitted that no other wife could pluck his arm pit hairs like Sadiku in the novel. Women were regarded as subservient and domestic because they had to live a submissive life to their dominant husbands whether it is to please them sexually or caress and treat their bodies the way it was requested.

Men are seen as authoritative and educated. Baroka, for example, at his old age has many wives and is still known as the King of the Village. He shows his authoritative behaviour with his wives. He demands and receives; instructs and shuns. Proof of this is when he told his youngest wife to pluck his arm pit hairs. She did not do it right and was asked to leave him. The wife had no choice but to obey. Furthermore, Baroka proves that he was educated by the way he seduced Sidi into intercourse. He used his wits and wisdom to catch

Sidi's attention and in the end his intelligence allowed him to successfully conquer the jewel.

In the village of 'Illunjile' they believe in the theory that 'Superiority to the male and Inferiority to the female'. This entire belief is based on the bible where God created man first and woman after so automatically in rank man is higher. The women in their society play a submissive role whereas they are expected to satisfy their husband, cook and clean. Take Sadaiku for example: She is the eldest of Baroka's wives and anything he asks of her she must do. When Baroka wants Sidi to be his new wife it is Sadaiku he sends to ask her. Sadaiku had NO say in whether she wanted to go or not, she simply just had to do it. On the other hand the men in this society play an authoritative and educative role. To prove this statement take Baroka for instance who fits the bill perfectly. When Baroka speaks his wives must listen, they cannot question him or "give him backchat". For example when Baroka's "favourite" is plucking out the armpit hairs and Baroka tells her to be more gentle she cannot talk back she must only do. Also when he asks her to leave the room she must do so without question. Baroka is also well educated. He uses wise words to trick Sidi into having sex with him and ultimately marriage. All this evidence shows us that men were more respected in the society and were posed as the head of women. Women were viewed as lower than men.

It is ridiculous to refer to women as the "weaker sex" and the "inferior beings" since men and women were made to be equal. Whatever a woman is given, she makes greater, therefore, women should not be made fun of just because they deal with life situations and live life differently from men. Women lived to please their husbands no matter what the task was, be it plucking his underarm hairs or rubbing his feet. Through Sadiku, we can see the level of compliance and loyalty that a woman has to pay to her

husband. Her periodical task was to find the Bale a new wife every time he desired. Additionally, when Sadiku was young she was passed on to Baroka by his father Okiki because she was his youngest wife. She also had a job of comforting him when he was distressed and having sex with when he pleased. Even as his wife, as any other subject, she would have now and attain permission to speak from the Bale. On the other hand, Bale with his high authority was able to do whatever he pleased. He was allowed to have numerous wives who could not deny him anything. He was to be addressed by his wives with utmost respect, like they were more of his subjects than wives. He could have intercourse with a virgin unmarried girl and get away with it, like how did to Sidi.

In conclusion, the women in Ilujinle were their husband's servant being compliant to them and performing their domestic role to the best of their abilities. While the men think of themselves as authentic and knowledgeable beings.

In *Ideal Husband*, which is the second work am using for this assignment; there is also evidence of gender and sexuality. In this work we see this men superiority over women. Lady Chiltern who in this play is a very strong woman who do things on her own, she is direct opposite of Sidi and Sadiku in the lion and jewel in the sense that she is a modern lady, she is educated, out spoken and self-determined. Although she possesses all this characteristics but we still see her husband as superior one because from the beginning of play, she believed in her husband and also holds the fact the fact that her husband is ideal. When she now find out that her husband had engaged in criminal act and also made his money in an illicit way, she decided to

leave her husband but after everything she still come back to her husband. So from the above, we can see actually that men in this work are more superior and always have their way.

Again we see this gender inequality in the fact that lady Cheveley who wants to black mail Mrs Chiltern ended up a loser. Lady Cheveley has a position at the Viennese embassy and is so self-sufficient but is also having this women weakness. She found about Mr. Chiltern's past and decides to blackmail him by threatening to expose his past to his wife, Mr. Chiltern is ready to comply but after lord Goring advise him not to do so, he decides not to do what Mrs. Cheveley said. Mrs Cheveley now tell the wife about it and instead of being victorious, she loosed it all, this is to show us that from this work, no matter what the women do, the men will always be above them so we see this aspect of gender inequality.

Another evidence of gender is also see in the fact that lady Windermere who suspects that her husband is cheating on her and even wants to leave her husband later decided to stay back and endure for the sake of her children. In this work, the author made it in a way that no matter what the female do, the male will always dominate them. That is to say that the men always want the wives to be under them.

In terms of sexuality, the women in this work are not object of sex like the women in Soyinka, the women here are so self-determined in the sense that they respected by this husbands, they are not weak like Sidi and Sadiku in Soyinka. So their husbands respects the facts that those women are their wives and treats them like one so there noting much to say about sexuality in Oscar wild.

So from this work by Oscar Wild, we can see the fact that no matter how a woman tries, she will still be submissive and will still be under the man.