

**UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA,
NSUKKA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES**

**PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
MODERN COMEDY (ELS240: MODERN COMEDY)**

**BY
ISIWU VIVIAN NKEMDILIM
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LECTURER: MR ODOH ONYEKA

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Gender not only refers to the fact of being male or female. It as well refers to the social identities, expectations and privileges different cultures construct for members of the different biological sexes. Gender expectations, which vary greatly between cultures, establish the boundaries of acceptable individual social behavior such as dress, marriage, property rights,

household duties and "sexuality," one's self-expression as a sexual being. Unlike biological sex, cultures may accept or assign many more than two genders. The related topic of feminism studies the social roles constructed specifically for women and the wider effects of these constructs. SEXUALITY just like gender simply means the things people do, think, and feel that are related to their sexual desires.

This concepts are obvious in modern comedy. In this essay, these concepts are discussed using *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Arms and the Man*.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the work presents dominant female characters. And females who have a say in the society. The question of each gender's role in society often centers on power. In the Victorian world of this play, men have greater influence than women. Men make the political decisions for their families, while women work around the house, quietly taking care of the children.

Men are valued for their intellect and judgment, while women are attractive to men for their beauty and chastity. However, Wilde raises interesting questions about gender roles in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by putting women (like Lady Bracknell) in positions of power and by showing that men (i.e., Jack and Algernon) can be irresponsible and bad at decision-making.

In *Earnest*, figures like Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen, and Cecily reverse gender role stereotypes by exercising power and control over the opposite sex.

Although the female characters in *Earnest* exercise power briefly, they also conform to many female stereotypes—ultimately ensuring that the play upholds traditional gender roles instead of challenging or changing them.

Wilde deals with the inconsistency of nature of men here. None of the male characters are serious in life or earnest in nature. There is lack of moral values in each character. The characters contradict themselves most of the time. Jack, the protagonist of the play, throws out all Victorian values even though he represents the model Victorian man and aristocratic English people. Through his characterization and portrayal of inconsistent characters, Wilde satirizes upon the English society and the hypocrisy prevalent in the Victorian era. However, the female characters depicted in the play are much more consistent and seem to follow the general ideals of marriage and love, as was evident in 18th century England. Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew are in love and they want to get married as marriage seems to provide the essential social security that was needed by women in the Victorian era.

In reading a George Bernard Shaw's play, *Arms and the Man*, one should pay attention to difference between gender and sexes. George Bernard Shaw pictures gender role in characters, Louka, Catherine, Sergius, and other. There is masculinity in Louka's character while annoying Nicola. She reveals her control through her interaction with Sergius. Mrs. Petkoff also shows masculinity in controlling house hold works in absence of her husband Mr. Petkoff. In first act of the play, Raina is threaded by Bluntschli who runs and escapes from soldiers. He threatens a defenseless woman with his gun and allows her to hide him behind the curtain.

George Bernard Shaw believes Nicola used Louka as an object for gaining his wish as Bluntschli who used Raina as an object to save himself. Here, Shaw illustrates the condition of women in society and the way they are behaved by men. Nicola is satisfied for achieving a customer like Louka in his business rather than worry about his fiancée. He is ready to separate from Louka and encourage her to do it only for his ambitions.

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