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DEPT: ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

COURSE CODE: ELS 240

COURSE TITLE: MODERN COMEDY; MOLIÈRE TO SOYINKA

THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ANY TWO PLAYS.

In Literature, gender and sexuality refers to the way a writer depicts the male or female folks in their works, their duties and roles in the society, their relationship as well as their social and cultural differences depending on genre of the play. Sexuality and gender are used as a form of propaganda, a tool of manipulation or sometimes both. During the time of Shakespeare, there was a social construct of gender and sexuality norms just as there are in our today's modern literature. Since the age of Aristotle, patriarchy has been working on the assumption that women are incapable of rational thought and therefore, they are naturally inferior to men. Women constitute half the humanity. Women are being extolled in literature. Bacon accords a very significant place for women in man's life; His statement amply explains the concept. Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's mistresses. In the lives of man, women are given a due place she deserves. All along, she is treated only as the other; she is considered as physically weak and very emotional in nature. So she cannot be independent to take decision on her own as she is not mature enough to decide her future.

In Wole Soyinka's plays women are built on the Africa traditional step. Though they are considered as an inferior subject in Africa, Women are equally treated as men. In Wole Soyinka's play *The Lion and The Jewel* is spirited on the first world ideals, and the power of men against the influence of women. We find this in the character of Lakunle who describes women as weaker sex because they have a smaller brain compared to the men. According to him, without the permission of the men the women have no thought of their own because their brains are too small to do the

thinking and the decision making. Baroka in the play also describe women as something that should be changed when you get tired of using it. Here women are portrayed as properties or even clothes that can be replaced when it's old and worn out. In the character of Baroka and Sidiku, women are portrayed as a means for saving men's pride rather than being the pride of men. This is seen when Baroka tricked Sidiku into believing that he is impotent and needs to marry a young and hot virgin from within to enable him save his pride which was actually his main reason for wanting to marry her (Sidiku). In this play, Wole Soyinka also uses the character of Lakunle to satirize the mentality of the society where their marriage to women on the basis of child bearing and domestic chores, and not base on Love.

“I do not seek a wife to fetch and carry, to cook and scrub, to bring forth children, (page 70.)

Gender and Sexuality can also be seen in Wole Soyinka's "The trials of Brother Jero" where Amope is portrayed in a negative light. Her quarrelsome nature which drives her husband almost to the point of sanity is what is known to be her outstanding characteristics. There is also the young girl who always pass before the prophet on her way to take a swim and comes back remarkably transformed from being dirty to "clean, wet, shiny face and hair" is usually a distraction to the prophet. This happens during his time of meditation and prayers and is a source of temptation as he is normally sexually attracted to her. A proof of this is seen in page 21 of this play during his prayers for deliverance assisted by Chume.

Jero: "Burn this lust for the daughters of Eve"

Another Female character is the one that runs after the drummer beggar boy that abused her. She is been described as a "*Sash tightened around her waist wrapper pulled so high up that half the length of her thigh is exposed. Her sleeves are rolled above the shoulders...*" The effect the woman has on the prophet is so much that he abandons his congregation to chume and goes after her.

In this play, women on the whole are presented as being either quarrelsome or seducers of men. Women are negatively portrayed in most of Soyinka's plays.

