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SEXUALITY IN J.P CLARK`S "WIVES RIVOLT" AND
EFUA SUTHERLAND`S "MARRIAGE OF
ANANSEWA"

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INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the widely shared set of expectations and norms linked to how women and men, and girls and boys, should behave. Unlike 'sex' which refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that are assigned to men and women in any given society. These expectations are not fixed but are continually being constructed and reinforced through social relationships and economic and political power dynamics. Nirantar, Indian scholar understands gender as

"A continuum in which there are different degrees to which one transgresses or breaks the social norms related to the 'ideal' woman and man. According to his understanding, everyone is

assigned a gender (either male or female) at birth. Society creates strict norms that are meant to be followed by the two genders. These norms are upheld by a system of punishment and privileges. The norms are not only policed, they are also internalised.”

Researchers, like those in Nirantar, who have explored the relationship between gender and sexuality, argue that gender and sexuality cannot be thought of as distinct and separate categories but as intimately related. The societies we live in construct the right and wrong way to behave as men and women and these are mapped onto ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ sexual practices, beliefs and behaviours:

“Ideologies claiming that women should be pure and chaste can lead to female genital mutilation, honour killings, and restrictions on women’s mobility and economic or political participation. Ideas that men should be macho can mean that sexual violence is expected rather than condemned. In many places, to be considered a ‘proper man’ or ‘proper woman’, you need to act one hundred per cent heterosexual, and stay in line with gender stereotypes.

ANALYSIS OF J.P CLARK`S "WIVES RIVOLTS" AND EFUA`S "MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA" AS TEXTS THAT DEPICT SEX AND SEXUALITY UNEVENNESS

All through the remarkable literary career of Professor JP Clark (the First African writer to be appointed professor of English), the centrality of his plays has always been the relevance of the culture of his own people. Clark, the man of memorable electrifying verses, the man who vomits poetry naturally without conscious effort, deserves all the accolades in the world for beaming the beauty of the Ijaw culture to the world. Clark skilfully makes a break from this his universally acknowledged cultural zone when his play *The Wives' Revolt* emerged in the literary scene after many years of hibernation in Kiagbodo where his MUSE supposedly dwells.

In *The Wives' Revolt* which signals Clark's first valedictory speech to culture, he awakens and addresses new realities in his environment. Perhaps bothered by the challenges thrown up by his environment he artistically feels a sense of responsibility to come up with his prescriptions and claim the garment of human rights activist in abandonment of the garment of culture activist. In a dance of commitment towards this new task, Clark in his play (*The Wives' Revolt*) of three characters with six parts designated as PROCLAMATION, DISSENT, WALK-OUT, LULLABY, RETURN AND RECLAMATION, draws attention to the crises in Erhuwaren village bred by an oil company. The crisis stems from oil money given to the community by an oil company operating in their land. Erhuwaren as an oil company is made up of the descendants of Udumede and Meghwere in four wards - Ikemeghwre, Ikikimedi, Adjesaba and Urevwodo. The oil money is divided into three parts in the community vis-a-vis elders, men of particular age-group and women. But this arrangement does not go down well

with the women who hold the view that the money should be divided into two equal parts between men and women. In protest, the women abandon their responsibilities in the home leaving the homes and streets of Erhuwaren littered with dirt and roaming goats. Faced with this reality of dirt in the community, a law that bans the ownership and rearing of goats is proclaimed by the men. This proclamation gives birth to the exodus of the women through Otughieven, Eijophe, or Igherekan, Imode to Eyara. In Eyara the women are accommodated and cared for by Ighodayen, a notorious prostitute. By the time the women are back to Erhuwaren through the repentant pleas of the men leading to the sharing of the oil money into two equal parts along with other compensations as demanded by the women as grounds for resolution of the matter, they are all infected by Ighodayen and to cure this affliction, a doctor and team of nurses are brought from Warri to administer treatment on the women.

The resolution of the matter in favour of women signals Clark's espousal of equality of women with men - a feminist touch that marks a new thematic direction in the writings of Clark. Beyond the feminism the man espouses and celebrates anchored by the three characters - Okoro, Koko and Idama - Clark also in the play awakens other serious issues such as ; the issues of underdevelopment of host communities by oil companies, self-inflicted underdevelopment in host communities, the primacy of women liberation, greed and arrogance of men, marital faithfulness of women, insensitivity of oil companies to development matters, host communities knowledge of the manipulative dance of oil companies in their areas of operation, danger of female prostitution, men's disrespect and distrust of women and men's vindictiveness. Though Clark explores all these issues with only three characters, artistically he makes the reader feel and hear the echoes of other characters relevant to the development of the plot. The message of JP Clark in *The Wives' Revolt* is clear, timely and relevant viewed against the backdrop of the challenges of the time. Clark's message outweighs the

language of the play in importance because the language is a departure from Clark's characteristic hypnotising poetry – a reality that has severally provoked critical questions as to whether Clark and his poetic muse have clashed, or could it be another Clark's artistic choice employed to reinforce the thematic orbit along which the play journeys. Interestingly in a move that bears semblance to a continuum of Clark's break from cultural preoccupation in drama, he has delivered his second valedictory speech to culture, this time with a radiant retention of his characteristic poetic genius. The traces of poetry in this second valedictory speech throws Clark up as a poet extraordinaire who has reconciled with his MUSE hitherto on the run in *The Wives' Revolt*.

However, in “The marriage of Anansewa” Efua hilarious and interesting play is about Ananse's cunning arrangement for his daughter's marriage, at the same time, using the bride price to turn round his financial difficulties. I intend to explore how Efua portrays his characters as regard to the issue of sex and sexuality and its significance in the play.

Efua firstly portrays Ananse as cunning and deceitful person and also a more articulated and balance being over other characters in the play especially on female characters. The act of total control that starts when he deceives his daughter to type the letters that she does not know is for her own marriage in Act1. We are exposed on how Ananse succeeds in convincing Anansewa in typing for him whiles she wants to go out. He intentionally complains about the world and hardship in life in order to make her feel sad and eventually she agrees to type of which we learnt that one of the tactics Ananse uses in cunning people is by making people feel bad using psychological means to remind his victims about undeniable difficulties that they are facing and talking about the negative consequence, on the other hand Efua portrays how Ananse uses the inability of her daughter to work and cater for the family and also for the fact that she is a girl to suppress her into agreeing to her father's wish and will. An example of this is how he often asks

Anansekwa questions such as; “will your fees be paid by the time you return home?” and “will the leaking ceiling be fixed by the time you return?” Its significance to the play is that, it is the first event that Efua uses to portray Ananse`s cunning and deceitful character, and also his suppression of her daughter`s wish. Anansekwa disregards his daughter`s will and rip his daughter through setting her up to be a source of income and benefit to him (Ananse) through numerous meeting and plans of marriage with different kings and suitors.

Another act that Efua uses to portray Ananse`s control over female counter part through deception is when he lies to his mother and aunt about the burning farm in other to drive them away, the scenario that also questions the ability of women to reason and think over issues on their own . Finally Efua portrays Ananse as a character that assumes authority and command over other characters, especially women around him, through deception and manly decrees.