



Gender Roles and Power Dynamics in Federico Garcia Lorca's Blood Wedding: A Feminist Critique

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Article History:			<i>Blood Wedding</i> , a poignant portrayal of rural Spanish society offers a unique lens to examine the complex dynamics of gender roles and power dynamics in early 20th century Spain. The study uses feminist criticism the theoretical framework to examine the women representation and perpetuation of patriarchy in Lorca's tragic dramas. Using a qualitative textual analysis, the study examines how gender identities are portrayed in the play, emphasizing how masculine characters take on commanding, authoritative positions while female characters like mothers and daughters are portrayed as oblivious, submissive figures. The results show that Lorca's <i>Blood Wedding</i> highlights the broader implications of gender inequality in dominant cultures by reflecting the cultural expectations of early 20th-century Spain, where women's identities are determined by their relationships with men and their roles are primarily defined by motherhood and domestication.
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Introduction

Many people consider Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* to be an awful and dramatic drama that addresses the complexities of human passion, family disputes, and constraints imposed by society on people. The famous Spanish dramatist wrote the play in 1932, according to a true story about two American families. Through his works, this frequently dealt with themes of desire, repression, and fate, Lorca, known for his unique literary style which captured the vitality of Spanish culture and heritage. In addition to *Blood Wedding*, he has been recognized for *Gypsy Ballads*, *Lament for a Bullfighter*, and *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*. With the advent of the Spanish Civil War (1936), Lorca was executed due to his liberal tendencies, and the charges of being queer (Luebering 142-43). The central theme of *Blood Wedding* is a woman who finds herself split between two impassioned potential partners Leonardo, her ex-lover, and the guy her

father arranged for her, simply named as the "Groom." As the story develops, the bride, who is engaged to the groom, can't help but be dragged to Leonardo, who, while being wed to someone else, yearns for a life of meaningful happiness and freedom with her. The tremendous conflict within the family and the restrictions of a very standard society, however, hinder this ambition. Additionally to being a tale of illicit affection, Lorca's *Blood Wedding* also makes an argument against the strict conventions that ruled Spanish society in the early 20th century. The drama reveals the firmly established gender norms and expectations that affect women's life, portraying them as oppressed individuals whose actions and wants are often determined by males. Women are shown to be servile and suppressed throughout the play, driven to play parts that are dictated by male authority. The oppression of women in a patriarchal society is illustrated by the Bride's character and Leonardo's wife. The male-dominated notions that determine a woman's worth are highlighted by Leonardo's wife, who leads a life of muted dismay, unable to stand up for herself, and hoping to have a son rather than a girl. By emphasizing these social customs, Lorca exposes the awful consequences of custom and ancestral prestige, which determine people's outcomes, especially women's, in a world where men dominate. As a consequence, *Blood Wedding* is not just an emotional story of love but also a profound examination of the power dynamics at work in a culture constrained by harmful and ancient sexism. The play examines these established patterns and makes the audience ponder the conflict between individual liberty and societal attempts to limit it.

Research Objectives

The research aims

1. To look into how *Blood Wedding*'s themes and characters depict the marginalized role of women in Spanish culture.
2. To examine the play's reflection of feminist theories, with an emphasis on the demeaning of women's bodies and Spanish cultural norms.

Research Questions

1. How does Federico Garcia Lorca's tragic play *Blood Wedding* portray the plight of Women?
2. In what ways does Federico Garcia Lorca's play *Blood Wedding* incorporate feminist theories?

Literature Review

Joyia and Gull (2007) conducted a study that aims at analyzing and highlighting the alienation and suppression of women in a male dominant society through many female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. This study has been conducted through Qualitative analysis and focuses on exploring the rights of women who are suffering from male brutality. This research highlights the rights of subjugated women through the theory of Subaltern and Spivak. Can the subaltern speak? In this research, the data has been collected through the cultural background of subordination in Afghanistan. The researcher provokes emphasis on gender equality through the characterization of Maryam and Laila who were the victims of the male dominant society. The findings concluded that society declared Maryam an illegitimate child and as a result of this, both mother and daughter were excluded from society. But Maryam and Laila showed resistance against the patriarchal rules and maintain their courage to survive in a male dominant society and demolish the gender discrimination. They struggled to achieve their rights in Afghanistan. Another study has been conducted by Khan (2021) analyzes the authoritative rules and regulations of a patriarchal society and how they become the reason for discrimination. This study has been conducted through a qualitative textual analysis of Bapsi Sidwa's *Water*. The main purpose of this

study is to investigate the domestic issues that result in inequality in gender. The findings concluded that dominating husband Somanth intimidated his wife to accept the patriarchal rules as he wants to forcefully marry her six years old daughter to a forty years old man. This study also depicts the hardships of Asian widows and how they were bound to follow the so-called patriarchal society rules after the death of their husbands. Similarly, this study, along with others, shows a link between science fiction and the possibility that a woman can break free from stereotypical female roles, and it raises questions about what Lips (1990) refers to as the inescapability with which sexual orientation is used by our general public to define assumptions about people and their conduct and how men and women's social lives and affiliations are influenced by their family structure. The other research show that signals that promote warmth and compassion toward women do not cease with adolescence and that the effects of stereotyping and the social development of sexual orientation extend throughout life. Simone de Beauvoir a French writer, her contribution to the field of feminism is a landmark. The book, *Second Sex* (1949) also depicts how patriarchal societies lead women to internalize a sense of inferiority and accept ideals that are opposed to their own. In the similar vein, the idea of objectification asserts that women manifest these messages that portray them as things to be viewed and evaluated only based on their outward appearance. Females are concerned with how they seem and evaluate their bodies based on how they look (McKinley & Hyde, 1996; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). They start to feel ashamed of their bodies and increasingly self-conscious about how they look, which might lead to disordered eating, depression, and dysfunctional sexual activity. Further, Zubair et al. (2020) explored *A Thousand Acres* from a feminist perspective. It unveils the harsh reality of an American Midwestern household which exploits women both physically and psychologically. It also unfolds the growing consciousness among women and how it challenges the male superiority norms. Kausar and Sarfraz (2014) explored the *Blood Wedding* at four levels psychoanalytical, linguistic, biological and sociocultural to highlight how women are treated as sex objects, witches and others. The study also sheds light on the patriarchal attitudes that suppress women and objectify them. It also shows how dominant women are viewed as a threat to the society. Wilnay (2017) examined *Point Zero* from a feminist lens which addresses the struggle of women in obtaining their basic rights not only as a woman but as a human. Similarly many other researchers have explored literary works from a feminist lens in order to voice the marginalization faced by women in male dominant world (Aryanika, 2016; Gusfitasari et al. 2022)

Theoretical Underpinnings

The investigation's theoretical foundations include Fredrickson and Roberts' Objectification Theory and Elaine Showalter's theories of feminist critique and gynocriticism. The concept of female inferiority and subordination in a male-dominated society is being challenged by feminist criticism. On the other hand, Objectification Theory emphasizes how women may become self-objectified due to their physical attributes and features. As an internationally recognized intellectual movement, feminism advocates gender equality and the deconstruction of social norms that reinforce tyranny based on race. The patriarchy cultures which uphold standards created by men and disempower women are attacked by feminism. It looks at gender inequality, stressing how these differences support prejudice against women. Elaine Showalter differentiates between two stages of feminism, gynocriticism and feminist critique. Feminist Critique brings attention to the way women are portrayed in these pieces, usually as passive or secondary figures confined to the home. The exclusion of women in the literary convention, where their positions are limited and undervalued, is brought to light by feminist critique. According to gynocriticism, women have traditionally been excluded from the literature worldwide to communicate their own voices and narratives. According to this phase, women need to assert back their sense of self and their place in society on a comparable level with men. Gynocriticism challenges the idea that women are less

significant than males and defends women in seizing their rightful position as authors of literature instead of just readers (Showalter, 1979). Through these two stages, Showalter illustrates how feminist thought has changed throughout time, ranging from criticisms of male-dominated systems to aggressive efforts to change the literary and economic environment for women.

Methods and Material

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the play *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca from a feminist perspective. It focuses on the textual analysis of *Blood Wedding* that analyzes the marginalization of women in Spanish culture. The researcher has selected relevant extracts from the play to highlight the struggles of women in Spanish cultures.

Analysis and Discussion

“Mother: *If I live another hundred years I shall never be finished. First your father, fresh as a carnation, and I had him for three short years. Then your brother. How is it that something as small as a pistol or a knife can do away with a man who is like a bull?*

Bridegroom: *Shall we stop now, mother?” (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.06)*

The mother's words are a reflection of the deeply rooted gender relations and social norms that are important to the play's investigation into doom and misery. The mother's sorrow and feelings on loss, particularly the way that something as insignificant as a weapon took the important men in her life, underscore the fragility and weakness that women face in societies characterized by patriarchy. The emphasis placed on men's strength, embodied in the analogy to a "bull," stands in direct opposition to the fragility of life and the uncertainty of death, which usually force women to take on the emotional burden of sorrow and surviving. "Shall we stop now, mother?" The bridegroom's discomfort with the subject at hand mirrors a deeper systemic tendency to repress feminine feeling of the challenging realities that women face in isolation. The mother's sorrow is seen in the ways in which women are socialized to deal with suffering, loss, and struggle in a society that praises male domination and takes benefit of women's psychological labor.

“Mother: *I just don't know. Suddenly, like this, it always takes me by surprise. I know she's a good girl. It's true isn't it? Well-behaved. Hard working. She bakes her own bread, and sews her own skirts, yet I feel, when she's named, as if I'd been struck on the forehead with a stone.*

Bridegroom: *That is foolish” (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.07)*

The mother in *Blood Wedding* praises the newlywed's domesticity, baking bread and making skirts, the qualities that are typical of conventional gender roles, her reaction to the bride underscores the oppressive norms that are enforced on women. According to feminist theory, the mother's dread and anxiety, in spite of the bride's virtues, represent psychological expenses related to being restricted to a particular, prescribed role. The expression "struck on the forehead with a stone" indicates how overwhelming those demands are. The bridegroom's disdainful remark, "That's foolish," perpetuates the masculine rejection of feminine emotions and instincts, especially when they violate conventional wisdom. The resulting conflict highlights how women's views frequently get overlooked or silenced in patriarchal societies, specifically when it comes to marriage and civic responsibilities. In the end, the play condemns the unyielding gender norms that confine men and women especially women in an endless loop of emotional and social repression with fatal consequences.

“Neighbor: *But you can't say anyone knows her well. She lives with her father, way off, miles from the nearest house. But she's a good girl. Accustomed to solitude.*

Mother: *And her mother?*

Neighbor: *Oh I knew her. Beautiful. Her face shone like a saint's; but she was not to my liking. She didn't love her husband" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p. 10)*

The boundaries and demands patriarchy imposes on women are illustrated by the neighbor's portrayal of the girl and her mother in the above lines. The girl's isolation from her father, which is seen as a sign of goodness, supports the idea that women should be submissive and obedient and kept in the house. In contrast, the mother gets punished for not adoring her husband despite being attractive, illustrating the adverse opinion of women who defy gender norms, especially those related to familial devotion. From a feminist perspective, these lines critique the limited space for women's emotional independence illustrating how society condemns those who display independence or defy expectations while forcing women into subordinate roles.

Wife: *What's wrong? What ideas are milling around inside that head of yours? Don't push me off, so, knowing nothing...*

Leonardo: *Leave me alone.*

Wife: *No. I want you to look at me and tell me.*

Leonardo: *I'm off. (He rises)" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.18)*

In the above stated lines, the wife's emphasis on knowing Leonardo's state of mind is a reflection of the gendered expectations that can be placed on women in relationships that they be psychologically present, providing care, and involved. Her request to "look at me and tell me" shows her need for communication and connection, which is an obligation that is usually imposed on women in patriarchal cultures. In contrast, Leonardo reacts emotionally, first stating, "Leave me alone," and then, "I'm off." His inability to interact supports the notion that emotional rigidity is a male quality and exposes the masculinity that prohibits men from showing sensitivity. Through this exchange, Lorca criticizes the psychological barrier that hinders true communication in gendered interactions and the silence that puts pressure on female voices.

Father: *What can I say of my girl? She's up at three with the morning star to make breakfast. Never speaks out; is as soft and gentle as wool; she embroiders all sorts of embroidery, and can cut a rope with her teeth.*

Mother: *God bless their house" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.23)*

The standard gender roles that are imposed on women can be seen in the sentences that the mother and father utter. The father's depiction of his daughter as being compassionate and kind, rising early to make breakfast, and being highly proficient at household tasks like needlework serves to strengthen the social norm that women should only be used for domestic, fostering, and submissive functions. Although it adds a bit of resilience, the reference to her ability to "cut a rope with her teeth" is still associated with her domestic persona rather than her ability to fight on her own. The mother's blessing, "God bless their house," supports the notion that a woman's worth is derived from her position in the home. These lines underline the limitations placed on women's identities and independence, emphasizing how they are admired for performing traditional roles in the play.

Mother: *What lovely eyes! Do you know what marriage is, little one?*

Bride: (Serious) I know.

Mother: *It's a man, and children, and a two foot thick wall against all the rest.*

Bridegroom: *Is anything more required?" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p. 24-25)*

The lines from *Blood Wedding* demonstrate how women are confined to strict and conventional gender roles in a patriarchal culture. The mother's remark that marriage is "*a man, and children, and a two-foot thick wall against all the rest*" highlights the constraints that cultures place on women, who are expected to live within the boundaries of domesticity and their worth is established by their duties as mothers and wives. The bride's answer, "I know," suggests that she has little power regarding her own life and that she agrees to this imposed duty. The commercial patriarchal aspect of marriage is further reinforced by the bridegroom's unconcerned question, "Is anything more required?" in which women are regarded as possessions rather than as unique people with needs and uniqueness.

Maid: *But, child! A marriage. What else is it? A marriage is such and nothing more. Is it sweetmeats? Is it sprays of flowers? No. It's a shining bed and a man and a woman.*

Bride: *You shouldn't say it.*

Maid: *Perhaps not. But that's the true joy of it" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.30)*

The maid's description of marriage as "*a shining bed and a man and a woman*" in this passage illustrates a patriarchal perspective. From a feminist point of view, this emphasizes how marriage has always been viewed as a useful arrangement in which a woman's location is essentially inferior and domestic. In order to keep up gender inequality, the maid reduces marriage to its most fundamental social and physical roles. Feminism opposes this viewpoint, seeing marriage as a chance for respect and equity between individuals as opposed to as a system that preserves gendered power relations. The bride's answer, "You shouldn't say it," highlights the uneasiness that many women have in their marriage life. This comment illustrates how women are frequently taught to see marriage through a romantic lens, which hinders them from recognizing the negative aspects of it. According to feminist theory, the bride's response illustrates the established gender norms that women are supposed conform to, as challenging or rejecting these roles can often result in feeling of shame or sense of guilt.

Leonardo: *To witness your marriage?*

Bride: *Just as I witnessed yours!*

Leonardo: *Forced to it by you, tied by both hands. They may kill me, but now they dare not show me contempt. Though with their silver, that shines so bright, they show contempt for everyone.*

Bride: *That's a lie! Leonardo I don't want to discuss it, because I m a hot-blooded man, and I don't want the whole place to hear my voice" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.33)*

Leonardo's speech demonstrates his sense of possessiveness toward the Bride and his annoyance at not being able to alter her destiny. He refers to the Bride's lack of freedom when he states, "*Forced to it by you, tied by both hands,*" charging her of being pushed into a marriage she might never have wanted. The phrase "tied by both hands" refers to the limitations that society and family place on women, where social conventions restrict their requirements that are frequently reduced to obligations and expectations to their families. In answer, the bride said, "That's a lie! Her efforts to

separate herself from the charges is apparent in her statement, *"I don't want to discuss it, because I'm a hot-blooded man, and I don't want the whole place to hear my voice."* Here, the term "hot-blooded man" draws attention to the disparity between the emotional freedom that men usually receive and the social norm that requires women to keep silent or be quiet in public. The Bride's hesitation to talk about her sentiments points to a feminist critique of the way women are often required to hide their emotions and wants, especially when they go against the rules of society.

Father: *Well, we must wait. My daughter is broad-hipped and your son is strong.*

Mother: *I trust so (they rise)" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.45)*

The father's comment, "My daughter is broad-hipped," indicates that a woman's body is perceived as a sexual and childbearing tool. The dehumanization of a woman's body based only on its ability to produce children is reflective of a patriarchal mindset in which women are valued for their physical characteristics that match to social norms concerning marriage and motherhood rather than for their individuality, cognitive ability, or freedom. Despite looking indifferent, the mother's remark, "I trust so," illustrates how these traditional notions about women's duties continue to be accepted and maintained. It illustrates how this way of thinking has become normalized within the family unit.

Bridegroom: *"Bad day for brides.*

Mother: *A bad day? The only good one. For me, it was like a great inheritance.*

Servant: *The breaking of the sod, the planting of the saplings*

Mother: *Show your wife a lot of love, and if she gets cross or moody, hug her so hard you hurt her just a little. Then a soft kiss. She'll understand. It will teach her that you are the man, the boss, the one who gives the commands" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.52)*

The reinforcement of traditional gender roles is emphasized in the Blood Wedding. The bridegroom's remark, *"Bad day for brides,"* suggests quietly that the bride's wedding day, which is usually seen as a happy occasion, is actually burdened with social expectations that adversely impact her. *"The only good one,"* was the mother's comment. The statement, *"For me, it was like a great inheritance,"* illustrates the notion that marriage is a means to provide stability and authority within the traditional family unit. By advising the bridegroom to exercise control over his wife under the guise of love, the mother's instruction serves to even more reinforce patriarchal dynamics. She encourages the bride to accept this act of affection as a sign of male power by indicating that emotional dominance is a type of concern by telling her to "hug her so hard you hurt her just a little." The inequality of power in relationships, where women are conditioned to recognize their subordination, are highlighted. In this instance, the Mother's sentiments reflect the notion that men's power and control over women in the marriage come before the emotions of women and freedom.

Bride: *I'll go on alone from here. Go back! I want you to go!*

Leonardo: *Hush, I said!*

Bride: *With your teeth, with your hands, if you can, cut from my honest neck the chain you've set there, leave me forgotten in my house of earth. And if you won't kill me like a nascent viper, place in the bride's hands the stock of your rifle. Ay, what grief, what fire runs through my head! What glass cuts at my tongue?" (Lorca, Blood Wedding, p.64)*

The Bride's inner dispute against the patriarchal and social pressures that limit her freedom is shown in these lines. Her declaration, "I'll go on alone from here," suggests her wish to flee the restrictions imposed on her as a woman. The Bride's decision to live a life that is bound by marriage and social conventions can be interpreted as a feminist pledge of independence. The weight of these restrictions is represented by the "chain" around her neck, and her request to have it "cut" off expresses her desire for liberty and the power to shape her own destiny free from social pressure. The Bride's use of explicit language, such as demanding to be "killed like a nascent viper" or grasping the "stock of your rifle," emphasizes the severe measures she believes are required to recover her authority. The psychological harm caused by a culture that limits her voice and power is highlighted by her use of "fire" and "glass" to strike at her tongue in order to convey her sadness and pain. According to the Bride's comments, she is sufficiently motivated to stand up to those who would silence her and desire a place where she can reside openly free from the patriarchal expectations of marriage and obedience.

Leonardo: *"But the guilt of it isn't mine, the guilt belongs to the earth it is the perfume that rises from your breasts and your hair"* (Lorca, *Blood Wedding*, p.66)

Leonardo's effort to place the blame for his actions elsewhere is reflected in the lines. He implies that his feelings and desires depend on involuntary, natural forces. Saying "the perfume that rises from your breasts and your hair," he admits the bride's strong allure and points out that nature, not his own acts, is accountable for the sad happenings.

Blood Wedding, a tragedy written by Spanish writer Federico Garcia Lorca, in 1932. *Blood Wedding* addresses the restrictive gender roles that women are subjected to, especially when it comes to marriage and social responsibilities. The findings illustrate the ways in which female personalities are significantly influenced by their relationships with males, whether as mothers, wives, or daughters. Despite being an essential element in the story, the bride is a passive character whose wishes are confined by the requirements of her family and society. Her marriage, which happened against her will, is an example of how traditional patriarchal structures frequently overlook the autonomy of women. The bride and Leonardo's disagreement emphasizes the restricted nature of gender norms even more. As a man, Leonardo is allowed to pursue his interests and desires, even if achieving so requires giving up social order and family. Nonetheless, the bride is bound by social expectations to be a subservient, chaste lady whose only goal is to maintain familial integrity and carry out the duties she has as a wife. Leonardo's chasing of the bride, on the other hand, is shown as a bitter and romantic deed, symbolizing the unequal treatment of men and women in terms of obligation and love. The bride's destiny is determined by her family, which highlights how little control women have over their own choice. The tragedy ultimately illustrates how deeply rooted cultural norms, especially those related to marriage and respect, can tragically result in the loss of life and agency, especially for women who are confined to these roles. The findings also reveal that the play is further complicated by this objectification, as the daughter's physical body transforms into an arena of desire and control. Her body is eventually not her own, rather, it is manipulated and appropriated by the males in her immediate surroundings as well as by society, which leads to the play's sad and violent moments. The feminist criticism of how women's bodies are turned into commodities and controlled in a patriarchal society is made explicit by the way her body is treated as a possession rather than as an individual with freedom.

Conclusion

Overall, this study unfolded that *Blood Wedding* essentially attacks the patriarchal systems that restrict women, depicting how giving independence results in both individual pain and destructive

social norms. The study offers an effective examination of the negative impacts of gender inequity and the results of suppressing voices of women and their hopes. It highlights how women are confined to motherhood and domestic chores. Moreover, it also shows that the identity of women is entirely dependent on man and it shapes their value in the patriarchal society.

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