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## **A study of the Position of Spanish Rural Women through an Analysis of the Characters of ‘Mother’ and the ‘Bride’ in Garcia Lorca’s ‘Blooding Wedding’**

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**Abstract:**

*“Blood Wedding” shares the status of Lorca’s tragic trilogy together with “Yerma” and “The House Of Bernardo Alba”. What is most notable in this trilogy is that directly or indirectly it is the lives and way of living of the women folk of the rural Spain which is highlighted. Yerma is the protagonist of “Yerma”, and as the name suggests, she is infertile -barren. It must be noted here that not only is Yerma biologically barren, her barrenness is symbolic of the condition of the women of her times, whom the social condition made sterile economically, as they were restricted within their households and denied to be their own bread earners. Although Yerma’s husband lacks interest in children, it is Yerma, whom the society blames. It is clear from the situation in which Yerma is projected that women in Lorca’s time were assigned by the society, the duty of motherhood and looking after the households. Lorca subtitled “The House Of Bernardo Alba” as “A Drama of Women in the Villages of Spain”. Though no male characters appear on the stage, the play shows the effects and impacts of man on the lives of women and deals with the theme of unexpressed desire in women.*

**Keywords:** *Class, Condition, Oppression, Society, Women*

### **1. Introduction**

The background of “Blood Wedding” is set against pastoral Spain where the women characters are shown strictly within the confinements of their houses. In “Blood Wedding”, the story oscillates between the two magnetic poles of the ‘Mother’ and the ‘Bride’. The position of Lorca’s women can be explained with the assistance of Marxist Feminism and Engel’s views on feminism. The Marxist Feminists believe that women’s oppression was due to the economic inequality, where man is the bread-winner, and a woman a mere parasite on a dependant on man. Engle’s in his famous “The Origin Of the Family, Private, And the State”, states that gender oppression is closely associated with class oppression and the man to woman relation in society is similar to the relations between proletarians and bourgeois. Similarly, the women’s subordination is a function of class oppression, where, the working class men, in order to retain their rule over the women, legitimate the refusal to pay the women for their labour and assign them the duty of child rearing.

In “Blood Wedding”, Mother and the Mother-in-law advocate the confinement of women in their households and needle work. The Mother tells the Bridegroom, her son:

*“I wish you were a woman. You’d not go to the river now, and we would sit and sew.”( Act 1 scene2.)*

This emphasizes that the women’s world comprised of households. Further, the Mother is projected as an epitome of sacrifice and chastity--- the qualities socially supposed to be inherent in women. With Marxist Historical perspective, Engles said, that, chastity and fidelity are rewarded, because the guarantee exclusive access to the sexual and reproductive faculty of women when possessed by a man. In this context, it must be noted here, that the Mother holds herself in high esteem, as, she declares her chastity in Act 1 scene 1:

*“ I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me. One woman for one man, and that’s it.”*

Although, Lorca did not write the play to highlight the position of women in the society, we find, the women in the play are judged by their households and their strong sexual potential. The Mother does not like the Bride much, as she belongs to the family who murdered the Mother’s husband and son. Yet, she eulogizes the Bride in Act 1, Scene 1:

*“ . . . I know she is a good girl. . . she bakes her own bread and sews her own skirts.”*

Similarly, the Neighbour praises the Bride, because, the Neighbour feels the Bride is accustomed to solitude, despite her Mother being accused of not loving her husband. The Bride is furthered praised not because of his beauty, rather because of her qualities, which the society had tagged ‘feminine’. The Father declares in Act 1, Scene 3:

*"She wakes at 3am with morning star to Make breakfast. She never speaks out and embroiders all sorts of embroidery."*

In order to give a picture of the Bride as a perfect woman to get married, the Father of the Bride talks of the strong fertile nature of his daughter. The Mother talks of his son's sexual virility, when she declares in Act 2, Scene2:

*"My son will do well by her. He is good stock."*

To defend his daughter, and also to put her on an equivalent pedestal to the Bridegroom, the Father, in Act2, Scene 2, declares:

*"Well . . . My daughter is broad-hipped."*

Thus, we see that a woman's world was all about marriage and, "a man and children and a two foot thick wall", as the Mother describes in Act 1, Scene3. This was the stereotype image given by the patriarchal society. But the Bride can be interpreted as a response to the feelings trapped by the limited space and prospect that a woman had at that time.

The creation of the Bride's character shows that Lorca was influenced by the age old maxim of women's desire or temptation leading to a disturbance of the norms and equilibrium. The Biblical allusion of Eve's temptation rings loud in the character of the Bride. The Bride received a warning from the Maid to keep a distance from Leonardo, still, she runs away with Leonardo, despite her entering into a nuptial tie with the Bridegroom. Like Eve, she is also punished. She is allowed to live and bear the guilt and stain of the death of her two suitors. Further, the action of the Bride can be interpreted as voicing the feelings imprisoned in limited space and prospect that a woman was pushed in. the Bride, in Act 2, Scene 1, says:

*"A man on horseback can go anywhere, and know how to put pressure on a woman in wasteland."*

This highlights that women were curtailed of freedom of movement from place to place at their will, and at the same time, man being able to go anywhere at their will, had an exposure to outer world, and could exert their superiority over women. The Maid defines marriage as:

*". . . a shining bed and a man and a woman." (Act2, Scene 1),*

where, she further adds, the woman has to ". . . bear the weight.". she calls this the bliss of marriage. Whereas, the Bride tries to voice her repressed desire and tags marriage:

*". . . the true bitterness." (Act2, Scene1)*

When the Maid remarks, that, the Bride is as strong as a man, the bride declares:

*"I wish I were a man." (Act2, Scene 1),*

In this context, it suggests that the Bride wishes she were a man so that she could protect herself and in doing so, get the freedom and agency that comes with physical safety. It is the notable inversion of the Mother's wish that the Bridegroom were a girl, so he could stay at home and not risk his safety by going out.

Despite her passionate love for Leonardo, she finally decided to marry the Bridegroom, not for love, but for attaining economic stability. Her decision to marry the 'vineyard owner' Bridegroom can be understood with the assistance of Marxist Feminism. Marx declared that owning private property leads to power. Since, the Spanish women of the time were denied economic independence, they were bound to attain it through marriage, and in return, be submissive to their husbands. In Act3, Scene2, the Bride declares to the Mother that she decided to marry the Bridegroom not because she loved him, rather because:

*"he could give me sons, land,"*

Thus it is clear that she wanted to get married only because, like Yerma, she did not want to be socially humiliated as barren, because she wanted physical and economic safety and stability--- because she was not a man.

## 2. Conclusion

Lorca consciously did not create the characters of the Mother and the Bride with any feminist point of view. But the two characters echo the position of the Spanish rural women. Further, the Mother and the Bride reside in remote areas where they rarely receive visitors. This highlights the fact that woman's world was that of seclusion, and the rarely could voice their desires and ideas. Although, the women would prefer bucolic life of embroidery, their wishes are ignored, so that men can pursue their insatiable appetite for action and violence. It must be further noted, that, the Mother and the Bride are addressed in terms of the Bridegroom, and so are, the Wife and the Mother-in-law in terms of Leonardo. This confirms man's superiority and man's status. This way of Lorca's representation emphasizes on the subjugation of women to man in the society.

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