

**Research Article**

## **A STUDY OF THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA'S PLAY THE BLOOD WEDDING PLAY**

**\*Javad Shekari<sup>1</sup>, Seyedeh Mozhdeh Ghazi<sup>1</sup> and Seyedeh Maryam Ghazi<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Dramatic Literature*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Painting*

*\*Author for Correspondence*

### **ABSTRACT**

Researcher in this study to evaluate the Roles of women in Federico Garcia Lorca's Play the Blood Wedding play is about. Woman has always played important roles in different societies under different circumstances. Accordingly, during different periods novelists and playwrights have made use of women in their works. Lorca is one of those writers who had a closer look at women in their contemporary; they intended to display the plight of women in their respected societies. An attempt is made in this article to study Lorca's works particularly Blood Wedding, to delineate the position of women and their role in Lorca's contemporary society in Spain.

**Keywords:** *Lorca, Woman, Blood Wedding, Spain*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In all of Lorca's plays women's presence along with their conches and pains is significant. Although Lorca never married in his life, women have a dominant presence in his works. Women in Lorca's works represent a range of different characteristics; from courageous women such as Maria in Maria Pineda, Brde in Blood Wedding and Adela run The House of Bernarda Alba to poor and disadvantaged women and to informed and enlightened women. Hardship is common to all the women in Lorca's work and bonds them to the whole history of Spain. Widespread presence of rvomen in Lorca's plays gives him plenty of opportunities to address all concerns in the theater. Propagating Spanish Folk Literature is part of these concerns as shown in Lorca's use of female characters with all their additions such as folk songs and lullabies, the songs were derived from the Spain history and have given a lyrical and poetic richness to Lorca's works. Using this most prominent characteristic we can investigate the unique faits of Lorca's works. Lorca's plays have been called poetic realism in that the characters are modeled on real ones in the society. Therefore Lorca's characters are vivid and alive and sometimes have been taken out of history.

Although Lorca's plays are more realistic than poetic, based on dialogues he used in plays we can feel a poet behind the story. In fact, the importance of character in the story is less than that of fate which drives them. No one is able to change fate arid set him or herself free. They feel their failure at the outset and their fate is predestined. And although this justifies most of those insane deeds, they know well that their anger is in vain.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### ***Research Methods***

This study was conducted in the form of a library research. Through careful study of Lorca's works and Spanish history the researcher tries to reach a right conclusion about women's position based on the picture provided in Lorca's plays.

#### ***Federico Garcia Lorca***

Federico Garcia Lorca Born on June 5, 1898, in Fuente Vaqueros near the city of Granada, the son of a liberal landowner, Federico García Lorca's creativity would rear its head early. As a child, he was known to carry on conversations with inanimate objects, bestowing upon each object a personality and speaking with them as if they were living things and might speak back at any moment. As a child, he studied music, an activity which enhanced his natural sense of rhythm, and in his late teens, he began to write poems which he would recite in local cafés.

## **Research Article**

As a young man, Lorca studied philosophy and law at the University of Granada, but he would soon abandon his legal studies for literature, art, and the theatre. In 1918, he published a book of prose inspired by a trip he had taken to Castile, and in 1919, he transferred to the University of Madrid where he organized theatrical performances and continued to read his poems in public. During this period, Lorca became associated with a group of artists who would become known as *Generación del 27*, including the painter Salvadore Dalí, the filmmaker Luis Bunuel, and the poet Rafael Alberti[1].

Lorca's first theatrical production, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* (1920), opened at the *Eslava Theater* in Madrid. Although the show closed after only one night, it gave Lorca his first taste of theatrical fame. He published his first book of poems in 1921, and seven years later, his book of poetry *Romancero Gitano* or *The Gypsy Ballads* made him famous throughout Spain. The public soon labeled Lorca as the "Gypsy poet", which displeased Lorca, and perhaps partly to dispel this myth, he moved to New York in 1929 to study English at Columbia University where he came into contact with amateur theatre groups and professional repertory companies. The trip also inspired a book of poetry, *Poet in New York*, which was published posthumously.

Lorca returned to Spain in 1931 and formed his own theatre company. Composed mostly of students, "*La Barraca*" toured the countryside giving free performances of the Spanish classics, including the works of Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Miguel de Cervantes. The company also produced the three "rural tragedies" on which Lorca's theatrical reputation rests.

The first of these tragedies, *Blood Wedding* (1933), was based on a newspaper account of a bride who ran off with her lover on her wedding night. In this play, Lorca heightens the woman's conflict by placing her in the middle of an ancient blood feud. Intended to be part of a "trilogy of the Spanish earth", *Blood Wedding* restored tragic poetry to the Spanish stage. *Yerma* (1934), also part of the Spanish earth trilogy, is the story of a woman who longs for motherhood, but whose husband is incapable of giving her a child. Unable to leave him because of the social customs of the day and unwilling to satisfy her urges with another man, the unhappy woman murders her sterile husband. Although dramatically sound, *Yerma* was not as well received as *Blood Wedding*, primarily because it was criticized by conservatives as an attack on traditional Spanish values. Lorca's third tragedy, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, is often mistakenly referred to as the third part of the "Spanish earth" trilogy, but in truth, the trilogy was never finished. *Bernarda Alba* tells the story of five daughters, held captive by their tyrannical mother who imposes upon them a strict moral code. Sexually frustrated, and yearning for love, each of these women searches unsuccessfully for a way to escape her mother's house. In the end, the youngest daughter kills herself when she is lead to believe that her lover has been murdered by her unforgiving mother. The role of *Bernarda* was written for the great tragic actress Margarita Xirgu. Although the play was never performed during Lorca's lifetime, it is considered by many to be his masterpiece.[2]

Although known for his tragedies, Lorca also wrote two popular farces, *La Zapatera Prodigiosa* or *The Prodigious Cobbler's Wife* (1930) and *El Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su Jardín* or *The Love of Don Perlimplín with Belisa in Her Garden* (1933). His first theatrical success, *Mariana Pineda* (1929), which featured a set design by painter Salvador Dalí, is an historical romance in verse which tells the story of Granada's 19th-century martyr, executed for having taken part in a conspiracy against the tyrannical Ferdinand VII. And perhaps dearest to Lorca's heart were two experiments in Surrealism, *When Five Years Pass* and *The Audience*, both of which attacked the norms of theatrical realism. Shortly before his death, Lorca would claim these two plays as more "his" than anything else he had written for the theatre. Unfortunately, Lorca was to be an early casualty of the Spanish Civil War. Intellectuals were considered dangerous by Franco's Nationalists, and in the early morning of August 19, 1936, along with a schoolmaster and two bullfighters, Lorca was dragged into a field at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, shot, and thrown into an unmarked grave. He had only finished the first draft of *The House of Bernard Alba* two months earlier and had recently told a Spanish journalist.[3]

"I still consider myself a true novice, and I'm still learning my profession ... One has to ascend one step at a time ... [One shouldn't] demand of my nature, my spiritual and intellectual development, something that no author can give until much later ... My work has just begun."

### **Research Article**

Lorca's writings were outlawed and burned in Granada's Plaza del Carmen. Even his name was forbidden. The young poet quickly became a martyr, an international symbol of the politically oppressed, but his plays were not revived until the 1940's, and certain bans on his work remained in place until as late as 1971. Today, Lorca is considered the greatest Spanish poet and dramatist of the 20th Century.

#### ***Blood Wedding Analysis***

The first scene of *Blood Wedding* includes important exposition, revealing information about the personalities of Mother and the Bridegroom, as well as the conflict between the Bridegroom's family and the Felixes. However, little of this information is told explicitly; rather, the characters allude to their situation and the audience is left to infer the meaning of their comments. This means that although we learn about the vendetta, we do not know the reasons behind it, a situation that mirrors the feelings of the Bridegroom and the younger generation, who are condemned to perpetuate their parents' vendettas simply out of inertia.[4]

This generational conflict manifests itself in the Bridegroom's conversation with his mother. He tries to solve her problems, from her concerns about his safety in the vineyard, to her fear of being lonely after he moves out, but she rejects his attempts because change is ultimately more frightening to her than even the Felix family.[5]

Similarly, the Bridegroom's apparent power over daily life—he decides how he will spend his time and controls the family finances—belies the fact that Mother still holds the key to a successful relationship. He can only be happy with the Bride if the older generation is willing to put aside their vendetta, but this is impossible because of their aversion to change.

With the exception of Leonardo Felix, none of the speaking roles in *Blood Wedding* have names. Given that they have quirky, well-developed personalities, Lorca's choice not to name his characters may seem counterintuitive. However, the lack of names invites the audience to identify more closely with the characters, and gives them a universality that makes the play more appealing to audiences in a society where blood vendettas are rare and events like those in *Blood Wedding* are inconceivable.

Furthermore, Lorca's decision to name the Felix family but not the Bride or Bridegroom's family means that it is perhaps easier to identify with these protagonists; because they are named, the Felixes become the Other—which reflects how they are seen by the Bride and the Bridegroom. By encouraging audiences to identify and “root for” one side in the conflict, Lorca makes the emotions visceral and downplays the absurdity of the blood vendetta. Although we are never allowed to forget the pointlessness and senseless violence that this family conflict has caused, we can also understand why the characters choose to perpetuate it rather than simply making peace. The theme of the individual versus society is central to *Blood Wedding*. Leonardo and the Bride find their respective social positions intolerable and rebel against their fates. They break the bonds of marriage and destroy the equilibrium of the community. The way the characters are named in Lorca's play reveals a great deal about how the playwright conceives this problem. With the exception of Leonardo, who instigates the disequilibrium, none of the characters are given proper names. Rather, they are designated according to their societal position or role. The Bride, therefore, is on her way to become a Wife or a Mother. The Bridegroom, besides being a son, is on his way to become a Husband or a Father. What this suggests is the manner in which, in some deep sense, there are no real individuals in societies, insofar as individualism entails total self-determination. In other words, to live in harmony with other humans, human beings in fact conform to a limited number of roles and possibilities that accord with the rules and agreements of social living and life. Hence, it is only Leonardo, who contests these rules, who can be individualized by being given a proper name. The play's development of this problem gives credence to those critics who see the play as a criticism of sectors of Spanish society unwilling to countenance change. These views will ring true as long as there is a need for persons to assert themselves against their society when its institutions or laws do not allow for the reasonable happiness and creativity of its members. Since the play generates sympathy for the passion of the lovers, it can be seen to generate sympathy for the forces of change.[6]

Some themes present in *Blood Wedding* are the cycle of life, the progression of time, choice, deception, fate, and nature. The cycle of life and progression of time are illustrated by the simple fact that the entire

### **Research Article**

play is devoted to a wedding. The process of marriage in every culture marks the concrete and tangible evidence of a passage from childhood to adulthood, and a progression through life and time.

The theme of choice is evident through the characters of Leonardo, the bride, and the bridegroom. The bride is very conflicted because she forces herself to marry the bridegroom, when in reality she is still in love with Leonardo. Leonardo, despite being married, is also still madly in love with the bride. Their combined choice to run away with each other after the marriage is one that manifests their latent and pent up desires left over from their previous relationship. The bridegroom is in love with his bride-to-be, however. Despite the fact that she lives in a cave located hours away, the bridegroom still loves the bride and takes her as the woman he wants to remain with for the remainder of his life.

The theme of deception ties into the theme of choice. The bride is deceitful and deceptive by masking her residual yearnings for Leonardo with a marriage to another man. This choice is dishonest because deep down the bride knows how she feels, and the only reason she even attempts to marry the bridegroom is because she is manipulating him in order to distract herself from her 'troubling' desires for Leonardo.

The theme of fate also ties into the themes of choice and deception. The choice on the bride's part to marry the bridegroom, despite the fact that she still retains feelings for her ex, causes the outcome of the deaths of both men in the end of the play. There is a certain degree of irony in action because what are the chances that a woman would try to choose both men and yet lose both instead of winning one? Fate plays a very important role in the drama of *Blood Wedding* with its surprising twists and turns in the plot, and the final result as well.

Finally, the theme of nature is present in *Blood Wedding*: the moon, the trees, the river, death (in the form of the beggar woman), the vineyard, orange blossoms, etc. These references to nature suggest that there is something in human nature that is unavoidable. Perhaps Leonardo is unable to follow social norms (by leaving his wife and running off with the Bride) because his nature will not allow him to do otherwise. In this and other examples, a Freudian reading of the text becomes available as Lorca seems to be exploring the true nature of man.

#### ***Women in Garcia Lorca's Blood Wedding***

A girl on her wedding day finds Leonardo Felix back. They were one in love with each other, but the girl's father didn't let them marry because of Leonardo's notorious family. Leonardo is now married and the young girl, who has been obsessed with this love, tries to free him by getting married. But the old love is revived. Leonardo and the Bride run off together on the wedding night. Her fiancé finds them and enters a fight with Leonardo. They kill each other. In *Blood Wedding*, the character who narrates the play and gives meaning to it, is neither Bride nor Leonardo, but is the mother who feels that her last son will suffer the same fate as his wife and sons did and there is no way to escape it.[7]

Although this violence and anger of life melt despair and happiness together, the human voice, in spite of everything, has signs of warmth and hope. The mother's reaction to the knife and the groom's susceptibility to leave the house begin a set of images which reveal her split personality and depicts the contrast between the lives of men and women. The images Lorca uses to explain these two themes are derived from the literary-dramatic tradition of the blood and revenge tragedy in which the curse of the gods or customs of traditional communities is the cause of destruction and devastation of a woman's wishes. That is why this woman becomes a bloodthirsty goddess of revenge and acts like an obsessed person.

The character of the mother Lorca creates in this play depicts a woman who has failed to fulfill her wishes and sees her safety and welfare in her only son who is her only hope. However, within this old, tired woman rests a ruthless Goddess of Vengeance.

Soon we face a new and more coordinated theme which helps us gradually discover the traditional social fabric in Lorca's play. This new concept is romantic possession. People in this society view wife as part of husband's property and marriage makes it incumbent upon husband to protect her wife as he does for his material properties. Therefore, virginity and loyalty to social conventions of love are deemed superior to love and affective desires. That is why the mother is proud of living alone after her husband's death.[8]

Leonardo, who is embodied as a rebellious horse in the lullaby, uses his horse - a symbol for acrid spirit, devastating emotions and antisocial character- in many scenes of the play. This horse-riding and jumping

### **Research Article**

represent his lack of interest in his wife and his loveless life which lead to poverty and misery of his family.

Leonardo's negative character and his forbidden love is clear for everyone, but we can well understand that this solitary rebellious male is himself the greatest victim of rituals and traditions governing the people - who deem blood and traditionalism as part of their existence, Leonardo is the only character with a name in this play. Modeled on real people in the society, the rest of characters fit rituals and traditions and they are strong because they are land owners. But Leonardo is like a homeless gypsy whose nervous behavior is the result of being confined in a loveless home and of uselessness of his effeminate emotions.

Leonardo has an energetic and active personality which is the symbol of opposing the traditional society in naturalistic plays. The difference is that Leonardo is studied among people around him and there is no emphasis on his being right or the society's being bad. However, the damages he imposes the people around him are also discussed.[9]

Another important element of this part represents the conflict between the world of men and women. Women's simple and elegant dreams and aspirations are derided at in the men's world. When these dreams are not fulfilled, their hearts gradually get hard and eventually they will wish nothing but power and extravagance.

The Bride's father is a symbol for the greedy people on the brink of death who evaluate people's worth based on their economic value. His characteristics show that he is one of the reasons why Leonardo couldn't marry Bride. As we know that the father did not like his wife, we can say that Bride's loveless family is one reason why the Bride's family rejects Leonardo.

The only good trait for this old man is his peacefulness. In his view, his daughter's marriage must be a vehicle to add to his lands and bring about children that help improve farming on these lands.

The Bride knows that she has no choice but to marry without love for the sake of land and assets which causes her inner confusion. However, accustomed to hardship and violence, she tries to punish herself by imprisoning herself within walls of husband and children so that she can forget emotional love and fertility.

His contention with Leonardo reveals foundations and practices of social conflicts and traditions that have led to their separation and show that Leonardo's personal and class pride and poverty is the main reason for formation of tragedy.[10]

The moon is a symbol for fate that wants to shed the blood of these two young men at the pre-specified time and place to prove its existence and to quench the land's thirst by their blood and that of the death by their bodies.

Alongside the iconic image of the moon which should be very lofty and imposing -not as a dumb doll- another iconic image can be seen: the old female beggar who sits begging the lives of the two young men and wants to hunt the groom who is going hunting himself. Groom's talking with death supports the fate philosophy from the perspective of Greek tragedy. He uses death to find Leonardo, unaware, of the fact that he is going to be hunted himself. In the final scene of the tragedy, Lorca concludes the concepts and ends the story of greed, tradition and blood which fight love. Women here have to imprison themselves behind the locked windows as if they are buried alive; this causes a repetition of fate because eventually they will lose all their freshness and vitality and will fill their children's life and soul with the same devastating traditions that have destroyed themselves.

Lorca's major plays -- Blood Wedding, Yerma, and The House of Bernarda Alba, as well as Mariana Pineda, The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife, and Doña Rosita the Spinster -- are among the most woman-centered plays in dramatic history.

In these plays, the pivotal characters are women. Women are the ones who suffer from desire and pass through conflict to tragic or comic resolution. Most of the scenes take place in women's spaces, the domestic interiors which they rule and from which men are estranged (or, as in The House of Bernarda Alba, completely prohibited).

The female characters reveal themselves most easily and deeply in conversations with other women. The poetry which erupts at moments of emotional intensity usually comes from the mouths of female

## **Research Article**

characters. Especially in the three great tragedies which are known as his "trilogy of rural life," Lorca chooses women to exemplify the human life which is crushed by Spanish customs and social life.

In *Blood Wedding*, Lorca's story oscillates between the two magnetic poles of the Mother and the Bride. The Mother has internalized the mores and constrictions of her harsh, rural world. She is strict about money and marriage and contemptuous of feelings. She is deeply conservative about gender roles (men belong in the fields, women belong in the house), about the importance of procreation ("Your grandfather left a son on every corner"), and about relations between the sexes ("I looked at nobody-I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me"). So there is no surprise when the Mother defines marriage for the Bride: "A man, some children, and a wall two yards thick for everything else.[11]

Small wonder that the Bride rebels against this confining society, which stifles her voice as well as her sexuality. After the formal interview with her novio and his mother, she suddenly bites her hand and cries "Ay-y-y!" in inexpressible rage and desire. Clearly she desires Leonardo, but why? Does her need spring from love or lust or the frustration of a life with no choices and no control? In the moments surrounding the wedding, she shuns physical contact and struggles to deny her thwarted passion. Only after she has run away with Leonardo-while alone in the forest with her lover and then grieving with the bereaved Mother-can she unleash torrents of poetry, harsh and vivid images of her love and liberation and eventual tragedy.

A very similar pattern rules the all-feminine landscape of *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Bernarda is like the Mother in the sense that she embodies the harsh, restrictive social codes that repress women. Her law for the sexes is "Needle and thread for women. Whiplash and mules for men. She too is concerned with maintaining class distinctions, with amassing money, and with putting up "a good front" of "family harmony" no matter how miserable her daughters may be. And she is fiercely strong-as Poncia says, "perfectly capable of sitting on your heart and watching you die for a whole year without turning off that cold little smile." In opposition to her are her daughters with their silenced lusts. Are they "bad" as the servant says? "They're women without men, that's all," answers Poncia. "And in such matters even blood is forgotten." No one else could have slammed the door more irrevocably on her children, kept them more confined, than Bernarda herself.

Some contemporary feminists have difficulty sympathizing with the title character of *Yerma* since her rebellion and her tragedy come from an intense desire to bear children, which her husband Juan denies her. But *Yerma's* soul is bound and gagged by Juan, his sisters, her neighbors, and the social expectation that she be quiet and dutiful. Like the Mother and Bernarda, Juan is convinced that nature's way is "sheep in the fold and women at home." However, as *Yerma* responds, "men get other things out of life: their cattle, trees, conversations," whereas "women have only their children and the care of their children." She can imagine no other purpose for a woman's life, and for it she must depend only on her husband. Juan's indifference leads her to sweep aside her own sense of honor, to smash social conventions, and to turn herself into an outlaw.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

*Blood Wedding* depicts a bloody vengeance between the two rural families. The story is very simple, but it's so filled with religious, mythical, ritual and folklore symbols whose emotional suuctule creates a large integrated poefy which communicates with our subconscious. Its poetic allusions, innuendos and emotional depth are comparable with the magic of fairy tales. However, alongside its hidden attractions which affect our subconscious, *Blood Wedding* reaches the dramatic climax of Greece works using unity with respect to time and place on the one hand, and emphasis on the fate on the other.

The name of the play, itself, presents a picture of the tkee essential experiences of human life, i.e. love, marriage, and death. And shed the red color of blood which is full of love on the white marriage clothe to depict death. The reader or viewer is waiting to see a marriage which comes to blood, but before that, he or she will see many things to discover the reasons and feel the inevitability of fate.

### **Research Article**

Heroes of the play, as in other plays by Lorca, carry an exorbitant legacy of blood, tears and pleading on their shoulders. All of them, without exception capitulate to the tradition of honor, and the power of primitive rituals which are not acceptable today but are extracted from the depth of history and human soul.

### **REFERENCES**

Cited in al-Ahrām Weekly, No. 381 2.

Gibson, Ian, Federico García Lorca. London: Faber & Faber. (1989). Pp125-131

**Giroux Daggart Sebastian and Michael Thompson (1999)**. Fire, Blood and the Alphabet: One Hundred Years of Lorca. Durham: University of Durham 48-52.

**Hernandez Mario (1991)**. *Line of Light and Shadow: The Drawings of Federico García Lorca*, translated by Maurer, Christopher (Duke University Press) 79-82.

**Maurer (2001)**. *Christopher Federico García Lorca: Selected Poems Penguin* 98-100.

**Yair Huri (2003)**. The Queen who serves the Slaves: From Politics to Metapoetics in the Poetry of Qāsim Haddād. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 34(3) 252-279.

**Asselineau Roger and Folsom (1999)**. *Whitman and Lebanon's Adonis. Walt Stainton, Leslie. Lorca: A Dream of Life* (Farrar Straus) London 68-71.