

***Federico García Lorca's La casa de Bernarda: The Mirror of an Androcentric Culture  
and Its Victims***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

by

*Nguyen Bao Tran Ngo*

**Thesis Advisor**

*Dr. Stephen Hessel*

**Ball State University**

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## **Abstract**

Under Franco's regime, the feminist movement that began in 1920 came to an end, and Spain temporarily regressed to its past ideologies about women's role and place in a society which was dominated by patriarchal principles and ideological conservatism imposed by the Church and the State. This paper highlights the paradoxical nature of being a woman in the literary world of Lorca through the vulnerable and painful female characters presented in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as they participate in their own oppression through patriarchy. Additionally, the paper provides an insight into psychological states of these characters, explaining why these Spanish women oppress other fellow women while being oppressed themselves under androcentrism.

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## Process Analysis Statement

As I started to pursue a bachelor's degree in Spanish at Ball State, I had the opportunity not only to learn the different aspects of the language itself, such as phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphosyntax and sociolinguistics, but also to explore various Spanish and Latin American literary texts, such as the works of Jorge Manrique, Garcilaso de la Vega, Cervantes, Federico García Lorca, Jorge Luis Borges, Ricardo Palma, among others. Having a variety of options, deciding upon a topic became the first step towards the completion of my Honors Thesis.

I was particularly interested in literary works to which I could relate myself, and while quite a few works came to my mind when I was in the process of choosing my topic, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* was one of the pieces in my SP 361 course that sparked my curiosity. As a Spanish major with a concentration in Language, Linguistics and Cultural Studies who possesses a female identity myself, I wanted to deepen my knowledge on how the Spanish playwright Lorca presents the cultural organization of power as well as patriarchal social structure and resistance to such system in his society through the female characters in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. After discussing with my Thesis advisor, Dr. Stephen Hessel, I decided that focusing on literary representations presented in Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as well as bringing in historical contexts and psychological concerns as a way to create an interdisciplinary literary analysis would be the best option for my project.

Feminist contribution and resistance to patriarchy were the main themes of Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. I began the process by looking for specific literary texts in Lorca's work that showed female oppression and resistance and translated them from Spanish to English. I

also conducted research on the social rules imposed by the Francoist regime that applied to Spanish women, and then looked for specific examples from *La casa de Bernarda Alba* to support my points.

Additionally, I read articles from online databases such as MLA International Bibliography and Jstor that informed readers of the historical contexts surrounding the Spanish misogynistic social structure during the time when Lorca composed *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as well as analyses of Lorca's work conducted by other researchers. I also read and incorporated psychological analyses into my project in order to explain the behavior and reactions of the female literary characters in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* in terms of their participation and resistance to androcentrism.

One of the major challenges I faced in pursuing this project was to find sources that were relevant to my topic. Even though there were numerous literary and psychological analyses related to *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, it was not easy to find ones that could support my arguments. In order to sort them out, I read the abstracts and the writers' general arguments. I then read the analyses that I found useful to me more thoroughly and skimmed through the bibliographies to see if there were any other titles that piqued my interest. I also found it difficult to translate from Spanish to English fluently and colloquially without changing the original meanings of the texts. Dr. Hessel guided me through this process by making suggestions of effective translations, which I really appreciated.

**Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda: The Mirror of an Androcentric Culture*  
and Its Victims**

As one of the most well-known playwrights in Spain who depicted the oppressed and exploited human beings, Federico García Lorca, through *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, shows the situation of Spanish women who lived in a society ruled by the patriarchy, especially in terms of their participation and resistance to androcentrism. In this essay, I will show how Lorca represents the paradoxes of feminist oppression and resistance based on a criterion of forced social and gender norms imposed by the Franco's regime through his literary characters presented in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the psychological elements that influence these characters will also be examined in the latter part of this paper.

Completed in 1936, the year that preceded the Spanish civil war and later on, the Francoist regime that begun in 1939, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* depicts the life of the Spanish women under the androcentric social structure of that period. When the nationalists claimed victory in 1939, the achievements of the feminist movement that began in 1920 were put to an end, followed by a temporary regression to conservative ideologies about Spanish women's role and place in society: to the time when the patriarchal principles and the ideological conservatism implanted by the Church and the State still dominated. These two institutions restricted women's social activities to the domestic sphere and household labor. The main theme of female oppression presented in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* reflects the political

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<sup>1</sup> Lorca did not live to see the Francoist regime; he only depicts the societal conditions that would come to full fruition under Franco.

situation during that time period. The leading role was given to masculinity, both in literature and in real life, while women remained their shadow.

With regards to a woman's life, Ona Aliaj identifies three phases: before marriage, during marriage and motherhood (112). According to Aliaj, in order to contribute to her homeland, a woman needed to be Catholic, be a wife and a mother dedicated wholeheartedly to her husband and sons, complying with her role as a housewife (112). She needed to give up her self-determination in order to be an ideal woman that could benefit her nation, for otherwise, she would be treated with disdain and be disregarded by society (Aliaj 12).

Aliaj also mentions that under Franco's regime, a woman's life was controlled by the church. In order to encourage more marriages and offsprings, the State was a loyal ally to the Catholic church, who tried to indoctrinate society in the different qualities possessed by the two opposite genders through their religious discourses (112). Women had to be respectful, while men could carry out activities deemed inappropriate for their female counterparts. Furthermore, women were obliged to constrain defiance and be both passive and submissive to men (Aliaj 112).

Through *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, the audience member discovers the circumstances of the female figure living in a society governed by the Spanish patriarchal system. Spanish society of that time had certain expectations for women. The ideal woman needed to be pretty. Physical beauty, according to *Cuentas Nacionales*, equaled "un valor social altamente apreciado e inclusive como símbolo de prestigio" (102). In his article, Wenceslao Gil explains that "la belleza atrae al hombre, al macho. Aquellas que no la poseen, la ansían, como elemento, como arma para conseguir aquello deseado: la pasión, y, al menos teóricamente, el amor. Es una

visión de sociedad patriarcal en la que la mujer ha de ser bella para lograr sus fines” (10). This argument is once again emphasized in Lorca’s work, when Martirio laughs bitterly at her own spinsterhood; that God had made her feeble and ugly and thus she had always been avoided by and protected from men (Méndez et al. 543).

Additionally, women’s domestic sphere is that of the home (Rosales 97). Aliaj elaborates, “durante el Franquismo, el papel protagonista se otorgaba al género masculino, pues tanto en lo literario como en la vida real, la mujer permanecía a la sombra del hombre” (112). In other words, Spanish women had to be submissive, obedient, modest and respectful, while depriving themselves so as to satisfy the needs of their husbands and sons (Rosales 98). There are several examples in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* that support this point, which will be discussed below.

During the first encounter of their courtship, Pepe el Romano tells Angustias that he is looking for a good woman, a modest one (Méndez et al. 550). This illustrates what a man in this societal context needed from his partner. Another vivid example can be found in the instructions Bernarda gives to her oldest daughter. During a later conversation with Angustias, Bernarda emphasizes that a wife should neither question her husband nor try to find out what he is hiding from her (Méndez et al. 556). Aliaj also adds that “la mujer tenía como obligación restringir su rebeldía mostrando así su pasividad y sometiéndose al hombre, ya fuera su propio padre, su novio o su esposo” (112). Affected by the death of the only man in the family, Bernarda herself becomes the authority in the house, whom the daughters must obey: “By wholeheartedly conforming to social expectations, Bernarda Alba exhibits a total disregard for her children’s desire, and although they resist her rigid authority, she asserts her power

relentlessly” (Blake 24). Hence, she always reminds her daughter that they must do what she tells them to do (Méndez et al. 539), for otherwise, a disobedient daughter would cease to be her daughter and instead become an enemy (Méndez et al. 564).

The Spanish patriarchal system also required women to stay at home, as though they were shut in a cupboard (Méndez et al. 568). Cristina Lopez Moreno states, “su ambiente se regalaba al terreno doméstico, siendo muy escaso el número de mujeres que trabajaban fuera del hogar” (18). In addition to this, one can identify the difference between the jobs carried out by men and those carried by the opposite sex through the conversation that Bernarda has with another of her daughters, Magdalena. While Magdalena would rather carry sacks to the mill than sit day after day in a dark room, Bernarda completely disagrees, as she believes that is what a woman should do, and she supports the traditions of needle and thread for women, and whip and mules for men (Méndez et al. 539).

Besides possessing beauty, a woman also needed to be pure and maintain a certain distance from the opposite sex. According to Fray Luis de León, a Spanish poet who contributed greatly to Spanish Renaissance literature, “las mujeres, cuando no saben guardar su castidad, merecen tanto mal, que no es bastante el precio de la vida para pagarlo” (48). Chastity was always surrounded by honor and virtue. Aliaj asserts, “en la sociedad patriarcal, la combinación de [los conceptos del ser y el parecer] y la deshumanización de la mujer se conjugan para constituir una idealización o radicalización de su imagen en dos facetas opuestas: la virgen y la puta” (114). Aliaj continues:

La mujer sería juzgada por el público según su aparente acercamiento a uno de [los] dos extremos [representados por la virgen y la puta respectivamente]. Para



tener un lugar respetable en la sociedad, tenía que conformarse a este ideal. La virgen era la mujer ejemplar cristiana según la doctrina católica, en tanto que la puta era la mujer que ya no cumplía con este papel. (116)

By losing one's chastity and accordingly their virtue, the individual would be expelled from the collective, or in other words, from the society to which she belongs (Aliaj 115). Moreover, as explained by John Hooper, the loss of honor would not only affect the dishonored woman but also her family (cited in Aliaj 115). This explains why Bernarda has been particularly strict to her daughters. She believes that women should not look at any man in the church except the priest, because "volver la cabeza es buscar el calor de la pana" (Méndez et al. 537). As a result, Bernarda decides to lock up her daughters inside the house: "During the eight years of mourning not a breeze shall enter this house. Consider the doors and windows as sealed with bricks" (Méndez et al. 539). According to Brian Morris:

For Bernarda, the house and her daughters' seclusion within it represent an ideal way of life: she cannot conceive of an alternative routine, and dismisses scornfully other modes of existence that would be in her view demeaning to her supposed station. She sees confinement within a house as a privilege and that house as a citadel of traditional values. (131)

In complementary fashion, Ricardo Doménech emphasizes that the house can be considered a shield that Bernarda makes use of to protect her family, or more correctly, to protect the honor of the whole family:

A ese dentro tan bien definido corresponde un fuera donde están... los otros, la gente. [...] Ese *dentro* que es la casa constituye para Bernarda, pues, una garantía

de seguridad frente a los otros y frente a lo otro, frente a lo desconocido. Parece un fiero animal en defensa de su territorio. [...] De *fuera* llegarán, vulnerándolo, innumerables señales, verdaderas llamadas. (304)

Reinforcing Bernarda's fear, Paca la Roseta can be seen as proof that all the negative incidents come from the outside world. She – the one described as willing enough, the one who went with her breasts exposed, held tight by a man as if he were gripping a guitar, after being carried off on horseback to the heights of the olive grove – like the men that accompany her, is not from their village (Méndez et al. 541). Just by retelling this story, la Poncia, someone from the village detached from the outside world, already feels ashamed. But how do the women living inside that house interpret it? According to Morris, “[f]or Adela, her house is a “presidio” [...]; for Angustias, an “infierno” [...]; for La Poncia, a “convento” and a “casa de guerra”” (132).

Returning to the purity standard, women were required to be chaste before marrying. That being said, those that do not comply with this standard would be considered dishonored and should be punished severely. In *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, la Librada's daughter is no exception. She is a single woman who gave birth to a child but killed him to hide her shame (Méndez et al. 562). Nonetheless, the truth is revealed in the end and the townspeople wish to kill her (Méndez et al. 562). As a contemporary citizen living in the twenty-first century, I would imagine that a woman, upon hearing such news, would sympathize with la Librada's daughter and her child; however, the truth turns out to be different in Bernarda's case, as she runs and screams “Let them bring olive branches and pick-handles, and let them kill her. [...] [M]ay she who tramples on her honor pay the price. [...] Finish her off before the police come! A burning coal in the place of her sin! [...] Kill her! Kill her!” (Méndez et al. 563).

Thomas Blake makes an interesting comment on this incident; “the matriarch reacts so violently because frivolous indulgence of sexual appetite is a luxury that only men can enjoy” (29). In complementary manner, Aliaj claims that “el desdoblamiento de la imagen de la mujer en las dos facetas de la virgen y la puta se aplicaba solamente hacia las mujeres. Había una doble moral para los dos géneros: si el hombre perdía su virginidad antes de casarse no se consideraba deshonorado y no lo castigaba la sociedad” (118). That is why la Poncia, in order to follow the phallogentric structure, speaks ill of the indecent women and prostitutes on one hand, but on the other hand, gives her son money so that he can sleep with one since she believes that men need such things, that they would be forgiven no matter what (Méndez et al. 554). This affirmation explains why the man who makes Librada’s daughter pregnant, the men that kidnap Paca la Roseta, as well as la Poncia’s son are neither punished nor criticized.

According to Clotilde Puertolas, “era común para los hombres casados desaparecer de la casa por algunos días sin notificar a sus familias y para los hombres comprometidos, romper sus compromisos para libremente gozar de la celebración y su festejo” (cited in Aliaj 118). Nonetheless, Aliaj emphasizes, this did not apply to women: if she was openly discontented with her partner, she would be deemed irrational (118). Women, “like submissive creatures, would have to be accustomed to the unreasonable demands made by men. Lorca’s work shows us that the women, for their desire to claim equality, were considered irrational and thus were always placed in the background of the society. Being submissive was one of the essential characters that an honored woman must possess” (119). As seen through la Poncia’s words, “after fifteen days of marriage, a man leaves his bed for the table, and later on from the table to the tavern, and the woman who cannot accept it will waste away, crying in a corner”

(Méndez et al. 550). Furthermore, a double standard in dealing with premarital sex also applies to the case Adela and Pepe. Adela, the youngest daughter of Bernarda, and Pepe, the man engaged to her oldest sister, are in an unconventional relationship. However, La Poncia insists that Pepe is not guilty but rather Adela is guilty as she is the one who provokes him. Adela is considered obscene as she is the one inciting her sister's suitor, while Pepe is but a victim that cannot help himself from being seduced. After all, "a man is a man" (Méndez et al. 569). La Poncia's conclusion sounds as simple as though everything Pepe does were the most natural and the most acceptable thing in their society. In other words, being a man is a privilege that allows him to conduct immoral acts without either condemnation or censure. That is, a man could do anything he wants without being responsible for it later on just because of his male identity, while a woman would have to endure and follow the gender norms imposed on her by society.

Each of the women in Bernarda's house reacts differently, living under such injustice and female oppression in a dictatorial regime. Some of them only complain and pity themselves, like Amelia, who believes that to be born a woman is the greatest crime (Méndez et al. 554), Magdalena, who makes a resentful comment on her miserable state "Curses on all women" (Méndez et al. 539), or Angustias, who follows her mother's instructions without objection even though deep down inside her she truly feels oppressed living in a home that is not so much different from a living hell. According to Blake, "woman must be subordinate to male authority; she must sublimate her desire. Although all people are subjected to the parameters of the order, these women (and all women occupying a patriarchal social structure) are far more confined. Not only must they answer to cultural codes that demand their deferral

to paternal law, they must endure the tyrannical reign of a mother that respects these codes to the letter” (29-30). Blake also adds that “the very act of ‘participation’ in culture constitutes conformity, to some extent, to clearly delineated codes of conduct, an obligation that fundamentally suppresses agency and personal freedom. Further still, the ‘we’ denotes women in particular, subjects who occupy a patriarchal Symbolic to which they must answer but which they have not constructed” (30-31).

The other occupants of the house disagree and rebel, like Bernarda’s mother, María Josefa, who “opposes the [...] primary sanctions that her daughter has imposed” (Blake 27). As Blake observes, while “Bernarda has forbidden her children from seeking male companionship and confined them to the home [;] Maria Josefa yearns for both physical freedom and intimacy. [She], after all, wants to liberate herself from the confines of tradition. She wants to remarry and pursue her own interest” (27). Blake also notes that “Maria Josefa’s dreams of marriage on the seashore and of children imply an escape not only from the house in which she is a prisoner, but from the village in which that house stands as a fortress of stern values and stiff traditions” (28).

Above are the passive participation and resistance to the order shown by examples of the women living inside Bernarda’s house; nonetheless, there is not always a clear line between these two opposed aspects. There are many times when these aspects are intertwined when the characters contribute and resist misogyny at the same time. For example, although la Poncia underestimates the prostitutes’ ethics, she still gives her son money to sleep with them. In addition, she is the one with authority in her family. During one of her chitchats, she

confesses that not only does she often beat her husband leaving him almost blind, but she also killed all of his birds with a pestle (Méndez et al. 550).

Another female figure belonging to this category is Bernarda. La Poncia mentions that she is of the same school as Bernarda (Méndez et al. 550). We can interpret this as an implication that Bernarda also controlled the household while her husband was still alive. The scenes of Bernarda holding her cane remind readers of the absolute authority and domination granted to the female figure, as opposed to the patriarchal social system where men are in authority over women. According to Blake, “one might imagine that, no longer straitjacketed by inherited notions of ‘appropriate’ feminine conduct, Bernarda would transform her home into an oasis far removed from the injustices of the outside world. Sadly, Bernarda actively reinscribes an overtly misogynistic social structure” (23). Blake emphasizes, “repression of the feminine follows when the mother uses her position to transmit and perpetuate the priorities and practices of patriarchal conditions” (33). By “imposing her command on the household, [Bernarda] confines her daughters to the domestic sphere as a gesture of respect for the patriarch. [...] In deference to paternal law, Bernarda perceives the continuity of traditional values as justification for imprisoning her daughters” (Blake 24).

Later on, when she confronts the death of Adela, who has now lost her virginity, the mother tries her best to cover up the disgrace brought upon the family by insisting that her daughter has died a virgin. This is her way to protect the family honor as well as to let the others know that her family has been complying with the norms imposed by the patriarchal society, for otherwise, Adela would have as well become another Paca la Roseta or Librada’s daughter; all of whom are objects of village gossip. According to Iris Scribner Bird, “[Bernarda’s]

final words, the same as her first, are a call for silence [...]. Bernarda's repetition of her first words as her last ones dramatically encloses the action of the play in a framework of repression as absolute as [her] inflexibility [...] representing the prison that Bernarda has constructed of her world" (98).

Another example of how feminist contribution and resistance to patriarchy are intertwined is Martirio. When she argues with Adela, she tells her younger sister that the stallion pen is not where a virtuous woman should be (Méndez et al. 571), which, according to Aliaj, shows how important it is for women to preserve their honor and virtue (118). Nonetheless, Martirio herself puts on her nightgown standing by the window waiting for a man to stop by until dawn (Méndez et al. 543), which is considered indecent and unacceptable at that time. According to Blake, "Bernarda's daughters have, from their mother, internalized this message [that woman has no subjectivity that is her own]. [...] Just as Bernarda thinks that societal norms should not be questioned, Martirio has no faith in the legitimacy of her material reality, but, as do her sisters, she robotically conforms to cultural expectations" (33).

Last, but not least, Adela's submission to patriarchy must not be forgotten. Even though she looks like she's resisting, it also shows how submissive she is to patriarchy. In terms of how she resists, she first rebels by wearing a green dress while walking towards the pen so that all the men can see her. After that, she expresses her desire to go out. Her passion becomes even stronger after Pepe enters her life, and she then decides to stand naked by the open window, waiting for him when he visits her sister. Moreover, not only does she dare to defend herself, she also defends her dream of a happy life with Pepe even if he were to marry her sister. As the

conflict becomes more serious, Adela breaks Bernarda's cane, the symbol of her mother's authority, before committing suicide as her last resort to fight against the phallogocentric structure that has always dominated her life, putting an end to the persistent desperation that always harried her. In terms of her contribution to the patriarchal system, Blake states that "Adela is rejecting the messenger but not the message. Even in her act of insubordination and total disregard of her mother's authority, Adela embraces the role of that which enables male subjectivity" (31). So what does this mean? Blake explains, "though Adela ignores Angustias's 'rights' to Pepe, and bypasses the necessity for marriage in pursuit of her sexual satisfaction, she embraces the underlying structures of a phallogocentric social economy. That is to say, she reduces herself to the status of object and is thus in collusion with her own oppression" (31). First of all, she claims that she would become whoever he wants her to be, even if the whole world were against her, that she would put on a crown of thorns, the one that a woman desired by a married man wears (Méndez et al. 572). For her, Pepe is the only one who can control her life and issue orders to her. Regarding Adela's behavior, Blake asserts that "claiming that she will be *whatever he wants*, she will mold her subjectivity around his projection of desire. Unwilling to be the daughter Bernarda demands, she elects to be the woman for whom Pepe el Romano yearns. Each 'identity,' however, is prescribed. She merely changes the setting of her confinement" (32). That is, nothing has changed in fact. Her dream of having Pepe by her side, in a little house where he can visit her any time he wants, whenever he desires her (Méndez et al. 572) also strengthens Blake's previous argument. The author concludes that "Adela has occupied a home in which her movement has been restricted. Her relocation situates her in the same position. Only this time, her movements are restricted, not by her mother, but by Pepe el



Romano. Essentially, she, as did her mother, dutifully conforms to the absolute power of male authority” (32). Again, even though it might appear to us that Adela is the person who opposes female oppression the most, she is still sucked into the whirling cycle of a life controlled by the demands of men and phallogocentric traditions.

Now, one might wonder why Bernarda acts like a wicked and tyrannical mother, while the other women conform and oppress themselves. Blake explains that: “Bernarda [...] has been subjected to patriarchal codes throughout life. Though she has elected to wholeheartedly conform to the mandates of paternal law, the matriarch is clearly motivated by fear—Bernarda is motivated by the compulsion to ‘fit in,’ rotting inside because of what people might say” (29). Beata Bergen also provides an insight into her behavior by regarding Bernarda as “the embodiment of Freudian civilization and Franco’s regime” (10). According to Sigmund Freud:

Civilized man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security. We must not forget, however, that in the primal family only the head of it enjoyed this instinctual freedom; the rest lived in slavish suppression. In that primal period of civilization the contrast between a minority who enjoyed the advantages of civilization and a majority who were robbed of those advantages was, therefore, carried to extremes. (cited in Bergen 11)

In other words, under the fascist regime governed by Francisco Franco in Spain, the Spanish citizens lived without freedom as “their lives were threatened [...] by the very civilization, the regime, which was supposed to protect them” and those who disobeyed would be harshly punished (Bergen 11). This is correct in the case of Bernarda’s household, as she has the authority over the suffering inhabitants of her house, including her mother, her daughters

and the servants. According to Bergen, Bernarda not only “incarcerates her daughters and her mother within the confines of her house [...] and reduces her daughters’ rights to following her orders” but also “uses her economic power to sustain her tyranny over Poncia and the Maid” (12). Hence, Bergen concludes, “the tyranny of Bernarda over the inhabitants of her house [...] reflects Freudian civilization which has gone wrong or superego and is a premonition of Franco’s regime in Spain which is an example of such civilization” (11).

Ana Martinez Medina, on the other hand, views the whole picture as an inevitable result of a leader/follower relationship. Specifically, the way Bernarda runs her household mirrors how Franco manipulated Spanish citizens (32). The author defines destructive leaders as individuals who disregard others’ voices, demand unwavering support and create hostile and violent environment and solutions (32). Followers, on the contrary, have low self-esteem and low self-efficacy (Medina 32). She also emphasizes that due to their narcissistic tendencies, these leaders can manipulate others, and their followers, due to their low self-esteem, feel that there is nothing wrong with how they are treated, while constantly seeking security and order (33). The patriarchal society in general and Bernarda as its vivid representative fit into the role of a destructive leader, while the other women in the household and female figures occupying an androcentric social structure serve as their followers. Not only do the society and Bernarda ignore the voices of other women, they also resort to violence to deal with oppressed victims, be it emotionally or physically. In terms of emotional violence, oppressed women cannot raise their voices and have to propagate existing ideology regardless of its impact on them, for otherwise they would be criticized and excluded from the society. They have to constantly endure such a life without escape. Both the patriarchal ideology and Bernarda abuse other

women physically. Domestic abuse can be seen when Bernarda grabs Angustias by the neck and violently removes her makeup, or when she uses her cane to hit her daughters. Additionally, other female figures like the daughter of Librada are victims of phallogentric presuppositions. Society believes that they deserve severe punishment for not conforming to the expectations placed upon them. Medina states that “it is within human nature to want to follow rules, obey authority, and conform to social norms, all of which a destructive leader takes advantage of” (33).

Through Lorca’s *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, the reader discovers not only how oppression and resistance define the Spanish female figure but also the reasons behind the fact that these women oppress other fellow women while being oppressed themselves. After all, the women shaped by phallogentric conceptions of subjectivity in general and the female characters living inside Bernarda’s house in particular can be considered to be, just as claimed by María Josefa, frogs with no tongues. As asserted by Blake, “these women, without tongues, can neither adequately articulate their frustration nor can they participate in the public dialogue that serves to construct the very laws to which they are subordinated” (30). If such ideology is perpetuated endlessly by the patriarchal social structure and its people, the machine rumbles on.

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