

النسوية السوداء: رواية *The Gilded Ones* (2021) لنمينا فورنا.

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الملخص

يدرس البحث النسوية والعنصرية في رواية *The Gilded Ones* (2021) لنمينا فورنا. الغرض من الدراسة هو تقديم نقد لثقافة ذكورية عميقة تقمع النساء والفتيات. المشاكل النسوية الموجودة في هذه الرواية هي العنصرية، كراهية الآخرين من جنس آخر، الذكورية، عدم المساواة، الإساءة، والصدمات النفسية. الغرض من هذه المقالة هو دراسة الرواية من منظور نسوي وتقديم أمثلة من الرواية تُظهر استخدام مكونات نسوية مثل التمييز اللوني، والتعصب القبلي، والدين، والعنصرية، وغيرها. في هذه الدراسة، تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي النوعي. الدراسة ذات دلالة لأنها تتكهن بكيفية تعامل المجتمع مع الآخرين من حيث العرق والجنس. فيما يتعلق بالنتائج، تستكشف هذا الدراسة وتنتقد صحة المنظومات التي تستخف بالنساء، سواء كانت قوانين دينية أو أعراف اجتماعية، ويخلص إلى أن كلا النظامين من الظلم يهملان النساء ويحبسنهن في شبكتيهما من الاستبداد. ديكا، البطلة، هي شخصية من المفترض أن تقوم بتفكيك صورة نمطية نسائية تمييزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، النظام الذكوري، العنصرية، الآخر، القوة

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Black Feminism: Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones* (2021)**Abstract**

The study addresses feminism and racism in Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones* (2021). The purpose of the study is to provide a critique of a deeply patriarchal culture that oppresses women and girls. The feminist issues found in this novel are racism, xenophobia, misogyny, inequality, abuse, and trauma. The purpose of this article is to study the novel from a feminist perspective and to provide examples from the novel demonstrating the employment of feminist components such as colorism, tribalism, religion, racism, and so on. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method was employed. The study is significant as it speculates how society deals with other regarding race and gender. As for the findings, this study explores and criticizes the validity of rules that demean women, whether religious laws or societal norms, and concludes that both systems of injustices marginalize and trap women in their web of authoritarianism. Deka, the protagonist, is a character who is supposed to deconstruct a misogynistic female stereotype.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Racism, Other, Power.

Introduction:

With fervor and lucidity, Forna writes on female segregation. She tackles how tyrannical patriarchy dehumanizes the feminine race. The relationship between patriarchy and violence against women is examined in this study. Patriarchy is usually blamed for women's mistreatment; in other words, it is assumed that maltreating women is a familiar part of all patriarchal systems (McKee, 2014, p.1). Patriarchy prioritizes males while placing considerable restrictions on female responsibilities and activities, with several taboos in place to ensure compliance with gender standards (Asiyanbola, 2005, p.8).

The Gilded Ones tells the story of Deka, a young female who lives in Otera, where women exist to serve men and their daily responsibilities are based on misogyny (Fergus, 2020. p.1). After a female known as 'White Hands' saves her, Deka trains among her companions to safeguard the civilization that has spurned her from the deathshrieks (Fergus, 2020, p.1). *The Gilded ones* is a principal text of feminism. This is a narrative about oppression.

Problems of the Study:

Given the foregoing context, the study addresses some problems. The first problem is what feminism-related themes are raised in Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones* (2021). The second problem is what repercussions the lead character endures as a result of patriarchy in Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones* (2021). The last problem is how the protagonist resists oppression in Namina Forna's *The Gilded Ones*.

Objectives of the study:

There are some objectives of this study. The first objective is to highlight the gender-based injustices that women experience. The second objective that the study aspires to achieve is to examine racial injustice and draw attention to the struggles that black women face in their daily lives due to both their gender and race as represented in the novel. This study has looked at how women's perceptions of race

and gender intersected with their attitudes toward two topics that manifested identity poetics in women's studies.

Significance:

This study is significant as it tries to deconstruct power mechanisms such as racism and patriarchy that parameterize lopsided social relations. This research is anticipated to be a good resource for feminism-related education and learning, as well as an effective means of promoting social equality, particularly with regard to the oppression encountered and confronted by black women.

Methodology:

The information was gathered through close reading and taking notes, and then it underwent a qualitative feminist theory analysis. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology. A qualitative approach was selected in this case because it is believed to best suit the goals of the current investigation.

Review of Related Literature:

The Gilded Ones is about oppression and how men run a cruel and exploitative society. Men are born to lead and women are foreordained to follow, according to conventionalists who embrace the creed of patriarchy:

This is a story about oppression and all the ways they move through an abusive and exploitative system. Forna does not shy away from discussing the ways in which men exploit women when the system is built to oppress, or the ways in which privileged women reinforce their own oppression because they benefit from the system. (Brown, 2021, p.1)

Some critics believe that *The Gilded Ones* presents the fact that women have been caught up in the vortex of folded cultures that consider the violation of women's rights to be ordinary. The classification of women as subservient to men indicate women's oppression in *The Gilded Ones*. According to Miller (2021), the oppression and exploitation of women is the key theme. It refers to overthrowing patriarchy, specifically the white patriarchy, both symbolically and practically. Our protagonist Dekka is raised in a culture that would have her be quiet, weak, and subordinate to the males in her life, yet she endures the merciless treatment from them and turns out stronger (p.1).

Dekka rebels against patriarchal society to call for shaking off the dust of "male oppression" against women. Dekka reaches the stage of her sovereignty over her mind and body while she lives with the mind of a man and the body of a woman: "As her characters find their own power and agency, and learn to love who they are in spite of what others have said about their worth, young readers will be inspired to recognize their own self-worth" (Book Browse, n.d, p.1) .

Text:

Patriarchy:

In *The Gilded Ones*, patriarchy is blamed for women's mistreatment. Dekka believes that reaching a specific age in this civilization requires women to participate in a blood ceremony. According to Cierra Cynosure (2022 , p.1), Dekka is expelled from her home and sentenced to death when it is revealed that she has golden blood, the color of impurity, rather than red blood which is the color of purity: "Later this afternoon, Elder Durkas will test me and all the other sixteen-year-old girls during the Ritual of Purity. Once we're proven pure, we'll officially belong here in the village. I'll finally be a woman—eligible to marry, have a family of my own" (Forna, 2021, p 1).

The Gilded Ones explores the notions of purity and impurity, indicating entwined relationship between blood ceremonial and gender-based discrimination. In Otera's blood ritual, if a woman's blood runs gold, she is considered impure, and she will face death; however, if her blood runs red, she is considered pure (p. 7). As a reward, the "pure" women will maintain a social status that is obedient to males, but they will also get "masculine protection" from male belligerence, which will be a perpetual hazard to the "impure" women. This protection, which will always be relative, will be contingent on women being obedient and subordinate as well as restrained. The alaki, semi-immortal women, are nothing more than a source of food for the Empire of Otera, which is responsible for the blood ceremonial and Death Mandate that have condemned women to their life. It is not by chance that patriarchal discourse excoriates women not only via religious moral scripts but also, and particularly, in laws. The marginalization of women through numerous tags, such as impure used by a male-dominated culture is used to vindicate violence. It has been used to demean women by classifying them as "impure" and thereby expelling them from society.

Forna takes a stand against those who deescalate women's worth. In Otera, women are required to wear masks in public: "That's why they're always acting so holy—always the first in temple, my aunts masked so even their mouths are hidden from view" (p. 6) and are unable to travel alone: "In most villages, women can't leave their homes without a man to escort them" (p. 2). In Otera, women are subjected to a complex web of abuse and violence. In Otera, women are abused by all means: If she's lucky, she'll be slain right there and then. If she isn't, she will be repeatedly sold, abused, enslaved, and killed.

According to Catherine Mackinnon (2007), male and female are categorized through the lens of dominance and submission (p.635). In Otera, women are

incapable of leading independent lives: "Girls can't shout, drink, ride horses, go to school, learn a trade, learn to fight, move about without a male guardian—we can't do anything. that doesn't somehow relate to having a husband and family and serving them" (p. 56). The home is frequently considered a woman's domain, according to the majority of men, and it is also a task that men cannot shirk because it is part of their expected gender roles. In Otera, women have no rights: "The **word circles in my mind, shimmering and unbelievable. Rights** are the **domain of men and boys-not women, and certainly not alaki**" (p. 34). Through a range of social, cultural, and religious factors, patriarchy influenced the formation of traditional masculinity. The social idea that women should be subservient to men is a common aspect of masculine hegemony, or patriarchy: "Our whole lives, we've been taught to make ourselves smaller, weaker than men. That's what the Infinite Wisdoms teach—that being a girl means perpetual submission" (p. 62).

Gender-based violence's asymmetries go beyond physical assaults on Deka and other women. It is declared that Deka is devalued to merely an object of trade as she is made to bleed gold in order to be taken and sold. As soon as they start selling her blood, she becomes objectified, dehumanized, and commercialized: "While you cower here in misery, those elders sell your gold to the highest bidder so nobles can make pretty trinkets from it. **They enrich themselves off your suffering – parasites, quite literally draining the blood from you**" (p.17). It's quite disturbing to see women, girls, and women in general have their bodies objectified and commercialized in this way. In Otera, women are considered as being part of the exhibited, negotiated for, merchandized and sellable bundles of goods.

Race and Gender:

Race and gender concerns are at the center of *The Gilded Ones*. The author aspires to write in a female and black voice. Deka is multiracial, with darker skin than the

rest of the locals. Colorism and racism are to blame for her internalized thoughts of being unattractive :

You think that just because you might be proven today, boys will suddenly start thinking you're pretty?" she sniffs. No matter how hard you wish otherwise, Deka, a mask will never be able to hide that ugly Southern skin of yours. I wonder what you'll do when no man wants you in his house and you're an ugly, desperate spinster without a husband or family. (p. 5)

Both a gender and a racial gap exist for Deka, which reflects the multifaceted realities of her daily life: "No matter how quiet I am, how inoffensive I remain, my brown skin will always mark me as a Southerner, a member of the hated tribes that long ago conquered the North and forced it to join the One Kingdom, now known as Otera. Only the Ritual of Purity can ensure my place" (pp. 3- 4). Gender, race, and class power synergies were seen to be synchronously and mutually constituting rather than analytically detached oppression systems, producing a "matrix of domination." (Weber, 2007, p. xi)

Resistance and Agency/:

Deka violates the traditional role that women are expected to play and becomes a warrior. Deka challenges the status quo, male dominance, and female servitude. Deka's life is turned upside down. They intend to convert the girls into warrior robots to combat the Emperor's Deathshrieks, pale creatures that attack villagers all around him: "*You will be at the forefront of the emperor's armies...You will ride into battle and fight for the glory of Otera, and you and you will win the war against the deathshrieks or you will die trying—however many times that may take*" (p. 50). She transforms from a victim to a victor. Deka must burst past an impenetrable barrier of fear and revulsion. She must begin to believe that she is not useless because of her ethnicity or gender. She gradually develops into

a self-assured and powerful lady, willing to protect her friends and supporters at any costs: "The Warthu Bera is exactly as you promised. I am...no longer ashamed of what I am," I say. "No matter my origins, there is worth in what I am" (p. 73).

War has always been seen as a man's sphere, in which women can be victims, onlookers, or prize winners. Women are denied agency and are made unconcealed but not listened to. Our idea of gender representation is likewise challenged by the warrior lady: "I'm not the same girl who cowered and *allowed myself* to be *dismembered*. I'm *stronger now, faster too. Most important of all, I'm trained for combat*" (p. 91). Woman's heroism in *The Gilded Ones* is both masculine and feminine, crushing cultural norms that depict gender categories in adamant, doubled terms. Deka has feminine and masculine characteristics altogether. As a result, Deka reflects a hybridized gender identity that goes beyond traditional gender roles. Deka is clearly a woman, but she is also a highly effective soldier, capable of using weaponry as well as strategy and leadership as any man: "As a reward, you will ride at my right hand, at the very front of the army in the special regiment I've made of Otera's best soldiers" (p. 113).

Identity and Belonging:

Deka has been able to recover and grow stronger as a result of the love and wisdom she has gotten from the women in her community. As a result, it's easy to see why Forna believes that a strong sense of belonging is an important aspect of female black identity and survival: "I can be pure. I can find a place that accepts me, and even belong for the first time in my life. I can have a future—a normal life, a normal death (p.17).

Belonging means being connected, close, and wholly embraced by your people. Belonging, however, entails more than only being a part of a group (Das, n.d. p.1). Belonging and social identity, which is a group of shared opinions or ideas, are closely related concepts. According to Shamsaei et al. (2020, p.6), knowing other

individuals is only one aspect of feeling like you belong. Belonging focuses on receiving acceptance, attention, and support from the group while also giving the other members the same attention.: "She needs to be accepted, to be part of a community. Except I'm the only community she has now—she and I connected by our demon ancestors and the golden blood that binds us" (p.25). People from under-represented groups are more sensitive of not belonging, since their minority status can contribute to a negative feedback cycle of unfulfilled or thwarted belonging demands: "All these days, I have been praying, submitting, in the hopes of belonging somewhere" (p.18). Belonging is a fundamental human urge that is felt to some degree by people of all cultures and backgrounds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.521). Gender regimes are intertwined with other forms of belonging, such as family, nation, and area.

Conclusion:

Forna's work is forceful and vivid, revealing the patriarchal society daring for her readers. So, she has come up with a novel that sheds light on some facet of the female situation, delivers a call to action, or makes a strong or unapologetic political statement in the best interests of women. The purpose of this study is to examine how the novel depicts the concepts of identity, race, and gender .

Forna examines black feminism in The Gilded Ones. She recognizes the inequity and difficulties of being a woman and anticipates intersectionality. ***Importantly, the novel emphasizes how many racial and gendered settings simultaneously shape how we perceive both ourselves and others.*** Forna writes on the intimate connection between race and gender. Her novel is a captivating and a unique and flawless synthesis of racial and gender spaces.

The study concludes that female agency is a paradigm shift toward resistance and insubordination. The study highlights the fact that *The Gilded Ones* is a call for inclusion. It is this non-excludability that may bring equity not only to the black women but to all lives that have been persecuted or downgraded in society. This study discloses the voices of those going through intertwined, simultaneous forms of subjugation in order to perceive the depths of the inequalities. An intersectional approach reveals the way that race and gender can converge, creating hybrid exposure to discrimination. Accordingly, the study finds that condemning and opposing the underlying causes of injustices are urgent thrusts for devising a framework that leaves no one behind.

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