

Mutiny and Societal Revolution in North's *Outlawed*: A Feminist Analysis

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Abstract

The current study's objective is to draw attention to the gender discrimination, glitches and how they impact women's daily life. The researchers have applied the theory presented by Marilyn Frye in her essay collection The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory (1983) has been to conduct the study through the critical lens of Radical Feminism. The researchers have selected North's Outlawed (2022) to analyse how discrimination and oppression against women take place, and they fight back to bring about social change. The findings show that Ada's is profoundly changed when she cannot conceive after marriage. Her mother worries that she could be hanged or imprisoned since the people of Fairchild think witchcraft is the cause of infertility. This qualitative research centres on the feminist narrative that moves the story that keeps the women reaching the full potential before they can feel free and establish their own opinions.

Keywords: Radicalism, Drastic Beliefs, Gender Discrimination, Labels, Societal Revolution.

1. Introduction

Feminism is an ideology based on the social, political and economic equality of the sexes. Feminism in literature therefore employs these beliefs and looks for male domination as it affects the economic, social, political as well as the psychological aspects of people in the society. It looks for the female voice under the influence of male domination in literature and how the latter has subjugated women and their actions. Feminism also criticises stereotyping based on gender and the norms of what it is to be a woman or a man. It looks not only for the things that limit women but also patriarchal beliefs that affect men. The idea that a man is always strong in moments of difficulties is something the modern feminists reject and instead argue that being strong should not be categorised as an attribute to males. In that way feminism is not only the resistance against men who want a patriarchal society but a protest against women as well who have inherited those patriarchal beliefs.

The present research study probes into the feministic study of North's *Outlawed* (2021) that gives an alternative idea of the Old West and points out the patriarchal views held by the society at that time and their effects on other people. Ada is the daughter of a midwife who helps her escape the town of Fairchild, as the people of the town link barrenness to witchcraft and thus women who cannot conceive can be imprisoned or hanged because of it. Her mother sends her to a convent where she meets many women who have had similar experiences like her which makes her feel a sense of sisterhood. Even though she feels safe in the convent, she is wretchedly unhappy and seeks knowledge thereby resulting in her departure and eventually joining the Hole in the Wall Gang whose leader the Kid has made it a mission to create a safe haven for women who are expelled from the society. During that time she learns many skills such as horse riding, shooting guns, dressing, acting and fighting like a man as well as having a strong will and determination. Just like her mother she wants to excel in the field of medicine and by the end makes it her goal to help other women through science.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To examine portrayal of feminism and its conflict with patriarchy.
2. To evaluate the narrative of feminism and how it affects and changes the lives of the individuals.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study will contribute future scholars in recognizing the feminism's common themes and motifs, which highlight how societal change, discrimination, ostracism, and oppression are woven throughout the text of *Outlawed*. These problems are widespread in all societies and serve to accentuate and exacerbate patriarchal ideologies. Future studies will be able to comprehend how being kicked out of one's community may cause such a radical shift in an individual's emotions or behaviour.

2. Literature Review

The idea and movement of feminism promotes gender equality in both society and the economy. It discusses how men and women should have equal rights in all spheres of their lives, which is a reaction against patriarchy. While radical feminists contend that no significant reform can ever coexist with patriarchy since the two ideologies represent completely different things, many forms of feminism hold that change may arise organically within the current patriarchal structure. One of the first recognized movements, radical feminism essentially started in 1960 alongside the Civil Rights Movement. It is one of the few subsets of feminism that has acquired significant traction over the years and into the mainstream. It is considered to be of the contentious kinds and has the potential to disturb the social balance. Ramzan and Khan (2019) have suggested that stereotyped ideological constructions are enhanced by nawabs in Baluchistan. Further, Ramzan et al.(2021) have indicated that there is a manipulation and exploitation of the public in the hands of politicians and powerful people. Khan et al.(2017) have expressed that print media acts as a tool in the hands of capitalists. Bhutto and Ramzan (2021) have claimed that there is a collusive stance and pacifier agenda of media wrapped in the strategy of power. Nawaz et al.(2021) have said that power is striving for negative them and positive us.

According to Frye (1983), oppression is a system of interconnected pressures and barriers that diminish, paralyze, and shape members of one group and cause them to submit to another. As a result, it may be difficult for someone to question or leave the subordinate group once they have been a member for a prolonged length of time. According to Frye, oppression is a system of interconnected barriers that are tightly bound together and lack a loose end, making it nearly hard to overcome or find

a way out. Not only is the barrier "double bind," but it is also "interrelated." "The double bind—situations in which options are limited to a few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure, or deprivation—is one of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people."

Beauvoir (1949) argued that men are not limited to achieve anything in this world but a woman has many things she needs to take into account before stepping ahead. She emphasised that women are capable of accomplishing everything the same way men are. She also pointed out that men have created a mystery around women and have put women into stereotypes i.e. they are only capable of doing certain things. This according to her has led to the widespread organisation of patriarchy in a society. Ramzan et al. (2023) have claimed that in written communication, grammar plays a vital role in ensuring that messages are conveyed clearly and effectively. Further, Ramzan et al. (2023) have suggested that motivation in English learning determines vigilant proficiency in ESL learning. Furthermore, Ramzan et al. (2023) have confirmed that social media helps facilitate the exchange of ideas, insights, and knowledge, fostering a dynamic and stimulating academic environment. By adding more, Ramzan et al. (2023) have elucidated that the English language holds significant importance in today's global society, serving as a vital tool for communication, business, academia, and more.

Robin Morgan, an American writer published her book *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (1970) and after its success turned it into a trilogy with *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (1984) and *Sisterhood is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium* (2003) is her first book of the trilogy, Morgan points out the discrimination women have experienced from the political left and the sexism they face in the workplace on a regular basis. Morgan (1970) talks about one of the most common struggles that women face when they are young and when they get old. "Listen to me! Think what it is like to have most of your life ahead and be told you are obsolete! Think what it is like to feel attraction, desire, affection towards others, to want to tell them about yourself, to feel that assumption on which self-respect is based, that you are worth something, and that if you like someone, surely he will be pleased to know that. To be, in other words, still a living woman, and to be told that every day that you are not a woman but a tired object that should disappear. That you are not a person but a joke. Well, I am a bitter joke. I am bitter and frustrated and wasted, but don't you pretend for a minute as you look at me, forty-three, fat, and looking exactly my age, that I am not as alive as you are and that I do not suffer from the category into which you are forcing me."

Callaway (2008) fabricates the feminist texture of the novel and plugs out key similarities and differences on the state of women in 1980s. In the study it is concluded that Atwood wanted the novel to be a warning sign for women who have made the progress by getting their rights to not take it lightly since those right may be taken back any moment. This was partly due to the lack of female solidarity when it comes to politics and women taking very different stances when given the option to choose from the candidates appointed to be elected. "By showing us a possible outcome of the momentum of Second-Wave Feminism, Atwood reveals that radical strains of this movement could backfire, with disastrous results." (Callaway, 2008). The study also points out the dystopian tone of the novel and how it shows that women's rights are always at stake and therefore continued progress must be made at all times.

Houndjo and Allagabe (2018) conducted a study to analyse two novels namely *A Beautiful Daughter* (2012) by Asare Adei and *The Housemaid* (1998) by Amma Darko. The study uses two very dissimilar ideologies i.e. radical feminism and womanism although both strive for the betterment of women. The two novels in question are identified to have both these ideologies embedded in them in one way or another. “The female characters’ reactions vary from one another. Some of them have made use of pacific ways such as dialogue, feminine solidarity or sisterhood in their attempts to address men’s patriarchal oppressions, while others have made use of violence against men and children in their quest for justice and equality.” (Houndjo and Allagabe, 2018). The majority of the characters in both the novels are women who are either socially or economically empowered.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present research study deals with the textual analysis of *Outlawed* (2022) and how the novel contains the elements of feminism and patriarchy clashing with each other on both ends. The purpose of this research is to show how the protagonist whose ever changing characteristics from a naïve little girl to a rebellious woman align with the feminist narrative. The research is qualitative in nature and employs the theory of radical feminism. This chapter discusses how radical feminism is different from other types and how it emerged and changed ever since. Feminist separation and radical social change is the process of abandoning all things that are male dominated and reflect male centric views as well as benefit men as a return by putting women in the secondary position. Frye (1983) describes it as a “separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities which are male-defined and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege—this separation being initiated or maintained, at will, by women.”

3.1 Sample of Study

The primary source for the study is the text of *Outlawed* (2022) by Anna North while the secondary sources are books, research articles and journals.

4. Textual Analysis

The researchers have dissected the oppressive regimes on the lives of women based on their gender in North’s *Outlawed* (2022). The present research study deals with the harms of stereotypes and the idea of social change.

4.1. Textual Analysis

Outlawed (2022) is a novel written by Anna North and details the life of a girl named Ada who is also the narrator of the story. Ada’s life is tormented when she is let go of her husband’s house because of her inability to have a child. Like her mother Ada wants to be a midwife but the myth surrounding barrenness with witchcraft forces her to leave her house and seek refuge in a convent. There she finds and reads many scientific books at the library and her love for medicine is renewed and doubled making her leave the convent and join the Hole in the Wall Gang. During her time with the notorious gang, Ada learns many skills that help her survive in the real world such as fighting and acting like a man, shooting guns and horse riding. She is inspired by the gang’s motto which is to create a separate homeland for deserted and exiled women. By the end of the story, the gang is able to fulfil their dream but Ada thinks she is better suited at helping other women through science and therefore leaves to add to her existing medical knowledge.

“At seventeen I wasn’t the first girl in my class to marry, but I was one of them,” (North, 2021, p. 1).

Ada’s marriage takes place not because she naturally consents to it but because it is the rule of the land that must be followed by all women. She didn’t necessarily love her husband but believed in the idea of love that was spread around,

“We used to say we loved our beaus.” (North, 2021, p. 1).

Marriage is a common theme in the novel that comes up again and again and more so in the sense of willingness and desire or the lack of it. Ada grew up like many women of her town to believe that she must be married in order to carry forward in her life and therefore avoid any resistance that may come her way if she does not.

“I had never asked myself whether I wanted to marry. I simply knew that it was what I had to do.” (North, 2021, p. 111)

Ada becomes rebellious because of her circumstances and not because she wants to as she would have continued to live the stereotypical life of a housewife if her husband hadn’t divorced her.

“I tried to picture what it would be like to leave home because you wanted to, not because you had to—to be able to simply choose a different life. It was beyond my imagining.” (North, 2021, p. 112).

Frye (1983) calls it “double bind” where the alternative choices are always subject to “penalty, erasure or deprivation”. Outlawed (2021) lays out these unbreakable forces with strong examples throughout the plot. In the book, the incredible myth surrounding barrenness and the inability to conceive a child by a woman linked with witchcraft and bad omen plays the key role in defining the oppression faced by the town of Fairchild. Women who are unable to have a child after marriage often end up getting divorced, thrown out of society or worse hanged publically as a teachable moment for others.

“When Maisie Carter and her husband couldn’t have a baby, it was Maisie who got kicked out of the house and had to live down the river with the tinkers and the drunks.” (North, 2021, p. 4).

The dangerous myth doesn’t stop at the shunning of barren women but continues to thrive on the idea that those barren women can infect other women as well and therefore must be executed right away.

“When Lucy McGarry didn’t get pregnant her family took her back in, but when two of her neighbours miscarried the same summer, everyone looked to Lucy for the cause. I was eleven when she was hanged for a witch.” (North, 2021, p. 4).

After her marriage, Ada’s inability to have a child makes her mother-in-law suspicious of her being involved in witchcraft.

“At my husband’s house my mother-in-law watched me all the time, like she might catch me in the act of witchcraft.” (North, 2021, p. 7).

Ada’s mother who is a midwife fears her daughter’s prosecution as she is unable to have children even after months of getting married and therefore advises her to find other means outside her marriage or else she may face dire consequences. Frye’s argument of the double bind is woven in the narrative of

Outlawed since barrenness is only linked to women while men do not share any of the blame and therefore a woman who cannot conceive is the sole culprit. Therefore, when Ada commits adultery, she is thrown out of her house by her in-laws who condemn her and shame her for being unfaithful to their son. The choices that Ada has are further shortened to the point where she is left with no possible escape from the tyranny infused by false beliefs and myths.

The character of Ada continues to see a shift in the pattern of her being as she faces enormous opposition since leaving her husband's home. The word starts to spread like fire that she might be a "witch" who can have an enormously bad impact on other women securing her a visit from the town's Sherrif who claims to have heard unpleasant stories about Ada recently.

"But I've started hearing complaints. Greta Thorsdottir says she saw Ada walking the fields at night carrying a dead hare. Agatha Dupuy says she and her daughters have all come with womanly ailments in the last month." (North, 2021, p. 16).

The sherrif orders Ada's mother to not seek her assistance in her medical procedures anymore since it can harm those women. Ada's mother thinks it "ridiculous" but deems it better to exclude Ada from any further scrutiny that may come her way. But the oppression against Ada does not stop as there appears a German measles outbreak, making three women lose their babies which creates a panic among the people of the town. Ada's mother who is aware of the ignorance of the people realises it quickly that it all can fall on her daughter's shoulders since her outing from her husband's house was a "fresh scandal" and her "barrenness was news."

Frye (1983) views the oppression as a result of a systematic structure which suppresses women to the point where their motions are restricted and penalised. For a woman to be truly oppressed she must be controlled in every aspect of her life or else she would not be oppressed anymore. Frye (1983) sees these barriers as interrelated and compares them to a birdcage where the cage is designed in such a way that it won't let out the bird to achieve its potential. If the birdcage were to be looked very closely through one of its wires, one cannot see the rest of the cage and the bird might seem free. But when one takes a step back and looks at the cage from a distance it is seen how all these wires have formed a structure that is built for the purpose of capture. The bird even though is given food, shelter and security from the predators, its freedom has been taken away since it cannot fly on its own will. This can be viewed from two different perspectives i.e. one from the owner of the cage and the other from the bird's eyes. The owner of the cage or the men of Fairchild in *Outlawed* cannot seem to grasp the suffering of so many women. Sherrif Branch who is generally a kind hearted man forces Ada to come back so that he can put her in jail even though he knows quite well that she has done no crime or Judge Hammond who has stopped using his conscience to develop his own rationale describe how men or the owner of the cage do not see it a problem that women are being oppressed. If the same scenario was taken from the bird's perspective or the women of Fairchild, the majority of them have no issue living as second class citizens. The bird who never knew how flying felt like would have no desire to leave the cage and may even feel threatened once it is out. Women like Ada's friend Ulla or her mother-in-law have been used to living under the system that does not put them first and therefore have no desire to seek emancipation. It is the microscopic view of the birdcage which doesn't let men and majority of women living in Fairchild see how some women are subjected to discriminatory practices.

The tyranny over a longer period of time either ends up breaking the oppressed or encouraging the oppressed to try to minimise any torture that may have been resulted because of the actions perceived

by the oppressor. Frye calls it “physical survival” and the victim can identify what makes a man happy and what angers him and in that way direct her actions accordingly to his likings. She can therefore not only reduce the number of beatings she has endured but also find some kind of freedom through that since her suffering has largely reduced though not fully eradicated. Outlawed tells the story of so many women who have had to deal with physical violence by their husbands.

“We knew, too, that if you married someone who turned out to be cruel, the best thing to do was to have children as quickly as you could.” (North, 2021, p. 8).

This is a concept among the people of Fairchild as the woman’s survival in the house is made possible with her kids where the husband then either end the physical violence or reduce the number of fights since she is now the mother of his children which may melt his heart towards her. Cassie, a pioneer of The Hole in the Walla Gang along with The Kid has also been a victim of domestic abuse as her husband cut off all her hair and said that she didn’t deserve to look like a woman since she cannot have any children. Upon joining the Hole in the Wall Gang, Ada meets the outlaws who were either banned from their own homes or chose to seek freedom somewhere else on their own as they didn’t find it in them to tackle the oppressive regimes imposed against them. The leader of the gang named Kid became an outlaw and makes it a mission to create a separate land for barren and deserted women. Just like the stories Ada hears in the convent about barren women and the treatment they received from their families, she meets many outlaws who have had troubled pasts all stemming from something deeply oppressive and that oppression is rooted in discrimination on the basis of one’s sex. The outlaws she meets left their homes because of the blame of witchcraft and not being able to have a child. After adjusting herself among them, she gets to learn each and everyone’s personal experience and haunting stories of the past. One of the gang members named Texas tells her how she had an exact similar path as Ada.

“Before I came here, I was in a convent for a while, same as you. I was safe there. But I hated it—dawn till dusk, all I did was knit scarves. I was terrible at it. They didn’t even call me by my name there—I was Sister Catherine. I was nobody.” (North, 2021, p. 79).

Texas therefore like Ada didn’t want to restrict her life to needlework and chose to leave the convent to have a more adventurous and freeing prospect.

Agnes Rose another prominent member of the group talks about her journey to The Hole in the Wall Gang. She tells Ada how her husband let her out of their home when she was seventeen for the same reason while she was married two years prior. She ended up in a brothel in Telluride but chose to leave after two years. Cassie talks about her reasons for joining the gang telling Ada that her husband used to beat her mercilessly.

“The day I met the Kid, my husband cut off all my hair. He said I wasn’t a real woman, and I didn’t deserve to look like one.” (North, 2021, p. 215).

An important thing to note here is the association of femininity with long hair as almost an accessory that a woman must carry in order to belong to that group and one without that accessory be deemed not woman enough. Where men are associated with bravery and valour, women are associated with beauty and demeanour, an important aspect of society that feminists thrive to end and it cannot fully eradicate unless some major steps are taken. Cassie however, adapts to the short hair and eventually

starts to like herself in that look. The leader of the gang the Kid was once a wife and mother of several children who was wrongly diagnosed by a doctor that told her husband that she had a mental disease which was highly contagious and could infect other people as well and the only cure for her disorder was to have as many children as possible but those children then must be taken away from her until and unless she showed signs of betterment. The emotional pain of being away from her own kids led to her abandoning her own house.

The immobilisation of women and limiting their options to a bare minimum can be found throughout the journey of Ada who after being captured is given a way out by a fellow jailbird who tells her that if she marries again, she will be given a chance to go to the church and therefore her escape can be made possible. It can be seen throughout the story that so many things in Ada's life are done because she has to not because she wants to. It is always the need of the hour for Ada all because she could not become a mother after her marriage. Every hardship she faces in the story stems from that particular lacking and therefore her quest for finding the truth behind barrenness increases day after day with only one thing as her absolute objective i.e. to find a remedy and make other women's lives a bit less difficult. Ada finds it hard to not speak the truth about science and therefore tries to help in any way she can. While she is still part of the notorious gang, she sees a woman buying a magical tonic at a fair festival and cannot help but speak her mind. She tells the woman to save her money and not spend it on useless and scientifically unproven portions. She also suggests her to run away from her husband's house if she is unable to have a child and seek refuge in the convent.

North pictures the situation of women in their social standings and how marrying someone can make their survival better or possibly secure them a better future than being on their own.

"We knew, too that if you married someone who turned out to be cruel, the best thing to do was to have children as quickly as you could." (North, 2021, p. 8).

There is an element of physical overbearing of women by men as it is scientifically well known and well-established fact that men possess more physical strength than women. When Ada escapes the convent to join the notorious gang, she is filled with the fear of being exposed as the bookseller assumes her identity and tells her that there is a prize on her head and whoever captures her will be rewarded by the town of Fairchild. She knows her weaknesses and therefore tries to analyse as what she must do in case if he tried to take her back to the town against her will. It is one of the fundamental differences between two sexes that North points out and how the physicality plays a role in the domination of one group over the other. If Ada were a man or the bookseller was a woman, she would not be fearing captivity as she could have handled the situation better but because the bookseller is of the opposite sex, she finds it rational to map out all her plans that may help her set free or control the situation if he decides to take her back to Fairchild.

By the end of the story many barren women approach The Hole in the Wall Gang as they seek asylum from the inhuman treatment that they might have to face such as being captured for life or hanged publicly.

"They were going to hang me for a witch is Sturgiss. I saw these and I thought maybe you could help me." (North, 2021, p. 252).

More and more women begin to approach the gang making them grow in size and therefore the strength

of their mission.

Almost every woman Ada meets after leaving her house in Fairchild has had some sort of experience of oppression on the basis of gender. Some find comfort in their destinies such as the women she meets in the convent, some challenge the authorities by hiding out in far out places living a life of crime while some are captured such as the old woman Ada meets in the jail when she and Lark are imprisoned. The woman narrates her story that isn't any different but carries enormous depth since she is put into an enclosed cell based on false conjectures.

"I have five sons, each one more good-for-nothing than the last...but my sisters-in-law, neither of them could have babies after I married their brother. So they pointed the finger and here I sit, twenty years next month." (North, 2021, p. 179).

In *Outlawed* (2022) it is seen throughout the text that women are subjected to oppression because of their inability to have children and their resources are limited to the point where they are unable to earn money since there aren't many jobs given to women in the town of Fairchild and the nearby areas. Ada herself and many other women such as Sister Rose, Sister Clementine, The Mother Superior, the old woman she meets in the jail, Cassie, Texas, The Kid etc. all describe their past in a similar way i.e. they were thrown out of their husband's home. Therefore, for a husband to be able to throw his wife out whenever he sees fit describes how the power dynamic runs in the novel. It isn't a woman's choice or desire to be married but she has to and it is not in the woman's hand to sustain a marital life since she can be kicked out if she doesn't fulfil the requirements of being a mother. One of the only real professions mentioned in the novel is that of a midwife and Ada's own mother has been raising her family by earning money through being one. Another one is of a Doctor named Mrs. Schaeffer with whom Ada develops a fondness and wants to meet her and learn from her experiences thereby enhancing her present medical knowledge. All other professions are assigned to men, which goes back to Frye's point of discrimination that may be based on irrelevant view of competence based on gender.

"I knew Mama was right, that the families who had lost babies would want someone to pay, and I was afraid they would turn on my sisters in their grief." (North, 2021, p. 23).

The subjugation of women in society to be of a very similar pattern as of a slave who is owned by a master. Where the slave cannot do anything with free will, the woman is also freed from her sense of perspective and lives the life that is acceptable for her man. This idea of dominance and submission is often associated with love which according to Frye is not love at all as one entity's desires, fulfilment and even survival is "constantly in jeopardy."

The sex-announcing act in itself puts women at risk as it further elevates men and subjugates women. She gives an example of the risk for walking alone at night being a man and being a woman. "For males the risk is less; for females the risk is greater...Both the man and the woman "announce" their sex through style of gait, clothing, hair style etc., but they are not equally or identically affected by announcing their sex. The male's announcement tends towards his protection or safety and the female's announcement tends towards her victimization." Since a man is likely to protect himself having the physical strength required for self-defence but a woman is more likely to be the victim in such a case since she is automatically deemed weaker. When Ada realises how being a woman and announcing her gender in the wilderness she has found herself in can put her life in danger, she decides to act and fight like a man along with other traits such as horse riding and shooting guns.

“A woman travelling alone makes everyone suspicious.” (North, 2021, p. 56).

Ada seeks the assistance of Lo, a prominent member of the gang whose sole purpose is to disguise the members’ identity with her wardrobe which Ada is amused to see at first.

“A makeshift wardrobe, knocked together out of rough pine boards, held fur-lined parkas, a crinoline, leather chaps, several women’s travelling coats, and countless dresses of muslin, gingham, and lace.” (North, 2021, p. 71).

Lo tells Ada that she must “learn to move like a man.” (North, 2021, p. 72).

Ada is reminded of her husband whose mannerisms she had observed very closely as to how he would “scratch one forearm, then the other” when he was nervous. The way he used to wash his face and run his “fingers through his hair” backwards. (North, 2021, p. 72).

Frye (1983) talks about the clothing and how even the clothes are more liberating when it comes to men and restrictive when it comes to women. Women’s clothing does not help in free motion such as the corsets that literally disallowed women to breathe properly. “It typically does not protect effectively against hazards in the environment, nor permit the wearer to protect herself against the hazards of the human environment. Men’s clothing is generally the opposite of all this sturdy, suitably protective, permitting movements and locomotion.” The reason why Ada feels so different in men’s clothing can also be seen from this aspect since she has been used to wearing dresses that reduced her overall movements and therefore it is very liberating as well as strange to be in clothes where she can walk, run and do other things easily.

It is also quite different for a man to announce his gender through clothing, mannerisms and speech as it is for a woman. “The male announcing his sex in sex-identifying behaviour and dress, is both announcing and acting on his membership in a dominant caste—dominant within his subculture and to a fair extent across subcultures as well. The female, announcing her sex, is both announcing and acting on her membership in the subordinated caste.” What this leads to is women indulging in “self-deprecation” while men engaging in “self-aggrandizement.” This can be seen throughout the text in the novel where women lack a complete sense of self, not knowing their worth and continuously minimising their potential. The characters of Ulla, Susie, Mary Alice, the two women Ada meets at the fair as well as hundreds of women escaping their homes and residing in the convent with no prospect in their hands. Men feeling a sense of superiority though often seen in the text are clearly identified when Ada disguised as Adam bumps into a man who has a huge stature and is extremely angry. His ego is fed by News who knows how to handle the situation without letting go off the control. News says reassuring things to him such as, “three different people told us to watch out for you,” or “I took a look at you and I knew they were right.” (North, 2021, p. 115). Through these utterances News and Ada are able to stall time and thereby run away from him into the hallways.

The sex-marking and sex-identification is not only limited to clothing but also to other things that are vital in order to carry on in a society. Things like horse riding, fighting with swords, shooting guns or fighting with bare hands are also a few things most men aspired to learn in the previous century. Ada who disguises herself as Adam knows it is not enough to play the part of a man in fact it is vital that she must learn all the things that are specified only for men of that era. When asked what she could do to help the gang members, Ada talks about her medical knowledge and that she can make soft cheese

and other domestic stuff. The Kid decides to teach her all the valuable things that are needed for her to be a member of the gang such as horse riding, shooting guns, fighting and acting like a man.

The Mother Superior had been a revolutionary in her young age when she along with few other barren women decided to open a school where they would teach young kids and may change their minds and perceptions about them thus making their future a bit less insecure and ease their persistent sufferings. The Mother Superior was projecting a radical view in the context of the situation of her time and was expected to meet with opposition which she did when she and the other teachers were handcuffed by the Sherif and his three deputies.

“They put us in handcuffs in front of the children. They said we were not women, we were witches sent by the Devil to corrupt their minds. I saw how quickly the children believed them. As they led us away that thirteen-year-old girl spit on my face.” (North, 2021, p. 43).

Frye’s argument of revolution not handed to women on a platter can be seen in the case of The Mother Superior since it takes many an efforts and constant knockings before the door is finally opened for change. The Mother Superior could not bring into reality her dream of a safer world for herself and women like her which leads to her enormous liking for the Kid who is the most rebellious among all other characters in the novel. The Mother Superior sends Ada to the Kid telling her that she would be an outlaw like the rest of the gang.

“Every now and again I send someone out to Hole in the Wall. You’re young and healthy and stubborn—they might take you.” (North, 2021, p. 44).

It can be clearly seen in the novel that The Mother Superior though might have abandoned her efforts to make a change in the world, however mentally she is still very much a rebel and she knows quite well that the revolution she was picturing can only be brought by the Kid who is far stronger and has a better chance at developing a separate homeland for the women.

There are many women in *Outlawed* (2022) who are oppressed and have no idea of what freedom looks like and therefore it is hard to miss something one has never been a part of. The Kid is aware of a large portion of those women who have not been able to come to terms with the tyranny they have been under and hopes that they will find the courage to come to a separate land too.

5.1 Conclusion

North has used the Western genre in order to create a contrast between feminism and patriarchy. It is seen time and time again that the stories written in the Western genre revolve around men and for North to see it from the women’s perspective is in itself quite diverse. It is a reimagining of the state of women in the 19th century and tells the tales about the fictional towns like Fairchild and Fiddleback.

5.2. Findings

Outlawed (2022) deals with many issues relating society in general and how men and women are treated unequally based on their genders. The oppression is solely based on gender because men are not hanged or imprisoned like women. The oppressive practices are not only carried out by men but also by women who become other women’s worst enemies. The novel gives many examples of the breakage of stereotypes introduced by the society. The gang members are full of women that have

made it their life's goal to demand a separate land for barren women. The not only have learnt to ride horses, shoot guns but also mastered the techniques to fight like men. Knowledge and intelligence are often associated with the male gender whereas beauty and nurturing are linked with the female gender. Ada's mother has garnered acclaim from other people of the town after she was able to resolve critical medical issues that even highly experienced male doctors couldn't. The novel also portrays the ideas of separatism which is a common radical feminist practice where women choose to isolate themselves from the common views of patriarchy. North's *Outlawed* (2022) takes this view and applies it literally since the gang members want to create a separate town for barren and exiled women because deep down they all know that they cannot coexist with people that want them dead or captured.

5.3. Recommendations

The research has focused on the inequities that surround women in every aspect of their lives i.e. social, political and economic. It details the ways on how oppression and discrimination are solely based on gender along with the stereotypes that women must abide by in order to coexist in the patriarchal system. The research can be proved vital for future researchers in how gender plays the key role in the social system.

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