



RESEARCH PAPER

**From Reluctance to Rebellion: A Foucauldian Analysis of Bina Shah's
*Before She Sleeps***

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ABSTRACT

The article explores Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps* (2018), a specimen of feministic dystopian fiction under Foucault's concept of 'discipline' to analyze the state's control over the female body and its repercussions. The dark side of the world arising when political and social forces become anarchic in a nation's power apparatus is being investigated here. When governments produce disciplined bodies and minds through the use of a strictly regulated routine, prescribed social functions, reproductive control and constant surveillance, the creation of the 'Panah', a secretive group of underground women where women resist the oppressive system, offers liberation from the state's disciplinary control and allows dystopian citizens to resist and rebel against the authority of the state. Through delineating repressive state strategies of domination and elaborating women's power of resilience the study highlights the role literature can play in helping women fight for their fundamental rights of safety and gender equality.

KEYWORDS Feminist Dystopia, Michel Foucault, Panah, Resistance, Surveillance

Introduction

The suppression of women's voices and gender inequity have been divisive topics in the modern world. Literature has always been an effective medium for raising the voices of those marginalised by society and giving them a forum where they are able to express their experiences and get the credit they deserve. This has been particularly significant for women, whose perspectives and experiences have long been neglected but whose voices are now more powerful than ever in the fight for gender equality and empowerment. Feminist dystopia is a subgenre of science fiction that imagines a society in which women are marginalised or subject to oppression. In these stories, the female characters often struggle against the oppressive environment in which they live in order to build a more equitable society. Feminist dystopias have drawn more attention in recent years as a way to study how oppressive regimes, especially patriarchy, may affect and mould the experiences and lives of women. *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah is a feminist dystopia that provides thought-provoking and provocative insights on the problems faced by women in cultures that are repressive and restrictive. In dystopian literature, society is often portrayed as being in a condition of decline or decay, with the people fighting against the oppressive system or trying to survive. Dystopian fiction often takes place in the future and shows a society that has devolved into an oppressive one, ruled by a government or other authority that uses a variety of tactics, such as punishment, censorship and surveillance, to maintain control over the individual. For a long time, authors have used the dystopian genre as a common tool to examine and comment on the shortcomings and inequalities in society.

Shah's *Before She Sleeps* (2018) is about the lives of those women who navigate the difficulties and complexities of living in a culture discriminatory and oppressive towards them. Here women are the objects and the reproductive machines. But the authorial intent is to grant these women the insight to discern the oppression, discover the importance of

self-reliance and struggle for their independence, thus elaborating the power of literature as the harbinger of change in society. Whether the women in Shah's dystopian world are ultimately able to achieve what the women in the real dystopia of this world have yet been unable to attain is debatable. Still their resistance is something to be heralded and celebrated as heroic. Green City, somewhere in the midst of a vast South West Asian desert, created as a result of nuclear war and worldwide instability, apparently appearing like a utopia, turns out to be a horrific dystopia when only the female population starts getting decimated by a virus. Although men hold all the power, the Agency's power is supreme which steps in to intervene with the intention of repopulating the region. Perpetuation Bureau is the offspring which makes it obligatory for every man to share one Wife with up to five other men. The stripping off of their basic rights makes all women only 'Wives'. The savagery is camouflaged with labelling these women as domestic scientists whose sole purpose of existence is to breed with the help of their multiple Husbands. The marriages are decided by the Bureau; the fertility of women is constantly monitored and any form of resistance is promptly met with execution. The historical background of the countries where women's rights have been repressed and their duties have been rigorously defined is reflected in this representation of a patriarchal authoritarian society. The advancement of technology is another issue that is explored in the novel. Technology is a weapon of control and monitoring in this dystopian future. The government takes control of society through the use of force and technology.

Social stability is enforced through the use of collectivism and rigid gender norms. The resistance from the women's end to the dehumanising of women emerges in the form of the 'Panah'— an underground community of women who dare to daunt the Agency by rejecting the role of 'Wives'. What becomes questionable here is the irony of the situation created by the author: the freedom, the individuality, the identity which these rebel women try to reclaim for themselves proves just another trap for them. In a strictly gendered world they still make use of their bodies to survive and utilise intimacy as a commodity. They prostitute themselves and sign a contract with the all-powerful but hungry-for-women men of Green City. The men become the 'Clients' of these women, paying them for the provision of an intimacy which is allegedly chaste because there is no sex. Although men still remain men, violating the contract at the very first given opportunity in their objectification of women, yet throughout the narrative, they are portrayed as indispensable for the survival of women. It is Reuben Faro whom Lin, the woman who runs the 'Panah', begs for help when Sabine, another woman living in the 'Panah', reaches the hospital because of a Client's violation of the contract. Again it is Julien Asfour, a male doctor, who helps Sabine and ultimately saves her. On a collective level, it is also a man 'Joseph' because of whom comes the ultimate demolition of the 'Panah'.

Literature Review

Many studies have been carried out to investigate and comprehend the representation of gender dynamics and women's struggles in the ever-evolving fields of feminist studies and English literature. The purpose of this evaluation of literature is to critically evaluate the previous works on Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps*, to point out knowledge gaps and to demonstrate how this study advances the investigation of gender dynamics and women's problems.

Chambers and Lowden examine the novel as an example of feminist dystopian fiction that explores the aftermath of pandemics and the oppression of women in a patriarchal society. They place Shah's novel in the perspective of the worldwide COVID-19 epidemic as well as current politics, culture and gender relations in South Asia. Shah's novel is also contrasted with other dystopian writings by Margaret Atwood, Naomi Alderman, Larissa Lai and Thea Lim (Chambers & Lowden, 2022, pp. 183-98).

Kohil & Bouregbi examine the poetics and politics of the feminist critical dystopia, a genre that combines feminist criticism and dystopian fiction, in two novels: *The Water Cure* by Sophie Mackintosh and *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah. They respond to how these novels' dystopian themes expose the effects of gender oppression on women, critique the objectification of women and provide a forum for resistance and liberation. To analyse the works, they draw on notions of critical dystopia, ecofeminism and feminist critique. They add to the ongoing discussion that has been examined by a number of academics about how feminism has influenced dystopian literature (Kohil & Bouregbi, 2021, pp. 1176-91).

McCurley places the novel in the dystopian fiction genre and draws comparisons between it and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. She draws comparisons between the novel and the actual experiences of women who, in many parts of the world, deal with forced marriages, honour killings, inadequate education and restrictions on their ability to have children. She contends that the novel is timely and relevant, particularly in light of the UK's 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and legislation (McCurley, 2018, pp. 46-7).

Alvira et al. present an analysis of gender discrimination experienced by the main character, Sabine. They examine the novel from the perspective of cultural studies. They argue that gender prejudice of numerous kinds affects Sabine in Green City. These include restricted employment and educational opportunities, coerced childbirth and polygamy and media manipulation. In order to rebel against the system, Sabine flees to Panah. They conclude that the gender gap and the politicized system the government established for its own gain are the root causes of the gender inequality in the novel. (Alvira et al. 55-9).

Afzal et al. explore the recent wave of feminism in Pakistan, which emerged with the 'Aurat March'. In order to evaluate the power dynamics, subversion and containment tactics engaged in the feminist movement and its response, they take a New Historicist perspective. They look at how feminist perspectives and issues in Pakistani society are reflected in and addressed by the country's modern Anglophone literature, with a focus on Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps*. They talk about the feminist movement's potential for change and negotiation in order to improve the status of women in Pakistan. (Afzal et al. 111-27).

Asif et al. explore the concept of spatial resistance in the novel. They examine how various social groups produce, manipulate and dispute urban space in the novel using the theoretical frameworks of Henri Lefebvre, J. L. Hicks and Michel Foucault. They contend that, in contrast to the heterotopia and repressive Green City, the novel depicts a heterotopia, a place of alternate order and resistance. They talk about how the novel questions gender, sexuality and identity conventions and expectations with regard to the urban environment. By incorporating these ideas into a work of current Pakistani fiction, the article adds to the body of knowledge on spatial resistance and postmodern urban dystopia. They make several recommendations for further studies on spatial resistance and heterotopias in Pakistani literature (Asif et al. 589-601).

Naseem et al. analyse the themes of female self-objectification and identity in the novel, anthropology and psychology, to bolster their claims and provide a thorough analysis of the subject. The novel itself, which is a key source of information and proof, is one of the primary sources cited in the article. Although the novel is a work of fiction, it incorporates the author's views and experiences from her time spent in Pakistan, a nation that has several obstacles when it comes to women's empowerment and status. The novel highlights the widespread patterns of violence, oppression and gender inequality that impact women across many societies and geographies (Naseem et al. 842-52).

ADEEL explores the theme of women trapped in dystopian societies in contemporary fiction. He focuses on the two novels, Prayag Akbar's *Leila* and Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps* and examines how they portray women's oppression and resistance in dystopian societies. He also explores the relevance and implications of this genre for the

modern and future worlds. In the introduction, he defines the word dystopia and discusses how it has evolved in literature. The author introduces the subgenre of feminist dystopia and offers some examples of both contemporary and classic dystopian literature. (ADEEL 2456-3315).

Al Disuqui et al. present a comparative analysis of two dystopian novels: *Adrift on the Nile* by Naguib Mahfouz and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margret Atwood. The notion of dystopian literature, its elements and the two novels' depictions of the 'New Woman' and her role in defying absurd dystopian beliefs are all explored. Their explanation of how dystopian works document oppressive behaviours and serve as a warning against unreasonable regulations is based on the Foucauldian idea of power. They draw attention to the parallels and discrepancies in the topics, characters and narrative approaches of the two novels using the comparative and content analysis approaches. They examine the history of dystopia, its relationship to utopia and how heterotopic space manifests in both the actual and virtual worlds (Al Disuqui et al. 1110-2721).

Material and Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyse *Before She Sleeps* by utilising Michel Foucault's concept of 'discipline' to investigate specific forms of state-implemented disciplinary measures to control the female body within the context of feminism. The primary data source for this research is original text of the novel. A close textual analysis has been conducted to identify key themes, characters and narrative elements that align with the chosen theoretical framework. In addition to the novel analysis, secondary sources, including scholarly articles, critical essays and interviews with the author, have been consulted.

Results and Discussion

Control and resistance are themes in dystopian fiction that are similar to utopian visions of the future, but they vary in their emphasis on the repercussions of failure. Dystopian authors often paint a picture of a future in which the rigorous planning of the utopian society collapses, either because a dystopian citizen refuses to follow rules or because corrupt government machinery becomes too hungry for power. The major theme of dystopia is the conflict between the desires and identities of the individual and the state's collective objectives, which suppress or destroy any individual expression. Dystopian citizens are directly attacked by the state's collective mindset and authority, which reduces individuals to robots meant to exist and serve the state alone. In a dystopian society, marriage and sex are seen as either a diversion or a means of reproducing and inhabitants lead very controlled and monitored lives devoid of any emotional connections or emotions. The state raises and educates children, teaching them to be obedient and carry out their duties precisely without ever questioning or opposing the system.

The study investigates how individuals find freedom from the state's control as well as the control the state exercises over them. Using the lens of Foucauldian 'discipline', which he devised in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1979), the discourse of the body is utilised to analyse how the government under totalitarian authority uses its power. One of the first thinkers to reveal how the body is subjugated by society and the powerful and continuously controlled and monitored through 'Panopticism', was Foucault. The 'Panopticon' is a kind of prison architecture designed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. It has a circular structure with a tower in the middle that makes it easy for the supervisor to watch prisoners from the tower without the convicts realising they are being watched. The inmates begin to regulate and manage their own behaviour since they are unable to know for sure when they are being observed and as a result, discipline develops naturally. To sum up, the Foucauldian understanding of 'discipline' is essential to the study of dystopian literature because it clarifies the discourse around the state's control and the negative consequences

it has on the residents of dystopian societies. We can better comprehend the state mechanism and its negative repercussions on dystopian inhabitants by examining how the government manipulates, exploits and monitors the body in a dystopian future. A topic that has been neglected in discussions of human conditioning is the state's goal to regulate the mind of human, is explored in dystopian literature.

Shah's *Before She Sleeps* describes how the state imposes its discipline through a well-planned regimen that dictates and moulds the ideas and deeds of each and every female citizen. The social roles that the state assigns to each woman, which end up being the only way to characterise their bodies and ignore their personhood, are likewise ingrained with discipline. *Before She Sleeps* portrays a totalitarian society that uses ideology from birth to create disciplined minds and bodies. A rigorous and constant surveillance system that monitors the body and imposes mental restraints via 'Panopticism', a mechanism that, in Foucault's view, ensures complete submission, is how discipline takes the form of control. Resistance is a freeing weapon for opposing the state's power and control. A place for resistance is provided in dystopian literature. In conclusion, the dystopian novel examines the role that literature plays in resistance to the repressive dictatorship as well as the government's goal of dominating human minds. The study presents a thorough examination of the dystopian genre and its possible influence on the story by looking at the many ways that literature provides resistance.

Before She Sleeps effectively illustrates the theme of state control over the human mind and body. The novel examines the sneaky ways in which the state controls and subjugates its people, especially women, from the time of fertilisation. The population's mental and physical faculties are both subject to this control, which eventually leads to the abolition of free will and the total domination of the state. One of the main ideas in the book is discipline, which is applied to the citizens of this dystopian society in a way never seen before. Discipline has historically been used to reshape and mould pre-existing bodies into submissive and obedient subjects. Nevertheless, in this dystopian future, the state goes one step further and interferes with the fertilised egg at the very beginning of life, controlling it to create a predetermined quantity of docile bodies. Reproduction operates under strict control and is necessary for the state to uphold its motto, community, identity and stability. This artificial control over reproduction resembles Bina Shah's Green City, where classes are established at birth and natural reproduction is replaced with a strictly regulated system. The government establishes guidelines for who can procreate and how many times an egg can be split to produce a specific kind of child. As a result, the populace is preprogrammed to act in a particular manner and is imbued with the values and obligations that the government wishes.

The novel explores the psychological manipulation of the public as well; from a young age, children are brought up with the values of the state strongly embedded in them, which shapes them into obedient, disciplined and hardworking citizens. The government uses this kind of ideological subjugation as a major instrument in its attempt to regulate every facet of human life. The concept of elimination of free choice and ultimate control over the physical and mental fate of the populace is related to the following quote: "I wonder if they'll miss her. None of them knows whose daughter she is and three fathers aren't much better than one, in my experience" (Shah, 2018, p. 21). The idea that people and their children are treated as state property in a dystopian society is explored in the novel. The concept of children as state property and a result of social responsibility rather than love is related to the following quote: "Her children, five girls and two boys, have not been told about her actions. They will be taken to a care facility, informed of their mother's death and treated for trauma before being returned to the house where the Wife lived with her Husbands" (Shah, 2018, p. 13). Individual bonds and feelings, like love and friendship, are discouraged and the government's role and the welfare of the people are prioritised. Children are viewed as state instruments, adding to the massive system of governmental control. The dehumanising effects of totalitarian regimes are exemplified by the

depersonalisation of people and the suppression of interpersonal relationships. The novel also emphasises how sexuality is regulated in this society. Only reproductive purposes are allowed for sex, depriving people of their right to intimacy and pleasure. This rule is one more example of how the government has complete control over every aspect of the lives of its citizens.

Foucault claims that since the Panopticon design makes authority “visible and unverifiable,” it is ideal for surveillance, not only in jails but also in society at large (1979, p. 201). He clarifies that the prisoner “should be constantly observed by an inspector” and that “the tall structure of the central tower, from which he is spied on, should always be before his eyes.” Nevertheless, he “must be sure that he may always be so” and “must never know if he is being looked at at any one point” (Foucault, 1979, p. 191). In short, the body must be regularly observed and made aware of its surroundings in order for it to be considered ‘docile.’ Since there is no way of knowing for sure whether or not you are being observed, this knowledge will ensure discipline on the part of the body. According to Foucault, “the centres of observations dispersed throughout society” would enable “a single gaze to see everything constantly” and facilitate the growth of discipline (Foucault, 1979, pp.173-212). Numerous dystopian novels bring to life ‘the centres of observations’ with their watchful ‘gaze’ that sees through everything. These centres take on different forms, but they always serve the same basic purpose: to constantly monitor the body’s actions in anticipation of the day when the body will become so disciplined that it will begin to regulate its own actions and become the subject of self-surveillance (Foucault, 1979, p. 212). Using “a whole set of tools, techniques and procedures,” the Panopticon’s gaze is brought to life and made effective, enabling “thousands of eyes to be deployed everywhere” to guarantee that the body is always ‘docile’ (Foucault, 1979, pp. 214-15). The ubiquitous surveillance system literally becomes the ‘gaze’ and the ideal tool for enforcing discipline over the bodies. Surveillance penetrates all spatial and temporal elements of party members’ daily lives and every behaviour, however inauspicious, is disciplined along state lines because the movement of the body must be constantly monitored and dictated by the party.

Shah makes repeated allusions to the government’s pervasive use of the internet, which follows women wherever they go, from the quiet nooks of his own flat to the deserted streets of Green City, from the very first pages of the novel. Shah writes: “The Agency has made sure to publicise all crimes well in the Flashes on the display, the Bulletins, even through door-to-door visits, something almost unheard of in this time where almost everything is done remotely and anonymously” (Shah, 2018, p. 9). This shows how the Agency uses surveillance and propaganda to intimidate and manipulate the people in Green City. The Agency constantly watches and records everything that happens in the city and uses its power to punish anyone who deviates from its norms. The Agency also creates a false sense of security and prosperity for the citizens, while hiding the reality of their oppression and exploitation. Such a faceless gaze, that may or may not be there to observe your behaviour, is a striking example of how Foucault saw the main objective of surveillance (Foucault, 1979, p. 214). The state is able to employ this disciplinary power, which is in this case applied through technology, to ensure that people not only obey physical commands and never rebel against the law, but also that they carry out their social obligations in a way that promotes the growth of the economy and ensures “its economy [and] efficacy, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms” (Foucault, 1979, p. 206). As a result, the ongoing monitoring serves as the best illustration of the state’s ability to impose discipline since it forces the body to take on the role of judge and focus the panoptical look inward, allowing the body to now monitor itself. Foucault concludes:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principal of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1979, p. 203)

Maintaining complete transparency in all areas of society and forbidding people from hiding or concealing things from view are more ways the state might use surveillance to create a disciplined body. The observation draws directly on Foucault's reading of the role of power in terms of the Panopticon model, according to which "the network of disciplinary mechanisms" would be "everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space and time" (Foucault, 1979, p. 209). Thus, in a dystopian society, common people are also „disciplinary mechanisms“, regimenting the human body and infiltrating all spheres of society, in addition to the state and its security apparatus.

In a dystopian society, discipline takes the form of an ongoing monitoring system that "fixes, arrests, or regulates movements," subjugating not just the physical body but also the intellect (Foucault, 1979, p. 219). You had to be in charge of every movement and thought at all times since you never knew who may be spying on you, gazing at you through the towering glass windows, listening in on your discussions via the microphones, or following all of your actions while you were working. In a dystopia, when it is illegal and punishable by death to think or behave in a way that is contrary to the dominant ideology, this control over one's thoughts becomes a key theme. As a result of the ongoing surveillance, people are forced to manage not just their personal behaviour but even their ideas, which are under the authorities of the thought.

Surveillance and discipline are major themes in Bina Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps*, which is in line with Michel Foucault's ideas and theories. The novel presents a society where surveillance is ubiquitous, akin to the Panopticon concept proposed by Foucault. In Shah's dystopian future, the government continuously monitors citizens by using modern technology, including the internet. Like the Panopticon, this never-ending watchful gaze creates an environment where people are never sure if they are being watched. "The gold powder that I'm coated in will prevent the security systems from picking up my DNA on the scanners. The video camera won't get activated and I can't be identified as I walk into or out of any building in Green City" (Shah, 2018, p. 10).

As suggested by Foucault's theories, this widespread surveillance keeps the populace submissive and docile. The continuous monitoring system eventually encourages people to keep an eye on themselves, which is a major theme in *Before She Sleeps*. Because of the constant surveillance, women in the novel are forced to control not only their physical behaviour but also their thoughts and emotions. The novel's portrayal of people needing to be in control of their thoughts and actions in order to avoid punishment is consistent with the idea that individuals become the principals of their own subjection. Shah's novel highlights how technology is used in surveillance, which is consistent with Foucault's theory that technology is used to enforce discipline. In the novel, the government employs the latest innovations to keep things under control, including tracking people online. As noted by Foucault, the government uses technology to enforce social and economic obligations in addition to the law. This is an example of how disciplinary power is applied.

Controlling one's thoughts is a major theme in the novel. The novel explores how mental as well as physical control is exercised through surveillance in a dystopian society. In *Before She Sleeps*, people self-censor because they fear being watched and feel pressured to fit in with the prevailing viewpoint in order to stay out of trouble. This is consistent with Foucault's claim that power relations govern not only bodies but also minds. The necessity of preserving total openness in society in order to establish orderly bodies is mentioned in the text. The government's objective in the book is to keep all aspects of its citizens' lives completely visible and to exercise total control over them. This is consistent with the Foucauldian notion of discipline as being implemented through observation and monitoring, making sure that people obey the state's orders without deviating.

Echoing Foucault's ideas about disciplinary mechanisms in society, the novel depicts a dystopian society where the state's power and control are centred on technology, self-

monitoring, ubiquitous surveillance, thought regulation and the enforcement of transparency.

Resistance poses a serious threat to the state because it gives people the ability to express themselves freely, reflect on their lives and challenge authority, all of which serve to empower and provoke critical thinking in a dystopian society where individuality is crushed by ideology and discipline and the ways in which individuals act and think are constantly tracked. Resistance not only gives rise to foreign ideas that might undermine state authority, but it also makes such ideas more mobile and dispersed, which puts the stability of the government in grave jeopardy. As a result, resistance is often seen as a crime in dystopian literature. It was fairly certain that it would be punished by death if discovered. Engaging in rebellious acts is equivalent to thought crime, which is defined as the central crime that constitutes all others in itself.

The creation of the Panah is a pivotal act of defiance against the totalitarian and patriarchal regime of Green City. An underground community established by a group of women who have managed to escape the fate imposed on them by the government is known as the Panah, which comes from the Persian word for refuge. This destiny includes being forced into polygamy and childbearing, a system put in place in reaction to a virus that caused a sharp decline in the number of women in the population. In addition to physically removing themselves from this system, the women of the Panah have subverted it through their distinct line of work. They give Green City's male leaders companionship at night, allowing intimacy without engaging in sexual activity. By openly opposing the government's attempts to control their bodies, this act of nonsexual intimacy is a potent form of resistance. To give high government officials nonsexual intimacy, the women of Panah also go out at night while wearing veils and gold powder, which stops their DNA from being picked up by scanners. This highlights even more how resilient and defiant they have been in defending their independence and autonomy against a society that wants to use and control them. There are dangers associated with this resistance, though. The survival of the Panah is at risk when Sabine, one of its members, finds herself in a hospital because of an ectopic pregnancy that she does not remember having. The secrets of the rebels and the elite of Green City are both in danger because of this incident.

Before She Sleeps portrays the creation of the Panah as a potent symbol of resistance against an oppressive government. It draws attention to how strong and brave women have been in defying social expectations and claiming their own lives. "The Panah was the only life she'd ever lived" (Shah, 2018, p. 200). Free from the totalitarian and patriarchal government of Green City, the women of the Panah have established a place where they can live by their own rules. "Living in the Panah among women provides one kind of safety" (Shah, 2018, p. 52). By providing nocturnal companionship without engaging in sexual activity, they have asserted their right to their sexual difference and resisted attempts by the government to regulate their bodies. This gives them freedom to create and express their identities as they see fit. They oppose the sexist myth that society has imposed on them in addition to claiming their right to their sexual differences. The characters in Green City, a dystopian society, experience a complete new world when they seek refuge in an underground community to defy and oppose the oppressive regime. Within this society, individuals bear a striking resemblance to inert automatons, prioritising the principles of rationality and willingly relinquishing their own aspirations in favour of communal happiness.

Panah enables women to become aware of their true essence, free from the dominant ideology of Green City. Through this process, women become aware of their own inconsistencies and, therefore, the inconsistencies within the regime of Green City, which the protagonist challenges in his narrative. The Panah helps women challenge and reshape deeply ingrained societal norms, showcasing the transformative potential of such spaces for societal change. The Panah serves as a controlled and nurturing environment, encouraging

individuals to explore their identities, agency and self-expression, destabilizing conventional power dynamics. The impact of the Panah on this transformative process is multifaceted, as it signifies the potency of spaces where marginalized individuals embark on journeys of self-discovery and empowerment. "She'd been in the Panah so long, she said, that she didn't desire any other life" (Shah, 2018, p. 147).

In conclusion, the themes of empowerment, resistance against traditional gender roles and the redefinition of relationships through non-sexual companionship discussed in the novel are highly relevant to the themes explored in *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah. The novel's characters, like the women in the passage, assert their right to define their existence on their terms, emancipating themselves from the confines of conventional societal dictates and demanding recognition for the diverse and multifaceted individuals that they are.

Conclusion

The silencing of women's voices and gender inequality have been contentious topics in the contemporary world. Feminist dystopias, a subgenre of science fiction, have drawn more attention in recent years as a way to study how oppressive regimes, especially patriarchy, affect and mould the experiences and lives of women. Bina Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps* explores the lives of women in Green City, the capital of South West Asia, focusing on issues of domestic violence, gender discrimination and the fight for women's rights. The novel delves into topics such as discrimination against women, misogyny, resistance, oppression, technological development and totalitarian governments. The novel serves as a serious warning about the possible perils of sexism, collectivism, unbridled technical growth, imposed social stability and totalitarian governments. Bina Shah's feminist dystopian novel *Before She Sleeps* stands out from Western-centric feminist dystopias, focusing on a futuristic society in the Middle East where women are forced into polygamous marriages by an authoritarian government. The novel focuses on an underground community of renegade women who survive in a secret sanctuary built inside an abandoned nuclear bunker named the Panah. Shah emphasises the urgent need for feminism in Pakistan, debunking prevalent misconceptions and highlighting the struggles and inequalities faced by women. The novel reflects Shah's unhappiness with Pakistani politics and sexist ideas, highlighting the unjust limitations that contemporary women face. In Shah's novel, women rebel against gender imbalance and patriarchal authority. Authoritarian regimes oppress women through laws, claiming to revive society or uphold their dictatorial rule. The dystopian system in Green City, characterised by polyandric couplings and strict environmental regulation, marginalises and excludes outcasts and those who do not fit the mould. Power manipulates space, violence and sexuality, contributing to the patriarchal objectification of women and the subversion of feminine gender.

The study examines Bina Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps*, focusing on the government's control over women's bodies and resistance. It provides insights into psychological manipulation and propaganda tactics used by governments to maintain power. It highlights the transformational power of women to reclaim control over their bodies through resistance. The study provides insights into the psychological and emotional costs of tight control in a dystopian environment and how individuals and organisations oppose repressive regimes. The findings deepen our understanding of dystopian literature and spark discussions on gender roles and revolutionary change.

Recommendations

In *Before She Sleeps*, male leaders in Green City spend their nights with women from the Panah, an underground community, providing comfort and intimacy without engaging in sexual activity. This act of resistance against the government's attempts to control their bodies is a potent act of resistance, as it goes against the advice that women should not

interact with their husbands in most other ways. The women's nocturnal companionship serves as a critique of emotionless, robotic and dispassionate marriages that have long since lost their platonic affection. This form of resistance is their freedom to define their own terms and their right to be themselves, regardless of their sexual orientation. However, the patriarchal, totalitarian regime continuously threatens women's freedom to express their sexual differences and define themselves as they see fit. These women assert their autonomy and self-determination by offering companionship without sexual involvement, challenging societal predefined expectations. This act represents a departure from the prevailing assumption that women's primary purpose is to bear and raise children. The women's choice to offer non-sexual companionship goes beyond the individual realm, symbolising a larger ideological struggle against patriarchal constructs. It challenges deeply entrenched gender norms and roles, paving the way for a more equitable and inclusive societal framework. The empowerment through non-sexual companionship challenges deeply ingrained stereotypes that dictate a woman's worth and identity, which intrinsically linked to her capacity for reproduction and submission to male-dominated society. The women's choices represent a direct confrontation with these stereotypes, underscoring that women have the right to exist and flourish as individuals who are far more complex and multifaceted than the reductive expectations imposed upon them.

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