المراقبة في رواية بينا شاه (قبل أن تخلد الى النوم)

Surveillance in Bina Shah's Before She Sleeps

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الانضباط، التطبيع، المقاومة، المراقبة، السلطة الشاملة

Keywords: Discipline, Normalisation, Power, Resistance, Surveillance, Universal Power

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث مفهوم المراقبة في رواية بينا شاه (قبل أن تخلد الى النوم) (٢٠١٨). تعد المراقبة سلطة تأديبية ووسيلة تتبناها الدولة لتحويل مواطنيها الى افراد سهلي الانقياد حيث لا يعدون سوى كائنات خاضعة ومنتجة. يتبنى البحث مفهوم ميشيل فوكو للسلطة وإجراءاتها وآلياتها وتأثيراتها في خلق المجتمع المراقب. تبسط الدولة القسرية السلطة من خلال فرض المراقبة والانضباط وعملية التطبيع على مواطنيها بشكل عام والنساء بشكل خاص للحصول على السلطة الشاملة. يؤكد البحث أن المقاومة هي ردة فعل مباشر للمراقبة المفروضة من قبل الدولة القسرية وهشاشة تلك السلطة، حيث يقاوم المواطنون الخاضعون ديناميكيات سلطة المراقبة المهيمنة تلك لتغيير الصورة النمطية المفروضة عليهم.

Abstract

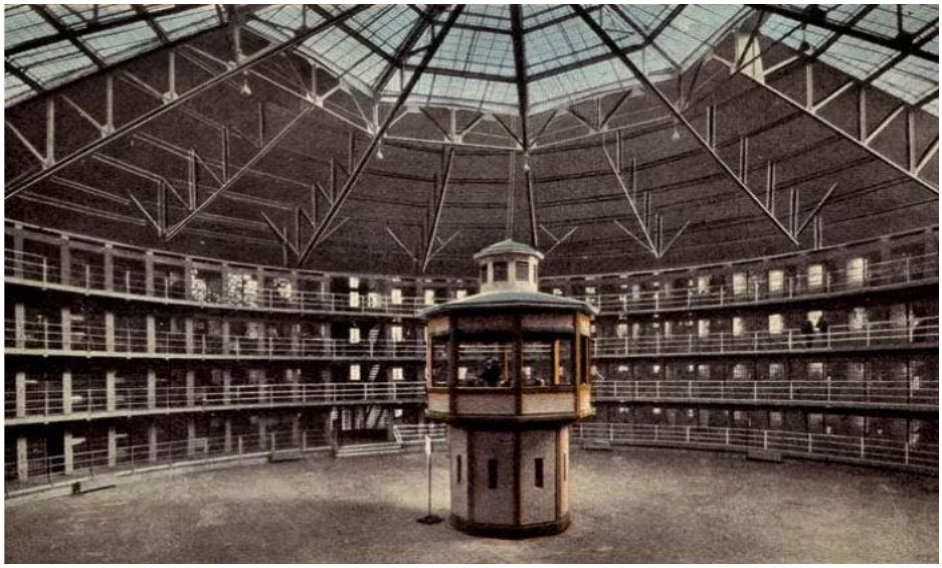
This research investigates the concept of surveillance in Bina Shah's Before She Sleeps (2018). Surveillance is a disciplinary power that functions as a method adopted by the State to convert individuals into bodies categorised as submissive and productive. It adopts a Foucauldian conception of power, its procedures, mechanisms, and effects in creating a panopticon society. A coercive State manipulates power by enforcing surveillance, discipline, and a normalisation process on its citizens, particularly women, to gain universal power. However, the population resists the dynamics of the dominant power of surveillance to change the stereotyped images enforced on them. The research confirms that resistance is a direct reaction of the subjugated individuals against the fragility of the surveillance power.

1. Introduction

Surveillance is a social, commonplace phenomenon that governments, institutions and communities employ for various purposes. It is one of the authoritative aspects of imposing power over the public. As a literary issue, it is incorporated within the postcolonial theory of studying literary discourse. Michel Foucault argues that the theory of power is a complex and multi-layered framework that investigates how power operates in modern societies. He argues that power is not possessed by individuals or institutions but rather a pervasive force that permeates all social relations and structures (Bãlan, 2010: 56). It is not simply exercised by overt acts of domination or coercion but also by subtle means of control, and surveillance is among these preeminent methods. It substitutes the brute and revolting punishment and discipline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which takes the form of mutilation, torture, and execution (Foucault, 1995: 73). The concept of "surveillance society" was first utilised by Oscar Gandy in 1985 in the domain of social analysis (Wood, 2009: 179). David Lyon, who later developed the concept of surveillance, states that surveillance is not a new concept but an essential characteristic of social life since people have "watched over" others to "monitor their progress, organise them", and "take care of them" (1994: 22). However, on the part of the State, surveillance plays a crucial role in exercising power as it permits the State to monitor and normalise the behaviour of individuals and groups with new goals.

The metaphor of the Panopticon is closely allied with Foucault's concept of power and surveillance. The panopticon is a prison design proposed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the English philosopher and social theorist. In this prison, the inmates are housed in individual cells arranged in a circular formation around a central tower. The tower is equipped with a one-way mirror, which allows guards to

observe the cells at all times without being seen themselves in an attempt to prevent violence or opposition against the prison authority (1995: 35).



Fig(1)

The Architecture of Surveillance: The Panopticon Prison

https://www.archdaily.com/937611/the-architecture-of-surveillancepanopticon-prison

Due to its design and the awareness of the "gaze", the prisoners will monitor themselves and become the principle of their subjugation, believing they are continuously surveilled. Accordingly, surveillance becomes internalised as the observers penetrate the observed minds (Foucault, 1995: 200-03). Foucault expounded the panoptic into a social concept and theory known as Panopticism. Panopticism emphasises discipline, surveillance and punishment where the observed is locked in the surveillance mechanism. Foucault argues that:

> He [sic] 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 principle of his own subjection (1995: 202)

The panoptic embodies power relations in which individuals are constantly under surveillance and discipline. The panopticon design has been replicated in various modern institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and workplaces, where individuals are subjected to constant monitoring and control as they correspond and conform to social norms. This kind of power is classified by Joseph Nye, Jr., who discloses the variations of power into two major types: hard power, which is obtained either by coercion and threats or promises or payments, and soft power, which is obtained by attraction (University of California Television, 2011). Another type of power might be formed by mixing these powers into its political strategies to have "smart power". So, instead of utilising physical force and intimidation, the panoptic State maintains its surveillance through the discursive power of soft power (Barry, 2002: 169).

Foucault emphasises the role of knowledge in the exercise of power, arguing that knowledge is not a neutral or objective pursuit, but rather a means of producing and reinforcing social hierarchies and power relations. Therefore, those who control knowledge dominate the distribution of power in society (Kaleta & Sørensen, 2020: 2-10). The repressive force of the government passively influences people's lifestyles to sustain control and power over them. The power of surveillance derives from the fictional gaze of law that controls human behaviour. It subjugates the body and maintains disciplined individuals through mind control, mechanical surveillance, or other disciplinary tactics. Foucault argues that surveillance is a normalising gaze that "makes it possible to qualify, classify and […] punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and

judges them" (1995: 184). In all mechanisms of discipline, the investigation is highly ritualised, establishing over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them. For Foucault, knowledge-power is based on an ideological system in which the gazer possesses rationality or truth. In the meantime, the gaze is forced into 'normal' behaviour and discouraged from being abnormal, deviant, or delinquent. Therefore, the normalising behaviour achieved through the gaze is a highly influential method for regulating, monitoring, acquiring knowledge of the docile body, and sustaining control over it after subjugating to these discursive processes. Nevertheless, Foucault stated there is resistance whenever there is power since "power is coextensive with resistance" (Kelly, 2009: 38), without which no power relations can be conceived. Resistance changes the situation from submission to reluctance, rebellion, and revolt.

2. Surveillance in Bina Shah's Before She Sleeps

Bina Shah, a renowned Pakistani writer, is recognised for her writings that delve into present-day concerns. She became intrigued by dystopian literature after reading George Orwell's 1984 (1949) and Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985). The dystopian literature, which exposes the official and social institutes' predisposition to monitor and regulate the population's imagination, thoughts, desires, and behaviour, is instigated by the terrors of the twentieth century, including repression, exploitation, disease, war, and State violence. By utilising the dystopia genre as a warning strategy of the pessimistic future, Shah attempts to critique the passive reality of women, which is echoed in the rise of social and political crises of her age (Clayes, 2010: 136).

In her dystopian novel, Before She Sleeps, Shah offers a compelling response to her fear of a nightmarish future if actions are not taken to avert the realistic trends of surveillance and their plausible premonitions. She strives to portray the lives of the silenced women living in totalitarian oppressive nations where everything is extremely unpleasant due to the imposed restrictions and the systematic control over society (Gottlieb, 2001: 7). The novel is set in Green City, where the government uses terror, war, technology, and spreading a virus to decimate the female population. This policy leads to alarmingly low levels of men and women. Therefore, women are assigned multiple husbands and incentivised to procreate as often as possible, as they are the only way to replenish the population. Some women resist this law and provide intimacy without sex to the rich and elite of Green City Rebels. Like Lin, the protagonist, they refuse to be part of the system and live in an underground collective safe place for young women who want no part in baby breeding. Lin's girls provide simple, unfettered female companionship to powerful men without any sexual contact allowed.

In Green City, surveillance and control are present, with the Agency monitoring every aspect of citizens' lives following the 'Orwellian' political system in which the State attempts to monitor and control people's thoughts and behaviour (Kaleta, 2020: 1). The constant fear of being caught is a powerful tool for social control, leading individuals to self-surveillance and self-regulate their behaviour. The brilliance of Green City's leaders, the Bureau, comes from their ability to mix the hard and the soft power in their political strategies to achieve smart power. The Bureau persuades individuals to raise the childbirth rate to rebuild civilisation after the virus spread, "Every new baby is a

new hope for the Green City".([1]) The Bureau merges its inherent drive for power and control with the people's urge to recuperate from the virus. It changes its policy by using hard power, which is crystalised through punishment, threatening and rewarding:

> Rebelling against our generosity […] is synonymous with transgressing against society and will be answered with reeducation as deemed necessary by the authorities. So be mindful you do not even come near the limits of rebellion, in thought or action. (BSS: 85)

Michel Foucault explains, "the exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power" (1995: 170). The Agency utilises specific mechanisms to control people's minds and consciousness. The tactic of "manufacturing crisis," where an existing crisis is exaggerated to justify government intervention and control: "The Virus was a disease that only women could catch, but men could give it to them—a fact that nobody liked to discuss in Green City" (BSS: 171). The virus is an excuse for the Agency's intervention and control. By framing the situation as urgent and dangerous, the public is convinced that extreme measures are necessary, and the virus becomes a tool for control and a synonym for repression. The Bureau's political smartness is revealed in its ability to penetrate the minds and bodies of individuals and turn them into puppets. It endures absolute power in having two phases: one

([1]) Shah, Bina, *Before She Sleeps* (New York: Delphinium Books, 2018), 128. Subsequent references to this text will be cited by the abbreviated title *BSS* and page number parenthetically.

builds consensus, norms, institutions, and spreads ideas, while the other handles the action whenever anyone crosses borders.

Moreover, the effect of threatening has a passive impact on the citizens, particularly women: "The Perpetuation Bureau would easily sacrifice a few errant women to teach the rest a lesson. Green City would use our deaths to illustrate the futility of revolt" (BSS: 57). The leaders of Green City would execute anyone if it meant to maintain their power. Instead of being a source of service and reward, the execution of the rebels unveils the dark side of the Bureau. Therefore, people become docile bodies and conformist due to these dehumanised procedures. These "docile bodies" are either curbed or remoulded, and thus, they are stripped of their identities and submitted and obedient to a set of norms of the dominated system of the Agency. The docile bodies rationalise the use of power over individuals to create a well-disciplined and orderly society: "They've swallowed all the restrictions and the secrecy without question. The rules have become a part of their bodies, clinging as leeches do to their flesh" (BSS: 46). The Agency's regulations which are designed to protect individuals end up restricting them instead. These regulations emphasise that power exists in all places and could be demonstrated independently of direct application to individuals. Creating the docile bodies saves the Bureau's efforts to control the population. It demonstrates its authority by placing an image of submissiveness in the population's thoughts. Foucault affirms that:

> A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains, but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas […] on the soft fibers of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest of Empires (1995: 102).

This kind of ideological control is more forceful than physical coercion. The Leaders of Green City create a uniform ideology by establishing a new nightmarish vision of the City. However, this ideology comes at a cost; it requires the population to sacrifice their freedom to maintain this vision. It highlights the power of ideology in shaping society. This vision is reflected in Karl Marx's attitudes towards forced ideologies; he argues that: "the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process" (Engles, et al., 2022, 58). In this domain, the powerful mode presented by the Bureau prevails over the whole population, believing they can impose their laws.

The position of Reuben Faro, one of Green City's primary agents, clarifies that possessing power is the ultimate goal among human beings, especially if they are persuaded by a higher state that developed this power. Faro's ambition for power is motivated solely by self-interest. The influence of his culture became obvious; he had always resisted being a compliant, law-abiding adult, instead doing everything he could to align himself with the powerful. The power of the Leaders shaped Faro's psyche; he sacrificed his humanity in pursuit of their approval to satisfy his hunger for power. The price for this power was massive in destroying his feelings and ideology:

> Faro was no monster; he was a man trapped in a life that promised him absolute power but in return had stripped him of everything good and honorable. The Agency had taken a man who might have been a kind husband, a loving father, and turned everyone who might have loved him into his enemy. (BSS: 214)

Marx defines this state from an ideological point of view: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their beings, but on the

contrary their social being that determines their consciousness" (Engels et al., 2022: 58). In this case, Faro's consciousness was fractured by the tempting lure of power, representing the dominant social consciousness. Therefore, in an unconscious effort to avoid joining the side of the controlled citizens, Faro took the side of the power, making him more subservient to the authorities' desires. Foucault highlights that power follows particular ends and objectives, and the Leaders' decision to give Faro some power is predicated on turning him into an effective tool in their grip. "I've worked for this city. Its security has been my entire focus [...] And in return, I was given a measure of power and responsibility. It was a fair exchange" (BSS: 194). This "exchange" is an illusion created by the City's most influential figures to consolidate their power and maintain absolute dominance over the citizens. Therefore, power is depicted as a drug administered to certain individuals to increase their desire to control others.

People are conditioned to accept the roles imposed by the Agency for their welfare as if they were inmates of a prison that is kept up with their assistance. This atmosphere eliminates normalcy by spreading terror, selfishness, normalisation and hunger for power, "I'm not normal, but neither is Rupa. None of us is. Green City stole our normality, our childhoods, our futures" (BSS: 75). The fictitious Green City symbolises the destructive authority that suppresses and ignores uniqueness in the name of total control. All forms of power robbed citizens of their ability to reject, define, or even behave as humans. The citizens unconsciously embrace this ideology as their final hope for survival while ignoring their severe loss of humanity. Out of fear, they become callous and care about saving themselves even if they harm others: "I've never heard of anyone in Green City acting unselfishly, putting someone else's safety ahead of his own" (BSS, 134). The subject should enjoy accepted social behaviour that is approved by the

cultural norms, which John Storey defines as the struggle between the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle" (2015: 97). The subject, therefore, generates a new discipline of self-surveillance functions as the watch tower of the panopticon which is constitutive in power relations. Therefore, the leaders establish absolute power. The citizens are kept in check through strict control measures: "Their unlimited freedom kept everyone else in line: they needed absolute power to guarantee absolute civic order" (BSS: 112).

Nevertheless, a new power stands before this destructive one embodied through "the Panah", an underground community where rebellious women shaped a state of resistance and refused to be situated in the position of a Wife and exist outside the system of the Bureau. Those women are perceived as traitors to Green City's authority. This place contained all the women who refused to be Wives and led by Lin, who represents the authority in the Panah. This place illustrates two significant ideas: first, the hypocrisy of the Green City's Leaders, who established the rules on women to be exclusively Wives for the City and yet justify their existence with Panah's women even though they are outlaws to fulfill their needs for women's company, "special men, the most powerful of them […] remember the old days before the Gender Emergency. We give them an experience they themselves destroyed long ago" (BSS: 28). Panah is presented as a consequential contradiction to the process of normalisation. It is a glimpse into the old everyday life and highlights women's ability to acquire power, which seems to control those who have it in the first place. The second reflection of Panah is presented by Lin, the leader who operates as a mini-dictator over the other women in her community by forcing her rules on them to follow her regulations. The significance of this situation lies in the fact that anyone who possesses power, no matter

what their goals are, might be drawn to exercise excessive domination. "The rules of the Panah provide a halfway house between the strictures of Green City and the complete freedom that exists in places I can't even imagine" (BSS: 16). One way to direct Panah's power in the right direction is to offer women an opportunity for freedom. Thus, the deceitful nature of the Leaders is reflected throughout Panah as it reinforces Foucault's notion, which argues that there should be resistance whenever there is power. This resistance is presented through women's power, and it only functions if managed and used for the group's good.

The Agency has various ways to spy on citizens, including electronic tracking, digital surveillance, and following any display transmissions or emissions of energy from a vehicle. This highlights the persistent nature of surveillance in Green City and the multiple ways that the Agency uses to spy on its citizens by employing biopolitics, "a new technology of power...[that] exists at a different level, on a different scale, and [which] has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments" (Foucault, 1997: 242). Technology and electronic devices make it challenging for citizens to evade surveillance, creating a sense of fear and paranoia as citizens are aware that they are constantly being kept under surveillance. Implementing terror as a means of psychological and physical control reflects the State's repressive totalitarian system (Holmes, 2015: 448). Even their houses have "low walls", indicating individuals' lack of physical and psychological boundaries. This suggests that citizens cannot escape the government's watchful eye, and their private lives are always somewhat exposed.

The system of the Agency works like a network of power that extends beyond individual agents, enabling the surveillance and control of the population. Shifana Hospital, a medical facility in Green City,

mirrors the system. It serves as a microcosm for Green City as a whole, with an advanced system that records meticulous medical procedures: "Hospital admissions were entered immediately into the city records; the use of all surgery rooms, drugs, and supplies were recorded, down to the smallest bandage" (BSS: 89). According to Foucault, surveillance is a key mechanism of power in modern societies (Bãlan, 2010: 57). In the case of Shifana Hospital, surveillance technologies can be seen as a way of creating a sense of order and 'discipline' within the institution. By monitoring the behaviour of patients, staff, and visitors, the hospital ensures that everyone follows the rules and regulations that are in place to maintain a safe and healthy environment to identify any potential threats to the safety and security of those within its walls. However, this constant monitoring creates a sense of paranoia and suspicion among those being watched. To be under surveillance is to have no space, to be deprived of any secrecy, to be naked, to be exposed to the gaze of others, and to have nowhere to hide.

Every inhabitant in the City "had blood taken from their heels at birth, dried and stored on special filter papers" (BSS: 91). This practice is a striking manifestation of the severe surveillance imposed upon the populace of Green City. It reflects what Foucault calls 'biopower,' whereby the State wields its authority to oversee and manipulate its citizens' physical and biological aspects. Foucault holds that modern institutions such as 'hospitals', 'prisons', and 'schools' are totalitarian establishments that use surveillance to remould the identity of the population via their hegemonic rules:

> Bodily posture and functions, sublimation of wishes and immediate emotions [...] all these are effects of the disciplinary pressure, but are also actions that, through pressure initially

> imposed externally, lead to self-discipline for the individual and eventually to the production of the individual himself as a subject. (Bãlan, 2010: 59)

By having access to the biological data of its citizens, the State exercises a level of control that extends beyond traditional forms of surveillance. Using hospitals as a biopower tool is significant as it shows how institutions traditionally associated with care and the State can co-opt healing to control its citizens further. Employing such diabolical surveillance practices leads to significant adverse outcomes in the population, impacting their mental comfort by instilling fear and terror.

Sabine, a character longing for freedom in the City, experiences a passive psychological influence of panopticism in the hospital. She is troubled by her imagination, believing that the Agents are watching her: "I retrace my steps all the way down the corridors, back to the elevators. The corridors, empty as starving bellies, are haunted by guards and Agents only in my imagination" (BSS: 142). Her language demonstrates the psychological toll an individual experiences while living in a society of constant surveillance. The word "haunted", which describes the empty corridors, emphasises her paranoia. It highlights the psychological influence of 'panopticism', where the possibility of being surveilled is enough to alter behaviour and induce fear. Her fear is compounded by the societal gender roles that dictate women's lives, reducing them to 'domestic scientists' and 'machines' used solely for breeding with their husbands. Faro embodies the panopticon, exercising power through his knowledge of Sabine's fear even in her "stupor", which penetrates her subconscious and aggravates her psychological torture: "Just the syllables of his name terrify her," indicating his power over her, leading to self-surveillance. This fear results from her

awareness that Faro is a high-ranking man in the Agency, which monitors women's fertility and executes those who resist regulations.

Similarly, Julien is troubled by the idea that the guards are coming to punish him for helping Sabine, "his heart kicked like a mule" and "a wave of cold sweat broke out across his back" (BSS: 149-50) just for hearing a voice. Although Julien is a male doctor with some power and privilege, he is subject to the same panopticon as women in Green City. The constant fear of being caught, punished, or executed for violating the rules and norms of the regime is pervasive and ever-present in the minds of the population and enough to control their behaviour. This terror assists in preventing potential resistance and creates a culture of compliance and submission to authority.

Green City is characterised by stark hierarchies, with the rich and powerful living in skyscrapers to reinforce surveillance. The destitute residents live closer to the ground. Sabine states that "we crawl close to the earth". For Foucault, "the disciplinary apparatuses hierarchised the 'good' and 'bad' subjects in relation to one another" (1995: 181). This spatial arrangement reflects a broader social hierarchy in which the Leaders control the rest of society. For Foucault, power is not just exercised by those in positions of authority but is also dispersed throughout society and embedded in social relations and practices. He adds, "Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society" (Pardo, 1992: 143). The strategic situation is prevalent in the surveillance and control among the Leaders who exercise their power through various means.

Foucault further argues that power is not just a tool that the State uses to control individuals but a pervasive force that operates at

all levels. In this context, the power dynamic within the family is a microcosm of the larger societal power structures, with patriarchal values and norms being enforced and perpetuated through generations. Throughout history, the family institution has been deeply intertwined with patriarchy, preserving traditional patriarchal values and norms from generation to generation. As the family is a microcosm of the larger patriarchal society, it operates under masculine rules and regulations, with the male head of household wielding ultimate power and control over all family members. This power dynamic is further reinforced by societal norms encouraging women to be submissive and deferential to male authority figures. The Agency seeks absolute control of women by encouraging patriarchy; it treats them as reproductive machines rather than human beings (Chambers & Lowden, 2022: 186). This dehumanisation encourages violent and degrading behaviour. Despite holding absolute power, men still suffer to protect women, as if they "had been noble enough to make the sacrifice of sharing wives" (BSS: 153). The idea of men "sharing" wives suggests that women are objects to be passed around or shared rather than autonomous individuals with their Agency and desires. The polyandry system that the government enforces suppresses monogamy and sexual jealousy, replacing intimate human relationships with clinical multi-person households. It eventually encourages the objectification of women as men view them as commodities to be shared. It reinforces the patriarchal power dynamic, in which men hold primary power and authority in social, economic, and political spheres, while women are excluded or marginalised from these positions. Joseph, one of the elites and a Client of the Panah, treats women as a commodity to gratify his desires. He exhibits promiscuous behaviour and lacks moral values, particularly in sexuality; he believes he has the right to Sabine's body. He employs his influence in a conceited and

self-centred manner towards women, frequently boasting about his connection with the Agency and his masculinity:

> There is nothing in this city that isn't available to me. Food, drink, drugs. Riches, power, pleasure […] I am in the fortunate position of being the guardian as well as a consumer of things that people spend their lives working to attain and obtain. (BSS: 78)

Sabine's rejection of his seduction pushes Joseph to the extreme. He ultimately rapes her mind and body, leaving her traumatised and violated. This disturbing and violent act reveals the dark side of the patriarchal society.

The Agency employs another method to achieve power, including technology that puts women under surveillance. It obliges them to use pills that aid in pregnancy in an unhealthy and intensive manner that exacerbates their suffering. Abortion is not a choice: "Anyone caught trying to buy or sell, deal in, or trade any substances used to prevent or end pregnancy will be dealt with severely by the Perpetuation Bureau" (BSS: ١٢8). To have a child would add to their oppressed status as they exacerbate the social and economic forces stacked against them by their sex and force them to depend on men economically, socially, and sexually. The Agency employs punishment to regulate women's behaviour and ensure conformity to the State's cognitive laws. Punishment, according to Foucault, has been changed from being primarily centred on torture as a method of inflicting pain on the body as the "subject of discipline" to a strategy of asserting power and reform from deviant behaviour via always present structures

of power and surveillance (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008: 32). Women who violate these laws are subjected to severe forms of punishment.

The Agency utilises a strict discourse to maintain its control over women, both mentally and physically, depriving them of autonomy and independent thought. It employs the constitution of "The Official Green City Handbook for Female Citizens" (BSS, 128), to advance the aims of its discourse. The Agency manipulates women's emotions to prevent them from rebelling, moulding their perceptions of their societal role and reinforcing the arbitrarily imposed rules. Likewise, it impedes girls' education and access to schools. Boys attend university, "while girls go to the Markaz to learn how to become good Wives" (BSS: 24). Markaz is an institution that gives classes on "Civic Duties, which targets brainwashing women into embracing their ideas and dictions, instilling a sense of inferiority within their minds to persuade them that they are machines for reproduction and multiple marriages, teaching them nothing but obedience. This strategy reduces women to objects of pleasure and entertainment, denying their agency and individuality and perpetuating harmful stereotypes and misogyny.

The Agency further employs the 'divide and conquer' strategy to maintain its control over women and break up groups into smaller factions. The government prevents women from gathering or communicating with each other to weaken their unity. Adrienne Rich states that State endeavours to make "the connections between and among women […] the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force on the planet" to exert control and potentially prevent challenging the government's stability (Bressler, 2011: 163).

Nevertheless, the dominant power dynamics are faced with resistance, reinforcing Foucault's concept of power relations and that power is coextensive with resistance. Women challenge the reality of

the Green City and the stereotyped images enforced on them. Despite the patriarchal dictatorship dominating Green City, women establish their Agency. They demonstrate the enduring power of the female spirit to gain freedom. Women's power means exercising influence, control, and authority in various spheres of life. It is manifested in different forms, from individual achievements to collective movements to challenging gender-based discrimination and inequality. It is often closely linked to women's empowerment, which involves enabling women to realise their full potential and participate fully in social, economic, and political lives. Evelyn Reed argues that "it was the female half of humanity who initiated […] productive activities, […] must […] be credited with the major share in this great act of creation and elevation of humanity" (Engels et al., 2022: 91).

In Sabine's case, her father attempted to force her into a marriage against her will, highlighting the patriarchal and oppressive nature of some family structures:

> My father told me he was going to fast-track me into the perpetuation scheme. I would have to leave school early and become a Wife [….] I was burning to tell my father I wouldn't be sold like a slave. But I kept my silence after I'd gotten over the initial shock. (BSS: 23)

Her silence reflects the power dynamics within the family, where women are often taught to be submissive and deferential to male authority figures. Shah writes:

> No matter what they say, or how strongly they claim to control us, how weak they say we are, they still need us. Not our bodies, or our sex, but our love and care, our human warmth, our

physical presence. These men won't risk losing what you offer them. (BSS: 29)

Lin's position as the head of authority and representative of the Panah community reflects women's power. She actively consolidates the female power principle and challenges patriarchal norms and values. Her determination to establish a new system that promotes female hegemony is evident in her statement that women "would never have to submit to the Agency or the Bureau again" (BSS: 200). Her statement challenges the existing power structures to create an equitable society and asserts women's power and autonomy. As Maya Angelou aptly stated, "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women" (Jones, 2007). The one form of organised resistance against the Bureau is portrayed through the Panah. The hidden location of the women of Panah underground suggests a resistance to the dominant power structures. These power dynamics are not fixed but constantly negotiated and contested. Women's systematic behaviour threatens the existence of the Green City's power, an "illusion" as described by Faro (BSS,153), and encourages the splitting of its rule as the situation changes from submission to reluctance, to rebellion, and to revolt. Lin's strategy for resisting the oppression the Bureau practices takes two forms. First, by announcing her refusal to engage with the system, which leads her to threaten its existence: "She lifted her chain. 'I refuse to be part of your system. Arrest me for that, if you have to'" (BSS: 124). Lin's refusal changed her social position from one of an unknown citizen into a well-defined human being. Resistance gives the subjugated individuals a voice against dictatorial power, which Foucault calls an "anti-authority struggle" (1982: 780). It demands bravery to challenge the universal power:

> Lin: There's more, too, about the Panah. All my notes, all Ilona's notes. If he doesn't help you get out of here, tell him you'll send it all to the Agency. They will know what to do with it. (BSS: 200)

Lin's strategy of refusal threatens the Bureau since it assists the women in escaping from under the ground to announce their existence and declare their refusal. What is essential and paradoxically depicted is that women's resurrection from being buried into life is done with the assistance of Faro, who represents the authority. This situation reflects the hypocrisy of power holders in that it is directed for their benefit. Lin's second strategy took the form of killing herself to engage in any further situations with the Bureau and especially with Faro. Ending her life takes different dimensions. First, on the side of the Bureau represented by Faro, who knows he cannot affect her anymore. Second, on the women's side, who always remind her of her role as the generator for their movement and not a victim. Lastly, on her side, she can finally sleep without any disruption. Lin's suicide reflected a kind of rest for herself and all women, as it would initiate a brave new world for them:

> [Lin] took out the vial of Sleep from her pocket, opened it, and spilled the pills into her hand. With one swift motion, she put them in her mouth, lifted her neck like a swan and swallowed. (BSS: 201)

Sabine also maintains this new world, as she shared with Lin her refusal to stay under the control of the Bureau. Her refusal takes the form of running away from the boundaries of the Green City, which reflects the Bureau's failure to control all citizens:

> I ask myself why I should die for Green City. It's stolen everything from me: my parents, my home, my future. My body, my sanctity, my friends from the Panah. Lin. Why should I give it the last thing I have left: my life? (BSS: 225)

Sabine challenges the fear implanted in the citizens by the Bureau; she overcomes her fear and turns it into a motivation for starting a new life. Shah describes Sabine's new life as "the first cry of a child entering the world" (BSS: 226). Sabine's resurrection from her hypothetical death enables her to be reborn as a new human. It is a notion clarified by Foucault that "power's incapability of doing anything other than rendering what it dominates becomes the paradox of its effectiveness" (Kalet & Skall, 2020: 16). Thus, the idea of universal power has fallen.

The change in describing the atmosphere and position of the Green City through language has a distinctive role in determining its fallen power since it aids the success of Panah's resistance. Sabine described Green City as "the buzzing of the high-efficiency cars cutting smoothly across fiberglass roads and planes vibrating through the sky, Green City is a chorus of sound and sight" (BSS: 11). Green City is depicted as a perfect reflection of harmony, where every human or object is related under the control of its universal power. Nevertheless, its position has been jeopardized by the existence of Panah; it "shrinks away as the Panah loomed larger and larger" (BSS: 42). The verb "shrink" highlights the expected fall of Green City before Panah's power, as if Panah appeared more like a real place than the overly perfect City. Sabine states "the sky's grown blurry and orange, as if the entire City is reeling from some kind of sickness that's corroded it down to its bones" (BSS: 177). At this stage, the City lost its fake harmony, and its coercive power appeared as a sickness reflected through the natural atmosphere. The City's glamour faded just as its

hidden identity was revealed to the public by the revolt of Panah. Thus, resistance against coercive power achieves positive effects in changing reality; in the Panah case, women's resistance is depicted as crucial to gaining respectability, freedom, and most importantly, a real identity through knowing their power.

3. Conclusion

Surveillance is a hotly debated issue in different fields of life, particularly in the literary arena. Shah's Before She Sleeps exemplifies the idea of surveillance in contemporary women's fiction. Surveillance is an institution of power and one of the various ways the State exercises its control over citizens. The abusive use of power creates a disjointed society obsessed with turning people into blind conformists. It disseminates its ideas to the citizens and persuades them of their high state by holding universal power. It aims to control its citizens by creating new forms of normalisation designed to make them abandon their identities. The disciplinary pressure of the State leads to the self-discipline of the individual and eventually to the production of the individual himself as a subject. Through power regimes, the subjects find ready identity categories produced through power regimes that serve to delineate boundaries between normalcy and deviance, then police these boundaries by the mechanism of self-surveillance. They feel that they are constantly under scrutiny and that any mistake could result in punishment, as they are never truly free from the 'gaze' of those with power.

Women, whose social roles have been reduced to those of "Wives" and "valued only for their reproductive abilities," have suffered principally from this process. However, where there is power, there is resistance, without which no power relations can be conceived. As a result of the State's oppression, the previously silenced women have emerged to demand justice and reflect a new kind of power that offers them comfort and respectability. Women's power stands in the position of resistance against the Bureau's universal power. Overall, women's steadfast determination to face all forms of surveillance and oppression showcases their way of resisting the patriarchal society to make their muted voices strongly heard and satisfy their intense craving for freedom.

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