

Simulacra and Simulation: A Postmodern Feminist Study of Bina Shah's Novel *Before She Sleeps*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Bina Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps*, under the perspective of Postmodern Feminism specifically focusing on Baudrillard's concept of Simulacra and Simulation. The research examines a number of traditional feminist norms, exhibited in the novel through its setting and the protagonist. It also utilizes Baudrillard's concepts of Simulacra and Simulation to explore the control over the protagonist Sabine while she lives in 'Panah', an imaginary land created within the setting of the novel. The study combines textual analysis and qualitative research methodology to depict the hegemony of the dystopian world of the novel and how the characters grapple with the situation. The research applies the principles of postmodern feminism particularly Baudrillard's concept of Simulacra and Simulation. The findings show that even though the characters particularly the protagonist, Sabine are entrapped within the dystopian setting of the novel but they have the resilience and courage to overcome the hegemony by not only leaving the traditional norms but also find several ways to liberate themselves.

Keywords: Postmodern Feminism, Simulacra and Simulation, Baudrillard, Before She Sleeps

Introduction

This research endeavors to embark on a multifaceted exploration of *Before She Sleeps*, dissecting the novel through the lenses of postcolonial feminism and the theory of simulacra and simulation. It seeks to unravel the intricate layers of this dystopian narrative, shedding light on how Shah's literary creation provides a fertile ground for the convergence of these critical discourses. By delving into the concepts of simulacra and simulation, post colonialism, and feminism, this study aims to unveil the nuanced ways in which the novel navigates the contested terrain of power, gender, and identity (Shah, 2018). Simulacra and simulation, as articulated by the postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard, encapsulate the idea that contemporary societies increasingly operate in a realm of hyper reality, where simulations of reality often supplant the actual. This concept, traditionally rooted in discussions of media and consumer culture, finds a unique application within the dystopian world of Shah's novel. Here, a meticulously constructed façade obscures the true nature of reality, leaving its inhabitants entrapped in a hyper realistic simulacrum and the research will explore the concept of intersectionality that proposed by Kimberley Crenshaw (Baudrillard, 1981).

Objectives

- To explore the women's role and identities constructed within the simulated reality of the society in the novel *Before She Sleeps*
- To see in what ways the novel challenges or reinforces traditional feminist and postcolonial discourses through its portrait of gender power and identity
- To see how female characters in the novel navigate the boundaries of simulacra to assert their agency or resist oppressive norms

Rationale/ Significance

The study will contribute in the field of Postcolonial feminism by exploring the women's role and identities constructed within the simulated reality of the society in the novel. It will also explore in what ways the novel challenges or reinforces traditional feminist and postcolonial discourses through its portrait of gender power and identity and study will see how women characters in the selected novel navigate the boundaries of simulacra to assert their agency or resist oppressive norms.

Research questions:

How are women's roles and Identities constructed within the simulated reality of the society in the novel *Before She Sleeps*?

In what ways does the novel challenge or reinforce traditional feminist and post-colonial discourses through its portrait of gender power and Identity?

How do female characters in the novel navigate the boundaries of simulacra to assert their agency or resist oppressive norms?

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of the study will be selected novel *Before she sleeps*. The researcher will select the specific text of the novel to apply postcolonial feminism, with particular focus on Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation and simulacra. The textual analysis and close-reading techniques will be applied to analyze the data. The study will focus on characters, plot, dialogues and themes of the novel.

The study will be limited to the theory of postcolonial feminism and Kimberly Crenshaw concept of intersectionality and it will be bound to follow the ideas of postcolonial feminism. It will mainly focus on Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation and simulacra.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Nancy Hartsock extended Marx's proletarian standpoint to create the feminist standpoint, asserting that women's oppression provides a unique and truer understanding of society. Marxist/socialist feminism delves into societal roots rather than just political and legal aspects of women's subordination, but it still focuses on objective societal structures. The subsequent stages of feminism, including radical, psychoanalytic, and postmodern feminism, shows how women become 'women' in society, examining the creation and perpetuation of gender meanings across all societal facets. Simone de Beauvoir kicked off her influential analysis of women, "The Second Sex" (1988), with a declaration that resonates in contemporary feminism: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." In the late 1970s, feminists delved beyond the surface of economic, political, and legal structures, seeking to unravel the deeper layers of meaning production to comprehend and rectify the inferior status of women.

Mohanty in her major book *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* addresses the issues of women of third world. She believes that western feminism is Eurocentric; she criticizes the legacy of Western feminism because of its Eurocentric nature. She emphasizes the importance of diverse experience of women from the different parts of the world. Mohanty discusses the issues related to colonization, labor, migration, and women's agency in the context of globalization. She rejects the traditional notion of feminism (2003).

Claire Chambers and Freya Lowden present a repressive, dystopian society in the novel *Before She Sleeps*. This has come to light as one consequence of a viral epidemic that was uncontrollable and caused a disproportionate number of males to women. In such a gendered society, intimacy is made into a commodity, giving women a tool of protest in a patriarchal and fertility-obsessed society. Shah investigates the horrible aftermath of pandemics, highlighting chances for citizens subjected to discriminatory laws to achieve freedom. The COVID-19 pandemic's effects, apart from mortality, are obvious as it wreaks havoc on the global economy and human population. The epidemic has made it difficult for society to react appropriately and morally because of the difficulties around employment, political culpability, and overburdened healthcare systems (Chambers & Lowden, 2022).

Alvira, Widisanti S, Setyowati enquires the concept of discrimination against women which is based on the main character of Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps*. This research approach encompasses the entire tale, including intrinsic components such as people and characterizations, places, and conflicts, as well as extrinsic factors such as gender discrimination, patriarchy systems, and power relations.

This qualitative study is backed by descriptive analytic methodologies and literature study approaches, yielding the conclusion those political gender discrepancies are the root cause of gender discrimination. Sabine, the primary character, faces numerous sorts of gender discrimination, including limited access to school and being denied employment. Her only option is to be a decent housewife with three to five spouses and bear as many children as she can (Alvira & Setyowati, 2021). Naseem, Laila Naqvi & Safdar explore the commodification and identity of women. This study focuses on the types of women's issues that are becoming more prevalent in society. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate Polyandry and pain in women. They do not have the option of living their lives freely. In a patriarchal society, they serve as scapegoats. Polyandry is a Greek term that means "many men." It was invented in India. This article contains the perspectives of several authors, including Tiwari, Goldstein, and Peter. This article paints an accurate picture of Green City. Though it appears to be an affluent city, it has proven to be a nightmare for women (Naseem, Naqvi, & Safdar, 2023).

Tahreem Iftikhar in their study focuses on the emergence of spatial resistance in Shah's novel *Before She Sleeps*. This research approach encompasses the entire tale, including intrinsic components such as people and characterizations, places, and conflicts, as well as extrinsic factors such as gender discrimination, patriarchy systems, and power relations. This qualitative study is backed by descriptive analytic methodologies and literature study approaches, yielding the conclusion that political gender discrepancies are the root cause of gender discrimination. Sabine, the primary character, faces numerous sorts of gender discrimination, including limited access to school and being denied employment. Her only option is to be a decent housewife with three to five spouses and bear as many children as she can (Iftikhar, 2018).

Mehraj examines the orients/female character's in Shah's Novel *before she sleeps*. This study is good reading from the standpoint of postcolonial feminism since it delineates gender problems and their exploitation. The current study adheres to Spivak's study paradigm in terms of gender representation as well as subaltern treatment of orients/women. The primary data collecting technique is followed by the secondary data collection method. The former is mostly determined by the intended text, whilst the latter is based on many research papers, books, and journals. The primary goal of this article is to demonstrate Shah's representation of women, the status of orients in patriarchal culture, and how the female gender is persecuted in a male-dominated society (Mehraj, 2023).

Schwarz and Ray in their book *A companion to Postcolonial Studies*, provide the concepts, overview, themes in the field of postcolonialism. They focus on the historical context of colonization and imperialism, their book discusses the marginalized groups, hybridity and issues related to identity in the postcolonial societies. The book also focuses on the issues of women in the third world and postcolonial feminism (2000, 2005). Karlsruhe (2020) in her work, *An Introduction to Postcolonial Feminist Theory*, gives introduction of postcolonial feminism, cultural identity of black women and racism. The book talks about the equality for women of color.

Through miming, women can "undo the Effects of phallogocentric discourse simply by overdoing them." (Tong: 2013, pg 226-29; Irigaray:1987; also see Julia Kristeva is a psychoanalyst inspired by Lacan's work. She adopts Lacan's idea on Oedipal and post-Oedipal stages with the Symbolic order and takes them further. She rejects the idea of identifying "feminine" with female biology and "masculine" with male biology. She argues that when the child enters Symbolic order, he/she starts identifying himself/herself with their mother or father. On the basis of their choice they become masculine or feminine. "The belief that 'one is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that 'one is a man.' I say 'almost' because there are still many goals which women can achieve: Freedom of abortion and contraception for children, equality on the job, etc. Therefore, we must use 'we are women' as an advertisement or slogan for our demands. On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot 'be'; it is something which does not even belong in The order of being." (Tong: 2013 pg 230)

Thus, she believes that “women” is not natural rather a socially construction’. Therefore, it cannot be and shouldn’t be defined. Sands and Nuccio in their article, “Postmodern feminist theory and Social work” have Explained the difference as well as the similarities between postmodernism, poststructuralism . And postmodern feminist theory. They argue that though postmodern feminist theory is akin To postmodernism, poststructuralist theory and French feminist theory; however, it critiques Both feminism as well as postmodernism. Like postmodernists, postmodernfeminists also criticised essentialism and categorical knowledge. They also highlighted that the earlier feminist assumed that when they were using “women” they were speaking for all the women Including black women, women from the third world, lesbians etc.

Baudrillard emphasizes the profound shift from the age of representation, where there was a distinction between the real and its representation, to the age of simulation, where this distinction collapses. The disappearance of the imaginary coextensivity and the rise of genetic miniaturization mark the beginning of the age of simulation.

In this new era, signs and symbols become more significant than the reality they represent. The model, as a perfect descriptive machine, generates signs of the real in a hyperspace without atmosphere, detached from any original referential. The hyperreal is a product of combinatory models, memory banks, and command models, detached from the constraints of being measured against an ideal or negative instance. Dissimulating is pretending not to have something one possesses, while simulating is pretending to have something one doesn’t. The former implies a presence, the latter an absence.

Simulation goes beyond simple feigning. Using the example of feigning illness, it highlights that simulation involves the actual production of symptoms, making it more intricate than mere dissimulation. Dissimulating or feigning leaves the reality principle intact, meaning that the difference between true and false is clear but masked. In contrast, simulation poses a threat to this difference, blurring distinctions between what is considered “real” and “imaginary.”

When a simulator produces “true” symptoms, determining whether the person is genuinely ill becomes challenging. This ambiguity raises questions about how psychology and medicine can objectively treat or diagnose such cases.

The psychosomatics, situated on the edge of the illness principle, evolves ambiguously. Psychoanalysis, by transferring symptoms from the organic to the unconscious, considers the latter as more real than the former. The passage questions why simulation couldn’t extend to the “work” of the unconscious, similar to other symptoms in classical medicine if any symptom can be produced and is no longer accepted as a natural fact, every illness may be considered simulatable. This leads to a suggestion that medicine loses its meaning, as it traditionally treats “true” illnesses based on their objective causes.

There is a historical conflict between Iconoclasts and Iconolaters, emphasizing that Iconoclasts were not image-haters but individuals who acknowledged the profound impact of simulacra. Their concern was rooted in the belief that simulacra, as perfect representations, could overpower the original divine referential.

The fear of the Iconoclasts was not based on the assumption that images merely distorted the truth. Instead, their metaphysical despair arose from the idea that images didn’t conceal or mask the Platonic idea of God; rather, they were perfect simulacra, forever captivating with their inherent fascination. The text suggests that, for the Iconoclasts, this revelation meant that there might never have been a God, and the divine itself might have been nothing more than its own simulacrum.

Textual Analysis

Smith (2017) believes that textual analysis is an approach of research used by researchers to explore and examine the meanings which appear through different mediums. The data generated for textual

analysis can come through films, documents, paintings, and newspapers, and so on. This kind of data is considered “texts” in the research. And it is used to examine and assess the meanings, values, and ideas. The textual analysis is mostly used in the field of communications, it is a transdisciplinary approach which is also used in the other fields of the social sciences and humanities, including history, political science, psychology, literature, media studies, and health. The process of textual analysis starts with close reading which is exploration of the text to identify patterns, themes, and rhetorical devices used by the writers. It includes the choice of language, tone, imagery, and literary devices used to convey the meaning.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative research deals with the issues related to people, their stories, and the oppressions of the people. And this research often comprises open-ended questions, documents analysis, image and text analysis, and interview data. One of the major aspects of this research is its reliance on qualitative sources. This kind of data includes, observations, narration, non-numeric data. Researchers use different tools like interviews, participant observation, and open-ended surveys to gather the data to explore human experiences, perspectives, and feelings. This research gives a platform for understanding context and generating theories. Through in-depth interviews or focus groups, inquirers can go into the intricacies of opinions, beliefs and values of the individuals. It enables them to explore the reasons behind certain behaviours or opinions.

Close Reading

Close reading is always employed to deeply examine and explore literary works. Instead of skimming the surface, this method involves carefully exploring the details and nuances in a passage or a piece of literature. It's like zooming in on a painting to notice everything closely. It pays close attention to language, structure, and symbolism, readers can uncover hidden messages and meaning, and it gives a richer understanding. When using close reading technique, it's necessary to consider the writers' language, such as sentence structure, diction, and flow of the writing. It helps to define the writers' intentions, the characters' motivations, and the underlying themes.

The close reading is a strategy that can be applied to understand challenging text. And it collects the knowledge from the specific text. Close reading needs patience, attention and detail for linguistic and literary characteristics and features. Furthermore, close reading mainly focuses on the exploration of different literary devices used by the writers, such as metaphors, similes, irony, foreshadowing, and allegory. By closely examining how these devices in the text, readers

Data Analysis

4.1 Question 1

In Bina Shah's novel “Before She Sleeps,” the construction of women's roles and identities within a simulated reality forms a central theme. Set in a dystopian future, the society depicted in the novel imposes strict norms and expectations on women, relegating them to specific roles primarily centered around reproduction and societal maintenance. The study explores in detail how women's roles and identities are intricately constructed within this simulated reality, examining the mechanisms of control, societal conditioning, resistance and the implications for gender equality and autonomy. In the dystopian society of “Before She Sleeps,” women are primarily valued for their reproductive capabilities. The narrative constructs women's roles around the duty to bear children, emphasizing their function as surrogates for infertile women. Within this simulated reality, women's identities are commodified, reduced to their biological capacity to conceive and birth offspring. Their worth is measured by their ability to fulfill this reproductive function, relegating them to a status akin to reproductive machinery rather than autonomous individuals.

Women's identities are further constructed within the simulated reality through the imposition of controlled spaces and pervasive surveillance mechanisms. The society depicted in the novel confines women to specific locations, such as the facility where they live and work, effectively limiting their

physical mobility and autonomy. Within these controlled spaces, women are subjected to constant surveillance, monitored by authorities to ensure compliance with prescribed norms and behaviors. This surveillance extends beyond physical spaces to include digital monitoring and tracking, reinforcing the pervasive control exerted over women's lives. The construction of women's roles and identities within the simulated reality is reinforced through societal conditioning and the perpetuation of traditional gender norms. Women in the novel are socialized from a young age to internalize their prescribed roles as caregivers and reproducers. They are taught to prioritize the needs of men and the collective society over their own individual aspirations and desires. This societal conditioning perpetuates the patriarchal power structures that govern the simulated reality, further entrenching women's subordinate status within the system.

Within the simulated reality of "Before She Sleeps," women's agency is severely constrained, with deviation from prescribed roles met with harsh consequences. Any attempt to resist or challenge the established norms is swiftly punished, reinforcing the system's control over women's lives. The fear of reprisal serves as a deterrent, compelling women to conform to their assigned roles despite their innate desires for autonomy and self-determination. The lack of agency perpetuates a cycle of oppression, wherein women are rendered powerless to effect meaningful change within the simulated reality.

Despite the pervasive control and surveillance, the narrative also depicts instances of resistance and rebellion among women within the simulated reality. Through acts of defiance and solidarity, some women seek to subvert the oppressive structures that govern their lives. They form clandestine networks and alliances, challenging the hegemony of the patriarchal regime and asserting their agency in subtle yet significant ways. The resistance movements within the novel serve as a testament to the resilience and strength of women in the face of systemic oppression, highlighting the possibility of resistance even within the confines of a simulated reality.

The construction of women's roles and identities within the simulated reality of "Before She Sleeps" raises profound questions about gender equality and autonomy. By portraying a society where women are reduced to their reproductive functions and subjected to pervasive control, the novel critiques the patriarchal power structures that underpin such systems of oppression. It challenges readers to interrogate the implications of commodifying women's identities and limiting their agency within a simulated reality governed by patriarchal norms. Moreover, the narrative underscores the importance of collective action and resistance in challenging and dismantling systems of oppression, offering a glimpse of hope amidst the dystopian landscape. In Bina Shah's "Before She Sleeps" offers a compelling exploration of how women's roles and identities are constructed within the simulated reality of a dystopian society. Through the lens of reproductive duties, controlled spaces, societal conditioning, limited agency, resistance, and rebellion, the novel unpacks the mechanisms of oppression that govern women's lives within this simulated reality. By interrogating these themes, the novel prompts readers to reflect on issues of gender equality, autonomy, and resistance in the face of systemic oppression. Ultimately, "Before She Sleeps" serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring power of women to resist, reclaim agency, and challenge the structures that seek to confine and control them within simulated realities and beyond.

Postmodern feminism argues that identities are fluid and constructed through social, cultural, and historical contexts. In the novel, the female characters' identities are not static; they evolve in response to the oppressive environment. The protagonist, for example, navigates between the roles imposed on her by society and her inner desires for autonomy. This fluidity challenges traditional gender norms, illustrating how identities are shaped and reshaped within the constraints of the simulated reality.

Postmodern feminism questions the binary understanding of gender roles, acknowledging a spectrum of identities beyond traditional male and female categories. In the novel, the enforced polygamous system reinforces a rigid binary where women are reduced to reproductive vessels. However, through

the characters' experiences, the narrative highlights the limitations of this binary construction. Some women resist their assigned roles, seeking alternative expressions of identity that go beyond the predetermined categories. Postmodern feminism emphasizes the role of language and discourse in shaping gendered identities. In "Before She Sleeps," the government controls communication and actively promotes a discourse that justifies the subjugation of women. Language becomes a tool of oppression, reinforcing stereotypical roles and perpetuating the simulated reality. The novel explores how women use language subversively, creating alternative narratives that challenge the dominant discourse and contribute to the deconstruction of prescribed roles. Postmodern feminism acknowledges intersectionality, recognizing that gender identities intersect with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. In the simulated society of the novel, intersectionality is evident as women from different backgrounds navigate the oppressive system differently. The intersection of identities adds layers of complexity to the construction of women's roles, illustrating how multiple factors contribute to their experiences within the simulated reality.

Postmodern feminism encourages resistance and subversion of oppressive structures. In "Before She Sleeps," women engage in covert acts of resistance to challenge the prescribed roles imposed upon them. This resistance takes various forms, from clandestine relationships to the sharing of forbidden knowledge. The acts of subversion highlight the agency of women in shaping their identities, even within the confines of the simulated reality. "Before She Sleeps" provides a rich ground for exploring women's roles and identities through the lens of postmodern feminism within a simulated reality. By deconstructing binary gender roles, emphasizing the fluidity of identity, examining language and discourse, acknowledging intersectionality, and showcasing acts of resistance, the novel offers a nuanced exploration of how women navigate and shape their identities within an oppressive society. The analysis of women's roles and identities in "Before She Sleeps" under the theory of postmodern feminism reveals the complexities of identity construction within a simulated reality. The novel challenges traditional norms, offering a narrative that encourages readers to question and critique the societal structures that shape gender roles. Through its exploration of fluid identities, deconstruction of binary gender roles, attention to language and discourse, recognition of intersectionality, and portrayal of resistance, "Before She Sleeps" contributes to the ongoing discourse on postmodern feminism and its implications for understanding the construction of women's identities in speculative fiction.

Author of "The Monsoon War" aims to depict women as more than just characters, but as representations of different stages of life, negotiating and handling power with unique characteristics. The women of the Panah seem to play a significant role, transitioning from a Greek chorus to discovering their own agency. Notably, male characters operate on the periphery, taking passive roles in contrast to active women.

The inspiration for the premise comes from real-world resistance movements led by women, such as the Kurdish women fighting ISIS, the FARC in Colombia, and women's participation in the Arab Spring revolutions. The author intentionally avoids idealizing women fighters, acknowledging the obstacles, threats to their safety, and instances of sexual harassment even when fighting alongside male compatriots. The narrative strives to convey a sense of freedom and expansion for women pursuing their deepest passions and purposes.

Question 2

Bina Shah's representation of the characters of the novel, specifically women are miserable. Because Shah attempted to show issues of the women as. In *The Green City*, writer provides a details of this city, that seems to be in the South-West Asia. This Green City looks more developed and advanced than other European cities, it has high technology and gadgets as well as other materials which are installed, everything in the city and outside the city is in the hands of powerful authorities. The government controls everything with the help of that technology, and they record everything. Male

and females get knowledge and education but different opportunities. Bina Shah has created the big image: her struggles to show the marginalized female and her needs and desires. Bina Shah raises the issues of females through with conditions. In the novel there are many female who are marginalized and they struggle from miserable situations. But here the scholar talks about only two females and the hero of the novel. These females are Rupa and Sabine. Besides, Ilona Serfati and Diya are also the characters who suffer and these are treated as subaltern

The character Sabine is just sixteen years old young girl, she escapes from her parent's home to join the Panah, which is a place especially known for the refuge and freedom for rebellious females. Sabine escapes not because her father belongs to poor class, But because she is in cage and restricted at the home. That's why, Sabine selects her own way by going against the patriarchy and the laws of Green City. However, Sabine, while talking with Lin, another woman of the Panah, talks her own plight: in a conducive, comfortable, and convenient atmosphere, women cannot think of escaping from the home which nurtures them, provides them butter and bread, and provides them the presence of parents. In contrast, this is not fortunate that male dominant mind set does not give them freedom and finally, chauvinistic ideas makes them rebellious. Sabine has strong heirloom and she has educated background and family. Her father has government sector worker as one of the agency's agents. Her father has provided education to all his children with some exception; girls can get education until matriculation, not more than this. It is where writer shows marginalization and oppression towards the women. Apart from this, female students are not allowed to meet one another, not even to have a little talk. As she talks, "I, may be ten or twelve, certainly not more than twenty—weren't encouraged to befriend one another (p.25). The People of Green City are developed to some certain, yet they are they are conservative regarding of Gender-based rights; thus, this metaphorically shows Pakistani society, or if broadly speaking, It also delineates South Asian society.

Further, Bina Shah's main character has been through miserable situations. The women are living their bad lives. The women characters do not have another choice. The parents of Sabine, even being well educated, do not allow female to go out of the home or to do any kind of work outside of their home homes. And females do not have right to select anything for themselves. Mohanty believes that third world women as they are colonized again. She believes that women were colonized during imperialism and after that they are colonized by their own patriarchal system. Sabine talks with Lin, "They didn't want us to talk, to question our roles in life, or dream of another life for ourselves (p. 25). That are some situations which Mohanty, Young, and Spivak question to Western feminists that they are only focusing on specific race and particular region, not talking about women from other regions. These situations highlight that how female are victims of patriarchy, as female in their own society and homes. And they are deprived of everything; but, they do not have any communication sources in spite of living in a high-tech world. Communication gadgets are always put away either by males or by elder parents from women of Green City. "We couldn't use our parent-connected devices at home, Couldn't use the Network to find each other (p. 26).

That is bad condition for living. Afzal, Pakri, and Abdullah (2021) put forth the question, "In the case of resistance, how does it unveil and Register the plight of Pakistani women as well as the actual debate of feminism in Pakistan?"

Shah has showed such ideas and themes in her work. Such talks about gender suppression, and

the resistance, in the patriarchal system where the girls do not have opportunities, which grows the spirits of revolution. The men members of such types of societies, have experienced the imperialism which is no doubt deep-rooted from ages to ages. Such members of such a society call the customs and values. Bina Shah really shows her perception as being a well-educated woman of society: “the representation of space as a tool to manipulate the lives of residents” (Asif, Qaisar, & Iftikhar, 2021). For the females, nothing is good; even disparities have been noted in the system of education, as ‘the official Handbook for Female Citizen’ is the part of education “The official Handbook for Female Citizens is part of the school syllabus”. The syllabus was quite undiscernable; while living on the same island, women members of society often communicate by sending written messages while putting them in the bottles. It was the only source of communication. Besides, women do not call one another names, but they have given implied names, such as “lowers, like Rose, Jasmine, and Honeysuckle; gems, like Ruby or Opal; birds (p. 26).

For females, oppression does not end here. They have to marry at least two or more than two husbands (“Nurya Salem had five husbands (p. 16)”). All these marriages were against their choice. And these forced marriages mostly ended in the suicide: “we would be forced into marriage at least twice but more likely three and four times (p. 28). Similarly, Asif, Qaisar, and Iftikhar (2021) have analysed that “they are coerced into marrying twice, thrice, or as many times as the Bureau deems fit for them”.

Rupa, is other teenager of Pana who is also suffering from miserable situations like Sabine, she is also a victim of male dominant society. But, she thought that after fleeing from male dominant society. She could have everything she desired for. Although there are other women who took part in Panah they feel gratitude for Lin, she saves them from getting forced marriages good to say prison and provides them some autonomy. Rupa has a unique case in Panah, she thought during fleeing from house that she can enjoy her life the way she desired for. She would search a man whom she loved. And soon after she would marry that man. And then they will be living peaceful life. But Rupa finds another prison due to the Panah and its own laws: orients are subject to giving comfort for upper class men such as Joseph. It’s why, she does not get right place, according to the desires. Through her character, Shah warns normative women if they are looking forward to breaking the shackles of traditional values and society, they have to struggle and travel untrodden paths, the less-travelled roads where they have to create their own ways instead of complaining, but such women should not expect the consequences the way that normative girls usually do. It is so with Rupa: “My choice was robbed from me. Once I set foot inside the Panah, I became a criminal. I could never go back. These are not my rules. I never made them, I Never agreed to them. I never got to say what I wanted (p. 56).

Bina Shah shows how fleeing from home, they cannot flee from their sufferings and pains. The problems will be everywhere in the patriarchal society. Bina Shah has presented the character of Rupa as jealous, she loves Joseph because he is richest man of the Green City. As husband, no other women can sit with him. But Joseph loves Sabine saying, “Ow you are hurting me, in truth, I liked this touch (Shah, 2018, p. 71).

In Shah’s novel, throughout the story, women characters suffering endlessly and they struggle to survive and create their own identities. The suppression and cruelty may end on suicides or by escaping. “ suppression and cruelty may end either by committing suicide or by escaping away. In this regard, many girls commit suicide in the well-furnished city: “a wife has committed suicide in her home in Qanna neighborhood (p. 16)”. The citizens of this Green City are living in such a bad and miserable conditions. But Bina Shah has created rebellious woman character who challenges the patriarchal and oppressive norms. There are five girls in the novel who challenge and rebel the society in different ways.

But, the very first traces of rebelliousness were found in Sabine when She had a conversation with one of her friends; usually girls were strictly prohibited from becoming or making friends, as earlier mentioned. The very first revolutionary step for Sabine is breaking the rules and laws. She never looks

back. Somewhere, Shah has shown the mutiny of Sabine by these words: “my femininity is no longer my weakness (p. 19). It is what postcolonial writers used to show, particularly Fanon, Said, and Spivak. Basically, the emergence of postcolonialism is a Slsqort of ‘gendered history of colonialism’.

4 .3. Question 3

In “Before She Sleeps,” the female characters navigate the boundaries of simulacra, defined as a representation or imitation of a person or thing, to assert their agency and resist oppressive norms. The novel explores a dystopian world where women are subjected to a rigid and oppressive regime, and the female characters engage in a complex dance between conformity and subversion. Their journey involves challenging societal expectations, reclaiming their autonomy, and finding ways to resist the oppressive system.

Set in a dystopian future, “Before She Sleeps” presents a world where female lives are tightly controlled and dictated by a patriarchal regime. The government enforces strict rules on reproduction, relationships, and individual freedoms. In this oppressive environment, female characters grapple with the constraints of simulacra, where their identities are confined to predefined roles and expectations.

Simulacra, in this context, becomes a tool used by the oppressive system to reduce women to mere reproductions of societal expectations. The government dictates women’s roles, stifling their agency, and suppressing their individuality. The simulacra in “Before She Sleeps” encompasses prescribed gender roles, limiting the scope of women’s lives to defined spaces and functions. The protagonist and other female characters are expected to conform to these simulacra, undermining their ability to assert personal agency.

The women characters in the work resist the confines of simulacra through acts of rebellion, both overt and covert. The protagonist, for example, seeks autonomy by defying the prescribed roles for women. She navigates the boundaries of simulacra by engaging in secret relationships, challenging the government’s control over her body and reproductive choices.

Other characters, too, find ways to subvert simulacra. Through clandestine connections and acts of defiance, they carve out spaces for personal agency within the oppressive framework. These acts of rebellion serve as a powerful assertion of the characters’ autonomy, disrupting the simulacra imposed on them.

One significant way the female characters resist simulacra is through the formation of genuine relationships. Despite the government’s attempts to commodify and control relationships, the women in the novel find solace and strength in their connections with one another. These relationships go beyond the simulated roles assigned to them, providing a space for emotional authenticity and shared resistance.

The power of these relationships lies in their ability to transcend the superficial expectations of simulacra. By forming bonds based on trust, solidarity, and shared experiences, the women in “Before She Sleeps” challenge the simulated nature of their interactions. In doing so, they assert their agency in a society that seeks to confine them within predefined roles.

While the female characters in the novel resist simulacra, the narrative also highlights the risks and consequences they face. The oppressive regime actively suppresses any deviation from prescribed norms, and the characters must navigate a dangerous landscape where discovery could lead to severe punishment. The inherent risks add a layer of complexity to their acts of defiance, underscoring the courage required to challenge simulacra in such an oppressive society.

Simulacra isn’t solely an external force in the novel; it also manifests within the characters themselves. The internalized expectations and societal conditioning create internal struggles as the characters grapple with their own perceptions of womanhood, autonomy, and rebellion. Overcoming these internal simulacra becomes a crucial aspect of the characters’ journeys toward self-discovery and resistance.

In “Before She Sleeps,” female characters navigate the boundaries of simulacra to assert their agency and resist oppressive norms. Through acts of rebellion, genuine relationships, and internal struggles, they transcend the superficial roles imposed on them by the dystopian society. The novel serves as a powerful exploration of women reclaiming their autonomy in the face of an oppressive simulacra, offering a narrative that challenges societal expectations and celebrates the strength of individual and collective resistance.

Comparisons to Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” suggest that “Before She Sleeps” explores similar themes of dystopia, gender oppression, and societal control, providing a contemporary perspective on these issues. Shah’s use of futuristic elements, such as artificial intelligence and technology, adds layers to the narrative, projecting a vision of a world grappling with post-religious authoritarianism.

The novel’s rich and appealing texture, as you’ve mentioned, indicates Shah’s skill in creating an immersive and thought-provoking reading experience. By addressing the treatment of women in a terrifying context, she prompts readers to contemplate the potential consequences of unchecked authoritarianism on gender dynamics.

It’s clear that Bina Shah’s work not only entertains but also serves as a vehicle for social commentary and advocacy. By raising her voice for females through this novel, Shah contributes to the broader conversation surrounding women’s rights and the potential ramifications of oppressive systems. If there are specific aspects or themes you’d like to delve deeper into or discuss further, feel free to let me know!

It’s clear that the novel addresses pressing issues related to gender inequality, the male gaze, and misogyny within a dystopian framework. The setting of Green City in South West Asia, plagued by war and disease, adds a layer of complexity to the narrative, creating a society where the government’s control and restrictions on women contribute to a climate of fear and oppression.

The novel explores the consequences of extreme gender imbalances and the government’s use of reproductive control measures. The restriction on women from having multiple husbands is presented as a violation of women’s rights, and the exploration of gender selection as a tool for managing population raises questions about ethics and autonomy. The government’s role in enforcing societal norms through power and technology is a central theme. The layer of terror spread across society reflects a dystopian reality where those in power manipulate societal structures to maintain control. The novel delves into the implications of unchecked authority on individual freedoms. The underground resistance by a group of women is a powerful manifestation of women’s agency and defiance against oppressive systems. Their refusal to accept the government’s dictates and the creation of a space for intimacy without sex challenges societal norms and becomes a form of rebellion.

Bina Shah emerges as a contemporary Pakistani writer who uses her literary work to address critical social issues, particularly the repression of Muslim women. The novel is viewed as a modern parable, reflecting Shah’s ability to interpret social, cultural, and religious forces through her writing. Her contribution to literature serves as a bridge between Pakistan and America, offering a nuanced perspective. “Before She Sleeps” has gained worldwide coverage and is recognized as part of the feminist dystopian fiction genre. It captures the zeitgeist of the #MeToo era, channeling the anger and anxiety surrounding issues of women’s rights and gender-based oppression. The novel serves as a potent tool to highlight the injustice faced by women and contributes to a broader conversation on gender equality.

“Before She Sleeps” is a dystopian novel that delves into themes of feminism, resistance, and the struggle for rights in a society where women are subjugated and exploited for their reproductive capabilities. The protagonist, Sabine, becomes involved in the Panah movement, led by Lin, which operates clandestinely beneath the oppressive regime of Green City. The Panah movement serves as a platform for women to resist the oppressive laws imposed by the government, which force them

into roles as wives and mothers through forced polygamy and childbearing. In this dystopian society, women are treated as mere vessels for reproduction, referred to as “domestic scientists,” and subjected to arranged marriages with multiple men to ensure the continuation of the population. As the narrative unfolds, the women of Panah begin to resist their predetermined fate, rebelling against the societal norms that seek to control and exploit them. This resistance manifests in various forms, including acts of defiance and clandestine gatherings to voice their dissent against the government’s oppressive policies.

The novel explores the complexities of female agency and empowerment within a repressive and patriarchal society, highlighting the resilience and courage of women who dare to challenge the status quo. By depicting the struggles of its characters against systemic oppression and the quest for autonomy, *Before She Sleeps* serves as a poignant commentary on the enduring fight for gender equality and human rights.

Before She Sleeps is indeed a dystopian novel by Bina Shah, published in 2018. It is set in a future world where gender inequality, the male gaze, misogyny, and other issues related to women’s rights are prominent themes. The story takes place in Green City, the capital of South West Asia, which is plagued by war, disease, and a drastic reduction in the ratio of men to women. Gender selection further exacerbates the dwindling population. The society depicted in the novel is deeply troubled and struggling to cope with these challenges.

The government has played a major role. The government has employed power and other technology to take control of society. The layer of terror has been spread all over society. The authorities restricted females from taking many husbands. It is only to retain human breeding, but this technique is against gender equality and women rights.

In *Before She Sleeps*, a group of women forms an underground resistance against the oppressive system that governs Green City. They reject the enforced roles and restrictions placed upon them by society. This resistance group clandestinely offers the wealthy and powerful individuals of Green City a unique service: intimacy without the transactional aspect of sex. This act challenges the norms of the society and disrupts the power dynamics that oppress women. By providing intimacy without the traditional expectations associated with sex, the resistance group asserts their agency and confronts the prevailing notions of control and dominance. As a result, the elite and influential members of society are left unsettled and disoriented by this unexpected display of autonomy and defiance.

CONCLUSION

Bina Shah’s novel *Before She Sleeps* explores a dystopian society where women’s lives are tightly restricted and controlled. The setting of the novel is in a future world where women’s rights have been ignored, Shah provides a haunting image of a society where women are child producing machines.

One of the most striking things of *Before She Sleeps* is Shah’s marvelous world-building. She builds a vivid and suppressive atmosphere, where surveillance is constant, and females are forced into roles controlled by males. The city of Green City feels both familiar and disturbingly foreign, drawing parallels to contemporary issues surrounding gender inequality and reproductive issues and rights.

The novel is in the Green City, the capital of South West Asia *Before She Sleeps* which is dystopic work similar to *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The difference being that because the women population is decimated by a version of the HPV virus they are treated with the utmost respect. Without them there is no way to replenish Earth’s population, but, not surprisingly, men have no intention of willingly ceding control of anything to the ‘weaker’ sex. Females have multiple husbands and with the aid of fertility drugs are incited to procreate as always as possible. The more children, the greater the economic achievements. And have no autonomy, freedom or individuality, but their bodies, as baby machines can’t be punished or otherwise harmed.

Into this baby breeding, cruel and totalitarian atmosphere one wise rebel and entrepreneur, Lin, makes

a safe place for younger females who intend no part of the breedfest, but who still want away to survive. Provided the mandate to have sex as always as possible to impregnate their wives but not to engage with them in most other ways, Lin gives stronger males with simple, unfettered women partnership. Her women are ordered through the Deep Web and will spend the night, cuddling or sleeping. No sexual contact is allowed. Sabine is one of the young women who lives in the Panah, as it's called. One of her Clients has begun to exhibit unwelcome feelings for her. She has no love for him, but soon finds herself in a harmful and untenable condition that threatens not only her wellbeing, but that of the whole Panah society.

The novel *Before She Sleeps* gives the real sense of being in a country or place with oppressive attitudes for females. She makes no attempt to mask how closely this parable aligns with life for many females in Muslim countries. The some agenda of the novel may feel heavy-handed, but wouldn't bother them. Bina Shah tackles difficult themes with sensitivity and nuance, exploring the intersections of gender, power, and freedom.

Findings

The study finds out that novel imposes strict norms and expectations on women, relegating them to specific roles primarily centered around reproduction and societal maintenance. In the dystopian society of "Before She Sleeps," women are primarily valued for their reproductive capabilities. The narrative constructs women's roles around the duty to bear children, emphasizing their function as surrogates for infertile women.

The research explored that women's identities are further constructed within the simulated reality through the imposition of controlled spaces and pervasive surveillance mechanisms. The society depicted in the novel confines women to specific locations, such as the facility where they live and work, effectively limiting their physical mobility and autonomy. Within these controlled spaces, women are subjected to constant surveillance, monitored by authorities to ensure compliance with prescribed norms and behaviors. This surveillance extends beyond physical spaces to include digital monitoring and tracking, reinforcing the pervasive control exerted over women's lives. It has been found that the construction of women's roles and identities within the simulated reality is reinforced through societal conditioning and the perpetuation of traditional gender norms. Women in the novel are socialized from a young age to internalize their prescribed roles as caregivers and reproducers. The construction of women's roles and identities within the simulated reality of "Before She Sleeps" raises profound questions about gender equality and autonomy. By portraying a society where women are reduced to their reproductive functions and subjected to pervasive control, the novel critiques the patriarchal power structures. Women's roles and identities are constructed within the simulated reality of a dystopian. Shah's representation of characters, specifically women ones are miserable. Simulacra, in this context, becomes a tool used by the oppressive system to reduce women to mere reproductions of societal expectations. The government dictates women's roles, stifling their agency, and suppressing their individuality. The simulacra in "Before She Sleeps" encompasses prescribed gender roles, limiting the scope of women's lives to defined spaces and functions. The protagonist and other female characters are expected to conform to these simulacra, undermining their ability to assert personal agency. Bina Shah has depicted the consequences of creating fragile characters such as Sabine and Rupa, such handcuffs cannot constrain females. The study has found novel serves as a powerful exploration of women reclaiming their autonomy in the face of an oppressive simulacra, offering a narrative that challenges societal expectations and celebrates the strength of individual and collective resistance.

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