



Politics of Patriarchy: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Male Authority and Female Resistance in Shah's Dystopian Novel *Before She Sleeps***Tanzeela Mehmood¹, Saadia Ayub^{*2}, Riaz Ahmed³, Gulab Khan⁴**¹ Lecturer English Literature, Akhuwat College for Women Chakwal.Email: tanzeelamehmood229@gmail.com² Lecturer, Department of CARBS, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan.*Corresponding Author Email: saadia.ayub@superior.edu.pk³ Lecturer in Languages, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Lasbela University of Agriculture and Marine Sciences, Uthal. Email: riaz.ahmed@luawms.edu.pk⁴ Lecturer Pakistan studies, Department of Humanities, Lasbela University of Agriculture Water and Marine Sciences Uthal, Balochistan Pakistan. Email: gulabkhan@luawms.edu.pkDOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1762>**Abstract**

Patriarchy as a discursive and institutional structure is the root cause of systematic marginalization and mistreatment of women in all aspects of life. This paper provides a feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps*, exploring how the construction, legitimation, and maintenance of male authority are linguistically enabled, and how female resistance is a counter-discursive practice. The novel presents a dystopian society in which totalitarianism is exercised by legal, religious, and moral discourses that enforce strict gender hierarchies, thus making it normal to conduct surveillance, regulation, and commodification of the female bodies. The protagonist's acts of defiance as forms of discursive resistance are a means to disrupt the dominant patriarchal discourses. Through questioning the discursive site of power, control, and gendered subjugation, this paper shows how the ideology of patriarchy is exercised through the language to naturalize inequality and limit female agency. The findings of the study show that *Before She Sleeps* does not only reveal the processes of patriarchal domination, but also expresses a counter-hegemonic vision of female empowerment and transformative agency, which is possible through resistance within the discourse.

Key Terms: Feminism, Patriarchy, Critical Discourse Analysis, Male Authority, Female Resistance, Discourse and Ideology, Commodification of Female Bodies, Counter-Discourse**Introduction**

Patriarchy makes men the heads of households and gives them control over domestic issues and decision making. This system makes the dominance of men institutionalized by making it acceptable that men exercise control over women through established social, cultural and political power systems (Bhasin, 1993). In a patriarchal society, women are created as inferior creatures, and strict gender structures are supported by the dominant ideological discourses that lead to the subjugation of women in various aspects of life (Mehmood, 2019). Patriarchal gender roles serve as a control mechanism, which trains women to internalize the male authority and discourages their involvement in making vital decisions. In a patriarchal society, "women are viewed as second-class citizens and are controlled as objects or puppets, with their experiences consistently

marginalized and classified as subaltern” (Qasim et al., 2024, p. 171). Patriarchy is a conceptualized idea by feminist scholars, who view it as a structural arrangement that makes male domination a norm and female subordination a normal condition (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy does not just exist in material terms through law, economy and state governance but in terms of discourse as well-through language, representation and daily communicative practices that justify gendered inequalities (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995). Critical feminism considers discourse to be a major location of power production, reproduction, and resistance (Lazar, 2005). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) offers a strict analytical approach to the study of the implementation of gender ideology in textual and institutional practices. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993), FCDA prefigures the gendered aspects of power, with particular attention paid to the ways in which discourse reproduces the patriarchal order and the ways in which the oppressed express resistance (Lazar, 2007). It questions the insidious hegemonization of male power and the discursive production of femininity as submissive, fertile and controlled. Meanwhile, FCDA favours counter-discourses that question the hegemonic masculinity and disrupt the ideological constructions (Connell, 1995).

Literature is an ideological place of power, and through it structures of domination are not only represented but also interrogated. In the feminist literary discourse, literary texts serve as arenas of revealing the implicit and explicit processes by which patriarchy perpetuates male dominance and governs the subjectivity of women. Literature undermines the discursive basis of gender inequality by making visible the forms of oppression that are usually normalized, including gender-based violence, reproductive control, sexual commodification, and forced silence. The narrative strategies, characterization, and linguistic choices are all involved in the reproduction or resistance of the hegemonic gender ideologies. In this respect, literary texts are the critical spaces where patriarchal politics are constructed and challenged. Bina Shah can be seen as a prominent feminist voice in the context of the modern Pakistani Anglophone fiction, whose work continuously questions the relations of male dominance and female opposition. Shah is a renowned Pakistani novelist, journalist and social commentator, who explores the issues of gender, identity and socio-political power. Her literary work is marked with a subtle sense of how patriarchal rules work by cultural traditions, religious discourse, and state apparatus to punish the bodies of women and their decisions. Trained in Pakistan and overseas, Shah has a transnational feminist sensibility to her work, placing the local gender struggles in the context of global discussion of authoritarianism, biopolitics and autonomy of women.

Before She Sleeps creates a society where bodies, sexuality and identities of women are strictly controlled, commodified and monitored. It represents the extreme form of consolidation of male power in the name of national survival, moral preservation and religious legitimacy. By revealing the multidimensional patriarchal domination through forced reproductive policies, forced marriage, ideological brainwash, and surveillance by the institutions, Shah (2018) shows how power works not only through the explicit legal restrictions but also through the normalized discourse of positioning male control as protective, rational, and endorsed by God. In doing so, the narrative reveals the intersection of authoritarian governance and patriarchy in reproducing rigid gender hierarchies and disciplining female subjectivity. But the novel also prefigures the female resistance as an intrinsic counter-force in these oppressive systems: the protagonist is strategically negotiating the roles imposed on her and sometimes openly opposing the male authority and other women are involved in underground solidarity networks that establish alternative spaces outside the state. These are both blatant and subtle actions that highlight that resistance is not homogenous and unilateral but is decentralized, interpersonal and context-specific. Shah (2018) not only criticizes the ideological machine of patriarchy but also redefines the agency of women as a disruptive power that can disrupt hegemonic masculinity.

This paper uses Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the politics of patriarchy in *Before She Sleeps* focusing on how male authority is constructed through discourse and how female resistance is counter-constructed through counter-discourse. It explores the role of language, narrative voice, and institutional discourses in reproducing gendered power imbalances, and how the alternative space and speech acts of women disrupt the space of male control. Placing the novel into the context of more general discussions about

gender, power, and postcolonial modernity, this paper claims that Shah (2018) is not only critical of authoritarian patriarchy but also redefines feminist agency as a revolutionary force that can challenge hegemonic masculinity.

Review of Literature

Patriarchy is a systemic pattern of social organization that institutionalizes male dominance in the political, economic, and cultural arenas (Walby, 1990). Radical feminist critics like Millett (1970) theorize patriarchy as a political institution that is perpetuated by ideology, representation and the normalization of masculine power in the domestic and social realms. These initial arguments prove that the issue of gender inequality is not a mere incident but rather a structural one, which is entrenched in discourse and institutional practice. Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity also expounds on how dominant masculinities get legitimacy by portraying male power as natural, rational and protective and excluding other gender identities and reaffirming the subordination of women.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a methodology of looking at how power relations are represented in language. Fairclough (1995) says that discourse is a reflection and a construction of social realities; it is a process by which ideology is normalized. van Dijk (1993) points out that dominance is represented in the daily communicative activities especially in institutional settings. Based on Foucault's (1972, 1978) concept of discourse and biopower, researchers have shown how contemporary states control bodies, particularly female bodies, by means of surveillance, normalization and control of reproduction. These are the main insights that can be used to comprehend how patriarchal governance functions not only by means of coercion but also through discursive legitimation. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) focuses on the gendered aspects of power. Lazar (2005, 2007) maintains that FCDA reveals the way in which patriarchal ideology is institutionalized in the linguistic practices and the way in which the resistance is developed using the counter-discursive strategies. FCDA sees gender as an ideological system that is reproduced by means of institutional texts, media discourses, and cultural discourses and, at the same time, identifies the places of feminist agency within the oppressive systems. Weedon (1997) also insists that subjectivity is constructed discursively and can be transformed as well, allowing a way of resisting by means of other articulations of identity. This view is especially applicable to the literary analysis, in which the voice of narration and characterization are the arenas of ideological conflict.

In feminist literary criticism, dystopian fiction has extensively been explored as a genre that enacted the excesses of patriarchal domination. *The Handmaid Tale* by Atwood has been seminal in demonstrating the intersection of reproductive politics and dictatorial regimes to control the bodies of women. According to scholars like Baccolini and Moylan (2003), feminist dystopias do not only portray oppression, but also preempt resistance and utopian possibilities of dystopian spaces. Donawerth (1997) argues that feminist dystopian texts confront the discourse of patriarchy through the redefinition of female agency in limited socio-political situations. These works define dystopia as an important literary mode of questioning gendered power relations.

Shah (2018) admires *Before She Sleeps* due to its bravery in feminist dystopia, rich world-building, and acute insight into the oppression of patriarchy. The novel is a strong re-enactment of the resistance of women in an authoritarian society in the form of intimacy and solidarity as survival tactics. Although the reviewer points out shortcomings in its approach to queerness, it ends up praising the book as innovative and culturally relevant and timely in alerting us to the gendered control and hypocrisy in society. "*Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah is well-crafted feminist dystopian science fiction (Shah, 2018, para. 4). Strand (2018) claims that *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah is an excellent feminist dystopia, with the action taking place in a South Asian city where a gender disaster compels women to enter into polygamous marriages. The reviewer admires the rich world-building, cultural specificity, and exploration of female resistance by Shah, especially the underground refuge that defies the patriarchal control. Nevertheless, she criticizes how the novel does not include queer

voices and lacks the development of speculative aspects, whether the presented types of freedom are really free of the systemic oppression. “*Before She Sleeps* is a satisfying and engaging novel that offers a nuanced take on the growing feminist dystopian genre” (Strand, 2018, para. 14).

Despite the study of feminist literary criticism on the issue of patriarchal domination, the feminist dystopian fiction of South Asia today is under-researched, particularly *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah. Current literature is mostly centered on Western literature and it does not capture how South Asian writers represent male dominance and female defiance. Not many have used Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the ways in which language and ideology support or oppose patriarchy. In addition, the strategies of agency of women in dystopian situations are rarely examined in research. The selected novel offers a critical location to examine these dynamics and emphasize the interaction of oppression and resistance and adds to the feminist literary analysis.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework.

The paper uses Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as a theoretical framework, which questions the intersection of language, power, and gender. FCDA is a continuation of traditional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by explicitly foregrounding the gendered aspects of ideology and power relations (Lazar, 2005, 2007). It assumes that language is not just a means of communication but a process by which social hierarchies such as patriarchal authority are created, normalized and challenged. FCDA allows examining the open and hidden discursive practices of legitimizing male dominance and restricting female subjectivity, as well as considering the counter-discourses and resistance expressed by women.

Complementing the structural perspective of patriarchy, Lazar’s Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) offers a refined perspective to examine how language, narratives and institutional discourses construct and challenge gendered power relations. “Critical discourse analysis is a movement which seeks to raise critical consciousness about the discursive dimensions of social problems involving discrimination, disadvantage, and dominance with the aim of contributing to broader emancipatory projects” (Lazar, 2017, p. 372). Lazar (2005, 2007) argues that discourse is not an objectively neutral means of communication but a primary process where ideology is reproduced, legitimized and normalized. This, in the context of patriarchy, implies that texts, be they literary, political, or social, encode assumptions of gender roles, authority, and legitimacy, and tend to make male dominance seem natural, necessary, or even desirable. By focusing on linguistic options, narrative voice, and the representational strategies, FCDA enables the scholars to reveal how the subtle forms of oppression are embedded in the daily communication and institutional practices and how they play a part in the perpetuation of systemic inequalities. “... the objective of FCDA is to demystify and challenge discourses that continue to buttress gendered social orders in various ways, which harm and foreclose socially progressive possibilities for individuals and groups” (Lazar, 2017, p. 372). More importantly, Lazar (2005, 2007) points out that discourse is always relational and contested, and this creates the room to explore counter-discourses that challenge or subvert hegemonic norms. Lazar (2007) also predicts counter-discourses- how women oppose, challenge or redefine hegemonic norms in speech, coalition, and maneuvering. This approach acknowledges the fact that resistance is relational, situational, and manifests in a variety of, and frequently subtle, ways, as opposed to open or uniform resistance.

The Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) offers an approach to the study of the construction and contestation of gendered power based on the use of language, texts, and institutional practices. “Feminist CDA is a political perspective which investigates the complex and diverse ways by which gender ideologies that entrench power asymmetries become ‘common sense’ in particular communities and discourse contexts, and how they may be challenged” (Lazar, 2017, p. 372). In contrast to the methods that consider discourse as neutral, FCDA considers language as an active location where ideology is created, distributed, and normalized, and it supports social hierarchies and justifies male dominance. In patriarchal societies, language functions in a naturalization of power, establishment of normative gender roles, and the creation of

understanding of what is socially acceptable to women and men. Noteworthy, FCDA underlines that power relations are never definite, but they are relational and negotiable. It is possible to identify counter-discourses in this way. These types of resistance may be subtle, adaptive and mediated in context, and they occur in the form of strategic speech acts, relational networks, or narrative reinterpretations.

The patriarchal authority in the FCDA model is perceived as both performed and institutionalized by the narrative, institutional, and ideological processes, whereas resistance is revealed in the counter-discourses that are inherent in language and social relations. The approach of Lazar emphasizes that female agency is relational and contextual, which is frequently performed in subtle, adaptive, and strategic ways that undermine or subvert mainstream norms. FCDA, applied to *Before She Sleeps*, not only perpetuates male dominance, but also offers the space to imagine other ways of gendered power, which makes it an effective instrument of analyzing the domination-resistance dynamics in literary works.

Textual Analysis

Before She Sleeps is a feminist dystopian novel that focuses on patriarchal power as a totalizing political regime, controlling the bodies, identities and social roles of women. In the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis lens, the novel reveals the discursively naturalized and legitimized nature of patriarchy via state laws, surveillance and reproductive ideologies. The fictional Green City in the novel reflects this fact as the subordination of women is not accidental but structural, being a part of political, economic, and ideological systems. The control of reproductive organs and supervision of women are the main methods of exercising male power in Green City, which degrades women to biological and emotional resources. Women's value depends on their ability to give birth, satisfy male sexual desire, and stabilize social life. Shah (2018) shows that patriarchy denies women subjectivity by presenting their oppression as protection and care, thus concealing domination behind the rhetoric of benevolence. This discourse is supported by legal and social institutions, which legitimize coercion and suppress opposition and preclude female autonomy. Shah (2018) prefigures forms of female resistance that exist within the dominant discourse and resist it through characters like Sabine and the women of Panah. In the perspective of FCDA, such forms of resistance are expressed through counter-discursive practices, which include selective silence, emotional restraint, and performative compliance. These very minor acts of rebellion disrupt the male power by revealing its dependence on the involvement and approval of women.

The description of Sabine and the society of control in *Before She Sleeps* shows that discourse is the core of reproduction and normalization of patriarchal power. Ideological assumptions regarding gender, authority and legitimacy are coded in the language, metaphors and narrative techniques of the novel, as male dominance is natural, protective and morally correct. Sabine's body, described as "shimmering skin... infused with gold dust" (Shah, 2018, p. 29), is discursively produced as a commodity, the value of which is determined by luxury and consumption instead of personhood. FCDA emphasizes that this kind of representation is not only a description of material reality but a construction of legitimizing male authority because this patriarchal logic of commodification and surveillance is introduced into the social and institutional framework of the Green City. The metaphor comparing women to "racehorses... sent out and retrieved under Lin's safekeeping" (Shah, 2018, p. 29) is an illustration of the way discourse masks coercion as concern, which makes obedience and productivity normal and at the same time controls the emotional and psychological conditions of women. This rhetoric can be understood in terms of Lazar framework that enables one to see it as the process by which ideology is reproduced and experienced, and that language mediates power and makes domination normal. FCDA also stresses that discourse is relational and contested, which allows identifying counter-discourses and resistance acts (Lazar, 2005, 2007). Sabine realizes that Joseph is playing with her, as she knows that he always attempts to get her drunk. Sabine's awareness of Joseph's manipulative gestures -- "Joseph always tries to get me drunk. He says it'll make me sleep" (Shah, 2020, p. 24) -- and her strategic responses to Lin's ideological tests-- "I know this is a test, so I feign ignorance" (Shah, 2018, p. 24) -- illustrate how women

negotiate agency within highly constrained structures. These context-specific and subtle strategies show how resistance may be practiced in discourse in the face of the most extreme surveillance and control, and how power is relational where domination and subversion are simultaneously present. Furthermore, Sabine's reflections on the psychological costs of coerced choices and her empathetic understanding of other women, such as Rupa-- "It's not easy when you've come to the Panah from the outside. Lin doesn't remember because she's always called it home" (Shah, 2018, p. 25) -- highlight how counter-discourses also emerge through solidarity and critical consciousness. These subversion acts enable women to establish free zones of autonomy, disrupt the hegemonic narratives, and challenge the normalization of male authority, which proves the claim by Lazar that discourse produces and opposes ideology at the same time.

The thoughts of Sabine show the way discourse is used to normalize and impose patriarchal power and at the same time offer means of slight resistance. Sabine's awareness of Joseph's manipulative gestures "Joseph always tries to get me drunk. He says it'll make me sleep" (Shah, 2020, p. 24) and her strategic responses to Lin's ideological tests "I know this is a test, so I feign ignorance" (Shah, 2018, p. 24) illustrate how women negotiate agency within highly constrained structures. The framework by Lazar enables us to observe that discourse is not just a narration of events but it recreates ideology, by making obedience and compliance a prerequisite to survival in society and by making dissent emotionally and morally distressing. Likewise, the policies of Green City, which are characterized as "precious resources, to be treasured and protected, looked after and provided for, in return for their bodies given to the cause of repopulation" (Shah, 2018, p. 35), are the examples of how the rhetoric of care and protection is institutionalized and how it makes coercion look like the rhetoric of benevolence, entrenching the principles of patriarchal society into the vocabulary. The discourse creates female bodies as spaces of reproductive labor and at the same time, it portrays compliance as morally good, which proves the argument by Lazar that language mediates power and ideology.

FCDA emphasizes the relational and conflictual character of discourse, which allows resisting even in the most patriarchal dominance. The counter-discourses that Sabine implements in the context of the system are her emotional endurance, introspective reflection, and selective compliance: "Something in me told me to go deep inside myself, to squeeze out every last bit of patience and cleverness that I had, and to rescue myself if my father was not going to help me" (Shah, 2018, p. 37). Her conformity to the rest of the girls who "pretend enthusiasm while secretly feeling nothing but a sense of impending doom" (Shah, 2018, p. 37) also shows that resistance is relational and subtle: compliance is carried out externally, whereas critical consciousness and subversion are internal. The FCDA of Lazar points out that these acts are significant in the sense that they demonstrate the agency negotiation in the framework of an ideological hegemony which demonstrates that power is never absolute and that discourse produces and challenges authority at the same time. Moreover, Sabine has an understanding of the plight of Rupa: "It's not easy when you've come to the Panah from the outside. Lin doesn't remember because she's always called it home" (Shah, 2018, p. 25). This quotation shows that discourse is also the vehicle of solidarity, understanding and relational resistance among women. FCDA enables us to understand the experiences of Sabine as examples of how patriarchal power works ideologically through language, narrative, and institutional rhetoric and how women negotiate, subvert, and manage that power even within highly surveilled and coercive systems.

Discourse in *Before She Sleeps* builds patriarchal power and allows female resistance to be expressed in subtle ways at the same time. The request of Sabine to her mother--"Mama, I don't want to be bought and sold like a piece of meat. I don't want to belong to anybody. I don't want to have babies. I want to have a life" (Shah, 2018, p. 38) -- exemplifies a counter-discourse where she is literally fighting against the social and institutional ideologies that turn her body and her autonomy into a commodity. FCDA highlights the fact that language is a place where power is created and fought over, and the speech of Sabine is a discursive intervention that seeks to break the normalized belief of female subordination and objectification. Sabine reveals the ideological processes that support the domination of males and the power of institutions by expressing what she wants against what she is required to do according to society.

In the Panah, women's roles are discursively framed as both essential and subordinate: their physical presence, emotional labor, and perceived autonomy are commodified for the benefit of men: "We're the only ones who can give it to them... free women, unattached to anyone else" (Shah, 2018, p. 44). Lazar claims that the institutionalized language becomes as natural as male authority, and the exploitation turns into the necessity. Lin's scolding-- "You're there for companionship, not sex. Don't trespass the limits and you'll be fine" (Shah, 2018, p. 45) -- discursively establishes boundaries that support patriarchal hierarchies, and obedience is both right and tactical. Nevertheless, within these constraints, women negotiate agency: the choice of Lin to accompany Sabine to a Client house, "we only survive because of the rules we've made" (Shah, 2018, p. 45), is a kind of relational and situation-specific resistance, which leaves limited but significant areas of agency and strategic intervention.

Lazar's framework highlights the discursive tension between appearance and reality in patriarchal systems. The cautious role of compliance that Sabine plays, having been trained in all the security "all the security protocols for arrivals and departures" (Shah, 2018, p. 43), shows the role of language, rules, and ritualized behavior in upholding the authority of men and also giving women the means to maneuver, survive, and subvert these patriarchal systems. The Client's unexpected gentleness, "a grandfather who'd had a wild youth but wanted to cap his life with a sedate, chaste courtship" (Shah, 2018, p. 46), further complicates the discourse, showing that resistance is not only internal but also relational, emerging in interactions that challenge rigid expectations of power. This passage can be seen through the prism of Lazar as an example of discourse as a place of ideological regulation, emotional work and subtle subversion, and the many-layered, context-specific means by which women resist, negotiate, and redefine patriarchal norms in highly controlled spaces.

Discourse justifies patriarchal power and at the same time offers glimpses of subtle resistance. The aging bodies of women, "shirking bones" and "withering flesh" (Shah, 2018, p. 49), show how the words internalize social and ideological standards according to which female value is measured by youth, beauty, and reproductive capabilities. Lazar highlights the fact that discourse is a process by which such norms are naturalized, shaping women's self-perception and internalizing compliance to patriarchal expectations. Institutionalized discourse, like the policies of the state that govern intimacy and reproductive labor, i.e. the Bureau that dictates the exact time limits of Wife-Husband relations, turns women into instruments of reproduction. Such phrase as "a new hope for Green City and South West Asia" (Shah, 2018, p. 49) demonstrates how bureaucratic rhetoric constructs obedience and fertility as moral imperatives, including the ideology of patriarchy and institution in the official communication. The process of normalization of coercion is also supported by the fact that the Bureau is ready to "sacrifice a few women for compliance" (Shah, 2018, p. 50), and the institutional discourse plays with the fear, lack of resources, and the sense of obligation to maintain domination.

The FCDA by Lazar also throws light on the hidden and relational types of resistance that women are able to do even in the most severe conditions. The reflection of Sabine-- "Just when it seemed that women had no choices left, Fairuza and I decided to speak with our feet and escape... Except down" (Shah, 2018, p. 51) -- shows how counter-discourses may be created by means of embodied and symbolic actions. The agency acted within the framework of structural restrictions is reflected in the metaphor of speaking with our feet, and the material and ideological barriers placed on us by patriarchal institutions are represented by the sealed borders. Even within this limited context, Lazar points out that discourse is disputed: women bargain survival, independence and resistance at the same time and show resistance to be contextual, relational and adaptive. Shah (2018) demonstrates that the ideology of patriarchy is supported not only by the direct institutional pressure but also by the hidden language, symbolic norms, and the rhetoric of bureaucracy, and that the areas of the subtle subversion still exist, where women can challenge domination even when they cannot do it openly.

"[Patriarchy] obstructs women's liberation in social, political, and educational spheres" (Qasim et al., 2024,

p. 171). In this repressive system, the mother of Sabine is a prime example of the way women can create resistance in discursively and institutionally imposed patriarchal systems in subtle yet important ways. Her pretended infertility and refusal “to take another husband” (Shah, 2018, p. 156) serve as the counter-discourses challenging the ideology of the Perpetuation Bureau that defines women as the main reproductive property. Lazar states that discourse is relational and contested and her strategic acts depict resistance, which is based on subversion instead of blatant defiance. Sabine disrupts the ideological discourses that justify the male and institutional power over the bodies of women by playing the language and demands of the state authority, faking obedience and demanding bodily sovereignty. Her death which was hinted at in her suicide highlights the stakes of challenging the hegemonic power even more. The framework created by Lazar enables viewing this as a discursive and a symbolic act: her death conveys resistance in a society where expressing discontent openly is forbidden and reveals the limits of patriarchal power. The novelist shows how discourse can be both restrictive and mediating in resistance. Sabine’s life is restricted by the language, rules, and expectations of the Bureau.

Conclusion

Before She Sleeps questions and critiques the politics of patriarchy and unveil the institutionalization of male authority, as well as its normalization. The novel reveals the nuanced and more blatant processes by which language, story, and social organization reproduce gendered hierarchies, also focusing on the relational and contingent ways of female resistance, through the prism of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The description of subversive speech, secret organizations, and negotiating the roles imposed on her provided underlines that feminist agency may be maintained even in the most severe conditions, disrupting the hegemonic masculinity and undermining the normative beliefs about the roles of women. Shah (2018) shows how male power works not only through the explicit legal restrictions but also through the normalized discourse of positioning male control as protective, rational, and endorsed by God. The novelist shows that patriarchy denies women subjectivity by presenting their oppression as protection and care, thus concealing domination behind the rhetoric of benevolence. The patriarchal discourse is supported by legal and social institutions, which legitimize coercion and suppress opposition and preclude female autonomy. The novel does not just criticize authoritarian patriarchy but also provides a platform where one can envision other ways of gendered power, with the transformative potential of female empowerment to face systemic oppression.

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