



Biopower, Gender Performativity, and Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Female Subjectification in *The Bell Jar*, *All That I Want to Forget*, and *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*

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ABSTRACT:

While feminist literature and criticism have significantly promoted women's empowerment globally, applying critical theories has predominantly centered on Western discourse. This research expands the analytical scope by examining Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) theory of institutionalized biopower and Judith Butler's (1956) theory of performativity across diverse cultural contexts through a comparative analysis of three feminist novels: Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), Bothayna Al-Essa's *All That I Want to Forget* (2014), and Cho Nam-Joo's *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016). This cross-cultural examination illuminates how institutionalized bodies create interconnected surveillance and control systems, establishing a panoptic society that transcends Western boundaries. The analysis reveals distinct manifestations of disciplinary power across 1950s American, early 2000s Kuwaiti, and contemporary Korean societies, shaped respectively by post-war modern mentality, conservative Islamic values, and Confucian traditions. The research demonstrates how the internalization of feminine performance as identity leads to the medicalization of non-conforming behavior through biopower mechanisms. This manifestation is evidenced through the protagonists' experiences: Esther's institutionalization and shock therapy, Fatima's forced medication by her husband, and Jiyoung's psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. These instances exemplify how biopower represents a primary mechanism in enforcing disciplinary control and maintaining socially constructed performances. The theoretical framework integrates Foucault's emphasis on ontology and metaphysics with Butler's psychoanalytical approach to gender roles, providing comprehensive insight into how disciplinary social norms become entrenched within societies. This integration reveals how institutional power structures shape individual self-identification through educational, medical, and domestic institutions. The study contributes to understanding how disciplinary power and gender performativity operate across cultural contexts. It demonstrates that, while culturally specific, mechanisms of control share fundamental patterns in their implementation and effects on

women's lived experiences. The analysis illuminates the universal applicability of these theoretical frameworks and highlights the importance of examining their diverse manifestations across cultural boundaries.

Keywords: biopower; Butler; disciplinary power; feminism; Foucault; gender performativity; hysterization; institutionalization; resistance

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The theorization of human subjectification and power relations has fundamentally transformed political studies, philosophy, criticism, and literature since Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) spectacular contributions to the field. His examination of disciplinary power and governmentality, particularly in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (1978), illuminates the intricate mechanisms of subjectification, positioning sexuality as a primary apparatus of control. Foucault demonstrates how this system "constitutes women's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the function of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function" (p. 153).

The Foucauldian framework has subsequently evolved through various theoretical extensions, notably in Judith Butler's (1956) theory of performativity. Butler's work fundamentally builds upon Foucault's conceptualization of disciplinary power and subjectification, particularly concerning sexuality, while focusing on women's marginalization within feminist and gender theoretical frameworks. In *The Psychic Life and Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997), Butler establishes the crucial connection between gender performativity and Foucauldian subjectification, asserting that the "process of subjectivation takes place centrally through the body" (1997, p. 83). The disciplinary regime of the body serves as a central nexus in both theoretical frameworks, with Butler noting that "the disciplinary regimes of the body have led feminists to consult Foucault in order to elaborate the disciplinary production of gender" (p. 85). In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitutions: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988), Butler conceptualizes gender as an "identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body" (p. 519).

While structuralism viewed relations as predominantly "linguistic, symbolic, [and] discursive" (Sarup, 1989, p. 80), post-structuralist thought elevated power to "the ultimate principle of social reality" (p. 81). Foucault's theoretical evolution, influenced initially by his association with Louis Althusser and the Communist Party in 1950, led to his conceptualization of power as a multifaceted operation resistant to centralized reform (Cain et al., 2001, p. 1618). In "The Subject and Power" (1982), Foucault articulates his primary interest in documenting the "modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject" (p. 777). This theoretical framework examines three modes of objectification: scientific inquiry's elevated status, 'dividing practices' that separate subjects internally or externally, and self-subjectification processes. Foucault challenged philosophical universals by deconstructing metaphysics, logocentrism, and patriarchy, arguing that "absolute and universal knowledge and moral values are themselves historical phenomenon" (Taylor, 2011, p. ii). The implementation of disciplinary power creates a "moral imprisonment" that proves "more oppressive than the former practices of brute incarceration since it operates on the mind rather than merely the body" (Dews, 1988, p. 146). This internalized control mechanism distinguishes modern disciplinary power from premodern external control systems, establishing power relations as crucial in understanding subject formation.

I.1. FOUCAULT'S DISCIPLINARY POWER:

Foucault meticulously documents the evolution of power relations and their impact on subject formation in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995), where he delineates the transformation from premodern sovereign power to modern disciplinary mechanisms. Through historical analysis, Foucault

elucidates how sovereign power granted absolute authority over subjects, manifesting through spectacular physical punishment to reinforce monarchical supremacy (Foucault, 1995, p. 8).

In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, Foucault articulates that "[t]he sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing" (1978, p. 136), establishing the sovereign's ultimate authority over life and death. This concept is further developed in *Society Must be Defended* (2003b), where sovereignty is characterized as the right to "take life or let live" (Foucault, p. 241). However, sovereign power exhibited inherent limitations, as "most premodern persons lived in deep obscurity, unnoticed by various authorities" (Cain et al., 2001, p. 1618).

The Enlightenment precipitated a fundamental shift in public consciousness regarding punitive practices. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed what Foucault described as a seismic change, a new theory of law and crime, a new moral or political justification of the right to punish; old laws were abolished, and old customs died out. 'Modern' codes were planned (1995, p. 7). This transformation catalyzed the emergence of disciplinary power and its associated mechanisms, characterized by what Foucault termed 'pastoral power' (Dews, 1988, p. 145).

As explicated in *Security, Territory, Population* (2009), the panoptic nature of disciplinary power ensures comprehensive regulation through surveillance mechanisms (p. 45). Utilizing Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design as a metaphorical framework, Foucault demonstrates how subjects become "perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (1995, p. 200). This perpetual surveillance, inducing self-regulation through surveillance anxiety, plays a pivotal role in the creation of self-governing subjects. Modern power structures focus on "the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution, and their submission" (p. 25), employing institutional frameworks rather than physical coercion. This system "saves everything, including what it punishes. It is unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify" (Lemert, 2018, p. 323), operating through interconnected surveillance institutions, including hospitals, schools, and familial apparatuses. The resultant disciplinary society creates self-governing subjects through embedded ideologies rather than overt physical control. This sophisticated network of institutional surveillance engenders docile bodies through continuous observation and self-regulation, establishing a more pervasive and efficient system of social control than its sovereign predecessor.

In *Security, Territory, Population* (2009), Foucault elucidates disciplinary power's fundamental strength through its panoptic nature, which enables comprehensive societal regulation (p. 45). The architectural paradigm of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon - a central watchtower encircled by cells where inmates remain uncertain of observation moments - serves as Foucault's metaphorical framework for understanding surveillance mechanisms. This structure ensures that each subject becomes "perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (Foucault, 1995, p. 200), inducing self-regulatory behavior through perpetual surveillance anxiety.

The disciplinary power apparatus emphasizes corporeal productivity through sustained surveillance and subtle coercion, employing confinement as a reformatory strategy. Modern power structures fundamentally address "the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" (p. 25) as their primary mechanism of control. This system "saves everything, including what it punishes. It is unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify" (Lemert, 2018, p. 323), operating through interconnected surveillance institutions - hospitals, educational establishments, and familial structures - creating a panoptic, carceral society.

The institutionalization of confinement and the power/knowledge apparatus emerged from the medicalization of madness. The Enlightenment established a unity between juridical subjectivity and society (Foucault, 2006, p. 128), constructing the foundation for subject formation through scientific validation. Foucault identified measure, inquiry, and examination as fundamental rules for knowledge establishment and power exercise (1997, p. 18), forming the cornerstone of human sciences' authority.

The institutional network functions to identify, categorize, and reform 'abnormal' behavior (p. 5). Through this diagnostic process, individuals become subject to authoritative institutional surveillance, normalizing self-

governance through knowledge acquisition. Foucault articulates that "power constantly asks questions and questions us; it constantly investigates and records; it institutionalizes the search for the truth, professionalizes it, and rewards it" (2003b, p. 25).

Scientific discourse legitimizes institutions until they become "so deeply embedded in the institutional field" (2015, p. 252), facilitating state intervention "and deeper intervention into all the details and relations of social life" (p. 23). This process establishes normalized behaviors as societal 'habits,' while deviations necessitate correction. Disciplinary mechanisms establish dominance through a "code of normalization" (Foucault, 1995, p. 38), embedding power structures within social existence through institutionalizing truth-seeking practices.

In his conceptualization of biopower, Foucault articulated it as "a number of phenomena...through which the basic biological features of the human species become the object of a political strategy" (2009, p. 1). This framework emerges when humanity, conceptualized as a 'species,' becomes subject to empirical scientific inquiry, leading to specialized knowledge and discourse professionalization. This professionalization establishes regulatory mechanisms that compel individuals toward internal conformity, manifesting in self-surveillance practices to avoid societal and institutional perceptions of abnormality. The apparatus of disciplinary power functions through the implementation of systematic discipline, cultivating bodies that are compliant and efficient in executing prescribed societal functions. Governmental apparatuses—educational institutions, carceral systems, and familial structures—function as mechanisms for producing individuals who internalize and embody state-sanctioned productivity paradigms.

The capacity to contribute to the social fabric in accordance with state-mandated regulations, behavioral protocols, and productivity metrics has evolved into a normative framework that subjects actively pursue and internalize. As Foucault eloquently elucidated in *The Abnormal* (2003a), "The norm is not simply and not even a principle of intelligibility; it is an element on the basis of which a certain exercise of power is founded and legitimized" (p. 50). Within the context of biopower, disciplinary normalization mechanisms concentrate on the physical and psychological regulation of bodies to generate productive, non-disabled individuals; consequently, unemployment and disability are constructed as pathological deviations from this norm. The institutionalization of medical and psychiatric disciplines has reconceptualized these abnormalities as pathologies requiring surveillance and therapeutic intervention to ensure conformity and productive capacity. Those who deviate from these established norms risk social ostracization and marginalization (2006, p. 103) while simultaneously being subjected to mechanisms of shame and infamy—disciplinary techniques designed to intensify self-surveillance practices (1997, p. 28) and enforce conformity to established norms.

I.2. BUTLER'S PERFORMATIVITY:

In Foucault's extensive analysis of institutionalized discipline, while primarily focused on madness, he articulated how the process of subjectification encompassed society holistically by establishing predetermined norms through the vectors of sex, sexuality, and gender (2006, p. 101). The omnipresent surveillant gaze of governmentality scrutinizes all members of society, categorizing any deviation from established norms as a punishable abnormality. This penal methodology has particularly intensified the marginalization of non-dominant groups, including racial minorities, the economically disadvantaged, the mentally ill, and women, subjecting them to heightened institutional and societal discrimination. The manifestation of disciplinary power's regulation of female behavior and the production of docile feminine bodies operates through institutionalized biopower and the implementation of patriarchal gender role constructs. Thus, subjectification theory posits that identities, particularly feminine ones, are not inherent but constructed through institutionalized power matrices that circumscribe individual existence. A. K. Singh (2011) delineates feminist theoretical discourse as encompassing "the body, class and work, disability, the family, globalization, human rights, popular culture, race and racism, reproduction, science, the self, sex work, and sexuality" (p. 1), demonstrating the intricate embedding of institutionalized patriarchy within feminine identity construction.

Numerous scholars have extensively elaborated the theoretical framework of feminine subjectification, with Judith Butler emerging as a particularly significant theorist who integrated it into feminist theory through her conception of 'gender performativity.' Her seminal work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), synthesizes Foucauldian disciplinarity with de Beauvoirian feminism. Butler builds upon Foucault's assertion in *The History of Sexuality* that normalized biopower regulations fundamentally derive from biological sex, its functions, and sexual desires (1978, p. 153), emphasizing the primacy of sexuality, sex, and social gender expression in identity formation. She echoes Foucault's theoretical framework in positing "that the female body is the arbitrary locus of the gender 'woman'" (1986, p. 35). Furthermore, she appropriates the Foucauldian emphasis on knowledge-based discourse and sociopolitical norms as mechanisms of individual control in *Gender Troubles*, theorizing that political and social institutions define women through sex and gender categorizations, resonating with de Beauvoir's assertion in *The Second Sex* (1949) that feminine identity is constructed rather than innate (p. 330). Butler's distinctive contribution lies in her reconceptualization of Foucault's 'subject' as a 'performer.'

The performer concept permeates Butler's theoretical corpus, exemplifying the intellectual lineage between her work and her French antecedents. She maintains that it is "impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (1990, p. 6), aligning with Foucault's analysis of institutionalized norms that generate the categories they seek to regulate. Paralleling Althusser's perspective, Butler maintains an anti-humanist stance regarding individual identity as non-fixed, particularly concerning sex and gender identification. This theoretical position manifests in her assertion that "[d]iscrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture" (1988, p. 522), suggesting an inherent dehumanization and absence of autonomy and authenticity in modern cultural contexts. This theoretical framework aligns with Foucault's proposition that liberation and individuality paradoxically constitute foundational elements of carceral and institution-dominated society.

Butler's theoretical framework intertwines with Foucauldian disciplinary theory yet diverges in its focus; while Foucault deconstructs metaphysics, Butler critiques patriarchal power structures through a feminist and gender studies lens. She conceptualizes sex and gender as instruments of power and control, mechanisms to which women are subjected. Butler posits that gender-based norms exhibit cultural variability despite their association with anatomical differences, thus reinforcing her assertion of their constructed nature. Her stance on the non-essentialist nature of biological sex and social gender, and their role in subjectification, is encapsulated in her statement: "[g]ender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized" (2004, p. 42).

Adhering to Foucauldian theory, Butler identifies modern scientific discourse as the primary architect of feminine self-identification and external definition. She characterizes gender as a socially and culturally constructed, normalized performance that "subscribes to forms psychological assessment...It makes assumptions about fathers and mothers, and what formal family life is, and should have been." This construct delineates a specific gender mold, consequently "pathologiz[ing]" (p. 77) non-conforming gender expressions. Historian Rosalind Miles (2001) corroborates this perspective, asserting that modern scientific discourse "became a new instrument of power; the swift colonization by men of this huge and virgin realm of knowledge placed in their hands the right to define, what was, and what should be [normal and natural]" (p. 225). This newfound authority enabled institutionalized science to redefine womanhood and prescribe gender-based roles. In this context, gender and sex function as regulatory apparatuses, aligning women's behavior with institutional imperatives and reinforcing their subordinate status.

Feminist theorists have critiqued "naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women's social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology" (Butler, 1988, p. 520), further aligning with Foucault's normalization theory and Butler's performativity concept. Butler's assertion that gender serves as the apparatus producing and normalizing masculine and feminine forms, along with hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative rules (2004, p. 42), reinforces the notion of gender as a Foucauldian mechanism of control and subjectification.

The conceptualization of sex and gender as instruments of women's subjectification through modern scientific discourse suggests that biopower and normalization processes serve as primary operatives. Gerda Lerner (1986) elucidates the relationship between sex/gender and biological definitions of men and women through the concept of a 'sex-gender system,' defined as "the institutionalized system which allots resources, property, and privileges to persons according to culturally defined gender roles. Thus, it is sex which determines that women should be child-bearers, it is the sex-gender system which assures that they should be child-bearers" (p. 238). Butler reinforces this connection, referencing Foucault's 'truth of sex' as being "produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms" (2002, p. 23). Furthermore, she posits that heterosexualization establishes the production of inequality between feminine and masculine, associating these constructs with biological male and female categories (p. 24), arguably through the authority of biopower discourse.

The institutionalization of female subordination through medical, educational, and matrimonial establishments employs psychological and medical discourses to instill physical and mental constructs of inferiority from birth. Historical examples illuminate this systematic subjugation: nineteenth-century craniology, supported by Darwinian theory, purported to establish male intellectual superiority through brain size measurements (Miles, 2001, p. 225). Similarly, J. Marion Sims' gynecological practices exemplified the weaponization of the distinction between womanhood as a social construct and biological femaleness, facilitating the dehumanization of enslaved black women for unethical experimentation (Chu, 2019, p. 45).

Scientific discourse and biopower reconceptualized female identity through the lens of reproductive function, characterizing it as "part of woman's natural destiny" (Miles, 2001, p. 244). This definition strategically tethered female identity to labor beneficial to patriarchal and governmental institutions while maintaining bodily docility. Human sciences effectively circumscribed women within social and cultural roles as wives and mothers, justifying this confinement through pseudo-scientific claims about female physical and mental predisposition to domestic labor while pathologizing resistance as madness.

Butler's performativity theory aligns with these concepts, conceptualizing gender and its attachment to sex as performatively produced acts "compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" and "constituting the identity it is purported to be" (2002, p. 33). This theoretical framework intersects with Foucauldian disciplinary biopower, as both theories identify sex categorization as an apparatus legitimizing behavioral and desire-based normalization. Both frameworks posit the subject's deprivation of agency through modern scientific discourse, which shapes individual understanding of corporeality and function.

The socio-cultural cultivation of biopower has received extensive theoretical attention. Millett (2000) characterizes patriarchy as a constructed system conditioned through naturalized social mechanisms (p. 28). Foucault's theoretical framework emphasizes normalization as the crucial bridge between disciplinarity and biopower in effective subjectification. This normalization process facilitates subjects' acceptance and enforcement of regulatory practices, as exemplified in the sex/gender system.

Butler's theoretical contribution suggests that "[t]here is already not only an epistemological frame within which the face [of the individual] appears, but an operation of power as well, since only by virtue of certain kinds of anthropocentric disposition and cultural frames will a given face seem to be a human" (2001, p. 23). This conceptualization is embedded in the "language that frames the encounter, and embedded in that language a set of norms concerning what will and will not constitute recognizability. This is Foucault's point" (p. 24).

Normalizing scientifically verified behaviors enables subject recruitment as norm enforcers without resistance. Butler conceptualizes gender as performance, necessitating the normalization of specific acts and behaviors. Through normalized social and biological discourses, gender roles become integrated into social belief systems, rendering gender appearance "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (Butler, 1988, p. 520). This echoes de Beauvoir's assertion that womanhood is acquired through normalized performances rather than innate characteristics. Butler's analysis of marriage across multiple

works, including "Performative Acts and Gender Constitutions" (1988), *Gender Troubles* (2002), and *Undoing Gender* (2004), exemplifies how normalized apparatuses utilize biological, cultural, and social discourses through anthropological examination of marriage institutions, kinship systems, and associated taboos.

In the theoretical frameworks of Butler and Foucault, matrimonial and kinship institutions function as heterosexually oriented regulatory systems that simultaneously monitor reproduction and naturalize discrete gender identities (Butler, 2004, p. 102). These systems operate through punitive regulations incorporating panoptic surveillance mechanisms. The familial, institutional apparatus socializes women to internalize maternal identification. Societal panoptic surveillance establishes presumptively biological and intuitive constructs regarding feminine requirements for stability, marital roles, and masculine provider functions. Deviations from these constructs—rejection of matrimony, career prioritization, or non-heterosexual orientations—engender internalized guilt and potential social ostracization, as such behaviors contravene established normative parameters.

Foucault and Butler emphasize normalization's centrality in operationalizing disciplinary ideologies throughout populations. The normative principle inherently encompasses "both qualification and correction" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 50). This principle normalizes human differentiation through a sex/gender matrix wherein biological sex determines identity and corresponding optimal behavioral performances, producing docile bodies that serve governmental interests. The theoretical intersection of Foucauldian disciplinary subjectification and Butlerian gender performativity illuminates oppressive power mechanisms. Foucault's subjectification theory posits power's omnipresence in institutional bodies and relations, operating through panoptic surveillance. This surveillance achieves optimal efficiency through normalized regulations, which ensure subject discipline. These theoretical foundations undergird Butler's gender performativity, wherein normalized gender-based performances constitute individual identification and self-identification processes. She conceptualizes subjects, particularly women, as performers—gender 'doers' who submit to discursive constructions of womanhood.

However, Foucault maintains that "[w]here there is power, there is resistance" (1978, p. 95). Power's panoptic and diffuse nature enables multiform resistance corresponding to power relations. Discourses functioning as power instruments can simultaneously serve as "a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (p. 101). Butler similarly identifies identity restrictions as catalysts for their rejection. Normative identity demands unattainable uniformity, compelling subjects either to resist regulatory compliance or succumb to pressure, exemplified by women historically pathologized as mad for conformity resistance (Butler, 2004, p. 77).

Butler observes that resistance systems, including feminism, may be constituted by the power apparatus they seek to resist (2002, p. 4). While Foucault targeted subjectification processes, Butler argues that beyond examining the "social construction of the subject, we have perhaps overlooked the fact that the very being of the self is dependent not just on the existence of the Other...but also on the possibility that the normative horizon, within which the Other sees and listens and knows and recognizes is also subject to a critical opening" (2001, p. 22). This opening interrogates truth regimes. The intricate entanglement of power systems and resistance mechanisms necessitates power relation analysis for its emancipatory potential. Deconstructing governmental apparatuses reveals their control mechanisms, facilitating resistance possibilities. Given their globally marginalized position, this analysis holds particular significance for women's emancipation and empowerment.

II. METHODOLOGY:

This research employs a qualitative comparative methodology integrating Foucault's conceptualization of institutionalized biopower with Butler's theory of gender performativity to examine how disciplinary power operates across cultural boundaries. Through meticulous analysis of three feminist novels - Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), Al-Essa's *All That I Want to Forget* (2014), and Nam-Joo's *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016) - the research examines how biopower manifests through mental health institutions in American,

Kuwaiti, and Korean contexts. The theoretical framework reveals how established authority and biopower discourse assert preconstructed codes of normalization that regulate feminine behavior through medical and psychiatric apparatuses. This investigation demonstrates how disciplinary techniques utilize women's mental health as an institutionalized instrument to pathologize resistance to gender norms while maintaining fundamental patterns in their implementation and effects on women's lived experiences across diverse cultural contexts.

III. ANALYSIS:

III. 1. INTRODUCTION:

Power structures and biopower discourse establish normalized behaviors through preconstructed codes that become second nature, utilizing human sciences as tools for disciplinary techniques. These methods empower knowledge by incorporating "life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and [make] its knowledge-power an agent of transformation" (Foucault, 1978, p. 143). Michel Foucault (1926-1984) developed the biopower concept, arguing that we are "subject to the truth in the sense that truth lays down the law...we are judged, condemned, forced to perform tasks, and destined to live and die in certain ways by discourses that are true" (2003, p. 25). This system maintains control through constant surveillance and categorization.

The theory extends to feminist literary analysis through significant works like Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), Al-Essa's *All That I Want to Forget* (2014), and Nam-Joo's *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (2016). These works provide a compelling examination of how biopower imposes gender norms through mental health institutions. Butler's work resonates with Foucault's biopower concept, describing gender performance as a "set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation" (1988, p. 526). This connection between their concepts enriches our understanding of how institutions create performers through surveillance, building legitimate knowledge systems for control. This disciplinary power operates productively across society, embedding control within social structures.

The 'make live' disciplinary model, as articulated by Foucault, enables governance through exercised rather than possessed power (1995, p. 26). This transformative power is evident in how human sciences like anthropology, sociology, psychology, and medicine form this system, transforming bodies into objects of knowledge. Butler's identification of gender as a "mark" of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference' (2002, p. 13) further enables monitoring and control. This shared perspective between Foucault and Butler reveals how institutional gazing creates categorization and control mechanisms that shape societal norms.

The medical gaze, as conceptualized through biopower, functions "to isolate features, to recognize those that are identical and those that are different, to regroup then, to classify them" (2003, p. 89), establishing a sophisticated apparatus of surveillance and categorization. This panoptic institutional framework generates hierarchical structures that simultaneously marginalize nonconformists while elevating those who embody prescribed standards. Through psychological diagnostics, Butler elucidates how medical institutions wield authority in normalizing specific behaviors, particularly regarding gender conformity. This manifestation of biopower "assumes the language of correction, adaptation, and normalization. It seeks to uphold the gender norms of the world as it is currently constituted and tends to pathologize any effort to produce gender in ways that fail to conform to existing norms" (2004, p. 77).

The perpetual surveillance mechanism, whether internally absorbed or externally imposed, facilitates the classification and management of individuals through biopower discourses. Contemporary societies have institutionalized classification systems - manifested through prisons, hospitals, and asylums - that have become so fundamentally embedded in social structures "that the mechanism of its effects could be posited as an anthropological constant" (Foucault, 1997, p. 27).

In examining gender categorization, Butler extends Foucauldian theory to illuminate how the binary classification of 'men' and 'women' reflects institutionalized power dynamics. This analysis brings to light the implications of biopower on gender categorization, making us more aware of the power dynamics at play.

Conforming members experience existential threat from deviants due to an "anxious and rigid belief that a sense of world and a sense of self will be radically undermined if such a being, uncategorizable, is permitted to live within the social world" (Butler, 2004, p. 34).

Butler's examination of the regulatory framework of sex categorization highlights its significant impact on women's bodies. She argues that the category of sex is inherently regulative, and any analysis that treats this category as presuppositional only serves to extend and legitimize this regulatory strategy as a power/knowledge regime. This regulatory mechanism is particularly evident in the 'hysterization of women's bodies', where biological determinism is used as a tool of control, reinforcing gender norms and perpetuating the power dynamics of biopower.

Operating within economic frameworks, the disciplinary apparatus exercises comprehensive control over bodies. It utilizes the body and its forces, utility, docility, distribution, and submission to enforce gender norms. This control extends to the thorough medicalization of bodies and sex, carried out in the name of the responsibility individuals owe to the health of their children, the stability of the family institution, and the security of society. The culmination of these mechanisms creates a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of itself and the law of its desire, thereby naturalizing patriarchal constructs of gender performance and pathologizing resistance.

III. 2. THE BELL JAR

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther, the protagonist and narrator, recalls her time in New York working in a summer internship at a women's magazine while feeling alienated due to not comprehending the common norms for women in American society in the 1950s. Plath depicts the social change experienced by the American culture in the 50s, which encourages women to work. However, being at the outset of change caused Esther to be caught in the conflict between the progressing modern era and a resisting society where both refuse to coexist. In the novel, Esther expresses feeling trapped due to her attempt to fit the socially accepted performance while being aware and confronted with her lack of desire towards it: "If neurotic is wanting two mutually exclusive things at one and the same time, then I'm neurotic as hell" (Plath, 1999, p. 99). This conflict causes her to feel lost and out of touch with her own identity to the point of exhibiting depressive and suicidal tendencies. The fact that Esther is not permitted career-centered goals complies with the normalized identification of femininity in 1950s American society. Biopower defined the 'feminine' role of a housewife and motherhood as healthy, while considering work-life for women to be unnatural.

In numerous instances, Esther's rejection of conforming to patriarchal norms is recognized as the source of her troubles. This recognition is expressed repeatedly by her partner, which is a matter that appears in all three novels. Esther expresses her opinion as "I began to think maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed, and afterwards you went about numb as a slave" (Plath, 1999, p. 90) after Buddy says her desire to write poetry will fade after having children. The normalization of the supposed biological naturalness of women's attachment to the familial institution is proven by Buddy's declaration: "You're crazy", and "You'll change your mind" as a response to Esther's decision to never get married (Plath, 1999, p. 98). This connects to the Foucauldian notion that madness is man-made by exemplifying the correlation between the male gaze and the medical gaze through Buddy. Esther being accused of madness due to her resistance to the norms and her lack of motherly instincts is explained by Foucault that madness in this example "is not a real punishment, but only the image of punishment, thus a pretense; it can be linked only to the appearance of a crime" (1988, p. 32). This proves the efficiency of biopower and medical institutions in imposing self-disciplinary behaviors on women to avoid the labeling of insanity, as well as labeling their resistance with invalidity.

Moreover, the definition of the familial institution as part of the 'healthy' identification of an individual is part of the disciplinary power's authority to decide the values it deems positive. When examining Esther, Doctor Gordon asks her, "Suppose you try and tell me what you think is wrong", to which Esther reacts with,

“What did I think was wrong? That made it sound as if nothing was really wrong, I only thought it was wrong” (Plath, 1999, p. 137). Biopower decides what subjects are and what they can be whether in the medical field or normalized among society members. This notion is what Foucault and Butler define as the politics of truth. Disciplinary power is the power of regulation that draws the “conditions of intelligibility by which the human emerges” (Butler, 2004, p. 57) and is recognized. Those conditions are composed of norms, “of practices that have become presuppositional, without which we cannot think the human at all” (Butler, 2004, p. 57). Therefore, biopower has the authority to invalidate Esther’s concerns in an example of the manipulation, or hysterization, that pathologizes women’s reluctance to accept their oppression.

Foucault’s conceptualization of panoptic houses of imprisonment and reform is depicted in Esther’s hospitalization in the mental asylum, as well as in the bell jar metaphor. A controlled space such as the asylum allows “an internal, articulated and detailed control—to render visible those who are inside it” (Foucault, 1995, p. 172). Such space transforms who it shelters and can “carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (Foucault, 1995, p. 172). Butler’s argument concerning this matter is that gender’s regulatory power shapes the subject. Therefore, gender is not only an apparatus of regulatory power, but it is itself a regulatory and disciplinary regime (Butler, 2004, p. 41) that operates other institutions such as the institution of psychiatry.

In those institutions, as is the case with Esther in the asylum, the subject is “perfectly individualized and constantly visible” (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). Throughout her stay at the asylum, Esther is constantly monitored and evaluated, and is constantly aware and reminded of being labeled as crazy/insane, especially by her community. She retold several visits that she received from members of her community and concluded that: “I could tell he thought I was crazy as a loon”, and “I hated those visits, because I kept feeling the visitors measuring my fat and stringy hair against what I had been and what they wanted me to be, and I knew they went away utterly confounded” (Plath, 1999, p. 213). Such instances assert the carceral behavior adopted by the American society as it pathologizes Esther’s conflicting desires. The sense of loss of self, which is the cause of her depression, is likened to being confined in a bell jar. After the electroshock therapy, Esther “felt surprisingly at peace. The bell jar hung, suspended, a few feet above my head. I was open to the circulating air” (Plath, 1999, p. 227). The therapy is aimed at correcting and reforming Esther, meaning that it is supposed to reform her to adhere to the societal norms expected of her as a woman.

The Bell Jar sets a major presentation of the 1950s American society and its norms; thus, portraying the role of women in that transitional era. Along with the effects of the Cold War, the 1950s are characterized by the instability of, and between, gender and marital roles required from women. In her analysis of *The Bell Jar* using a Foucauldian conceptualization, Bærevær theorizes in her thesis *Esther Greenwood’s Panopticon: Female Identity Through Self-Policing in The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath (2007) that the American society abides in panoptic self-surveillance. She asserts that the “historical aspects of fifties America, together with its emphasis on conventional values, affected Esther’s mental health through the imposition of self-policing” (p. 65). The fifties being a post-war era caused society to seek security in promoting settlement into marriage and family-life, “which in turn led to a society of order in which suburbia participated as a significant allegorical image of the “correct” society” (p. 66). All highlights the patriarchal exploitation of biopower and its linkage to the cultural and political landscape of 1950s America. As well as its strategy of imposing or diagnosing madness into non-conforming women.

III.3. ALL THAT I WANT TO FORGET

The protagonist in the novel is Fatima, an orphan who is placed under the guardianship of her step-brother Saqr, only to be married off to her husband Faris as she refuses the authority of to chase her dream of being a poet. Butler states that gender performances construct a sense of self, and failure to adhere to them removes the subject’s autonomy and sense of identity (2002, p. 11). Likewise, Fatima in *All That I Want to Forget* faces diagnoses of mental illness due to the lack of sense of self that originates from the refusal of

conformity to the imposed gender performance. Fatima's loss of autonomy and control over her life is the origin of her frequent and continuous episodes of anxiety and depression. For instance, Fatima's reaction when Saqr takes away her freedom is, "I have to die. Stamp out my senses bolting from so much fright...There is no sense in fighting, every struggle is a prolongation of the torture session called my life" (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 179). This reaction is a result of the punishment she faces for her rebellion against the image she is supposed to portray as a woman according to her step-brother.

Besides, the license of biopower and psychiatric institutions managed to diagnose Fatima's non-conforming behavior as an illness. This diagnosis allowed her to be punished with the banishment of her credibility when she tried to gain back control over her life. That is present when Faris inquires, "Wait! Did you take your medicine?" when Fatima calls demanding a divorce (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 199). His question takes advantage of her previous breakdowns to take away the reliability of her mental stability and blame it for her resistance. This resonates with the normalized concept that a sane wife must be submissive and obedient to her husband; otherwise, she is sick and/or insane. Also, similar to Esther, this suspicion of Fatima's sanity came from her husband who should have been the most knowledgeable about her condition. Thus, giving him the authority to judge and socially diagnose her.

Fatima expresses refusal of the culturally presupposed maternal instincts, and is elated upon revealing that she is infertile: "I hugged the medical certificate that proved my infertility with more than relief. I hugged it and danced with it like a triumph" (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 195). Her attitude is associated with Butler's conceptualization that maternity is an essential part of the performance of womanhood, which connects it to its biological element of femaleness through the credibility of medical discourse. Fatima's gratitude for missing a crucial component of the female performance highlights her non-conformity. Besides, the biological aspect of pregnancy and childcare has been historically used to exploit female bodies for reproduction within patriarchal regimes. As Butler concludes regarding the conceptualization of maternal instincts in the kinship system, "we might understand the exchange of women as imposing a compulsory obligation on women's bodies to reproduce" (2002, p. 115). As a result, Fatima's positive reaction is a consequence of her gaining a sense of body autonomy that the medical institution validates since her infertility performs as a pardon sentence from her obligations to her husband.

Also, Fatima points out her awareness of the injustice that women face as a minority by thinking of the future her daughter may face had she given birth to one: "Another female. A functional being to justify violation, a being cut into and undergoing revision, objectified, crucified, an offering to attract man's violence, to release the lust for blood" (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 194). Her thoughts draw attention to the trauma she experienced from losing her autonomy and being aware that it will be passed on to her children due to it being the normalized cultural and biological destiny of womanhood. She acknowledges that despite her own beliefs, this injustice will be passed on to her daughter due to society's influence. Fatima discloses that before her infertility diagnosis, "I used to squeeze my legs together in bed shouting at him so he wouldn't come near me. "It would be a disaster! A disaster!" I don't want to be the cause for another being brought into this frightening place, I don't want to be responsible for anyone's pain" (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 194). Her awareness materialized since the "medical, psychiatric, psychological...made the family the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and the abnormal" (Foucault, 1995, p. 216) which aligns with her own experience.

The utilization of mental illnesses sprung from the oppressive expectations imposed on women due to their sex/gender. In the novel, the decline of Fatima's mental health and the employment of monitoring methods of imprisonment are explored as she experiences suicidal tendencies due to her imprisonment by Saqr, but is prevented due to Saqr's watchful eye. Fatima states "Saqr comes down to the basement every two or three hours, monitoring the progress of my ruin. He sees me sobbing and circling my cage like an animal, feels reassured, and goes back up. How can I die under surveillance?" (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 179). Saqr's attitude signifies Fatima's society as it imposes patriarchal ideologies on women while keeping them under constant surveillance to prevent their escape. Additionally, she recalls her fits of anger and night frights. She recalls the "antidepressants, migraine drugs, and other indications of [her] misery and unsuitability" (Al-Essa, 2019, p.

193), proving the corrective role of the medical and familial institutions, as well as the role of confinement in managing subjects/patients.

The theme of medical subjectification is further portrayed through the medical attention Fatima receives during her breakdowns and how it contributes to her imprisonment. Faris takes Fatima to the hospital where she gets an “injection, and another and another. He’d say, What do you want? I’d say to him, I want me for me [divorce me so I can have me]...He’d say, I can’t do it! You’re my wife. Another injection in my vein” (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 196). This shows the involvement of medication and hospitalization to keep Fatima docile and contain her attempts of resistance. Alongside the utilization of mental illness, Fatima’s marriage represents a form of confining asylum in what Foucault described as a destiny that marked the Western culture, and then, all civilization. Al-Essa points out through Fatima how the Kuwaiti society grants authority to men: “In the end no one will blame you if you act like a small god. You’ll find the judge and the cleric on your side, and society puts its full weight behind your authority” (2019, p. 212), and that allows both Saqr and Faris to question her sanity when she rebels. Al-Essa highlights the patriarchal dominance in the Kuwaiti society, and manifests it in Saqr and Faris to show how despite their overt differences, they are both agents of patriarchal norms.

Moreover, when Fatima confronts Faris after her escape, “The drugs, the sleeping pills, the antidepressants, the migraines, the nightmares...What a heavy price you’re making me pay in order to stop writing” (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 215), to which Faris justifies with, “We live in a small country. You know how people would receive something like this” (Al-Essa, 2019, p. 215). This destiny involves madness being doubly alienated within the family, “and by a truly alienating situation in an asylum constituted in the family mode” (Foucault, 1988, p. 253). Due to her refusal of the patriarchal norms, Fatima is alienated from others and herself, and is met with pathologizing of her resistance. She is physically violated and is medically induced to force her docility, which all proves the powerful involvement of biopower and medical institutions in the hysterization and manipulation of women in Kuwaiti society as well as the American.

The Kuwaiti society, in parallel with the American fifties, experienced a transitional period that caused a form of unsteadiness regarding women’s position, which is determined by both traditional values and government. As Tétreault declares in “Civil Society in Kuwait: Protected Spaces and Women’s Rights” (1993): “Kuwaiti social practices are defined by laws, mediated by institutions, and shaped by traditional values” (p. 282). The manifestation of the combined authorities of both government and traditions created the concept of femininity according to the dominating ideologies to confine women to a gender-specific existence. The Foucauldian disciplinary attitude is exhibited in all life aspects strategically to form a coercive power to exploit the female identification. For instance, job opportunities are “constrained by the effects of values on social practices. Even trained women with demonstrated interest and competence in certain positions find it hard to obtain jobs that would require them to go against traditional norms” (p. 282). Hence, Saqr and Faris’ prevention of Fatima’s interests in poetry is a demonstration of the social hold on women’s identity. This attitude, supported by official institutions redirects women to adapt to an exploitable identification that is contained in domestic servitude and maternity. An identification that matches Fatima and her Kuwaiti society to Esther’s American fifties.

III. 4. KIM JIYOUNG, BORN 1982

This novel follows Kim Jiyoung, a representative of the average Korean woman, throughout her life from birth till adulthood, to illustrate the patriarchal oppression women face in Korea under the Confucian system. The theme of biopower’s control and authority is fairly illustrated in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* when considering that it is narrated by Jiyoung’s psychiatrist. This narrative method highlights the deprivation of control and autonomy that is authorized by medical institutions that both Esther and Fatima experienced. Particularly, Butler describes the aim of psychoanalysis as to offer the patient a chance to put together her story from the past to produce a narrative to know oneself. This reconstruction of the patient’s identity happens through the therapist’s guidance and contribution (2001, p. 32). This matter is presented when the last chapter

reveals the narrator to be a male psychiatrist who discloses to have exposed his wife to a similar predicament as Jiyoung's: "my wife made it through each day, one day at a time, with the help of a revolving door of nannies to look after our son" (Cho, 2021, p. 157). Both women's voices were not heard directly, but were monitored and filtered through the patriarchal gaze in a manifestation of disciplinary biopower that is authorized by patriarchal Korean culture. This conveys the possible bias in the doctor's account by exemplifying it in his disregard for his wife's struggle as she sacrifices her career dreams for domestic life in a mirror image of Jiyoung's story. So, despite the story belonging to Jiyoung to represent the struggle and oppression Korean women face, the story remains supervised by the patriarchal medical gaze.

Besides, the novel opens with the effects of sexism and oppression that Korean women are exposed to, while highlighting the performativity of women's existence. After introducing Jiyoung, the novel documents the beginning of her dissociative behavior when she personifies the women in her life who are victims of the sexism that lasted through multiple generations, "Daehyun laughed at his wife, who was talking like a much older woman [her mother]" (Cho, 2021, p. 2), and "A few days later, Jiyoung said that she was Cha Seungyeon, a college friend who died a year before" (Cho, 2021, p. 3). The Confucian Korean society trapped Jiyoung in an unescapable maze that drove her to madness, especially due to the realization that all women surrounding her have faced the same normalized oppression. In a fashion similar to Fatima's awareness of the continuation of female oppression, she adopts her daughter's behavior along with other subjugated women: "she was sleeping next to their daughter. Both were sucking their thumbs...Jiyoung's tongue stuck out a little and she smacked her lips, just like a baby" (Cho, 2021, p. 3). While Esther and Fatima reacted to the ontological alienation in the form of depressive episodes and numbness, Jiyoung adopts the performance of other silenced women in a metaphor that voices and points out the variations of the feminine gender performance, yet how its essence of oppression remains unified. This metaphor, like many instances of women's rejection of oppression, is manifested as a mental illness.

Additionally, Jiyoung faces a lack of understanding from her husband, Daehyun, like Buddy with Esther, and Faris with Fatima. When Jiyoung speaks up about the struggle and injustice women face during her dissociative episode, "Daehyun had to cup his hand over Jiyoung's mouth and drag her out. 'She's not well, Father. You've got to believe me, Mum, Father. Suhyun, too. She hasn't been well lately'" (Cho, 2021, p. 11). His behavior pertains to Foucault's statement that "minority under family tutelage, a juridical status in which the madman's civil status is alienated, becomes a concrete situation in which his concrete liberty is alienated" (1988, p. 253). Further, Jiyoung asks her husband after being called a mum-roach by a stranger, "Am I stealing from you? I suffered deathly pain having our child...I gave it all up to raise our child. And I've become vermin. What do I do now?" (Cho, 2021, p. 154), and where he answers with, "That's not true. Don't think like that" (Cho, 2021, p. 154). Accordingly, she is admitted to a psychiatrist by her husband without her knowledge of the nature of the session initially. There, she is diagnosed and prescribed antidepressants and sleeping pills to manage the symptoms of her reclining mental health that were a result of her suffocating under the pressure of the Confucian Korean society. The behaviors of strangers towards her, the ignorance of her husband, and the hypocrisy of her doctor are all evidence of how normalized women's struggle is in Korean society.

Among other disciplinary mechanisms employed and distinguished in the novel is the exploitation of women's labor using their biology and medical discourse. Biopower and biological discourse managed to normalize attaching domestic labor and childcare to women due to their reproductive abilities. For instance, Daehyun naturally saw caring for his and Jiyoung's child as Jiyoung's duty. To which she answers, "Isn't this your house, too? Your home? Your child?...Why do you keep saying "help out" like you're volunteering to pitch in on someone else's work?" (Cho, 2021, p. 131). Moreover, when Jiyoung complains of wrist pain due to caring for her child along with housework, her doctor answers, "Don't you have a washing machine for laundry and vacuum cleaner for cleaning? Women these days - what have you got to whine about?" (Cho, 2021, p. 136). Thus, attaching domestic labor to women's biology while undermining their efforts and struggles when it comes to those tasks.

Lastly, since pregnancy is normalized to be the 'natural destiny' for women in society, pressure and scrutiny are instantly placed on Jiyoung when she and Daehyun choose to delay having children. Jiyoung is expected to reproduce, and blame is placed on her when she does not: "[T]he elders were convinced, regardless of Jiyoung's input, that she couldn't get pregnant, and proceeded to investigate" (Cho, 2021, p. 120). Further, Cho signifies this pressure on women by exploring Misook's—Jiyoung's mother—experience. After giving birth to two daughters in a society that favors sons, Misook had to abort her third female pregnancy:

None of it was her fault, but all the responsibility fell on her, and no family was around to comfort her through her harrowing physical and emotional pain. The doctor held Oh Misook's hands as she howled like an animal that had lost its young to a beast...Thanks to the old lady doctor's words, Oh Misook was able to avoid losing her mind.
(Cho, 2021, p. 19)

Like Fatima, Misook was aware of the oppression that would fall upon both her and that child from her punitive society, which pressured her to make that decision. All those cases illustrate how medical and kinship institutions are used as practices "that emerge to address fundamental forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, [and] generational ties" (Butler, 2004, p. 103) to enforce self-subjectification.

Social exploitation of disciplinary Foucauldian institutions and performative gender roles is fundamental in the make-up of Confucian Korean society. The Confucian system is solidified through the production of a 'correct' image of what womanhood entails. Confucianism has been purposing social values and institutions to establish its philosophy into Korean social structure to take advantage of its members, especially women. Nan-Yeong Park Matthews clarifies in *Development, Culture and Gender in Korea: A Sociological Study of Female Office Employment in Chaebol* (2005) that Confucian "philosophy stresses a rigid hierarchal order of human relationship based on age, sex, and inherited social status" (p. 7). This philosophy places women as inferior to men, and imprisons them into the roles of a daughter, wife, or mother. Despite the modernization of the system to grant women a relatively more significant level of freedom to participate out of the domestic confinement and in the workplace, Cho depicts through her protagonist that the culture and social values remain repudiate regarding the matter. In a picture aligned with Fatima and Esther's societies, Jiyoung's Korean society faces a transitional period that opens the paths for women to participate alongside men, although with resisting members that insist on limiting women's roles to the household. Park Matthews asserts so as "it is hard to escape the impression that essentially women's status remains secondary, decorative as 'flowers of the office', and that injustice and gendered practices are still common at the workplace and in society" (p. 7).

IV. CONCLUSION:

The study explores the representation of disciplinary power and normalization within the context of each novel demonstrating the role of governmentality and institutionalized norms in enforcing pre-constructed performances and their manifestations in educational, medical, and domestic institutions. It confirms that all forms of institutionalized bodies are interconnected, creating a panoptic web that leads to self-surveillance, thus trapping women in a carceral society that is not limited to Western civilization. The findings reveal that a punitive society exists in American, Kuwaiti, and Korean contexts, with differences stemming from the post-war modern mentality in America for Esther, the conservative Kuwaiti society for Fatima, and Confucian traditional values in Korea for Jiyoung.

Due to the internalization of feminine performance as identity, abnormal behavior is often medicalized by biopower, exploiting the concept of the "mad woman." Analyzing the novels concerning the authority of biopower illustrates how 1950s American, early 2000s Kuwaiti and modern Korean societies embrace gender

norms. It highlights that these norms are embedded within society due to the authority of biopower and human knowledge. Biopower punishes and controls disturbing or non-conforming behavior through psychiatric imprisonment, shaming, and loss of credibility to maintain adherence to expected norms. The forced hysterization faced by all three protagonists underscores this issue, showing the pathologization of resistance and abnormality alongside their confinement as a means of reform. Esther is institutionalized in a mental asylum and subjected to shock therapy. Fatima is medicated with drugs and antidepressants by her husband, while Jiyoung is diagnosed and treated by a psychiatrist. This evidence points to biopower as a primary force in enforcing disciplinary power and maintaining socially accepted performances.

The study also observes the rise of resistance and the various methods exhibited by each protagonist. It examines the outcomes of their resistance, focusing primarily on the differences between Fatima and her counterparts, as Foucault believed in the potential of creative literature to emancipate docile subjects. The research presents Foucault's idea that "knowledge is power" as a double-edged sword; all three novels utilize this concept for protection, empowerment, and resignification, allowing the protagonists to reclaim their existence and personhood beyond the confines of patriarchal performances. Additionally, this research showcases the subversion of patriarchal imagery in literature through the deconstruction of normalized gender roles and performances, actively challenging their dominance. Despite the struggles, the protagonists demonstrate resilience and the pursuit of identity beyond societal constraints.

All previous novels have employed Foucault's concept that "knowledge is power," highlighting the prevalence of this tendency and the ignorance surrounding its history, implications, and consequences. The popularity of this tendency underscores the necessity of dissecting and analyzing normalized disciplinary strategies. We can better protect the targeted demographics by raising awareness about controlling methods that are not confined to a particular era, culture, or society. Literature can make these complex ideas more digestible.

Moreover, dismantling institutionalized norms reveals the cultural and oppressive marginalization within them. Moghadam discusses family systems in the Middle East, stating, "[d]espite Muslim women's legal and religious rights to inherit, own, and dispose of property, this right often has been circumvented by more powerful male relatives, including her brothers, uncles, or husband's agnates" (Moghadam, 2004, p. 142). The power granted to men in Middle Eastern societies, even in light of Sharia laws, is evidence of patriarchal domination that normalizes and legalizes the treatment of women as second-class citizens, illustrating the systemic oppression of women that disregards Sharia and Islamic values, similar to the situation faced by Al-Essa's protagonist. As oppressive power takes legal forms, Butler argues that subversion will occur "from within the terms of the law," allowing the "culturally constructed body" to be liberated, moving beyond its "natural" past and toward an open future filled with cultural possibilities (2002, p. 119).

Understanding disciplinary and performative power relations is equally important in North Korea. Butler notes that the "possibilities of re-signifying heterosexuality itself are refused precisely because heterosexuality is understood as a total system that requires a thoroughgoing displacement" (p. 154). She then outlines two possible responses to this totalizing view: "(a) radical conformity or (b) radical revolution." The former reflects the experience of the older generation, who had limited choices and often submitted for their protection, while the latter was recently embodied in the 4B movement in Korea. The 4B, or 4-No's movement, refuses participation in patriarchal relationships, including heterosexual marriage, childbirth, romance, and sexual acts (Lee & Jeong, 2021, pp. 633-4). Lee and Jeong argue that women's orientation toward the future should be viewed as a critical, generational response to the presentist way of living, which became the norm for young, single women in the 2000s (p. 641). This reaction arose from the severe oppression experienced by women under the patriarchal Confucian system. Kim Ji-young, Born 1982 portrays the struggle of Korean women by providing an in-depth look at the issue through the experiences of a character that embodies the average Korean woman, allowing their voices to be heard and their oppressive marginalization to be exposed. Literature offers a transparent and intimate view of the causes and context behind these movements.

Therefore, the instances of revived oppressive performances and the exploitation of power relations that exploit women's labor indicate the urgent need to analyze feminist literature concerning these performances and disciplinary powers. Studying the patriarchal forces at play in America during the 1950s reveals the exploitive dynamics surrounding the 'tradwives' phenomenon. Analyzing the normalization of women's submission under the guise of religious and social values in Kuwait prompts us to question the power dynamics within Arab Muslim cultures. Examining the struggles faced by women in the novel sheds light on the feminist resistance in Korea, expanding our understanding of women's human experiences and the demand for justice. This analysis interrelates the intimate portrayals of the protagonists with the real struggles of women across various cultures and societies.

Future research should explore the diverse forms and representations of the theory of disciplinary normalization and biopower and their connections to gender performativity in literature. This exploration will amplify the voices of marginalized individuals. Additionally, a deeper investigation into various strategies implemented across different cultures and eras is essential due to the dynamic nature of these theories, their inclusivity, and other means of resistance. Such efforts will enhance our understanding of how these theories manage human behavior, empowering targeted individuals and helping prevent exploitation.

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