

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: TRACING PATRIARCHAL PANOPTICISM IN LOUISE O' NEILL'S *ONLY EVER YOURS*

*LA BELLA Y LA BESTIA: RASTREANDO EL
PANOPTICISMO PATRIARCAL EN ONLY EVER
YOURS DE LOUISE O' NEILL*

P. Shubha

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, India
Shubha.udupi.95@gmail.com

S. Christina Rebecca

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, India
christinaengdept@gmail.com

Received: December 31 2023 **Revised version accepted:** July 23 2024

How to cite Shubha, P., & Rebecca, S. Christina. "Beauty and the Beast: Tracing Patriarchal Panopticism in Louise O' Neill's *Only Ever Yours*." *The Grove. Working Papers on English Studies*, vol. 31, 2024, e8604. <https://doi.org/10.17561/grove.v31.8604>

Abstract

Only Ever Yours is a dystopian narrative underlining a feminist discourse that critiques the impractical obsessions of the masculine culture over the beauty standards of women. Set in an intensely regimented institutional structure in which young girls are tamed by an androcentric authority, the novel magnifies the gravity of patriarchal practices in reducing the status of women into mere objects by overemphasising their physical appearance and sensuality. This paper interrogates the living condition of the female characters that are subject to rigorous control mechanisms of the institution that seeks to mould them into ideal companions for young men adhering to patriarchal stereotypes. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of 'Panopticism', this paper critically examines the representation of control structure in the select text, revealing its profound entrenchment of patriarchal ideologies. Moreover, it highlights the reciprocity between the panoptic system and the patriarchal gaze in enforcing a self-disciplinary

inclination in women and examines its psychological repercussions on them.

Keywords: Panopticism, Patriarchal Society, Control mechanisms, Female Objectification, Beauty Stereotypes.

Resumen

Only Ever Yours es una narración distópica que subraya un discurso feminista que critica las impracticables obsesiones de la cultura masculina sobre los estándares de belleza de las mujeres. Ambientada en una estructura institucional intensamente regimentada en la que las niñas jóvenes son domesticadas por una autoridad androcéntrica, la novela magnifica la gravedad de las prácticas patriarcales en la reducción de la condición de las mujeres a meros objetos al subrayar su apariencia física y sensualidad. Este documento interroga la condición de vida de los personajes femeninos que están sujetos a rigurosos mecanismos de control de la institución que busca moldearlos en compañeros ideales para jóvenes hombres que adhieren a estereotipos patriarcales. Basándose en el concepto de “Panopticismo” de Michel Foucault, este trabajo examina críticamente la representación de la estructura de control en el texto seleccionado, revelando su profundo anclaje en las ideologías patriarcales. Además, destaca la reciprocidad entre el sistema panóptico y la mirada patriarcal en la aplicación de una inclinación auto-disciplinaria en las mujeres y examina sus repercusiones psicológicas sobre ellas.

Palabras clave: Panopticismo, Sociedad Patriarcal, Mecanismos de Control, Cosificación Femenina, Estereotipos de Belleza.

1. Introduction

The discourse of female objectification critically evaluates how the patriarchal institution reinforces gender roles to establish a social structure characterised by gendered norms favouring the masculine culture. The traditional roles attributed to women serve to confine them primarily to the sphere of reproduction, wherein paramount emphasis is laid upon women’s trait of attracting her mate and ensuring her fertility. Hence, femininity is generally linked to aspects of beauty and the body, often eclipsing the recognition of women’s creative faculties, talents and intellectual capabilities. Consequently, women’s social worth is chiefly assessed based on their appearance and sensuality while men are valued in terms of their performances in the production sphere and their intellectual capabilities in the economic front. This disparity is realised

through the stereotypical norms associated with women's physical beauty that ultimately gets perpetuated through the socio-cultural scrutiny of women's body. However, the growing fantasy over artificial beauty enhancers and cosmetic surgeries among working women in the contemporary era witnesses an unchanged perception regarding the beauty codes of women and hence the victimisation of women in this context is still a reality. Developing on this argument, Heflick and Goldenberg contend that objectification is a "direct response to a focus on women's physical features *by others*" (225), and as a result women undergo the mode of self-objectification in order to fit into the cultural standards and expectations of the society. John Berger's remarkable statement, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (47), succinctly captures the aforementioned discussion over the internalisation of cultural practices that prioritise the aspect of beauty in women. These assertions mark the core argument of this paper in association with the analysis of the dystopian narrative *Only Ever Yours* by Louise O'Neill that efficiently interrogates the beauty stereotypes of women that are inherent in a phallogocentric society.

Only Ever Yours manifests an enthralling feminist critique on the severity of the patriarchal obsession towards female objectification through a dystopian illustration characterised by highly despotic masculine political scrutiny. The narrative exposes the victimization of adolescent girls within a private and a confined institution that is propelled by patriarchal principles. This school is administered by a malevolent figure referred to as 'Father' who is rigorously committed to train the 'eves' (denoting the girls under the school's ownership) in accomplishing impeccable standards of physical and facial features as outlined by the institutional directive known as the 'Noah's Project'. The primary objective of this project alludes to create ideal female companions for young men, ultimately aiming to uphold their traditional gender roles of physical attractiveness and reproduction. In this context, Ekaterina Muraveva's observation about how the eves are subjected to a dual form of commodification is evident through the statement, "the female body is a commodity, that is, on the one hand, a product of individual and collective labour and, on the other, has value only through social relationships" (130), suggesting the school's attempts to enforce impractical beauty codes on eves and attach their value solely to winning a companion. Consequently, the novel reveals the intrusion of

patriarchy into the private realm of women, resulting in men asserting dominance over all aspects of women's personal choices and opinions and therefore the "girls are brainwashed to believe that they no longer have control over their own bodies, which are, first, a property of the State and, secondly, of the man that chooses them" (Elices 77). Thus, the critical examination of the crisis of individual identity in the girls prompts to delve into the problematic aspects of patriarchal authority and its control structure in the novel.

O'Neill presents a compelling depiction of a dystopian society by skilfully crafting the school as an ideological prototype of the contemporary patriarchal society. The setting and ambiance of the institution effectively emulate a metaphorical prison, creating a palpable sense of claustrophobia along the narrative. The school encompasses multiple areas serving distinct purposes to facilitate the requirements of the institution, constituting the gym, the beauty parlour, and the surgery room among many others. These designated areas consolidating the structural pattern of the school reflect the overall scheme of the patriarchal notions in formulating and conditioning the lives of the eves, underlining the stringent expectations and standards imposed on them. Moreover, the portrayal of the compartments that are exclusively designed to accommodate the eves is noteworthy as they bear a striking resemblance to sophisticated prison cells. Correspondingly, the protagonist of the novel, Freida's description of her personal cell, stated as "I blink as my cubicle flickers in the subdued light ... It is a small house made of mirrors, every surface papered in glass. And there I am. And there. And there. I am imprisoned in these walls" (O'Neill 4-5), underscores the patriarchal intentions of the school in shaping the eves' psychic orientation and diverting their attention solely toward their physical appearance and sensuality. Thereby, the interiors of the school are meticulously organized to facilitate the practical execution of the school's agenda. Consequently, the collective architectural features of the school contribute to an illusion of estrangement as evidenced by Freida's statement: "but sometimes it feels impossible that anything exists outside of this glass dome. It feels as if this is all that exists or ever will exist (295). These anxious words by Frieda articulate her feeling of hopelessness toward the oppressive tendencies of the school that constraints the girls' freedom of thought and aspirations for a life of self-determined experiences.

The illustration of the school and the living condition of the eves unveil the structural implications of this particular institution in manifesting the administrative ambitions of the androcentric authority in establishing a complete grip over the female characters in the novel. The school is designed in such a way that it serves as a potent tool in creating a suitable atmosphere to impose stringent rules, extreme control strategies, and micro-management within the fictional world of the novel. In this context, renowned post-structural theorist, Michel Foucault's critical insight about the 'Panopticon', an architectural model of prison designed by the social theorist Jeremy Bentham is highly relevant. His application of this model as a metaphor for social control is remarkable as it promotes a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of control operative within diverse institutional setups and therefore Claire Wrobel claims: "Foucault's reading of the treatment of space in the Panopticon is in keeping with Bentham's presentation of his institution as a place in which full mastery of space can be achieved" (par. 22). Hence, a comparison between the administrative policies of the represented patriarchal institution in *Only Ever Yours* and the ideological implications of the architectural model of the Panopticon aids in scrutinising the multifaceted discourse concerning power dynamics and control structures.

2. Conceptualising Patriarchal Panopticism in *Only Ever Yours*

The power relation between the dominant and the subservient categories constitute the foundational element of the dystopian genre as these narratives focus on instilling the dystopian dread based on how the dominant category exploit its power toward the enslavement of the subservient category. Consequently, these narratives typically rely on world-building, a significant factor that vividly constructs the setting, as it plays a pivotal role in inflicting the ideological premises of the dominant category through unimaginable extents of disciplinary measures. Likewise, in *Only Ever Yours*, the patriarchal regime strategically utilizes the school as a backdrop to disseminate their oppressive goals against the female inmates, offering a framework for critiquing the exploitation and objectification of the female characters. Therefore, it is significant to note how the structural attributes of the school effectively implements the conditioning practices by those in authority, ultimately shaping individuals into extremely disciplined

subjects. Further, Sandra Lee Bartky's assertion that "[t]he construction of feminine body is chiefly determined by the process of discipline it undergoes, a discipline of the inegalitarian sort" (37), strikingly reflects the enforcement of set standards of femininity through the internalisation of control and discipline in women. However, the disciplined construction goes beyond the stereotypes associated with the female body, finding its expression in the broader social expectations that are deeply rooted in gender inequality.

In *Only Ever Yours*, the mechanisms of controlling the women are chiefly "embedded in the ideology of self-dispossession of their bodies by the state" (Naufina 179), reflecting on the micro-policing tendency of the androcentric authority. Falling in line with this interpretation, John Berger puts forth his argument that "patriarchy is exhibited as being panoptic first through the action of men objectifying women" (qtd. in. Wright). This statement emphasises the pervasive nature of masculine gaze over women that acts as a kind of surveillance ensuring the supremacy of men in the society. Moreover, Bartky observes the impacts of this intrusive act of men over women stating that "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other" (34). Therefore, the control structure imposed by the patriarchal regime within the school is primarily exhibited through consistent monitoring carried out by the masculine gaze over the female characters in the novel. Thus, the analysis of the spatial structure and the institutional governance of the school methodically interlink the notions of patriarchy and the impacts of Panopticism in the novel.

The exploration of Foucault's concept of Panopticism is essential to understand the panoptic dimensions of patriarchy. Panopticism is a conceptual extension of the rationale behind Bentham's architectural plan of a disciplinary institution, known as the 'Panopticon'. To comprehend Panopticism, it is essential to explore the structural facet of the Panopticon and hence the following description by Foucault encompasses a detailed account of its design:

... at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the

other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy (200).

In alignment with this depiction, it is clear that the Panopticon represents an architectural model characterized by the power dynamics between the central authority, symbolized by the supervisor, and the outer periphery, representing the prisoners. The term ‘panopticon,’ rooted in Greek, translates to ‘all-seeing,’ and Bentham has maintained the essence of the term by incorporating comparable features into his design. Conceptually, the structure embodies an inherent system of control, employing strategic surveillance methods to discourage violation of disciplinary rules among prisoners, fostering the illusion of a perpetual monitoring structure. Consequently, to regulate this kind of control, Bentham has devised distinct formulas and technicalities to enact discipline within the institution by making power ‘visible’ so that “the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon” (201), and ‘unverifiable’ so that “the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (201). Therefore, in Foucault’s perspective, the expected outcome of this ingenious plan is to:

induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assured the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of the power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers (201).

The above interpretation of the Panopticon encapsulates the emphasis given to surveillance and how it transforms individuals into subjects of programmed submission in order to uphold discipline within the institution. Considering the control system operative within the architectural design of the Panopticon, a relative comparison is evident in O’Neill’s depiction of the patriarchal regime in *Only Ever Yours*. In both scenarios, the constant

implementation of control in the form of surveillance, whether through the central tower or through the masculine gaze, contribute to the internalisation of societal expectations and ideologies of the dominant category. Moreover, the technique of the Panopticon in making power visible and unverifiable closely resembles the implications of the male gaze in a patriarchal society that ensures an “automatic functioning of power” (210) in women. This idea gets reflected through John Berger’s interpretations of how the self-dispossession of female body is ingrained in a patriarchal society:

To be born a woman has to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space... And so she comes to consider the *surveyer* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituents yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman (46).

As discussed above, it is significant to note how women internalise imposed identities within the confines of patriarchal structures resulting in the perpetuation of gendered notions of femininity. Thus, the mechanisms of patriarchal Panopticism in *Only Ever Yours* contribute to the experience of self-deterioration in the female characters and channelize the reinforcement of their inferiority.

3. The Panoptic Scrutiny of Beauty by the Beast in *Only Ever Yours*

Only Ever Yours encompasses an institutional structure reflecting its dystopian characteristics that systematically functions toward the attainment of perfect facial and bodily features in young girls, with their value solely determined by their beauty as strikingly articulated by Freida: “We are like sponges, absorbing beauty, becoming more and more lovely as we dream. More and more valuable” (O’Neill 4). Consequently, the school serves as a means to execute the intentions of the patriarchal regime that aims to instil in the girls the competence to fulfil the role of companions to the sons of influential men within the state. In contrast to the design of Bentham’s Panopticon that constitutes the central tower as a symbol of power and authority, the premises of the school lacks the physical presence of the Father, who is expected to play the role of the central tower in the novel. However, the patriarchal regime has designed the school in a way that their

physical presence has no significance in carrying out their vision; instead, the execution of the control mechanisms and the disciplinary measures is channelled through diverse techniques.

The school operates under the cautious surveillance of the Father, whose physical appearance is invisible throughout the novel, yet, his presence is felt through the principles and propaganda disseminated by the school. However, the task of supervision and surveillance of the eves in the school is carried over by nuns like ‘chastities’, appointed by the Father in order to train the eves in the art of desirability and homemaking. As part of the regulations of the school, the eves’ food intake, weight, hygiene, health and mobility are intensely monitored and conditioned by the chastities too. The effectiveness of the chastities in their role is accentuated by the establishment of specific norms for them. These norms compel the chastities to undergo radical physical changes, including shaving their heads and adopting a nun-like appearance to enhance their persuasiveness in influencing the girls. This serves as a potent tactic, further solidifying the deceptive narrative that convinces the girls in the school to invest their self-worth in conforming to a predetermined beauty standard, ultimately reinforcing patriarchal control within the narrative of the novel.

Ironically, the commands issued by men are executed by women, with the chastities serving as vulnerable instruments to achieve these goals. Despite enduring similar hardships during their adolescence in the school, the chastities unquestioningly follow instructions passed down by the patriarchal authority, perpetuating patriarchal norms and suppressing women’s critical thinking. This underscores how patriarchy successfully implants its ideals by subduing women’s intellect and coercing them into submission. For instance, chastity Ruth commands the girls in one of the teaching sessions stating that “thinking too much robs you of your beauty. No man will ever want a companion who thinks too much” (4). This instance is noteworthy as it exemplifies the suppression of the intellect of the female characters in the school and the ingrained belief that securing a man’s companionship is the ultimate goal of women. Thereby, O’Neill deftly forefronts women’s quality of being adaptable and for being individuals who readily succumb to the tricks played by men and exist as passive bearers of patriarchy.

In addition to the dissemination of propaganda and commandments within the school, the girls are subjected to a meticulously structured routine that employs sophisticated monitoring techniques to meticulously record day-to-day updates about their bodies. According to the school’s disciplinary

norms, the girls' lives are constrained to a set schedule, stated as, "Breakfast, Gym, Organized Recreation, Lunch, Gym, Organized Recreation, Dinner, ePad, Bed" (69), suggesting the school's commitment to asserting authority through disciplined control over girls' body and physical activities. The effects of such conditioned disciplinary practices resonate Foucault's assertion that "discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies... disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (138). Furthermore, the girls are equipped with electronic devices such as eFone and ePad, enabling them to share photos within the school profile, thereby compromising their privacy regarding body weight and other personal matters. Freida expresses her desperation about how her existence is sadly felt through her, stating "The need to record my life is as fundamental as my need to breathe. Without MyFace, I'm floating. I have nothing to anchor me down, to prove I exist" (O'Neill 100).

The school incorporates a nuanced robotic voice that is frequently played as a reminder to cheer up the eves on being vigilant in maintaining their discipline and their daily activities. Some of the alert messages include "I am a good girl. I am pretty. I am always agreeable" (4), "I am pretty. I am a good girl. I always do as I am told" (11). These alerts are only an extra dose of conditioning the Eves besides the formal teachings regarding the conduct and appearance of the girls. In an instance, Freida expresses on how her anger is submerged saying "I picture my irritation as a big red balloon bursting through my stomach, leaving a gaping hole behind" (77), as a stream of thought reminds her of the lessons taught in Unacceptable Emotion class that "Anger is ugly. Nice girls don't get angry" (77). All these illustrations convey the stereotypical notions that surround the female gender over polishing them according to the standards of patriarchy. Thus Heather Braun observes that "[t]he constant surveillance of her body through technology objectifies Freida to such an extreme that she comes to see herself as an object separate from her interior being. Indeed, Freida never fully inhabits her body and is encouraged by these forms of objectification to see herself as a tool of a larger system" (72). This insight underscores the dehumanizing consequences of technological monitoring and societal expectations, reinforcing the girls' status as instruments within the patriarchal machinery.

The analysis of expected standards of femininity in *Only Ever Yours* aligns with Bartky's categories, which explore how disciplinary practices shape the feminine body to conform to patriarchal norms. Bartky outlines

three categories: “practices aiming for a specific body size and configuration, those bringing forth a repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements, and those directed toward the display of the body as an ornamented surface” (27). In the novel, these categories find expression in the stringent standards enforced by the school, emphasizing physical appearance, specifically focusing on achieving a predetermined body size. The girls undergo rigorous monitoring of their weight, and their societal value is intricately linked to adhering to established beauty standards. The novel reinforces this idea with the statement “No man likes a fat girl. We have been told this since design” (O’Neill 27). Furthermore, the female characters are not only expected to meet certain physical criteria but are also systematically trained in specific gestures, postures, and movements. This training serves to mould them into a predetermined notion of femininity, illustrating how their identity is constructed and controlled externally. The directive “All eyes must manage their behaviour and conduct themselves in a manner that is ladylike at all times. Emotional Behaviour can be off-putting to men and must be controlled” (275), exemplifies this aspect. In addition to these expectations, the overarching societal pressure in *Only Ever Yours* revolves around presenting the female body as an ornamented surface. The girls are groomed to prioritize external appearance over internal qualities, emphasizing the dehumanizing effects of objectification. The emphasis on beauty as a measure of their worth reduces them to objects for aesthetic consumption. The above interpretations find a consolidated parallel in John Berger’s statement that a woman “has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another” (46).

Only Ever Yours examines how female objectification contributes to the development of negative body perceptions among women who do not conform to established standards. Sabala and Gopal eloquently express this notion stating that “When women receive messages that their bodies are inferior, a gap is created between the body as deficient and the body as an object to be modified” (50). Frieda’s internal monologue further reinforces this idea:

What weight did PSP say I was this morning? It said I was at target.
But it was wrong, it was wrong. I saw the way Megan looked at my

stomach; she could see the blubber ripping through my skin. I'm disgusting. I take another bite of porridge, but it slimily crawls back up my throat, like a slug. I run, the blood roaring in my ears, and I make it just in time to fall to my knees and see yellow bile spattering the back of the toilet bowl (O'Neill 98).

In a similar vein, Alexandra Neagu observes, "Women are more likely than men to engage in upward social comparisons, perceiving other same-sex persons as being more attractive, having better physical qualities than theirs" (32). Heather Braun adds depth to this discussion, emphasizing that "[t]his process of female manufacturing and objectification leads not only to a sense of powerlessness but also produces competition, jealousy, and estrangement among intelligent and compassionate women who should otherwise be supporting and lifting one another up" (381). In essence, these perspectives collectively highlight the damaging consequences of societal expectations on women's self-perception, fostering a climate of competition and estrangement instead of solidarity and support among women. The novel underscores how the objectification of women not only erodes their sense of agency but also perpetuates harmful comparisons and divisions among women themselves.

The novel provides profound insights into the objectification of women through the exploration of how the androcentric regime disrupts the identity of the eves by reducing their status into mere objects as their value is solely derived from their beautiful face and chiselled bodies. As Cristina Sánchez Moll rightly articulates that "[t]he rhetoric of the necessity of being constantly aware of their appearance and improving it because it is never good enough, is what maintains the myth [body image and beauty stereotypes] alive and is what keeps the eves immersed in a never-ending anxiety about their bodies" (13), leading to the degeneration of their identity. The problematization of the girls' identity is consistently exposed in the narrative through various exemplifications. A significant articulation of identity crisis in the novel is witnessed through a deliberate non-capitalization of the first letters in the names of the girls. This unique stylistic choice of writing by O'Neill serves as a poignant indication of the treatment of women as objects rather than individuals with distinct identities. For instance, the name 'Freida' is intentionally presented as 'frieda' in the novel. Besides, Freida's reflections on the school and its system offer significant commentary on how her external appearance is prioritized at the expense of her self-worth and individual identity. Her contemplations over her image in the mirror serve as a powerful

critique of a societal structure that places disproportionate emphasis on superficial attributes, resulting in the erosion of women's agency:

I sit on my hands and watch myself in the mirrored walls at this face that is so familiar yet which never feels as if it belongs to me. It is the property of the school, of the Zone, of my future Husband. This face is my worth, my value. This face is all that I have to offer and it isn't even mine. I watch myself for hours. I watch myself until this face becomes meaningless (O'Neill 303).

The above lines convincingly expose Freida's pain as she arrives at a realisation that she lacks control over every aspect of her life, including her own body. Instead, she finds herself unwittingly consuming her sense of self in the relentless pursuit of societal standards created by men for their own advantages. This internal conflict within her is reflected through her stark declaration: "I am eating myself. I am an identity cannibal" (341). Hence, this disturbing metaphorical portrayal of self-destruction encapsulates the deeper psychological impacts of societal expectations and pressures on her selfhood. Besides, Freida's poignant expression of frustration, encapsulated in the words, "I'm sick of being in this school. I'm sick of being in this body. I'm sick of being me. Every toxic feeling I've ever had seems to explode inside me, like a million different voices screaming to be heard at once" (291), serves as a powerful commentary on her profound discontent with the oppressive norms of the school. These sentiments extend beyond her personal experience, resonating with the broader societal context that perpetuates patriarchal structures. The metaphorical explosion of toxic feelings within her reflects the overwhelming pressure and scrutiny imposed on women, highlighting the destructive impact of societal expectations. The statement becomes emblematic of the struggle women face in a system that diminishes their freedom, reinforcing the novel's critique of the dehumanizing effects of objectification and the gradual erosion of women's identity within patriarchal frameworks. Therefore, *Only Ever Yours* effectively portrays the emotional and psychological toll of conformity to societal standards, offering a compelling exploration of the challenges women encounter in asserting their individuality within a patriarchal narrative.

4. Conclusion

Only Ever Yours critically interrogates the patriarchal norms that contribute to the reinforcement of female objectification through a meticulously crafted dystopian narration. Louise O'Neill's feminist stance

in the novel serves as a poignant critique of the patriarchal standards that prioritize superficial attributes of women that leads to the degeneration of women's identity.

Interpreting the objectification of women through the panoptic nature of patriarchal surveillance, this paper underscores the intricate ways in which the oppressive control structures inherent in the dystopian institution shapes the lived experiences and consciousness of the female characters in the novel. Furthermore, it accentuates how the mechanisms of patriarchal Panopticism contribute to the self-deterioration of the female characters in the novel as a consequence of psychic internalisation of predetermined standards and norms of femininity to uphold male supremacy. In addition to this, the paper examines how the select text provides a compelling narrative lens to comprehend the intricate ways in which power, surveillance, and discipline intersect within the context of gender relations.

References

- Bartky, Sandra Lee. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, 4th ed., Routledge, 2016, pp. 25-45. Taylor & Francis, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315680675>.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972. *Internet Archive*. www.archive.org/details/WaysOfSeeingByJohnBerger
- Braun, Heather. "Invisibility and (Dis)Embodiment in Louise O'Neill's Only Ever Yours." *The Embodied Child: Readings in Children's Literature and Culture*, edited by Roxanne Harde and Lydia Kokkola. Taylor and Francis Group, 2018, pp. 70-82. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315101262>
- Elices, Juan F. "Othering Women in Contemporary Irish Dystopia: The Case of Louise O'Neill's "Only Ever Yours"." *Nordic Irish Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 73-86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44363745>
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books. 1975.
- Heflick, Nathan A., and Jamie L. Goldenberg. "Seeing Eye to Body: The Literal Objectification of Women." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2014, pp. 225-29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44318776>

Muraveva, Ekaterina. "Beauty Magazines' Discourse in the Dystopian World of Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours*." *Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2018, pp. 120-137. <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2018-8639>

Naufina, Nurin. "The Portrayal of Hegemony and Patriarchy in Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours*." *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 2021, vol. 13, no. 2. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v13i2.1215>

Neagu, Alexandra. "Body Image: A Theoretical Framework." *The Publishing House of Romanian Academy*, 2015, 29-38. <https://acad.ro/sectii2002/proceedingsChemistry/doc2015-1/Art04Neagu.pdf>.

O'Neill, Louise. *Only Ever Yours*. Quercus, 2014.

Sabala, and Meena Gopal. "Body, Gender and Sexuality: Politics of Being and Belonging." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 45, no. 17, 2010, pp. 43–51. www.jstor.org/stable/25664384

Sánchez Moll, Cristina. *Feminist Dystopia and Young Adult Fiction: A Critical Analysis of Louise O'Neill's Only Ever Yours*. 21 Sep. 2018. U of the Balearic Islands, Master's Thesis. <http://hdl.handle.net/11201/149326>

Wright, Amelia Clare. "The Panopticon of the Patriarchy." *vocal.media*. www.vocal.media/viva/the-panopticon-of-the-patriarchy.

Wrobel, Claire. "Introduction: Literary and Critical Approaches to Panopticism." *Revue d'Études Benthamiennes*, vol. 22, 2022, pp. 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudes-benthamiennes.9920>