

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF FAHRENHEIT 451 BY RAY BRADBURY

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to analyze the main role and the key representations of governmental system of Fahrenheit 451.*

Keywords: *Montag, dystopian society, an epoch, patriot, totalitarian, intellectuality, imagination, herd mentality.*

In the restrictive society which is depicted by Ray Bradbury which will not promise a blooming of knowledge by burning mass of books and libraries, the fireman, Guy Montag, is in the charge of burning the any source of knowledge demanded by government which has absolute power and controls over population. Guy Montag's contentment with his job in the dystopian vision of three chapters, namely "The Heart and the Salamander," "The Sieve and the Sand," and "Burning Bright", is disrupted by the arrival of the female character, Clarisse McClellan. Montag demonstrates the difficulty of going beyond the suppressive limits of his society due to restriction and prohibitions. Bradbury presents the traditionally positive terms, fireman, the books, and the hound, which "slept but did not sleep, lived but did not live in its gently humming, gently vibrating, softly illuminated kennel back in the dark corner of the firehouse" in a different way, which are presented in a negative, destructive light in his dystopian work (Bradbury 24)¹.

The society in Fahrenheit 451 is a representative example of a dystopian society, which is defined as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived"². This great novel has come to existence with the result of various masterpieces, such as the novel of The Pedestrian, in which all the pedestrians are treated as criminals and walking is forbidden, Bonfire, Bright Phoenix, in which a town librarian is threatened by the local patriot bigot in regard to a few dozen books aching to be burned and others.

The twentieth century was "a century of hostility, an epoch in which the brutality of mankind erupted and flowed more expansively than ever before"³. The period witnessed, thus, the rise of the totalitarian, dictatorial regimes that restricted most of the rights of the individuals in order to maintain their absolute power thereby bringing the culture of submissiveness into their own system

¹ Impediment To Knowledge And Imagination In Ray Bradbury's Dystopian Novel, Fahrenheit 45, Emrah Atasoy, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi 55, 1 (2015) p-399-414

² SARGENT, Lyman Tower. "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited." Utopian Studies 5.1 (1994): 1-37. JSTOR. Web. 11 March 2015, p-9

³ KRESSEL, Neil J. Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror. Colorado: Westview Press, 2002, p-27

and excluding or punishing the defiant ones. In this regard, books posed serious problems for these regimes since their system was based on absolute orthodoxy without questioning or judging the norms and values of their rule. In this dystopian world of Fahrenheit 451, firemen minister to burn books through “the fire trucks with their mythic salamander iconography” instead of putting out fires, as reading books is against the law⁴. The regulatory rule claims to give what the individuals desire, which is mere happiness in Fahrenheit 451, but this desire is somehow enforced upon the individuals thereby causing conformity in the society and becoming a desire of the state.

Although the governing body wishes to achieve absolute obedience through the system based on the herd mentality and mere happiness with no other vision and knowledge than the given one, there are individuals that are divergent towards the instilled ideas, thoughts, practices and norms of the mainstream society. Thus, these people become rebels, fugitives, outcasts, or castaways such as Clarisse McClellan, Professor Faber, who is a retired English professor, and Granger, the leader of Book People. These divergent individuals in the novel remind us or imply that the system, in which “unhappiness and dissent are squelched,” does not function flawlessly, which brings the question of the feasibility of such a society of total conformity⁵. In this dystopian atmosphere, citizens are kept under thought control through censorship and conditioned not to approach the books as they internalise the hatred of them. The regime is afraid of imagination and knowledge to such an extent that it portrays all the books as dangerous and malignant.

In conclusion, Ray Bradbury’s dystopian novel, Fahrenheit 451 deals with a range of issues like censorship, thought control, burning books, and intellectuality, and demonstrates how the totalitarian state puts an obstacle to imagination and knowledge in this dystopian vision. The totalitarian state desires to create a society of absolute submission with submissive individuals who do not read books and are not critical due to absolute repression and constraint over citizens in this dystopian novel. Clarisse dies, a woman who refuses to leave her books burns herself, dies, the Book People live in seclusion, and Montag is pushed to exclusion. However, these contumacious individuals substantiate the failure of the totalitarian, coercive structure and render a hopeful, optimistic ending via the open-endedness of the dystopian vision implying betterment and development in the future as the Book People and Montag go back to the demolished city to contribute to the building of a new society in Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451.

The system fails ultimately in its purpose of forming a society of absolute allegiance and submissiveness, and dystopian world gives its place to a possible, prospective utopian world to be established: “Montag felt the slow stir of words, the slow simmer. When it came to his turn, what could he say, what could he offer on a day like this, to make the trip a little easier? To everything there is a season. Yes. A time to break down, and a time to build up. Yes. A time to keep silence and a time to speak. Yes, all that. But what else. What else? Something”⁶.

⁴ ROBERTS, Garyn G. “Some Social and Cultural Context for Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451.” *Critical Insights* (n. d.): 27-36. Salempress. Web. 16 Feb. 2015, p-31

⁵ PATAI, Daphne. “Ray Bradbury and the Assault on Free Thought.” *Society* 50.1 (2013): 41-47. Springer Web. 18 Feb. 2015, p-41

⁶ BRADBURY, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. London: Harper Voyager, 2008. Print, p-211

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