FREEDOM AND POWER AS CONTRUCTED IN RAY BRADBURY'S FAHRENHEIT 451

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Abstract

This paper discussed the relevance and role of science fiction in reflecting the contemporary society. Specifically, the paper attempted to determine how Fahrenheit 451 novel characters as well as how the movie adaptation characters were characterized and represented as reflective of the modern times were shown. It then analyzed how these characters construct freedom and power as depicted in both the novel and the movies. Professed from formalist and Foucault and Gramsci's power and ideology, findings show that the characters in both the novel and film versions would at first always submit to an authority who uses fear and intimidation. But as the novel and the movies progress, it is deemed that once a citizen is educated and is made socially aware of the repressions, violations, and injustices against the civil society, those who are courageous enough will always aim for freedom and justice in spite of the discomfort and danger this self-awareness and valor bring. Moreover, the characters have shown that knowledge and power can be fashioned depending on one's desires as well as needs. Moreover, the dystopian novel together with the two dystopian movie adaptations have echoed the different current and on-going political, cultural as well as health crises. Moreover, it reflects different kinds of confusion power can create among the people.

Keywords: *science fiction; Fahrenheit 451; power; ideology*

A. Introduction

As the world is grappled with hunger, political conflicts, greed, scientific advancements, and a health crisis that shook and stilled the world, life is a far cry from the dream world every individual has ever dreamed of. The ideal and perfect society which as early as Plato has been eyeing by humankind is now challenged by the very kind who had been aspiring for it. Thus, a critical evaluation of the ways of individuals as reflected and predicted in science fiction literature is wanting. Suvin (1988) theorized that

> Science Fiction (SF) is a literary genre or verbal construct whose necessary and appropriate conditions are the presence and the interaction of estrangement and cognition. SF's main device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment. While, the novum (plural nova) is a fictional device, artifact, or premise that focuses on the difference between the world the reader inhabits and the fictional world of the SF text. The device can either be a spacecraft, time machine, and the likes or an abstraction such as the novel concept of gender or consciousness.

These abstractions are explored in the novel; later adapted into movies (1966 and 2018) with the same title. The novella and the movies are set in a place found in the future and whose characters are oriented to the new consciousness which is dictated by the windows on the wall (television). As the novel and the movie adaptations of Fahrenheit 451 are set in the future, the whole theme of the novella works on the new consciousness that is enforced in the characters of Guy Montag, Captain Beatty, Mildred and, the rest of the characters in the novel's world which are echoing the contemporary effects of the social media. Parrinder in Roberts (2016) postulated that the

the idea of cognitive estrangement balances radical alterity and familiar sameness, such that 'by imagining strange world one sees the own conditions of life in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective leading Broderick in Roberts (2016) to hypothesize that SF becomes that species of storytelling native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and supersession of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. This genre is marked by (i) metaphoric strategies and metonymic tactics, (ii) the foregrounding of icons and interpretive schemata from a collectively constituted generic 'mega-text' [i.e. all previously published S F] and the concomitant de-emphasis of 'new writing,' and characterization, and (iii) certain priorities more often found in scientific and postmodern texts than in literary models: specifically, attention to the object in preference to the subject.

SF definition has branched out to so many thoughts thus some critics have tried to content themselves with definitions of the mode [science fiction as mere tautologies leading Edward James to suggest that "SF is what is marketed as SF" (although he concedes that, as a definition, this is "a beginning, nothing more"), while Damon Knight noted that science fiction is what is pointed as such which supports the argument of Norman Spinrad who posited that science fiction is that anything published as science fiction. (James 1994, Clute & Nicholls 1993, Roberts 2006) as cited by Evnine (2015). Mendelson in Evnine (2015) maintained these views stating that science fiction's texts "are mutually referential, maybe written by those active in criticism . . . and have often been generated from the same fan base which supports the market." The novel Fahrenheit 451 analysis approach correlates more with Carl Freedman's and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's view on cognition. Both Freedman and Csicsery-Ronay(in Gerhard, 2018) speculated that as long as the illusion ("effect") of the cognition is formed or a semblance of scientific knowledge is provided through employment and imitation of the language of science and technology, then science fiction text has succeeded. Finally, it appears that the world in science fiction is concurrently different ("estranged") from the readers' observed milieu and yet still familiar or recognizable; the natural laws that the science-fictional world is founded upon resemble the laws of our reality and yet somehow deviate from them, thereby incorporating, as Tom Moylan suggests, "a realist sensibility in a non-naturalist form" and demonstrating what Suvin refers to as "realistic."

Science fiction is a world building genre where writers construe alternative but self-consistent societies. This imagined community of a perfect state where the citizens are law-abiding and are working for the good of the state is believed to be formally put into records by Plato whose idea of the state is divided into three classes: The artisans, those responsible for building houses, making clothes, and producing food; the warriors, those in charge of defending the state from imminent dangers, and; the guardians, those very small and selected class in charge of ruling the republic. This division shown in Plato's Republic itself shows unjust distribution of work and goods, only a select few can rule and only those favored by the rulers are allowed to have freedom as shown in different science fiction novels and movies not just Fahrenheit 451. This society, the Utopia, as posited by George Kateb in his book Utopia and Its Enemies as cited by Neumann and Kline (2010) is a conflict-free civilization where human beings live in an impressive and prosperous life underscoring that all conflicts of conscience and conflicts of interest are obliterated. He further accentuated that in this society all the complications to a decent life for all men have been removed while the ingenuity of modern technology is put in the unfettered service of lessening labor and increasing and enriching labor [with] peace,

abundance, and virtue permanently and universally obtained. This society furthermore, has designed men and women to stop questioning especially those in authority which lead these people to stop thinking or reflecting on their ways and that of their milieu having been conditioned that it is indeed how life should be. These conditions are clearly pictured out in the novel as well as the adaptations where the characters have lived and behaved exactly how the society wanted them to.

This idea of a perfect society which is called Republic by Plato was given the name Utopia in 1516 by Sir Thomas Moore through his book of the same title. He envisioned an ideal place that is politically stable, socially harmonious, just, and economically prosperous. These conditions are assumed to satisfy the people and thus avoiding any conflict nor emotions detrimental to a fully functioning political society. Utopia, although written in Latin is a combination of two Greek words in origin which means 'no place' but the usage stands for 'good place'. More, like Plato, Sir Moore believes that the control and the prosperity of a state can be given to a few government officials who think only of the wellbeing of the citizens, an assumption that is generally practiced in the novel as well as the adaptations. Furthermore, he believes one root cause of the problems of the society is money thus abolishing it would mean abolishing as well the egocentric behavior of the people. Bagchi in Dundar (2013) resonates with the train of thought of Plato, More, and Walsh postulating that utopian idea is not simply a place, it can also be a resonance, a modem a perspective but which is very difficult to actualize in reality but can exist through the imaginative principles of the writers. But as the world had faced two world wars, a pandemic, scientific advancements, and economic challenges as the twentieth century enters it had aroused magnanimous fear among people as a result of ambivalence, isolation, and lack of confidence in humanity. This fear as articulated by Gissing as cited by Gerhard (2018) further sparked with the establishment of totalitarian governments which began to devour the freedom of human beings under the false ideals of the state thus drastically changing the ideals of the utopian principles making some critics believe that this is the main root of dystopian vision. Moylan in Gerhard (2018) articulated that:

> the dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century: A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war genocide, famine, pandemic, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of the everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination.

People of the period have gone through the complete dereliction of humanity, which resulted in the fading way the beliefs of the assumed ideal state giving birth to dystopian literature. Dystopia is a term originally termed by Joh Stuart Mills as the antonym of utopia in 1868. Opposing the ideals of utopia, dystopia pertains to an imagined community where every possible event or encounter is bad. Disturbed, scared, and looking for hope and possible salvation from internal and external destruction of the twentieth-century world events, Little as cited by Finnsson (2016) quantified dystopian writing to have grown to a peculiar quality of engaging its readers with pressing political concerns, such as liberty and self-determination, environmental destruction and looming catastrophe, questions of identity, and the increasingly fragile boundaries between technology and the self hence showing an imagined environment that is worst than the reader's own. Basu in Finnsson (2016) speculated that the term is tensely vexed as orthographically speaking, dystopia suggests a meaning that is entirely juxtaposed to utopia, functioning as a rhetorical reductio ad absurdum extending a utopia to its most extreme ends to warn against the contemporary disparaging politics and culture. Dystopia generally diverges from the utopia as its prescriptions are negative, and it does not show nor tell how to build the ideal state; instead through the bleak dystopian environment it illustrates the possibility of utopian change even in the darkest of circumstances thus suggesting ways to avoid destroying the world further than it already is.

Science fiction plays as the arbiter of the present and the future through dystopian literature. It plays the role of a prosecutor questioning the role, significance, costs, and benefits of current and

future technologies and presents ideas that can influence civic beliefs. It also regulates the worldview of individuals, by modification of attitudes to the importance of contemporary and future science and technology as it equips humanity with acceptance to the changes as natural and inevitable through the different metaphors, analogies, and models that science fiction has employed. According to a lot of researches, the psychological and sociological impact of science is profound and extensive as it can serve a directive effect on the understanding and interpretation of science. In so doing, science fiction has become an agent in writing the cultural memory of historic events thus has become centrally germane in many studies of contemporary culture (Stable; Tymm; Bina, Mateus, Peneira & Caffa; Hansen; Kotasek; McIntire; Toscano; Nyhan, Reifler, Richey, & Freed; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross; Rigney; & Hollinger in Menadue & Cheer, 2017). It also in this respect that Science fiction is considered significant in studies of human culture as it is an ancient and enduring form of literature that has been part of what Brian Aldiss called "cultural wallpaper" since the origins of recorded history (Aldiss & Wigmore, 1986, p. 14). Adam Roberts suggested that science fiction begins with the "voyages extraordinaires" of the Ancient Greeks (Roberts, 2005, p. vii), but we might go back a millennium further to the Sumerian creation story, with the supreme god Marduk "cloning" mankind from the blood and bone of the renegade god Kingu (Enûma Eliš, 5.26). Science fiction became an increasingly significant genre for literary study after Darko Suvin's (1979) epochal publication of Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, which raised the profile of science fiction as a legitimate field of academic inquiry (Hassler, 1999). Suvin's work has become a core text around which the study of science fiction circulates, and it has been used accordingly as the limiting date for this review (Menadue and Cheer, 2017).

Dystopian literature often showcases an imagined community with environmental issues and other world-changing events such as plague, a third World War, asteroids, or even zombies. These apocalyptic disasters destroy civilization and humanity leaving behind a very small posse of people struggling to exist amid fear, ignorance, secrecy, and isolation in repression and violence exercised by those few who are in power. This world is encapsulated in the Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 written in the 1950s and published in 1953 which serves as the corpus of the article investigates the effect of both the movie and 1966 as well as 2018 movie adaptations with the same title to the reader at the same time viewer as guided by the tenets of Foucault and Gramsci's power and ideology.

Ideally, SF is generally characterized by strict conformity among citizens leading to the idea overall assumption that dissent and individuality are bad thus breading fear or disgust of the world outside the state. Also, traditional life lived simply alongside nature is viewed as primitive and nonsensical thus the natural world is banished from everyday life instead everything is turned mechanical and in the contemporary world mechanized and computerized with technology more advanced than the ones present in the contemporary society. Furthermore, the dystopian state whose citizens live in fear because of the constant surveillance of the state through technology is far more advanced than that of contemporary society both in their private and public lives. With these technologies too, the state does not practice the due process of law as described by the democratic states nowadays, instead, the law rests in a few powerful individuals who employ both psychological and physical torture to the people; but because of conditioning, this is viewed as an ordinary routine in the community including a penal system that lacks due process laws and often employs psychological or physical torture. These experiences lead the protagonist to reconnection to an inner voice which allows him/her to intrinsically feel that something is wrong leading to an inner desire to be free and to question the society to save the world from being destroyed by the very people it cradles to life (Orwell as cited by Geetha, 2014).

B. Methodology

Using textual analysis through the formalist and Foucault and Gramsci's power and ideology lenses, this paper explores the discourse on power and freedom by probing into Ray Bradbury's

Fahrenheit 451 novel as well as the two movie adaptations' main characters. Specifically, the paper investigated how power and freedom are constructed in the lives of the characters as explored in the narratives presented in both the novel and the films.

The paper investigated how in the proves the citizens have allowed their lives to be controlled by the eyes and ears on the wall proving true to the idea of Gramsci that power is constituted in the realms of ideas and knowledge through consent rather than force along with Foucault's claim that the truth of this world is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints.

Gramsci and Foucault underpinned the analysis of Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 to identify and discuss how knowledge and power can be both one's salvation or incarceration.

C. Results and Discussion

Power is wanted by most if not all people. We are willing to do whatever we can to ascertain it stays in our hands for as long as we can. This part of the paper discusses how power can be abused and gained, and how awareness can bolster and free a person.

Guy Montag the protagonist of Fahrenheit 451 had journeyed to his self-discovery leading to his separation from the job which he thought is his life as it was "the job of his father and the father of his father" to his living as an outlaw with the Book People. Guy always finds it a pleasure to burn. He gets excited with his eyes all orange in flame as he flicks the igniter and watches everything in front of him eaten by the fire, blackened and changed. He is filled with special pleasure as he allows his great python to spit its venomous kerosene and watch the flapping pigeon-winged books die on the porch and lawn of the house as it sparklingly whirls and is blown away by the wind. Doing this, he feels great power and control over his surroundings. Doing this, he needs not to think of what the books contain nor why the state wants it burned, instead he feels proud he is doing his job as a law-abiding citizen. Guy as personified in the 1966 film as well as the 2018 movie greatly believes that he holds the power of making people happy, he makes their lives simpler and less complicated, more so, he has faith in what the state wants him to do, burn books.

The novel and the two movies greatly reflect Gramsci's notion of nuanced power as posited by Jones in Daldal (2014) where it is operated mostly at the level of mutual interactions of culture economy and politics within the realm of a hegemonic discourse (Jones in Daldal, 2014). Montag had been so shaped by the beliefs and virtues of the strong society he believes he is protecting. In the 2018 movie, with the aid of recent film technology, one sees how one's soul is bared to the public through the cameras that surround them. As he burns the books and hurts the outcast of society, the reactions of the people supporting what he is doing through the different emoticons that are sent are shown on the screen.

As one watches the 2018 film, one would notice the different touch given by the director compared with the almost bookish interpretation of the 1966 film. In 2018 Montag uses a powerful gun that kills a man instantaneously while 1966 uses a gun that looks exactly the hose of the modern firemen, only instead of saving lives, it throws out kerosene and consumes the life of anything it touches. He had an erotic connection with Clarisse, the informant of Captain Beatty who is an eel pretending to be a native, who brings out conflicting emotions through him. Unlike in the novel as well as the 1966 film, Montag is not married in the most recent adaptation, instead, he lives the life of a man who has a very active party life being the premier master trooper looked up to by the citizens.

On the other hand, in the 1966 film as well as the novel, he is married and did not have any relationship with Clarisse of the sort in both, instead, his relationship with his wife is rather shallow and almost sterile. The couple's relationship is almost mechanical, there was very little conversation and when Montag had started to share with his wife how he feels she would not listen, and when he burst his frustration his wife in the movie only said, "Talk, Montag, you want to talk then talk until it makes you happy" and she left him in the kitchen. The non-caring and dismissive ways of Mildred (the wife) shows that there is no real communication that is happening anymore, their relationship echoes

the general belief in a dystopian community as speculated by Orwell in Geetha (2014) that a traditional life such as conversations between husband and wife are primitive and nonsensical, assuming that everything is sustained and provided by the comfort and convenience of machines/technology, thus as portrayed by Montag's wife, a usual discussion where one listens and interacts and feedbacks is no longer necessary.

The dependence on technology and gadgets to communicate emotions or rather to eradicate it that was portrayed by the couple in Fahrenheit 451 is emulated in the contemporary time as Prensky in Shliakhovchuk (2019) observes that [youth] today communicate, buy and sell, search for information, and socialize differently; technology has become an entire tactic for how to live, survive and prosper in the 21st Century.

Although the world had not completely succumbed to putting everything in automation, the current pandemic as well as the apathy of the people is starting to create a world such as that of Montag's. This view is supported by the findings of Gadowski as cited by Finnsson (2016) that in the 1960s there had been a great upsurge in dystopian fiction in general, which is mainly due to the effects of the Cold War.

Throughout the world, there has been growing restlessness over issues such as regular economic crises, anxiety about the future, war, and terror, along with tensions between the traditional and the progressive politician. Thus, as foretold in the novel and other dystopian studies, the world in general, the Philippines in particular, would be facing a great shift of paradigm in the days to come as a result of the pandemic, economic anxiety, political wars leading to a future that may either be filled with concern and distress or a future that is enlightened and better as the experience had shaped the views of Montag.

Science fiction questions the role, relevance, costs, and benefits of current and future technologies, and presents ideas that can influence public opinion. Brian Stableford as cited by de Marquez (2014) claimed that science fiction could determine the worldview of individuals, by the modification of attitudes to the significance of current and future science and technology. Clarisse McClellan personified this property of the genre both in the novel as well as the two movie adaptations.

Although there were different touches put on the movies such as the 1966 version wherein Clarisse is a teacher while in the 2018 movie she is an eel raised to act like a citizen and an informant of Cpt. Beatty compared to the novel version where she is a carefree teenager who had approached Montag out of nowhere. Both movies followed the general characteristics of Clarisse in the novel as someone unafraid to communicate, to interact, and to ask, likewise in print and both motion pictures, Clarisse had been observing Montag. Her character is unduly killed in the novel, but her presence is felt until the end as Montag had been affected by her absence more than her presence. This existence and her annihilation had been observed in the 1966 film while the 2018 film had made her the love interest of Montag whom he had wanted to protect until the end. The pains and dangers as well as the threat that she went through are necessary evils for her to shake the society Montag is living in. While Beatty, Mildred, and Montag had been following the norms and the expectations of the civilized society which perfectly exemplifies Gramsci's conception of power concerning force as lived by the aforementioned characters without question, Clarisse on the other hand had been creating a balance by asking basic questions such as whether Montag is happy or whether he has never been curious why he had to do what he does or better yet, had he ever wonder what the books contain which the leaders of the society order them to burn on the guise of preserving peace and harmony.

In the process of questioning Montag regarding these unpretentious queries on his job and his life in general, the present and observable power play is shown as a complex relation of force in the society creating both vacuum and fulfillment considering the complete understanding of why a task has to be fulfilled.

As described by de Marquez (2014), this power is mainly exerted by the dominant bourgeois class through the medium of ideology: by working on the popular mentality via the institutions of civil society and thus establishing a hegemony using the State apparatuses. This very power is what the book people challenge. In the contemporary time, in the midst of health catastrophe married by

political and cultural division in the country, this power exerted by the dominant group as echoed in the different government programs and execution as packaged for mass consumption through the different media available is what is being challenged by both those watchdogs as well as the intellectual groups. Like Clarisse, those who question do not necessarily invite rebellion nor any terrorism act, instead, they were meant to guide and to clarify abominable actions, but like Captain Montag those who obey blindly execute the designed law and refuse to listen nor open their eyes to the real calamity brought by those who maintain their power through creating fear or imagined order produce unfathomable series of disasters.

D. Conclusion

Granting the two films had two distinctive approaches in bringing the characters of the novel to life, both the films and the novels have clearly shown how any person would always seek freedom and understanding of the events around him no matter how doomed or tricky the path is. Furthermore, the characters of Montag and Clarisse undoubtedly mirror the fate of the common people whose freedom has been ripped off in exchange for imagined advancement and success in life as well as the people who refuse to be silenced so that what is real can be exposed.

Science fiction collects and narrates the fears and hopes of a people amidst the different catastrophes both manmade and natural. It is an influential discourse that serves as an evaluation of the past as well as the validation of the future as shown in the political, economic, and even emotional state of the general populace as illustrated in both the novel and the movie adaptations of Fahrenheit 451.

As SF continues to investigate the role, relevance, cost, and benefits of current and future technologies as well as ideologies that affect the quality of life as mirrored in Fahrenheit 451, it is judicious to use the genre to critique the society in such a way that it can guide the leaders as well as the followers to always ask and validate before enforcing any novel ideology. As exemplified by the characters, when collectively experiencing something, people are emboldened to express dissenting views in various forms.

E. Acknowledgement

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