

THE DEPICTION OF SYMBOLS IN “FAHRENHEIT 451” BY REY BRADBURY**Usmonova Zarina Habibovna***The senior teacher of Bukhara State University***Nadir Khanova Nozima Alisherovna***The student of master degree of Bukhara State University*

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel set in a future where books are banned, and the job of firemen is to burn any remaining books that they find. The novel follows the story of Guy Montag, a fireman who begins to question the government's decision to ban books and starts to read books himself, leading to a dangerous rebellion against the government.

The novel begins with an introduction to the world of Guy Montag, a fireman whose job is to burn books. We are introduced to his wife, Mildred, and her obsession with the interactive television walls that dominate their lives. We also meet Clarisse, a teenage girl who Montag meets on his way home from work, who challenges his worldview.

The storyline of the novel won various awards for its uniqueness, bringing recognition to the author and awards such as the American Academy Award and Prometheus Hall of Fame Award with several others. The novel also became a film adaptation under the same name in 1966 and 2018.

“It was a pleasure to burn” [1,25]. Ray Bradbury’s dystopian novel, Fahrenheit 451, offers readers a vivid account of how life could become if a technologically advancing society chose to value instant-gratification and ignorance over passion and knowledge.

The story centers around the life of the protagonist, Guy Montag, and his intellectual rebellion against a mindless and deceitful society focused primarily on efficiency and the creation of like-minded, brainwashed individuals. Bradbury develops the story’s message, promoting freethinking and individual freedom, through the repeated usage of symbols, allegories, metaphors, and allusions, drawing inspiration from the increasing presence of technologies in the household, such as television, as well as from the fears surrounding McCarthyism and the censoring of the mind in post second world war America [5,93].

This continuous usage of symbols in Fahrenheit 451 enables Ray Bradbury to attribute greater and deeper meaning to supposedly normal objects and actions. The most prominent theme of Fahrenheit 451 is the danger of censorship and the government's control over the flow of information. In the novel, books are banned, and those who possess them are hunted down and punished. The government wants to control the thoughts and opinions of the people, and the burning of books is a symbolic representation of their efforts to do so. The novel highlights the importance of preserving the freedom of thought and expression to maintain a free and democratic society.

The Power of Knowledge and the Importance of Free Thought: Fahrenheit 451 also explores the power of knowledge and the importance of free thought. The characters who possess knowledge and who question authority are portrayed as heroic figures, while those who blindly accept the government's propaganda are depicted as mindless drones. The novel argues that knowledge and critical thinking are necessary for individual freedom and the

advancement of society.

Fire embodies both good and the evil, which are abundant throughout Bradbury's work. At the beginning of the novel, fire reigns as a significant destructive force — it is used to destroy the knowledge and ideas found in books, enabling this mechanical eradication of cultural thought [1,25]. Firemen are the epitome of fire as a destructive force, having to “start the fire swiftly” and “burn everything” to the ground, pulverizing works of literature, such as the “old woman's ... fountain of books” near the beginning of Bradbury's novel [1,25]. Stating that “it was a pleasure to burn”, Bradbury also brings into question the true object of the verb “to burn”, thus leaving ambiguity about “how active the verb is” . According to Seed, the true object of ‘burn’ is deferred until the third part of the novel, where Montag destroys first his house, followed by Beatty. In that moment, the true manifestation of fire is experienced firsthand by Montag, dissipating any prior ambiguity surrounding the verb and establishing fire as a reigning force of destruction.

Despite fire's portrayal as a symbol of chaos and destruction at various key moments of the novel, it takes on a more luminous meaning when an old lady decides to burn herself amongst her books [1,25]. The woman, in her final moments, exclaims, “Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out” [1,25]. Instead of being a destructive force, fire takes on the role of symbolizing strength, courage, and resistance in the face of imminent death. Fire becomes the gentle “candle” that somehow gives the despaired woman the ability to sacrifice herself for her beloved books [1,25]. Even though it is fire that leads to the woman's drastic end, it is at the same time fire that keeps her alive [1,25].

Fire, near the end of the novel, plays a more constructive and positive role than before, marking a strong departure from its prior uses. Although fire had previously been used to destroy and bring about pain and suffering, the burning flame that Montag witnesses after his escape from society symbolizes something much more: healing. In fact, Bradbury remarks that the fire “[means] a different thing to [Montag]”; to the fugitive fireman, unlike earlier in the novel, the fire “[is] not burning, it is warming”.

To Montag, fire does not represent courage or strength (unlike the old woman with her books); instead it symbolizes warmth and hope. John Huntington remarks that “by rescuing fire for the good, natural side, [Montag] has enabled the novel to convert dystopia into utopia” [3,122]. Indeed, the role of fire as a symbol of the current societal state of Bradbury's futuristic world reveals much about the nature of his allegories [3,122]. The dystopian society, which employed fire to pulverize sources of new, undesired knowledge, was itself eventually destroyed by that same force, thus giving the world an opportunity to be reborn into a utopia. The varying roles of fire as a symbol of both warmth and destruction further add to the novel's literary complexity. According to Donald Watt, “burning as a constructive energy, and burning as apocalyptic catastrophe, are the symbolic poles of Bradbury's novel”. Indeed, the “antithesis of extremes” between “fire as destructive and fire as transforming or life-giving” is prevalent throughout Fahrenheit 451, inducing a particular literary effect which enables Bradbury to contrast various ideas. Fire is employed as a tool by Bradbury to symbolize the instability of the world — through fire, he is able to

demonstrate how some things can both be destructive as well as “life-giving” . Indeed, the depth of the symbolic meaning of fire greatly enhances the literary merit of Fahrenheit 451. Bradbury himself once stated, “When I wrote my novel Fahrenheit 451 during the years from 1949 to 1953, we were living at the heart of what is known now as the McCarthy era. We were very close to panic and whole sale book burning. I never believed we would go all out and destroy ourselves in this fashion. I have always believed in the power of our American society to rectify error without having to resort to destruction” [6,403]. The common and symbolic “book burning” in Fahrenheit 451 is less of a fictional statement for literary amusement than it is a warning for future generations to heed [5,93]. When writing his novel, Ray Bradbury had a feeling that the television and mass media of the 1950’s would continuously grow without boundaries; for this reason, he made Fahrenheit 451 about the constant clash between ignorance and knowledge, between television and books, warning against any efforts to censor controversial or thought provoking pieces of literature [4,133]. Indeed, the McCarthyist period was a time when censoring was at its highest and people were afraid of speaking their minds out of fear of being labelled as communists. Bradbury’s message heavily alludes to the Red Scare, concluding that any censoring, even that of communist thought, is detrimental to humanity as a whole [9,895]. Indeed, the principal, anti-censorship message of Bradbury’s novel was derived from his own beliefs against the political policies.

Perhaps the most well known of all book burnings, which Bradbury draws parallels to in his own novel, is that of the Nazis during the Second World War [2,3]. Indeed, the continuous indirect allusion to the Nazi regime within Fahrenheit 451 plays a major role in how Bradbury’s dystopian society develops and functions. Rationalizing the book burning in Bradbury’s novel, Smolla states, “Beatty, justifying the burning of books, says that ‘we can’t have our minorities upset and stirred’ ... Through his dystopian novel, Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury carefully manages to craft a message against involuntary censorship and in favor of the freeing of the mind. Bradbury’s impeccable usage of language enables him to convey a specific idea through a variety of literary techniques. Employing symbols, allegories, metaphors, and allusions to connect his work of literature to a broader scale, Ray Bradbury is able to tell an engaging narrative filled with messages which, in the end, help contribute to the overarching moral of Fahrenheit 451, calling on all to combat ignorance with knowledge and to rebel against the status quo when necessary.

Conclusion, Fahrenheit 451 is a powerful novel that explores the dangers of censorship and the importance of free thought and expression. Bradbury's writing is haunting and evocative, and the characters are well-drawn and memorable. The novel is a cautionary tale about the dangers of authoritarianism and the need for individuals to think critically and question authority.

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