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THE HOLOCAUST OF INTELLECT: *FAHRENHEIT 451* AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF POSTMODERN GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

There is a futuristic world where technology is the king and superficiality is the queen. In this world, fashion resides in the palace and intellect is a fugitive. This is the world of Ray Bradbury's classic piece of fiction Fahrenheit 451. A dystopian science fiction novel published in 1953 and replete with the metaphors of fire and ignition, Fahrenheit 451 presents an advanced and homogenized generation in which humans have almost become cyborgs and have lost their emotional capacities of empathy, compassion and love. This fragmented generation of Bradbury is very much postmodern in essence as they celebrate this very fragmentation of norms, value systems and even existences. Their emphasis on physical looks, mechanization of life, philosophy of hedonism, advocation of triviality, denial of natural beauty and disregard of past are all postmodern in nature leading them towards the dreaded intellectual deadlock.

Keywords: *Fahrenheit 451, postmodern generation, dystopian fiction, cyborgs*

INTRODUCTION

'Ten minutes after death a man's a speck of black dust. Forget them. Burn all' (p. 62).

How aptly this remark by Captain Beatty exemplifies the miserable and sorry state of affairs of the futuristic American society which Ray Bradbury might have seriously dreaded in the mid-20th century. A society where "intellectual" is a swear word, where philosophy is regarded as slippery stuff, where fashion is religion, compassion an uncharted territory, and where hedonism and superficiality reign supreme. With fire and burning as predominant motifs, *Fahrenheit 451* is Bradbury's classic dystopian science fiction novel, originally published in 1953. Widely regarded as Bradbury's warning to future generations and as a testament to his reverence for books, the novel is bursting with startling role reversals and disturbing conventions. Firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* no longer extinguish flames—they ignite them. Book ownership is a crime. Driving slowly is frowned upon. Such is the extreme deterioration depicted in Bradbury's unsettling vision.

Given that science fiction often questions "being" and expresses doubts about the nature of the world, such narratives are inherently postmodern. Brian McHale, in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), posits that the dominant component of postmodern fiction is ontological, asking

questions such as: "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" McHale even identifies science fiction as a sister genre to postmodernism due to their shared fascination with multiple realities, norm reversals, and technological dependence. These concerns—challenging objective truths and stable realities—resonate throughout *Fahrenheit 451*, making its cast of characters (Montag, Mildred, Beatty, Faber) deeply reflective of postmodern sensibilities.

In a world increasingly driven by spectacle, speed, and surface-level engagement, *Fahrenheit 451* endures as a prophetic cautionary tale. Set in a dystopian future where books are outlawed and "firemen" burn them to maintain social order, the novel invites readers into a chilling reality where critical thinking is not only discouraged but actively annihilated. As digital technologies continue to shape perceptions and reduce attention spans, Bradbury's vision grows alarmingly relevant. The novel encapsulates the gradual erosion of intellectual freedom and the triumph of conformist passivity, offering what can be termed a "Holocaust of Intellect"—a cultural genocide not of bodies, but of thought, nuance, and reason.

The novel was published during the age of Cold War hysteria and McCarthyism censorship; Fahrenheit 451 deals with the paradox of personality and the state, liberty and obedience. However, with its progressive depiction of a robot-like society of Coca-colonized drones with memory loss and without meaning, it fits the postmodern pulse. As a reaction to rational certainties of modernism, postmodernism denies any legitimacy of any grand narratives and fixed identities. This is seen in the dystopia of Bradbury with a disturbing reality: the truth becomes malleable, identity is dispersed, and reality gets veneered through simulations.

In this scenario, to get a feel of the Holocaust of Intellect, one should remember that the annihilation of intellect is not in the physical sense but in the psychological and cultural sense. It entails a methodical destruction of books, history and critical commentary the substitution of all such by spectacle, diversion and deadening uniformity. Amusing Ourselves to Death (1985) by Neil Postman differentiates the fear of authoritarianism as pointed out by Orwell and the fear of trivialization by Huxley. In the vision of Bradbury, however, both are present, a society which prohibits books, as well as one which does not desire them anymore. His firemen do not just set fire to books so that anything that goes against their plot might be silenced, they do it to kill the very process of thought itself.

They ring truer than ever before in our own post modern times not only because we have an ideal world-hostile-to-technological ideology and a commodification of information but also because we have gone through ideological polarization and saturation with digitality in the sense of information. We live in the reality shaped through algorithms, where the paradoxical sense of information provokes ignorance. Skimming, superficial, insight, temporary. Of collapsing meaning under the burden of signs and simulations, a feature so characteristic of the postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard, is brought alive in Fahrenheit 451. This hyperreality is provided by the parlor walls that Mildred watches obsessively as a metaphor and a mechanism.

Mildred Montag is the image of postmodern subject: devoid of feelings, addicted to artificial stimulation and deprived of any memory or self-reflection. The shallowness of her immersion in spectacles stands out against the increasing hunger of Montag on the food of meaning and truth. It is on these opposites that Bradbury references the loss of personal identity and human soul, of having your mind completely saturated by the media and slipping your empathetic strings and human experiences to radiating fantasies mediated through the prism of media.

The very cold-blooded justifications of Captain Beatty underline even more the fact that the society turned into post-intellectualism. According to him, censorship was not a political prescribed capability of the masses but rather a popular request. His monolog shows us a world where the world of complexity is despised and every intellectual content is reduced to triviality. you writers, filled with wicked imaginations, put away your typewriters, he declares, and the holocaust of intellect proceeds, not by the power of will of

authoritarians so much as by the consent of the masses. This coincides with the argument by Lyotard in The Postmodern Condition (1979), that in postmodernity there is no longer an emancipator effect of knowledge, but instead it has been tooled knowledge which translates into the data that upholds the status quo.

Relevant is also the concept of the waning of affect established by Fredric Jameson. In Fahrenheit 451, people are desensitised, and relationships are enacted. The alienation of intense emotional appeals coincides with the loss of sense and power of judgement. Grief is made a mechanized affair, rejoicing a ritual. Such affective flattening, which is typical of postmodern culture, supports the idea expressed in the novel about the society which cannot stand against tyranny and think about its immorality.

In the meantime, Bradbury contains in his world the theory of surveillance societies promoted by Michel Foucault. The Mechanical Hound, a robot created in order to recognize and neutralize any disagreement, represents not only the external regulation by technology, but simultaneous self-discipline. Even neighbors as well as spouses inform about others. Similar to Foucault panopticon, the fear of perpetual gaze transforms the behavioral framework forcing them to drop any sign of individuality or any sort of resistance. Surveillance in this case is not about control; it is about deleting the intellectual posture of reasoning and opposition.

The fading of literature and humanities in the world of Bradbury depict the present changes in culture. In an environment of educational establishments favoring STEM at the expense of the liberal arts, and the digital replacing the long-form reading experience, the harbingers of doom foretold in the novel are becoming a reality in the 21 st century. To Bradbury, reading is not only educational, it is a revolution, a resistance of conformity and a way of regaining the memory and identity.

Aesthetics of the novel portrays postmodern features too. The reader is forced to actively create meaning through the idea of fragmented narrative, intertextuality, and metafictional features. Bradbury alludes to canonical literature, Shakespeare, the Bible, texts of Matthew Arnold in the poem the Dover Beach, so Fahrenheit 451 is a literary palimpsest. These intertextual moments intensify its detraction of cultural oblivion and celebrations of literature as a reservoir of memory and opposition.

It is in this assumption that this paper puts forward the argument that Fahrenheit 451 is not only a dystopian commentary on censorship, but that it is a post-modern allegory of intellectual breakdown. The novel eerily foresees and criticizes postmodernity, compensation of the crises of cultural amnesia, media addictions, voluntary censorship and fragmented identities. In this piece of writing, Bradbury comes out as a mirror or a mirror of an alternative civilization who is disjointed in truth, mediated in reality and who is hazardous to think.

I will elaborate on this thesis in the next chapters. The first chapter will examine the social political background of the Fahrenheit 451 with regard to post modern disillusionment. Chapter Two shall explore the concepts of media, spectacle, and simulation using such theorists as Baudrillard and McLuhan. Chapter Three will examine how power, identity, and surveillance work according to the concepts developed by Foucault. Chapter Four will take up the aesthetics of the novelthe fragmentation, intertextuality and metafiction and relate it to the postmodern theorization of the novel. In the conclusion, the lasting timeliness of the novel in the digital capitalist world of the post-truth era of ideological segregations and theologized exhaustion and burnout will be reflected.

In a day in age when screens are the eyes, and the distinction between reality and conjecture ends up failing, Fahrenheit 451 is a siren cry. It tells us to remember, to fight and most importantly, to think.

Review of Literature

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury was originally published in 1953, and it has been termed as a classic in dystopian and science fiction genre, not only because it presents a very original condemnation of tyrannical censorship but also because it was a harsh critique of postmodern

aims. Fahrenheit 451 is placed within a larger area of academic discourse, which also includes the thoughts about censorship, postmodernism, media theory, surveillance, and the understanding of the philosophy of knowledge. Specifically, it establishes links between Bradbury story and postmodernism as presented by the theorists namely: Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Neil Postman.

A bulk of research studies conducted on *Fahrenheit 451* have focused on the novel as an exemplary piece of postmodernist fiction focusing on either unitary themes, individual characters, discourse and structural aspects. Zhang Zhe and Huang Xiaoyan in their research paper 'Postmodern humanism in English dystopian fiction: From *Animal Farm* to *Fahrenheit 451*' (2020) draw interesting and apt parallels between *Animal Farm* and *Fahrenheit 451* and discuss only the humanistic themes in the novel including the restraint of freedom of speech and thought, the instability of identity, the suppression of creativity, human's avarice and hypocrisy.

Likewise, in an interesting article written by Recep Yilmaz titled 'A Study of 'The Other' in Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451' (2015), the totalitarian government's strategies are unmasked and how the odd one outs like Montag, Clarisse and Faber are regarded as the 'Others' and hence excluded from the social sphere.

As for research studies on characters, R. Jung's research (2016) discusses the internal and external conflicts of Guy Montag with his internal conflicts giving voice to the readers' eerie sense of discontentment as the novel proceeds and his external conflicts (as with his wife and Beatty) naturally turning out to be pivotal in plot progress.

In terms of structural aspects of postmodernism in *Fahrenheit 451*, Maria Anwar's research titled 'Postmodern Dystopian Fiction: An Analysis of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*' (2016) is notable with its primary focus on metafiction, the medias res beginning, blurring of generic boundaries and deconstruction of truth about firefighters who have now become state-approved arsonists. No research, however, presents a comprehensive thematic analysis of the postmodern nature of the *Fahrenheit 451* generation. The present research will primarily focus on the dominant postmodern traits of the entire generation as depicted in the novel especially the technology reliance, cyborgization and the off shoots of this complete dependence.

Academic commentaries on Fahrenheit 451 usually start with discussing the historical setting of the novel. Bradbury wrote in the times of McCarthyism in the United States when people were more suspicious and politically repressed and the censorship was systematic. Critiques like Jonathan Eller (2011) in Becoming Ray Bradbury asserts that very major themes of the novel are heavily laced in this socio-political environment as these are the very fears of the author on the intellectual stifling and misrepresentation of the democratic ideals. The firemen burning down the books in the novel are symbolic enforcers of court-approved censorship, similar to House Un-American Activities Committee and other suppressing establishments of the time.

But the sphere of influence of the novel is much more than the narrow time frame of the historical context. Brian McHale offers a different position in Postmodernist Fiction (1987) arguing that science fiction is postmodern by its very nature because it deals ontologically. He states that questions of reality, identity, and epistemology should be placed on the speculative fiction such as Fahrenheit 451. The features of postmodern culture that Bradbury captured in the representation of the society fascinated by the TV screens, blinded by the display of spectacle, and afraid of intellectual stimulation look similar in many aspects. The emotionally detached and addicted to on-line entertainment cybernauts, Mildred and others, bear all the characteristics of Jean Baudrillard and his hyperreality through simulation idea, where the normality of reality is left more to a simulation than the actual world (Baudrillard, 1981).

The writings of Baudrillard in Simulacra and Simulation offer a pretty productive prism to study Fahrenheit 451. Parlour walls that Mildred interacts with make the real relationship but does not contain any analogous emotions. These immersion technologies act as the instruments of

ideological confinement, hiding the ugly truth of the external reality and providing further support to debauched state of consumer satisfaction. Debra Castillo (1991) points out that by medial cultural technologies presented by Bradury, the reality and fiction are put in a blurred state, eventually leading to a disoriented and indifferent people. In its turn, this proves the thesis that Baudrillard focuses on in his ideas, on the postmodern condition of people that cannot draw the line between what is true and what is created.

Theories of power, surveillance, and discipline expressed by Michel Foucault also throw light into the narrative by Bradbury. In Discipline and Punish (1975), Foucault writes of how in modern societies, the mechanisms of surveillance are internalized by society so as to guarantee compliance and docility. This is truly represented as cold and frightening by the Mechanical Hound in Fahrenheit 451, a mechanical law enforcer that can and will single out and punish the dissenter. The theme of treason, a dog-eat-dog neighbor informing on a neighbor, a wife informing on her husband, single-handedly vindicates Foucault and his idea of dispersed power, the dispersion of the power residing in the fabric of the society rather than just above it.

The very concept of waning affect, which Fredric Jameson discusses as the postmodern culture, is reflected in the dystopia written by Bradbury. According to Jameson in Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991), people in postmodern society have lost their feelings and they are no longer able to establish a real tie, or feel profound emotion. The relationships are painted very well using such characters as Montag and Mildred as these are characterized by alienation and emotional emptiness. The existential crisis Montag goes through on the way to rebelling against societal norms can be therefore interpreted as an effort to feel and live authentically within a culture meant to deny it to him.

Jean-Francois Lyotard is another influential author to this discussion as he laments on the downfall of metanarratives in The Postmodern Condition (1979). Lyotard further states that the postmodern societies, the grand enlightenment, progress and the universal truth narratives become discredited in late modern societies. Fahrenheit 451 is a story that depicts a world that vigorously destroys history and literature and intellectual dialogue to deny critical thinking. The justifications of censorship made by Captain Beatty are seen with the words, written by Lyotard, that knowledge will be commodified and instrumentalized, which means that people would not appreciate knowledge because of its truth, but how useful it is to them in preserving the status quo.

The book by Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death (1985), shares such criticism that discusses the downside of critical thought in a society of media saturation. Postman establishes a distinction between Orwellian censorship (they held back information) and the Huxleyan trivialization (they clogged information in trivia). These threats are, in a way, coupled together by Bradbury who shows that not only books are banned and forbidden but they are also substituted by useless amusements. Fahrenheit 451 society does not pursue knowledge and truth anymore it pursues distraction. This is in line with the arguments by Postman that contemporary media and specifically television transform serious discourse into entertainment whereby he denounced that this undermines the consciousness of the people.

Feminist and cultural studies reflections also touch on the work of Bradbury. Other researchers like the work of Donna Haraway in her Cyborg Manifesto (1985), delved into how there is a shift in identity, gender and agency due to technological mediation. Although Fahrenheit 451 is not a feminist text per se, it does provide insights into gendering the characterizations of non-conformity, and conformity, in the case of Mildred and the rebellious Clarisse. The curiosity and emotional sensitivity of Clarisse stands in sharp opposition to Mildred, the mechanised and disinterested character, evoking the gender elements of Bradbury intellectual critique.

Another characteristic of postmodernism taken and used by Bradbury to excellent effect is intertextuality. Through the text he inserts references to the bible, shakespeare and poetry which form a literary mosaic that serves to

highlight the riches of the very tradition of which the society of the novel is attempting to lead. With critics such as Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism (1988) such intertextuality is said to have dual purpose; it respects literary tradition, and at the same time provocatively challenges the authority and the meaning of such tradition.

Last but not least, theory is great studies in reader-response theory indicate that Fahrenheit 451 is an Invitation to active interpretation that adheres to the amount Wolfgang Iser thinks of as implied reader, with his or her need to complete the gaps in narrative. The novel lacks the definite answers or moralistic statement. Rather, it makes readers ask questions, reflects, and re-thinks about the importance of literature and critical thinking in their respective life.

Summing up, the works of criticism that accompanied Fahrenheit 451 emphasize its comprehensive approach to postmodern concepts. Whether in terms of media saturation and surveillance, emotional detachment and lack of meaning, Bradbury dystopia serves as the vision of its era as well as the predicted vision of cultural crises in future. Placing Fahrenheit 451 in a context of the wider discussions on postmodernism, censorship, media studies, and philosophy, scholars confirmed the sustainable value of the novel as a culturally-bound art object and a guide to morality. Accordingly, present literature review defines the intellectual background in order to dig deeper into the reading of Bradburys work as the representation of the postmodern generation and the symbolic Holocaust of Intellect.

Chapter Three
Methodology

The current chapter describes the methodological approach that is used to analyze the Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury as the exemplifying narrative of the postmodern anxieties, especially through the figurative Holocaust of Intellect in a technologically socialized, intellectually enslaved community. It uses a qualitative, interpretive approach, which is primarily a literature-analytical methodological approach, combined with critical as well as theoretical points of view about postmodernism, media theory, and cultural criticism.

3.1 Research Design

The study is formulated in the form of a literary analysis through a critical lens of post-structuralist and postmodern. Since inquiry is text based and theoretical, it is best designed as qualitative, and has interpretive interest in the literary form, content, and context. This paper will seek to expound on how the narrative strategies used by Bradbury and his obsessive themes add to the phobias of lager post modernism, such as the issue of media saturation, surveillance, fragmentation of identity and the degradation of intellectual life.

3.2 Objectives of the Research

The most essential goals of this research are:

- To discuss how Fahrenheit 451 reflects some of the most important features of a literary postmodern and a postmodern society.
- To discuss the novel as a metaphor to intellectual decadence in a media obsessed, technocratic era.
- In order to situate Bradbury work in the postmodernial discourse on literature and philosophy.
- In order to evaluate how characters, plot and narrative machine attract or express ideas of censorship, hyperreality and epistemological uncertainty.

3.3 Theory of Framework

The study uses a number of theoretical frameworks:

- Postmodern Literature Theory: In the context of postmodern theory or theory studies, the theory emphasizes on ontological instability, intertextuality and metanarrative collapses (McHale, 1987; Hutcheon, 1988).
- Baudrillard, The Hyperreality of the novel: The concept of simulated realities and saturation with the media, as realized in the novel is described through the theory of simulacra introduced by Baudrillard (1981).
- Surveillance and Discipline of Foucault: Foucault (1975) concepts concerning panopticism and biopolitics are identified to discuss

informational influence under external control from the institution and technology.

- Jameson Cultural Logic: Commodification of culture and nonsentimentality Jameson (1991) narrates the experiences with late capitalism through commodification of culture and de-sensitized emotions.

Lyotard: Postmodern Condition The context in which disintegration of grand narratives and commodification of knowledge is put is provided by the framework of Lyotard (1979).

3.4 Rationale of Methodology

The given study demands a qualitative, interpretive approach that is necessary due to the ability to:

- A philosophical, allegorical and symbolic reading.
- A subtle interpretation of the role of literary texts as reaffirmation and commentary of socio-political reality.
- Inclusion of interdisciplinary approaches, in particular cultural studies, media theory and philosophy.

This approach does not deny the fluidity and plurality of meanings of postmodern texts, but shall strive to help the readers search the text against themselves as reflective interpreters rather than conclusive readers.

3.5 Limitations

Although this work tries to undertake a comprehensive theoretical involvement, it does not make use of empirical and reader-response research. As such, its results are majorly interpretive and theoretical. Also, the aim is to look at postmodern theory, but other readings (psychoanalytic, feminist, Marxist) are not thoroughly sought, but can subsequently guide study.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Since it is a textual and theoretical research there exists no direct human participants. All the sources are quoted appropriately and academic integrity is upheld.

4. Discussion

Fahrenheit 451 serves to be a bleak yet brutal critique of the prevailing ideas of homogenization and uniformity in the futuristic modern society. With the postmodern emphasis on plurality of discourse and appreciation of multiplicity coupled with its utter dismissal of the notions of coherence and uniformity, the novel through its lead characters Montag, Clarisse, Faber and Granger challenges the concept and practices leading towards the illusion of homogeneity. The most striking norm of the generation as depicted in *Fahrenheit 451* is this very homogenization of thought and disregard for diversity. When Clarisse McClellan (a young girl living in Montag's neighborhood) says, "They all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else" (p.31), she essentially hints towards this strange societal norm in which uniformity of thought is preferred. One of the ways with the help of which this is done is through suppressing the fundamental human instinct of questioning. Clarisse clearly spells this out when she says, "we never ask questions…. They just run the answers at you." (p.30). Clarisse was indeed the square peg in the round hole. Her habit of probing and asking 'whys' certainly made her misfit in that eerie universe. Moreover, the odd one outs were labelled as 'queer' and even 'mad'. This equation of sanity with uniformity is overwhelmingly criticized by postmodern thinkers. Erich Fromm in *Sane Society* (1955) argues that, "it is naively assumed that the fact that the majority of people share certain ideas or feelings prove the validity of these ideas and feelings. Nothing is further from the truth. Just as there is a 'folie a deux' there is a 'folie a millions'. The fact that millions of people share the same forms of mental pathology does not make these people sane". (p. 14-15). This high regard for homogeneity is legitimized by Captain Beatty's sweeping remark that happiness can only be accomplished through homogeneity of thoughts. In this generation, dissent causes discord and hence all must think alike. This is the reason why fields of study like philosophy and sociology are termed as the 'slippery stuff' as they lead to different patterns of thinking which eventually pave the way towards disagreement,

despondence and despair. Beatty puts this all up in a nutshell when he tells Montag that if we truly wish our people to attain political happiness we must never show them the two sides of the coin. We just give them one or better none.

This postmodern disregard towards homogeneity is also one of the ways of questioning the meta narrative of uniformity and coherence- the very narratives which serve to be the primary premises of the conventional schools of thought. With the vast globe transitioning into a miniature village, the idea of homogenization gets associated with the establishment of integrity and one large global fraternity. From a traditional perspective, for one global community, plurality can turn out to be a threat. Therefore, in Lyotardian terms, postmodernism with its acceptance and in fact reliance on plurality and diversity shows its incredulity towards the grand narrative of uniformity. In strict contrast to traditional forms of criticism like liberal humanism, postmodernism utterly dismisses the idea of universality. The very same dismissal is seen in *Fahrenheit 451* through the characters of Clarisse, Montag, Faber and the book people who are in fact the leading characters. Giving them a central position is Bradbury's way of giving prominence to vanishing postmodern voices. All these characters chose hassle over tranquility, bother over relaxation and most importantly fragmentation over coherence. When Montag tells Mildred that "We all need to be bothered once in a while", he was playing the role of the spokesperson of this grand narrative of incoherence. They knew that perfectly coherent lives aren't possible. Postmodern subjects are fragmented entities for whom coherence is a non-existent realm.

Inextricably linked to this is the idea of mechanization of human beings and loss of profound emotions and feelings. With the mass production of technological gadgets including four walled televisors and audio seashells, a human being has merely become a tool in the hands of technology and in so becoming, humans have lost the emotional capacities of benevolence, tenderness and empathy to name some. In fact, their technology families have surpassed their actual families in terms of preference. Montag's illness mattered the least to Mildred as she did not even bother to turn the TV parlor off despite his pleading request. Compassion has evaded from the surface of the planet. Even the news of immolation of the old woman didn't bother Mildred to the slightest. In fact, she said, "She is nothing to me." (p. 53). The very same idea termed as the *waning of affect* has been put forward by Fredrick Jameson in his majestic work 'Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' (1991) when he concludes that postmodern art possesses depthlessness and lack feeling and anchor. According to Jameson, postmodernism has severely critiqued the conventional forms of depth including the Freudian notion of unconscious and existential views of authenticity. He views this postmodern depthlessness as an expression of superficiality. Furthermore, Dick Hebdige (1993) while listing the common traits and tendencies of postmodernism does include 'a general attenuation of feeling' and 'the functioning and effects of the new miniaturized technologies' in his list. Hence the *Fahrenheit 451* generation is very much postmodern in essence.

An expected off shoot of this automation of humanity owing to technology and waning of affect is an extreme adoration and regard for trivial and frivolous normative values. The survival of virtually non-intellectual genres like comics and confessions and the dismissal of intellectual disciplines certainly exhibit the lack of depth and love for superficiality. Moreover, the human subjects are fascinated by vapid entertainment. Clarisse's portrayal of life palpably illustrates the emphasis on superficiality when she says that people go to fun parks to tease other people, or break windowpanes in specially designed 'window smashers' or furiously wreck cars in 'car wrecker' spaces or indulge in street racing and so forth. Probably an extreme level of superficiality was seen when Mildred's friends were discussing about war and their husbands. Their attitude towards suffering in war and marriage was that of utter artificiality and depthlessness. They talked about war as it's perfectly normal emphasizing on its quickness and immediacy of results. Mrs. Phelps talk about her third husband in a very frivolous

manner stating that if he dies in war, I would never cry and go on with my life. Such superficiality turns out to be quite sickening for Montag as well as the readers.

Yet another significant characteristic of postmodern generation is extreme emphasis on physical looks and fashion. Fashion has almost assumed the status of a religion. Montag's description of Mildred's physical appearance is quite notable in this aspect. He says, "Her hair burnt by chemical to a brittle straw... the reddened pouting lips, the body as thin as a praying mantis from dieting and her flesh like white bacon" (p. 50). In the chapter, "The Sieve and the Sand", Montag refers to Mildred as a 'wax doll'. Likewise, Faber while explaining why books are hated and feared to Montag says that "the comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, expressionless" (p. 84). This overwhelming emphasis on developing deceptive public facades and outward appearances is an indication of the fragmented nature of the society. Mrs. Bowles while discussing politics with Mildred and her friends cheerfully said that she voted for President Noble because he was such a handsome and good looking man. This association of postmodernism with mutation and cosmetic surgery is quite an interesting and apt parallel drawn by many postmodern thinkers. While basing her argument on postmodern architecture, Meredith Jones in her article 'Architecture of the body: cosmetic surgery and postmodern space' (2001) argues that postmodern spaces are depthless with wide open spaces, facades not permitting interference from other places and a variety of elevators and escalators. Giving reference to Fredrick Jameson's famous description of the Bonaventura Hotel, she maintains that postmodern fragmented subjects are unable to fit in these new environment cognitively and hence a need to mutation in the form of surgery arise specifically for women. Regarding cosmetic surgery as body architecture and body technology, her research suggests that bodies mutated after cosmetic surgery become an aesthetically pleasing reflection of postmodern architecture and then they seem to synchronize and fit in perfectly with postmodern environment.

An obvious corollary of this heavy reliance on technology and physical looks is the tendency to disapprove natural beauty. With artificial mutations like cosmetic surgery and make up reigning the world, human subjects have lost their sense of reverence for nature. Their distance with nature has multiplied due to their closing proximity with technology. Clarisse is the only character who could enjoy the fragrance of flowers and the smell of green grass. Almost whenever Montag saw her, she used to be absorbed in natural and scenic beauty. Even Montag while describing her countenance uses nature similes saying that her 'face bright as snow in the moonlight'. Montag never described Mildred or her friends like that preferring to use artificial expressions and figurative language for them. With an exception to Clarisse, the generation is so occupied that time dedicated to nature appreciation is equivalent to time wasted. When Clarisse asked Montag if he ever smelled old leaves, Montag told her that he never had time for that. The preferences hence are transformed and nature appreciation has taken the back seat. This alienation from nature can be viewed as the direct result of the postmodernist rejection of one unified reality. When postmodernist theory states that there is no natural, this distance becomes perfectly understandable. Consequently, Craig Owens (1980) suggests that in postmodernism, nature becomes a domesticated and cultural entity and the 'natural can only be approached through cultural representation' which eventually leads to distance from nature. Starting from the arbitrariness of signs, postmodernist thought moves towards the indifference towards the 'violation of original contexts' which inevitably leads to an inability to appreciate and relate to nature in its originality.

All this finally leads us to the equation of human beings with machines. The human lives in *Fahrenheit 451* have become totally monotonous and repetitive. They are programmed like machines. With the dawn of technology and the dismissal of variety in thought patterns, humans are made to think alike hence becoming mechanical. The lives of the characters strictly follow a routine and they have no time for

intellectual thinking. Their vapid forms of entertainment keep them occupied and hedonistic. There is a high degree of alienation among human beings. The distance between Montag and Mildred is an excellent illustration of this alienation. The institution of marriage has fallen into pieces. Montag and Mrs. Phelps both stated that they would not even cry if their spouses pass away. Mrs. Phelps was repellent towards the idea of having children. Anti-socialism is the trend and people don't have time to talk to one another. All these serve to blur the boundaries between a human and a machine. In 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), Donna J. Haraway traces the evolution of human beings and their relationship with machines. She argues that three boundaries have been broken during this evolution process. With the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in the 19th century, the first distinction between humans and animals was tethered. Next, with the advent of industrial revolution, the second boundary also got destabilized which existed between machines and organisms (humans and/or animals). Machines became advanced and human reliance on it increased thereby diminishing the fine lines between a machine and a human. A third slippery distinction came into crisis with the arrival of a plethora of technological gadgets engulfing the universe. With ongoing advancements in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics, machines are becoming absolutely smart and hence the distinction between a human and a machine is rapidly deteriorating to an extent that it's becoming difficult to tell where a human ends and a machine begins. For Haraway, such a hybrid of machine and human is a *cyborg*. Meredith Jones (2001) also argues that "surgical technologies, biotechnologies and the continuing cyborgization of the human are increasingly everyday occurrences". Mildred, her friend circle and Beatty serve to be the exemplifications of such cyborgs.

Lastly, another distinctive trait of postmodern generation is man's disregard of the past. While referring to the postmodern protagonists Giuliana Bruno in her research paper *Ramble City: Postmodernism and "Blade Runner"* (1987) argues, "The replicants are perfect.... What they lack is a history". In the novel, there is absolutely no discussion of the past. When Montag says 'once upon a time..' captain Beatty stops him there and then and states, "Once upon a time! What kind of talk is that?" (p. 35). Moreover, Mildred and Montag couldn't even recall where they met for the very first time and interestingly it didn't even matter to them. Here Fredrick Jameson's idea of schizophrenia is also relevant according to which postmodern subjects are schizophrenic in nature. Jameson notes that "as temporal continuities break down, the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and material" and past eventually loses its significant essence.

Conclusion

To sum it up, *Fahrenheit 451* is a classic manifestation of the value systems, norms and living patterns of a postmodern generation. With the heavy reliance of this futuristic American society on technology, fashion and frivolous tropes leading towards the holocaust of intellect and the development of cyborgs, Bradbury's tone of despondence perfectly makes sense. Bradbury, however, is not totally hopeless for there is light at the end of the tunnel. The novel's final pages portray a strong sense of optimism and faith. Montag is fighting and he is not alone. He is accompanied by the book lovers. The ones who have books not in their hands but in their hearts and minds. These marginalized strata and their voices might one day become the dominant ones. After all, the game is not over.

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