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EXTENDED ESSAY

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Research Question: To what extent is the transformation of the protagonist in Fahrenheit 45(Guy Montag) similar or different to the protagonist in 1984 (Winston Smith)

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ABSTRACT

This extended essay explores the extent of the similarities and differences between the transformations of the protagonists Guy Montag and Winston Smith. The research question is divided into the analysis of each protagonist with respect to their reality, which basically consists of oppressing, totalitarian, and manipulating governments, forcing their society to be emotionless and empty individuals.

This investigation includes references to the novels, providing an in-depth analysis of each protagonist. These analyses consist of the adverse effects of the antagonist on the character and the role of supporting characters in the process. Apparently, combined with the nature of the protagonists, these effects comprise a great deal of complexity so this essay comprises of two sections where the characters are analyzed and a third part, in which the correlations of the events are evaluated. The information provided on this essay is based on the logical interpretation of knowledge into a reasoning system. Direct quotations from novels comprise the majority of this essay, but secondary observations are required when cases of this complexity is inquired. These observations are provided from the sources in the Bibliography section. The essay is depending on claims and justifications based on solid evidence provided in the novel. In the conclusion, it is validated that these protagonists share a lot of common and uncommon factors during their transition. It is hard to classify any of these aspects to determine a one-sided conclusion so all of the concepts explored in this essay determined the transformation of protagonists Guy Montag and Winston Smith to be both similar and different.

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INTRODUCTION

In George Orwell's 1984 and Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, the main ideas examined are the society's structure, utopia or dystopia where bewildering characters like Guy Montag and Winston Smith maintain a rather simple life, working for the government; unaware of the seeds of doubt that keep proliferating inside them.

If we start from the novels' beginning, analyzing each character's background and investigating their basic characteristics and nature, we sure will be amazed how characters like these have turned into symbols of treachery, freedom and so many vivid concepts that exist throughout the novels.

Starting from Fahrenheit 451's Guy Montag, we are going to explore each protagonist and the characters that have influence over them. Guy Montag is a member of a futuristic society where he is a fireman who is responsible for burning each and every book in the community. The people in this society do not read books, enjoy nature, have meaningful conversations amongst themselves or pay attention to their life and what happening around them. Like the society in 1984, the society of Fahrenheit is blinded by their government party and not allowed to have opinions of themselves with the oppression of leaders of their society. Developing in a society like this Guy Montag is not to far away from eradicating every bit of faith he has in his government and social order.

One of the turning points in the novel was when Montag was riding the train in order to get to his banal and stressful job when she met the young seventeen-year-old girl Clarisse McClellan. We might even refer to her as the largest impact on the protagonist since she is the one that both planted and revealed ideas and concepts in Montag's head such as freedom, realization of the beauty of nature, enjoying life, paying attention to your surroundings, etc.

Of course with such a social order and oppression Montag cannot relate with these ideas at the beginning. The factors that repel him from these concepts are the extensive dread spread by the government into the hearts of every individual in the society. But as time passes, Montag starts transforming; a solid proof of this statement is that he starts reading books and he starts to question the authority and its power. As we all know this is the first step of the birth of a rebel. It's the little things that bug him such as the plainness and the obscurity of the shows Mildred watches and the meaningless conversations she has with her friends. In Montag's society noticing these small details is even a major accomplishment since government leaves you no time to think about life, by creating distractions such as addiction TV, pointless pep rallies and social events, sports and an awfully loaded business schedule. As this seed of thought starts to flourish Montag starts to question his job and his life. He gets bored and everything just seems soporific to him. Another breakthrough in the novel is when Montag meets Faber. A retired English Professor, Faber too carries rebellious thoughts but he doesn't contain the same excitement and faith Montag has. These two courageous men form an undertaking to escape the society and to join other rebels known as 'the book people'. They sure encounter certain obstacles throughout the process but they manage to be successful and Montag lives in a utopia of his own.

Now, what we must question is how are these factors similar to that of 1984's? Well, lets discuss the background that will later thrive the rebellious thoughts lying in his head. Winston Smith, a 39-year-old regular man with an office job in the government but is he really this plain and simple? Like Montag, Smith's transformation is a process involving numerous steps and effects. Apart from Montag's transformation, Smith's transformation involved more of his independence and private thoughts. Perhaps he wasn't accompanied or some might say 'provoked' as much as Montag was by characters such as Clarisse and Faber. But he realized how unpleasant their lives were and he started sharing his thoughts with his dearest diary that was prohibited by the thought police. Whilst at his workplace he glances at a beautiful girl named Julia, who is a mechanic of some sort. He suffers from severe anger and hatred after he encounters her, probably because he cannot have her. But one day Julia slips a note to Smith saying 'I love you'. Surely, this occurrence shocks Smith's world and they involve in a love affair, which is also prohibited by the so-called 'Ministry of Love' and we can consider this act as the second strike Winston committed against the government. One day Smith meets a guy named O'Brien who is one of the powerful members of the inner party. On a fine evening O'Brien invites Smith and Julia over to his house and this unexpected but pleasant invitation makes Smith believe that O'Brien is a rebel too. At his house, O'Brien confesses that he is a rebel too and hands Smith a journal that belongs to a mysterious man named Goldstein. Dramatically, it turns out that O'Brien is actually a spy of the government! Fully consisting of rebellious and uncanny thoughts, this journal entralls Smith and during that moment the thought police busts him and Julia and takes them to the gruesome torturing center, 'Ministry of Love'. Unlike Montag's happy ending, this is the

beginning of a extensive negative transformation for Smith where his integrity will be tested. After countless tortures, Big Brother prevails to find and use Smith's deepest fears, which are rats.

The moment when Smith finally breaks down is when he says 'Do it to Julia!' which is a sad moment for readers like us. After this breakthrough in the novel they release both of them back to society but they weren't who they were at the middle of the novel. Something was taken away from them. Something that made them dream and think outside the limits. Their integrity was collapsed; the last sentence of the novel is 'He loved Big Brother'. What we can interpret from these series of events is that every human being's integrity can be eradicated and destroyed but the positive and what might be called as the 'optimistic' approach to the ending of this novel is that it is very hard to break one's integrity and Winston Smith is a solid proof.

So basically, these protagonists demonstrate very similar features and characteristics but they have different levels of faith in their cause and both are challenged by different difficulties but I feel the urge to state that both of them prevailed and did something that rest of the people couldn't have done and they committed themselves to freedom of thought and expression and so many other concepts that their societies were lacking.

The awakening of both characters begun when they encountered people of high intellectuality. In 1984, this transformation is stated in a quote by Smith as " Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious." (Orwell, 112). The state of clarity and consciousness in this quotation refers to the awareness of the protagonist from the actions of the government against the society.

ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

A) GUY MONTAG

The protagonist of the novel Fahrenheit 451 is named after a paper manufacturing company, which allows a certain foreshadowing to the reader, such as the name of the character Faber, which has a correlation to one of the greatest publishers of all time, Faber-Castell. Ray Bradbury tends to use this form of expression in his novels since it bonds the novel to a certain piece of reality that excites the reader.

Guy Montag is portrayed as a misguided and clumsy character that is constantly on the look for a purpose and meaning to his existence. His dedication to his job as a fireman and as a normal functioning character in his society disappears the second he finds an alternate universe to be a part of and he is introduced to this lifestyle by the help of Clarisse. As they familiarize, Montag mentions, “I feel I’ve known you so many years?” (Bradbury, 40) and this part is crucial for them to get to know each other because they complete each other in a way similar to a family. Their unity is stated as “You make me feel very old and very much like a father. Now you explain, she said, why you haven’t any daughters like me, if you love children so much?”(Bradbury,41). Both Clarisse and Montag feel the need to pursue their identity and to reach a certain level of spiritual prosperity. The main difference is that Clarisse is a very driven and clever girl for her age and she occasionally uses their connection to Montag as a tool to guide him to question his surroundings. This transformation begins as a simple tendency to appreciate the surroundings in an artistic way. After they develop their relationship further, they share information regarding their daily lives, about how meaningless every conversation they have or hear is and the way people spend their time. These series of events raise the question ‘Why?’ and Montag

and Clarisse seek the answer to be in the books Montag burns. The perception of society about books is quite complicated. In my opinion, this apprehension is similar to any illegal activity involving the alteration of the mind. The people involved are considered as delusional and erratic and nobody tries to empathize with them. Montag had a considerable amount of human interaction with his coworkers but what bothered him most were the communication problems he was having with his wife, Mildred. Mildred is one of the most apt examples of what the lifestyle of a human being in Montag's society can do. She is described to be a mindless, distant and unstable character who even is unaware of her own suicide attempt. This event is described in the novel as "You took all the pills in your bottle last night. Oh I wouldn't do a thing like that. Why would I do a thing like that? She asked." (Bradbury, 29). The author portrays Mildred as an empty, emotionless shell. She betrayed her husband in cold blood without a second thought. Montag's society is lacking the attachment and commitment that an individual should sense. The main reason why we view the characters described in this novel as inhumane and unrealistic is that they resemble robots rather than humans. However, their level of intelligence is baffling, such as in the case of one of the major characters, Captain Beatty. Montag has a stable relation with Captain Beatty as one of his employees but during the transformation of Montag, the series of events are daunting for the audience. "Beatty snorted gently. 'Hell! It's a fine bit of craftsmanship, a good rifle that can fetch its own target and guarantees the bull's eye every time'. That's why I wouldn't want to be its next victim said Montag. 'Why? You got a guilty conscience about something?'" (Bradbury, 39) Moments like these pass frequently between Montag and Beatty. Personally, I find a resemblance to the nature of the relation of Raskolnikov and Porfiry in *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoyevsky. Beatty applies a

constant pressure to 'break' Montag, without revealing his true intentions and opinions. Just like Raskolnikov, Montag feels helpless and trapped. It is a matter of resilience and endurance to maintain the state of the transformation. Apart from Raskolnikov, Montag keeps his head clear with the help of supporting characters, which was a privilege that Raskolnikov did not have.

Another important aspect of Montag's transformation is his relationship to Faber. Faber is an opposing character to Beatty, as a counterpart to have a completely different impact on Montag's mind. His method forces Montag to think independently but from time to time, he demonstrates complete dominance over Montag. He articulates Montag's beliefs in ways mentioned by critics as cowardly and heroic by turns, so he is a very unique character in the novel who played a crucial role. As the plot thickens, each one of these supporting characters reveal their identity. Clarisse becomes a victim of a tragedy and becomes deceased as a result. Her purpose was complete according to the author. Mildred and Beatty betray and try to entrap Montag but using a character as unpredictable as Mildred surely improves the plot. Faber takes great risks that jeopardize his safety most of time but like Montag, he is committed to a cause.

B) WINSTON SMITH

The primary goal of 1984 was to explore the outcomes of having a totalitarian government and the novel itself serves as an uncommon prediction of the future that portrays a society under constant surveillance of the government. The measures a government could take to have absolute control over its society baffle the audience with the vivid presentation of the environment and the series of events Winston Smith, the protagonist experiences. His personal tendency to resist the stifling of his individuality, and his ability to reason about his resistance, enables the reader to observe and understand the harsh oppression that the Party, Big Brother, and the Thought Police institute apply on the foundation of the society.

Winston Smith is portrayed quiet heroic by Orwell. He has a tendency to constantly challenge the party by committing rebellious acts ranging from writing a single phrase such as “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER” to having a love affair with Julia. The beginning of the novel describes a Winston Smith that is considerate and thoughtful but strictly kept in the limits set by the government. As his transformation begun he becomes apparent with his fatalism and rebellious acts. The reader’s perception of Winston Smith comes to a crucial turning point when he starts to commit selfless acts that are simply not expected from a simple low-position government worker. As of any action, there is a purpose behind Winston Smith’s behavioral change. What sets him apart from the rest of the society, from Julia, from O’Brien or any acquaintances of him is his penchant to explore the roots of this totalitarian government. "Who controls the past', ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past (Orwell, 37). As opposed to a government that committed itself on covering its past and wrong doings, Smith is faced with a challenge that is considered

as suicidal by everyone around him. His ‘journey’ started long before his rebellious actions. He always felt an emptiness that he tried to fill by expressing himself on a secret diary. Even though he knows the severe consequences of this simple act, he keeps doing the same each and every day and this serves as solid evidence to the level of dedication he is willing to commit to this journey. “If there is hope, wrote Winston, it lies in the proles.” (Orwell, 72). This quotation indicates the awareness of Smith from the adversity of his position but for someone who has confidence, he acts in a way similar to a person sentenced with an execution; he takes unnecessary risks. On the other hand, he is a paranoid character who checks his surroundings to see if there is someone to arrest him while he even imagines rebellious actions. The contradictory nature of Winston Smith is attracting and intriguing to the reader, but just like any other protagonist his transformation and existence is plain without supporting characters. Julia is one of the most active characters but both the reader and Smith is not satisfied with her simplicity and superficial nature. Opposed to Winston, she is optimistic and pragmatic. She is strictly bound to her sexual desires and enjoyment. She tries her best to cover up her tracks so that she can go on to pursue the present happiness state. It is apparent that Julia meant so much more to Winston before they started this affair, probably because she had an eluding mystery that drove Winston mad but as soon as he got to know her, his attraction to Julia was limited substantially. Despite this huge downer, Winston loved and tried to protect Julia until the moment he broke which is described in the novel quite vividly. "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!" (Orwell, 279) Another crucial character that played a role in both the beginning and ending of Smith's transformation is O'Brien. O'Brien is described as a high-command government

official which makes him a superior of Winston. Winston was most probably attracted to his relaxed state and his unique charisma since it is very risky to try and connect with another individual in this society. We witness Winston and O'Brien getting to know each other but some critics mention the easy-going and provocative behavior of O'Brien gives a foreshadowing of his true purpose to the audience. O'Brien claims to be a rebel to himself but he barely mentions his feelings about the party and offers an outrageous amount of content that he knows is enough to send anyone to the labor camp. Both Winston and Julia shock the audience with their unimaginable naivety that they are entrapped as they explore the mysterious journal of Goldstein, who is the unknown leader of the rebellious party.

At the final stage of Winston's transformation, he endures a great deal of pain, inflicted on him by the officials of the 'Ministry of Love' that are basically specialists on torture. It is 'Room 101' where they are finally able to break Smith by using his worst fear: flesh eating rats. Winston describes his experience as "It was like swimming against a current that swept you backwards however hard you struggled, and then suddenly deciding to turn round and go with the current instead of opposing it. Nothing had changed except your own attitude; the predestined thing happened in any case." (Orwell, 280).

When O'Brien tells him about the true intention of himself and the government, Smith questions how O'Brien became the person he is today. O'Brien replies with "They got me a long time ago" (Orwell, 326). O'Brien becomes a more complex and bewildering character since the beginning of the novel. The novel ends with questions still left about the government but Orwell's intention was to create a threatening and disturbing society and the majority of people believe he succeeded.

The ending of the novel, quoted as, “But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.” (Orwell, 451) sends a complex message to the audience that can be interpreted in a number of ways. It is fascinating that a person can take these enormous measures to protect and defend his opinions but also the novel proves that every person can be broken into a completely different one – brainwashed.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES

The analysis of the protagonists on the previous part explored a lot of common and different properties of the transformation processes.

To start off, we should bear in mind the initial state of the protagonists. They were both dedicated workers, living a monotone daily life that is monitored by the government. The most distinct difference between them in this stage is the initial thoughts of the characters. Montag did not have any seeds of doubt or any dwelling rebellious ideas or plans but Smith kept a daily record of his opinions about his government, knowing the danger such an action poses. Also, Smith did not have any kind of guidance from anyone around him while Montag was accompanied by enlightening support characters like Clarisse and Faber. This claim indicates that both characters were driven into this blur differently. As their thoughts kept on forming, Montag was faced by a daunting obstacle, Captain Beatty. He confronted and closely threatened Montag while Smith was unknowingly fooled and entrapped by O'Brien. Both the characters experienced the betrayal of those who were close to them in different ways. In Smith's case it was subtle and unexpected whereas in Montag's case, events raised into a raid followed by a thrilling man-hunt.

Their responses to the events occurring around them were quite different. Montag allied with intelligent people that maintained a certain level of planning and reasoning. Smith had a love affair with a woman of simple needs and perhaps their relationship clouded both of their judgment. As Smith did rebellious and selfless things, Julia's deepest concern is to maintain her comfort zone consisting of only sexual pleasure and enjoying and living life to its fullest.

The sorrow and pain each protagonist endured is completely different. While Montag was threatened by physical pain and pressurized, Smith didn't even know what was happening until O'Brian clarified things for him. Unfortunately, Smith's battle against torture failed to prevail and he lost his integrity. Montag, however, managed to escape the authorities and had the chance to have a happy ending.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this essay explored the sole existence and transformation of Guy Montag of Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury and Winston Smith of 1984 by George Orwell. I analyzed each protagonist using indicators such as their surroundings, the infrastructure of their government and in my opinion, the effect of supporting characters on the transformation. The protagonists demonstrated an interesting development, which was extraordinarily addicting. Dystopian novels tend to contain characters that we cannot simply familiarize with and the characters of these novels definitely prove this claim. As a result, investigating the structure of these characters were hard relative to that of a regular novel; there are countless conditions and factors to consider when we evaluate the protagonist.

The authors used a similar technique that allowed us to relate the changes of the protagonists' lives into each other – both of them start their life as regular human beings and as time passes they slowly change, which is the main structure of the plot of each novel. The protagonists are proven to be as similar as to be different. Their common and different properties were hard to distinguish and differentiate but after the comparison of the in-depth analyses of each protagonist, the differences and similarities became more apparent.

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