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**The Subjugation of the American Midwestern Individual in
The Grapes of Wrath (1939) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1955)**

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to my family; my father, my mother and my brothers who supported me throughout my education.

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Abstract

The Grapes of Wrath and *Fahrenheit 451* are both influential works by John Steinbeck and Ray Bradbury, which are highlighted for their representation of the systematic destruction of personal identity in the Heartland known as the American Midwest. Both narratives explore themes of dehumanisation and subjugation in different environments and settings. *The Grapes of Wrath* reflects the Joad family's struggles during the Great Depression as well as reflecting socio-economic exploitation. However, *Fahrenheit 451* envisages Guy Montag, the protagonist, in a future dystopian situation where intellectual individuals are subjugated and cultural dehumanization is predominant. Both books underline the importance of personal freedom and human self-esteem against the oppressive systems.

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General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The heartland of America, known as the Midwest, holds a unique and complex position and place in the cultural thoughts of the United States. Commonly, it has been romanticized as the essential embodiment of American values and principles such as perseverance, modesty and agrarian integrity. This perception is grounded in the area's agricultural past, quaint towns, and a strong sense of community spirit. The traditional myths represent the Midwest as a region of stability, purity and a more leisurely way of living, contrasting with the apparent disorder and moral ambiguity of urban cities along the coastlines.

The Midwest typically conveys several thoughts of dedication and intimacy for a better life which is the concept of the American Dream. This flawless vision highlights themes of persistence, moral integrity, and the social flexibility. Another vision, more precisely a literary one, that deals with the Midwest's image is the Postmodern literature. It challenges and deconstructs the Midwest' myths, and presenting a more fragmented and critical perception. Within the Midwest context, postmodern narratives often expose the deep-rooted social and economic gaps, the flaws of the capitalist structure, and the failure of personal and public identities. These literary works, including *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451* by John Steinbeck and Ray Bradbury, question the basic, sentimental and nostalgic perceptions of the Midwest, revealing a region that is complex and intricate marked by its historical and stereotypical myths and contemporary realities.

Thus, the present dissertation aims at the representation of the Midwest, its people's life exploration and other characteristics like literature and culture. For such purpose, a set of research questions were raised, merely:

1. Why the Midwest is portrayed as an agrarian land in literature and how is the Midwestern character represented?
2. What do the titles *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451* mean?
3. What is the message behind Steinbeck's narrative in *The Grapes of Wrath*?
4. How does the life of Montag change in *Fahrenheit 451* and how is this change in vision related to the Midwest?

A Set of hypotheses were derived in order to answer the previously mentioned research questions, which are the following:

- Important personal transformation of characters of *Grapes*.
- The novel *The Grapes of Wrath* shows an important transformation of characters based on their belonging to the Midwest and the highlighted cultural differences they face as they travel.
- Guy Montag, the protagonist of *Fahrenheit 451*, begins to discover the truth behind banning books, questions the system, and changes his mind after the death of Clarisse McClellan.
- Postmodern literature deconstructs the American dream, its essential contradictions and its failure way of promises.

Chapter one of this dissertation deals with the Heartland or the American Midwest. It explores the the image of the area in addition to the vision of the Midwestern individuals. Also, in the Midwest background, it carries different meanings of confidence for a better life which is the American dream that depict the integrity and pursuit of contentment. Besides, there is a literary perception that exposes mostly about the region is the postmodern literature which highlights the social gaps and the failure of individual identities. All these insights marked by the the representation of the Midwest as an agricultural and industrial land along with the rejection and ideological control of the people.

Chapter two of this research concerns with both narratives that are *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451* by John Steinbeck and Ray Bradbury respectively. It reveals the themes of exploitation and oppression faced by the individuals including the characters of both novel in dissimilar sceneries. In this part, the research unveils points out ideas that are emphasized in those novels like the pursuit of the American dream , challenging the oppressive system and cultural thought freedom.

Chapter One: Exploration of the Midwestern Life and Literature

1.1 Introduction

In the heart of America, the Midwest, often referred to as America's heartland, includes a vast region of the United States and it has long been emblematic of the American essence. It is characterized by its extensive plains, serene agricultural landscapes and bustling urban centers (Cronon).

The Midwest played a vital and crucial role in shaping the nation's identity such as crossroads of cultures and a center for industrialization and urbanization. Major cities like Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis emerged as main centers of trade, industry and innovation as well as powering the development of the region and contributing significantly to the country's economic progress.

When it comes to history, the Midwest is marked by conquest and colonization, of agrarian dreams and industrial revolution. From the indigenous peoples who first inhabited these areas to the influx of immigrants who looked for a better life on its rich fertile land, the region has been a melting pot of traditions and identities. However, alongside of Manifest Destiny¹ and westward expansion², there are also darker events such as the removal of native populations, the brutality of frontier life, and the scars of racial discrimination (Cronon).

Throughout literary works, the heartland of America has been commemorated in literature as a region of community, tradition and the pursuit of the American dream. The Midwest region has been portrayed as a symbol of longing for nostalgia and pragmatism, often depicted as a location where conventional beliefs and diligence are greatly valued. A literary genre mostly emerged in this area in the twentieth century which is the postmodern literature. The advent of this latter offers a perspective through which to interrogate and examine the myths of the Midwest. As writers grapple with the fragmentation and shattering of the truth and the failure of grand narratives, they face the core of Midwestern culture and identity. Through works that

¹The 19th-century doctrine or belief that the United States had the right to expand throughout the American continents and it was both justified and inevitable.

²A significant movement towards the western coast of North America started in 1810s.

challenge usual structures and forms and blur the limits between reality and fiction, authors highlight the fissures in the area's shared history and encourage readers to rethink its legends of uniqueness and progress. Nevertheless, is the intersection of literature with ideologies of control of the masses, as they reflect and distort the anxieties of their time. Midwestern writers have long dealt with the mechanisms of power and the manipulation of the individuals. In a time marked by surveillance capitalism and algorithmic control, their insights and observations into the nature of propaganda and persuasion remain as relevant as ever.

In general, the Midwest's abundant history, varied cultural scenery, and impact on literature offer a fertile environment for delving into complex themes of identity surrounding individuality, authority, and the quest for the American ideal in the context of postmodern thought.

1.2 The American Midwest

The American Midwest, also referred as the Midwest, is a geographic region situated in the northern and central parts of the United States. Located between the Appalachians and Rocky Mountains and lies to the north of the Ohio River and the 37th parallel. According to the federal government's definition, the Midwest comprises the Northwest Territory, or the Old Northwest, including the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin, and the Great Plains that involve Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. The Midwest is also pioneering in architecture and retail. The region has a unique culture and an area of enormous diversity, as well as to welcome the outsiders and hard-workers (Britannica).

The Midwest extends to two major geological regions in North America, which are the Canadian Shield and the Central Lowland. The Canadian Shield, including some of the world's oldest rocks dating back billions of years, is exposed in central Canada and the northern Midwest. Moving southward, a layer of more recently formed sedimentary rocks covers the ancient shield rocks in what is known as the Central Lowland. This sedimentary rock region has a lightly sloping or rolling topography. It

extends from the eastern base of the Appalachians to the western Rocky Mountains. The Central Lowland, unaffected by mountain-building forces, maintains rocks in roughly horizontal layers. The Canadian Shield and the Central Lowland are widely covered by glaciers in the past two million years, that contributes to subdued topographic features. In the southern Midwest, the glacial cover is absent as well as the land is noticeably mountainous. (Sisson et al 129)

The climate of the Midwest experiences a humid, warm-summer variety, with winter variable temperatures that range from cool in the south to very cold in the north and central portions. There are three types of air masses that are originating from distant sources and resulting day-to-day weather variations: Cold, dry air from northern Canada carries cold fronts associated with precipitation throughout the seasons. The second air is mild which is a dry air from the western interior of the United States leads to prolonged periods of sunny weather. The third air mass, originating from the Gulf of Mexico and the subtropical Atlantic Ocean, is warm and moist. Tropical air moves northward in all seasons and causes substantial precipitation when it meets the colder Canadian air at the surface (Cayton et al 129).

The term Midwest or Middle West first emerged in the 1880s, originally referring to describe Nebraska and Kansas. It was not until after 1903 that it extended to encompass states like Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and portions of the northern plains. In 1984, the study of the historian James Shortridge claimed that the term did not arise from a simplistic splitting of the West into far and middle sections. As an alternative, it changed as the region itself progressed. Currently, the Midwest typically includes states from the Old Northwest Territory and portions of the northern plains, with some regional variations such as the Nebraska Sand Hills and Missouri Bootheel (Mather 191).

1.2.1 The History of The Midwest

In the eighteenth century, the Midwest was a region where American Indian tribes and European settlers interacted in a dynamic way. The area, which stretched

from the Ohio River to the beginning of the Mississippi River, was inhabited by various indigenous groups such as the Ojibwe, Sioux, Osages, Illinois, Potawatomi, Shawnee, Delaware, and Miami. These native communities resided in settlements near lakes and rivers, practicing agriculture and engaging in trade with French and English merchants. This trade involved the barter of pelts and hides, acquired from places like the Dakotas, for European commodities like fabric, firearms, alcohol, and metal tools. (Sisson et al xxi)

The Midwest was densely forested and had a network of lakes and rivers that facilitated commercial connections linking indigenous tribes with major European cities such as Paris and London. As these economic bonds grew stronger, the native peoples of the Midwest started to rely more on European technology and trade. Besides economic ties, they also aimed to form diplomatic and military partnerships with European nations, strategically pitting the French and English against each other. This strategy allowed them to use European assistance against the powerful Iroquois and maintain a certain level of independence in the face of colonial pressures. The history of the Midwest during this era showcases a complicated and evolving interaction between indigenous populations and European influences, influenced by economic, diplomatic, and military factors. (xxi)

The downfall of the world, as depicted, commenced in the mid-1700s when George Washington first arrived in 1754 near the junctions of the Ohio River, sparking a global conflict that lasted until 1763. This war led to the collapse of the French dominion in North America. The triumphant British, however, faced challenges in controlling their victory, resulting in disaffection among diverse American factions, including indigenous tribes in the Great Lakes region and craftsmen in Philadelphia and Boston. In 1776, thirteen colonies along the Atlantic coast proclaimed independence, establishing a new nation.

The journey towards British recognition of this fresh system included confrontations with indigenous communities from New York to Georgia. Following the Treaty of Paris in 1783, tensions escalated, culminating in the defeat of indigenous warriors prior to and during the War of 1812. Ultimately, Great Britain and the United

States agreed on a permanent boundary at the Great Lakes. Despite intermittent conflicts in the upper Mississippi Valley, the 1820s and 1830s witnessed the expansion of American influence from the East Coast to the vast plains. Interestingly, most Midwestern states, excluding Indiana, were named after indigenous cultures, underscoring the ironic juxtaposition of the region's past and its native origins.

Within a few generations, American and European settlers altered the landscape of the future Midwest. They cleared forests, drained marshes, and constructed infrastructure like roads, canals, and railways. The area blossomed into a key agricultural hub, yielding crops such as corn, wheat, fruits, and livestock, transforming it into a global food source. The establishment of numerous small towns along trade routes, characterized by houses made of brick and wood around a central commercial hub, became a common sight. These strategically positioned communities evolved into processing hubs, converting grains into commodities like flour and beer, and manufacturing pork into various products. (Sisson et al xxi)

As numerous prominent cities emerged in the area, Chicago, founded in 1833, swiftly rose as the hub of transportation, commerce, and culture in the North American heartland. The construction of railroads played a vital role in the growth of Chicago, enabling the movement of timber, wheat, and corn from the surrounding regions. Despite facing a setback with the devastating Great Chicago Fire in 1871, the city swiftly bounced back and, by 1900, flaunted an impressive skyline adorned with towering buildings, spacious streets, and geometric squares. Chicago became a top destination for those looking to escape rural and small-town life. Beyond Chicago, from Ohio to Kansas, the Midwest in the early twentieth century was viewed as an unmatched commercial and agricultural paradise on a global scale. (xxi)

The significance of government in shaping the history of the Midwest is often overlooked. The U.S. Congress established territorial regulations in the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which served as a blueprint for American expansion during the nineteenth century. The organized process of surveying and selling land in grids defined the region's unique checkerboard pattern. The Northwest Ordinance also played a crucial role in ensuring that Midwest states

would adopt republican governments, promote public education and religion, and prohibit slavery (except in Missouri). While the commitment to education and opposition to slavery were at times more symbolic than practical, these principles became synonymous with the Midwest in popular perception. By the mid-nineteenth century, many Midwest residents attributed their progress to the promotion of free labour and the influence of cultural institutions such as schools and churches that shaped individuals with values of the middle class. The public culture of the Midwest flourished through various activities, including engaging Chautauquas and numerous local voluntary organizations dedicated to the moral and material advancement of individuals. (Sisson et al xxi)

The Midwest region saw a surge in cultural growth, with more than half of the Carnegie libraries in the United States being situated there. Various Christian groups constructed stunning churches, and their followers established numerous private schools focused on training clergy, educators, and upstanding citizens. Midwestern states established public school systems and universities, creating innovative educational programs that would later influence global standards. A pivotal moment occurred in the 1800s with the establishment of renowned land-grant universities, which became symbols of accessible higher education in the region for the next century. The founding of these institutions, like The Ohio State University, demonstrated a dedication to educating citizens, as reflected in their motto, Education for Citizenship(xxii). This emphasis on learning and cultural establishments played a crucial role in shaping the Midwest's identity and advancement during this era. In the 1800s, Midwest residents took pride in their progress, often referring to their home as the West or the Great West. The term Midwest only gained popularity in the early 1900s. Their sense of regional identity was somewhat unclear, as they primarily identified with their individual states rather than as a collective region. Even during the American Civil War, they viewed the Union's triumph as a validation of regional beliefs, but their loyalty was mainly to their own states rather than the Midwest as a whole. (xxii)

From the middle eighteenth century to the middle nineteenth century, the children of the American Heartland held powerful positions, with occupants of the Presidential Office hailing from this region for over half a century, spanning from 1860 to 1960. Influential leaders, innovators, visionaries, creators, designers, and cultural icons emerged from the Heartland, influencing national infrastructure and serving as the hub for major American industries. Notable figures such as Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers, Henry Ford, and influential authors like Mark Twain and Langston Hughes hailed from the Heartland. By the early twentieth century, the transformation of the Heartland into its recognizable form was mostly complete. It shifted from an era of rapid change and progress to a period of stability and standstill, symbolizing the American norm.

Once pioneering global shifts, the Heartland became synonymous with practicality and moderation. In the late twentieth century, the region was often stereotyped as uniform, predictable, and dull, associated with down-to-earth and honourable citizens. This perception contrasted with the past story of small-town Midwesterners seeking fame and fortune in cities like New York or Hollywood, reversing the migration trend of the 1800s.(xxii).By the mid-20th century, the Heartland seemed more like a state of mind or perspective rather than a clearly defined geographical area. Midwesterners were known for their unassuming qualities, lacking distinct characteristics. Considered anything but flashy, they were thought to have no easily recognizable accent, specific fashion sense, or unique traditions.(Sisson et al xxii)

1.2.2 The Midwest in Literature

In 1924, the *New Yorker* magazine made its debut by stating that it was "not tailored for the elderly woman in Dubuque," (Sisson et al 427) leading to discussions about cultural identity in the Midwest. *The Time* magazine, curious about the reaction in the heartland, decided to send a copy to a reader in the Midwest who criticized the *New Yorker* editors for being part of an exclusive literary group, showcasing the clash between urban and rural viewpoints. This incident highlights broader themes and

conflicts in the literary history of the Midwest, tracing back to the 1830s. Early settlers like James Hall and Caroline Kirkland depicted the challenges and wonders of the western frontier for readers in the East, prompting efforts by writers and editors in the Midwest to create a regional literary scene. Despite these endeavors, by the 1870s, the Midwest was seen as lacking a strong literary heritage. Edward Eggleston, in the introduction to *The Hoosier School-Master*(1871), spoke of the struggles Midwesterners faced in finding their place in American literature. He observed that literature was dominated by depictions of rural life in New England, leaving the Midwest largely unrecognized. .(Sisson et al 427)

However, significant works emerged in the late 19th century, such as Eggleston's own novel, E. W. Howe's *The Story of a Country Town* 1883), Joseph Kirkland's *Zury: The Meanest Man in Spring County* (1887), Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), and Mark Twain's writings about the Mississippi River, including *Old Times on the Mississippi* (1875) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). While these works gave the Midwest a literary voice, their focus on rural and frontier experiences reinforced the perception that the region lacked the intellectual and artistic resources necessary for a unique literary culture. The tension between urban and rural viewpoints endured, shaping the ongoing narrative of the Midwest's literary identity. (427)

In the Midwest's Literature, there was a provincial and metropolitan viewpoint was used as a structure for comprehending the growth of midwestern writing (Sisson et al 428). This contrast emphasized the societal and historical influences shaping American regionalism and the unequal connections between big cities and smaller towns or countryside regions. The phrases provincial and metropolitan provided a shared vocabulary for discussing location-based cultural and authority variances. They emphasized the tangible disparity in cultural circumstances, affecting where writers decided to reside and create. The social past of midwestern writing has been defined by movement, as writers looked for jobs, community, and mental inspiration in cities. (427)

The conflict between province and metropolis has been a key theme in literature from the Midwest since the 1800s, exploring the connection between countryside and urban culture. As urban and rural areas became more alike, writers began to portray the division between city and country in a more symbolic way, focusing on attitudes and ways of thinking rather than specific locations. This approach can be seen in works such as Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street," F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*, suggesting that a city-dweller's perspective could be limited. This satirical approach highlights the influence of places like Dubuque in shaping a sophisticated literary awareness, challenging stereotypes about rural life and contributing to the growth of a national literary tradition. (Sisson et al 428)

Writers like Jane Smiley and James Wright illustrate recognizable landscapes in the Midwest, linking characters to societal and financial changes such as industrialization, deindustrialization, migration, and movement to cities. The concept of "middleness" in the Midwest not only pertains to its location on the map but also signifies its crucial role as the center of modernizing influences that shape the culture of the nation. Midwestern literature mirrors a variety of cultural settings, making it a true reflection of the entirety of America.

The literature of this region is rich with interconnected imagery and nuanced meanings, presenting a range of viewpoints. For instance, Willa Cather's depiction of Nebraska in *My Ántonia* is viewed through the lens of a narrator located in New York City, while Sandra Cisneros paints a picture of a neighborhood in Chicago in "The House on Mango Street" that triggers memories of Mexico for the bilingual protagonist of the story. The essays in this collection encompass nearly one hundred and fifty years of Midwestern literary works, recognizing the impact of authors who either stayed in the area or departed but whose writings are influenced by their Midwestern origins. The thematic articles delve into different styles, historical movements, and concepts, offering analytical viewpoints and historical contexts to assist readers in comprehending the diverse range of Midwestern literary works. In general, Midwestern literature is depicted as intricately linked to its surroundings,

societal interactions, and the overarching influences that have molded American society. (428)

The case for promoting literary regionalism may face more obstacles in today's world, but portraying the Midwest in writing still emphasizes topics specific to the region. Jane Hamilton's novel *A Map of the World*, published in 1993, does not focus on global issues; instead, it delves into the everyday life of small towns in Wisconsin. Notably, writers such as Garrison Keillor and Larry Woiwode, despite working in New York City, have returned to their hometowns in Minnesota and North Dakota to create stories rooted in their upbringing. For both aspiring and established authors, the Midwest offers a supportive and inclusive environment. In metropolitan areas like Minneapolis, which is home to the Loft, considered the largest literary center in the country, or at Cleveland State University's Poetry Center, where workshops have been open to the public since 1962, and in Detroit, where the Broadside Press carries on the legacy of activist poet Dudley Randall and the Black Arts Movement from the 1960s, literary culture thrives in harmony with local communities. Poetry slams held throughout the region also play a significant role in nurturing literary culture while maintaining strong connections to the people and landscapes of the Midwest. (Sisson et al 431)

The literary culture in the Midwest goes beyond individual reading experiences, as public gatherings, scholarly seminars, and historical texts all contribute to cultivating a vibrant and involved literary community in the region.

1.2.3 The Culture of the Midwest

The Midwest is frequently described as linear, straightforward, effortless, and lacking in major dramatic events or extremes. The region's history is mentioned to have included wars in the mid-1700s, early 1800s, and the 1860s, but without the presence of oceans. Despite underlying issues such as agrarian discontent, racial tensions, and urban poverty, the culture is characterized as solid, practical, and unimaginative, often associated with a simplistic diet of meat and potatoes. Midwesterners are represented as non-introspective, nice people who contribute to

society quietly without drawing attention, fitting the stereotype of a Garrison Keillor monologue. (Cayton et al xxii)

Unlike individuals from the South or the West, who actively engage in conversations about their regional identity entrenched in a sense of hostility from a vague American mainstream culture and its government, Midwesterners seem content to identify with the United States as a whole. Their local pride revolves around showcasing the best of America, portraying the Midwest as the Heartland—a microcosm of the nation—lacking of extremes and diversity.

Despite attempts to complicate this image by highlighting the Midwest's history of political protest, social reform, labour unions, and cultural movements, defining the region remains a challenging task. Scholars have historically struggled to agree on the boundaries of the Midwest, with ongoing debates about whether states like Ohio and Nebraska should be grouped together. The authors acknowledge the difficulties in this endeavour but emphasize a practical, midwestern approach, opting to examine the region and let definitions emerge from the process. (xxiii)

The encyclopaedia suggests the authors' belief that culture is often shaped by perception, and what people believe to be true holds significance, possibly even more than scholarly, empirically provable demonstrations. The American Midwest, as depicted in this work, is organized thematically instead of chronologically, encouraging readers to reflect on the region as a whole. Each section, entrusted to prominent specialists, moves from the general to the unique, with introductory essays covering broad themes and shorter entries supplying details. The organization varies, with some sections following a chronological or alphabetical approach. Rather than having precise sections for traditionally excluded or underrepresented groups, such as women, African Americans, and Native Americans, the encyclopaedia includes all peoples throughout. A section titled "Portraits of the Twelve States" opens the encyclopaedia, focusing on idiosyncratic essays about each state's unique qualities. (Cayton et al xxiii)

Two habitual themes in the book are universalism as opposed to exceptionalism and homogeneity versus diversity. The question of whether the Midwest is merely a

microcosm of the United States elicits divided responses from authors. While some find nothing strangely Midwestern in their subjects, reinforcing the perception that the Midwest is the least recognizable or interesting American region, the encyclopaedia reveals a significant number of authors who believe in the region's uniqueness. Extensive information documents the ways in which Midwestern cultures and peoples diverge from counterparts in other regions, regardless of experiencing similar main developments and issues in the history of the United States.(xxiii)

When it comes to the question of homogeneity in the Midwest, the authors insistently reject the notion that the region is characterized by continuous sameness. According to "Images of the Midwest,"(James R. Shortridge) the perception of the Midwest as homogeneous is largely a product of imagination that increased prominence after World War II. Despite the prevalence of this oversimplified view, the Midwest is, in fact, extremely diverse. (xxiii)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Midwest stood out as one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse places globally. Its population consisted of immigrants and their descendants from several regions, including the eastern coast of North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Congressionally imposed immigration restrictions in the 1920s and increased attention to racial issues caused the multiple cultures of the Midwest to disappear from public awareness. However, in the 1890s, a diaspora of Christian denominations significantly influenced parts of the region, including rural Iowa and small-town Kansas.

Cities like Chicago, Cleveland, and St. Louis were busy with communities of Poles, Russians, Italians, Hungarians, Lebanese, Greeks, and others. The Midwest bragged numerous newspapers and magazines printed in a multitude of languages. The German triangle (Cincinnati to St. Louis to Milwaukee) played a dominant role in Midwestern culture, introducing German words, customs, foods, and music. The upper Mississippi Valley attracted large numbers of Scandinavians, leaving their mark from Wisconsin to the Dakotas. In the final decades of the twentieth century, a new wave of immigrants arrived from the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Africa. (xxiii-xxiv)

Ironically, the Midwest's inherent diversity fosters a public culture that often downplays differences while emphasizing surface-level conformity. Midwesterners emphasize the importance of civic culture cultivated in schools, churches, and families, and manifested in significant public buildings and ceremonies. This emphasis is seen as a means to bring order to the complex and diverse Midwest. The region reflects James Madison's argument in *The Federalist Papers* that in a large, heterogeneous population, it is less likely for a majority to have a common motive to infringe upon the rights of other citizens. The Midwest, with its diverse population and lack of a common interest, is defined by the construction of a public culture that facilitates communication and participation by suppressing differences behind facades of civility and the common good. While this tendency may promote conformity, it also nurtures creativity and passion among individuals determined to express themselves within this framework. (xxiv)

Contrary to the perception of the Midwest as a bland and uniform region, it is, in reality, a collection of diverse communities bound together, more or less, by a civic culture that transcends or at least overlooks differences. This culture is shaped and sustained by social engagement, marked by consistent public participation, and characterized by philanthropic giving. The emphasis is on generic institutions related to commerce, education, manners, and development. Morality is not specified but is generally focused on values such as hard work, respect, and politeness. (Cayton et al xxiv)

Midwesterners, including rebels within the region, seek to capture and define this civic culture. Today, the American Midwest is viewed as a source of comfort and conformity, transitioning from a nineteenth-century symbol of progress into a twenty-first-century symbol of stability. It has evolved from being the home of pioneers pointing the United States toward the future to becoming the residence of guardians of the nation's traditions. (Cayton et al xxiv)

The Midwest's legacy is evident in various aspects, from the settlement patterns in places like Peoria, Arizona, and Columbus, Nebraska, to the creation of Main Street at Disney theme parks and the annual Iowa reunion picnics in southern California. It

extends to environmental impacts, such as the dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico caused by drainage from midwestern farm fields, and even cultural references, such as the idealized Illinois town on Mars in Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*. (xxiv)

Finally, the Midwest represents a remarkable display of human achievement, constructed rapidly as a monument to material progress, concealing the challenges and contests involved in its creation. It is a place with unique variations on themes that set it apart from any other in the world. The hope is that readers find the exploration of this encyclopaedia as stimulating as people over a century ago found their stroll through the exhibits of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.(xxiv)

1.3 The American Dream in Literature

The American dream is a resilient and unique concept that has evolved over time. It is shaped by individual interpretations rather than lineage, religion, or shared history. Unlike other national identities, it is defined by collective values such as individualism, self-actualization, and self-reliance. (Izaguirre 1).Entrenched in the belief that hard work and determination can lead to a better life, the American dream is a myth that endures and lasts, as well as influencing the cultural landscape of America. It promotes an aspirational experience that can be both elusive and fulfilling in the lives of individuals and the broader American society. (1)

The origins of the American dream traces back to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which emphasized the entitlement to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"(Declaration of Independence). The concept gained more formal and precise definition in 1931 during the Great Depression when James Truslow Adams, in his work *The Epic of America*,articulated the American dream as a tangible promise. Adams defined it as a vehicle that offers all citizens, irrespective of origin or social status, the opportunity for prosperity in a society built on free and equal opportunities. This formalization marked a significant moment in grasping the American dream's essence (1-2).

To explain the concept of the American Dream, this analysis will draw upon two seminal works: *The Epic of America* (1944) by James Truslow Adams and *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (2003) by Jim Cullen. While Adams' original edition dates back to 1931, the focus here is on the 1944 edition, which introduced the term "American Dream." Notably, these texts, separated by approximately 70 years, approach the topic from different perspectives. Adams adopts a philosophical and promotional approach, advocating what the American people should aspire to, particularly during the Great Depression's challenges. In contrast, Cullen provides a historical overview of the dream, exploring its origins and examining it through various lenses, like freedom and home ownership, aspects not widely covered by Adams (Izaguirre 2-4).

The American experience has a distinct life cycle in the nation's history, characterized by enduring beliefs in individualism, self-actualization, and self-reliance. These beliefs, rooted in the idea that individuals have the potential to shape their destinies and create a different life, have been reliably present in the American consciousness. Understanding and preserving the American dream involves exploring into the aesthetics and ideals of American literature, as Fredrick Carpenter explains in *American Literature and the Dream*. (3-10). He emphasizes that while the American dream is challenging to define precisely due to its varied and vague nature, American literature has been more precisely outlined and distinguished from English literature. Carpenter suggests that this distinction is attributed to the constant and omnipresent impact of the American dream in American literature throughout history (3-10) (Izaguirre 4-5).

The rich tapestry of American Literature inherently reflects elements of the values that describe the American dream, even if not clearly mentioned. According to Fredrick Carpenter, the various voices and perspectives in American Literature embody the essence of the American dream, contributing to a distinct national spirit. Carpenter suggests that understanding how the American dream has shaped national literature allows readers to grasp American beliefs (5-6).

However, the concept of the American Dream has evolved through time and has been subject to many interpretations. Some argue that the dream has become more elusive for certain segments of the population due to economic inequality, systemic barriers, and other challenges. Nonetheless, the idea of the American Dream remains a central theme in discussions about social movement and the pursuit of success in the United States.

In the 1800s, a new era of American literature known as the Literary Revival began, marked by a sense of independence and uniqueness that originated from the time of the Revolution. Writers like Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman played a significant role in this movement, establishing a literary heritage centered on ideas of independence, nature, and self-sufficiency. At the core of this movement was the idea of the American dream, as seen in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's works challenged European literary standards and highlighted the importance of drawing inspiration and wisdom from personal experiences rather than societal norms or traditions. This portrayal of the American identity and journey helped shape American literature as distinct from its European counterparts (Izaguirre 19).

Emerson's transcendental belief, particularly highlighted in his essay "Self-Reliance," emphasizes the significance of independence, instinct, and self-sufficiency in shaping one's fate. This belief acts as a foundation for grasping the timeless essence of the American ideal in literature. Similar to how Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography emphasized the link between the American dream and American writings in the early days of the nation, Emerson's "Self-Reliance" elaborates on this concept by vividly depicting the self-sufficient American who embraces the sacredness of uniqueness and strives to achieve their individual destiny in a nation full of possibilities. Through Emerson's perspective, the American dream is not just about material achievement but also about the pursuit of one's genuine potential and satisfaction. (Izaguirre 19-20).

Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance" emphasizes the significance of personal encounters and gut feelings in attaining genuine satisfaction and enlightenment. He posits that every individual should have faith in their own brilliance and exploration,

instead of copying others or yielding to jealousy. As per Emerson, real advancement and development can only arise from accepting one's distinct journey and nurturing personal authenticity through individual labor and struggle. Believing in the benevolence and fairness of personal encounters is crucial for leading an authentic life and unlocking one's capabilities, rather than feeling stifled or shattered by adhering to outside demands (Emerson Qtd. in Izaguirre20).

James Truslow Adams emphasizes the significant impact of Emerson on molding the American mindset, stating that no other writer captures the essence of the American ethos as closely. Adams points out various crucial aspects of Emerson's influence, such as the exaltation of vitality and goodness in life, the denial of defeat, wickedness, or wrongdoing, the exaltation of the self, the value of personal action, the pursuit of excellence, and the simultaneous recognition of the mundane facets of being. Emerson's focus on uniqueness and the faith in the natural wisdom of each person deeply connects with American society, according to Adams (21-22).

In his analysis, Frederic Carpenter asserts that the mental frameworks, emotions, and perspectives evident in Emerson's literature are reactions to the prevalent influence of the American dream in American literary works. Carpenter suggests that the American dream, along with the corresponding mental and emotional tendencies, have influenced and provided significance to American literature. This implies that Emerson's texts mirror and play a role in the continuous examination and understanding of the American dream in the realm of literature (24).

Adams and Matthiessen both argue the groundbreaking nature of Emerson's beliefs regarding the American vision. Adams characterizes it as a profoundly spiritual feeling and an act of belief, proposing that the confidence in the worth of every person and the limitless possibilities accessible to them is not only a logical idea but a jump into the mysterious. As long as this vision persists, Emerson will be respected as one of its visionaries. Matthiessen depicts Emerson as the patriarch of American writing in his piece "American Renaissance," emphasizing Emerson's formation of a literary custom concentrated on themes of independence and self-sufficiency. Emerson's article "Self-Reliance" in particular highlights the person's role in shaping their fate

and underscores the concept that true enlightenment stems from within. Through his transcendental philosophy, Emerson articulates what would eventually be recognized as the core of the American dream. In conclusion, Emerson's impact as a foundational figure in American writing is profound, with his piece "Self-Reliance" acting as evidence of the enduring essence of the American dream in American literary history (Izaguirre 28).

The American Dream served as a cornerstone of American culture, and underlined the individual success and the pursuit of happiness. After that, the American dream began to crumble under the weight of skepticism, cultural shift, and technological change, particularly after the World War II. All of this marked the transition and laid to the rise of postmodern literature. This latter represents the concept of the American dream to a more fragmented, skeptical exploration of truth and reality, and mirroring broader changes in society's understanding the nature of life.

1.4 Postmodern Literature

Postmodern literature is involvedly connected to socio-cultural and historical evolution, serving as a distinctive portrayal of life in the postmodern era (Rezaei 16). It attempts to depict a reflective crisis in human identity and encompasses challenges related to ethnicity, sexuality, social standing, and culture. The literature vividly deals the ongoing struggle for validation within a society marked by hypocrisy. Postmodernism appeared more prominently in America and Europe, with the exception of the realm of Drama. Samuel Beckett, who resided in Paris and was both French and English, exhibited strong postmodern tendencies, particularly evident in his plays and novellas. Other notable postmodernist authors include John Fowles, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Thomas Pynchon, Ray Bradbury, John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, Leonard Michaels, Brigid Brophy, and Richard Brautigan (16).

These writers defy traditional rules and opt for alternate principles of composition that align with existentialist thought. Their purpose is to summarise the human condition in its most focused form, applying forms capable of accommodating

the meaninglessness, purposelessness, and absurdity of existence. Employing methods like fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators, contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess, and short circuit, they reflect the chaotic nature of the world through their equally chaotic forms(16).

The common threads in their works often align with Jean-François Lyotard's concepts of metanarrative and little narrative, Jacques Derrida's idea of play (*Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Science*), and Jean Baudrillard's notion of "simulacra" (*Simulacra and Simulation*) In contrast to the modernist pursuit of meaning in a tumultuous world, postmodern authors playfully reject the possibility of meaning, turning the postmodern novel into a parody of this quest (Razaei17).

In postmodern literary texts, the concept of originality and authenticity is satirized and destabilized. Rather than trying to present something entirely new, postmodern works use old literary forms, genres, and artistic styles, as well as kitsch, quotation, and allusion(18). These elements are used to recontextualize their meanings within different linguistic and cultural frameworks and highlight distinctions and differences of modes of representation between the past and present. John Barth's famous essay, *The Literature of Exhaustion*, discusses the exhaustion of traditional artistic forms, highlighting the creative potential found in the application of these older forms, genres, and styles (18).

Postmodern authors purposefully derive meaning not only from employing old forms and genres but also through intentional acts of plagiarism, kitsch, and fabricated or feigned quotations from well-known literary and other texts. Feigned or pretended, mean that authors closely imitate the ideas or styles of famous figures without providing proper bibliographical references. Plagiarism, in this context, is not intended to steal the original authors' ideas but rather to suggest a parodic and ironic effect from the source texts. Some critics refer to this as "pla(y)giarism" in postmodern literary works, describing it as a creative utilization and recontextualization of existing texts through techniques meaningful of plagiarism—such as the unjustified use of these texts—followed by further modification through linguistic and textual play. (18)

Postmodern literary works often exhibit a metafictional quality, meaning they question their own fictional nature by employing various techniques and narrative devices. While a simplistic understanding characterizes metafiction as fiction about fiction, it encompasses broader issues beyond the realm of fiction. Coined by American author and critic William Gass, the term has diverse meanings according to scholars like R. Scholes and Patricia Waugh. Waugh's definition, considers metafiction as fictional writing that self-consciously draws attention to its status as an artifact, proves particularly insightful (Rezaei 18).

Metafiction, in this context, critiques its own construction, delving into the fundamental structures of narrative fiction and probing the potential fictitiousness of the world beyond the literary text. One crucial element of postmodern literary works, closely tied to metafiction, is intertextuality. Coined by theorist Julia Kristeva, intertextuality denotes connections between texts through various devices, emphasizing a creative transformation of referred texts within diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. According to Kristeva, a literary text is not solely a product of a single author but emerges from its relationship with other texts and the structures of language. Intertextuality, rooted in Michael Bakhtin's concept of a "polyphonic novel," (Bakhtin), views a literary text as part of a broader literary tradition, undermining the traditional notion of authorship. The role of the author diminishes as the text exists within specific literary and cultural contexts, open to diverse understandings. (Rezaei 18).

Another significant aspect of postmodern literary works is the utilization of postmodern parody, pastiche, and radical irony. Linda Hutcheon, in her work *A Theory of Parody* (1985), along with Margaret A. Rose and partly Frederic Jameson, theorizes postmodern parody. Unlike traditional parody, postmodern parody's primary aim is not to mock the parodied author or style; it lacks a mocking or ridiculing aspect. Instead, it uses irony to underscore the difference between past artistic forms and sensibilities, highlighting a distance between the past and present. Hutcheon sometimes uses the term "modern parody"(Hutcheon) to refer to what could be labelled as postmodern parody. Identifying irony within postmodern parody can be challenging, as they are

often closely connected and inseparable. Hutcheon later emphasizes the political and ideological aspects of parody due to its subversive impulse, but this perspective is not universally accepted, as the political and ideological elements may not always be the most critical aspects of this literary device. (Qtd. inRezaei 18)

According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodern parody serves as both a deconstructive critique and a constructive creative force, making us aware of the limits and powers of representation in any medium. Hutcheon emphasizes that parody, as an ironic representation, holds a dual political coding—it legitimizes and subverts what it parodies. The act of parody, particularly in postmodern literature, involves referring to older forms of art and creatively reconstructing them to reveal a difference between traditional and contemporary forms of art and sensibility. It becomes self-reflexive, drawing attention not only to the parodied works of art but also to the entire process of depicting reality through linguistic representation (Razaei 18-19).

Parody, often connected with pastiche, rewrites, transforms, and changes motifs and styles from parodied literary works, offering an alternative vision of reality, history, and the position of various social, ethnic, and minority groups. This alternative serves as a playful and creative reconsideration, not intended as an official replacement for real history but rather as an artistic relativization. Postmodern authors frequently parody histories, religious texts, biographies, myths, and works of traditional and popular literature, creating awareness of the representation process and showing differences between past and present sensibilities (19).

Pastiche, a term originating from the Italian word "pasticcio," initially had a derogatory connotation in the arts, referring to uncreative and mechanical imitation. In postmodern literature, however, pastiche takes on a positive meaning, involving the imitation of older works that are further transformed, rewritten, and placed in different linguistic contexts. Pastiche is closely related to parody, and while definitions may overlap, they are often inseparable in postmodern works (19).

Parody, pastiche, imitation, and intertextuality are interconnected with radical irony in postmodern literary works. Radical irony may not be limited to verbal expression but can extend to the overall composition of a text, employing different

styles to create an ironic effect or incorporating travesty and burlesque as part of the parodic mode (19).

1.4.1 The Common Individual in the Postmodern Literature

In the realm of postmodern fiction, the conventional role of character development is radically transformed and contested. Modern novels offer a fresh viewpoint on characters that reflect the societal changes and artistic advancements of today. Coined by the English artist John Watkins Chapman in the 1870s, postmodernism rose to prominence as an artistic movement in the mid-twentieth century and became a dominant presence in British literature, especially during the late 1970s and 1980s. (Dolaykaya 1004)

Postmodern fiction is closely intertwined with the current state of the world, where established forms of authority have crumbled under the impact of widespread social, political, economic, and technological shifts. This genre is known for its exploration of metanarratives, challenging the ways in which knowledge is shared and questioning traditional modes of representation. As a result, postmodern fiction raises doubts about depictions of historical, scientific, and cultural knowledge, examining how this knowledge is obtained and validated.

In contrast to modernism, which focused primarily on questions of knowledge—the ways of understanding and depicting the world—postmodernist fiction, as defined by Brian McHale, is more concerned with existence. Rather than delving into how to distinguish and depict the world, postmodern fiction challenges the very representability of the world itself and questions the methods used to represent it. The emergence of this genre coincides with a global environment in which established forms of validation are disrupted, prompting a reassessment not only of what is known but also of how that knowledge is communicated and recognized (Dolaykaya1004).

The postmodern character is a product of various complexities essential in postmodernism with the postmodern concept of the individual standing out as one of

the most notable among them. The idea of the individual or the self, a fundamental question in Western philosophy, has transformed into a fundamentally contested category, susceptible to ongoing modification, creation, surveillance, or negation (Hassan 428). The wide range of viewpoints on the individual have had a deep effect on how figures are depicted in stories since the beginning of the genre.

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century stories were molded around a humanistic view of the individual, characterized by uniqueness, importance, and steadiness. Independent figures with proper titles, steady configurations, and noticeable socio-economic backgrounds were prevalent in these works. However, the modernist novel, while questioning the idea of a reasonable, organized, and arranged individual, did not propose a complete decentralization and disintegration of the individual. Instead, influenced by Freud's recognition of the center in the unconscious, modernist novels extensively delved into the disorganized psychologies of figures to illustrate the developing perception of the individual. (Dolaykaya 1005)

In the postmodern literature, characters act as embodiments of the postmodernist idea of self by challenging the notion of a centralized self, primarily through the flexibility of numerous names, identities, and arrangements. These characters defy the cohesion, consistency, and logic that define the anthropocentric view of self. Instead of adhering to a singular and stable identity, postmodern characters freely explore different eras, assume various personas, and take on diverse roles. Consequently, characters in postmodern literature appear as highly fragmented, disjointed, and fluctuating entities.

Postmodern literature explores various identities and perspectives, formed through conversations within the narrative. The language used in postmodern literature surpasses simple portrayal of persons or external reality; it actively shapes and builds both figures and the environments they exist in. Consequently, the historical and socio-economic setting of the narrative, in addition to engagements with other figures, consistently mold, dismantle, and rebuild the postmodern identity. The persona of the postmodern protagonist is depicted as "mostly influenced by others, diverse, and

constantly evolving" (Bertens 12), highlighting the fluid and developing essence of the self in this literary environment. (Dolaykaya 1007)

Furthermore, David Simmons wrote the book named *The Anti-Hero in the American Novel* that delves into the alteration and importance of the anti-heroic identity in American literary works. The book outlines that the era of the 1960s marked a shift in the world of literature, as aspects of postmodernism started to appear alongside traditional, more conventional storytelling techniques. Characters in postmodern literature frequently take on traits of the anti-hero, rebelling against societal norms and conventions as they navigate the intricate realities of contemporary existence. (Simmons 2-35)

Moreover, the book delves into the wider cultural and historical backdrop in which these stories were embedded, emphasizing the impact of societal movements like the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the countercultural uprising on molding literary portrayals of disagreement and nonconformity (51-59).

In the end, this literary work suggests that the anti-heroic character in American literature from the 1960s was an effective way to critique the established order and encourage readers to rethink traditional ideas of heroism, ethics, and civic duty. By portraying imperfections, inconsistencies, and challenges, these individuals reflected the intricacies of human existence and the ongoing search for purpose and authenticity in a world full of uncertainties.

1.5 Ideological Control and Exploitation of the Masses

The control of the masses is a frequent theme in postmodern literature. It imitates the complex and often dystopian societies portrayed in these works. Postmodern authors explore several ideologies and mechanisms through which power policies and structures seek to control and manipulate the common individuals and communities.

In Michel Foucault's perspective on modern power, he challenges the foundations of revolutionary movements, particularly Marxism. Unlike these

movements that pinpoint specific groups and institutions as sources of domination (such as the bourgeoisie, central bank, military high command, and government press), Foucault argues that power in the modern world is more decentralized and diffuse (Gutting 87-88).

According to Foucault, revolutionary strategies that emulate past models, like the French Revolution, where the focus was on cutting off the head of the king, are outdated. In the contemporary context, power is not concentrated in a single authority or a few institutions, making it challenging for revolutions to succeed by simply capturing government offices, military bases, and official newspapers. (87-88)

Foucault uses the example of the Soviet Union to illustrate his point, stating that despite a change in political leadership, social hierarchies, family life, sexuality, and the body remained relatively unchanged from capitalist society. He implies that the fundamental transformation sought by revolutionaries requires central control over the minutiae of a nation's life, a level of control that is difficult to achieve given the dispersed nature of modern power.(87-88)

In essence, Foucault provides an explanation for the apparent totalitarian tendencies in modern revolutions. The inability to address and transform power dynamics at various levels beyond the state apparatus contributes to the persistence of social hierarchies and structures even after political revolutions have taken place(Gutting 87-88).

The ideas of Michel Foucault, particularly from his work *Discipline and Punish*.It reflects that the contrast between premodern and modern punishment is emphasised. In premodern times, punishment was often physically and painfully brutal, focusing on inflicting agony as a form of revenge. In contrast, modern punishment seeks and aims an inner transformation for a change in the individual's heart and a shift toward a new way of life.

However, Foucault argues that this modern control of the soul, or the inner self, is not solely about personal transformation. Instead, it serves as a means to exert a more subtle and pervasive control over the body. The transformation of psychological attitudes and tendencies is ultimately directed at regulating and controlling bodily

behaviour. According to Foucault, in the modern age, "the soul is the prison of the body,"(Foucault 30) signifying that the focus on inner change is a strategy for controlling and regulating bodily behaviours and actions. (Gutting 80)

Furthermore, Foucault suggests that the disciplinary techniques initially developed for dealing with criminals extend beyond the confines of the prison system. These techniques become a model for control in various other institutions such as schools, hospitals, and factories. In essence, prison discipline fills all aspects of modern society. Foucault describes this strategy as living in a "carceral archipelago," indicating that the principles of discipline and control are spread throughout society, creating a network of interconnected sites of power and surveillance. (81)

The distinctive feature of modern disciplinary control is evident in the transformation of military training methods. In contrast to premodern approaches that focused on selecting individuals with inherent qualities like strength and courage, contemporary military training employs a different strategy. The emphasis is on severe and specialized training to shape ordinary individuals into effective soldiers, even if they lack initial fitness.

The process, often exemplified in boot camps, is aimed at actively making someone a soldier through systematic training, in contrast to relying on inherent qualities. This approach differs from aspiring to resemble a certain image, like a model or actor, and instead centres on the actual acquisition of the skills and systematic training required for being a soldier. (Gutting 81)

The core aspect of disciplinary training lies in its meticulous control of specific parts of the body rather than exercising direct control over the body as a whole. The training breaks down complex tasks, such as caring for and shooting a rifle, into a carefully well-ordered sequence of steps. This methodical approach permits for the systematic development of the skills needed for military skill.(81)

The passage explores the modern approach to disciplinary control, particularly in military training, and how it aims at producing "docile bodies" (Discipline and Punish 138). Unlike a simple directive to achieve a specific result, modern discipline focuses on detailed procedures and measures to attain those results. The goal is not

only to have individuals do what is desired but to do it in a precise and prescribed manner. This approach is characterized by micro-management, emphasizing the specific actions and techniques to be followed. (81-82)

Foucault captures the modern disciplinary approach by stating that it seeks to produce "docile bodies" (Foucault 138). Docile bodies are those that not only comply with commands but do so in the exact manner dictated by those in authority. The idea is to shape individuals into obedient subjects who not only perform tasks but do them with careful adherence to prescribed methods. (82)

The passage also introduces three distinctively modern means through which docile bodies are produced. The first is hierarchical observation, which involves controlling people by simply observing their actions. While traditional examples include watchtowers along city walls, modern power has elevated this technique to a new level. Also, modern buildings don't just display power, but help authorities observe people better. Additionally, modern buildings also work as tools to monitor subjects closely. (Gutting 82)

The passage explores how modern architecture is designed not only to meet the functional needs of individuals but also to make those inside visible and subject to observation. Examples include tiered rows of seats in lecture halls, well-lit classrooms with large windows, and wide aisles. These features not only serve practical purposes but also make it easy for authorities, such as teachers, to monitor and observe the activities of those within these spaces. (82)

This technique of rendering individuals visible is not restricted to educational settings but extends to several environments like hospital rooms, military barracks, and factory work floors. The intention behind such architectural designs, according to Foucault, is to transform individuals by performing on those sheltered within these spaces, providing a means to keep impact over their conduct, knowing them, and potentially altering them.

Foucault identifies Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as the ideal architectural form of modern disciplinary power. Although actual Panopticon-like prisons were not constructed until the twentieth century, the principle of the Panopticon—maximizing

control with minimal staff through constant surveillance—has permeated modern society. The Panopticon becomes a metaphor for the broader disciplinary mechanisms that function in numerous institutions, embodying the concept of constant observation and the potential for behavioural influence in contemporary society.(Gutting 82)

The Panopticon, a concept developed by Jeremy Bentham, serves as a structure where each inmate resides in a separate cell, isolated from and unseen by other inmates. The cells are arranged in a circular fashion around a central tower, allowing a monitor stationed in the tower to have a view into any cell at any given time. The key principle of control in the Panopticon is not persistent observation but the capability of observation (82-84).

While the monitor may only look into a specific cell intermittently, the inmates lack knowledge of when these instances will occur. Consequently, they are forced to assume that they are under observation at all times. This perpetual uncertainty induces in the inmates a state of consciousness and permanent visibility. As a result, the automatic functioning of power is achieved, as the psychological impact of potential observation leads to self-regulation and conformity among the inmates. This concept of constant potential visibility becomes a powerful tool for exerting control and discipline within the Panopticon structure(Gutting 84).

The passage discusses a second distinctive feature of modern disciplinary control, which is its emphasis on normalizing judgment. In this system, individuals are not judged based on the intrinsic rightness or wrongness of their actions but rather on where their actions position them on a ranked scale in comparison to others. For example, children are not just expected to learn to read but are assessed based on their placement in the 50th percentile of their reading group. Similarly, a restaurant is not merely evaluated on providing good food but is compared to other establishments in the city. Normalization is a pervasive concept in society, evident in the establishment of national standards for various fields such as education, medicine, and industry. Informally, society also tends to obsessively rank and order everything from tourist sites to body weights to levels of sexual activity(84).

The effectiveness of normalizing judgment as a means of control lies in its omnipresence. As there is always a higher level on the scale for virtually any achievement, individuals are constantly motivated to improve. Moreover, norms define certain behaviours as abnormal, categorizing them as socially or even humanly unacceptable. This designation operates as a constraint on individuals in modern society, influencing their behaviour by the fear of being judged as abnormal. This subtle form of control pervades various aspects of contemporary life, compelling individuals to conform to societal norms and expectations (84).

The passage delves into the concept of examinations as a critical component of modern disciplinary control, combining hierarchical observation with normative judgment. According to Foucault, the examination involves a "normalizing gaze" (Foucault 184) that establishes visibility over individuals, enabling differentiation and judgment. The examination, as a locus of power/knowledge, integrates the deployment of force with the establishment of truth (Gutting 86).

Examinations serve as a prime mechanism for modern power/knowledge by eliciting truths about individuals undergoing the examination process, such as patients, students, or job candidates. Simultaneously, through the norms it sets, the examination controls their behaviour. This process reveals the individual's new position in the modern power/knowledge network, situating them within a "network of writing." The results of examinations are documented, providing detailed information that allows power systems to exert control. Examples include absentee records in schools and patients' charts in hospitals (86).

The examination transforms individuals into cases in a dual sense—scientific examples and objects of care, where caring implies a form of control, according to Foucault. This process also alters the dynamics of visibility. In the premodern period, the exercise of power was visibly apparent, such as military presence in towns or public executions, while the objects of knowledge remained obscure. However, in the modern age, power's exercise is typically invisible, controlling its objects by making them highly visible. The highest visibility is now granted to those with thick dossiers, like criminals or the mentally ill, maintained and scrutinized by anonymous and

invisible functionaries. This shift underscores the transformation of power dynamics in the modern era (Gutting 85).

Louis Althusser, a prominent French Marxist philosopher, proposed influential ideas in the 1960s about how ideology conceals authentic reality. His first thesis posits that ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, aligning with the idea that ideology distorts our perception of our true conditions. The second thesis links ideology to social sources, asserting that it operates through ideological State apparatuses. These include institutions like organized religion, the law, the political system, trade unions, the educational system, and the media – all of which contribute to socialization and are influenced by the ruling ideology. From a Marxist perspective, the State is not neutral but actively supports the capitalist order. Althusser emphasizes the material existence of ideology, manifested in various practices within these apparatuses, such as church activities, funerals, sports events, school days, and political party meetings. This material embodiment underscores the pervasive nature of ideology in shaping our understanding of the world (Bertens 84).

Emphasizing the pervasive nature of ideology in every aspect of our lives, shaping our actions and engagements. According to Althusser, individuals may believe they are acting out of free will, but in reality, they are being acted upon by the ideological system. This perspective, influenced by Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, denies the notion of human freedom. Althusser does not attribute the unequal distribution of wealth in capitalist societies solely to the self-interest of a select few, as even those who benefit are blinded by ideology (85-86).

The question then arises: where does ideology originate, and how does it gain such immense influence? Althusser turns to the ideas of Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, who posits that the incomplete nature of human development leaves individuals yearning for completeness. Ideology, according to Lacan, addresses individuals as if they are already whole, providing a sense of coherence and stability. Althusser adds that ideology 'hails and interpellates' individuals as 'concrete subjects,' assigning them different 'subject positions' or social roles. These roles, such as being a

mother, a member of a church, a doctor, or a voter, are created by ideology's addressing, and they feel familiar because they align with what individuals already know. Ideology, therefore, is not merely a set of political views but offers fundamental coherence tied to a specific socioeconomic order (86).

Ideology tempts us to embrace a self-image that is highly alluring, convincing us that we are whole and authentic, the 'concrete subjects' we desire to be. This seductive appeal makes us perceive whatever ideology presents as natural, seamlessly fitting into the harmonious order of things. By welcoming readers into a world that seems naturally liberated, where characters make independent choices, these novels establish a specific position for readers, nurturing the deception of freedom. Similar to ideology, these novels suggest that readers are whole, leading them to believe in their independence and involving them in their own misconception (Bertens 87).

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Midwest stands as a diverse and complex region in the United States, rooted in its rich history and influential literary scenery. The region's past is defined by various waves of migration, industrial growth, and the development of extensive farmlands, which have all played a role in shaping its unique culture and identity.

Nonetheless, the rise of postmodern writing has brought forth a new period of inquiry and analysis, questioning the established traditional narratives regarding identity, influence, and cultural values. Authors such as Thomas Pynchon, Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. have utilized postmodern approaches to examine beliefs of authority and the mysterious essence of the American dream. By using disjointed stories and metafictional methods, they shed light on how mass media, consumerism, and institutional supremacies shape personal encounters and perceptions.

In this context, the heartland of America serves not only a setting for literary investigation but also exemplifies larger societal dilemmas and paradoxes. Its literature captures the continuous tension between tradition and modernity, personal freedom

and systemic control, and the pursuit of personal serenity amidst a complex and harsh environment. As to navigate through the shifting dynamics of culture and ideology, the literature originating from the Midwest remains a vital and significant account of humanity's timeless journey for purpose, meaning, belonging in a world with uncertainties.

**Chapter Two: Dehumanization and
Exploitation in *The Grapes of Wrath* and
*Fahrenheit 451***

2.1 Introduction

The Grapes of Wrath and *Fahrenheit 451*, written by John Steinbeck and Ray Bradbury respectively, are seminal literary works that demonstrate themes of exploitation and dehumanisation in several contexts and settings. Steinbeck's novel, published in 1939, occurs during the Great Depression and follows the displacement of the Joad family who travel to California in order to get a better life. Steinbeck uses this narrative to represent the harsh realities experienced by migrant workers and the systematic exploitation they face. The novel highlights the dehumanisation of migrant labourers such as their identities. Also, it deals with the powerful wealthy landowners who manipulate the workers as to keep them in perpetual state of poverty and insecurity.

Bradbury's literary work, published in 1953, presents a dystopian future where Books are banned and the firefighters burn them. Those firefighters include the protagonist Guy Montag who begins to question reality, the oppressive authorities and his role within. The author shows that society in *Fahrenheit 451* is dehumanised and that the system is stripping individuals of Books in order to weaken their capacity of critical thoughts and knowledge. People become passive consumers and lack of interconnections and human interaction.

Both novels focus on the theme of dehumanisation in different periods while *the Grapes of Wrath* concentrates on the exploitation of the migrant working class during the Great Depression, *Fahrenheit 451* deals with the lack of intellectual thinking and oppression and the loss of individualism. In each narrative, the main characters highlight the human spirit's depression, the search for freedom, and dignity in challenging systematic exploitation. This part aims to discover the several types of injustices portrayed in each novel, including economic mistreatment, environmental prejudice and the exploitation of individuals.

2.2 The Representation of the Midwestern Individual in *Grapes* and

Fahrenheit 451

In the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck presents a profound and complex illustration of the Midwestern area, capturing both its physical terrain and its social structure

during the chaotic period of the Great Depression³. Through careful attention to detail and compassionate storytelling, Steinbeck portrays the Midwest as a place of suffering, strength, and optimism, where the powers of nature and financial turmoil clash with the resilient spirit of its inhabitants. At the core of Steinbeck's portrayal is the Dust Bowl, a disastrous environmental event that devastated large parts of the Midwest in the 1930s. The relentless dust storms, dry land, and ruined crops serve as a potent symbol for the economic and environmental ruin inflicted on the area. Steinbeck's vivid depictions create a feeling of emptiness and hopelessness, as families like the Joad's are forced from their homes by uncontrollable forces.

The Midwest, once a symbol of plentiful harvests and agricultural success, is turned into a desolate wasteland where survival is a daily challenge (Steinbeck 158). However, amidst the despair, Steinbeck also highlights instances of strength and unity among the Midwesterners. The Joad family's migration from Oklahoma to California becomes a testament to the human ability to endure and adapt in the face of hardship. Along their journey, they meet other migrants who understand their struggles and offer assistance, forming temporary communities united by shared challenges. Steinbeck presents the Midwest not only as a place of despair, but as a forge of human relationships and solidarity in the midst of overwhelming obstacles (Steinbeck 131) and the description of the land and its people (Steinbeck 238).

Furthermore, Steinbeck utilizes the heartland as a canvas to delve into wider concepts of fairness and financial disparity. The mistreatment of itinerant labourers by affluent landowners and corporate entities acts as a scathing condemnation of the ingrained injustices within American society. Steinbeck reveals the brutal truths of labor exploitation, bias, and disempowerment experienced by the underprivileged communities of the heartland. Through figures like Tom Joad, who emerges as a symbol of defiance and resistance, Steinbeck highlights the crucial demand for social and financial reform in light of entrenched inequality.

Apart from its profound themes, Steinbeck's depiction of the heartland is distinguished by its profound sense of place and ambiance. By means of poetic prose and vivid imagery, he captures the rugged allure and severity of the terrain, from the shimmering wheat fields to the vast plains. The heartland evolves into more than just a setting for the novel's occurrences; it transforms into a vibrant, living entity that molds the lives and fates of its residents. In

³ A severe global economic crisis period that began in 1929 and lasted throughout the late 1930s.

conclusion, *The Grapes of Wrath* offers a deep and intricate portrayal of the Midwestern area during the period of the Great Depression. Through its vibrant portrayal of the Dust Bowl, its examination of themes of resilience and unity, and its critique of social and financial unfairness, the book paints a multifaceted image of a region and its inhabitants grappling with the substantial challenges of their era. Steinbeck's magnum opus still resonates with readers today as a timeless rumination on the human condition and the enduring strength of hope in the face of hardship.

In the novel *Fahrenheit 451* written by Ray Bradbury, the Midwestern environment serves as a dystopian setting that captures the book's themes of control, conformity, and the vanishing of uniqueness in a society obsessed with technology. Bradbury's portrayal of a futuristic Midwestern city paints a startling picture of a world where freedom of thought is suppressed, independent thinking is dejected, and disagreement is muzzled. The depiction of the Midwest in *Fahrenheit 451* is represented as a sterile and controlled place, noticed by uniformity and standardisation. Bradbury describes the cityscape as occupied with modern, impersonal buildings and wisely maintained lawns, where the chase of pleasure and distraction has taken the place of meaningful human relationships as Beatty said:

“What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these.” (Bradbury 88).

The absence of natural elements and the occurrence of artificiality indicate the isolation and disconnection experienced by the inhabitants of this society. At the middle of Bradbury's illustration of the Midwest, is the oppressive government that controls every facet of life, particularly through books restrictions. In this repressive society, books are forbidden and intellectual pursuits and activities are actively discouraged, with firemen tasked with burning books and removing knowledge. The act of burning books becomes to symbolize the suppression of ideas and the stifling of disagreement, as the authorities work to maintain power by keeping the public ignorant and submissive.

Among this world of control and uniformity, Bradbury introduces Guy Montag, a fireman who starts to challenge the oppressive government and resist its orders. Through Montag's journey of self-discovery and revolt, Bradbury explores the worth of individual freedom and intellectual liberty in the face of oppression. “Right now, we have a horrible job;

we're waiting for the war to begin and, as quickly, end. It's not pleasant, but then we're not in control, we're the odd minority crying in the wilderness. When the war's over, perhaps we can be of some use in the world." (Bradbury 200), Montag's interactions with rebels and outcasts who protect outlawed books serve as a metaphor for the influence of literature in encouraging critical thinking and resistance to injustice.

In addition, Bradbury focuses on the Midwest to investigate deeper into more wide societal concerns, including the influence of technology on human relationships and the dangers of consuming mass media. The abundance of television screens and the continuous supply of mindless entertainment work to causes individuals and distract their attention from the harsh realities and truths of their lives.

Bradbury warns against the threats of passive consumption and the decrease of genuine human interactions in a society worried with superficiality and diversion. Ultimately, *Fahrenheit 451* gives a frightening portrayal of the Midwestern region as a dystopian environment marked by censorship, conformity, and the decline of personal identity. By portraying a community where intellectual freedom is muted and opposed is met with punishment, the novel serves as a strong cautionary tale about the risks of authoritarianism and the necessity of maintaining personal autonomy and critical thinking. Bradbury's work continues to be relevant to readers as a current examination and exploration of the dangers of censorship and the lasting importance of intellectual freedom in a quickly changing society.

2.3 Ideological Control and Free-Will in *Grapes* and *Fahrenheit 451*

In the mid-1940s and 1950s, amid the Cold War era, worries regarding "literary cleanup" (Tardivel 14) surfaced in the United States, fueled by concerns of Communist influence. Although there were instances of book destruction primarily at local levels, it sparked debate due to the controversial nature of such actions post-World War II. People deliberated on the idea of "freedom to read" (15) as opposed to censorship.

The chapter "Burning Bright" of *Fahrenheit 451*, linked the novel's authoritarian environment to McCarthyism⁴ and the apprehension of communism, showcasing cases where books were taken out from foreign libraries under influence from figures such as Senator

⁴ A political investigations and repression, named after the U.S. senator Joseph McCarthy, to reveal supposed and suspicious communist and Soviet influence and espionage on American government during the 1950s.

McCarthy⁵. President Eisenhower's choice to reinstate the books on shelves was a significant stand against censorship. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), established prior to McCarthyism, probed individuals and groups suspected of Communist affiliations, impacting works like Bradbury's "The Fireman," later rebranded as *Fahrenheit 451*. The HUAC's roots can be traced back to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the subsequent dread of Communist beliefs spreading in the United States, recognized as the initial Red Scare. Both McCarthyism and the HUAC contributed to the suppression and censorship of literature seen to advocate Communist principles.

Ray Bradbury introduces a dystopian world in his novel *Fahrenheit 451*, where any types of creative expression are forbidden, as well as libraries are demolished, and reading is banned such as Captain Beatty told Montag that "A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind." (Bradbury 87). In this discriminating system, the pursuit of knowledge is not respected and valued, and the fire department's objective instead to extinguish fire, it aims to eliminate and destroy books and artworks. Books are prohibited due to their capacity to encourage intellectual thought and face societal conventions, such as ideologies that concern freedom and contentment. Set in a post-apocalyptic world after the nuclear attack, the society is marked by excessive consumerism, as televisions covering every wall inside households. As the rise of consumption and the advancement of technology, the intellectuals are sidelined by the authorities. The novel focuses on the protagonist Guy Montag, who is a devoted firefighter, he begins to question his job in burning books. After that, Montag defies the system and escapes into the countryside, where he joins a group of rebels who have memorized books to preserve knowledge for the future of humanity.

Louis Althusser, a French philosopher, explores the function of ideology within a society in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". He starts the discussion of Marxist standpoint of society, which is made up of a foundation and a superstructure. According to traditional Marxist theory, the state is seen as a repressive instrument, including institutions such as the military, police, courts and jails. However, Althusser suggest that this viewpoint is restricted and introduces a new concept: ideological state apparatuses (ISA) (Althusser 143). This concept is distinct and specialized organizations that shape people's beliefs and perceptions. The philosopher points out different significant ISAs like religious

⁵. A former Republican U.S. senator from 1947 until his death in 1957. He is known for his practices called "McCarthyism".

organization, educational systems, families, legal institutions, political backgrounds, unions, media and cultural establishments. These ISAs have a significant role in spreading ideology and upholding social order in Althusser's view (Ersöz 108-109).

Althusser claims that both cultural and tyrannical state mechanisms operate through combining power and beliefs (148). Even though establishment like the military and law enforcement rely deeply on force to functioning, they also employ principles to support cohesion. In contrast, cultural state apparatuses like schools and places of worship primarily function through beliefs, employing methods such as discipline and opting to enforce conformity. Nevertheless, both kinds of mechanisms ultimately serve the same goal: to perpetuate the current production relationships and uphold the authority of the ruling elite (109).

Fahrenheit 451 released in 1953 during the peak of the book-burning controversy, is viewed as the conclusion of a period characterized by suppression and apprehension of Communist sway, with McCarthyism fading around 1954. The central topics of the novel, including censorship and the annihilation of thoughts, were firmly established in history, reflecting occurrences from two decades earlier, yet they persist in significance today. The depiction of burning words retains symbolic significance, underscoring the lasting impact of Bradbury's creation and its pertinence sixty seven years later, as it connects with present-day dialogues on censorship and the open exchange of thoughts. (Temang 5-6)

In her analysis of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Katharine Pennavaria delves into the story of Guy Montag, the main character who undergoes a significant transformation. Originally a fireman whose job is to destroy books in a society where they are forbidden, Montag becomes a fierce advocate for literature. In this dystopian world created by Bradbury, firemen are responsible for burning all books they come across. However, Montag's curiosity about the content of the books he burns leads him to collect and read them in secret. This ultimately prompts him to question his role in society and join a group that fights to protect literature (5-6).

2.3.1 The American Dream in *The Grapes of Wrath*

As the Joad family travel to California, they notice distinctions in the social divisions, especially between the locals and the migrant group known as "Okies". They realized this soon after reaching their destination, when they encountered a law enforcement officer

(Steinbeck 153). The events that followed shortly afterwards, while Ma (the matriarch of the Joad family), and Rose of Sharon (Tom's elder sister), rested in a temporary shelter.

In the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Joads face distrust and prejudice upon arriving to California. Steinbeck explores this topic and proposes that in areas where groups of unfamiliar strangers come together, natives tend to look for common features among new arrivals to help create relationships. Californians have established a border between themselves and Okies to protect their social structures and support their authority. This classification and separation of individuals into dispersed social groups can be viewed as a form of labelling and a process of organizing people.

In *the Grapes of Wrath*, Al, (Tom's younger brother), expresses a desire to leave his family and work in a garage (Steinbeck 334-383). He strongly believes that the life is simpler to navigate without the family (378), showcasing a strong belief and sense in individualism. Despite his initial wish to go, Ma, his mother, eagerly opposes his leaving, as ultimately stopping him from doing it (411).

Nevertheless, when the story progresses, Al experiences a change in his way of thinking, realizing the importance and value of family and appreciating the challenges he cannot confront alone. This change in Al's outlook can be viewed as a transition toward a more cooperative type of Individualism. While he is capable of making personal decisions, Al remains dedicated to his family for survival. Even though Al initially wanted to focus on his personal progress, he comes to understand the boundaries after being labelled an "Okie" and recognizes that his chances of achieving individual success is constrained within society's current limitations. The book underscores how the social hierarchy in California blocks movement between different classes, as well as preventing Al from pursuing his personal goals and dreams and forcing him to prioritize familial bonds for survival. (Warner 71).

However, the focus on individualism in the book transits into a more communal viewpoint, questioning current social systems and challenging the negative stereotypes of the Okies. As Hearn explains, the Joads can only attain their aspirations through coming together as a group and standing in solidarity with others in their social class (88). He stresses the importance of people experiencing poverty seeking help from others in similar situations rather than depending on the wealthy for empathy, kindness, and aid (132). When the Joad family finally arrives in California, Tom realizes that a single Okie cannot survive in the Californian society on their own. This realization is sparked by their interaction with a labor union, as previously mentioned. Tom comprehends that in order for Okies to make positive

changes, they must band together as a whole. Casy, who is involved in the union, informs Tom that because of an ongoing strike, workers are receiving fair wages (Steinbeck 399-403). Later, Tom is hiding near the workplace, suspected of killing a police officer, [He is suspected because he revenges against the officer who killed Jim Casy, his friend] his mindset seems to shift towards communalism rather than individualism (Steinbeck 435-439).

Within the government encampment (It is a migrant's camp, that was established by the government, so that to keep them safe from the corrupt police officers), there is a widespread understanding that individuals known as Okies must come together in a communal manner in order to maintain their relative freedom (130-132). This idea is articulated by a resident of the camp named Willie, who emphasizes that by working collectively, they are able to prevent individuals from being singled out by authorities: "It's because we're all collaborating. The deputy can't single out one person in this camp. He would be targeting the entire camp. And he wouldn't dare" (Steinbeck 374). Nevertheless, this sense of communal spirit can both strengthen and challenge the existing social hierarchy in California.

On one side, this reinforces the unique group identities among the Okies, fostering a sense of duty and allegiance to their social class. Consequently, individual goals linked to the American Dream diminish, and there is less interest in social progress. On the other hand, the need for survival and the struggle against entrenched social systems compel the family and Okies to stick together, promoting communal collaboration and solidarity. This unified front serves as a way to challenge the established social hierarchy. As a result, the communal spirit may both bolster and undermine the existing social class system in California.

Ma argues in favor of leaving due to the family's prolonged struggle with inadequate meals and the lack of employment opportunities for any family member (Steinbeck 366-367). By taking this stance, she showcases the possibility of upholding one's own uniqueness without fully embracing individualism. "All we got is the family unbroke...I ain't scared while we're all here, all that's alive, but I ain't gonna see us bust up," (Steinbeck 114) she places high importance on the well-being of the family while also holding on to her own beliefs and viewpoints. This serves to underscore the capacity to possess personal perspectives and make decisions independently of oppressive systems and biases that target the Okies.

Ma, alongside other members of the Okies community, adopts a collective individualistic mindset, understanding that working together offers a stronger chance at

challenging the existing social order. Given the difficult conditions they are up against, competing against one another becomes impractical. As a result, Ma's actions reveal a lack of self-centeredness, echoing Adams' notion that selfishness can hinder the pursuit of the American Dream (422).

In *the Grapes of Wrath*, Al expresses a desire to leave his family and work in a garage (334-383). He strongly believes that life is simpler to navigate without the family (378), showcasing a strong belief and sense of individualism. Despite his initial wish to go, Ma, his mother, eagerly opposes his leaving, as ultimately stopping him from doing it (411). Nevertheless, when the story progresses, Al experiences a change in his way of thinking, realizing the importance and value of family and appreciating the challenges he cannot confront alone. .

2.3.2 The American Dream in *Fahrenheit 451*

The novel *Fahrenheit 451* is introduced to a society gripped by dystopia, where the mere possession of books is forbidden, and any form of independent thinking is stifled. The story delves into various themes such as censorship, uniformity, and the value of knowledge and also moving upon the idea of the American Dream in a delicate way. The traditional concept of the American Dream revolves around notions of liberty, prospects, and the pursuit of contentment (Adams). However, within the limitations of *Fahrenheit 451*, this dream is distorted and tainted, mirroring the societal weakening brought about by censorship and inconsiderate consumption.

The novel witnesses a shallow representation and portrayal of the American Dream as the characters chase material possessions and immediate satisfaction. In Bradbury's world, the inhabitants are overwhelmed and inundated with mind-numbing methods of entertainment from oversized televisions, seashell radios, and interactive parlour walls. These technological diversions cause the individuals to be disconnected and detached from reality, leading in a shallow life without genuine connections and fulfilment. The search for happiness is turned into a pursuit of pleasure, leading to an existence that is void and devoid of substance.

Moreover, the American Dream in *Fahrenheit 451* is eclipsed by the oppressive control and censorship enforced by the government. Books are considered illegal because they hold knowledge, creativity, and dissent in order to maintain conformity in society and suppress any desire to challenge the existing system. Captain Beatty, who represent the discriminating

authority in the novel best expresses this idea saying "...We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against..." (Bradbury 87). He advocates conformity and uniformity with the sacrifice of individuality and freedom. This quote reflects the government's wish to destroy any differences among individuals and accepting that the equality can only be realised through uniformity.

The freedom to participate in intellectual activities is sacrificed in order to preserve social stability, creating a dystopian world where independent thought is repressed and individualism is frowning upon. The desire to explore intellectually and express oneself is muffled under oppressive rule of censorship and control.

Montag also declares "Nobody listens anymore. I can't talk to the walls because they're yelling at me. I can't talk to my wife; she listens to the walls. I just want someone to hear what I have to say. And maybe If I talk long enough, it'll make sense." (114). He expresses his frustrations with the lack of genuine and sincere communication with his society. He feels isolated and marginalized while longing for someone who will truthfully listen to him and help him make sense of his opinions and sensations.

Despite the austere landscape of censorship and uniformity, there are bright and optimistic positions that indicate a new interpretation of the American dream. Characters like Clarisse McClellan and Professor Faber represent the potential of resistance and rebellion against the oppressive authority. Clarisse's curiosity and nonconformity prompt Montag, leading him to scrutinize the society where he lives. Similarly, Faber, a former English professor, becomes a mentor and guiding character for Montag, encouraging the protection of literature and critical thinking (Bradbury 124-125).

Bradbury implies that regaining the American dream is possible by taking individual initiative and standing up against repressive systems. Moreover, the conclusion of the novel provides a small ray of optimism and hope for the revival of the American dream. After the devastation of the city in a nuclear assault, Montag runs away to the rural area, where he finds across a group of scholars and intellectuals who have memorized books to uphold knowledge and heritage. The leader of this group named Granger addresses Montag saying:

There was a silly damn bird called a Phoenix back before Christ, every few hundred years he built a pyre and burned himself up. But every time he burned himself up, he sprang out of the ashes, he got himself born all over again. And it

looks like we're doing the same thing, over and over, but we've got one damn thing the Phoenix never had. We know the damn silly thing we just did (Bradbury 213).

This Granger's quote expresses the theme of rebirth and regeneration in this novel. He compares humanity's cyclic patterns of falling and renewal to the mythical Phoenix. He also notes that humans are conscious of their mistakes, which gives them the potential to learn and raise from them.

This group serves as a symbol of hope in a dark and oppressive world, representing the values of intellectual liberty, individualism, and human interactions. In this manner, the author suggests that the American dream is not lost but instead waiting to be found again through tenacity, courage, and the retention of humanistic principles. *Fahrenheit 451* presents a nuanced depiction of the American dream, highlighting how it has been distorted and corrupted in a dystopian society controlled by censorship and standardisation.

By including characters such as Clarisse and Professor Faber, along with the intellectual community at the novel's climax, Bradbury introduces hope for the resurgence of the American dream through confrontation, determination and the protection of knowledge and humanitarian values. Ultimately, the novel acts as a warning tale, cautioning versus the perils and dangers of being too comfortable and losing intellectual freedom in pursuit for a narrow and vacuous existence.

2.4 Book-Banning as a Form of Control in *Fahrenheit 451*

The plotline in *Fahrenheit 451* suggests that despite the prohibition on literature in the community, books are still being censored and gradually ignored. There is a widespread narrative that condemns books, as Beatty mentioned "Colored people don't like *Little Black Sambo*⁶. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*⁷. Burn it" (Bradbury 89). They are spread by the authorities in an effort to promote joy by keeping people away from reading. Many individuals fall under this influence because of the constant negative talk about books. However, the book also highlights the importance and worth of books, as seen in the main character's fight against the norm to bring back a love for reading. This contrast in narratives is at the core of the book's importance, sparking conversations.

⁶ A children's narrative was written by the Scottish writer Helen Bannerman, and published in 1899.

⁷ An abolitionist book was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and published in 1852.

Just like Michel Foucault's *The Order of Discourse*, the author explores these conflicting viewpoints, seeking to uncover the impact of banning books and its effects on society. The study delves into how these different narratives are formed, spread, and challenged in society, focusing on two main ideas: the creation of anti-book narratives and the rise of opposing voices questioning them. (Irsyad 2-3)

Foucault's analysis underscores the mechanisms of power in society through communication, which is managed and sustained by those in positions of influence and modes of interaction. He delves into the exclusive nature of communication, where certain thoughts or forms of expression are forbidden, unveiling the connection between communication, craving, and authority. Every community establishes its own "system of truth" (3), dictating what is deemed accurate or incorrect through communication.

Communication both conveys and generates power, strengthening it while also laying bare its vulnerability. Foucault examines how communication molds one's sense of self and power dynamics, shedding light on the rise of controlling power within organizational and communal structures. This authority functions through observation and evaluation, motivating individuals to regulate their behavior to adhere to societal norms. Foucault introduces the idea of the panopticon, a surveillance system where prisoners are under constant scrutiny, prompting them to internalize self-regulation as they grow uncertain about when they are under surveillance. (Irsyad 3-4)

Censoring books is a way to ensure everyone follows the same societal norms by supposedly "protecting" individuals and fostering a sense of togetherness based on shared beliefs, thus preventing disagreement (5). However, the idea that books have negative influences is not natural but rather spread by those in power to keep authority. In the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, Captain Beatty justifies burning books as necessary to shield people from differing ideas that could cause unhappiness. He stresses the importance of everyone being the same and fair, achieved by suppressing different thoughts and viewpoints. As he once says:

We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other; then all is happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So!

A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it (Bradbury 55-56).

Beatty's argument offers immediate satisfaction and the false sense of fairness, as he advocates for a society where everyone is equal through compliance. He sees books as a

threat to the supposed peace, calling for their elimination to preserve social structure. (Irsyad 5-6)

Communication practices function as a structured method of regulation, frequently enforced and organized through diverse establishments like the government, press, schooling, and individual requirements (6). These practices mold the range of potential behaviors for others, empowering individuals to wield power over others through legal channels, societal standing, or monitoring systems. Although power dynamics are not exclusively overseen by governmental establishments, such establishments play a substantial role in shaping and managing them. Within the political domain, two key types of governance are present: democracy and totalitarianism.

In the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, the administration embodies a totalitarian regime, striving to establish an ideal society by constraining individuals' liberty to read through the dissemination of book-burning propaganda. Captain Beatty, in his authoritative position, presents numerous addresses denouncing books for the sake of national stability. He advocates for restricting people's exposure to diverse perspectives, asserting that reducing options brings about greater contentment among individuals. Beatty's reasoning centers on the notion that silencing dissenting viewpoints results in satisfaction among the general population. (Bradbury 6)

In the novel, those in power use oppressive surveillance methods and force to uphold the prohibition on books. The regime relies on "mechanical hounds" (Bradbury 44-45), sophisticated technological devices created to detect books, similar to police canines. These hounds represent the government's deployment of destructive technology to dominate its people. Furthermore, coercion and intimidation, demonstrated by the threat of burning individuals' residences, are used as consequences for owning books. This regime installs fear in the community, compelling individuals to comply to avoid serious repercussions. The society depicted in the story embraces beliefs, information, and viewpoints disseminated by authoritative government bodies through communication. Monitoring is maintained by regulations that bolster this communication and uphold societal beliefs. The law acts as a mechanism for setting standards and structure in society, influencing citizens' actions by defining what is permissible. It is viewed as a measure of truth, as individuals are under the impression that the law determines what is truthful or deceitful.

The universe of the novel *Fahrenheit 451* forbids its citizens from owning books, and having one is a clear breach of the law. Those in power manipulate conversations to

rationalize the act of burning books, determining what is considered to be truthful or deceitful. The authorities create a narrative that deems books to be dangerous, punishing those who dare to think differently. Captain Beatty undermines the worth of books, stating “I’ve had to read a few in my time, to know what I was about, and the books say nothing! Nothing you can teach or believe. They’re about non-existent people, figments of imagination, if they’re fiction” (Bradbury 79), as he said that they provide no valuable knowledge or ideas. Bradbury skilfully demonstrates how this manipulation of conversations influences human cognition and reinforces conformity in societal norms. The widespread dissemination and embrace of this narrative give the government complete authority over individuals' actions, reading materials, and discussions. (Irsyad 6-7)

2.5 Montag's Resistance

Change is a prominent theme in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, delving into various mental concepts like joy, sadness, compliance, disobedience, isolation, disappointment, and the delicate balance creation and destruction within relationship. By focusing on change, its presence is observable in both the individual growth of Guy Montag, the protagonist, and a larger societal context. Montag shifts from a passive follower to a mentally strong and brave individual. The writer, Bradbury, brings up this change early in the story, apparent in the famous opening lines: "It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed." (Bradbury 01)

The statement "Witnessing objects devoured, charred, and altered was a unique pleasure" illustrates Montag's initial contentment in his position as a book destroyer, while also hinting at his future evolution ("to see things...altered") (Bradbury 1). Initially portrayed as a malevolent character engrossed in eradicating knowledge, Montag's self-assurance conceals inner conflict. He recognizes his absence of joy and scrutinizes the hollowness within himself. Clarisse, his thoughtful adolescent neighbour, acts as a catalyst for Montag's introspection. "...I think it's so strange you're a fireman. It just doesn't seem right for you, somehow" (Bradbury 23). Her penetrating questions disturb him, triggering a series of conflicting thoughts and feelings. Through Clarisse, Montag starts to address his uncertainties and undergoes a profound internal turmoil. This internal struggle recurs throughout the story, symbolizing Montag's inner battle. While Montag's transformation commences tentatively, the rest of the book portrays his gradual assimilation of change. He faces his own flaws,

rebels against the societal standards he now opposes, and embarks on a journey to rediscover his lost identity, represented by his contradictory occupation as a firefighter. (Pendery 53-54)

As Montag nears his final day at the fire station, where he plans to confront and eliminate Beatty, his change is close to being done. Encouraged by the elderly man, Faber, he is promised that he will blend his identity with Faber's knowledge, represented as fire and water turning into wine—an image of rising above his past self. Montag is ready to carry out his violent idea of changing society, but his scheme is stopped. Instead, he experiences a personal shift, transitioning from a negative force to a positive one. His goal is to put out the flames that have been consuming his life and rediscover himself in a hopeful way.

Approaching the encounter with the book-loving forest people, he understands that he will never again participate in destruction. Nevertheless, his attempt to overturn the current system is turned down by the 'forest people,' and just before he can act, a nuclear war breaks out, symbolizing the ultimate societal turmoil. Amidst the turmoil, societal purification takes place, but Montag's personal evolution is not yet complete. He must face one final memory to achieve inner peace: the memory of where he first met his wife (Pendery 54).

In an earlier part of the book, "I remember.... I remember.... Chicago a long time ago. Millie and I. That's where we met! I remember now. Chicago. A long time ago". (Bradbury 28) Montag inquired of his spouse about the specifics of their initial encounter, but she was unable to provide a satisfactory response. However, during the most intense moment of the narrative, as Montag lays on the ground outside the urban area amidst the commotion of the explosions, he suddenly remembers the instance they met in Chicago many years ago. This recollection marks the pinnacle of Montag's personal growth. In the meantime, civilization is in shambles, and it is now Montag and the 'woodland dwellers' responsibility to go back to the devastated community and kickstart a more profound positive change by reflecting on their history and reconstructing from the ruins. (54)

2.6 The Mid-Western as a Violated Character in *Grapes* and *Fahrenheit 451*

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is a significant piece of literature that explores into the socio-economic struggles of the 1930s Dust Bowl era, particularly focusing on the mistreatment of migrant workers in the Midwest. Steinbeck vividly demonstrates the journey of the Joad family from their Oklahoma farm to California, and revealing the prejudices and exploitation they encounter during their journey. "A fella ain't got a soul of his own, just a

little piece of a big soul, the one big soul that belongs to everybody." (Steinbeck 289). From this quote, it reflects interrelation of humanity, exposing that individuals are not isolated but portion of a larger. Exploitation often happens when this interrelation is ignored and the persons are treated as merchandises.

A main idea delved in the novel is the economic abuse. The Joad family, just like the sharecrop farmer in the Midwest, become victims and suffer the cruelty of the heartlessness of wealthy landowners. They are forced from their land because of lacking rain and the economic struggles of the Great Depression, they have no choice but to move to the westward in hopes of looking for employment (PAGES). Even in California, the Joad family are subjected and exploited by wealthy landowners who get benefit for the low-cost labour. Steinbeck depicts this exploitation through the character of Tom Joad, who sluggishly recognizes the inequalities experienced by migrant labours and eventually joins a labour demonstration to request better wages and improved working circumstances.

Steinbeck mentioned a metaphorical reference which is: "They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don't get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat."(Steinbeck 22). This figurative expression vividly demonstrates the nature of capitalism, where gains and profits are the priorities above anyone else including individuals. This is one of the types of exploitation when it comes to the pursuit of money, regardless of the human cost.

Additional significant idea sightseen in the novel is environmental mistreatment. The Dust Bowl, triggered by widespread farming and soil collapse, harmed the farming heartland of the Midwest which leads to the displacement of many farmers. The author intensely depicts the harsh challenges and realities faced by the Joad's while travelling through deserted landscapes and fighting to survive. The impact of this environmental devastation served as a poignant and powerful figure for the wider exploitation of natural resources under industrial capitalism.

Nevertheless, possibly the most severe type of abuse portrayed in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the exploitation of labour. Itinerant workers like the Joad's are viewed as expendable assets, cruelly taken advantage of by agribusiness concerns for their inexpensive labour. They endure extensive work hours, insufficient salaries, and dreadful living conditions, with minimal opportunity to enhance their situations. Steinbeck reveals the personal sacrifice of this exploitation through the character of Ma Joad, who bravely bears the weight of her family's hardship while striving to uphold their honour and unity.

The Grapes of Wrath is a poignant denouncement and condemnation of the injustice suffered by the Midwesterners migrant workers during the Dust Bowl period. Through showcasing the experiences of the Joad family, Steinbeck exposes the environmental, economic and labour manipulation that emphasised the era, highlighting the unfettered capitalism that sheds light on society. By emphasizing this irrationality, Steinbeck impulses the audience to address and confront the systemic inequalities and differences that continue in today's society.

The novel *Fahrenheit 451*, reveals the heartland of America as a strong portrayal and representation of the decline of society into uniformity, consumerism, and the subjugation of understanding. Bradbury investigates the vivid descriptions and engaging storytelling into how mistreatment of the Midwest mirrors larger and broader concepts of societal worsening and the loss of personal individuality. This part investigates the several ways that the Midwest is depicted as being taken advantage in the novel.

Furthermore, the exploitation of the heartland also encompasses the suppression of intellectual freedom. In the story, books are forbidden, and any divergent thoughts are quickly silenced. The heartland, which was known for independent thinking and curiosity, approves a role of suppressing knowledge and altering information, as well as from this quote "The mind drinks less and less. Impatience. Highways full of crowds going somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, nowhere."(Bradbury 85). It captures the core of a society characterized by decrease in intellectual engagement and critical thinking, and society's growing impatience and agitation. Moreover, people's activities are aimless and leading to nowhere meaningful and genuine purpose.

Society is dispirited from reading books that encourage critical thinking or that face established standards. The rich intellectual legacy reduces and giving way to a culture of standardisation and ignorance, as Faber said "... So now do you see why books are hated and feared? They show the pores in the face of life."(Bradbury 115). Faber argues that books reveal imperfections, complications and truths of life essentially similar to "the pores in the face" (115). Thus, books are dreaded due to the challenge of social control and prompting individuals to question and reflect critically about the reality and their existence.

Additionally, the use of the Heartland in the novel mirrors the ties with nature and human moralities. Bradbury contrasts the sterilised and technology-centred atmosphere of the region with the magnificence and vitality of nature. Nevertheless, nature in this community is commonly depicted as being ignored or ruined in favour of urban enlargement and the

progress of technology. The beforehand flourishing landscapes of the Heartland has been substituted by urban areas and vast cities which alienates individuals from nature. The separation from the natural world contributes to the dehumanization of societal standpoints and causes them to become progressively disconnected from their own realities and feelings.

The representation of the Heartland in *Fahrenheit 451* functions as a strong metaphor for the hazards of conformity, intellectual oppression and consumerism in society. By demonstrating a society controlled under these forces, Bradbury cautions of the consequences and repercussions of forsaking uniqueness, critical intellectual and basic human ideologies. The Heartland, which once was an illustration of strength and inventiveness, transforms into a dark and sorrowful indication of the consequences of prioritizing the conformity over questioning, consumption over sympathy and suppression over freedom. Reflecting on Bradbury's visionary foresights, the novel reminds the importance of safeguarding intellectual freedom and preserving the connection with nature and humanity.

2.7 Conclusion

Both *the Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451* by John Steinbeck and Ray Bradbury provide deep insights and understanding of dehumanisation within society and its effects. Those narratives underscore the strength of the human spirit and the critical importance of retaining the humanity amidst the systemic discrimination through engaging narratives and the Dynamic characters.

In the end, both novels are still significant because they prompt the audiences to reflect the different types of dehumanisation present in contemporary society. They challenge the readership to consider the effects of economic systems, technological advancement and societal structures impact on the humanity. Steinbeck and Bradbury inspire and encourage readers to protect the dignity, individuality and freedom by telling compelling stories that emphasize the necessity of empathy, justice and intellectual freedom.

General Conclusion

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Midwest serves as a cultural and literary symbol for exploring the intersection of traditional myths, the American Dream, and postmodern critiques within cultural and literary representations. Historically, the Midwest has been romanticized as the core of American principles like industry, unity, and modesty, illustrating an idealized view of farming ethics and reliability. This picture is closely linked to the American Dream, which guarantees progress and achievement through hard work and determination.

The Grapes of Wrath and *Fahrenheit 451* present deep perspectives on these themes, presenting both validations and criticisms. The Joad family's relentless quest for a better life in *The Grapes of Wrath* embodies the American Dream, showcasing resilience and hope, key elements of American philosophy. Nevertheless, Steinbeck's narrative also functions as a postmodern analysis, emphasizing structural disparities and the harsh obstacles that obstruct the dream for many individuals, thus challenging the achievability and widespread applicability of the American Dream.

Although *Fahrenheit 451* does not specifically deal with the Midwest, it connects with the cultural aspects of the region by delving into the fight for personal identity and intellectual liberty within a society that values conformity. Bradbury's writing romanticizes the journey towards self-discovery and understanding, reflecting the hopeful elements of the American Dream, but also deconstructing it in a postmodern way, illustrating how societal expectations and oppression can hinder individual development and satisfaction.

To recap, the two literary works under analysis represent the Midwest as a picture of American values and their particulars. The area is known for its traditional beliefs and the concept of the American Dream, but it is also a place where postmodern literature critically examines and breaks down these ideas. *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451* reveal the complex nature of these topics, showing a balanced depiction that recognizes the positive and difficult elements of the American experience. Looking at the Midwest through these perspectives, it becomes clear that it is not just a symbol of lasting values, but also a terrain that is ready for challenging and reinterpreting the stories that shape the national identity.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The American Midwest is known for its agricultural landscapes such as the corn fields and urban industrial. In fact, the Midwest portrayed as an agrarian land because of its cultural identity that is deeply rooted in its history. The title *The Grapes of Wrath* refers to the increasing anger among the migrant workers as they face oppression and poverty, uprising against the wealthy capitalist system that exploits them, while the title *Fahrenheit 451* means that is the temperature degree and the heat of fire burning, in Celsius, it is 232°. Furthermore, the message in *the Grapes of Wrath* is that people need to help each other and unite together in order to hope to survive systems.

Clarisse McClellan is a character in *Fahrenheit 451*. She is a free minded young woman and a neighbour of Montag, the protagonist. In fact, her death served to motivate Montag's enlightenment to take actions and contribute his belief that books are significant that could save him from society's imminent ruin and the system. Montag's change is related to the Midwest in terms of personal identity and rights because the Midwesterners are somehow oppressed due to the industrialisation and urbanization that is how Montag tends to escape from society and discover the truth.

Both novels, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fahrenheit 451*, address critical and societal problems such as the abusive systems and seek for change, yet they have their differences. *The Grapes of Wrath* explores the historical realism and focuses on economic and social fairness, whereas *Fahrenheit 451* discovers the themes of censorship, conformity and the impact of technology in society.

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