

Tribhuvan University

Exercising of Power Over Body in The Movie *The Truman Show*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Sita Dahal

Symbol No: 00006184

T.U. Regd. No: 6-2-453-45-2011

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

July 2022

Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Recommendation letter

This thesis entitled Exercising of Power Over Body in The Movie *The Truman Show* has been prepared by Sita Dahal under my supervision and guidance.
Therefore, I recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voice.

Laxman Bhatta

Lecturer/Thesis Supervisor

Department of English

Tribhuvan University Kathmandu, Nepal

Date: -----

Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “Exercising Of Power Over Body In The Movie *The Truman Show*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuwan University, by Mrs. Sita Dahal has been approved by the undersigned Members of the Research Committee.

Laxman Bhatta

Internal Examiner

Mahesh Poudyal

External Examiner

Head of the Department

Prof. Dr. Jiblal Sapkota

Date: _____

Acknowledgement

Throughout the writing of this thesis I have received a great deal of support and assistance. I would first like to thank my supervisor, Professor Laxman Bhatta, whose expertise was invaluable in formulating the research and methodology. His insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher level. I will be eternally grateful for his valuable and appreciable comments and suggestion.

At the same time, I would like to extend my gratitude to respected professors; Mahesh Poudyal, Komal Phuyal of the department of English for their valuable guidance. They provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my thesis.

Finally, my heartily honors goes to my husband, Nir Kadel for his valuable contribution, great patience, encouragement during the study and is always there for me.

July 2022

Sita Dahal

Abstract

The Truman Show (1998) illustrates the situation and experiences of Truman Burbank and issue of constant surveillance which is used as a form of entertainment for the masses. Truman Burbank is the subject matter for the reality show, whose life is broadcasted by the creator of the show by using five thousand hidden cameras to the millions of viewers and he is totally unknown about this. The theoretical framework of this research paper combines theories of Panopticon, hyperreality and cinematography. The theory of hyperreality focuses on how meaning is misrepresented by media. The media broadcast the Burbank's life experiences but he is surrounded by false reality. Theory of cinematography discusses to explore how the use of different cinematography technique such as lighting, music, camera angle to create that what viewers are watching is real. Similarly, the theory of panopticon focuses on how a panoptic framework would impact on individual identity and how Seaheaven Island serves function of a panopticon. The main conclusion to be drawn from this work is that, surveillance is an element that is used as a disciplinary power and it tends to be of the quiet kind. Hyperreality is used to misrepresent the meaning of the story through media to the audiences in the show that they cannot figure out what is real and what is not real? It blurs the line between reality and fiction.

Key Words: panopticon, surveillance, simulacra, hyperreality, media control.

Exercising of Power Over Body in The Movie *The Truman Show*

This research paper deals with the broader area of bio surveillance in Peter Weir's movie *The Truman Show* (1998). It pays particular attention to an issue related to those who are under surveillance system. It further explains the issue of power over body and hyper reality in relation to the experiences of the protagonist, Truman Burbank.

The movie basically focuses on the life experiences of Truman Burbank who is rejoicing in his false world; Seaheaven but remains totally unaware of how his whole life experiences are captured by five thousand hidden cameras for a TV reality show before his birth. At this stage the central phenomenon of bio politics is described as having power over the bodies. Here, in the movie Burbank is completely controlled and manipulated by the creator of the show, Christof. Furthermore, this research paper will inquire on the notion of being under surveillance which led to the loss of an individual's privacy or identity. Because of the power exercise over body Burbank's identity or privacy has been in crisis. The film depicts Burbank's life that has been captured by a television company called 'Omnicom'. He does not have any idea that he is the sufferer and being recorded from his birth.

The movie relies on 24/7 surveillance to provide entertainment to hundreds of millions of viewers. The main characters in *The Truman Show* are Jim Carey as Truman Burbank, Laura Linney as Meryl Burbank, Noah Emmerich as Marlon (Truman's friend), Natascha McElhone as Sylvia, Holland Taylor as Truman's mother and Brian Delate as father. Ed Harris plays the role Christof who is controlling each and every movement every day in Burbank's life as well as the reaction of the audiences in the movie. Burbank is the star of the show but he does not know that his

life is the subject of a reality television show watched by hundreds of millions of viewer. Burbank is legally adopted by the broadcasting company and been unknowingly publicizing his entire life as an entertaining show to the whole world. Throughout the film, director Weir also presents his gentle understanding of the world which is constructed and restrained. Burbank has been raised on a large broadcasting station which has filled with more than five thousand hidden cameras and actors who imagined being his friends and family but all of them are not true to him and they are the paid actors hired by the creator of the show. Since the day he was born, Burbank's life was restrained from a huge control panel, which is broadcasted by the production team to the audiences. The movie clearly portrays how the role of media in Burbank's world convinces him into living in a way that he is in the real world. It is quite often unaware to him the effect that media has on him. However, the effects of media have altered the course of Burbank's living. He has regular type of schedule in his life. His life is always the same.

This research is important for a number of reasons. As this is a reality show, the viewers want to watch it in some true or real way. That's why the world Burbank lives in and the world the audiences live in are the eventually in the same world. So, the viewers want to notice completely like that. Burbank's surrounding is controlled; his life is operated by the creator of the show. Where is his real identity? The question arises here. Everyone around himself is paid even his family. Secondly, being an expressive and creative movie that inspires viewers to re-examine the truth, the media and the human ethos. This movie has raised more questions about the nature of external outfit which plays a significant role to shaping Burbank's identity. Though Burbank's identity has been heavily shaped by the creator of the show, Christof, it isn't distinct from our own living beings shaped by teachers, parents or any other

authority figure. The movie anticipated the rise of reality television show and that's what makes its concept feel so timeless now. Burbank perfectly plays the role of Truman Show and he sells the real aspect of the show. The popularity of Truman Burbank as a character shows the power that the media has over people's lives. After watching this film, viewer's thoughts immediately focused on postmodernism. Postmodernism brings us to a point where all things are endless. The depiction of a social condition in which popular culture and mass media have full control over the public relations in it.

After some introductory comments from characters, during the movie, the story of the movie begins with Burbank leaving his home to go to the work. Some odd light fixture nearly falls on him. In the very beginning of the movie the creator show something that happens unusual. This movie presents that the media can be very controlling and has effects on our lives. For example, Burbank lives a perfect and happy life. Truman's way of life is supposed to be the 'American Dream'. Cullen argues "declaration is implicitly and explicitly invoked all the time- life liberty and as much entertainment as is digitally possible" (39). He explores the meaning of American Dream which includes a happy way of living. He has all things which he need of but the most important thing is that everything is not true. The media is advertising Burbank's perfect life to the public but that is not the real reality. The media influences Burbank's lives in many ways such as magazines, TV and radio. The media wants sets many expectations not only to show how Burbank live but also how he look. Burbank is the example of this because his life is manipulated by the media, where nothing is real but he believes it is not only real but true. Burbank is a happy person who lives the life of a well put together American. But he is influenced by the media by emotional manipulation and his actions are controlled. Jointly with

the principles of freedom and privacy that every individual can earn. It is their right as well. No one's life should be constructed on false and suspicion. All these principles are reflected in the movie through the use of different cinematography techniques such as: audience positioning, symbolism, camera angle, lighting and music. In the movie the character of Burbank is manipulated and shaped under the direction of Christof, for gaining the rate and power from his audience.

The literature review mentioned below will examine the main issues related to the hyper reality and body politics in the movie. The study within this review of literature focuses on the objective of terms 'reality', 'surveillance', 'panopticon' and what it affects in the context of Truman's world, Christof's world and the audience world within the movie's world and most importantly why Truman is under surveillance, where is his identity. By exploring these areas of literature, a significant contribution will be made to this research.

Camera is the thing that makes true into fake. Baudrillard described hyperreality as "the generations by models of a real without origin or reality" (4). In the film Burbank tries to find the truth, but the truth there is not the whole truth, but it is just another way of looking at life which is happening inside the studio. The movie is based on the show about a boy who is adopted by a corporate channel. The title of the film itself tells the idea that what it is all about. It shows that Burbank is living in the hyper real world and cannot figure out what is true and what is not true. In fact Burbank presents the absolute metaphor for current situation where everything is shaped by the media. Burbank is living in the period of hyperreal but the audiences in the show are demanding that everything to be real about Burbank. Burbank's world is controlled by the various media. Then, the question arises why he is under the surveillance of tools and technology. Similarly, Truman cannot distinguish between

what is real and what is not real in his life. Creator has created everything as if it is real and media advertise this false reality to the viewers by saying that everything is real and perfect.

Cinematography is also an important technique which has been successfully used in this movie to show the issue of hyperreality and surveillance. It is the technique that includes camera angle, framing, style of music, lighting etc. to convey the meaning of the movie in a visual form. Cinematography tells the story with image and compelling the audiences that it is real. A cinematographer Blain Brown argues “in visual story telling few elements are as effective and as powerful as light and color. They have the ability to reach viewers as a purely emotion gut real” (48). Storytelling through cinematography technique is powerful and it can give true essence of film’s structure and the meaning of the film. Filmmakers use such technique to inspire the viewers to believe that what they are watching is unscripted and real. Brown further says “one of our most important tools as filmmaker is visual metaphor, which is the ability of images to convey a meaning in addition to their straightforward reality” (46). Visual imagery is used to identify a character, an event or mood of the audiences. Peter Weir has creatively directed a film portraying the media and its effects on Burbank’s life. In the movie, Christof the creator of the show has represented the media companies that can keep the audience hooked by telling lies and false reality. Similarly Sea Heaven metaphorically it is like a comfortable prison built by man for Burbank. Similarly, when Christof tries to reunite his dead father to Burbank he uses the close up camera angle to show the real picture to the audiences who are waiting to see something real and the music tone is fade in that scene. By using different camera angle he tries to show that Burbank’s surrounding is almost too

perfect, his world is artificial such as the sky is very blue, the weather is very bright which really does not exist in real.

In the movie, Burbank is transformed into the object to make the profit for the creator of the show. The producer of the show employs numerous tools to give a view on the capitalist society that entertains audience on a daily basis. Bharathi T and Ajit I deal with the theme of constructed reality and somehow the issue of bio politics in the movie. They talk about the brilliant visionary movie sets onward this question through the story of regular guy Truman Burbank, Born on TV and legally who is adopted by a hidden mastermind producer and his life are broadcasted twenty four hours a day. Bharathi T and Ajit I assert that "When power comes to rule, everything is right according to that power. In this virtual world media take many forms to control the world like the Christof's control Truman in the movie. Everything believes to be true but everything is the simulated truth of the truth according to Baudrillard" (3). From this it can be analyzed that they firmly imitating the effect of media in everyday life. Nowadays the influence of media is unlimited because media is everywhere just like in the movie. Burbank's life is covered by the media. He has become the product of media. Media is dynamic in nature; it cannot give the fix and real meaning just like in the movie. Millions of viewers are watching the show but it is the fictional reality created by the media and the meaning is manipulated.

Jagodzinski analyzed the movie to find out why reality television has become so much popular in post-modern society. He declares "Truman corporate father, producer and the mastermind of the show is watching and directing every move to the best of his ability" (63). So, Truman is what kind of victim, because he is totally unaware that his life is publicizing. Where is his privacy in his life? And how does he differentiate himself from everyman. He thinks he is in the real world and everything

around him is the reality. He concludes his article by saying “Almost the entire film takes place in an artificial land Seaheaven which can be identified as a form of ‘womb envy’ by corporate interest and Truman is their baby” (63). In the movie, the broadcast company becomes the father of the Burbank. So, mainly the producer of the movie: Christof can do anything whatever he wants to do toward him. In one scene he tries to kill Truman by increasing the wind power when Burbank is in the sailboat where as he has the fear of water but Christof don’t care about this thing. The movie is the observation on enjoyment, society and it’s also telling today’s reality through the experiences of Burbank. It criticizes on the media who focused on the commodity and profit rather than the reality. Reality is misrepresented particularly on TV screens by the mass media as a whole and this is well illustrated in the movie which is based on ironic establishment. Ashton argues “Truman is living in an arguably broken moment and it shows us what waking up looks like, but it also stage the struggle and the sorrow that come along with it” (1). Through his discussion it can be analyzed that it merely asks a lot of questions about bio power. It is analysis on the today’s entertainment society and today’s people who are heavily rely on the reality show like *The Truman show*. Today’s people are enjoying the fictional reality due to the rise of heavy reality show. But these kinds of show are created from materialistic purpose to attract viewer’s attention.

The movie is inventing the effect of media, the arts and company in Burbank’s life. The movie depicts the creation of a master plan of action that is perceived around the world by millions. S.Gall captured the essence that Christof, the creator of the show and director of the Burbank’s world, control the things of his life within that artificial land: seaheaven and continuously watches over Truman and keeping him under surveillance. He observes “sight helps to create polarity of subject and object.

Vision tends to turn what it sees into an object and to suppress the link between subjects and object as the viewer's detached from the objects of one's gaze''

(8).Which results that the gap and objectivity of vision inspires for one is allowed to see a head. Creativity empowers planning and previous knowledge. Burbank's vision gives him power because it gives him foreknowledge of what will be happen in his life because he has already fixed his life's action. The main objective of this study was that the movie is making critique about our media, culture and corporate impact on Burbank's life for shaping his identity.

Similarly,the movie uses Burbank to represent the audience as a whole to show how he is affected by the media. Barrunderlined the importance of the perceptual effect representation where Burbank is just a commodity to make a profit for the creator of the show, Christof. He is the subject matter for the hidden camera reality show and creator to show to broadcast it to others. He further asserts "the movie is made more that entertainment..... It brings into focus the new values that technology is forcing on humanity" (4).Technologies are forcing people for creating the false reality and effect of technology interaction that the character himself has no idea that he is the part of that technology. Technology forces people to believe that what is untrue by media is true.

Tiang argues that media utilizes people as an object in order to advertise. His ideas and my ideas would be slight different but the meaning we are trying to find is the same; bio politics and effect of media with related to panoptic power. He moved his discussion forward by pointing out that " Truman must face the founder, producer and director of the world of Truman and overcome the greatest fear in his heart to break through the invisible barriers and gain freedom" (55).Burbank's each and every things were already set out and planned for him in the movie. Truman's every single

activities are already predetermined and recorded by the media to show the public. Burbank should face Christof to overcome from this false reality and to gain his freedom. If he doesn't try to find out the real things how should he get his freedom? Throughout the paper Tiang investigates how Christof is using his power over the Truman's body to entertain others. Burbank, this is a satirisation of the life of the audience of the reality show, a group of audiences who take enjoyment watching another person live which is not even real. Burbank is under constant so his identity is in crisis but he should have to fight with the creator to gain his identity and freedom. Sea Heaven in the movie is a film set designed to follow the panopticon model created by Foucault.

Volkan studied the movie with objective to find out the world of Burbank who is surrounded by false reality and he is the main focus of this world. Everyone is watching him at restaurant, at home, at bar etc. Everywhere is surrounded by Burbank's activities. This study was based on the 'Illuminati' defined as a secret society which apply power over the public by manipulating media and providing information and control audiences. The main finding of the study was that reality is misrepresented specifically on reality show Like *The Truman show* and Burbank is losing his real human being identity in the show. He asserts "hidden cameras are located all over the place where Truman lives and move about. Truman's life including his private space is expose to the world" (36). Through this Volkan find that Christof and the member of Corporation Company as a whole utilizing their power to control and operate Burbank. He is surrounded by the fake reality. Hidden camera are fit each and every corner. So, Burbank's private life has been also in crisis. But he happily enjoys this fictional reality.

Fitch asserts that "how someone's identity is constructed by one's environment and the character, Truman Burbank is trapped by physical limit" (1). He further holds the idea that, "surveillance is way for manipulating and shaping and individual identity" (6). As the plot progresses in the movie, Burbank's each and every activity is tracked and controlled by creator of the show, Christof. Christof also controls audience within the show. He kept showing the show because he wants that audiences are not to go anywhere. He comments on how a world is under continual examination and manipulation. Burbank's identity has been changed by the view of the creator of the show.

Burbank is the main subject matter of the story. As the story of the film grows, Burbank is a kind, humor and also visionary character. Burbank is the only character who has not been acted in the movie. He has been born and raised without knowing about himself and he was never aware about himself. He was rejoicing in a created world. He did not really know about actual situation. In this regard Jackson claims "It is a story about world like ours that is obsessed with an ongoing realistic story" (138). The viewers in the movie were occupied with the show, they were never shown doing anything else besides from watching the show. He further argues "the way Truman has been abused by corporations for wealth and power, blinded since birth by institutions demonstrates how our society is controlled and manipulated by corporation as well" (139). He specified how and why realistic television is so popular. He also claims "Realism is appealing because it allows us to separate our subjective self from an objective representation" (136). Truman's identity has been built by the creator of the show. He has been born and raised in an artificial land so his identity is also a created identity. Christof watches him just from the materialistic perspective. He had to attract the attention of the audience and get a rating from the audiences.

Aforementioned review reflects that the movie is analyzed from multiple perspectives but the issue related to hyper reality and bio politics has not been explored. Surveillance is becoming unified into human lives. The movie attempts to capture his real emotion and human behavior and broadcast it to millions of viewers. However, Burbank is totally unknown that his entire life is a fake life. His existing is observed by thousands of cameras and every aspect of his life is carefully controlled by Christof and his production team. However, the film has different meanings. The name Truman itself conveys a kind of meaning, 'true man' or 'true human' he is a real man. He lives in a heavenly place, Seheaven and almost paradise "heaven" on earth. In the course of the movie the existence of Burbank is in someone else's hand. His life is affected by outsiders. He virtually has no space be called private. The only place he does not have a camera is his head. Otherwise his every action are showing from everywhere from his office, from his car, from his home etc. to the audiences who are eagerly waiting in front of the television to see Burbank.

The movie displays the idea of hyper reality in a clear way. Burbank has the physical distortion of reality. Seheaven, the place Burbank lives, appears to be even better than real life because it is all fake. It is the world that Christof created for Burbank. Burbank's world is dominated by the power of media. Everything that happens in his life reaches all over the world through media. The media make it impossible to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Especially, media in the name of reality shows, which is created and scripted by the creator to make them believe everything is real. So, to find out the issue of bio politics how an individual's identity is constructed by the outer forces, so many research were conducted and this work is still continuous. Previous research reveals that the world of the movie can be characterized as a hyper reality. The next stage of this research will detail the research

methods to be used to capture the data, including details on the research strategy to be adopted, data collection techniques, and management of the researcher's role.

Methodology will provide the details of the research strategy address the research issue identified above together with the means of collecting data for analysis of the study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the issue of 'surveillance', 'body politics' and 'hyperreality' by focusing the experience of the protagonist, Truman Burbank by applying the Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard's theory. He is captured and manipulated by the creator of the show Christof. This study also investigates the power of media and how the media plays a significant role in a person's survival. The main purpose of this research is to bridge gap of the idea of mass surveillance and panoptic power. It also focuses on the effect of the reality TV show on Burbank's life.

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and literary critic try to find that how body is historically, culturally and socially constructed. In his book' *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of Prison*' he narrates that discipline is a chain of approaches which the body's movements can be controlled. According to him discipline worked by pressuring and organizing the individual's movements, his experience of space and time. In this regard he says "the exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation" (170). Foucault argues that the use of disciplinary power has increase everywhere in society. According to Foucault, prison is not only place that have disciplinary power or surveillance to control people. Surveillance is now taking place everywhere and each and every one is in its shadow and CCTV cameras are one of its kinds, which are used heavily in private as well as public spaces. Nowadays human beings have become a part of it.

Foucault describes two types of power. The first one is 'sovereign power' which means controlling people through threat of force and another one is 'discipline power' which means control through surveillance. He asserts that disciplinary power originated importantly in the late 19th century. The meaning of punishment has been change since the 19th century. According to Foucault "Discipline may be identified neither with an instrument nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, level of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power and technology "

(215). What can be said from this is that disciplinary power is a means for categorizing, commanding and normalizing individuals. Disciplinary power projects as observing and monitoring an individual's movements. Through his writing we came to know that discipline is different from forcing. This is to constantly control the human body.

Foucault has also defined another concept which is 'Panopticism' which is based on Jeremy Bentham's idea of the 'Panopticon'. Panopticon was a prison theorized by Jeremy Bentham, with a tall central tower and cells in a circle around it. Although the term 'panopticon' was originally coined for a particular building, Foucault believes it means society as a whole. Nowadays people think that wherever they go, they are being monitored while they are not prisoners. Foucault said "All that is needed , then is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell.....a worker or a school boy.....one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, small captive shadow in the cells of the periphery " (200). What is meant by this is that an individual life's is recorded, observed and analyzed. A person can be the subject matter of other people's entertainment. From the tower anyone can be observed by the supervisor.

In today's postmodern society due to the modern media technology, the activities of any person are controlled and predicted as a form of CCTV camera or social norms and values. For Foucault "Panopticon is prevalent throughout society as it is the most effective way to control human behavior. The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power" (202). It is considered to be very effective in controlling human behavior. It demonstrates power equally. Panopticon, a huge building planned by Bentham has become a sign of Foucault's argument. Each individual imprisoned within it is felt isolated and the supervisor is looking at him but he does not see. It is marvelous, it authorizes one person to have capacity over many. He focuses on how our contemporary society is built. In Marcelo Hoffman's essay "Disciplinary power", he gives an overview of Foucault's disciplinary mode when he establishes as 'producing an organic individuality by exerting control over bodily activities' (29). This is a psychological manipulation, controlling and modifying behavior with subjects through invisible channels. Discipline is the act of constantly disciplining and marking a body as a sign form. Foucault has analyzed numerous technologies that control and hinder the body. In postmodern writings, everything is already preset, predetermined and limited. In this type of writings the characters are controlled and they are bound to a limited freedom. As Foucault argues that:

Disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility at the same time. It imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. This visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen of being is always to be seen that maintains the disciplined individual in the subjection (106).

The application of the disciplinary power is always invisible. It is a mechanism of power. It is used by an invisible power while it is difficult for people to know. It works very differently. It is an invisible and calm force. Disciplinary power is a new kind of diplomacy for bodied. In postmodern society it required that technique for observation and control. It is the fact that being visible always helps to keep a person disciplined.

Panopticism is an external monitoring element that makes power more effective. Foucault convinces that panoptic power brings out a natural force. Foucault sum up the commentary of the society route by idea of Panopticism as follows:

this enclosed segmented space observed at every point in which the individuals are interested in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all event are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and periphery, in which each individual is constantly located examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism (197).

This explanation is what we can say in Foucault's thinking modern disciplinary society is built on such prison. For individuals it is difficult to get out of such consistent network of disciplinary society since the power is so globe. He further defined Panopticism as:

It is an architectural figure if this composition as we know the principle on which it is based: the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the periphery building is divided into cells, each of which extends the hole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the outside, one on

the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other (200).

Foucault's view is that prisons are only opened unilaterally to the surveillant and not to the prisoner. In the circular prison society, those who are under close surveillance they have nowhere to hide and cannot avoid those in power-control is everywhere. For their rating, the company controls every move of every person.

Postmodernism recognized new insight, style, concepts and evolution in the field of literature. The most significant influence behind the postmodern literary writing is the work of Jean Baudrillard, the famous French philosopher and postmodern theorist. His most famous work, *Simulation and Simulacra* focuses on the relationship between reality, symbols and society. Jean Baudrillard focuses on hyperreality. Reality in post modernism is difficult to find reality from a Simulation of reality. Jean Baudrillard originally coined such a concept as a part of his theory, the role of Simulacrum plays in structuring our lives.

Baudrillard takes the term 'Disneyland' as an imaginary world which means supposed to be what makes the operation successful. He believes 'Disneyland is presented as imaginary to make us believe that the rest is real' (12). He claims that the truth and meaning of our present society has been replaced with symbols and signs. He also says 'it has no relation to any reality whatsoever' (6). Hyperreality is mainly the case in societies with a lot of modern technology. The media has a key role to play in manipulating the truth. 'The Disneyland imagery is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machines setup in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real' (370). It is because of the current media that TV, movies, internet, print etc. are blurring the truth. He described four stages of simulacra and the hyperreality

occurs in the fourth stage. In this stage there is no longer refers to any reality, we cannot find any originality.

In the era of hyperreality, the spirit of postmodern time is the entrance of the failure of the real. When the real is no longer what it used to be of the real. John Carlos Rowel argues that “postmodern fiction presents the social reality, the complex relation between psychological and social experiences and the essential term governing our lived relations” (181). It is important for such writers to pay attention to the media because it is the media that manipulates the meaning. Similarly, Debord’s theory of the spectacle finds the original growth of current society in which authentic social life has been restored with its presentations. He says “the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation among people mediated by images that produce false consciousness and distorts human rationality “ (108). These images are the outcome of the capitalist point of view to praise the customer culture. It creates social relationship between people through pictures.

This thesis focuses to introduce a different perspective on studying ‘surveillance’, ‘body politics’ and ‘hyperreality’. The existing studies have not much considered in the context of surveillance and body politics. Studies on *The Truman Show* have focused on the complication of depicting an individual identity in reality show and how it affects Burbank’s psychology. The theories of Panopticism, hyperreality and body politics introduced above will bind jointly in the investigation of the movie by analyzing the general themes of the film.

The separation of Burbank’s world can give many theories and angle regarding the reality. The creator of the show has assumed his existence. The movie describes the presentation of a television project that is watched by millions around the world and it has now become a global. The analysis of the movie has generally

focused on the issue of constant surveillance. The movie portrays the production of a television program that is watched around the world by millions of people. The opening part of the movie tells that it was created by Christof, the man in the moon himself. On the show Burbank's life always seems to be the same. Through his grade school we came to know that everything he had was already fixed and predetermined and there was nothing left to explain. That means every single effect is settled and absolute. The movie tells that the world of Burbank's life is in fact not really true. Christof is invisible himself and he cannot be seen by Burbank. He is a confusing figure to both Burbank and TV/movie viewer. What he wants the viewers to believe that he is a 'true man' and not every reaction he makes is a written down or scripted. His friend Marlon emphasizes this view when he says in an interview at the beginning of the movie "it's all true, it's all real. Nothing here is fake. Nothing you see in this show is fake. It's merely controlled" (02: 03). Each and every action performed by Burbank are real. All the time in the movie, there is a wide range of surveillance, by using the hidden cameras behind the Burbank's car radio; the creator wants to broadcast his each and every moment for the audiences' purposes. But, Truman is absolutely unknown about his. Christof, the creator of the show is the God behind the screen.

The concept "Being able to see without being seen" (167) by Jean Baudrillard is applicable in Burbank's life. Fake and constructed reality can be seen in the film. Burbank is used as a subject matter for the entertainment purposes. As I mentioned earlier, according to Foucault, panopticism fixes things so that the surveillance in people is permanent. Burbank, wherever he was at home, at work or at car, the hidden cameras are catching his every movement. His entire life is under the supervision of Christof but he did not have this at all. Surveillance has become a part

of his life. It plays a vital role in Burbank's life for shaping his individual identity. Burbank seems to be the survivor of the under surveillance. His freedom/privacy is captured through the use of hidden cameras and fake actors. Almost in every part, the purpose of the creator is manipulating him for the entertainment for million audiences. During the movie, in one scene we can see "10, 910 number of days running" (19:20). His life has been shown to many viewers since his birth but he thinks that what he has seen is the real reality.

As the film progresses there came to know that what happens to a person in a panoptic model. When a person is under constant surveillance, he must try to get out in order setting up his freedom. Burbank doesn't know exactly what he is running from because he has never seen the person who is in the tower. The man in the tower is always hidden or invisible for Burbank. Millions of spectators are watching Burbank's movement but he does not know that he is being observed. He cannot see the viewer. Burbank is not only the subject but he is the unknown subject matter for hidden camera reality show. He is the prisoner of the show just like the term by Foucault's Panopticism. When Jean Baudrillard describes four stages of simulacra, Burbank's life reflects at the fourth stage. He is a true man but he is surrounded by fake environment. His marriage, family his friends all of them are fake. Burbank's existence is in virtual world in which the line between reality and non-reality cannot be differentiating. In *Simulation and Simulacra*, Baudrillard's comments that media including television, film, print and the internet are responsible for blurring the line between what is real is what is fake. Simulation warns between real, fake and imaginary.

Here in the movie we can see the effect of Disneyland. Audience's watch this TV show and they suppose that they are living in the real world and watching the real

show. Just as Disneyland is a simulated reality with in a controlled environment, Truman Show exists as a deceptive prison, reality with in a reality. Like Disneyland, Seaheaven does not show any reality.it is the image of the false world created by Christof. Baudrillard describes that Disneyland survives as hyperreal world to force us think that America is real. Just like in the movie Burbank's identity is constructed and scripted to make audiences as if it is real by creating the artificial land seaheaven in the dome. Burbank is bounded in terms of what he can do mainly he can only do what is given to him. Everyone greets him by saying good morning every day in a polite manner by name and he can only go in limited places. He says "good morning, and in case I don't see you good afternoon, good evening and good night" (0:02:55). This shows that his life has completely controlled by the creator of the show. Everything is predefined, prearranged and restricted. He has a fake smile on his face. That gives the impression to viewers that it is scripted.

The surrounding of Truman is in a solid type of disciplinary society according to Foucault's term. In Foucault's opinion there is no escape for an individual in disciplinary society. Everything is already fixed by the producer in the movie. Seaheaven, the city Burbank lives in is another form of Foucault's Panopticon. We can see the same kind of scenario between Seaheaven and Panopticon. In Foucault's opinion modern disciplinary society is built on such prison. As Sylvia says "he is not a performer, he is a prisoner" (1:07:39). Sylvia is the only person who advocates for Truman's freedom. When she tried to say the real reality of the Truman she was removed. As she told to Truman "everybody knows everything you did" (0:26:33). From this the truth is known that it is all made by someone for Burbank. Burbank is under continuous observation by his producer. There is seen to be strong representation of manipulation through power. Burbank's existence is structured by

media. Everything is stimulated except for his life. Producer of the show, Christof created an illusionary world and hired all the actors who are not real to Burbank. As Christof says “everything on the show is for sale. The actors, the wardrobe, food products to the very homes they live in” (1:19:02). Burbank’s life is public subject matter for understanding to the world and mainly to Christof, who is watching from above. Sylvia also says Truman “it’s all fake. It’s all created for you. The Sky and the Sea. Everything is a set” (0:26:58). She is the only character who wants to tell the truth to Burbank. But, Christof removes her from the set. Christof does not want Burbank to know the truth. Creator of the show creates an artificial land for him, which does not exist in real.

Burbank appears to be the life style of American Dream (a utopia land). Cullen defined American dream “a specific dream of Upward mobility” (97). Truman has a dream to escape from Seaheaven to Fiji where his girlfriend Sylvia is there. Fiji symbolizes the freedom where he wants to escape and make his life free. His life seems very calm and happy. He has his family members and friends. His life is very good, not any bad things have happened in his life. Even so, his surrounding which he has is not the real world, it is created by the creator of the show, and he seems to be satisfied with his life. But, in this artificial land relationships are destroyed it is totally opposite. Relations are forcefully encouraged to keep Burbank happy. The staff and the viewers are the only ones that see Burbank’s life. In Foucault’s world it is a panopticon. Burbank is living under cameras but he has no idea about that. Here in his life there can be find the similarities with Foucault’s idea that prison is only opened one way. Being in the place of the significant spectator, Christof firmly trusts in the mirage he has created. When questioned by the host of Tru-Talk show about why he never comes to find out the truth of his world, he replies, “we accept the

reality of the world, with which we are presented. It's as simple as that '' (1:06:13). Through this he wants to say that Burbank's world is real and he should accept the reality of this world. As his name recommends Truman means the 'true man' that means human beings in general humanity. But later Christof gives a composite meaning about Truman to Sylvia: "He can leave at any time. If he was more than just a vague ambition, if he were absolutely determined to discover the truth, there is no way we could prevent him. I think what really distress you caller is that ultimately Truman prefers the comfort of his cell as you call it'' (1:07:41). He says the Seahvean is the world that would be the perfect for all the people. He says he has given a chance Burbank to live a normal life; he did not control his life. Christof shows immoral behavior towards Truman in this sense. Christof killed off Truman's father when he thought that he was struggling to find out the truth. Again, when Truman's college girlfriend Sylvia tried to tell him his life was a show she was also removed from the show. Toward the end of the movie he says "he is not willing to take risk his life. He doubts will turn him back'' (1: 14:24). Thus he appears 'true' in the sense that like other human beings he has fears, chaos and long for security.

Truman is represented to be a survivor of the fullest range of surveillance. His privacy is occupied through the use of hidden cameras and fake actors, all in the purpose of manipulating him for the audience's entertainment. Truman is the subject matter for the commodity purpose. Camera angles and shots are used to present the power of media in the movie. The film manages to entertain as well as inform audience 24 hours every day without any breaks. To make money the director of the show uses product placement. Throughout the film, different cinematographic techniques are used such as the fish eye lens and close up camera position and what it says that he is in a trap. As Jacques Alian Miller explains panopticon:

“The temple of reason, a temple of luminous and transparent in every sense: first because there are no shadows and nowhere to hide: it is open to constant surveillance by the invisible eye but also because totalitarian irrational: no opacity can withstand logic” (11). In the ecosphere there are no shadows and nowhere to hide. Similarly in the movie, Truman has no space to hide and he has not his private life. He is under constant all the day. Due to this his identity is in crisis. His everything is constructed by outer forces. Similarly in Baudrillard’s simulation of reality, viewers appearance perceive as reality. Burbank’s father is appearing after his death but he could not catch. Christof way of simulation reality in Truman show is that Burbank’s father by showing unreal things as if it is real. As the film progresses, he realizes that someone is watching and following him. So, he says this thing to his friend Marlon “and the radio starts following me, talking about everything I am doing” (35:07). From here, things get in reality.

All over at the end of the film, Burbank controls his trauma and tries to get out from his weakness aquaphobia and try to flee by boat. When he finds out the truth, he starts asking questions about his reality. Then he finally asked question to Christof; who am I? Christof replies you are the stars. Was nothing real? Truman again asks and Christof responds by saying that:

You were real. That’s what made you good to watch. There’s no more truth out other than in the world I created for you. Same lies, same deceit. But in my world you have nothing to fear. I know you better than you know yourself....you is afraid. That’s why you cannot leave. It’s okay Truman. I understand. I have been watching you your whole life. I was watching you when you were born. I was watching when you took your first step. I watched you on your first day at school. The episode when you lost your first tooth.

You cannot leave, Truman. You belong here with me. Talk to me. Say something, goddammit, you're on television! You're live to the whole world! (1:32:46).

The world given to him gives a message of hope, joy and happiness to many viewers. He tells to Burbank even to the last that everything is truth and real. Christof has created the world for him but that is the real world of him.

Burbank's world can give many different viewpoints about the relevance of Truman's reality. The creator of the show has been commercialized his life. He uses different visual metaphors to show the false reality of the film. Burbank lives in an artificial world (television studio) with in a world and he knows nothing about the outside world. He has not seen the true or real picture of the outside world. He is so scared of water that he cannot leave Seaheaven. This metaphorically and literally means that he has lived like a prison because of the sea. When he finally knows the false reality about his life that he is in constructed reality then he again the ask question to the creator. As we see in the final scene of the movie:

Christof: Truman, you can speak. I can hear you.

Truman: who are you?

Christof: I am the creator of a television show that gives hope and joy and inspiration to millions.

Truman: Then who am I?

Christof: You are the star.

Truman: Was nothing real?

Christof: you were real. That's what made you so good to watch. Listen to me,

Truman. There is no more truth out there than there is in the world I created

for you. Same lies. The same deceit. But, in my world, you have nothing to fear. I know you better than you know yourself (1:32:30).

When Christof says that there is no more truth in the real world than there is in Seaheaven, this means that Seaheaven is the concrete version of Foucault's disciplinary society. The creator of the show tries to tell Burbank by forcing that it is the reality of your life which I have been created for you since the years. The Truman Show is not hard for us to imagine how pressure can be for to escape the reality show after he knows out that all people around him are just paid and fake actors. Christof is even able to disobey the laws of nature by having the sun rise too early.

When Christof organizes the dramatic death of Burbank's father ending with Burbank being traumatically scarred for life just for the entertainment of the audience. This shows the immorality of Christof. Christof also represents immoral behavior when he acts as a God like character when Burbank attempts to escape which results in Christof controlling the weather to the extent of clearly risking Truman's own life. He is thrown overboard the small boat facing his biggest fear of seas. Christof chose not to discontinue his actions which almost caused Truman's death purely for the entertainment of the audience. This immorality is highlighted when Christof exclaims, "he was born on the set he can die on the set" (1:25:00). He has done anything to keep Burbank trapped and almost ready to let Truman die. His immoral behavior is also shown when Burbank attempts to leave the set by other means for example by car and boat however is prevented numerous times, which also shows the extent of manipulation Christof is prepared to go to keep the show going. Christof's neglect and disregard for Burbank is a major example of immorality that is shown throughout the television show. However, this is not the case with Meryl as she is involved in Burbank's personal life and he is familiar with his wife.

This study reveals that panopticon is a special surveillance method which is used by the authority to control people. Christof, the creator and director of Burbank's world is constantly watched. The media is powerful technique which is carefully used to create emotional experiences on its viewers. The media is everywhere. Due to the development in technology and globalization, the media has definitely become part of anyone lives. And how someone's identity is constructed by culturally or historically which is visually presented in the movie where Burbank's identity is totally constructed by the creator of the show. The media has a huge impact on anyone and it can control anyone. Films like *The Truman Show* are created by entertainment companies as a means to exploit the people's feelings.

The movie suggests in a number of way that the world of Seaheaven and the Omnicom where Burbank lives is dystopia rather than utopia, which is also complex world. Burbank has difficulties in finding what types of world he is live in. Weir use different cinematography technique and trying to show that everything he has shown is true of the real events. But he has tried to show that it is true by changing the method of telling the false and scripted reality. Burbank's world and the story that he is broadcasting are indeed artificially and determined. Due to this technique audiences are in difficult to differentiate between what is real and what is not real. Whenthe surveillance is in clear form people`s attitude towards perceiving the truth becomes different. They also cannot differentiate between the real and not real. Many of technologies watch Burbank's every move and they are never turned off. *The Truman Show* is watching everywhere and all the time without any breaks. This shows that the thoughts of the creator are based on material perspective. This situation causes the constant supervision and the surveillance of people, who should be

exemplary all the time. There are different ways of emotional blackmail based on fear, rather than love.

The creator plays a significant role to revealing the falseness of the surroundings. So, *The Truman Show* remains one of the most dominant films about television about the 20th century. The movie presents exact point of view and principles through the identification of Burbank by using different cinematic techniques. The media wants sets many assumptions not only to show how we live but also how we look. Burbank Shows this because his life is manipulated by the media through a universe of hallucination where nothing is real but he believes it is not only real but true. Media is a technology that changes the way peoples look at meaning.

Works Cited:

- Ashton, Will. *The Politics Behind The Truman Show* .The Playlist. November 8, 2106.
 Web.<https://theplaylist.net/video-essay-explores-politics-behind-truman-show-20161108/>
- Barr, Jason M, *Cue the Sun: an Analysis of Perceptual Effects Representations in "The Truman Show"* (2011). Research papers. Paper 49.
https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1111&context=gs_rp
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simularacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Glaser, University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bell, Judith. *Doing Your Research Project*. Buckingham: open University press, 1993.
- Bhaarathi,SusseI and I,Ajit. *Hyper reality and Technology in the film The Truman Show*. Global Media Journal. May 5, 2018. Pdf.
<http://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/hyperreality-as-a-theme-and-technique-in-the-film-truman-show.pdf>
- Brown, Blain. *Cinematography theory and practice or cinematographers and director*. Routledge, 2015.
- Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A short story of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. Oxford University press, 2003.
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Kenn Kabb. Bureau of Public Secrets: 2014.
- Fitch, Alex. *Dark City and The Truman Show Surveillance and the Destabilization of Identity*.Film criticism, vol. 43, no. 2, Sep. 2019, pp. 1-18.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Shridan. Newyork: Pantheon 1977.

Gall, Robert S. ‘ ‘of God Humanity and the World: Reflection on *The Truman Show*.’ ’

Journal of Religion and Film, vol. 23, no. 1, April. 2019, pp. 1-24.

Hoffman, Marcelo. *Disciplinary power Michel Foucault: key concepts*. By Dianna

Taylor, 2011.

Jackson, Tony E. *Televisual Realism: The Truman Show*. In Mosaic: A Journal for the

Interdisciplinary study of Literature, vol. 43, no. 3, Feb. 2010, pp. 135-149.

Jagodzinski, Jan. *The Truman show: A Symptom of Our Time or a cure for an Escape to*

Attempt. Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, vol. 10, no. 1, April.

2005, pp. 61-78.

Miller, Jacques- Alian and Richard Miller. *Jeremy Bentham’s Panoptic Device*. 1987,

pp. 3-29.

Rowl, Carlos John. *Postmodernist Studies: Reading with Boundaries*, 2nd Ed, The Modern

Language Association of America, 1996, pp. 179-204.

Shiang, Tian. *The Truman Show under the perspective of Michel Foucault*. Journal of

Artistic Creation and Literary Research, vol. 6, no. 2, Dec. 2018, pp. 48-64.

The Truman Show. Directed by Peter Weir. Performances by Jim Carrey, Laura Linney,

Noah

Emmerich and Natascha McElhone. Paramount Pictures. 1998.

Volkan, Hasim. *The Truman show: exposure of the illuminati*. Eastern Mediterranean

University, Degree Thesis, North Cyprus, Feb. 2013, pp. 4-40. Pdf.