"And the Leaves of the Tree Were for the Healing of the Nations": Literature and Civil Disobedience in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

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Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is a blatant criticism of suppressed creative thought. The novel follows Guy Montag, a firefighter who, rather than putting out fires as we expect, is partially responsible for setting fire to the houses of people who harbor and read books. Montag meets a young girl, Clarisse McClellan, who encourages him to question his perceived happiness and role in his society while searching for ways to add meaning to her own life. Montag continues his self-questioning and, while at the house of books set to be burned, accidentally reads a line from one of the books. After watching the owner of the house martyr herself, Montag begins hoarding books and attempting to memorize them but is frustrated that he cannot hold onto the words. Captain Beatty, the fire chief, warns Montag of the insidious nature of book reading; to Beatty, possessing a book is dangerous but reading a book is akin to asking the authority for death. Consumed by his fascination with books and his growing frustration at the materialistic and subservient culture in which he lives, Montag reads a poem to his wife's friends in the hopes of forcing them to see the power of the written word. Instead, they leave the house horrified and Mildred, Montag's wife, turns him in to the authorities for his book reading. After fleeing into the countryside, Montag discovers a group of intellectuals led by a man named Granger, who preserve books by memorizing them. In the final pages of the novel, Montag's society is abruptly consumed by war while Granger and company, Montag included, watch and remember as much literature as they can in an attempt to preserve it. In working to preserve the

past and create a better future, they resist civil authority and form autonomous selves, seeking an end to the war of the nations.

In his widely-read and hugely influential essay, *Civil Disobedience,* Henry David Thoreau says that it is the obligation of citizens to be "a counter friction" and to do everything possible "to stop the machine" (Thoreau 8). Mahatma Gandhi coined the term "satyagraha" to describe his philosophy of non-violent civil resistance, a concept, which can be seen as early as in Aristophanes' play, *Lysistrata,* where women upset the social order by withholding sex, ultimately gaining power through a nonviolent act. Thus, while Thoreau articulates what most Americans have come to understand as nonviolent protest, this tradition can be located in the literary tradition of antiquity. John Rawls attempts to define civil disobedience in a modern context in his *A Theory of Justice,* published in 1971, and comes up with the following concise definition: "a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government (Rawls 364). Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is a work of speculative fiction in which the book's protagonist, Guy Montag, disobeys the civic order by reading. As such, he refuses to uphold the rule of law, stops starting fires and burning books, and begins to memorize works of literature. Doing so, he commits crimes against the State, all the while working to preserve human culture. At stake lies the sort of horrors that follow the denial of free speech and the loss of cultural memory, both of which are essential human rights that,

according to Bradbury, are foundational for creating a humane society. A form of civil disobedience that both individuals and a group of rogues practice, reading appears as a subversive act capable of undermining the social order. Thus, for those who fight the totalitarian government seek the healing of the nations and an end to oppression and mass ignorance. Rather than bear arms, they bear books. As a work much like Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," which calls for blatant challenging of the status quo, *Fahrenheit 451* challenges the institutions that encompass our lives and demonstrates literature's ability to cultivate human autonomy.

Criticism of Bradbury's works, specifically *Fahrenheit 451* can easily be divided into two categories: criticism of the work as literature and criticism of the work as science fiction. Though the distinction may seem to be merely semantics, it becomes important when considering the development of the critical conversation surrounding *Fahrenheit 451*.

In his article tracing the development of science fiction (often abbreviated SF) criticism, Istvan Csicsery-Romay explains that "popular SF criticism emerged from the vibrant discussions conducted in the pulps, the popular SF magazines that were the main vehicles for SF publication in the USA from the 1920's to the 1950s" (Csicsery-Romay 45). It was in these pulps that Bradbury got his start in publishing; his first published work was "Hollerbochen's Dilemma" in a 1938 issue of *Imagination!* magazine. From then until 1947, Bradbury published exclusively in pulp fiction

magazines. "The Fire Man," the short story which served as a precursor to *Fahrenheit 451* was published in *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine in February of 1951 (Weller 166).

The most distinctive difference between the two critical methods is how each handles the futuristic, fantastical elements of the story. Joanna Russ, a feminist critic, explained the separation of science fiction and literary criticism with the following questions:

> Is science fiction literature?
>
> Yes.
>
> Can it be judged by the usual literary criteria?
>
> No. (Russ 3)

That is not to say that science fiction cannot be analyzed with the same critical techniques as traditional literature. In fact, the cultural material aspect of Marxism is a favorite angle for science fiction critics. Science fiction critics have used "varieties of structuralism, neo-Marxism, psychoanalysis, critical anarchism, proto-Green eco-criticism, feminism, structural functionalism, along with other schools" to explain the social and cognitive structures in science fiction narratives (Csicsery-Romay 51). Where literary criticism is forced to question the plausibility of a given set of ideas, science fiction accepts the potential for absurd innovation, a concept explained by Csicsery-Romay as follows:

> In the popular view, science fiction should be judged by different standards than traditional literature, since its values are different. Popular science fiction critics have a tendency also to be more practical than their literary counterparts. [Critics view] science fiction as an ideal kind of mass entertainment. (Csicsery-Romay 45-6)

While the academic criticism of *Fahrenheit 451* is concerned primarily with the formations of a dystopian world, criticism within the science fiction field is broader and focuses on the final effect on a reader by a work. As indicated by Csicsery-Romay and Russ, science fiction criticism recognizes that its source text is written as mass entertainment for a specific audience.

The publication of Bradbury criticism increased rapidly in the 1980s, as academia sought to justify the work's literary qualities and dispute the pulp magazine conversations of the previous fifty years. Carl Freedman describes the sometimes difficult melding of the literary world with the world of science fiction in his book *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. He claims that the persistence of "modern works in which the tendency of science fiction is strong or even, arguably, dominant" but which are not sold as science fiction like Beckett's *Endgame* and Kafka's *The Trial*, belittles the canon-worthy works of science fiction (Freedman 87).

David Mogen and William Touponce, both of whom began publishing on Bradbury in the 1980s, are arguably the first and most well known critics to analyze

Fahrenheit 451 as a work of literature while embracing its science fiction elements. By framing his analysis around the combined ideas of realization and reverie, Touponce manages to explicate and criticize *Fahrenheit 451* so that the analysis appeals to critics from traditional literature and science fiction/popular culture studies backgrounds. In examining the fantastical elements of the novel, Touponce argues that "*Fahrenheit 451* moves from a fantastic world to a real one" as the reader becomes accustomed to the unfamiliar, futuristic setting (21). Later in his book, Touponce touches on the concept that Bradbury would address nearly thirty years later: the oppressiveness of new media and society's willingness to conform. Touponce described this phenomenon in *Fahrenheit 451* as:

> The lesson to be drawn from *Fahrenheit 451* is not only that a society could be devised that would frustrate active virtues, nor even that these could eventually be suppressed, but that there is in all kinds of people something that longs for this to happen. (83)

David Mogen's analysis of the novel compliments Touponce's, though Mogen focuses primarily on the politics involved. He holds that *Fahrenheit 451* fuses traditional themes of anti-utopian fiction to focus satirically on the oppressive effect of a reductionist philosophy of realism. Along with Touponce and Mogen, Sam Weller's analysis of Ray Bradbury's life and writing is one of the most important and most often cited sources in recent Bradbury criticism. Weller set out to write an authorized biography of Bradbury

and ended up including both an overview of the criticism of Bradbury's works and his own interpretation of many of Bradbury's stories and novels. This trifecta of Touponce, Mogen, and Weller forms the basis for all examinations of Bradbury's work, from both literary and cultural theory perspectives.

Pauline Kael's essay "The Book's Censorship Metaphor Does Not Work—But the Movie Is Worse" is a strong example of the most common negative criticism of *Fahrenheit 451*. Kael holds that Bradbury's book burning metaphor "taps a kind of liberal hysteria," relying on the reader's fear of modern censors like McCarthy (78). For Kael, the associative nature of the metaphor weakens the novel, suggesting that Bradbury does not have the ability to craft a powerful metaphor but must instead rely on the reader's associations.

Critics who chose to focus on the failings of Bradbury, like Kael, primarily highlight the weakness of Bradbury's central image. Donald Watt also struggles with Bradbury's book burning. In the conclusion of his essay, "Burning Bright: *Fahrenheit 451* as Symbolic Dystopia," he considers the weaknesses of Bradbury's text and criticizes Bradbury for glossing over the question tackled by other dystopian novelists like Orwell: "If man's individuality and knowledge bring him repeatedly to catastrophe, should not the one be circumscribed and the other forbidden?" (Watt 212-3). Both Kael and Watt agree that Bradbury closes his novel with a sense of "vague optimism" rather than a definitive argument for change (Watt 213).

Conversely, Bulat Galeyev questions Bradbury's lack of grounding in *Fahrenheit 451*. A Russian writer and critic, Galeyev objects to the novel's willful ignorance of the world's diverse political structures. Galeyev sees Bradbury's examination of censorship and suppression of thought as a rallying point, but questions Bradbury's American focus. In his letter, Galeyev asks Bradbury "How is it that you, being so much 'our' writer, never let representatives of other planets know that 'our' country is also on Earth?" in an attempt to understand how his own country fits in Bradbury's narrative (25). Galeyev questions the "unexpected disappearance of world polarization" and holds Bradbury at fault for suggesting that "America is the symbol of our native home, of the whole Earth" (25-6). According to Galeyev, though *Fahrenheit 451* presents itself as a warning to all future generations, the limited, America-centric narrative ultimately excludes foreign readers.

Galeyev is not alone in his view of *Fahrenheit 451* as a text intended as social critique. In two separate articles, Rafeeq O. McGiveron examines the social criticism in *Fahrenheit 451* as represented by a particular image: mirrors in one essay and landscape in another. In "'To Build a Mirror Factory': the Mirror and Self-Examination in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*," McGiveron uses a combined Marxist and cultural materialist approach to the text, examining the repeated use of a single material object, the mirror, and how Bradbury manipulates that object to influence his audience. At the close of the article, McGiveron says "with Montag's failures and successes, Bradbury

shows that all of us, as individuals and as a society, must struggle to take a long, hard look in the mirror" ("To Build a Mirror Factory" 287), making clear the connection between the text and the reader. Not only does Bradbury use metaphorical images, he also intends those metaphors to translate from his novel to the reader's own environment. McGiveron attempts to explain "the necessity of using a metaphorical mirror, for only through the self-examination it makes possible can people recognize their own shortcomings ("To Build a Mirror Factory" 282), implying that *Fahrenheit 451* itself serves as a metaphorical mirror, providing readers with a vehicle and inspiration for self-examination.

McGiveron's criticism fits well with Louise Rosenblatt's concept of the transactional relationship between a reader and a text. Rosenblatt describes this theory by comparing the relationship between a book and a reader to a conversation between two parties: "Both the speaker and addressee contribute throughout to the spoken text (even if the listener remains silent) and to the interpretation that it calls forth as it progresses" (Rosenblatt, "Making Meaning" 5). Each reader brings a unique set of experiences and emotions to a text and thus each reader develops a marginally different relationship with the text. Rosenblatt's theory is concerned not only with how the reader's experiences inform his or her interpretation of the text but also with how the text can affect the reader. *Fahrenheit 451* criticism considers the interactions between individual readers and the book itself as well as the interactions between characters and

texts within the novel. Critics like Kael and Watt, who criticize Bradbury for his associative metaphor, directly conflict with Rosenblatt and her transactional theory. Fortunately for Bradbury, Rosenblatt has proven herself lasting, while both Kael and Watt are resigned to the back chapters of essay collections.

McGiveron's earlier essay, "'Do You Know the Legend of Hercules and Antaeus?': the Wilderness in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*," includes a short examination of Faber's relationship to books and the nature imagery associated with those books. McGiveron argues that by "associating books with the natural world, Faber reflects Bradbury's narrative, wherein they are described with more poetic imagery" ("Do You Know the Legend of Hercules and Antaeus?" 105). Bradbury romanticizes books by associating them with the pristine natural world, and many of his critics have taken notice of this device.

The contrast between the natural world and the technological world provides one of the most basic and most often analyzed conflicts in *Fahrenheit 451*. Guido Laino considers Bradbury's varying representations of environmental chaos, from the war-consumed city or the unpredictable countryside (31). Donald Watt compares the images of technology associated with Montag's wife Mildred and the images of nature associated with the free-thinking Clarisse (199). Gary K. Wolfe sees the undeveloped frontier in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles* as a safe-haven for the

free thinkers like Montag and Stendahl, a Montag-like character in *The Martian Chronicles* (52).

Bradbury himself has spoken out in response to the criticism of his novel, especially in the last fifteen years. In a recent interview following his Pulitzer honor, Bradbury said of his novel, "*Fahrenheit 451* is not a story about government censorship. Nor was it a response to Senator Joseph McCarthy" (Boyle 1). Though only a small subset of *Fahrenheit 451* criticism attempts to establish the relationship between the novel's book burning and Senator McCarthy's blacklisting, including Pauline Kael's "The Book's Censorship Metaphor Does Not Work—But the Movie Is Worse" and Juan Guijarro González's "Back to the Future or Out of the Past? The Sociopolitical Subtext of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*," the grounded comparison frustrates Bradbury almost as much as do descriptions of *Fahrenheit 451* as a book about censorship. Even Sam Weller, Bradbury's authorized biographer, calls *Fahrenheit 451* "a response to the McCarthy hearings" (17) and "an anticensorship novel" (219). While Weller's analysis locates the book in a specific historical context, one that Bradbury denies having in mind, the Red Scare did use the same methods of controlling the popular imagination as *Fahrenheit 451's* firefighters, whose greatest threat is literacy, the novel's primary subject and also its solution: civil disobedience.

Bradbury divides his novel into three sections that mark the development of the main character's sense of identity and capacity for individual thought. The opening

lines of the novel describe Guy Montag as a fireman who loves burning books and finds it pleasurable "to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*" (3). The three sections of Bradbury's narrative track the progression of Montag's civil disobedience, from questioning his lack of knowledge to taking action against his oppression to the final consequences of his actions. Montag, an everyman in his stable and comfortable position as a fireman and believer of government doctrine, is an ideal character to use when examining the potential for individual thought in Bradbury's society because of his initial conformity.

The first section of the story, "The Hearth and the Salamander," describes Montag's introduction to the concept of free thought and the first steps in his movement from Authority to Dissident. The section title refers to two images of fire with which Montag would be familiar. The hearth is the centerpiece of the home, an image suggesting familial intimacy and complacent comfort. The salamander is a mythical beast known as a bringer of fire, and is an image that Montag wears as a patch on the shoulder of his uniform, a symbol of his job as a fireman. As a fireman, Montag holds a position of some power and prestige, respected and feared by anyone who sees him in uniform. Clarisse, Montag's seventeen year old neighbor, is not immediately frightened of Montag in uniform, observing "So many people are. Afraid of firemen, I mean. But you're just a man, after all" (7). With her simple observation, Montag realizes that he has never considered how other people might see him nor questioned any aspect of his

job. Her later question, "Are you happy?," (10) rattles Montag more than he expects; he begins wondering if the world he sees is more imperfect than he had previously assumed.

Montag is not the only character upset by the world in which he lives. His wife, Mildred, is a foil for Montag in that she loves the modern technology her society provides her and revels in the comfort of never having to worry because the government will always be there to keep her safe. But even Mildred, the perfect product of the Authority, attempts to commit suicide because she can tell that something about her life is not right. The suicide attempt by Mildred again emphasizes to Montag the imperfections of his world hiding under the veneer of happiness and order. Mildred's suicide attempt is perfectly normal to the emergency responders, who "get these cases nine or ten a night" (15). As Montag watches the men in horror, they explain their lackadaisical attitude: "You don't need an M.D., cases like this; [sic] all you need is two handymen, clean up the problem in half an hour" (15). Montag is shocked to realize that Clarisse's questioning of his happiness was more than a fanciful inquiry; she had realized where he had not yet that their society is rotting from the inside out. While he is unsettled and upset by Clarisse's questioning, his entire world is unhappy to the point of suicide but refuses to recognize the problem. Mildred's repeated denial of any suicide attempt after she wakes up only reinforces Montag's growing horror. As a final persuasive point, Montag watches a woman guilty of book owning and reading martyr

herself for her books. In the confusion of the burning, Montag catches sight of an open book and accidentally reads "Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine" (37). Upset thrice by Clarisse's questions, Mildred's suicide attempt, and his own reading, Montag makes a conscious decision to resist the government-prescribed life. Revealing to Mildred that he has been hoarding books in the duct work of the house, Montag takes a step from merely knowing about the books to actively including someone else, someone he hopes will become his ally, in his deception of the government.

The second section of the novel, "The Sieve and the Sand," traces Montag's attempt to subvert oppression from within the system. The section title refers literally to a trick played on Montag when he was younger that left him desperately trying to fill a sieve with sand. Within the section, the sieve refers to the human mind and its inability to grasp every concept presented to it while the sand represents all truth, knowledge, and happiness that a human could possibly try to grasp. Now that Montag is aware of how much he does not know or understand, he understandably begins to wonder if there is any point in thinking on his own at all, if playing into the life set out for him by government and society would not be easier. Mildred seems to think so, clinging to her "family" of soap opera characters on television as she tells Montag "if Captain Beatty knew about those books [...] he might come and burn the house and the 'family.' That's awful!" (73). Because of Mildred's reaction, Montag finally makes conscious recognition of the need to think outside of the seemingly perfect world designed by the

government. Mildred's refusal to consider anything upsetting or outside the status quo, from the possibility of her own suicide to Montag's interest in reading, angers and frustrates Montag. In an attempt to understand why, he actively contacts a man known to collect books, a retired English professor named Faber. Rather than turn Faber in for his illegal activities, Montag goes to him for help. His own questioning of the world has developed since Clarisse asked if he was happy, to the point that Montag now wants to understand how knowledge and books and individual thought can be perceived as dangerous.

From understanding why the government would want to crush all individual thought and unique action, Montag begins to consider a more public and active demonstration of his disproval. Encouraged by a joking comment from Faber, Montag suggests that they "plant books, turn in an alarm, and see the fireman's houses burn" (85). Faber hesitates at violent, public action, instead advocating patience, but Montag cannot be swayed from his own plan of action. Once he has decided that the government needs fixing, Montag is sure that a burning purge of those committing the censorship, the firemen themselves, is the best way to liberate the people from their prison of uniform thought. But of course rebellion, no matter how small and passive, never goes unnoticed for long, and Montag's Captain Beatty finally demonstrates that he knows of Montag's anti-establishment thoughts.

In the third and final section of the novel, "Burning Bright," Montag becomes an anti-Governmental figure recognized for his nonconformist actions. Initially, Beatty is the only character to observe and recognize Montag's behavior as anti-establishment, suggesting as much when he says "Old Montag wanted to fly near the sun and now that he's burnt his damn wings, he wonders why. Didn't I hint enough when I sent the Hound around your place?" (113). This statement is similar in both structure and meaning to Beatty's description of Clarisse in the first section: "You ask why to a lot of things and you wind up very unhappy indeed, if you keep at it. The poor girl's better off dead" (60). With a reference to the Greek myth of Icarus who flew too close to the sun, Beatty warns Montag that he, like Clarisse, has asked too many questions. Montag is left with a choice: destroy his home, submit to arrest, and return to his niche in the government-created society or somehow defy Beatty and brand himself an outcast forever.

Montag's hesitation to ruin all that he once knew is at war with his desire to fix a system he knows is broken, a dichotomy exemplified by the fractured conversation he has with Beatty and Faber. Standing in front of his own house, Montag talks face-to-face with Beatty about his duty as a fireman while also conferring with Faber by way of an ear radio, without letting Beatty know of Faber's existence. Montag must keep the two men separate, paying each equal attention and consideration, and decide who he will choose to follow without allowing Beatty to become aware of Faber's presence. When

Beatty's discovery of the earpiece forces his hand, Montag submits to his need to fix the world and turns his flamethrower on Beatty. By far the most public and violent act of rebellion from Montag so far, Beatty's murder gives Montag the fear and adrenaline he needs to escape entirely from his constraining society.

Subtly subverting the system from within by collecting books, reading, and thinking for himself did not provide Montag the power he hoped for or needed in order to convince the rest of his society that the government is dangerously oppressive. When subverting from within fails, Montag removes himself in a burst of flame from that world and flees to the undeveloped wilderness. Outside of the city limits, Montag meets a wandering band of homeless academics led by a man named Granger who introduce Montag to a new form of rebellion. Rather than subverting either passively or actively from within the system as Montag had attempted, the academics defy the government that crushes individual thought by preserving the remnants of a creative and individualistic culture—the books—as best they can. "All we want to do is keep the knowledge we think we will need intact and safe" (152) Granger explains. Because the academics remain passive, "the cities don't bother us" (154) and the academics are free to continue with the memorization and preservation. Montag's violence was perhaps effective in removing him from the society but did nothing to change the oppressor while the text preservation by the academics, though imperfect because "a lot will be lost" (153) will ultimately provide for the rebuilding of a new and better society.

Montag's escape from the city could not have come soon enough; the following morning, atomic war breaks out.

Most civil disobedience theorists agree that only public acts qualify as being acts of civil disobedience and Montag's reading is not public. His reading, which is initially just disobedience, becomes civil disobedience when he attempts to include others, i.e. the poetry reading to Mildred and her friends. That singular public act, which leads to attention from the authorities, is public enough to justify Montag's later reading (as well as his meeting with Faber and preserving books) as "civil disobedience" rather than simply "law breaking."

At the close of the book, we see from a distance the death of all the rigid society Montag once knew including the presumed death of Mildred, and the emergence of a new, nonconformist society within the ranks of the homeless academics. Granger comments on the potential for a new society when he compares Man to the Phoenix, the mythical bird who builds a pyre, bursts into flame, and is reborn every hundred years. Granger has hope not just for this incarnation of society, but for all future humans when he says:

> We know the damn silly thing we just did. We know all the damn silly things we've done for a thousand years and as long as we know that and always have it around where we can see it, someday we'll stop making

> goddamn funeral pyres and jumping in the middle of them. We pick up a few more people that remember every generation. (163)

Though the society we see in *Fahrenheit 451* is oppressive and dystopian, Bradbury ends with the hope that, so long as people fight for the right to individual thought and will, eventually the human race will be able to live without devolving into a totalitarian state. Montag quotes *Ecclesiastes,* the one text he has memorized, in the final lines of the novel, leaving us with a powerful image of hope: "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (172). Despite the destruction that will inevitably come before healing, the leaves, in this case the pages of books, will repair whatever destruction the human race has created.

Bradbury's novel is neither the first nor the only work to suggest that we as readers have a responsibility for processing and then promoting the ideals exemplified in the text. In fact, nearly any discussion of *Fahrenheit 451* also includes mention of George Orwell's 1949 classic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's slightly earlier *Brave New World*. Publishing within twenty-five years of each other, Bradbury, Huxley, and Orwell all predict a slightly different society, not far in our future, in which the governing authority attempts to control all thought. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* presents a society in which books, and all other methods of thought, are banned except when used for governmental propaganda. Orwell predicts a society in which reading is equated with indoctrination. *Brave New World* considers what might happen if people simply do

not care about books anymore. While reading certain books is forbidden in Huxley's universe, the vast majority of the public does not care because they are so consumed by the search for their own pleasure. In his 1985 examination of communication and new media, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, sociologist Neil Postman considers the difference between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*:

> What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. (157)

The society in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* exists between Orwell and Huxley's worlds. Bradbury fears both the book banners (in his case, book burners) as well as the complacency of a society content to let an authority do all the thinking.

Bradbury is also not the only author who considered literature the preserving force of society. Nearly one hundred years before *Fahrenheit 451* was published, Jules Verne wrote *Paris in the Twentieth Century*. Verne's editor did not approve of the novel's dystopic, pessimistic outlook on life and modern society, and shelved the text in 1863 for an indeterminately later publication date. The manuscript was lost until the 1990s,

when it was recovered and published first in French in 1994 then translated to English in 1997. The narrative follows Michel Dufrénoy, a young man living in Paris in the 1960s, as he watches his society collapse from its obsession with technology and unconcern for the basic standard of living. Dufrénoy tries to bring back the classic literature and art of centuries past in an attempt to remind his fellow Parisians of the humanity and beauty in art. To Dufrénoy, the reacceptance of classic literature and the subsequent embracing of art instead of technology will allow his society to pull away from its current poverty-stricken, totalitarian state. Like Faber and the academics in Bradbury's novel, Dufrénoy believes that literacy will bring his people to the utopian world he imagines. It is not the books themselves that are singularly important as much as the reading and the interaction with books by the people that will serve as the saving force. Here we have an illustration of Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literature. Just as Rosenblatt believes in the undeniable connection between reader and text, and the relationship that forms and ultimately changes both the reader and the text, so to do these characters who would use literature as way of bringing society away from totalitarianism and toward a more utopian future.

Bradbury again addresses his ideas of memorized texts in his story "The Exiles" originally printed in *R is for Rocket*. In "The Exiles," Bradbury examines what might happen to the forbidden texts some hundred years on, long after all print volumes have been wiped out of existence. Bradbury wonders where the stories will go once the

minds holding them are destroyed, and comes to the bleak conclusion that the stories, their characters, and even their authors will cease to exist, disappearing entirely from our cultural history. In the story, Poe explains to Dickens and Bierce how the three of them came to be on a barren rock floating through space. As the three men watch Earth, a globe floating trillions of miles above their heads, Poe says, "On Earth, in the last half of the twentieth century they began to outlaw our books. Oh, what a horrible thing—to destroy our literary creations that way! It summoned us out of—what? Death? The Beyond?" (248). The three authors are soon joined by others, writers whose works have been banned and burned as well as the forbidden characters themselves. As the characters watch in horror, men from Earth come to burn the last copies of forbidden books, everything from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Each book that Bradbury mentions in "The Exiles" is either referenced or quoted in *Fahrenheit 451*. The Earthmen are completely unaware of the spectral authors and characters watching the burning. The captain of the Earthmen begins the burning by "ripp[ing] pages from the books. Leaf by seared leaf, he fed them into the fire" (253). The characters and authors disappear into puffs of smoke as the last books, the last remnants of their existence, disappear. Here, as in *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury continues to write about dissidents who protest, sometimes passively and sometimes violently, the quashing of intellectual freedom. In examining *Fahrenheit 451*, we must question how Bradbury portrays individual thought as a method of civil disobedience. Whom does

Bradbury condemn for allowing thought crushing to continue? The militaristic, inhuman government is at fault; but the complacent, uncaring people who could take action but do not are equally guilty. *Fahrenheit 451* ends on a cautiously hopeful note, with the suggestion that preservation by memorization will allow culture to endure. Thus, the novel testifies to the power of the word. As Bradbury's characters read, and, by implication, as we continue to read and to teach future generations about the power of the word, we are often led to resist the strictures of civil authority. As we fight for justice, decry tyrannical institutions and, perhaps most importantly, form an autonomous self, we live according to the word. As we turn whose leaves of paper and commune with other like-minded souls, we find both the kind of dissonance and harmony that accompanies all utopian dreams and seek the healing of the nations.

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