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FAHRENHEIT 451:

BRADBUR'S VISION VERSUS NOWADAYS REALITY

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů,
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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the novel Fahrenheit 451, written by Ray Bradbury and deals with his vision of the future. Considering thematic analysis of the book and comparing it with nowadays reality, the bachelor thesis shows the similarities between the vision and current situation in society and determines the nature of social and cultural changes in recent years.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact Ray Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451" was released more than sixty years ago it shows unbelievably accurate image of the future and it concerns many burning questions of current events. This thesis works with this assumption of upsetting similarities with Bradbury's vision and the present and it focuses on certain appropriateness of radical transformation of our society within on-coming technical age.

The aim of this work is to analyse the vision of the future, presented in the novel, and to subsequently compare it with the present. The first impression of this American masterpiece suggests the major concern focuses on the future of books and their importance and status in society. However further study reveals other important messages contained in this proclaimed literary piece, all of which should be taken as equally significant in the context with our history and current society.

In order to elaborate the idea, books can be taken just as a tool through which Bradbury presents the state and mentality of the American society of the 1950s. Despite the fact the story takes place in the future (at least from the author's point of view) it is self-evident that inspiration and expressed apprehensions are based in those days reality.

Course of progress which took place since 1950' served as initial impulse for writing this thesis. It works with the assumption that concerned based on factual background which led Bradbury to create Fahrenheit 451 gradually transformed into nowadays' reality. The thesis is an expression of fear of social and cultural development which to a large extent fulfils the predictions of society against which Bradbury was trying to warn us.

The first half of the thesis is aimed mainly on the factual information briefly introducing the author's life, his literary career and it provides readers some influences which shaped Bradbury's literary work. Chapters concerning the author himself are subsequently followed by introduction of Bradbury's most proclaimed novel, summarizing its evolution based on cultural and political background and presenting the storyline. No less important part then pursues the main themes of Fahrenheit 451 giving basis for further comparison of Bradbury's vision versus nowadays reality.

The second part of the thesis, along with searching for parallel with the present, investigates the impact of modern technologies on nowadays' society as well as on lives of individuals, introducing their advantages and disadvantages.

1. Ray Bradbury

One of the main goals of this thesis is a close study of Bradbury's most proclaimed novel Fahrenheit 451. There are of course numerous aspects influencing the final form of the work but the undoubted factor is the author himself. The following two chapters are devoted to pursue the life and work of Ray Bradbury.

The first chapter is therefore devoted to Bradbury's biography itself. As a literary author, Bradbury needs to be considered quite versatile. His work contains novels, short stories, essays, poems or even dramas and screenplays. The biography provides a brief survey of the author's life from his birth to his death but its main course is to find important events and factors which shaped firstly Bradbury's literary expression and his classification among literary genre.

1.1. Biography

Ray Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan Illinois. His family had been living in America nearly 300 years by the time of his birth. Ray's family was one of the rich sources of his inspiration. One of pseudonyms Bradbury liked to use was a name "Douglas Spaulding" which is a combination of his and his father's middle name. Pseudonym was also used as a name of one of his characters. Unfortunately, more significant aspect of Bradbury's childhood was something else. From an early age, he was quite surrounded with misfortune incidental to the family, beginning with loss of earnings caused by his grandfather's desperate chase after gold and silver mining. But the worst tragedies were only about to come. Ray's older brother Samuel died during the Asian flu epidemic two years before Bradbury was even born. Nine years later, the family had to deal with another tragic stroke of fate when their other child, Elizabeth, passed away. According to Aggelis and Kristi Hiner these events were most likely a source of author's attraction to the theme of death. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 5)

Luckily all the inspiration of Bradbury did not come only from despair and bleakness. Around the age of seven he and his older brother Leonard became fascinated by traveling circuses and magicians visiting their hometown. Young Ray was drawn by this aura of magic and fantasies so strongly he decided to be a magician. New found course of his life was greatly supported by the rest of the family. In order to indulge Bradbury's fantasy they celebrated Halloween with such an enthusiasm leading to a transformation of their home into a haunted house. Decorations were so well-done and persuasive that some of the details and memories were later used in Bradbury's books. It is perfectly possible to say Ray's childhood experiences were profoundly

rooted inspirations of his work. Fascination by magicians and various protagonists of operas and movies as well as deep interest in literature, created his personal “heroes” and altogether influenced Bradbury’s later life quite dramatically. (Kristi Hiner, 2001, p. 2).

The author himself mentions in Aggelise’s *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* many of his favourite writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Edgar Rice Burroughs (Tarzan), Lyman Frank Baum (The Wonderful Wizard of Oz) or Jules Verne (Around the World in Eighty Days), whose legacy he has been trying to pursue. Such an early age interests reflected on beginnings of Bradbury’s career, bearing in mind he wrote his first stories in 1932, being only twelve years old.

Soon after the first “flirting” with writing, young Ray extends his activities as a producer and scriptwriter and starts working in the Los Angeles Science Fiction League, one of the oldest science fiction organization. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 24)

As a still operating organization, Los Angeles Science Fiction League has been working as a club, hosting weekly sessions providing regular access to membership library as well as contact with other members, possibilities which only strengthen Bradbury’s affection for genre. Friendships with some of those colleagues meant an important step for young Ray’s career as it helped him profoundly to master the craft and pave his own way in the field.

Final confirmation of Bradbury’s ambitions to pursue the world of literature comes in June 1939 when he visits the First World Science Fiction Convention in New York. Besides meeting the successful writers within the field, he managed to sell his friend’s illustrations and oil paintings created for *Weird Tales*, *Astounding Science Fiction* and other magazines. Ironically, it was not a work of Bradbury’s himself but the possibility to present samples of some of his own stories and consequential encouragement opened the notional door for the young author. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 10)

But another impact of the 1939 trip to New York was yet about to come with the event called the New York World’s Fair. As the opening slogan “Dawn of a New Day” proclaimed, the event was an exposition presenting possible visions of the future containing various aspects such an infrastructure, technology or even social and political life. The exhibition took place in 1939-1940 and it is safe to say it had enormous effect on Bradbury’s further subject of focus. Together with the ongoing Second World War, accelerating development provided him a great source of excitement but the fair amount of concerns at the same time. (Bill Young, 2004)

As mentioned at the beginning, the first subchapter is aimed mainly at aspects of Ray Bradbury's life which influenced his literary work rather than exhaustive biography. It is worth mentioning that the author was productive into venerable age of his eighties and received a number awards, for example the Nebula Grandmaster Award for lifetime achievements, the National Book Foundation's 2000 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters and special citation from Pulitzer board for his "distinguished, prolific and deeply influential career as an unmatched author of science fiction and fantasy."

Bradbury passed away in Los Angeles on June 5, 2012, at the age of 91 after protracted illness. (A&E Television Networks, 2004)

As previous paragraphs suggests, life experiences together with cultural and social conditions were crucial elements for Bradbury's literary work. The subchapter summarizes some of these significant events and experiences which laid down foundations for the author's lasting legacy. In respect to the theme of the thesis it is appropriate to realize how deeply rooted Bradbury's motives were as well as to acknowledge different spheres he was drawn on.

1.2. Literary Career

While the first chapter is devoted to the topic of inspiration and life experiences which had shaped author's literary expression, in the following chapter, I would like to focus on Bradbury's actual work. As lines above mention, his unusually early fascination predicted an equally early start of Ray's career and it also attracted his attention throughout the entire life.

According to Kristi Hiner (2001, p. 8), Bradbury's first attempts on writing appeared at the age of eleven, while Steven Aggelis (2003, p. 4) places these beginnings in the age of twelve but both authors agree on the period around 1931. Bradbury's initial phase included all of his passions evolved continually throughout the childhood, containing magic shows, science fiction literature, comic books and drama. At the same time it showed an admirable amount of creative and expressive maturity for such a young writer, although according to some, it was not before a short story called *The Lake*, written in 1942 and published in 1944, that really refined his distinctive style. This story happens to be yet another display of author's close affinity for fairs and carnivals but it also offers variety of imaginations and exuberant portrayals, so typical for Bradbury. (Aggelis, 2003)

Next step for upcoming author followed when his family moved to Los Angeles in 1934, where he joined the Los Angeles Science Fiction League referred in the first subchapter. This club helped greatly not only to solidify Bradbury's effort to pursue the literary field but also enabled him to publish four issues of his own magazine *Futura Fantasia*. Three years after graduation from LA high school in 1938 Bradbury manage to realize his first professional sale by publishing a short story entitled *Pendulum*, co-authored with an American science fiction writer Henry Haase. Story was published in 1941, coincidentally on Bradbury's twenty-first birthday. (Kristi Hiner, 2001, p. 3)

Around this time, Bradbury's future career becomes quite obvious and he gives up his part-time jobs and decides to be a full-time writer. During next few years, he contributes regularly to a number of periodicals and publishes an important story *The Lake*, mentioned above. The Following years proves to be very productive and successful for Ray Bradbury. His profuse work for various magazines was appreciated in 1945, when his story *The Big Black and White Game* was selected for *Best American Short Stories*. Putting together his best material so far, Bradbury also manages to publish his very first story collection entitled *Dark Carnival* which brings him even wider renown throughout the whole country. (Kristi Hiner, 2001, p.4)

It is worth mentioning that in the same year, 1947, Bradbury also got married to Marguerite McClure. This relationship had a great impact not just on author's personal life but most importantly on his career, more precisely on his ability to write. Marguerite, being a passionate fan of literature, supported her husband all the way by taking quite exacting jobs, in order to enable Bradbury to stay at home and write. According to American journalist Sam Weller, the significance of Bradbury's newly received financial independence was enormous and he titles Marguerite McClure as a "woman who changed literature forever." It may sound like overrating but considering Bradbury's legacy her contribution is undisputable. They were married for unbelievable fifty-six years. (Sam Weller, 2006)

Up to this point, as he himself said, Bradbury had drawn on childhood experiences and recalling his memories created a solid foundation for most of his stories. Among the others, pieces such as *Homecoming* and *Uncle Einar* could be mentioned, both of them inspired by Bradbury's hometown, his relatives and local Halloween parties. Visiting one of the many carnivals, where he saw a pickled embryo for the first time, also led him to write a story called *The Jar*. The three pieces mentioned above are dated between 1944 and 1947, the year when collection *Dark Carnival* was released. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p.11)

During this period Bradbury also published stories *The Meadow*, *Powerhouse*, *I See You Never* and *The Big Black and White Game*, all of which, together with foregoing *Homecoming*, were selected for prestigious awards. One other event in 1947 proved to have a great impact on Bradbury's career and his life for that matter. (Steven Aggelis, p.13)

He meets literary agent Don Congdon, who later that year signed him with The Harold Matson agency. This encounter turned out to be much more influential than it seemed at the beginning. Congdon and Marguerite McClure both took place as the two of the most important people in Bradbury's life. As the writer himself said later in 2000 during a speech to the National Book Foundation event: "I married Don Congdon the same month I married my wife, so I had fifty-three years of being spoiled by my wife and by Don Congdon. We've never had a fight or an argument during that time because he's always been out on the road ahead of me clearing away the dragons and the monsters and the fakes." As an evidence of appreciation and gratefulness, Bradbury also dedicated his masterpiece *Fahrenheit 451* to Mr. Don Congdon. (William Grimes, 2009)

Turn of the forties and fifties meant a certain change of focus for Bradbury. Close study of background as well as some further description of general social climate is intentionally limited in respect to the subject of the following chapters 2.3. and 3.1. Nevertheless, there is no doubts current situation in The United States, possibly in the whole world, became one of the major Bradbury's interests. (Kristi Hiner, 2001, p. 12)

Since the 1948 Bradbury started to contribute to even bigger and more proclaimed magazines but also, towards the fifties, made a transition to hardcovers and paperbacks collections (Aggelis, p 14). Eventually, since the release of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, he is embraced into even more sophisticated and, to a certain point, involved literary circles. The theme of possibility of destroying the planet Earth and certain unpreparedness of humankind nicely reflects Bradbury's concerns about the future. This work was also highly inspired by some of author's childhood heroes such John Carter of Mars, a fictional character created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, or Tarzan, a protagonist of series, written by comic book writer Harold Foster. Year after *The Martian Chronicles* is published, another Bradbury's prose collection comes to light – *The Illustrated Man*, which is, along with the previous one, often considered as one of his best work. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 14, Wikipedia, 2017)

Moving towards the next decade, a general fear of nuclear war and the future of the country spreading across The United States eventually escalated in Bradbury's most proclaimed novel

Fahrenheit 451, published in 1953, whose further analysis will be provided in following chapters, with regard to the topic of the thesis. Besides written pieces mentioned above, the rest of the fifties revolved to a certain point around collecting previous work which eventually gave birth to two collections entitled *The October Country* and *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, both of them published the same year as *Fahrenheit 451*, containing, together with some additions, number of short stories originally released within *Dark Carnival*. Towards the sixties, Bradbury also released two volumes called *A Medicine for Melancholy* (1959) and *Dandelion Wine* (1957), both of which again gathered stories written sometimes around 1945 to 1959. The second one was also intended as a semi-autobiographical novel and it received an effusive reactions from many critics. There is an interesting fact the crew of Apollo 15 spaceship even named a section of The Moon Dandelion Crater after the title of this novel. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 17)

If not sooner, by this time, it must have become obvious how productive Ray Bradbury as a literary author was, even more impressively, that he certainly did not rest on his laurels. His next “course of life” had been, as well as the vast majority of his work, predestined again by Bradbury’s childhood. Living as a kid in Los Angeles near the Uptown Theatre, young Ray discovered very soon the glamorous world of movies and movie stars. He used to sneak in theatres only to watch film previews or even followed some actors around the city just to get an autograph, probably not realizing yet he will be part of that same world thirty years later. (Wikipedia, 2016)

The gates of Hollywood opened for Bradbury in 1954 when he starts working with famous American film director and screenwriter John Marcellus Huston. He hired Ray Bradbury for rewriting Herman Melville’s classic *Moby Dick* and turn it into a screenplay which later on had ensured Bradbury a prominent status in Hollywood. Unfortunately the collaboration did not go quite peacefully and their disagreements were later dramatized by Bradbury himself in the short story called *Banshee* which was also adapted into an episode of *The Ray Bradbury Theatre*. Despite the initial quarrel, *Moby Dick* adaptation meant a great step forward for Bradbury, evidenced by his numerous cooperation with all the major TV networks such as BBC, CBS and others, whom he was working with on every possible project from television shows to stage. As originally a literary author, he gets into the center of attention and by 1958 he becomes one of the most financially successful American writers. In 1963 his collection of drama *The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics* also appeared. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 22)

Despite a roaring success, Bradbury did not abandon a traditional form of literature and kept publishing more collections. Considering his productivity, it would be impossible to giving an exhaustive list of Bradbury's work but some of the other pieces, published later on, contains a novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962), poetry collections such as the haunted *Computer and The Android Pope*, or short stories collections, *Long After Midnight*, *The Stories of Ray Bradbury*, and *The Toynbee Convector*, all of them published in 1976. (Sam Weller, 2006)

Life's work of Ray Bradbury has to be, by all standards, considered enormous. 27 novels and about 600 short stories sold out in over eight million copies translated into more than 36 languages speak for itself.

As Kirsti Hiner mentions in her book *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, he made a promise to his childhood hero Mr. Electrico to become a magician and to a certain point he kept this promise. Although using a pen instead of a magic wand, Bradbury managed to draw his readers into a magic world and his dateless fantasies strongly affect our minds and imaginations up to these days. (Kirsti Hiner, 2001, p. 5)

As suggested above, Bradbury's career is an impressive display of literary work. Despite a few strokes of luck which probably helped Ray Bradbury on his path, the contribution he made to the genre and literature is undeniable, evidenced by the sales numbers and his ongoing popularity.

2. Fahrenheit 451

2.1. Introduction

It is the October 1953 when Ray Bradbury, at that time already very successful author, releases his most famous and proclaimed novel Fahrenheit 451. The first released version is often considered as a collection containing other two short stories “And the Rock Cried Out” and “The Playground”, nevertheless it is hold as a valid first publication of the novel. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 16)

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the fifties, Bradbury’s already finds himself on the high spot of his career. Significant publications such as Dark Carnival, The Martian Chronicles and especially The Illustrated man has been introduced to the world, bringing quite prestige for the author. Important step along the way occurs in the second issue of Galaxy Science Fiction in 1951 which contains a short story The Fireman. Bradbury himself claims that the path towards the birth of Fahrenheit led throughout many more written pieces such as The Pedestrian and Bright Phoenix, which was ironically published much later than Fahrenheit itself, nevertheless, it was the link of ideas from both of them which provided foundation for The Fireman, which was eventually in 1953 extended and released as Fahrenheit 451. Quite interestingly the novel was not published on its own until the April 1960 but on the other hand appeared as a three-part series in 1954 issues of newly-emerging Playboy magazine. (Kirsti Hiner, 2001, p. 7)

Bradbury’s masterpiece had also an undisputed impact on a way of how Science Fiction literature was perceived. Until that point, the genre had often been called as “literature of distraction” or as a “branch of escape reading” which understandably suggested some kind of inferior form and it diminished its value. Treated as such, Science Fiction genre would be in a way “doomed” to be yet another entertaining, shallow branch without any deeper interest from general public. Ray Bradbury was well aware of this situation and while he was able to build on literary work that came before him, he also managed to change the course of the field. Prior Science Fiction literature was primarily focused on glowing fantasies, action stories and excitement, and as such, its target audience was assumed to be mostly at the adolescent age.

Fahrenheit 451 had changed successfully this erroneous assumption and came out on the top of so-called “Golden Age of Science Fiction”. (David Fox, 2011, p. 9)

Bradbury’s novel managed to popularized Science fiction genre, making it more involved in social criticism. Based on more realistic material technical age, the story became more believable and in a way more upsetting by bearing in mind some realistic dangers of human kind’s rapid progress. (David Fox, 2011, p.10)

The novel was also adapted into several plays, graphic novels or even computer games. French director and screenwriter Francois Truffaut transformed Fahrenheit 451 into eponymous film released in 1966. There is also a new film adaptation in development whose scheduled release should be in 2020. (Wikipedia, 2017)

As the lines above undoubtedly prove, the value of Bradbury’s visions continues up to these days without losing any impact. Timelessness of Fahrenheit is constantly proved by its unceasing popularity among readers all over the world as well as by attention of academic circles. Its message is far from being a part of the past and its relevancy should not be taken off lightly.

2.2. Storyline

This chapter is devoted to the plot of Fahrenheit 451 itself. As the novel deals with some important issues, it is, in my opinion, necessary to introduce at least briefly the story to possible uninitiated readers.

The book is divided into three parts entitled The Hearth and the Salamander, The Sieve and The Sand and Burning Bright. The story is set somewhere in twenty-fourth century and it introduces a reader to an unnamed US city. The twisted rules of the future world are revealed soon after beginning when we meet the main protagonist Guy Montag, a fireman working for local fire brigade. Original purpose of firemen is in this reality transformed in the exact opposite in a sense that instead of putting fires out they start them. Their “mission” is, even more repulsively, aimed on burning books. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

Up to this point, Montag is quite satisfied with his routine life and he willingly follows the majority on its blissful, insouciant path. One of the first impulses implying the breaking point occurs when Guy encounters a young girl named Clarisse McClellan who lives across the street and follows Montag on his way to work. Despite initial incredulity towards her view of the

world, Guy starts to perceive the reality in a different way and begins to question the rightness of his actions. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

Montag's doubts are even more strengthened by a series of upsetting events taking place during the next few days. Only few days later after his wife's suicide attempts, Guy's fire- brigade is called over in an old lady's house to burn another hidden stash of literature. The lady chooses to be burnt alive along with her books which leaves Montag shocked and his confusion slowly grows into curiousness in which he decides to find some answers or explanation in books he managed to steal in that very same house. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

Montag's state of mind is on gradual decline when he finds out that Clarisse was killed by a car and he eventually ends up failing to show up for work. As a result, he is visited by a fire chief Beatty who delivers him a vigorous speech about importance of the fireman function and explains him the harmful impact of books. Conversation gradually reveals that Beatty is well aware of Montag's theft and he gives Montag twenty-four hours for finding any benefit from stolen books after which he has to bring them for incineration. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

Being given this ultimatum, Guy is firmly determined to gain any deeper understanding about books and their content but he faces a difficulty with his own wife who refuses to participate in his endeavour. In his vain effort, Montag remembers an English professor Faber whom he once met in a park and decides to visit him. Guy persuades old professor to teach him and receives a seashell radio in order to be able to communicate with each other. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

Situation begins to escalate when Montag comes home and argues with his wife's friends after which he returns to work bringing only a single book. After a while another alarm comes into the station and firemen along with Montag rush to another destructive mission. He instantly finds out they are heading towards his house and he is essentially ordered to burn his own place down. Guy reaches his breaking point and eventually enjoys destroying his home and burning, in a way, sad existence connected with it. Unfortunately he also turns his flamethrower on Beatty and kills him. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

On his escape, Montag eventually reaches a group of outcasts, joins them and watch the man hunt on television which happens to be yet another staged show for the audience that ultimately ends with killing an innocent bystander. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

The story finishes with a catastrophic ending when the group, with Guy Montag in the lead, watch the bomb falling upon the city as the war begins. Despite the initial intention, group decide to return to the city. (Ray Bradbury, 2012)

This subchapter summarizes briefly the storyline of Fahrenheit 451. It reveals Bradbury's dystopian world in order to introduce this vision to a reader and lay down a certain foundation for the following subchapter devoted to the themes of the novel. Subchapter is also based on personal reading which is the reasons why there is only one source acknowledged.

2.3. Themes of Fahrenheit 451

This subchapter focuses, at least, on some of the many themes and issues, Bradbury managed to cover in his masterpiece. As a deeply profound novel, Fahrenheit 451 it might not be quite easy to grasp and there needs to be born in mind a strong interconnection of all concerns displayed in the work. Following subchapter serves as a brief summarization of some of the opinions and points of view on the novel as well as find a connection in which different topics can be related. Intention of the subchapter is also to introduce these themes as the first step towards comparison of the vision and nowadays' reality.

According to Steven Aggelis Fahrenheit 451 is above all aimed on the topic of censorship, especially the censorship conducted by a government. As it turns out, this statement, however accurate it may seem, has its own limitation and it needs to be specified. However repulsive the idea of censorship appeared to Bradbury, he still believed government has the right to choose which art it decides to fund the same way galleries select the art for their exhibitions, without being considered despotic. Even though Bradbury saw the danger within political parties and other groups of special interest, his even bigger concerns were aimed at the other side of the problem as well. Based on a number of interviews included in a piece "Conversation with Ray Bradbury", it is possible to come to the conclusion that Bradbury was even more frustrated with obedience which essentially allows government or any other institution act like a superior power. (Steven Aggelis, 2003, p. 13)

Later on he kept developing this idea to even wider context. Related to the issue of obedience mentioned earlier, the next theme of the novel deals with a problem of human masses and the way in which they within their malleability succumb to any third interested party. Bradbury sees such behaviour as foolish but at the same time inevitable considering current conditions in society. Book burning displayed in the novel suggestively reflects these conditions and

successfully serves as an accusation of society breeding more and more illiterate and consumption oriented people. (Kirsti Hiner, 2001)

The topic of insufficient education producing more easily manipulatable individuals is also frequently mentioned by Bradbury himself with his claim that “danger is what is not going on in our school” referring specifically to a problem of growing illiteracy among younger generations which leaves them vulnerable to any kind of propaganda and blind to a contexts of gained information. Bradbury’s statement is from a certain point of view essential for establishing some kind of thematic linkage of thoughts presented in Fahrenheit 451 as all the issues are closely connected to each other and their beginning can be often traced back to schools and childhood. (Jill Stewart, 2012)

In a context of control and influencing people, reader of the novel come together with the subject of mass media, another significant theme contained in Bradbury’s novel. Fahrenheit 451 is filled with references and predictions for the future of telecommunications and their impact on society as a whole as well as on the individuals. Considering the current state of our society, being tirelessly pumped up by endless stream of information, commercials and other “must see” TV shows, the accuracy of Bradbury’s vision might be perceived as impressive and terrifying at the same time, even more when realizing that as far as this topic goes Fahrenheit 451 is far from being a Science Fiction.

Assumption for every comparison is presence of both sides of the argument. In order of that, this subchapter determines some of the main themes of Fahrenheit 451, covering the issues of book burning, censorships, mass media and control with subsequent obedience of masses. Towards the end the subchapter already indicates a certain parallels with our present represented further in subchapter 3.2.1.

3. Fahrenheit 451 – Vision meets reality

Fahrenheit 451 delivers without any doubts number of messages and as I suggest at the end of previous chapter, most of them can and should serve to us as a cautionary tale. Looking at the comparison of Bradbury's vision and the present I decided to devote the following chapters to contemplations about current situation, focusing on certain course in which we, as a society, are heading to and revealing unsettling similarities with author's dystopian picture of the world. I will base my assumption and conclusion on various studies and statistics through which I would like to determine the nature of transformation of our society in recent decades. In order of that my subject of interest will not be only the Bradbury's vision but the real background of the novel as well.

3.1. Historical Background of the Novel

As I intend to investigate the changes observable in our present it is absolutely necessary to focus on the original background of Fahrenheit 451 first. Stated in the subchapter 2.1., some of the elements that shaped final form of the novel comes from author's own experiences introduced earlier in his previous literary work. For instance the idea of being pulled over by policeman for basically walking on the street was elaborated in his story The Pedestrian. Nevertheless Bradbury's was not the only literary author concerned with a topic of dystopia. In 1932 Brave New World by Aldous Huxley appeared depicting society where people are treated as a common goods made at the Ford assembly line each on created for any particular purpose. Only four years before Fahrenheit 451 George Orwell's world famous novel Nineteen Eighty-Four was published foreshadowing some of the issues that eventually took place in Bradbury's novel as well.

While Orwell's novel was released in the early days of the Cold War, Fahrenheit 451 appears in its entirety. It is then no surprise Bradbury's commentary was to a large extent aimed on political situation. (Paul Brians, 2016)

It is appropriate to at least briefly state what the conflict called The Cold War actually represented. The end of The Second World War stirred up an intense rivalry between two leading superpowers- the United States and the Soviet Union. Although the conflict did not occur strictly as an armed struggle it caused increasing international tension propelled by propaganda spreading tirelessly political and economical supremacy over the other country.

Despite the fact that both sides avoided direct military confrontation, constant fear of possible catastrophic outcome in a form of nuclear war prevailed over the entire United States.

According to the researchers in online source Encyclopædia Britannica, The Cold War reached its notional peak between 1947 and 1953. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017)

Constant paranoia about danger of communism and fear of prospect of war pervading the entire country. In that time the entire US society is pervaded with fear of communism and the situation is even more empowered by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy. Around 1950 McCarthy starts “a hunt” for communists and traitors, accusing every possible sphere of society. His endeavour gradually led to frequent unsubstantiated prosecuting of people, unjustified arrests and general censorship among every cultural sphere. (Fahrenheit451nicoparker.wikispaces.com, 2017)

This period, eventually entitled as the “era of McCarthyism”, had another distinctive element which basically set the whole situation in motion. McCarthy proficiently took advantage of public concerns to strengthen his power and by deceiving propaganda justified his action to people. It may seem that the era of McCarthyism was Bradbury’s main source of inspiration writing Fahrenheit 451, nevertheless he argues during one of his interview that the impact of this period was not so significant to the process of creation of the book. One way or another this statement was most certainly disproved in the latter years by Bradbury himself with his claim he is very much concerned about ignorance and obedience of people. It is obvious that era of McCarthyism was a shining example of the exact type of behaviour. (Christine Schofelt and Hector Cordon, 2012)

Nevertheless the situation of that time resulted from the era of Joseph McCarthy was not the only incentive to creation of Bradbury’s vision. As mentioned in the subchapter 3.1. , the genesis of the novel is dated mainly to the second half of 1940’s, not even ten years after the end of The Second World War. This horrendous period of our history was not revolved only around the massive destruction and tragic losses of millions of lives but it also represented the wave of anti-intellectualism in its worst possible form. (Kirsti Hiner, p.10) Cases of book burnings are well known throughout the whole history occurring as sad evidence of numerous periods of intellectual suppression but it is the Nazi power struggle considered as one of the largest. On May 10, 1933, over 25 000 books were burned in the name of pursuing “pure” German culture. Unfortunately the incident was only a minor part of Nazi’s spree and the burnings kept appearing across the entire Germany. Shocking degree of how far the sickening ideology reached is demonstrated by the variety of social groups involved. Over 30 German

university cities took part in this act. In the most ironical way these action were frequently led by local university students. Symbol of academic world becomes the tool of intellectual decay. (TodayIFoundOut.com, 2014)

Leaving political background of Bradbury's enduring masterpiece, there is a significant theme of technological progress. The real impulse for writing Fahrenheit 451 is explained by Bradbury himself in the interview with newspapers LA Weekly during which the author claims the main purpose was to show that "television destroys interest in reading literature". This statement revealed the next important theme of the novel- technology.

Since the 1930', when first televisions flooded the market, it became almost indispensable piece of equipment in every household. Before 1950' over four millions TV sets were purchased in The United States. Even at that time there were already growing number of various shows, all of them conveniently picturing perfect families and carefree lives, twisting reality to satisfaction of the audience. (Fahrenheit451nicoparker.wikispaces.com, 2017)

The way in which TV reality became indispensable to the majority of people really struck Bradbury and he became concerned about possible consequences. From his point of view TV along with mass media not only suppresses people's ability to think for themselves but also push them into conformity and easily controllable state. He sees the saddest true in the fact that this technological dominance over society does not have to be forced to people but it is willingly embraced. R. A. Ried (2000, p.69) finds a parallel with such behaviour in book burnings displayed in the novel intended as an alarming picture of what people are able to let happened.

As the title suggests, this subchapter deals with the background of Fahrenheit 451. It reveals events that took place approximately around the second half of the 1930' to the first half of the 1950' and follows changes in social climate brought by political situation as well as by approach of new technologies. The subchapter has its important meaning with respect to the subject of the thesis, in a sense that the factual background, on which Fahrenheit 451 is based on, is for the eventual comparison equally significant as the vision itself. As the novel becomes more and more relevant to our nowadays' reality, people should realize they are once again heading towards the similar era.

3.2. Progression in Decline

While the previous subchapter is focused on the themes of Fahrenheit 451 this subchapter deals with a topic of modern technology and its growing position of dominancy over our current

society. Ray Bradbury throughout his life stated on many occasions that this rapid progress became the central idea of the novel. (Jill Stewart, 2012) His vision might of course suggest that the word “progress” is little out of place. The following subchapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 are based on the assumption that the current state of our, technologically oriented and through media effected, society is closer than ever to Bradbury’s dystopian vision. Chapter 3.2.2 then discusses the possibility whether our path does not lead us to our own version of dystopia? The goal is to observe impacts of technologies on various aspects of lives. As a basis for the intended discussion there is also introduced two major theories grounded on the view in which technology is perceived as a useful tool or as controlling force.

3.2.1. Instrumental and Substantive theory

In order to follow negative and positive outcomes of modern technologies it seems beneficial to elucidate some main theories that came to light in recent years in attempt to find the one to which potential users might incline.

The first and the most widely accepted view is the instrumental theory. For purpose of slight simplification the subchapter introduces only some basic ideas contained in this theory. First of all the major idea seems to put technology into quite innocent position. Generally this theory holds the view of technologies only as a tool serving their users purely without any additional and intentional contributions of its own. Taken simply as means, technologies are within the instrumental theory considered as a “neutral” tool and as a such, it develops its further thoughts around this idea by implying its neutrality as an indifference towards different kinds of societies (capitalist, socialist and so on), politics or any other circumstances. (Andrew Feenberg, p. 5)

Disproving assumption offers the second theory, usually entitled as substantive. Opposite of instrumentalists the substantive theory seems to advocate less theoretical but more pessimistic approach. It refuses the neutrality of technology and acknowledge its impact on society, proclaiming that strong inclination towards technologies creates the whole new cultural relations and transforms the social world into an object of control. (Andrew Feenberg, p. 6-8)

Predictions resulting from substantive point of view does not suggest very bright future as they find social and cultural changes caused by technology irreversible. The only escape is seen in improbable scenario of returning to simplicity and traditions both of which would inevitably mean decrease of productivity and business recession. Considering our consumer capitalist society where money determine course of everything, this “retreat” solution does not seem as a plausible story. Unlikelihood of such a step is to a certain point even more evidenced by the fact

that the substantive theory is far less supported than the instrumental. (Richard Stivers, 2004, p. 18)

Those who would agree with Bradbury's concerns, might most likely incline to the second theory as there is the point of cultural changes obvious and undeniable. Technology should not be considered only as a neutral means and we need to embrace the fact it has become an environment and the certain way of life. As Feenberg points out in his thesis *Critical Theory of Technology* the problem is not some kind of apocalyptic vision of machines taking over control but the unintentional choices people make in order to use them, choices which cannot be no longer seen as unaffected and inconsequential.

In a context of Fahrenheit 451, lines above might lead to a conclusion that Bradbury's vision clearly corresponds with the substantive theory and that the upsetting popularity of the instrumental theory fulfils his initial concerns of our voluntary submission.

3.2.2. Consequences of Modern Technology

Based on latest technological theories, previous chapter gives reader a hint at establishing whether society or human beings can be considered as mere users of modern technologies or whether they reached a certain point at which they cannot be no longer taken for unaffected bystanders. Considering the second assumption as the correct one, goal of the next subchapter is to understand the nature of such an impact by determination possible preponderance of positive or negative effects.

In order to follow the topic of this subchapter its goal is to examine cultural and psychological consequences of modern technologies and especially social media, as primary determining factor of society. Doctor Richard Stivers in his book considers technology not only as material aspect containing machines, computers and other devices but also as non-material referring to organizational and psychological technique. With regard to Bradbury's vision, the aim of this subchapter is to discuss impacts of material technology, although the original purpose of both is to maximize the efficiency and as such they could be identified as one phenomenon. Nevertheless subchapter deals with the first one, specifically with the issue of social media which, in my strong opinion, play crucial role in growing decay of book reading and gradual decline of thinking in general. (Richard Stivers, 2004)

Although Stivers also points out the ecological imperative of technical progress, he explores mainly its psychological side. He perceives technology as a strong organizational force by which

we form to large extent our interaction with other people as well as transforming all other kinds of social organization. Ironically, the primal purpose of technology as an improvement of general organization does not seem to be working as intended. According to Stivers excessive usage of technologies grounded in false idea of their alleged implicit benefit, leads paradoxically to alienation and cultural disintegration. (Richard Stivers, p. 16)

The issue of alienation and social isolation became a central subject of many discussion with growing influence of the internet and social networks. The first chapter in Stiver's book *Pathologies of Technological Society* entitled "Alone with others" briefly but accurately summarizes this problem and demonstrates unfortunately misplaced word "social".

The study introduced by researchers from the University of Pittsburgh examining the issue among 1 787 participants at the age of 19 to 32 reveals close connection between social media use and user's perception of the outside world. Many of interviewed individuals agreed on answers like "I feel that people barely know me" or "I feel that people are around me but not with me." (CNN, 2017)

On the other hand there is of course the question whether we do not confuse the order of action and reaction? It is possible people became more isolated because of social media but we can also as well presume they tend to engage in it to avoid isolation that was already there, in which case social media could be embraced as almost ground-breaking invention. In a short term I would certainly agree but in my opinion, isolation of such kind should be dealt with in any other way instead of looking for illusive connection which can eventually lead to even further deepening of social separation. (CNN, 2017)

With the age of social networks we come to across with another phenomenon, which might be called as the "Big Brother phenomenon". It is another example of lifestyle which we seem to willingly embraced, and which we uphold as a great product of being part of the "online world". Every social network proclaims the same "advantages", inviting us into fabulous world of connection where we get in touch with everyone on this planet and the world where we can share our ideas, troubles and dreams with our friends. This pseudo-happiness and pseudo-intimacy only disguise anxieties arouse envy among the participants. (Richard Stivers, 2004, p.16)

What initially introduces itself as a friendly place, immediately becomes just another tool for judgement and appraisal of every individual involved. We are watched and reviewed on daily basis by a vicious system of "followers", "thumbs ups" and "likes", which we receive from

strangers hidden by their computer screens. Unfortunately this way of evaluation also became the way of how we subsequently perceive ourselves and laid foundation for general dishonesty and misleading information spreading throughout these networks. Neat appearances, images of perfect life and seemingly thoughtful statements posted for general public view became our new reality, establishing ridiculous demands which we are expected to satisfy. (Jacob Silverman, 2015)

This pathological need of some kind of public approval frighteningly correspond with Bradbury's anxieties in sense of suppression of individuality and individual thinking.

There could be another argument that vision depicted in Fahrenheit 451 came true to even larger extent as he predicted that such a situation will be most likely caused by government or by some specific corporation gaining influence through the mass media. Their reasons would be, at least from certain point of view, more understandable, with the respect to their goals and agendas which would explain (but not justify) providing false information and intentionally misleading advertising. Bradbury of course counted in his dystopian view of society on human element with its weakness and willingness to submit, but he probably did not expect that such an "environment" providing basically full control over another human beings will be created by the people who live within this very same environment. It might sound as an exaggerated statement but it seems that we do not need any dictatorship to be enslaved anymore because we managed to create such a state on our own and voluntarily accepted it.

Previous paragraphs may appeared for readers as some kind of harbinger of catastrophic scenario but it is necessary to realize negative aspects of technological progress, even more urgently in a face of the fact they frequently remains hidden or do not appears as a real danger.

The beginning of this subchapter suggested a discussion about consequences of modern technology and the nature of possible impacts. There is of course number of asset that technological progress could offer. We are no longer limited by distance or, to a certain extent, by time as we are able to hear and see people from the other side of the world within a few seconds or have access to every possible sources imaginable. Acceleration of our society has reached its top which would not necessarily mean a bad thing with the respect to the progress but the problem is that human beings, as individuals, are not even allowed to go the other way anymore. As a result of cultural and social needs, we are forced to participate in the world of technology and social media. (Andrew Feenber, 2002)

But the question whether the benefits of social media and technology outbalance their downsides still remains and it might be more difficult to answer than it seems. It is an undeniable fact that our current society is blessed with endless possibilities, many of which would be hardly imaginable only few decades ago and number of which has been enabled exactly by the development of technologies. Some people could essentially even agreed with the frequently promoted characterization of technologies as a notional door to the entire world but the society should face the unsettling reality that it might still not be prepared for such a range of possibilities or even be able to handle them.

In respect to this idea it appears that a certain points developed by the instrumental attitude towards technology, referred in the subchapter 3.2.1., might be seen as valid in a sense that technology is in fact a “tool” like any other. But the idea of its neutrality should be disproved by its impact on users.

As this subchapter suggests, the answer to discussion whether modern technology is more beneficial than disadvantageous depends above all on people themselves. It would be unreasonable to mark out a tool such a hammer as a murdering weapon in some criminal case and ignore the original purpose. The proper way of evaluation of any tool has to be through its user. Subsequently this statement leads to the comparison of the past and the present, the vision and the reality.

3.2.3. Another Kind of Dictatorship

This subchapter is intended as a notional climax of the chapter 3. as the main goal of the thesis is to compare Bradbury’s vision depicted in Fahrenheit 451 with nowadays’ reality and determine a certain nature of the social transformation of the past five or six decades. Intention of the whole chapter was to introduce some basis for this discussion including information about the background of the novel and provide nowadays’ situation. The following lines are drawn on some additional research but also on my point of view, based on previous sources.

Although Bradbury stated many times that Fahrenheit 451 is not, above all, the critique of censorship, this theme has its undeniable place in the novel. It reveals the world where people are conveniently kept in a state of blissful ignorance, fed up with useless information and data which consequently leaves them blind but in a way “happy”. This phenomenon continues in a large scale to these days in a sense that people are still exposed to the censorship or, at very least, various form of selectiveness. Event which take place every day but are misinterpreted or

completely left out by the media are just a minor example of the public misleading. Unfortunately, situation does not get better, even when correct information is received.

Exponential growth of the quantity of information gradually causes severe numbness of people. Society is overwhelmed with what is happening to such a extent that looking the other way may seem like the only or at least more comfortable option. Sadly, in the past selectiveness was usually caused by fear (The Era of McCarthyism, chapter 3.1), nowadays, it is a result of plain ignorance and convenience. (Aleš Rozehnal, 2015)

Expansion of social media is with the regard to Fahrenheit 451 one of the key idea of the novel. However foresightful Bradbury's vision is, the reality has gone far beyond his imagination. Intermediary devices allowing access to the internet became essential to the vast majority of people. According to the research conducted by communication regulator OFCOM, children of the age of 5-15 spend more than seven hours a day behind computers, smart phone or television. It is not very difficult task to find the similarities with the world of Fahrenheit 451. Current use of technologies borderlines with dehumanizing process where at the same time everybody is everywhere and nobody is nowhere. Richard Stivers refers to this phenomenon as the "second hand experience", which seems as highly appropriate title. Unfortunately he also applies this idea on the human interaction as well as on their experiences. (Richard Stivers, 2004)

Connection through the screen corrupts a direct interactions and reduce relationships to the mere list of contacts. Availability of every person and every place devalues its original qualities and ironically disrupt the sense of certain belonging. Honesty or empathy were replaced by the distance causing that people are more interested in whoever is currently on the screen than in the person who is sitting next them. This way of "socializing" is sadly and entirely in the line with Bradbury's vision. (Aleš Rozehnal, 2015)

It may appear that the theme of book burning has been to a certain point left out the thesis so far, despite the fact, it is often considered as the main idea of the novel. As suggested in chapter 2.3. it is not the act itself that should be seen as important but the attitude which it represents. In the context of the present as well as with the respect to the previous paragraphs, there is very much possible to say that nowadays' society is still involved in book burning. The way in which people stand by and become mere spectators of their own present and future is the first step that leads to such a tragedy and the first step towards our own version of dystopia.

Aim of this final subchapter is to compare vision depicted in Bradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451. Complexity of the novel offers countless points of view and possible outcomes. As revealed

above, technology and society has been evolving in recent years and decades faster than ever. Every progress means arrival of something good and something bad it always relies on how humankind handles it. So far, as people managed to successfully fulfill Bradbury's frightening prospects, it seems they have not handle it well.

CONCLUSION

Through the content of the thesis, reader was introduced to the life of Ray Bradbury. The biography revealed author's childhood fascinations and interests which later on gave birth to one of the most prolific literary career of the 20th century.

Following Bradbury's life, his literary career demonstrated how his early "obsessions" had become a defining element of his work and his literary expression. In the respect to his career, the thesis acknowledge some of Bradbury's finest literary pieces such as *The Martian Chronicle* and *The Illustrated Man* but also covered his beginnings as a young author contributing to a number of science fiction magazines.

Path through Bradbury's career inevitably led reader to author's most proclaimed and well-known masterpiece *Fahrenheit 451*. With regard to the main theme of the thesis, this great novel is closely examined from various points containing the storyline, historical background, and themes.

Looking for parallels with nowadays' reality, the thesis displayed some aspects of modern society, aimed especially on modern technologies, social media and explored cultural changes within modern society.

Conclusion of the thesis based on the result of the comparison between the vision and reality does not appear as very cheerful as the final chapter reveals humankind so far precisely following Bradbury's warning example.

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RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá literárním dílem 451 stupňů Fahrenhaita autora Raye Bradburyho. Seznámením s biografií autora, vlivy, jež ho ovlivnily, historickým a kulturním pozadím vzniku, které vedly ke vzniku tohoto díla, je postupnou analýzou dosaženo srovnání jeho vize a přítomnosti. Práce je zaměřena především na vývoj způsobený masivním nástupem moderních technologií a jejich vlivem na běžný život a kulturní proměnu.

ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení:	Petr Strbák
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Rok obhajoby:	2017

Název práce:	Fahrenheit 451: vize Raye Bradburyho versus současnost
Název práce v angličtině:	Fahrenheit 451: Ray Bradbury's vision versus nowadays reality
Anotace:	Bakalářská práce pojednává o díle 451° Fahrenheita amerického autora Raye Bradburyho s cílem porovnat jeho anti utopistickou vizi budoucnosti s dnešní realitou. Práce ve stručnosti představuje autora, jeho další díla a dále srovnává stěžejní myšlenky jeho vize v díle 451° Fahrenheita se současnými výzkumy v sociální oblasti.
Anotace v angličtině:	This bachelor thesis discusses Ray Bradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451. The main aim is to compare Bradbury's dystopian vision of the future with today's reality. The thesis briefly presents the author and his other works and then concentrates on the comparison of the main ideas behind Bradbury's vision in Fahrenheit 451 with contemporary research in the field of social studies.
Klíčová slova:	Ray, Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451, vize, současnost, porovnání, sociální, média, vliv,
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Ray, Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451, vision, reality, media, social, influence, comparison
Přílohy k práci:	CD
Rozsah práce:	
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina