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***Fahrenheit 451*, its Dystopian Concepts and Possible
References to the Modern World**
Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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***451 stupňů Fahrenheita, prvky dystopie a možné
souvislosti v moderní společnosti***
Bakalářská práce

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*Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně
pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedl jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.*

.....

Benjamin Mik

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1. Introduction

This thesis is focused mainly on one of the most famous works of Raymond Douglas Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*. Bradbury was an important figure in the literary world of the twentieth century. The world that he grew up in was changed significantly by World War II, and in 1953, eight years after the end of the war, he published *Fahrenheit 451*.

The book is considered a dystopian novel and although it is technically a work of fiction, its theme is not as far from reality as it might appear at first sight. Bradbury obviously could not experience, for example, what the Czechs experienced during the communist era. Still, the communist era had already begun and he managed to foresee the problems that might arise from it. One of the most significant problems was oppression of the intelligentsia in general. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the ruling party knew very well that intellectuals are dangerous. There is always a risk of doubting the regime in terms of its right to authority.

This questioning of the regime's ways of governing can present a strong enemy to the party in power, which is absolute and aims to control its citizens. As mentioned, Bradbury managed in some ways to function as a prophet and created a vision that was not far from the reality of the era of communism, at least in our country.

The ruling party in the novel tried to control people's minds by applying strong censorship. The communists, compared to the book, were not much different. Censorship was a real issue and the intellectuality was viewed as a problem. Also, individuality was suppressed and people had to simply fit into the system, otherwise they faced the consequences of political imprisonment and/or bad treatment from the government.

However, there had been a significant event in the recent history even before the wide spread of communism in Europe. The Nazi book burnings of 1933 provided certain inspiration for Bradbury's writing. The theme of physical destruction of opinions and thinking which do not correspond with the ideology of the party in power is visible in both the actual book burnings that took place in Nazi Germany, and those in the novel.

Nowadays, the situation is quite different. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many countries became independent and democratic again. The censorship as we knew it is no longer required, but it is there in a different form. The control of people's minds is real even in the democratic systems. Commercial television stations with their strongly biased news prove the point. It is sometimes extremely difficult to recognize fake news or even relevant news. The threat of people being manipulated is present in today's world and in this thesis I will focus on the parallels of today's world with the famous dystopian novel.

In the thesis there will also be mentioned various allusions to books important for the history of mankind, influential works ranging from those of secular thinkers to the Bible itself. These references are important for the development of the story as well as for the reader's deeper understanding of the relevance of this seemingly fictional novel to the reality of today.

The relevance of its implications is clearly visible on the recent case of a massive book burning initiated by the government of President Erdogan in Turkey. "More than 300,000 books have been removed from Turkish schools and libraries and destroyed since the attempted coup of 2016, according to Turkey's ministry of education."¹ It seems very likely that now is the perfect time to start being alerted by the frightening allusions that *Fahrenheit 451* provides and that are in the process of becoming very realistic in this age once again.

¹ Alison Flood, "Turkish government destroys more than 300,000 books," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/06/turkish-government-destroys-more-than-300000-books>.

2. Historical Background

As foreshadowed in the introductory section of the thesis, *Fahrenheit 451* was first published in the early fifties, in 1953. However, it had been written three years earlier “in a shorter version for a science-fiction magazine in 1950.”² First it is important to mention the impact of the era in which the novel was written.

Even though in the United States there was prosperity and overall optimism after helping the Allies win the Second World War, the situation in Europe was quite different. The aftermath of such a great war was tremendous. The world had to recover from the fascist oppression. There had been regimes that fell but new ones were emerging. The threat of fascism was in a way substituted with the threat of communism. As for “regimes”, they are one of the important themes in *Fahrenheit 451*.

Considering Bradbury’s American nationality, some may find it difficult to imagine that he could depict the problems connected with totalitarian government in such a brilliant way. Nevertheless, he lived through the era of the Second World War, and therefore the rise and fall of Nazi regime had possibly influenced his perception of the world.

The Second World War not only changed modern history, but also provided an example of populist ideology and dictatorship established with the use of manipulation of the whole nation. It is vital to mention the Nazi propaganda in order to understand the possible inspiration for the motifs that Bradbury used in *Fahrenheit 451*. Probably the most significant series of events from this era are the Nazi book burnings, which will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.2 and which bear a striking resemblance to the book’s central theme, the burning of books.

However, burning of books is a phenomenon nearly as old as their printing. The Protestant Reformation had such a great impact on sixteenth century English society, because Martin Luther’s “ideas, and those of his followers, were dispersed in the relatively new medium of print.”³ Cressy further mentions that “it was the arrival of Lutheran books in the reign of Henry VIII that prompted the first public book burning in England.”⁴ The public burning of books is therefore not a newly created phenomenon which Bradbury put into the

² Peter Sisario, “A Study of the Allusions in Bradbury’s ‘Fahrenheit 451’,” *The English Journal* 59, no. 2 (1970): 201,

<https://doi.org/10.2307/811827>.

³ David Cressy, “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 2 (2005): 362,

<https://doi.org/10.2307/20477359>.

⁴ Cressy, “Book Burning,” 362.

futuristic context, but rather an old way to strengthen the power of a ruling party or any influential party which is afraid of a potential reform that particular books may bring. Such burnings can be referred to as an “impressive exhibition of power.”⁵ This “exhibition” is nevertheless questionable at least, since it originates from fear. Would the burnings in general be needed, if the powerful party were not fundamentally afraid of the books’ content? Bradbury showed the possible extreme in the form of a nonselective book burning. Whereas the burnings that happened in real world were selective, the ones exercised by the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* were meant to apply to all the books.

Interestingly enough, the parties which exercised book burnings for various reasons are nowadays not always considered evil. The Nazis who organized the race-connected book burnings in 1933 Germany are in today’s history books presented as inhuman, and rightfully so. The same cannot be said about the Tudors and the Stuarts who allowed book burnings for heretic reasons under their rule. Yet the motif remains. The destruction of printed ideas which can cause trouble to the people in command and in some cases can even start a revolution.

Another regime that I have found highly connected to the themes in the book is communism. The Bolshevik Revolution had started a new distribution of power in Eastern Europe and presented the world with yet another repressive regime a few decades before Bradbury published his novel.

It is therefore possible that Bradbury found an inspiration in communism and made various allusions to this regime. He had also successfully predicted the peril to the individual’s freedom, which it presented even a few decades after 1953, when the novel had been published. Several possible links to the regime of communism in *Fahrenheit 451* will be mentioned in section 2.3.

Overall, the era in which Bradbury created much of his work affected him in a way that led him to question the future and the change of regimes that happened in Europe after the War. The fact that he wrote *Fahrenheit 451* more than sixty years ago clearly limits his imagination and his outlook on a possible futuristic society. It would be foolish to assume that Bradbury would create an accurate depiction of the future with all the technological progress that comes with it. The field of technology in general underwent major changes since the book was published.

Nevertheless, the society that he created in the novel makes use of technological innovation, which bear striking resemblance to those of today’s world – “Television spans

⁵ Cressy, “Book Burning,” 364.

four walls, soap operas and sentimentality abound, and books, the carriers of ideas, are burned.”⁶ The resemblance is remarkable in the form of technology, represented by the enormous TV screens. This technology is not far from the reality of today’s TV industry. Furthermore, Peter Sisario in this excerpt mentions the issue of what is being broadcasted. The content presented by television stations in *Fahrenheit 451* is highly sentimental and represents a form of manipulation and dictation. The theme of manipulation by media will be covered in the thesis as well.

⁶ Sisario, “Study of Allusions,” 201-2.

2.1 Synopsis

Fahrenheit 451 is a world-famous dystopian novel written by Ray Bradbury and published, as foreshadowed in the introductory section, in the postwar era of the twentieth century. The story is set in a futuristic society in an unspecified city in what we now know as America. The central character is a fireman called Guy Montag.

Since all houses in recent years became fireproof, thanks to the technological advancement of civilization, Montag's profession consists of setting fire rather than extinguishing it. The aim the firemen is to destroy books. In his society books present a threat to the vast majority of population. The idea is not to think, but to be impulsive and to live in the moment. Books in general are considered an obstacle to people's constant pursuit of happiness. Over the years, people themselves choose to stop reading. The literature is too confusing and provocative. The media that can easily entertain masses take control. Households now often include rooms with televisions that cover all four walls. The televised content is generally entertaining in a non-intellectual way to appeal to most people. The news, presented through television or radio, is not meant to be questioned.

Guy's wife, Mildred, is a good example of an intellectually numb citizen. She does not question anything as she is addicted to immediate satisfaction and freedom from worry. However, her lifestyle has a negative impact on herself. A good example of such impact is her overdosing on sleeping pills, which invokes deeper thinking and concerns in her husband. Montag, unlike his wife, starts to feel unhappy about the society and the system that he lives in. The acquaintance with his neighbor, Clarisse McClellan, gives him another perspective on life. It makes him appreciate the nature along with its peacefulness, which is a theme long forgotten and overlooked in his society.

The fireman, who is supposed to burn books, starts hiding them in his house. His superior, Captain Beatty, deduces from Montag's recent strange behavior that he is hiding the books. However, he pretends that he does not know and secretly sends mechanical hound to scare Guy and make him dispose of the books that he illegally possesses. But Montag's revolt continues. He meets with Faber, a former professor and an intellectual, and together they start planning a conspiracy. Their plan to plant books to the firemen's houses and eventually destroy the book-burning business proves unsuccessful.

Montag is compromised, most likely by his wife, and one day he arrives at a house, with his fellow firemen, that turns out to be his own. He knows the consequences and in a desperate attempt to escape his fate he burns Beatty to death and flees from the crime scene.

Luckily, he manages to escape from the urbanized area in a river and finds himself in the country. Then he encounters a group of renegades; the outcasts from the system that cannot abide individuals, who stand out of the ordinary.

The group consists of intellectuals, a sort of resistance movement, whose aim is to pass the knowledge from books to future generations. They are more powerful than it first seems, because they memorize the prominent literary works and together create a virtual library in their heads. This allows them to pass the knowledge to their children and potentially to the whole civilization, which suffers from a constant warfare. Montag proves himself useful when he admits that he has tried to memorize a part of the Old Testament. That makes him an important member of the resistance. Soon there may be an opportunity for them to make the world a better place, after the major city centers will be destroyed by extremely efficient bombing.

The prophecy is fulfilled when Montag witnesses the destruction of the city where he used to live. He sees the city turn to ruins and dust in just a few seconds. Then the former fireman joins the intellectuals on their journey to the war-affected cities, whose people need their help and knowledge to change their self-destructive lifestyle and create a better future for their offspring and themselves.

2.2 *Fahrenheit 451* and the Nazi Book Burnings

The Nazi book burnings was by no means a series of events that Bradbury as an intellectual would be indifferent to. “On 10 May 1933 thousands of books were burned in Germany in universities all over the country.”⁷ This was an act of barbarism, but also a victory of fanaticism over reason. Bradbury started his novel with a powerful statement. “It was a pleasure to burn.”⁸ This pleasure might have been found in the eyes of those German students, who zealously threw thousands of books into flames. The tragic event depicts the success of the campaign of Joseph Goebbels and the Third Reich. With similar success in the book, the fictional government manages to indoctrinate the firemen and, as a matter of fact, the whole nation into believing that books present an enemy to their peace of mind. “Burn the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag. Take your fight outside. Better yet, into the incinerator.”⁹ These words from Captain Beatty suggest a peace of mind that can be achieved by destroying books as the source of evil. This kind of peace, however, is connected to ignorance. Books in general are considered in the novel a source of uneasiness, a kind of burden to people’s minds, that are accustomed to simplicity and straightforward emotions shown in the TV soap operas.

Of course, in the case of actual Nazi book burnings, the undesired books were chiefly those of Jewish origin, or simply books by such authors whose beliefs did not correspond with the “superior” ideals of the Nazi Party. However, there is a motif that links the fictional burning of books in the novel with the actual Nazi book burnings. This motif is destruction of the past. Undoubtedly, it is easier for a regime to control people through elimination of books in order to suppress their knowledge and threat of a possible rebellion.

Knowledge can be dangerous to any totalitarian form of government especially when it includes a knowledge of history. The past is therefore erased, along with the books, by the novel’s main protagonist Montag and his fellow firemen. With the past being non-existent, the government is able to indoctrinate its citizens quite easily. Whereas *Fahrenheit 451* depicts destruction of books in general, the Nazi book burnings were aimed to erase specific segments of literature, connected with Jews and authors, whose beliefs were not shared by the Nazi government.

⁷ J. M. Ritchie, “The Nazi Book-Burning,” *The Modern Language Review* 83, no. 3 (1988): 627, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3731288>.

⁸ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 3.

⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 59.

The question whether knowledge can be really destroyed by physical destruction of books as such, still remains. The fundamental function of almost any book is to convey an idea, an extralinguistic object. It would definitely be useful for the dictatorship established in Germany to destroy the Jewish past and heritage, otherwise the eradication of Jewish race would not be completed. The past and heritage preserved in the form of books and cultural artifacts in museums presented an obstacle to Hitler's plan. However, knowledge is hard, if not impossible, to destroy when it is already rooted in people's minds.

There is a motif which connects the book burnings in *Fahrenheit 451* with the burnings that occurred in Nazi Germany, a motif of non-completion. The society desired by the Nazi regime would be that with no knowledge of the Jewish heritage, and preferably of the Jewish race altogether. Bradbury depicted in great detail the issue of thought eradication through physical destruction of books, which in the end proved ineffective. Major contribution to it was done by a kind of resistance movement: a movement of intellectuals and academicians who, even though from the exile, found an alternative way of storing knowledge while books were being burnt by the thousands.

Considering the aim of the Nazi book burnings was to destroy the Jewish cultural heritage and their identity as such, it was not truly successful. Of course it would be suitable for the Nazi regime to destroy anything that resembles Jewish identity to complete their Final Solution. Still, it was not the case and the reason was probably not just the fact that the Third Reich eventually surrendered to the Allies and the subsequent end of the Nazi regime in Germany. The reason for the unfinished eradication could partly be similar to the one mentioned in *Fahrenheit 451*, the resistant people. The outcast intellectuals from the book can somehow be compared to the common people of Germany and other states under the Nazi regime who willingly provided shelter for persecuted Jews.

The mentioned similarity can be questionable since the people hiding the Jews were in severe danger themselves if the government found out. The intellectuals in the book are considerably more safe. They are spread in the rural areas outside the large cities, and since the society is extremely urbanized, outside the regime's interest. They simply do not present a large threat to the government because of their minority status and because they cannot directly influence the vast majority living in the urban centers.

However, the intellectuals are not completely safe, as Granger, the most prominent of the outcasts, says, "we didn't hide as we usually do"¹⁰, referring to Montag's loud entrance,

¹⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 147.

but also implying that they could not feel entirely safe even in the abandoned parts of the country. The similarity of the book-burning theme in the novel and in Nazi Germany of 1933 is quite obvious. Yet they both raise a question: Is it possible to destroy knowledge by burning of books as its primary source? The answer, if there is any, is quite complicated.

Certainly books have served as a major source of knowledge throughout the history of mankind and have stimulated one's mind in a way that television or radio could not have. Once they influence one's mind, the knowledge is hard to eradicate. The outcast intellectuals perfectly demonstrate the power of books. Memorizing the classical works of literature is an extreme but powerful method to convey the noble ideas and the intellectual heritage of mankind along with the principles of freedom to the future generations. The motif of learning books by heart could have possibly served as an inspiration in the recent post-apocalyptic movie "The Book of Eli"¹¹, where the main character attempts to learn the whole Bible by heart because of a lack of existing copies and the fear of it being forgotten after the last copy possibly can be destroyed.

The Germans who were hiding secret copies of Jewish works of literature, or those who remembered at least parts of the texts in their head, helped to revive the Jewish literary heritage. In conclusion, it is very important for totalitarian regimes to eliminate book-related knowledge in order to get a better control over the citizens, but it is extremely hard to do so thoroughly. The human factor needs to be considered.

¹¹ *The Book of Eli*, directed by Albert Hughes and Allen Hughes, Los Angeles: Silver Pictures, 2010.

2.3 *Fahrenheit 451* and the Communist Regime of the Twentieth Century

Even though the book was first published in the early fifties of the twentieth century, not only was it way ahead of its time, but the themes and implications in *Fahrenheit 451* also resembled the behavior of particular regimes at that time. In addition to Nazism, there was at the time, and still is, a very ideological regime called communism. The thought of equality and unity, which it is based on, is noble in theory, but often leads to a suppression of individualism in reality. This does not always have to be perceived negatively. One can even argue that life under the communist government is easy in the way that the government takes care of common people by sort of predetermining their careers and not giving an individual enough freedom to make unlucky decisions and become homeless, for example.

On the other hand, this system, which an individual must fit in, necessarily brings a certain level of censorship with it. This censorship applies to various types of media, but books as such are possibly the hardest to filter in terms of censorship. The literary language is often not straightforward and provides the reader with hidden messages and meanings that only a well-educated censor can discover after thorough reading of a work of literature.

The book censorship performed by the ruling, often totalitarian, party is often being connected to the party's selfish intentions of eradicating any thoughts that might jeopardize its power. Such was the case of Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century. One can doubt the morality of forbidding the citizens to express themselves freely, but in *Fahrenheit 451* the leading fireman Beatty provides the reader with what can be perceived as a noble motive behind similar behavior of the fictional government in the book. "Colored people don't like *Little Black Sambo*. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book."¹² What the fictional character of Beatty explains here is in itself a noble act of maintaining a certain kind of equilibrium. The burning can be even perceived as making precautions against the spread of racism.

Nevertheless, Beatty later goes even further. "Funerals are unhappy and pagan? Eliminate them, too."¹³ and "Let's not quibble over individuals with memoriums. Forget them."¹⁴ Interestingly enough, he calls funerals "pagan" but in communist Czechoslovakia they were one of the few Christian ceremonies which the government did not feel particularly

¹² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 59.

¹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 59-60.

¹⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 60.

threatened by. The quotes by Captain Beatty imply that the fictional government in *Fahrenheit 451* was in some ways more extreme than the communist party in Czechoslovakia, for example.

The real cause of this behavior might be the desire to maintain the fast tempo of life and consequential eradication of deep thinking. Even though the communism as such does not focus on the fast way of life, it is concerned with deep thinking. The motifs that connect the book with the sad Czech reality of the twentieth century are therefore the oppression of intelligentsia and the related strong censorship of any influential source of information, including books.

Whatever the differences between the regime in *Fahrenheit 451* and the actual communism may be, there is a vivid inspiration from reality, and possible future, in this particular work of Bradbury. Due to the technological advancement of the book's civilization and its fast way of life, there is a possibility of discovering similarities with capitalism.

The resemblance of the society in the novel to today's capitalistic Western society will be further discussed later in the thesis. Bradbury however used Captain Beatty to explain something suspiciously similar to a communist philosophy. When Beatty tries to lecture Montag about the history of firemen and mankind as such, he uses several statements to support his claim. "You always dread the unfamiliar." and "We must all be alike."¹⁵ That could be a reference to communism, as the motto about familiarity corresponds with communist ideology and the dread of the unfamiliar (which is perfectly natural to some extent) can be a convenient excuse for any totalitarian government for gaining better control over its citizens, promising them that there will not be any unfamiliarity for them to fear.

Shortly after, Beatty makes a very interesting point. "Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal."¹⁶ The process of forbidding an individual to stand out of what is set to be the norm is a typical feature of communist regimes. The fact, that Bradbury put emphasis on the word "made", only makes the possible reference more vivid. Nevertheless, the persecution of those who stand out of the ordinary is in the novel connected with the government of democratic origin, at least at first. Only after some time does the regime become totalitarian. This could be an alarming message that even in today's democratic Western society there is a threat of forming a regime similar to communism. The raising percentage of extremists among young people in Western society is an interesting and convenient recent trend to support the argument.

¹⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 58.

¹⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 58.

3. Important Allusions in *Fahrenheit 451*

Discussing the dystopian elements and the book's possible references to the modern world seems almost impossible without a mention of various book allusions and quotations that Bradbury used in specific parts of the story to illustrate his point. The quotations are references to real and historically important works of literature, even though *Fahrenheit 451* is set in the future and is considered a work of dystopian fiction.

Before mentioning the important book allusions, it would be relevant to analyze a few significant allusions unrelated to other literary works. First, the book's title itself, *Fahrenheit 451*, signifies the temperature of paper ignition. This is an obvious reference to the burning of books, which serves as the novel's theme. The numeral is also featured on the helmet of the main protagonist, fireman Guy Montag. "With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head"¹⁷ The firemen's helmets clearly bear a sign of their mission. That is, to burn books, which according to the government present obstacles to people's peace of mind.

Then there is the name Guy. Even though it is an actual American name, I found it convenient for Bradbury to use this particular name for the main character of a fireman with a doubtful mind. The possible explanation is that "Guy Montag" could just be anyone. That the character does not seem to be special in any way and that it is perfectly natural for any individual to have doubts and to question the very things they have considered to be unquestionable, at some point in their lives.

An important allusion is provided in the beginning of the novel when Montag with his fellow firemen arrive to a house of an elderly woman, who has been turned in by her neighbor. The fact that the woman is present during their book burning makes Guy very uncomfortable, as he feels that she is "spoiling the ritual."¹⁸ Even more important are the words that she says out loud in front of the firemen, who has come basically to burn her house from within. "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."¹⁹ These words impact the main protagonist and even though he does not remember them completely, he thinks about them and about the reason why the woman said such a peculiar thing before she let herself die. On the way back to the firehouse, he gets an explanation from Beatty, who proves his own wisdom by remembering the piece by heart. "A man named Latimer said that to a man named

¹⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 3.

¹⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 37.

¹⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 36.

Nicholas Ridley, as they were being burnt alive at Oxford, for heresy, on October 16, 1555.”²⁰ Beatty unknowingly helps Montag start his intellectual revival. Guy now knows the context of woman’s words and it gives him even less peace of mind. He is willing to seek the truth and eventually perhaps light such a candle himself. This woman and also Clarisse McClellan have both provided Montag with the will to question and even to rebel against his society.

The motif of the mystical bird Phoenix is another hint to invoke further thinking in attentive reader’s mind. “It is crucial that Beatty wears the sign of the Phoenix on his hat and rides in a “Phoenix car.” He has great knowledge of the past yet ironically and tragically does not know how to use his knowledge, treating it only as historical curiosity.”²¹ What Sisario might be implying is that Captain Beatty shares significant attributes with the mystical bird illustrated on his helmet and on the appearance of his car. With a use of loose interpretation there can be found a similarity between Beatty and the Phoenix in the form of a shared incorrigibility.

While the Phoenix periodically burns to ashes and rises again, Beatty continually fails to use his knowledge of important literary works for a noble purpose and rather continues burning them for the false feeling of security from doubt. Ultimately it costs him his life. As Peter Sisario adds that “his death by fire symbolically illustrates the rebirth that is associated with his Phoenix sign.”²² This association is clearly visible and does not need further analysis, since Beatty literally burned to death. Of course unlike the Phoenix, he did not rise again to start a new “cycle”. For Montag, however, the death of Captain Beatty presents a “rebirth to a new intellectual life.”²³ Guy Montag’s escape from the city, which is a result of the murder of his superior, allows him to get acquainted with intellectuals who help him start the previously mentioned intellectual life.

Furthermore, in Sisario’s study the author points out that the possible motif of rebirth at the end of the novel might not concern the main protagonist only, but also the whole of mankind as such. “Through the persona of Granger, Bradbury expresses the hope that mankind might use his intellect and his knowledge of his own intellectual and physical destruction to keep from going through endless cycles of disintegration and rebirth.”²⁴ This is a very powerful interpretation of the message that the character of Granger possibly conveys.

²⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 40.

²¹ Sisario, “Study of Allusions,” 202.

²² Sisario, “Study of Allusions,” 202.

²³ Sisario, “Study of Allusions,” 202.

²⁴ Sisario, “Study of Allusions,” 202.

Sisario refers to the allusion where mankind itself is the Phoenix, which is, historically speaking, very relatable. The novel's publishing date is in the middle of the twentieth century, shortly after the two world wars. Referring to the mankind as the Phoenix was perhaps a desire that mankind would learn from its terrible self-harming mistakes and stop the dreaded cycle once and for all.

Bradbury in his novel made one more important allusion to be analyzed in this thesis. During Montag's card session with his fellow firemen, he questions the very nature of their work. "Didn't firemen *prevent* fires rather than stoke them up and get them going?"²⁵ The fellow firemen then present him with an answer from their rulebook, which says "Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies. First Fireman: Benjamin Franklin."²⁶ This story is presented as a plain and simple fact to the firemen and is definitely not meant to be questioned. Interestingly enough, it is an artificially created fact that is in itself a lie. It is obviously not true to claim such things about Benjamin Franklin, but with a lack of unbiased and relevant historical data at their disposal, the firemen should be content with this information and do not question its truthfulness.

However, there are certain facts that make the reference to Franklin more believable and therefore convenient for the government. Benjamin Franklin is considered one of the most important figures in American history. He can be referred to as a hero, which is something that connects him with the idea of a fireman. Firemen are generally perceived as heroic and incite feelings of admiration and respect in people.

Furthermore, there indeed is a historical connection between Franklin and the idea of a fireman. "On December 7, 1736 Benjamin Franklin co-founded the Union Fire Company, also known as the "Bucket Brigade". It was the first formally organized all volunteer fire company in the colonies and was shaped after Boston's Mutual Fire Societies."²⁷ This fact may have served to prevent further questioning of the lie that is based on it. The mentioned statement from the firemen's rulebook is supposed to give even more credibility to their profession, even though the profession has become very immoral after households became fireproof. What Bradbury may be after here, is an implication that false statements gain a lot of credibility when a famous and well-respected name is linked to it.

This false allusion to Benjamin Franklin's life can cause further thinking when one attempts to compare this particular way of manipulation to the techniques of modern media.

²⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 34.

²⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 34.

²⁷ "Union Fire Company," Benjamin Franklin Historical Society, accessed August 17, 2019, <http://www.benjamin-franklin-history.org/union-fire-company/>.

When a commercial TV channel, for example, presents in its daily news a problem that sounds believable and does not leave room for viewer's further thinking about the issue, the majority of the viewers do not question the news' validity. The lack of evidence for the contrary can present an often-used manipulation technique by the media. The desire to insert certain ideas into people's minds is a timeless motif that simply proves the relevance of Bradbury's novel in today's world 66 years after the first publishing of the book and 69 years after the publishing of the preceding shorter version for a magazine.

3.1 Allusions to Non-Biblical Works of Literature

Various references made by characters in *Fahrenheit 451* to real books, often found in the students' reading lists, help to underline the significance of book reading and the wisdom that books can convey. The first quotation comes from Jonathan Swift's famous novel, *Gulliver's Travels*. The quote that Montag reads from a book that he picked up from the floor is not as random as it first seems. "It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end."²⁸ The statement depicts a demonstration of extreme stubbornness. It is even absurd to imagine people who are willing to die rather than change a habit of little to no importance to their existence. His wife's reaction, however, is somehow fitting to create a complete picture of the dystopian society which they live in. "What does it mean? I doesn't mean *anything!* The Captain was right!"²⁹ The brainwashing by government and partly by Captain Beatty, who Mildred refers to, appears to be successful. She is not able to comprehend the moral of the story, her perception is shallow as she is bound to understand only the literal meaning of the quotation. One can argue that this is through no fault of her own, but undoubtedly her misconception, or rather an utterly shallow conception of the passage that Montag just read, is a clear indication of dystopia in *Fahrenheit 451*. The dystopia is indicated by the fact that people are no longer able to think critically and assess the credibility of a statement, let alone its deeper, non-literal meaning, due to a lack of a knowledge of history. Mildred not only cannot see the message that the quote conveys, but she even relates herself to the quote unknowingly because she comes to a quick conclusion. Her conclusion is a result of her habitual behavior caused by the government and the society that she lives in. Fundamentally, she shows a stubborn behavior by quickly repudiating any meaning of the mentioned excerpt from *Gulliver's Travels*, which also deals with stubborn thinking and points to its absurdity.

However, Bradbury used another book reference earlier in the story. Guy Montag investigates the origin of his profession with the help of Beatty, who is his superior at work and also on the intellectual level. Beatty at one point mentions a world-famous tragedy by William Shakespeare. "But many were those whose sole knowledge of *Hamlet* was a one page digest in a book that claimed: *now at last you can read all the classics; keep up with your neighbors.*"³⁰ It is no coincidence that Beatty uses *Hamlet* as a book to demonstrate the

²⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 68.

²⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 68.

³⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 54-55.

process of condensation and simplification of literature. It is the shortening of the books' content that comes along with the unfortunate advancement, if it can be called advancement at all, of civilization in *Fahrenheit 451*. Bradbury used a well-known example from classical literature and therefore made Beatty's explanation more believable. Montag can then more easily understand him, but more importantly, it influences attentive readers.

There is a certain correlation between the condensation of Shakespeare's extensive work into "one-page digest" and various trends in modern society. For example, the widespread use of Twitter³¹ results in many people submitting to willingly produce and read texts with a maximum length of 280 characters each. What is fascinating is the fact that the 280 character limit is a result of the network's decision to double the character limit. "Curiously enough, the character limit increase has not led to longer tweets for the most part. The most common length of tweets in English is 33 characters, which is actually one less character than before the change."³² This observation might somehow suggest people's desire to absorb short pieces of information rather than the long ones, even when they have the alternative.

The mentioned condensation of texts online can be caused by the same restlessness and faster life pace that Bradbury prophesied more than half a century ago. In today's Western society, there are many tools for people, mostly students, who want to pretend as if they have read a certain book. Some of the most prominent are the websites SparkNotes³³, Shmoop³⁴ or CliffsNotes³⁵. Even though they are supposed to help their users with deeper understanding of literature that they already read, many people use it chiefly as a substitution for the actual reading. It is alarming how fast we live our lives in the twenty-first century. It is important to consider the timelessness of the novel's motifs and to use them to think thoroughly about the threats of modern life, which these motifs possibly symbolize.

The next quote that Guy shortly after presents to his wife and to himself again proves how shallow Mildred's perception of reality really is. Also it illustrates the influence that

³¹ "About," Twitter, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://about.twitter.com>.

³² Matt Southern, "Twitter Doubling its Character Limit from 140 to 280 Has Not Led to Longer Tweets," *Search Engine Journal*, October 31, 2018, <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/twitter-doubling-its-character-limit-from-140-to-280-has-led-to-more-polite-users/276035>.

³³ "About SparkNotes," SparkNotes, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.sparknotes.com/about/>.

³⁴ "ABOUT SHMOOP," Shmoop, accessed August 15, 2019, https://www.shmoop.com/public/about_us/.

³⁵ "About CliffsNotes," CliffsNotes, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/discover-about>.

Clarisse McClellan has had on Montag and the sort of intellectual and emotional revival that she has sparked in him. “We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over.”³⁶ The quote taken from James Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* reminds Guy of his lost friend Clarisse, who basically starts Montag’s questioning of righteousness in the world around him. Clarisse metaphorically opens his eyes to see the controversy behind his work, which is just one of the precautions by the government to supposedly make people happy, but in fact gaining better control over them by suppressing further stimulation of their intelligence. Mildred, whose friendships are ridiculously shallow, is once again not able to comprehend the quote’s message and simply silences Montag when he starts polemicizing about this particular definition of friendship and connecting it to his recent experience with Clarisse.

There is a clash of two worlds. One simple, fast, fun, but nevertheless empty; and one long forgotten by most, which is definitely worth seeking. Of course, Mildred represents the majority in the empty, shallow world. It is however not clear whether it is her fault or not. The society that she lives in is strongly manipulated. The dictatorship is not evident, but it is there. It is possible that she might have a lower IQ than her husband and therefore she cannot see through the literal meaning of the quotes and think about them more deeply. Still, it is also likely that she might have the potential to understand the classical literature, but she is so much hypnotized by the government that she is no longer able to think independently about things which at first sight do not seem to relate to her life. The motif of immediacy and living in the moment is in *Fahrenheit 451* very visible. Bradbury perhaps used Mildred as a deterring example of how negatively one’s character can be impacted by a mass medium, which does not seem to be dangerous at first, for example television.

Another significant difference between intellectually woken and curious Guy and his wife can be observed when he reads aloud an excerpt from Boswell’s “Letter to Sir William Temple”. “That favourite subject, Myself.”³⁷ Not surprisingly, Mildred is able to understand this particular excerpt. However, she is only using her shallow perspective. Her understanding is based on the fact that she is very egocentric, probably just like the vast majority of her society. There can be an obvious question about the cause of her egocentrism. Is it simply a fault of her character, as selfishness is fairly common human attribute; or is the government to blame? She is presented as a victim of government’s indoctrination. Bradbury might use her

³⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 71.

³⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 72.

character to demonstrate the negative influence of television on one's psyche, if the individual is addicted to shows that are not intellectually stimulating in any way and is not given an alternative. Mildred compares her favorite TV show with books in general. "Books aren't people. You read and I look all around, but there isn't *anybody!*" and then "My 'family' is people. They tell me things, *I* laugh, *they* laugh! And the colors!"³⁸ Her fictional "family" is of course nothing but a TV show. Is it even possible to compare classical pieces of literature with a form of entertainment that does not provide almost any stimulation of the brain? For Mildred it surely is. It is even more absurd that she is convinced that her favorite TV show is better than the books in general, because it is more interactive and colorful. This point of view is not much different from that of many people today, at least in the Western civilization. It seems that our society tends to prefer the forms of entertainment that do not require much imagination and provide us with visual and audio experience, like television. The colorful images along with loud and emotional characters on screen usually attract more attention than seemingly boring and complicated works of literature.

Sadly, the show is actually very artificial and definitely not as realistic and interactive as Mildred thinks. As opposed to the books that she has recently come across, the show has no point, no message and does not require almost any form of thinking. However, it is not entirely true that she has not been given an alternative. Later in the novel Montag speaks to Faber, a retired professor and intellectual.

At one point, Faber reminds Guy of a very important fact from the history of their society. "Remember, the firemen are rarely necessary. The public itself stopped reading of its own accord."³⁹ This statement partly takes the blame away from the government. Even though the regime in the novel is very totalitarian and manipulative, it is the people who have initiated their own intellectual destruction. "Censorship is in many respects a natural human instinct, a reflexive impulse. To tolerate the speech we loath is counterintuitive."⁴⁰ The major motif in the history, presented by Captain Beatty, is the need for simplicity. This is closely connected with the enormous popularity of mass media, such as radio and television. "These media appealed to the masses; hence simplicity became of paramount importance"⁴¹ It is truly remarkable how Bradbury predicted in his novel the real issues connected with technological

³⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 73.

³⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 87.

⁴⁰ Rodney A. Smolla, "The Life of the Mind and a Life of Meaning: Reflections on 'Fahrenheit 451'," *Michigan Law Review* 107, no. 6 (2009): 902.

⁴¹ Charles F. Hamblen, "Bradbury's 'Fahrenheit 451' in the Classroom," *The English Journal* 57, no. 6 (1968): 819, <https://doi.org/10.2307/812029>.

progress and evolution of modern society. In the twenty-first century, many people find the same form of entertainment as Mildred for a similar reason. It provides an easy way to relax and to disconnect from the problems of this modern, yet hurried era.

Interestingly enough, Bradbury managed to somehow predict the evolution of the television industry. Gigantic televisions that cover the whole walls in the novel are slightly exaggerated when compared to the modern televisions. Still, the difference in size is not so big nowadays when the trend is to have larger screens and higher resolution as technology progresses.

Also nowadays, like in the novel, channels with little educational value make the most significant profits. It is widely acknowledged that television is a medium used chiefly for entertainment, not educational, purposes. Yet, there is a danger of possible imbalance if one becomes the twenty-first century version of Mildred. It is likely that many people in the modern era do not live a very different life from that of Montag's wife. Even though Bradbury might not have intended to become a prophet, the dystopian elements in his futuristic society are suspiciously similar to some of the trends in the world of today. The resemblance is indeed alarming.

The final non-Biblical excerpt to be analyzed is a poem that furious Guy Montag reads aloud in front of his wife and her female friends. By bringing the book for them to see, he risks a lot. He is not portrayed as a particularly courageous character, and when he steals a book in the beginning of the novel, it is hard to imagine that he would do such thing as showing any of his hidden literature to other people besides Mildred. It could surely compromise him.

The poem that he reads out loud is, quite surprisingly, suggested by his wife. Mildred chooses a poem that she obviously does not understand and projects her frustration on her friends even before they actually hear it. "Ladies, you won't understand a word. It goes umpty-tumpty-ump."⁴² Bradbury once again used the character of Mildred to illustrate the negative impact of technology on one's personal development. Her criticism of the given poem shows her limited vocabulary, which might ironically be connected with the fact that she does not have access to literature in general. The vocabulary that she learns from the soap operas on television is very limited. The negative influence of the modern lifestyle can be observed also on her friends. Their selfish and shallow nature and way of thinking irritates Montag. He now sees their behavior from the perspective of someone who has been

⁴² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 99.

influenced by Clarisse, an odd girl that sparked his questioning. Montag could as well ask himself: is Clarisse really the odd one if she is derived from the majority that is odd in itself? Montag then reads a part of the poem selected by his wife; two stanzas from *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold. The poem shows the struggle of a man unhappy with the world he lives in. The man in Arnold's poem underlines the importance of being honest with one another in a world of emptiness and enmity. This theme is very relatable to Montag and his personal life struggles.

Obviously, Mildred is unable to take anything from this particular poem, but the same does not apply to one of her friends. Shortly after Montag finishes his reading, it is said that one of Mildred's friends is "crying."⁴³ This reaction proves that even in a society where literature is banned, it can still appeal to people's thinking and emotions. The ignorance that is illustrated in Mildred luckily does not apply to all members of her society. Therefore, appealing to one's emotions can be used not only as a means of manipulation through media, but also through literary works.

There is no doubt that the excerpt from *Dover Beach* influences Montag, because he then spontaneously delivers one of his most aggressive, yet honest, speeches in the whole novel. "Go home and think of your first husband divorced and your second husband killed in a jet and your third husband blowing his brains out, go home and think of the dozen abortions you've had, go home and think of that and your damn Caesarian sections, too, and your children who hate your guts! Go home and think how it all happened and what did you ever do to stop it? Go home, go home!"⁴⁴ Montag's monologue can be perceived as a rage against the rotten society, the brainwashed majority. He shows them the truth they have long tried to avoid. Mildred's friends are trying their best to make themselves think that they are living in an utopian world. In fact, they are living in a dystopian world. In fact, Mildred pushes Montag to read this specific poem, because she knows that he likes it. This should give her certain assurance that he would be satisfied after the reading and let them proceed in their activities, preferably watching their favorite TV show. They reflect the theme of seeking an "immediate gratification."⁴⁵

The advancement of society in the novel comes along with symptoms such as laziness, an inability to face and solve one's problems, the lack of creativity and intellectual void. Many of these symptoms are very up-to-date. They can be observed in our modern society as

⁴³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 100.

⁴⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 101.

⁴⁵ Hamblen, "Bradbury's 'Fahrenheit 451'," 819.

well. However, books have not been burned on a larger scale yet. Hopefully the resemblance of Bradbury's dystopian society to the one that we live in will not get stronger over the years to come.

Bradbury used more references to classical literature, most notably during the fictitious debate between Captain Beatty and Montag that supposedly happens in Beatty's dream. Even though they will not be analyzed here, they serve to illustrate Captain's intellectual dominance over the main protagonist. A possible interpretation of the mentioned debate might be that knowledge (that Beatty possesses) is not sufficient to revive the society intellectually. There must also be the urge and will to apply the knowledge and not be "interested only in keeping that status quo of uninterrupted happiness and freedom from worry."⁴⁶ This interest makes Beatty obedient to the needs of the government, even though he has the wisdom to rebel against it.

⁴⁶ Sisario, "Study of Allusions," 202.

3.2 Biblical Allusions

It is completely natural that Bradbury implied several Biblical references along with other literary allusions. Faith and religion are suppressed in the dystopian society of Montag's world. Therefore, it gives him the feeling of excitement and a certain importance when he tries to memorize the lines of Matthew 6:28 in the subway. The words of a poetic parable about "the lilies of the field"⁴⁷ collide in his mind with a loud advertisement promoting "Denham's Dentifrice."⁴⁸ The advertisement for dental care prevents the main protagonist from learning the verse by heart. The verse is, ironically, about trust and relief of stress. However, from this example we can see that it is in human nature to stress and that it can be very challenging to become like the lilies. This controversy allows the reader to understand the pressure of Montag's fast-paced and intellectually empty lifestyle. However, it also timelessly alludes to the Western society of today. The excerpt also shows how easy it is to memorize advertisements compared to other works. It implies that what is memorable, may not always be important.

The second Biblical allusion comes conveniently during Guy's return from Professor Faber. Montag anxiously anticipates the debate with his superior, Captain Beatty. He agrees that the professor can read to him and transmit his voice through the speaker in Guy's ear. It might not be a coincidence that Faber chooses to read "The Book of Job."⁴⁹ Montag is at the point in his life where he struggles with fear and doubts. Similarly to the "lilies" parable, the motif of this particular book from the Bible is submission and trust in God's power. It should provide Guy with the tranquility and peace of mind that he needs to overcome his doubts and face the well-read Beatty in a debate. The struggles of Job are of course incomparably worse than those of Guy. Nevertheless, there is a certain similarity between the two and Montag should be given at least a little comfort by learning this Old Testament story.

In the final chapter of the novel, after Montag's successful escape to the country, a group of outcast intellectuals provide an opportunity for yet another Biblical reference. Montag has tried in the past to memorize the Book of Ecclesiastes and Revelations. This knowledge, however poor he thinks it is, suddenly makes the former fireman more useful than he has ever been in his entire life. He becomes part of a community that plans to restore the world with the use of important literary works that they remember by heart.

⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 78.

⁴⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 78.

⁴⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 93.

When it is Montag's turn to say excerpts from his assigned literature out loud, he first thinks of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3. "To everything there is a season. Yes. A time to break down, and a time to build up. Yes. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak."⁵⁰ Note that *Fahrenheit 451* was published shortly after World War II. There is a possible reference to the era in which the novel was written and published. The postwar era in the twentieth century could also be perceived as a "time to build up". It is likely that Bradbury applied this motif from reality to the fictional world of the novel to highlight its importance.

Shortly after, Guy recalls another passage; this time from the Book of Revelations, 22:2. He proves to himself that his memory is not as bad as he first thought. "*And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*"⁵¹ Again, the passage can be considered a reference to the reality of Bradbury's postwar world. The most important factor, however, is the timing of this particular quote in the development of events in the book itself. It is in the very end of the novel, where Bradbury placed his final Biblical allusion. Montag wants to keep this passage in mind for when he enters a civilization, to which he is headed along with his book-preserving companions.

The idea of "healing of the nations" is strongly present in the novel from the moment when the fugitive fireman encounters the intellectuals. Also, this idea leaves the book's ending quite open. The reader can ask himself if such a demolished world can be rebuilt again with the revival of literature. Maybe Montag would finally have the opportunity to become a sort of "Paul the Apostle" of the future. Perhaps he would eagerly preach what he as eagerly used to persecute.

⁵⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 165.

⁵¹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 165.

4. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to analyze in detail the particular dystopian novel with the focus on the timeless motifs used in the novel, its dystopian elements and both literary and non-literary allusions. First, there are the resemblances between the totalitarian government that Bradbury created and actual regimes of the twentieth century.

On the one hand, *Fahrenheit 451* must have seemed to be very futuristic in the middle of the twentieth century, when it was first published; at least when considering the technological innovations, such as the extremely large televisions, which cover the whole walls; or the omnipresent fireproof houses. On the other hand, the behavior of the totalitarian government in the novel is similar to that of the infamous totalitarian regimes. One of them is fascism, which however rose and fell before Bradbury published his novel. Still, there are possible links to fascism that are discussed in the thesis. The most notorious is the book burning, which functions as the central theme in the novel and also provided a significant demonstration of regime's power in Nazi Germany in 1933.

The second discussed regime is communism. Similarities to the communist regime can be found in the book especially in the form of censorship. There is certain need to control the people, by applying strong censorship, which is present in the behavior of the fictional government in the novel and also in the behavior of the communist governments in the twentieth century. Bradbury has, in a way, foreseen the issues connected with this behavior in real world. The communist regime had already been powerful when Bradbury wrote *Fahrenheit 451*. Nevertheless, many links between the communist regime and the book's regime could only be observed in the era after the novel was published. The novel can therefore be perceived as a warning against the totalitarian future.

Sadly, the novel's story is set in America and the totalitarian form of government there is described as a product of the society. This raises a question: is today's democratic Western society bound to have a strong, authoritative leader? It does seem so. The recent example is the election of President Trump. He may not win over his opponents intellectually, but his strength is in his businessman's nature and his binary perception of problems. The society in *Fahrenheit 451* demands simple and straightforward solutions to problems, and therefore initiates its own intellectual destruction. In conclusion, the desire to simplify the reality when it seems that democracy becomes very complicated may be the general reason for electing such a straightforward president. What is very alarming is that in the book the government misuses its power severely.

The misuse consists of a number of manipulation techniques. The widespread of media such as television and radio makes the manipulation feasible on the majority of society. Then it is easy to present a misleading or untrue statement to the general public as a fact, knowing that the people are not going to check if it is relevant or true.

The similar thing is happening with commercial television and radio stations today. The news that aims to appeal to the society through emotions is often the most discussed. However, it tends to present strongly biased and “ready-made” truth, used as a means of manipulation. The mentioned manipulation can be hard to identify, especially with the lack of alternative sources of information that the people have in the novel. On the other hand, the reality of the modern Western society is that the sources are available, but it is the people who often do not want to take the time to question what is presented to them as unquestionable.

However, the core of this thesis is the analysis of allusions that are strategically used in the novel. It is no wonder that Bradbury decided to include various references to prominent literary works of the past. They help to highlight the importance and relevance of the novel’s themes in contemporary society. The story of *Fahrenheit 451* is set in the future, but with the use of citations from the real literary works the reader may connect the themes with reality. If the quotes were absent, it is more likely that the reader would consider the novel to be a work of fiction. However, it is also referred to as a work of science-fiction, but it is not so simple to define its genre. There are allusions to actual and famous books along with the timelessness of the novel’s motifs, which make the genre of *Fahrenheit 451* debatable at least.

To summarize the conclusions made in this thesis, Bradbury’s famous dystopian novel is more than just a piece of sci-fi literature. It hides a variety of allusions and implications to be discovered by attentive readers. It may be that not all the important implications were covered in this thesis, because that also depends on what one considers important. Nevertheless, the thesis should provide a detailed analysis of such allusions and references to the modern society of the twenty-first century. The resemblances mentioned in this thesis are indeed alarming and if the novel is not perceived purely as a work of fiction, it has the potential to incite the society to think thoroughly about the problems in today’s world.

If the deterring example of dystopian society is not that far from reality, it will be good to ask ourselves which actions to take in order to maintain democracy and suppress ignorance. Otherwise the society that we create might at some point resemble the one that Bradbury used as an exaggerated example of the undesirable. This thesis does not conclude that manipulation and ignorance have gotten out of control in the modern society. It simply implies that there is a connection between reality and what seems to be a work of fiction.

5. Summary

The aim of this Bachelor thesis is to analyze *Fahrenheit 451*, a famous dystopian novel written by a prolific twentieth-century writer Raymond Douglas Bradbury. The primary objective is to point out the timelessness of the motifs that Bradbury used in the novel. That corresponds with the fact that the thesis also deals with the issues of contemporary society. Furthermore, the aim is to prove that even, or especially, in the modern era of today, the society in general has a lot to learn from the allusions that the novel provides.

In the first section of the thesis, the focus is on the historical context of *Fahrenheit 451*. Various historical events are mentioned to illustrate any possible links between the themes in the novel and the history of our civilization. The section is further divided into three subsections.

In the first subsection, there is a brief summary of the novel's plot, characteristics and themes. Note that although *Fahrenheit 451* is generally considered a work of science-fiction, the term is purposely not used there. The second subsection deals with the issue of Nazi book burnings and the influence that this series of events may have had on Bradbury when writing the novel. The burning of books presents a significant theme in the novel and therefore many resemblances are found. In the third subsection, novel's various allusions to the communist regime are discussed. Even though the regime displayed in *Fahrenheit 451* cannot be regarded as purely communist or fascist, their totalitarian practices are very similar to those of the communist or fascist regimes in the twentieth century.

The second section discusses the most prominent allusions that can be found in the novel. As stated earlier, the sci-fi genre is not mentioned on purpose. Bradbury made so many brilliant allusions to the contemporary society of the twenty-first century that the book's genre remains questionable, at least. This section is then divided into two more subsections.

The first subsection deals with allusions to famous literary works in the novel, whereas the second subsection analyzes the references to the best-known book ever written, the Bible. The literary allusions in general help to make the themes in *Fahrenheit 451* more connected to the real world and therefore make the reader's experience more relatable.

As a result, the observed and analyzed allusions illustrate how Bradbury, with the use of timeless motifs and references, managed to predict the problems of future generations in *Fahrenheit 451*. These "prophecies" should, in a way, alarm our society to be careful and attentive to the novel's implications, otherwise the absurd examples of the masses of ignorant and severely manipulated people from the novel could become reality.

6. Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analýza románu *451 stupňů Fahrenheita* s ohledem na nadčasové dystopické prvky, které Raymond Douglas Bradbury, autor románu, do díla zakomponoval. Díky nim se dá *451 stupňů Fahrenheita* považovat za velmi relevantní dílo právě v dnešní moderní společnosti. Dále jsou v této bakalářské práci zmíněny důležité implikace, které přinejmenším otvírají otázku, zda lze tento román vůbec zařadit mezi sci-fi literaturu. Dystopická americká společnost z budoucnosti, vyobrazená v tomto díle, se totiž v určitých ohledech příliš neliší od moderní společnosti dnešního západního světa. Tato práce ukazuje, jak motivy, které Bradbury použil před více než padesáti lety, souvisejí s rychle se rozvíjejícím světem 21. století.

V první kapitole této bakalářské práce jsou rozebrány historické souvislosti, které mohly potenciálně souviset s tvorbou tohoto, zdánlivě vědeckofantastického, románu. Dále je zde uveden rozbor románu spolu s hlavními motivy a souvislostmi mezi hlavními postavami. Další dvě podkapitoly pojednávají o dvou významných režimech dvacátého století a jejich souvislostmi s knihou. Jedná se převážně o témata manipulačních praktik a cenzury.

První zmíněný režim je nacismus, přesněji pak pálení knih v nacistickém Německu roku 1933. Jelikož pálení knih je v knize klíčové a odvíjí se od něj prakticky celý děj, bylo nalezeno mnoho souvislostí v tomto směru. Druhý režim, který je v této práci uveden v souvislosti s hlavními motivy v knize, je komunismus. Především útlak intelektuálů a více či méně přísná cenzura jsou hlavní motivy, které jsou zde rozebrány s ohledem na možné souvislosti s komunistickým režimem dvacátého století. Jak výše zmíněný nacismus, tak komunismus jsou v této práci uvedeny jako režimy, na které Bradbury mohl potenciálně poukazovat nebo před nimi varovat.

Druhá kapitola této bakalářské práce o symbolech a implikacích použitých v Bradburyho románu vyjadřuje hlavní myšlenku práce, poukazuje totiž na znepokojující podobnost absolutistické vlády v tomto románu s dnešní realitou. V následujících dvou podkapitolách se tato práce zaměřuje na literární reference, které Bradbury do *451 stupňů Fahrenheita* zakomponoval, a které propojují svět budoucnosti z knihy se skutečnou historií lidstva. V první podkapitole jsou to citace z literárních děl světoznámých autorů, která jsou zde analyzována a dána do kontextu s dnešním moderním světem i s dějem románu. Druhá část kapitoly se pak soustředí na biblické citace, na jejich význam v ději Bradburyho románu, a také na jejich nadčasová poselství, která jsou v této práci rozebrána a ponechána jako důvod k zamyšlení nad dnešní společností.

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8. Annotation

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Abstract

This Bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of dystopian elements in the famous novel by Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*. Historical events of the era when the novel was written are mentioned to highlight the possible influence of the past on the work about the future. Also, various timeless motifs from the novel are discussed and the emphasis is put on the idea that the dystopian society depicted in the novel is not in many aspects much different from the modern society of the twenty-first century.

9. Anotace

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Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu dystopických prvků ve slavném románu Raye Bradburyho, *451 stupňů Fahrenheita*. Kvůli objasnění možného vlivu okolního světa a jeho událostí na psaní tohoto románu jsou zde zmíněny některé historické události, které s tímto románem určitým způsobem souvisí. Taktéž jsou v této práci rozebrány nadčasové motivy použité v této knize s důrazem na fakt, že dystopická společnost vyobrazená v tomto románu se v mnohých ohledech neliší od moderní společnosti dnešního světa.