

5-2015

Future memory: Ray Bradbury and the aesthetics of nostalgia

Billy J. Cryer
University of Texas-Pan American

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cryer, Billy J., "Future memory: Ray Bradbury and the aesthetics of nostalgia" (2015). *Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA*. 195.

https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd/195

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

FUTURE MEMORY: RAY BRADBURY AND
THE AESTHETICS OF NOSTALGIA

A Thesis

by

BILLY J. CRYER

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2015

Major Subject: English Literature and Culture

FUTURE MEMORY: RAY BRADBURY AND
THE AESTHETICS OF NOSTALGIA

A Thesis
by
BILLY J. CRYER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Jean Braithwaite
Chair of Committee

Dr. Amy Cummins
Committee Member

Dr. Mark Noe
Committee Member

May 2015

Copyright 2015 Billy J. Cryer

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To Mike Cryer

Who helped me climb up into the rocket and sent me blazing off to Mars,
and to many worlds besides.

ABSTRACT

Cryer, Billy J. Future Memory: Ray Bradbury and the Aesthetics of Nostalgia. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2015, 60 pp., references, 40 titles.

Upon the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, Ray Bradbury quickly emerged as the nation's leading science fiction writer. Bradbury's novel figured among the most prominent tales of Mars—eclipsing even the highly popular Mars novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs, who first popularized the Mars adventure novel with the appearance of *A Princess of Mars* in 1912.

While many critics praised *The Martian Chronicles* for its inventiveness, its acute treatment of social injustices, and its lyrical prose, other critics were quick with complaints. Prime among these was a plangent criticism of Bradbury's attitude toward science and technology: critics alleged that the author promoted a pessimistic view of science and technology, one fraught with an abiding philosophy of futility. This thesis scrutinizes this claim by critics and examines the novel's use of nostalgia to show how Bradbury's views on science and technology are far more complex than critics allow.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Much gratitude goes to the chair of my thesis committee, Dr. Jean Braithwaite. Her advice and guidance have been invaluable, and her knowledge of Bradbury—and science fiction in general—has been critical in the completion of my thesis. It is a privilege to count her as a mentor and friend.

My thanks also go to Dr. Amy Cummins, whose deep learning is matched only by her exuberant passion for literature and its transformative power; her enthusiasm is a university all its own.

To Dr. Mark Noe I am grateful for the unique insight on science fiction he provides, from his experience as both a scholar and as a creator of imaginative worlds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I: BRADBURY'S MARS.....	1
CHAPTER II: BRADBURY AS MIRROR.....	19
CHAPTER III: THE LENS OF NOSTALGIA.....	40
REFERENCES.....	55
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	60

CHAPTER I

BRADBURY'S MARS

In the summer of 1877, the planet Mars, attended by its twin moons Deimos and Phobos, drew near the Earth in a rare occurrence as the two planets converged at perihelion. More than 30 years had passed since Mars and the Earth coincided in such close proximity along their elliptical revolutions around the sun. During this unique alignment—known as a perihelic opposition--the three celestial bodies were perfectly aligned: Mars, Earth, and Sol. The red and blue planets were remarkably close.

Down on Earth, two deeply inquisitive minds had readied themselves for this event, girded with new advances in the telescope and scientific understanding. In America, the Washington astronomer Asaph Hall made perhaps the more important scientific observation; he discovered the two small moons of Mars—Deimos and Phobos.

In Milan, Giovanni Schiaparelli was the director of the Brera Observatory. His observations during the Mars opposition had a much more profound impact on the subject of Mars in general. Schiaparelli observed a network of streaky lines across the Martian surface and, consulting notes made by a previous Italian astronomer, he decided to name the phenomena *canali*. The word was rendered into English as “canals,” rather than the more accurate “channels.” This seemingly insignificant detail would ultimately prove to be enormously significant.

The observations from Hall and Schiaparelli sent a subtle ripple across the scientific community. This ripple gained momentum and ignited an extraordinary flurry of public interest regarding the topic of Mars. Intellectual activity about Mars bloomed rapidly—both scientific and artistic. Monographs began to flow. Mars-inspired art and music emerged. The literature of Mars was birthed. In the pantheon of Mars literature, Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* stands out as one of the most representative and iconic works.

When Bradbury’s short story fix-up novel—or, more accurately, composite novel—first appeared in May of 1950, most of the book’s stories had already been published in various American fiction journals of the time, while another twenty or more Mars tales—the so-called “unchronicled” Mars stories—penned by Bradbury never made it into the final version of the novel. Later editions of *The Martian Chronicles* saw the subtraction and addition of stories, although these changes have only ever accounted for five percent of the novel (Reid 26). Nonetheless, what remains is a seminal work of fiction that catapulted Bradbury’s career as a writer, and contributed to science fiction becoming—for a brief time—one of the most widely read genres—as popular as mainstream fiction (Latham 86).

The initial reviews of *The Martian Chronicles* were generally either tepid or glowing. In the May 7 edition of *New York Times*, reviewer Rex Lardner wrote: “Earth people will find the ‘Chronicles’ suspenseful and, at times, funny.” While not exactly short shrift, these cursory reviews made little effort to treat the book properly. Other reviews were more generous. In the October 1950 edition of *Tomorrow*, British-American novelist Christopher Isherwood wrote that *The Martian Chronicles*

demonstrated Bradbury to be “highly sensitive and intelligent [...] a great master of his particular genre” (Isherwood 57).

Still, Bradbury does not escape the pillory of harsh criticism. More recently, Harold Bloom writes that while Bradbury is “highly inventive and humane[,]...his palpable failure is his style: his language is thin, and his characters are names upon the page. *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles* lack the literary distinction of Ursula Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*, David Lindsay’s *A Voyage to Arcturus*, and John Crowley’s *Little, Big* and *Aegypt* series” (Bloom 1). Bloom voices a common complaint about the science fiction genre in general: that the characterization is weak and that the prose is not at par with other so-called serious literature.

But Bradbury’s prose style is exactly what has elicited such positive reader reaction over the years, particularly the lyrical nature of the prose in *The Martian Chronicles*. Aldous Huxley famously declared Bradbury to be a poet rather than a novelist. A critic in 1953 pointed out that even “hardened reviewers” were “enchanted by the author’s poetic prose” (Mogen 18). The result is that Bradbury’s detractors have had to address this positive attention to Bradbury’s prose, sometimes with marked annoyance. The literary scholar Oscar Shaftel wrote in his 1953 article “Social Content of Science Fiction”—which appeared a scant three years after the novel’s publication—that *The Martian Chronicles* is an “allegorical fantasy in pretentious prose” (103). Shaftel offers no specific details enumerating how the prose is pretentious.

Shaftel’s article, however, provides a wealth of perspicacious insight into Bradbury’s writing in relation to social issues of the time. The article is also significant in that it establishes one of the primary criticisms against Bradbury, which still remains at

the center of Ray Bradbury studies today. Shaftel argues that the novel reveals Bradbury to be cynical of science and technological advancement, which diminishes the author's effectiveness. He contends that *The Martian Chronicles* follows Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* to a "cheap philosophical conclusion" of "the old depression-conceived moratorium on science, with men better off in an idyllic cave, tending sheep and dancing, free of the false hope of 'progress'" (102). Ultimately, Shaftel argues, Bradbury has only scorn for the human race: "But the sum of Bradbury's theme is the essential self-defeat of man's aspirations" (103). Furthermore, Bradbury's rejection of modern culture is "smug rather than indignant" (103).

This same criticism against Bradbury has reverberated up through contemporary scholarship. Influential Bradbury scholar David Mogen writes that critics and science fiction readers often complain that Bradbury "has no respect for the medium; that he does not even trouble to make his scientific double-talk convincing; that--worst of all--he fears and mistrusts science" (21).

In this thesis I scrutinize the notion that Bradbury espouses views of futility and cynicism in relation to scientific progress. I argue that Bradbury's true concern is not the dangers of scientific advancement itself, but rather the dangers of scientific advancement without the arts and humanities granted equal footing. I show that Bradbury conveys to his reader that in fashioning the future, humankind must always place equal value on both the sciences and the arts and humanities. I demonstrate how Bradbury manifests these ideas by engaging his characters with their pasts in vivid, lyrical prose. I conclude that *The Martian Chronicles* is not a dire lamentation of humanity's inevitable demise, but

rather a cautionary tale, full of optimism, wonder, and catharsis—all affirmations of life and human progress.

A cogent analysis of Bradbury's attitude toward science and technology in *The Martian Chronicles* first requires situating the novel fully within its literary context, and tracing the development of the literature of Mars. Understanding the novel's unique position within the literature of Mars is crucial in understanding the themes of the novel, including Bradbury's messages regarding science and technology. As such, it is essential to go back and carefully examine the period between 1877—with the discoveries of Asaph Hall and Giovanni Schiaparelli—and 1950, with the publication of *The Martian Chronicles*.

While some literary historians might place the beginning of the literature of Mars in 1609, when Galileo was cobbling together the first rudimentary telescopes with simple pipes and lenses, its true origins perhaps lie in the literature of the moon. In the 2nd century AD the Greek rhetorician Lucian of Somasata wrote the first fictional interplanetary voyage—*True History*—in which a hurricane lifts up a ship and carries it to the moon. Later, Galileo's telescopes brought the moon much closer to Earth, and with the continued development of the telescope, the imagination of writers also proliferated. In 1686 Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle published *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds) in which he predicted humans will travel to the moon in “airships” (Crossley 25). Fontenelle speculated that there is intelligent life on other worlds. He did not, however, attempt to describe the physical appearance of this hypothetical life form, adding that “it is not proper for the imagination to go any farther than the eye can” (Crossley 25). Still, his book served as a catalyst, and novels on

dangerous voyages to the moon gathered in numbers, and, by the 19th century, they abounded. Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) remains a popular representation of the lunar voyage novel.

The literature of Mars was close on the heels of the literature of the moon. Like the literature of the moon, it was waiting for enough scientific knowledge about the red planet to be uncovered in order to manifest itself. Ironically, the literature of Mars, as later represented in the most iconic fictions of Mars, is informed by a number of erroneous scientific discoveries. Perhaps the most egregious scientific discovery took place in the 1877 Mars opposition. Giovanni Schiaparelli's observations of long striations along the surface of the planet turned out to be an optical illusion. Other astronomers noted the lines, as well, including Nathaniel Green, who, in England, also took part in the 1877 Mars opposition from which he created colorful drawings of the planet.

Nonetheless, Schiaparelli had already published his findings, and the notion of canals on Mars gained momentum. Schiaparelli was convinced that his discovery could be nothing other than canals. "It is impossible to doubt their existence, as that of the Rhine on the surface of the Earth," he later wrote to Nathaniel Green with drawings (qtd. in Crossley 40). Green was uncertain about the presence of canals from his own observations, but allowed that the air in London was not as clear as the air in Madeira. The *canali* became a topic of debate among astronomers: many claimed there was no evidence of *canali*; others supported Schiaparelli.

In 1892 the subject of Mars intensified. Camille Flammarion published a massive study of the history of observations of Mars, *La planète Mars*. More influential, however,

was Flammarion's work of fiction about Mars, *Uranie*, which appeared in English translation in 1890 (Crossley 67). The topic of Mars gained more and more interest in popular discourse. In 1894, Flammarion's *Popular Astronomy: A General Description of the Heavens* appeared to English readers. In his book, Flammarion paints a vibrant Mars imbued with intelligent life:

Henceforth the globe of Mars should no longer be presented to us as a block of stone revolving in the midst of the void, in the sling of the solar attraction, like an inert, sterile, and inanimate mass; but we should see it a living world, adorned with landscapes similar to those which charm us in terrestrial nature; a new world which no Columbus will ever reach, but on which, doubtless, a human race now resides, works, thinks, and meditates as we do on the great and mysterious problems of nature. These unknown brothers are not spirits without bodies, or bodies without spirits, beings supernatural or extra-natural, but active beings, thinking, reasoning as we do here. (qtd. in Crossley 71)

Already in 1894, astronomers are making a leap of logic, speculating about the existence of life on Mars with surprising conviction. Astronomers are "doubtless" that a "human race" resides on the planet. Not only does intelligent life exist on Mars, but the intelligently life is *human* life. Flammarion does not even allow that extra-terrestrial life is alien in form.

The same year that Flammarion's *Popular Astronomy* appeared in English, 1894, an American amateur astronomer named Percival Lowell took two research assistants from Harvard Observatory in Boston and moved to Flagstaff, Arizona to build the Lowell

Observatory. Percival Lowell would become the most significant figure in the history of Mars. His influence on the cultural and literary history of Mars in the twentieth century cannot be underestimated.

Lowell was initially an unlikely candidate for such a central figure in the history of Mars. He was born in 1855 in Massachusetts. He earned a bachelor's degree at Harvard in 1876 and took up a position in his family's investment business (Crossley 68). He later made extended trips to East Asia and published a number of journey writings, which were widely read. They include *Chosen: The Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea* (1886), *The Soul of the Far East* (1888), *Noto: An Unexplored Corner of Japan* (1891), and *Occult Japan* (1894).

Lowell held strong ties to Harvard. The poet James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) had served on the modern languages faculty; his brother—Abbot Lawrence Lowell (1856-1943)—became president of Harvard in 1909; and his sister, Amy Lowell (1874-1925), was a popular poet. Lowell's scholarly interest in astronomy was purely casual. He had no formal training in the subject, other than a strong foundation in mathematics. Furthermore, he had no connection to the professional scientific community (Crossley 69). Nonetheless, when the opportunity presented itself in 1894, he moved to Arizona to set up his observatory on a steep bluff a mile from downtown Flagstaff. The Lowell Observatory is still in operation and is one of the most visited observatories in the nation.

Lowell's first book on the subject appeared in 1895, simply as *Mars*. In the book he reinforced Schiaparelli's and Flammarion's observations about the *canali*. Lowell argued the *canali* represented proof of life on Mars. The canals were evidence of an intelligent race of beings that—in order to stave off extinction from a desiccated, dying

world—engineered a large-scale irrigation system, which crisscrossed the globe, transporting water across the vast dusty planet. The canals were proof of this ingenious system of waterways, and thus the existence of the intelligent life on the planet.

In his writings, Lowell postulated that when astronomers saw the canals on Mars, they were not seeing the long waterways, but rather dense flora on either side of the canals. He argued that the striations would have to be 30 miles in width to be visible from Earth, and thus he deduced that the explanation was the existence of lush vegetation on either side of the canals (Crossley 73). With this type of pseudo-science—committing one *non sequitur* after another—Lowell established himself as an authority on Mars to the popular audience.

Lowell produced two other works on the subject: *Mars and Its Canals* (1906), and *Mars as the Abode of Life* (1908). Lowell's critics constituted the majority of the scientific community; they were vociferous in their remonstrance against his errant logic and unsupported deductions. They gnashed their teeth in consternation at his impatience for empirical rigor. The general public was unaware that Lowell's name was anathema to most astronomers (Crossley 12). His writings were, ultimately, more creative than scientific, completely disregarding Fontenell's maxim about scientific speculation: it is not proper for the imagination to go any farther than the eye can (Crossley 25).

But this creative speculation is what captured the imagination of the popular audience. The blurry images from Lowell's telescope left a great deal to the astronomer's imagination—and Lowell had no difficulty filling the lacuna. His writing was remarkably popular. He lectured widely—at home and abroad—and his speeches were spellbinding. His charisma for the subject fueled a massive popular fascination for Mars. Lowell

promoted a big, romantic, exciting, and highly elaborate Mars. He also articulated a very sophisticated and literary vision of Mars. As Crossley points out: “Lowell’s vision was extraordinarily artful and literary in presentation” (72). Lowell provided to the general reader the thrill that most astronomers could not provide. In short, his romantic depictions of the red planet seized the collective imagination.

The first flurry of imaginative writing about Mars had already kicked off shortly after the 1877 Mars opposition. These include Percy Gregg’s *Across the Zodiac: The Story of a Wrecked Record* (1880), which introduced the word *astronaut* to the English language; *Aleriel, or a Voyage to Other Worlds* (1883), by the Anglican priest, Rev. Wladislaw Somerville Lach-Szyrma (his novel was unique in that it portrayed an extra-terrestrial protagonist, a winged inhabitant of Venus travelling to Earth in an “ether car” disguised as an explorer, researcher, and teacher); *A Plunge into Space* (1890) by Robert Cromie; and *Messages from Mars, By the Aid of the Telescope Plant* (1892) by Robert D. Braine. This last book is notable for both its bizarre title and its relative obscurity in the literature of Mars.

More fiction about Mars soon followed. By the time Lowell’s third book on Mars appeared, the popularity of the subject of Mars had reached a feverous crescendo. A *New York Times* feature article in 1909 stated: “Save the problem of immortality and of life beyond the grave, there is, perhaps, no more fascinating one than that which conjectures life on Mars and the possibility of establishing communication with that great planet” (Crossley 11).

No single writer captured Lowell’s vision of Mars better than Edgar Rice Burroughs with the publication of *A Princess of Mars* in 1912. Burroughs’s Mars is lifted

right out of Lowell's works, with additional embellishments. Burroughs paints a desiccated planet with vast dry seabeds, sponge-like vegetation that carpets the globe, and endless stretches of canals, which Burroughs refers to as *waterways*, reinforcing the idea that they are engineered structures to facilitate irrigation, rather than natural rivers. Additionally, Burroughs presents the trope of a dying planet: ancient abandoned cities with beautiful architecture slowly crumbling; a lost race of Martians sunk into history, along with their acquired knowledge and culture; and a younger race of Martians endowed with telepathic powers, a pattern that was already in use by H.G. Wells in *War of the Worlds* (1898).

The legacy of Burroughs's Mars is that it set the standard for a generation of novels about Mars. *A Princess of Mars* was the first truly popular science fiction novel about Mars (Crossley 7). It was followed by ten sequels over a period of three decades. Contemporary British author of hard science fiction Stephen Baxter writes that the literature of Mars has seen three great paradigms. The first paradigm is represented by Edgar Rice Burroughs's Mars novels; Baxter refers to this vision of Mars as the Barsoom paradigm—the name “Barsoom” taken from the name of the red planet by the Martians in Burroughs's Mars novels. In this paradigm, literature about Mars is largely informed by Lowell's depictions of Mars and mirrors Burroughs's vision of the planet: a thin but breathable atmosphere, a chilly though bearable climate, gravity lighter than that of Earth, a system of artificial canals, and an ancient crumbling civilization. The Barsoom paradigm is a highly romanticized vision of Mars. This same paradigm or mythos dominated the literature of Mars for nearly three decades. Perhaps the three most popular Mars novels that conform to the Barsoom paradigm—other than Burroughs's novels

themselves—are *Last and First Men* (1932) by Olaf Stapledon, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) by C.S. Lewis, and *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) by Ray Bradbury.

However, by the time Ray Bradbury published his first tale of Mars—“The Piper”—in 1940, the Barsoom mythos had begun to give way to the Arid Mars paradigm—the second of the three paradigms (to date) in the literary history of Mars. This shift in the literature of Mars was the result of new discoveries about Mars. Advances in the telescope, and the introduction of new technologies such as thermocouples and spectrometers, dispelled many fallacious ideas promulgated by Schiaparelli and Flammarion and Lowell. The new discoveries showed the canals to be an optical illusion and revealed that the atmosphere on Mars could not sustain human life. Arid Mars depicted a more scientifically accurate representation of the planet. According to Baxter, on Arid Mars:

[T]here were no canals, no gorgeous Martian cities. But Mars was still a home away from home: basically Earthlike, with an atmospheric pressure maybe a tenth of Earth’s. There was some water around, and probably Mars held life, but it would be rather feeble: dour, unthreatening stuff, perhaps plants with tough, leathery skin to retain water. Humans living on Arid Mars would grow long legs and huge lungs to strain at the mountain-top air. (Baxter 8)

Early examples of Arid Mars literature include the story “A Martian Odyssey” (1934) by Stanley Weinbaum, Robert Heinlein’s novel *Red Planet* (1949), Arthur C. Clarke’s novel *The Sands of Mars* (1951), and Isaac Asimov’s story “The Martian Way” (1952).

As the Arid Mars paradigm emerged, criticism of the Barsoom representation of Mars proliferated. In his seminal work of science fiction criticism *New Paths of Hell* (1960), American writer Kingsley Amis sums up the criticism against Burroughs's Mars:

The degree of scientific interest here can be gauged from the way Burroughs shows his contempt for all planetary devices, from watersprouts to gravity insulators: the hero, trapped in a cave by a band of Apaches, simply finds himself on Mars, and at once enough starts happening in the way of green men for the more technical questions to be quietly dropped. Burroughs' most celebrated and profitable creation, Tarzan, is, incidentally, a more complicated person than the continuing spate of films about him would suggest. (Amis 37-38)

Bradbury's Mars exhibits no more fidelity to scientific accuracy. American science fiction writer Fletcher Pratt complained that Bradbury's descriptions of Mars tended to "strain credulity" (Seed 39). Asimov wrote that Bradbury's stories "reek with scientific incongruity" (Seed 39). Heinlein held a "personal irritation" with Bradbury's "commitment to scientific purity" (Crossley 198).

The fact that Bradbury chose to hold on to the Barsoom mythos in fashioning his own tales of Mars suggests a key to understanding his views on science and technology. There are at least two primary reasons why Bradbury may have clung to the older paradigm of Mars. The first is that the Barsoom paradigm is a far more interesting view of Mars. From his richly imagined plots, it appears evident that Bradbury found the earlier Martian landscape more captivating and enchanting. Arid Mars left no room for the imagination, an untenable situation for Bradbury, who frequently referred to his

stories as “fantasies,” rather than “science fiction.” The second reason Bradbury clung to the Barsoom paradigm is because it was simply easier to assimilate the Barsoom vision into his stories—inasmuch as the mythos already existed. It was already a richly developed series of lore; Bradbury didn’t have to reinvent the wheel.

In these two points Bradbury mirrored C.S. Lewis, who also wrote science fiction. “There is thus a great deal of scientific falsehood in my stories: some of it known to be false even by me when I wrote the books,” Lewis wrote. “The canals in Mars are there not because I believe in them but because they are part of the popular tradition” (Crossley 170). Likewise Lewis responds to criticism about his decision to use canals on his Mars novel, *Out of the Silent Planet*: “It is their wonder, or beauty, or suggestiveness. When I myself put canals on Mars I believe I already knew that better telescopes had dissipated that old optical delusion. The point was that they were part of the Martian myth as it already existed in the common mind” (Lewis 69). Like Lewis, Bradbury remained an exemplar of Barsoom Mars because of expediency and because of the pleasure of developing a world already pulsing with complexity and beauty.

Moreover, I suggest that Bradbury’s vision of Mars is even more romanticized than Burroughs’s. Bradbury never attempts to account for the fantastical elements in his novel, while Burroughs—in an attempt to create the passing semblance of verisimilitude—frequently weaves into the narrative desultory background information about the planet, its inhabitants, and phenomena. The fact that John Carter can leap implausible heights is carefully explained (albeit unconvincingly to the vigilant reader, perhaps) by the variations in planetary gravity. In *A Princess of Mars*, the planet’s atmosphere is generated via an intricate process of terraforming:

The building in which I found myself contained the machinery which produces that artificial atmosphere which sustains life on Mars. The secret of the entire process hinges on the use of the ninth ray, one of the beautiful scintillations which I had noted emanating from the great stone in my host's diadem. This ray is separated from the other rays of the sun by means of finely adjusted instruments placed upon the roof of the huge building, three-quarters of which is used for reservoirs in which the ninth ray is stored.

This product is then treated electrically, or rather certain proportions of refined electric vibrations are incorporated with it, and the result is then pumped to the five principal air centers of the planet, where, as it is released, contact with the ether of space transforms it into atmosphere. (Burroughs 132)

Here Burroughs at least attempts a credible explanation of the atmosphere using the jargon of science. The effect is similar to reading about the process of oil extraction or the production of paper. The suspicion and annoyance bubbling in the reader's mind are instantly mollified. Or such appears to be the intended effect.

In *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury offers no such explanations; his Mars simply exists and the reader is charged with accepting his world as a condition for entering into it. There is no hard science in Bradbury's science fiction—and Bradbury suggests that attempting to analyze the scientific elements in his novel is the wrong approach altogether. This is a crucial point in understanding his attitude toward science and technology.

For example, while Bradbury does not provide an explanation for the impossible existence of an atmosphere on his Mars (Tyrr, as the Martians refer to their planet), the

atmosphere becomes an important element in the novel—to bring into focus another topic even more important to the author. In “The Green Morning,” Benjamin Driscoll is a 31-year-old Mars immigrant traveling on motorcycle with bags of tree seeds. After 30 days of planting seeds, Driscoll builds a camp and reflects on the planet:

Mars was a place as unpredictable as time. He felt the baked hills simmering down into frosty night, and he thought of the rich, inky soil, a soil so black and shiny it almost crawled and stirred in your fist, a rank soil from which might sprout gigantic beanstalks from which, with bone-shaking concussion, might drop screaming giants. (*The Martian Chronicles* 76)

In this paragraph, like so many others throughout the novel, Mars is depicted as a strange, mysterious place with unspeakable potential, like the “rich, inky soil” itself. Driscoll’s thoughts are interrupted by the beginnings of a soft rainfall. The rain gathers strength and continues for two hours while Driscoll turns up his face and laughs into the rain and claps his hands. The next morning, miraculously, all the seeds planted by Driscoll have sprouted and grown into soaring, mature trees. A surge of fresh air blooms into the atmosphere:

All about, like a moving current, a mountain river, came the new air, the oxygen blowing from the green trees. You could see it shimmer high in crystal billows. Oxygen, fresh, pure, green, cold oxygen turning the valley into a river delta. In a moment the town doors would flip wide, people would run out through the new miracle of oxygen, sniffing, gusting in lungfuls of it, cheeks pinking with it, noses frozen with it, lungs revived, hearts leaping, and worn bodies lifted in a dance.

Mr. Benjamin Driscoll took one long deep drink of green water air and fainted.

Before he woke again five thousand new trees had climbed up into the yellow sun. (*The Martian Chronicles* 78)

In this chapter, the planet's atmosphere is used as a mechanism to comment on a far more important topic to Bradbury, namely the beauty and the miracle of life—the prevailing theme that permeates all of Bradbury's writings. Bradbury—though he remained a humanist—approached life with an exuberant optimism, and repeatedly attempted to convey his philosophy of wonder and appreciation for life in his writings. The novel's epigraph—“It is good to renew one's wonder,” said the philosopher. “Space travel has again made children of us all.”—serves as a hint from Bradbury to his reader that his primary focus in the novel is exploring humans and their relationship with each other and the world.

Bradbury's deliberate disregard of scientific accuracy, then, does not prove the author is anti-science. As I have shown thus far, Bradbury's Mars becomes merely a backdrop to help draw into focus his more important themes—the characters and the societies they build. I argue that Bradbury's decision to invoke the Barsoom mythos reveals his writing as primarily social and aesthetic in nature. Bradbury uses the trappings of science fiction to build a moral fable, and, just as a child's fairy tale contains a moral with all the impossible components of fantasy—immense dragons, hungry trolls, disgruntled witches—so does Bradbury's novel contain a moral with the impossible trappings of Barsoom. Bradbury does not expect the impossibility of his Mars to be questioned, no more than the fantastical elements of a fairy tale are scrutinized.

In closing my examination of the novel in its literary context, I want to draw two distinctions regarding Bradbury's relationship to science and technology, which I have developed in this chapter. The first is Bradbury's *use* of science and technology in the novel, whether accurate or inaccurate. The second is the author's *attitude toward* science and technology. This distinction is sometimes blurred by critics. That Bradbury does not invoke science in a faithful manner in itself does not reveal his attitude about the subject. The author's use of science in the novel is rather an aesthetic decision. However, Bradbury does indicate his attitude toward science and technology by other means, which I will explore in the next chapter. In doing so, I will first need to establish the novel in its social context.

CHAPTER II

BRADBURY AS MIRROR

With the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, Ray Bradbury situated himself at the center of the literature of Mars, nudging Edgar R. Burroughs from the throne. Whether or not Bradbury remains the most widely recognized figure in the literature of Mars is a topic for another paper. Nonetheless, Bradbury inherited a firmly established genre when his novel appeared, though it was not a very reputable genre among literary critics. Science fiction as a whole enjoyed a similar critical disapprobation, and certainly not entirely without reason.

The salient feature of genre fiction was its defining quality: characterization and literary device were eclipsed by plot and intrigue. “Its execution was usually detestable; the conceptions, sometimes, worthy of better treatment,” opined C.S. Lewis on the state of early science fiction (“On Science Fiction” 59).

Elsewhere, early science fiction is simultaneously given equal praise and condemnation: “Burroughs’s books are gorgeous, entertaining, and completely daft,” writes science fiction author Stephen Baxter on the Mars novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs (Baxter 6). A character in Robert Cromie’s *Messages from Mars, by the Aid of the Telescope* (1892) serves as a form of satire of the literary critic’s exasperation with science fiction and adventure novels. One character bemoans “authors whose sole business is to cudgel out of their brains a string of incidents which might possibly have

happened, but which never did happen” (Crossley 62). He adds that “the more impossible the incidents related, the better the readers like them” (Crossley 62). This is a biting—if somewhat blinkered—remark on the nature of adventure novels and the readers who enjoy them.

Yet it is important to note that the provenance of science fiction bears no claim to great literary distinction. The space opera in one respect is a mere variation on the western novel—otherwise known as the horse opera. As Kingsley Amis points out in his groundbreaking study of science fiction *New Maps of Hell*, there is a small leap between a western and a space opera:

In space-opera, Mars takes the place of Arizona with a few physical alterations, the hero totes a blaster instead of a six-gun, bad men are replaced by bad aliens looking just like bad men with green skins and perhaps a perfunctory sixth digit, and Indians turn up in the revised form of what are technically known as bug-eyed monsters, a phrase often abbreviated to BEMs. (Amis 36)

Another early influence on the formation of science fiction was the Lost World adventure novel, popularized by H. Rider Haggard. Lost World novels narrated dangerous adventures in far, exotic locales on Earth. *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887) are Haggard’s two most representative Lost World novels. This genre achieved sensational success and was a major influence in the Mars novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Kingsley Amis points out that the Lost World genre “provided elements that needed only to be shifted to Mars and eked out with a BEM or two to get the whole new show on the road” (Amis 37).

The Lost World stamp on science fiction was so pervasive that C.S. Lewis satirized the motif in *Out of the Silent Planet*. The protagonist, Ransom, arrives on Mars (referred to as Malacandra by the Martians) and is nonplussed at not encountering the obligatory Lost World fauna. There are “no insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean Abominable, no twitching feelers, rasping wings, slimy coils, curling tentacles, no monstrous union of superhuman intelligence and insatiable cruelty” (35).

Bradbury himself seemed to exhibit a general dissatisfaction with the quality of science fiction writing. He labored endlessly to fashion a distinctive prose style. He drew inspiration from the rich visual imagery of fellow genre authors, such as Clark Ashton Smith, whose stories appeared in *Weird Tales*, alongside Bradbury’s. Bradbury also found valuable insight in the Mars fiction of Leigh Brackett, whose first Mars tale appeared in the same year as Bradbury’s first Mars story—1940. Brackett, a fellow member of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, was Bradbury’s senior by five years. Around 1940 Bradbury and Brackett began mentoring each other on the craft of writing; they met every Sunday for five years to share and critique each other’s writing (Weller 108). From Brackett, Bradbury learned how to craft his deceptively simple prose: “Leigh taught me pure story writing. Her stories were very simple, and well plotted, and very beautiful. I learned from her how to pare my stories down and how to plot” (Weller 108).

Bradbury’s influences, however, were not limited to Burroughs and Smith and Brackett—that is to say, practitioners in his own field. While these writers inspired the backdrop of Bradbury’s own Mars, he drew upon more mainstream literary writers, as well. Bradbury often gives credit to two novels for the structure and style of *The Martian*

Chronicles: Winesburg, Ohio (1919) by Sherwood Anderson, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).

The short vignette approach to narrative in *Winesburg, Ohio* inspired Bradbury to fashion the scenes of his Mars novel in a series of close-up, small-town character studies using a similar technique to Anderson's. *The Grapes of Wrath* worked a similar influence on Bradbury's prose:

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, every other chapter is a description, a metaphor, prose poetry, it's not plot. I read that book and I learned to ponder, to philosophize, to make images...I subconsciously borrowed that structure from Steinbeck when I wrote *The Martian Chronicles*. Every other chapter in *The Grapes of Wrath* describes the land, or the highway, or the individuals...The bridge chapters in *The Martian Chronicles* are pure Steinbeck. (Seed 50)

Each bridge chapter—the short sections throughout the novel that separate the longer stories and help introduce the theme or tone for the longer story it precedes—provides a smooth narrative flow for the novel.

The enduring legacy that *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Winesburg, Ohio* left on *The Martian Chronicles* is the close-up character examination approach to the narrative. This portrait of every day life—the normal dynamics between characters—especially appealed to Bradbury, who was born in the small Midwest town of Waukegan, Illinois in 1920 and lived there until the age of 14 when the family immigrated to Los Angeles, California (Weller 68). There is a pungent aroma of self-reflection that threads the entire series of tales in *The Martian Chronicles*—of hearkening to long ago times when the planet held a

great civilization, of things lost to time even within the characters' individual lives. This backward momentum is a prime narrative force in the novel, and in much of Bradbury's other writings, as well. The cumulative effect of this backward momentum is one of deep and abiding nostalgia. In virtually every story, Bradbury uses the backdrop of Mars to bring into sharp contrast a profound sense of loss. In the next chapter I will focus on how examining this backward momentum provides the crucial element needed to unlock Bradbury's attitude toward science and technology.

If science fiction literature enjoyed a wildly popular following by the time Bradbury emerged on the scene, the genre only grew in popularity with Bradbury's contributions. His publications represented a new type of science fiction: a science fiction written with the skill of a master stylist—writing that theretofore had only appeared in the most literary of venues.

Kingsley Amis astutely observes that in 1940—when Bradbury was putting forth his first stories—major shifts were happening in the terrain of speculative fiction:

Sensationalism began to diminish, some degree of literacy made its appearance, and the admonitory utopia, virtually the leading form of contemporary science fiction, came into being...As regards the emergence of the new and better writers, I can just suggest that while in 1930 you were quite likely to be a crank or a hack if you wrote science fiction, by 1940 you could be a normal young man with a career to start, you were a member of the first generation who had grown up with the medium already in existence. (Amis 41)

Amis illustrates his claim by pointing out that in the 1950's, science fiction stories began spreading into general magazines, including *Playboy*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, *McCall's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *the Reporter*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* (Amis 48).

Ray Bradbury's fictions appeared in many of the same leading general magazines. His writing appealed to a much wider audience than the typical science fiction writer, so much so that he soon became known as the leading figure in science fiction. "Ray Bradbury is the uncrowned king of the science-fiction writers, a young author whose fanciful imagination, poetic prose and mature understanding of human character have won him an international reputation," wrote a New York Times reviewer in 1953 after the release of *Fahrenheit 451* (Prescott).

In *New Maps of Hell* (1960), Amis confirms Bradbury's role as the central figure in science fiction of the time, a writer who appealed even to the most reluctant science fiction reader: "Bradbury is the Louis Armstrong of science fiction, not in the sense of age or self-repetition but in that he is the one practitioner well known by name to those who know nothing whatever about his field" (Amis 90). Amis speculates that one reason for Bradbury's fame may have something to do with the quality of the author's writing. This acknowledgement, however, seems to come grudgingly and not without reservations:

Another and much more unlikely reason for Bradbury's fame is that, despite his regrettable tendency to dime-a-dozen sensitivity, he is a good writer, wider in range than any of his colleagues, capable of seeing life on another planet as something extraordinary instead of just challenging or horrific, ready to combine this with strongly held convictions. (Amis 91)

Bradbury scholars seem to agree that Bradbury's science fiction is altogether unique because of the quality of the author's prose. One Bradbury scholar refers to the prose in *The Martian Chronicles* as "rich as the cream filling of Twinkies" (Forrester 50). At its best, Bradbury's prose is light, ethereal, humming with a pensive lyricism. The most perceptive assessment of Bradbury's writing perhaps comes from Scholes and Rabkin in their 1977 monograph *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*: "Bradbury represents an extreme of elegiac sentiment and gentle fantasy, touched with the eerie and uncanny. It is a special preserve, very much his own, somewhere on the far side of Sturgeon" (65).

The quality of Bradbury's writing, then, offers one explanation for his success. The other explanation is that Bradbury presented themes on social issues that resonated with a large audience. In other words, Bradbury leveraged the genre of science fiction, which—during the 1940s and 1950s—served as a major platform for social commentary. Some of the most popular novels of the time—*Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Fahrenheit 451*—were all science fiction dystopian novels. As demonstrated by these novels, the genre was a strong "instrument of social diagnosis and warning" (Amis 74). This has always been a primary trait of science fiction; by placing characters in entirely new circumstances, the genre becomes a unique medium that "furnishes a new vantage point from which to survey our culture"(Amis 12).

Science fiction as a mechanism for social examination and criticism defined the genre even before Bradbury's generation. Stephen Baxter points out that H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898) served as a jarring critique of British colonization. In the novel, the invading Martians are portrayed as "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic [who] regarded this world with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans

against us” (Baxter 6). This was the first time in a major science fiction work in which an alien race made contact with Earth, rather than humans making contact with another planet. Wells, for the first time, gave his readers “a taste of being on the receiving end of a hostile colonisation” (Baxter 7). Orson Welles’s 1938 radio broadcast adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* from his New Jersey studio demonstrated more palpably the fear of a possible alien invasion, though undoubtedly the subtle post-colonial criticism was lost on the listener amidst the general panic and terror.

In *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury embraces the long-standing tradition of using the medium to closely scrutinize society. The novel flows with two undercurrents—a backward-flowing current (as mentioned above, represented by the heavy sense of nostalgia woven throughout) and a forward-moving current, represented by the future setting on a far planet. Both of these narrative currents bring the reader all the faster to the very present. Bradbury directs these currents—with all the engineering needed for a Martian canal—to bring the present into sharp relief for a focused examination of society.

But what does Bradbury have to say about society? Does it reveal his attitude toward science and technology? I argue that the best way to get at Bradbury’s views on science and technology in society is to begin by studying the author’s use of irony.

Throughout the novel, irony emerges as the primary vehicle for dramatic power. The pathos of virtually every story hinges upon this literary device. Using the technique of irony, Bradbury successfully comments on social matters ranging from sexism, censorship, authoritarian governments, and the role of science and technology. Many Bradbury scholars and critics view metaphor as the novel’s chief literary device;

however, while metaphor provides a way for the author to better convey concepts—typically descriptions of scenes or other physical objects—irony is used to unpack and drive home major themes.

Bradbury's irony is subtle; it does not clobber the reader over the head like the “earthquake irony” of the likes of G.K. Chesterton. It serves as a litmus test to reveal to the reader his or her own values—often exposing those values as hypocritical, or selfish, or both. “Mars is a mirror, not a crystal,” Bradbury frequently insisted (Crossley 7). In *The Martian Chronicles*, irony serves as the reflective surface of that mirror.

Examples of Bradbury's irony abound. In the first full-length story, “Ylla,” the Martian Mrs. K. dreams of a visitor from Earth. She recounts the dream to her husband:

“I dreamed about a man.”

“A man?”

“A tall man, six feet one inch tall.”

“How absurd; a giant, a misshapen giant.”

“Somehow”—she tried the words—“he looked all right. In spite of being tall. And he had—oh, I know you'll think it silly—he had *blue* eyes!”

“Blue eyes! Gods!” cried Mr. K. “What'll you dream next? I suppose he had *black* hair?”

“How did you *guess*?” She was excited.

“I picked the most unlikely color,” he replied coldly. (3)

If Bradbury uses irony to point a mirror back at the reader, this passage serves to startle the reader into seeing humanity from a different perspective, with the aim of showing

how human life is incredibly unique and should be valued all the more. This is a common motif in Bradbury's writing, as previously mentioned.

Irony, then, is the main tool Bradbury uses to highlight his views on science and technology. The first glimpse of the use of irony in relation to Bradbury's views on science and technology comes from passages that discuss the theme of cultural expansionism. Scholars have repeatedly interpreted the novel as a sharp criticism of expansionist ideology, citing a clear parallel of the colonization of Mars in the novel to the conquering of America: "[It] has been widely noted that Bradbury's most famous work, *The Martian Chronicles*, 'talks about the colonization of Mars in terms of the colonization of America,' and is, in fact, a view of history thinly disguised as science fiction'" (Wolfe 104).

Examining Bradbury's use of irony, we can gauge his opinion on cultural expansionism in general, and his views on science and technology in particular. The second full-length story, "The Earth Men," provides an example of Bradbury's incisive use of irony to suggest his views on cultural expansionism in general. From the very beginning of the story, irony uncoils like a snake:

"Whoever was knocking at the door didn't want to stop. Mrs. Ttt threw the door open. "Well?"

"You speak *English!*" The man standing there was astounded.

"I speak what I speak," she said.

"It's wonderful *English!*" The man was in a uniform. There were three men with him, in a great hurry, all smiling, all dirty.

"What do you want?" demanded Mrs. Ttt.

“You are a Martian!” The man smiled. “The word is not familiar to you, certainly. It’s an Earth expression.” He nodded at his men. “We come from Earth. I’m Captain Williams. We’ve landed on Mars within the hour. Here we are, the *Second Expedition*! There was a First Expedition, but we don’t know what happened to it. But here we are, anyway. And you are the first Martian we’ve met!”

“Martian?” Her eyebrows went up.

“What I mean to say is, you live on the fourth planet from the sun. Correct?”

“Elementary,” she snapped, eyeing them.

“And we”—he pressed his chubby pink hand to his chest—“we are from Earth. Right, men?”

“Right, sir!” A chorus.

“This is the planet Tyrr,” she said, “if you want to use the proper name.”

“Tyrr, Tyrr.” The captain laughed exhaustedly. “What a *fine* name! But, my good woman, how is it you speak such perfect English?”

“I’m not speaking, I’m thinking,” she said. “Telepathy! Good day!” And she slammed the door. (16-17)

Throughout this story, the men from Earth are astounded by the incurious reaction to their appearance. The Martian insouciance is bewildering. When Mr. Ttt—to rid himself of the nuisance standing before him—sends the Earthmen to the house of Mr. Aaa, this latter growls that his neighbor once again has schemed to inconvenience him. “That’s not the important thing, sir!” the captain shouts in exasperation (19).

The astronauts eventually meet their deaths by the hands of a Martian psychologist who believes the Earthmen—along with their spaceship—are mere telepathic projections of a fellow Martian suffering from a mental disease. When the ship doesn't disappear after the men are killed, the psychologist is seized by a paranoid fear that he has been infected with the psychological disease. He shoots himself dead. The Martian townspeople later find the rocket and haul it away to be broken down for scrap metal. The last paragraph, in typical Bradbury fashion, flips the scene on its end to provide a different perspective: "That night it rained all night. The next day was fair and warm" (31). Irony opens and closes this story. The insignificance of the Earthmen's presence is reinforced by the contrast of the dramatic events narrated in the story and the sheer unimportance of those events—the world went on as usual. Bertrand Russell writes that "nature is indifferent to our values" (Russell 92), and here Bradbury conveys that indifference via irony to challenge the reader's assumptions about the superiority of his or her own culture.

Perhaps the most explicit example of Bradbury's criticism of expansionist ideology is seen in the short story "And the Moon Be Still as Bright," the fourth expedition to Mars, in which the Martian race has already been obliterated from chicken pox brought to the planet on a previous mission. The crew's archeologist, Spender, takes umbrage at the disrespect for the planet his fellow crewmates exhibit.

Gibbs walked over to the freshly ignited fire and said, "Why don't we use the ship chemical fire instead of that wood?"

"Never mind," said Spender, not looking up.

It wouldn't be right, the first night on Mars, to make a loud noise, to introduce a strange, silly bright thing like a stove. It would be a kind of imported blasphemy. There'd be time for that later; time to throw condensed-milk cans in the proud Martian canals; time for copies of the *New York Times* to blow and caper and rustle across the lone gray Martian sea bottoms; time for banana peels and picnic papers in the fluted, delicate ruins of the old Martian valley towns. Plenty of time for that. And he gave a small inward shiver at the thought.

(49)

A while later in the story, Spender ostensibly becomes possessed by the spirit of a Martian and begins killing his crewmates for their "imported blasphemy." Yet again, Bradbury seems to challenge his reader's fundamental assumptions, to encourage his readers to see value in other cultures. He suggests that a sense of superiority often results in the senseless destruction of something else—whether a set of values or an entire culture.

The question of cultural superiority was doubtless a topic that weighed heavily on the American mind. The war against Hitler and the Axis powers was raging during the early 40s when Bradbury began composing his first Martian stories, and the expansion of the Soviet empire continued well after the novel appeared in 1950. For Bradbury, the expansion of the German—and later the Soviet—empire not only constituted an egregious and heinous act in that the expansion resulted in untold deaths and oppression, but it also resulted in the sharp curtailment of civil liberties in America.

Many scholars place *The Martian Chronicles* firmly in the sphere of Cold War novels, novels influenced by the period after World War II when the country was plagued

with “deep insecurities” and “suddenly suspicious and vigilant of Communist activity within its citizenry” (Hoskinson 346). The scholar William Touponce echoes Hoskinson: “The years during and especially immediately following the end of World War II, during which most of Bradbury’s important stories were written, constitute a period of spiraling anxiety and paranoia in American cultural politics” (110). Hoskinson enumerates succinctly the reasons for the cause of this anxiety and paranoia:

First Joseph Stalin’s immediate and unchecked occupation of Eastern European countries at the close of World War II left many Americans wondering if the United States and the Roosevelt administration hadn’t foolishly misjudged Soviet intentions at the Yalta Conference in 1945. Second, the Soviet Union’s subsequent acquisition of atomic weapons technology in 1949 would reinforce this position; it would also end the U.S. monopoly on thermonuclear weapons and raise questions about Communist agents in high-level government positions. Third, Senator Joseph McCarthy’s public accusations of Communist activity in the State Department in 1950 (together with the inflammatory tactics of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI, and a host of other right-wing government agencies) planted seeds of paranoia and subversion in the American culture that would blossom into fear and irrationality throughout the 1950s. (Hoskinson 346)

Senator McCarthy, who chaired the House Committee on Un-American Activities, went to Hollywood in 1947 to hold hearings on alleged communist activities. A number of actors, writers, and producers were convicted for refusing to answer questions, and consequently were blacklisted or boycotted by the movie industry. Some actors fled the country for a brief period. (Touponce 110).

Touponce writes that U.S. congressional legislators began linking art with artist as promulgators of “subversive ideas” (111). Comics were investigated as contributing to juvenile delinquency, and fantasy books such as *The Wizard of Oz* were removed from libraries on the claim that they were harmful (111). Jonathan Eller writes that the FBI opened a file on Bradbury:

There was no shortage of conservatives in Hollywood, and there were writers in and beyond the industry who felt that science fiction offered an easy route for subversion. Bradbury’s well-known anticensorship stories were more concerned with the death of the imagination than they were with any narrow political stance, but others—most notably “Carnival of Madness,” revised for *The Martian Chronicles* as “Usher II”—were critical of any government that tried to regulate literature. (Eller 146)

In 1949 the Soviets detonated their first atomic bomb, which began a new wave of cold war paranoia and secrecy. As early as 1946 George Orwell argued that literature, which aims to promote individual liberty, might disappear altogether under the “weight of bureaucracy and machine civilization if writers did not take a strong stand against these forces” (Touponce 112).

This unfolding cultural expansionism in Europe and Asia resulted in extreme counter measures by the U.S. government. The government’s new tactics “amounted to government-supported conformism and resulted in mass censorship” (Hoskinson 346).

With *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury simply follows a tradition of writers who explore the dehumanizing effects of authoritarian governments that value science and not the arts, a tradition that goes back to H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine* and continues up

to Ursula K. Le Guin. *The Martian Chronicles*—like *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*—suggests less about the author’s view on science and technology and more about the author’s concern about the suppression of imagination and fantasy of the conformist culture of the 1950s (Touponce 116).

To be sure, these dehumanizing effects caused by authoritarian governments are exacted by the aid of technology, and Bradbury does not shrink away from the fact, nor does he hesitate to show how technology—when used for selfish ends (Bradbury repeatedly suggests that the definition of evil is predicated on the concept of selfishness)—wreaks untold sorrow. These dehumanizing effects are drawn in all corners of the narrative.

Bradbury’s novel depicts real, visceral fears of the time. The atomic bomb and the threat of a nuclear holocaust remained a lurid weight on society. This anxiety about further war and increasing government authoritarian practices is portrayed by the old man Pritchard in the bridge story “The Taxpayer.” To avoid impending doom on Earth, the old man takes himself to the nearest rocket field and demands admission:

He shook his fist at them and told them that he wanted to get away from Earth; anybody with any sense wanted to get away from Earth. There was going to be a big atomic war on Earth in about two years, and he didn’t want to be here when it happened. He and thousands of others like him, if they had any sense, would go to Mars. See if they wouldn’t! To get away from wars and censorship and statism and conscription and government control of this and that, of art and science! (31)

The men in uniform laugh in derision. The old man is dragged away and taken off in a policewagon. Even though the old man is not taken seriously, Bradbury here depicts a legitimate, widespread fear. At the center of this fear—the war and destruction and government suppression of rights—was a keen acknowledgement that innovations in science and technology were part of the cause of the problem.

Technology was used during WWII to exact unspeakable horror. The destruction was staggering. In total, the death toll exceeded 60 million (McMahon 2). Winston Churchill wrote that Postwar Europe was “a rubble heap, a charnel house, a breeding ground of pestilence and hate” (McMahon 2). One reporter wrote that Germans had destroyed Warsaw, “systematically, street by street, alley by alley, house by house. Nothing was left but a mockery of architecture” (2). McMahon describes the desolation as astonishing in scale:

In France, fully one-fifth of the nation’s buildings were damaged or destroyed; in Greece, one-quarter. Even never-occupied Great Britain suffered extensive damage, principally from Nazi bombing, while losing an estimated one-quarter of its total national wealth in the course of the conflict. Soviet losses were the most severe of all: at least 25 million dead, another 25 million rendered homeless, 6 million buildings destroyed, and much of the country’s industrial plant and productive farmland laid to waste. (McMahon 2)

In “There Will Come Soft Rains,” Bradbury best captures the kinetic possibility of a similar Armageddon occurring in the United States. The story—one of Bradbury’s most anthologized pieces—is a grim tableau of post-apocalyptic horror. A single house stands in an entire city destroyed by nuclear conflagration. During the night, the demolished city

gives off “a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles” (167). The single remaining house appears normal on the exterior, except for the west-facing wall:

The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their image burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint---the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer. (167-168)

The “nuclear shadows” depicted here serve as a shocking reminder to Bradbury’s reader about technology’s potential for vast and senseless destruction. Again, as with nearly all of the stories, Bradbury turns to irony to hammer in his message. The house’s appliances continue their diurnal operations: the stove prepares and serves meals, tiny robot mice collect dust and debris to deposit in the chute of an incinerator, the yard sprinkler whirs to life.

Bradbury’s story is a reimagining of a popular war poem by Sara Teasdale (1884-1933), from which the story derives its title, “There Will Come Soft Rains.” The story quotes the poem in full:

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;
And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire,
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;
And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.
Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
If mankind perished utterly;
And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn
Would scarcely know that we were gone. (170)

The Teasdale poem echoes Bertrand Russell's claim that nature is indifferent to human values and efforts. The irony of a house that continues to serve humans who have departed like gods, is compounded, when near the end, the house catches fire after a tree falls, shatters a window, and knocks chemicals onto the stove. While the house succumbs to the flames, the robot mice are "darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away" (172). The cumulative effect of this scene is to draw into sharp relief the absence of humans—conveying the senselessness of the nuclear war with all the more dramatic effect.

While Bradbury portrays the potential horrors of science and technology—by exploiting the dramatic power of irony—he does not suggest that science and technology are inherently bad in themselves; he simply demonstrates the *potential* of science and technology to be harnessed for terrible purposes.

Indeed, for every abominable use of technology in the novel, Bradbury counters with a positive use of technology. In "There Will Come Soft Rains," the manifold technology of the house is seen as positive. Bradbury uses playful, lyrical language to

describe the contraptions—the tiny robot mice with whirling mustached runners; an electric incinerator that sits like evil Baal in a dark corner; poker tables that unfold and fold back into walls like butterflies. These images are delivered lovingly to the reader in positive connotations. Likewise, elsewhere in the novel, Bradbury views space travel—along with space ships and related technology—as highly positive. If—as with the domestic appliances above—Bradbury uses lyrical language to indicate his attitude toward space technology, one only needs to read the opening scene of “The Third Expedition”:

The ship came down from space. It came from the stars and the black velocities, and the shining movements, and the silent gulfs of space. It was a new ship; it had fire in its body and men in its metal cells, and it moved with a clean silence, fiery and warm. In it were seventeen men, including a captain. The crowd at the Ohio field had shouted and waved their hands up into the sunlight, and the rocket had bloomed out great flowers of heat and color and run away into space on the *third* voyage to Mars! (32)

Bradbury evinces a child-like wonder for space exploration here. The language is charged with the author’s signature exuberant optimism, with enthusiasm for the subject. In one of the most visually striking metaphors of the entire novel, Bradbury compares the exhaust blast from the rocket to “great flowers of heat and color.” This highly artistic language, along with its underlying tone of wonder, reveals the author’s passion for the technology of space travel.

As I have shown thus far, a historical and social examination of *The Martian Chronicles* reveals an abiding concern about the potential of science and technology to

cause widespread death and to also curtail civil liberties. Reid argues that the novel explores the power of technology to suppress individual freedom and identities, as well as spirituality and art (33). If Bradbury sees science and technology as a vehicle for death and oppression, does he simply use the novel as a mirror to express this, or does he take a step further and suggest a possible alternative future? My argument is that, yes, Bradbury suggests that the only future in which humankind flourishes is one in which the arts and humanities are given equal footing to science and technology. The final chapter will explore how Bradbury communicates this by utilizing perhaps the strongest literary device in the novel: nostalgia.

CHAPTER III

THE LENS OF NOSTALGIA

On April 28, 1951, the British scholar and writer C.S. Lewis penned a brief note to an admirer who had written to inquire about the scholar's opinion of a young American writer named Ray Bradbury. Lewis's appraisal of Bradbury was decidedly generous: "Bradbury is a writer of great distinction in my opinion. Is his style almost too delicate, too elusive, too 'nuancé' for S.F. matter? In that respect I take him and me to be at opposite poles; he is a humbled disciple of Corot and Debussy, I an even humbler disciple of Titian and Beethoven" (Lewis, Letter to M. Rutyearts).

Lewis provides an especially keen analysis of Bradbury's imagery. It is delicate and elusive and nuanced, like the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot or the music of Claude Debussy. The latter's music is light and whimsical—woven with playful fluttering arpeggios. The melody is not crisp and staccato, but rather the notes blend one into another so as to achieve richly subtle layers. Likewise, Corot's paintings are equally elusive and subtle. A glance at "Orpheus Leading Eurydice From the Underworld" (1861) or "Souvenir de Mortefontaine" (1864) and one immediately perceives the similarity; the art is blurred, unfocused, the colors bleeding into each other to create a delicate, elusive scene—one that appears only partially-formed, as if from the fog of memory.

Memory, here, emerges as the key concept. Like the art of Corot and the music of Debussy, Bradbury's prose is light, elusive, his imagery is hazy and unfocused, and suffused with strains of wistfulness. The prevailing sensation evoked by Bradbury's imagery is that of a brooding pensiveness, a sustained engagement with memory. This sets the aesthetic tone for Bradbury's use of nostalgia throughout the novel.

It is important here to illustrate the delicate, subtle nature of Bradbury's prose. In "*The Martian Chronicles* and Other Stories," Wayne Johnson examines the lyrical imagery of the story "Ylla." Johnson argues that Bradbury engages in a sophisticated layering of imagery in order to create contrasting impressions:

Bradbury combines visual impressions, soft-focused and vague, with tactile images that are sharp and evocative. For example, we are told the house turns and follows the sun like a flower, and that the walls are hung with 'blue phosphorous portraits'—visual images which tantalize rather than define. On the other hand, the description of the house's cooling system is quite concrete: "A gentle rain sprang from the fluted pillar tops, cooling the scorched air, falling gently on her. On hot days it was like walking in a creek." [...] The cumulative effect of the two kinds of imagery is to produce a mixed impression of both house and occupants which is part real, part dream. (33)

With "Ylla," Bradbury's writing emerges as highly stylized and nuanced. Like the passage above, the imagery is often surreal in nature. Jonathan Eller writes that Bradbury's surreal prose resulted in literary accolades in France:

A review of *The Martian Chronicles* by Michel Carrouges and a broader review of Bradbury's fiction by Michel Deutsch were beginning to establish a

Surrealist reputation for Bradbury in France. These critics found Bradbury's creative hallmarks—his haunting dream-logic, his reverie-based exploration of man's deepest feelings, and his appropriation of Space-Age machinery without any reference to scientific logic—to be richly surreal; here was an unstructured, almost intuitive, but nevertheless extremely creative form of Surrealism that would be highly regarded by many (but certainly not all) French critics. The Denoel celebration marked the beginning of a canonical process that would place Bradbury, along with Faulkner and Poe, among the major figures in French rankings of American literary masters. Late in life, this process would culminate in France's highest literary honor—Commander, French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. (Eller 119)

The success of Bradbury's use of nostalgia is rooted in his lyrical language. Furthermore, Bradbury's sophisticated, lyrical structuring of language—and thus his use of nostalgia—is a prime ingredient in the narrative force of the novel. Touponce writes that Bradbury “uses image clusters of lyricism to drive the plot, set the mood, and comment on character” (Touponce xv).

Essential to this examination of Bradbury's use of nostalgia is confronting the author as a highly poetic writer. This quality separated him from his peers in the speculative fiction arena. In 1953, TIME magazine declared Bradbury “the Poet of the Pulps” (Weller 43). As previously mentioned, Aldous Huxley claimed that Bradbury was a poet (Weller 175). Commenting on the *The Martian Chronicles*, Stephen Baxter draws attention to both the imagery and the nostalgia: “These stories are rich in nostalgia and

style, suffused with loneliness, pensiveness and regret, and told in Bradbury's extraordinary mixture of uplifting strangeness and homespun folksiness" (Baxter 9).

If Bradbury's special blend of nostalgia never existed in science fiction before, I argue that it is precisely due to his lyrical language. In other words, it is no accident that Bradbury's language is both lyrical *and* shot through with nostalgia. Nostalgia as a literary device originated in poetry. It did not exist—in its modern form today—in the 17th and 18th century European novels; realism was generally the *modus operandi*. Poets created the modern concept of nostalgia in literature. As Santesso writes in *A Careful Longing: The Poetics and Problems of Nostalgia*: "Poets were attempting to broaden the concept of nostalgia to include longing for idealized places and time never personally experienced [...] Eighteenth-century poets experimented with tropes with which they could evoke newly refined experiences of nostalgia and thereby establish it as a familiar emotion" (Santesso 19).

Before the 18th-century poets began developing nostalgia as a literary device, nostalgia as a concept had not existed for very long. Not only is the concept of nostalgia relatively new on the human timescale, it also initially emerged as a physical, pathological condition rather than the emotional or psychological condition that it is today. The word nostalgia was coined in 1688 in a dissertation by a Swiss medical student named Johannes Hofer (Walder 8). According to Dennis Walder, Hofer created the word by combining two Greek roots: *nostos* ("returning home") and *algia* ("pain" or "longing"). Santesso, translates *algia* as "painful condition" (Santesso 13).

In his dissertation, Hofer attempted to describe and name a condition he observed among young Swiss abroad. Hofer described the condition as "an affliction of the

imagination” (Ladino 6). Walder explains Hofer’s difficulty in articulating the condition medically:

Its aetiology was a mystery; the disease appeared to spread from the brain through the body, the sufferer’s afflicted imagination having been aroused by the idea of a the recalled native land, resulting in nausea, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, fever, cardiac arrest, and even attempted suicide. According to Hofer, the sole cure was a prompt return to the homeland, although drugs could mitigate the condition. (Walder 8)

For over a century nostalgia was considered a medical, pathological condition. It wasn’t until 1950 that nostalgia had lost its pathological connotations (Ladino 115). As Linda Hutcheon puts it, at some point “nostalgia became less a physical than psychological condition” (qtd. in Santesso 13).

Still, nostalgia as depicted in art was first explored and developed by poets. Scholars have defined nostalgia as both a literary device and an emotion. As a literary device it enables authors to manipulate language, drive plot, develop characters, and influence readers. As an emotion, it affects both the reader and the characters in the story (Ladino 7). Santesso writes that the concept of nostalgia—from the outset—stretched and evolved so that it became more than simply a personal experience, but also a shared experience:

What do we mean, today, when we speak of nostalgia? The word no longer conveys anything as specific as a ‘longing for home.’ We hear of nostalgia for schooldays or for ancient Rome, for the sights and sounds of a now-changed neighborhood, or for the smell or taste of a food no longer

available. It is a word used in a remarkable number of ways, with a startling range of objects: it has become a kind of catchall term for all forms of sentimental longing, or regret. And yet there are some obvious rules and expectations. It is atypical, for example, to encounter a depiction of nostalgia for middle ages; childhood is the usual object of nostalgia. Nostalgia is commonly nationalized: Americans feel nostalgia for their own Old West rather than for the western settlement periods of Canada and Brazil, for example. And nostalgia today is more often imagined in temporal terms (one longs for the past) than in the spatial or geographical terms at the heart of Hofer's original definition. (Santesso 15)

Thus, a far broader notion of nostalgia emerges. Santesso writes that “nostalgia today is no longer simply a synonym for homesickness: we can be ‘nostalgic’ for hula hoops and ancient Greece; we can be nostalgic for homes we never had and states we never experienced” (Santesso 14). This evolution of the concept of nostalgia in large part was the product of poets, who first glommed nostalgia, with which to fashion new literary experiences. Even with the evolution of nostalgia in literature, however, the scholarly consensus is that “the material of nostalgic experience is the past” (Santesso 16).

As a literary device, nostalgia has received substantial criticism. David Lowenthal writes that nostalgia has been accused of being “ersatz, vulgar, demeaning, misguided, inauthentic, sacrilegious retrograde, reactionary, criminal, fraudulent, sinister, and morbid” (Ladino 5). Susan Stewart—stationed at the vanguard of nostalgia criticism—is responsible for the infamous diagnosis of nostalgia as a “social disease” (Ladino 6). Stewart argues that nostalgia is:

[...] always ideological; the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, the past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. (Ladino 6)

According to nostalgia critics, the literary device has a “tendency to romanticize the past through imagining an origin that is too simplistic” (Ladino 6). In short, nostalgia is disregarded as “sentimental kitsch” (Walder 4).

I reject this assessment. It is true—as Weller points out—that Bradbury is an “unabashed sentimentalist” (9). However, Linkfield points out that Bradbury does not engage in pointless sentimentalism; he is rather a pragmatic and optimistic sentimentalist:

[Bradbury] realizes that each person is a product of his past experiences and that the present should contain some of the past in it. But anyone who tries to escape into the past by whatever method is merely attempting something that is both impossible and dangerous. (Linkfield 101)

Throughout *The Martian Chronicles*, nostalgia is tempered by an acute awareness of the present and the need to respond to the challenges of the present. In “And the Moon Be Still as Bright”—the fourth expedition to Mars—Bradbury suggests that cultural expansion results in the extreme potential for loss of life and liberties. In “Way Up in the Middle of the Air,” Bradbury provides a scathing rebuke of racism, arguing for equality and humane treatment of all people. Nostalgia critics disregard the inherent aesthetic value of nostalgia, on the one hand, and they completely deny the value of nostalgia as a

force for social good, on the other. As Stewart asserts, nostalgia only looks toward a past that “never existed,” and thus cannot provide a mechanism for social change in the present.

However, many scholars argue that nostalgia *explicitly* provides a mechanism for social change in the present. Clewell writes that it is the unique medium of nostalgia—its backward and forward narrative momentum—which allows it to speak so forcefully about the present: “In the tension between a backward-looking and forward-looking impulse, modernist writers have discovered the potential for a productive dialogue where the past is brought into conversation with the present” (Clewell 1).

Nostalgia particularly serves to speak about social injustice. Ladino writes that “nostalgia works as a productive force—an individual emotional experience, a source of collective consciousness, or a narrative catalyst that imagines ways to facilitate social or environmental justice” (Ladino XIII). As the scholar John Su argues, “Loss and nostalgic yearning can, and do, shape ‘ethical visions’ in numerous literary texts, and many authors consciously exploit nostalgia’s tendency to interweave imagination, longing, and memory in ways that can challenge social justice” (Ladino 14). Nostalgia is a mechanism for social change and a model for ethical relationships, in that it “signifies an effort to discover meaning in one’s life, to understand oneself better by making comparisons between the past and the present, and thus integrating experiences into a larger scheme of meaning” (Ladino 115). Scholars assert that nostalgia is especially suited to speak on issues of social oppression; as Lynne Huffer argues, “nostalgia also functions within oppressed groups struggling for liberation” (Ladino XII).

In *The Martian Chronicles*, by analyzing nostalgia as a literary device using the theory of nostalgia as a mechanism for social change, one discovers desultory adumbrations of Bradbury's views on the sciences and the arts. One of the more eminent voices in nostalgia studies—Svetlana Boym—defines nostalgia as “the mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility” (Walder 9). I wish to highlight the concept of mourning as an integral component of nostalgia. Bradbury's narrative is saturated in mourning. The prose is tinged with a “brooding melancholy” (Linkfield 96). This brooding melancholy is characteristic of an individual in mourning. More specifically, of an individual confronting loss.

Bradbury, then, employs nostalgia to convey a palpable sense of loss throughout the novel. Between the lines, the reader discovers the author's views on the dual importance of both the sciences and the arts.

Often, the loss a character suffers is clearly apparent; other times the loss is much more subtle, and the character seems to have trouble articulating why he or she is suffering. The closing scene of “Ylla” offers an example. Near the end of the story, Mr. K takes a weapon and a mask from a closet and leaves to murder the two Earthmen who are soon scheduled to land in a spaceship nearby. When Mr. K returns home, Mrs. K's unspoken sorrow is wrenching:

They sat down to eat. She looked at her food and did not move her hands.
“What's wrong?” he asked, not looking up from dipping his meat in the
bubbling lava.

“I don't know. I'm not hungry,” she said.

“Why not?”

“I don’t know; I’m just not.”

The wind was rising across the sky; the sun was going down. The room was small and suddenly cold.

“I’ve been trying to remember,” she said in the silent room, across from her cold, erect, golden-eyed husband.

“Remember what?” He sipped his wine.

“That song. That fine and beautiful song.” She closed her eyes and hummed, but it was not the song. “I’ve forgotten it. And, somehow, I don’t want to forget it. It’s something I want always to remember. She moved her hands as if the rhythm might help her to remember all of it. Then she lay back in her chair. “I can’t remember.” She began to cry.

“Why are you crying?” he asked.

“I don’t know, I don’t know, but I can’t help it. I’m sad and I don’t know why, I cry and I don’t know why, but I’m crying.”

Her head was in her hands; her shoulders moved again and again.

“You’ll be alright tomorrow,” he said.

She did not look up at him; she looked only at the empty desert and the very bright stars coming out now on the black sky, and far away there was a sound of wind rising and canal waters stirring cold in the long canals. She shut her eyes, trembling.

“Yes,” she said. “I’ll be all right tomorrow.” (13-14)

The catharsis is profound. Ylla’s true loss is not the missed opportunity to meet the Earthman who appears in her dreams, but rather the intimacy that she once shared with

her husband, when they used to paint pictures with chemical fires, swim in the canals when filled with “green liquors” from wine trees, and talk until dawn by the “blue phosphorous portraits in the speaking room” (2). Captain Nathaniel York provided a brief possibility of experiencing those moments again. By the end of the story, nostalgia surfaces to convey a powerful sense of loss. Nostalgia enables Ylla’s quiet desperation to be expressed with all the more pathos.

On a thematic level, the “evil weapon” Mr. K uses to kill the alien visitors represents the potential of technology to cause oppression and loss, which are typically followed by suffering. Additionally, Mrs. K’s various dreams symbolize art, as Bradbury suggests throughout the novel that dreams and visions—including telepathic-induced visions—represent art and creative expression. Mr. K’s hostile dismissal of Mrs. K’s dream symbolizes the dismissal of the arts and humanities in a society that values science and technology more.

This same motif is repeated throughout the novel. At the end of “The Earth Men,” the Martian psychologist—Mr. Xxx—shoots the Earthmen, believing they, along with the ship, constitute a projected hallucination. This shocking act represents a rejection of the artistic and creative force by a cold, clinical, emotionally detached mind—a mind that sees no need for art or creative expression. Bradbury here is implying—with supreme irony—that all the advantages of modern technology and scientific understanding do not make humans better. Bradbury shows that humane ideals are often sacrificed upon the altar of science and technology. Bradbury makes a bold claim: he asserts that questions of ethics are the exclusive jurisdiction of the arts and humanities.

This claim resurfaces multiple times in the novel. In “The Musicians,” a group of boys run through the homes in the abandoned Martian towns, playing in the ashes and bones of the dead Martians. The boys kick about and thrash their feet and uncover “white xylophone bones beneath the outer covering of black flakes” (89). Great white skulls roll into view “like a snowball” from beneath the piles flake-like Martian flesh. The boys shout and continue playing the role of “musician” amongst the xylophone bones and the “ribs, like spider legs, plangent as a dull harp” (89). While the boys play, they are mindful that “each of the towns in its turn was being burned clean of its horrors by the Firemen, antiseptic warriors with shovels and bins, shoveling away at the ebony tatters and peppermint-stick bones, slowly but assuredly separating the terrible from the normal” (89).

Bradbury presents a dream-like scene that is being erased by “antiseptic warriors” who are separating the “terrible from the normal.” This scene presents clear parallels with mass censorship that was transpiring in the US and abroad during the aftermath of WWII. Whimsy, fantasy, and creative expression are suppressed by the firemen, who symbolize a clinical, detached mindset that devalues the arts and humanities.

“Usher II” develops the most plangent criticism of censorship in the novel. The protagonist, a man named William Stendahl, has spent four million dollars to construct a representation of the house that appears in Edgar Allen Poe’s short story “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Stendahl’s house is an exquisite rendering: it is lugubrious and ghoulish, foggy and frightening. The reader learns that Stendahl has created the house in order to exact revenge on all his enemies--eminent sociologists, clever psychologists, tremendously important politicians, bacteriologists, and neurologists (112).

To Stendahl, these individuals represent the face of censorship. They represent the mindset that resulted in the Great Burning of 1975—an event that precedes the novel’s narrative—when all the books of imagination were burned—specifically “tales of terror and fantasy and horror and, for that matter, tales of the future” (105). For Stendahl, the central problem is the antagonism toward human imagination and a blind commitment to realism. This allegiance to a realist philosophy results in the suppression of so-called “escapism.” To the realist, works of imagination deter a civilization’s progress: “Every man, they said, must face reality. Must face the Here and Now! Everything that was not so must go. All the beautiful literary lies and flights of fancy must be shot in midair” (106).

In the story, Bradbury articulates his continued criticism of the suppression of the arts and humanities in the form of a well-crafted metaphor: “Sleeping Beauty awoke at the kiss of a scientist and expired at the fatal puncture of his syringe” (106). Here, as elsewhere in the novel, the suppression of the imagination is achieved with the aid of science and technology.

Bradbury, however, does not imply that science and technology are the culprit of suppression and censorship, but rather science and technology serve as the mechanism by which the “realist” mindset suppresses and censors. Bradbury suggests that both the sciences and the arts are equally essential for a civilization to flourish. In “And the Moon Be Still as Bright,” the character Spender serves as a mouthpiece to this idea during his impassioned monologue about the virtues of the dead Martian race:

They blended religion and art and science because, at base, science is no more than an investigation of a miracle we can never explain, and art is an

interpretation of that miracle. They never let science crush the aesthetic and the beautiful. It's all simply a matter of degree. An Earth Man thinks: "In that picture, color does not exist, really. A scientist can prove that color is only the way the cells are placed in a certain material to reflect light. Therefore, color is not really an actual part of things I happen to see." A Martian, far cleverer, would say: "This is a fine picture. It came from the hand and the mind of a man inspired. Its idea and its color are from life. This thing is good." (67).

Bradbury here is leaving unspoken an idea he develops throughout the novel. He insists that humans are never passive participants when experiencing art, that, in fact, people are actually co-participants in the creation of that experience. Philosophically, this occurrence officially falls within the realm of phenomenological aesthetics. As William Touponce writes in *Ray Bradbury and the Poetics of Reverie*: "First of all, because when we respond to the aesthetic experience of fantasy or science fiction, we are reacting to a concrete vibrant world which we have in fact helped to create. We do not respond simply to a collection of formalist devices or a hierarchy of linguistic structures" (Touponce xi). For Bradbury, the phenomenological processes are essential for an effective response to a work of art. As Touponce writes:

According to the strata-theory of [German of Roman] Ingarden, in the work of art itself objects are only given schematically, fragmentarily, in perspectives chosen by the author. It is up to the reader to make them complete in the form of a concretization...[there is a need for] turning the sketch into a complete form in the concrete with the help of imagined experience and much else besides, as world experiencing life. In [Wolfgang] Iser's view it is the

unformulated aspects of the text that allow us to formulate a response to the aesthetic object, that we come to feel as the life of a fantastic world, its ideas, values, and specific intangible glamour. Thus it is not simply an array of linguistic structures or formalist devices to which we respond, though they are part of it to be sure. We respond to a world. (Touponce Xii)

A work of art—such as a novel—becomes a vessel that the participant temporarily steps into. The participant brings his or her own memories and sensations from a hundred thousand life experiences, and the vessel burgeons into something much more than it otherwise is. For Bradbury, the difference between the original artwork and what it becomes is of enormous value to society—it is essential, even. Bradbury argues that the arts and humanities ensure that humanity does not lose its humane qualities, that art fosters empathy and compassion, encourages tolerance and creativity, and staves off emotional desuetude.

If Bradbury feared a world of philistines, he needed only look at the world around him—at the surging communist empires, the alarming rise in censorship of creative expression, the new and ever-present threat of nuclear Armageddon—to confirm the basis for his anxieties. Whether or not Bradbury’s fears were legitimate, in *The Martian Chronicles* he nonetheless conveys—by engaging his characters with their pasts in elegiac and sumptuous prose—the urgency of placing equal value on both the arts and sciences.

REFERENCES

- Amis, Kingsley. *New Maps of Hell*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1960. Print.
- Baxter, Stephen. "Martian Chronicles: Narratives of Mars in Science and SF." *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction* 0.5 (1996): 5-16. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bloom, Harold. "Introduction." *Ray Bradbury: Modern Critical Views*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001. 1-2. Print.
- Bradbury, Ray. *The Martian Chronicles*. New York: Bantam Books, 1979. Print.
- Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *A Princess of Mars. John Carter of Mars: The First Five Novels*. New York: Fall River Press, 2013. 1-187. Print.
- Crossley, Robert. *Imagining Mars: A Literary History*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011. Print.
- Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., Istvan. "Science Fiction/Criticism." *A Companion to Science Fiction*. Ed. David Seed. Malden: Blackwell Publisher, 2005. 43-59. Print.
- Eller, Jonathan. *Ray Bradbury Unbound*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2014. Print.
- Forrester, Kent. "The Dangers of Being Earnest: Ray Bradbury and The Martian Chronicles." *Journal of General Education* 28 (1976): 50-54. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 March 2014.

- Harlow, Morgan. "Martian Legacy: Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles." *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 17.1/2 (2005): 311-314. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Hassler, Donald M. "The Academic Pioneers of Science Fiction Criticism, 1940-1980." *Science Fiction Studies* 26.2 (1999): 213-231. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 18 April 2014.
- Hollinger, Veronica. "Contemporary Trends in Science Fiction Criticism." *Science Fiction Studies* 26.2 (1999): 1-40. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 April 2014.
- Hoskinson, Kevin. "The Martian Chronicles and Fahrenheit 451: Ray Bradbury's Cold War Novels." *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy* 36.4 (1995): 345-359. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 April 2014.
- Isherwood, Christopher. Rev. of *The Martian Chronicles*, by Ray Bradbury. *Tomorrow* 10.2 (1950): 56-57. Print.
- James, Edward. "Building Utopias on Mars: From Crusoe to Robinson." *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction* 68 (1996): 64-75. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 April 2014.
- Johnson, Wayne L. "The Martian Chronicles and Other Mars Stories." *Ray Bradbury: Modern Critical Views*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001. 29-38. Print.
- Ladino, Jennifer. *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012. Print.

- Lardner, Rex. Rev. of *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury. *New York Times* 5 May 1950. Print.
- Latham, Rob. "Fiction, 1950-1963." *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. Ed. Bould, Mark, et al. London: Routledge, 2009. 80-89. Print.
- Lewis, C.S. Letter to M. Rutyearts. 28 April 1951. Web. 20 February 2015.
<http://www.whitmorerarebooks.com/pages/books/415/c-s-lewis-ray-bradbury/autograph-letter-signed-by-c-s-lewis-from-1951-discussing-the-authors-reaction-to-young-author-ray>
- . "On Science Fiction." *Of Other Worlds: Essay and Stories*. London: Harcourt, 1966. 59-73. Print.
- . *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1996. Print.
- Linkfield, Thomas P. "The Fiction of Ray Bradbury: Universal Themes in Midwestern Settings." *Midwestern Miscellany* 8 (1980): 94-101. Print.
- McGiveron, Rafeeq O. "'To Build a Mirror Factory': The Mirror and Self-Examination in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*." *Critique* 39.3 (1998): 282-287. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 10 March 2014.
- McMahon, Robert. *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.
- Milner, Andrew and Robert Savage. "Pulped Dreams: Utopia and American Pulp Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 35.1 (2008): 31-47. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Mogen, David. *Ray Bradbury*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986. Print.

- Prescott, Orville. Rev. of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. *New York Times* 21 Oct. 1953. Print.
- Reid, Robin Anne. *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000. Print.
- Russell, Bertrand. "Do We Survive Death?" *Why I am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1957. 88-92. Print.
- Scholes, Robert and Eric Rabkin. *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.
- Seed, David. *Ray Bradbury: Modern Masters of Science Fiction*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015. Print.
- Shaftel, Oscar. "The Social Content of Science Fiction." *Science & Society* 17.2 (1953): 97-118. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 April 2014.
- Sullivan, Anita T. "Ray Bradbury and Fantasy." *The English Journal* 61.9 (1972): 1309-1314. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Touponce, William F. *Ray Bradbury and the Poetics of Reverie*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984. Print.
- . "Ray Bradbury, or Nostalgia." *Lord Dunsany, H.P. Lovecraft, and Ray Bradbury*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013. 109-137. Print.
- Walder, Dennis. *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.
- Weller, Sam. *The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2005. Print.

Wolfe, Gary K. "The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury." *Ray Bradbury: Modern Critical Views*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001. 103-123. Print.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Billy J. Cryer completed his Master's degree in English Literature and Culture from The University of Texas—Pan American in May 2015.