



Archival Domination In *Fahrenheit 451*

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Abstract

This essay will discuss how the state in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) uses new media as a tool to create passive, surveilled subjects, entertained by programs engineered to embed state ideology into the viewer. In the 1950s, television—a machine for reproducing state and corporate ideology—threatened to replace the written cultural archive with a presentist modality. The written cultural archive of *Fahrenheit 451* is constituted by works Bradbury posits can overcome institutionalized prejudices of race, class, and gender. The inaccessibility of this written cultural archive, the isolation, and loss of individuality the populace experiences reflect how much denizens of Bradbury's world are willing to sacrifice to gain access to gain access to a media archive of momentary pleasures. By turning the car into a measure of class and success, corporations have also succeeded in splintering a sense of community that might otherwise encourage intelligent discourse in public spaces. The written word once carried arguments formulated in the public sphere to private spaces, but now wall-to-wall screens dominate private spaces, reinforcing state ideology in homes as if they were public spaces. *Fahrenheit 451* maps both the shift from reliance on the written word to the emergence of the televisual archive as the primary site of a society's archive and that archive's relationship to corporate and state powers seeking maximum control over the population. Though modern technology evolves by the day, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* remains a touchstone in discussions of social anxieties and replaced cultural archives in science fiction.

Keywords: Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, archive, surveillance, ideological state apparatus, television

"The usual vantage point from which we talk about the archive—at least from a European cultural point of view—is still the notion of the print-based, paper-formatted archive. The media-archaeological task, then, is to rethink archival terminology in order to embrace a multimedia concept of the archive. The book belongs to the first external memory devices through which culture as memory based has been made possible, but the book now has lost its privilege as the dominant external memory of alphabetic knowledge. Europa is still fixated on the book, that is, the library and archive; in contrast, the

media cultures in the United States have already cultivated a culture of permanently recycling data rather than eternally fixed memories."

—Wolfgang Ernst, 2013, p. 122

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) reflects the anxiety of the early 1950s about the ascendancy of television and reflects the fear that new technologically-backed media might supplant books and be used as a mechanism for state and corporate-based social control of American society.



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Television was profoundly linked to the present in Bradbury's day—television shows weren't recorded for repeat broadcasts until 1951—and its rise invoked discussion of more than just media usage. The emergence of televisual media and the interlinked media feed created a shift from a cultural archive composed of books promoting an egalitarian society to a commercialized, televisual archive that manipulated its viewers to generate sales and disseminated messages of discipline to ensure obedience to the state. Ideology is embedded in *Fahrenheit 451* in archives that are not merely the written, stored record; ideas and behaviors are archived in the population. Bradbury's novel thus presents the real possibility that corporate and state powers might coopt televisual media to remove independent thought and personal agency from viewers to more easily control them. This essay analyzes the state's use of new media to create passive, surveilled subjects, entertained by programs that embed state ideology.

Fahrenheit 451 is set in a futuristic America where firemen burn books rather than putting out fires and everyday citizens consume audiovisual media rather than exploring the world around them, reading books, or thinking for themselves. Guy Montag, a fireman, lives in a house with his wife Mildred, who constantly watches televisions that take up entire walls. Montag encounters Clarisse, a teenage girl who forces him to begin questioning the world around him through her strange free-thinking questions, but a few days later, a speeding car hits Clarisse and kills her. This, when combined with the fact that Montag watched an elderly woman opt to be burned alive with her books, made him create his own cache of books and begin reading. Mr. Faber, a retired English professor

Montag once met in passing, agrees to help Montag continue reading and to eventually overthrow the status quo by printing books. Mildred informs Montag's boss, fire chief Beatty, about Montag's strange behavior and that Montag has been reading books rather than burning them. Mildred abandons her husband and Beatty ultimately confronts Montag, forcing Montag to burn the books he has collected and his own house. Montag turns his flamethrower on first Beatty, killing him, and then destroys the Mechanical Hound, a mechanical dog capable of delivering a lethal injection, before fleeing to Faber's house. Faber helps Montag, providing him with tips to escape the other Mechanical Hounds, the helicopters, and the television crew pursuing him. Though Montag does escape, the authorities televise a lethal injection performed by a different Mechanical Hound on another captive forced to serve as Montag's replacement for the viewers watching the live broadcast. Montag flees into the woods, where he meets a group of men who have memorized books to preserve them for future generations. The group, led by a man named Granger, welcomes Montag and gives him a book to memorize. At the end of *Fahrenheit 451*, a nuclear attack destroys the city from which Montag escaped, and he chooses to help the scholars use their knowledge to rebuild their civilization.

Control via archival imprinting (i.e. the writing onto the body and mind), entraps subjects through internal manipulation. In *Fahrenheit 451*, this action is derived from media and technology, or more specifically, the television screen. Robert Wilson (2013) sees no escape from such manipulation whether in the form of government ideology or corporate advertisements. He maintains that "an



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individual's identity and agency" are "hopelessly intertwined with the countless, contradictory media that have colonized his or her mind" (Wilson, 2013, p. 16). Bradbury demonstrates that televisual media does more than colonize individuals, as it is not unnecessary for the state to carry out surveillance of subjects by recording their movements and watching them on-screen. By regularly viewing television, the citizens of *Fahrenheit 451* become obedient and passive reflections of what they view and hear. Book burning in *Fahrenheit 451* ensures that government controlled televised programs that surveil, entertain, and interpellate are the only remaining media sources available to citizenry. The television presents an archive of acceptable ideas and behaviors for citizens and displays the results of failing to follow protocol. When viewers are alerted that an execution is about to take place during Montag's nocturnal flight from the Mechanical Hound, they wake to view it. There are no regulations against not watching the execution, just as there are no requirements to having television screens in the home. The populace wakes to watch the execution because it is—as Montag narrates—a kind of carnival, an entertaining spectacle masking its political use as a tool of the state.

Montag's flight and pursuit symbolize the presentist television archive's threat to destroy the historical archive of books in Montag's world. Broadcast to the masses, this entertaining spectacle guarantees viewers that civil disobedience results in severe punishment. Montag's punishment serves as entertainment, entertainment that communicates those rules of behavior expected from the totalitarian state. Thus, entertainment is disguised as interpellation. Public discipline in *Fahrenheit 451*

comes as a consequence of accessing the banned literary archive, an act of resistance against the state-supported archive. The goal of discipline is to punish these offenders, with televised spectacles serving as forceful displays of the rule of law. Televising Montag while the Mechanical Hound pursues him through the streets acts as a surveillance mechanism, changing private spaces (homes) into public arenas. As Montag flees through their streets, the viewing society watches his efforts televisually. Even though they could open their windows and doors to witness the action, the state program incites viewers to first watch the screen to ensure a mediated experience. Viewers are later commanded to open their doors and peer into the streets so that Montag has no safe hiding place. The citizens are so indoctrinated that they do not turn from the mediated view of the screen until the government demands they do so. The program allows the state to feed its viewers an interpretation of the event sympathetic to its aims. For instance, even after Montag destroys the first Hound sent after him, a second Hound is sent out and the televised program remarks that the "Mechanical Hound never fails. Never since its first use in tracking quarry has this incredible invention made a mistake" (Bradbury, 1953, p. 112). The first Hound fails and is destroyed, but in replacing the first mechanical Hound with another, the state makes good on its claim that the Hound does not make mistakes. With continued replacements, one of these machines will eventually find its mark and affirm the foolishness of resisting the state. Montag notes that if he were to open a window he would be able to watch his own death on the screen:

If he kept his eye peeled quickly he would see himself, an instant before oblivion, being

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punctured for the benefit of how many civilian parlour-sitters who had been wakened from sleep a few minutes ago by the frantic sirening of their living-room walls to come watch the big game, the hunt, the one-man carnival. (Bradbury, 1953, p. 125)

With Montag's realization that he could be simultaneously executed in the house and on the screen, he demonstrates that the perceived safety from viewing is false: Montag realizes that private and public spaces have merged together. Viewers choose a technological view over a non-mediated experience, believing the screen acts as a barrier from violence, both on and off-screen; viewers, it is believed, cannot possibly become participants. Montag's realization demonstrates that watchers are very much participants. By engaging with the new media the population is simultaneously made passive by fear of the repercussions of acting against the state and becomes incapable of intervening in the creation or destruction of different archives.

Television viewers in *Fahrenheit 451*, relieved that their plight is not that of the criminal hunted and butchered in the streets by the Mechanical Hound, feel removed from the oppressive system in which they live. While the Repressive State Apparatus provides a distraction from oppression, it ensures that people are aware of the state's power and produces both conformity and obedience. Though Montag eludes the police, a substitute for Montag receives the robotic Hound's lethal injection so that the state can reinforce to the public that no one escapes state discipline. At the same time, viewers are cognitively distanced from the reality that they could easily replace Montag. The idea of

the Hound as an internal surveillance mechanism is also implied in the actions of the firemen who remove and burn books found in citizens' homes and in Mildred's decision to separate from Montag and inform his book reading to the police rather than live in a house with books. The Hound, the firemen, and Mildred embody those penalties associated with breaking the law, rules that citizens acknowledge and embrace. Entertainment qua punishment is a grander scale of old forms of public punishment as spectacle like the auto-de-fé, public hanging, or guillotining. Louis Althusser describes public punishment as part of the "Repressive State Apparatus" (2014, p. 76) and Baudrillard argues that these displays provide a distraction from other, subtler oppressions (1994, p. 85).

A direct result of the four-wall televisions in *Fahrenheit 451* is increased inaccessibility to the cultural archive, which Bradbury believes will result in a loss of individuality. In the 1950s, technological and informational advancements, which were facilitated by the emergence of television, created cultural change in United States that gave rise to postmodernity. Television in *Fahrenheit 451* filled the space of public consciousness, space that had previously been taken up by reading and social interaction. Those books—authored by diverse writers such as Edna St. Vincent Millay, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Plato, Einstein, Confucius, Gandhi, and the Gospel writers of the New Testament—make up Bradbury's canon of social equality, works linked together by an interest in overcoming institutionalized prejudices of race, class, and gender. The erasure of the written archive is connected to the loss of the subject's identity; Fire Chief Beatty verbalizes this idea when he connects physical death to burning: "Ten minutes after death



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a man's a speck of black dust. Let's not quibble over individuals with memoriams. Forget them. Burn them all, burn everything" (Bradbury, 1953, p. 58). In *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern* (1998), Fredric Jameson lists the factors that have erased subject identity: "Today, in the age of corporate capitalism, of the so-called organization man, of bureaucracies in business as well as in the state, of demographic explosion - today, that older bourgeois individual subject no longer exists" (1991, p. 5). "The organization man"—an idea developed by William H. Whyte in *The Organization Man* (1957)—proposes that Americans have become largely collectivist in practice rather than individualistic, preferring organizations to make decisions as a result of pressures associated with living in a cooperative society (p. 13). As exemplified in *The Organization Man* and *Fahrenheit 451*, Whyte and Bradbury demonstrate their awareness of the same trends in society. A citizenry of addicted viewers in *Fahrenheit 451* demonstrate the presence of the novel's organization man society, divesting themselves of a valuable cultural archive as a result of dominating and manipulating televisual media. In *Fahrenheit 451* Bradbury maintains that watching television and listening to radio are less thought-provoking and convey less detailed information than reading, and thus, by extension, these means of information-sharing are less effective educational tools than reading: "The same infinite detail and awareness [of books] could be projected through the radios and televisions, but are not" (1953, p. 82). This perspective that books are unparalleled in conveying details describes the state of mediatic technology as Bradbury saw it in the 1950s as a deliberate strategy for broadcasting programs that engender the populace

to being easily controlled, passive consumers. The mediascape provides collective decisions for every facet of life, answering how one should behave, what one should eat, wear, speak, and think. Montag's wife Mildred lives for her interactive programming, where she responds to television actors from a prepared script. This interaction reflects collectivist embodiment and signals the death of individuality, with Mildred's loss of identity culminating in an attempted suicide via overdosing on pills. In contrast, Montag's mark of individualism in a media-driven society is indifference toward television flow and the ability to make decisions without regard for larger organizations of society.

Television consumes and impacts both individual and public consciousness in *Fahrenheit 451*, as evidenced by the isolation and loss of individuality of women in Montag's world, particularly Montag's own wife, as they choose to belong to a collective, television culture. Mildred is a housebound, middle-class and suburban housewife with nothing to do but watch TV. Bradbury was not alone in recognizing the effect that suburbia and televisual culture took on women—ten years after *Fahrenheit 451*, Betty Friedan (1963) characterized suburbs as "comfortable concentration camps" for women (p. 426). With little more to interact with than television, Mildred comes to bodily reflect the pacing of television shows as a result of her viewing:

The door to the parlour opened and Mildred stood there looking in at them, looking at Beatty and then at Montag. Behind her the walls of the room were flooded with green and yellow and orange fireworks sizzling and bursting to some music composed almost completely of trap? Drums, tom? Toms, and cymbals. Her mouth



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moved and she was saying something but the sound covered it . . . The fireworks died in the parlour behind Mildred. She had stopped talking at the same time. (Bradbury, 1953, p. 59)

The television display not only inhibits Mildred from effectively communicating, but televisual media has literally colonized Mildred's speech, as evidenced by the fact that Mildred stops talking in time with the frenetic sounds of the television, which also demonstrates her closer relationship to television than people, including her own husband. Television viewers receive a set of lines to say during shows so they might more actively participate in the television programming and thus ultimately enter into a collective televisual identity. The words Mildred speaks are her part in the interactive television program. Regardless of what Mildred says, she cannot contribute to Beatty and Montag's conversation as a result of being trapped too long in suburban isolation. Commenting on the effects of media overexposure, Scott Bukatman (1993) stresses that viewing media results in the emergence of a new subjectivity characterized by a loss of individuality and agency (p. 15). Mildred's lack of agency condemns her to a life of terminal subjectivity, passively consuming television shows because she is no longer capable of taking part in other types of social engagement.

Mildred trades individuality for access to the archive—media feed coupled with momentary pleasures available as a result of a corporate-engineered consumer culture. Manipulated by corporate media, Mildred embodies the perfect image of the consumer. In "Mass Exploitation and the Decline of Thought in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*," Rafeeq McGiveron places

responsibility for the formation of a dystopic state on the citizens of Montag's world because they voluntarily sacrificed their individual thought for conformity (1996, p. 248). This implanted desire for easily accessible momentary pleasures drowns out creative thoughts with constant danger and competition, demanding attention and, through it, conformity. In *Fahrenheit 451*, watching televised athletic events (and other programming), taking drugs, and speeding along in newly manufactured cars looking for animals or people to run over all satisfy the need for momentary pleasure. Momentary pleasures are often the easiest pleasures to attain but this does not imply that momentary pleasures are antithetical to archives because their full meaning depends on the type of archive discussed. The corporate and state complex in *Fahrenheit 451* relies on an ongoing media feed to suppress the cultural archive. While the media feed does not eliminate the cultural archive entirely, constant creation of a present moment archive through televisual media diverts attention from the original cultural archive. Consumers spend their time in the mediatic archive instead of in cultural archives so they can learn what products they "should" buy. Loss of individuality in *Fahrenheit 451* is further ensured by the Seashell, which constantly broadcasts news and other programs, keeping viewers tethered to the media feed even while they are away from television screens. Bradbury describes Mildred's Seashells vividly: "And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk and music and talk coming in, coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind" (1953, p. 42). Increasingly, as the individual in *Fahrenheit 451*'s society trades reflective activities like reading or regular conversation for scripted televisual



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engagement and endless immersion in the media feed, the concentration required for more reflective, personal experiences is eclipsed by a reliance on outside media.

After Montag emerges from his prior media-controlled state, he realizes both just how much televised media dominated his life and that he can no longer recall how he first met Mildred. When he asks her about it, she can't recall either:

"Millie...?" he whispered.

"What?"

"I didn't mean to startle you. What I want to know is..."

"Well?"

"When did we meet. And where?"

"When did we meet for what?" she asked.

"I mean-originally..."

"I don't know," she said.

He was cold. "Can't you remember?"

"It's been so long."

"Only ten years, that's all, only ten!"

"Don't get excited, I'm trying to think." She laughed an odd little laugh that went up and up. "Funny, how funny, not to remember where or when you met your husband or wife."

He lay massaging his eyes, his brow, and the back of his neck, slowly. He held both hands over his eyes and applied a steady pressure there as if to crush memory into place. It was suddenly more important than any other thing in a lifetime that he knew where he had met Mildred.

"It doesn't matter," She was up in the bathroom now, and he heard the water running, and the swallowing sound she made.

"No, I guess not," he said. (Bradbury, 1953, p. 40)

The constant info-stream that they have been

subject to over the course of ten years has erased their individuality and diminished their ability to remember the past. The televisual archive has so colonized Mildred's mind that she views her own personal history as unimportant, and while Montag comes to value his personal history, his immersion in the right-now world of televisual media has eroded his ability to recall his own life events and dulled his capacity for introspection. Mildred represents the extreme conformist in Montag's world: her near-constant involvement in a simulated life has irreparably compromised her individuality. To Mildred, the only tasks to complete are those with a nexus to the lives of television characters. Mildred's emotional and social life is defined by the events and fictional characters portrayed in audiovisual media and designed not just to provide amusement but also to benefit the corporate and state alliance that controls the politico-economic realities of Montag's world.

Because they were aware of the suppressed cultural archive, some individuals, such as Professor Faber or Granger and his book-memorizing followers, never found momentary pleasures and their associated archives enticing. Aware of the cultural archive that became suppressed, Faber and other like-minded characters could distinguish between the two types of archives and therefore value the literary archive for its cultural merit. By embracing Faber's beliefs as he learns of a suppressed cultural archive replete with diverse information, Montag realizes the artificiality of a televisual archive filled with talking heads and state executions.

A strategy for state and corporate control in *Fahrenheit 451* is to shape desire through the



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television feed. Television broadcasts deliver messages of collective identity and social norms, which are a new immediate cultural archive and serve as a primary method through which both the state and corporations establish and maintain control of viewers. The thoughtful concept of reading books is replaced by a streaming television feed that holds its audience captive. Faber, who helps Montag comprehend the scope of changes that have occurred in their society with the loss of books and thus, the cultural archive, decries the role of the television:

...you can't argue with the four-wall televisor. Why? The televisor is 'real.' It is immediate; it has dimension. It tells you what to think and blasts it in. It must be right. It seems so right. It rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn't the time to protest... (Bradbury, 1953, p. 84).

Indeed, the addicted viewer craves watching television to experience its pacifying effect, its ability to allow the viewer to achieve an idealized state of thoughtlessness. In his discussion of science fiction (SF) tropes in *Movement SF and the Picaresque* (2013), Robert Wilson finds "the identity and agency [of subjects] are being erased by powerful social and economic forces exterior to and normally imperceptible by the individual" (p. 5). The television broadcast represents both state-based ideologies and the marketing campaigns working together to erase their subjects' identities and agency, usually without the victims growing aware of what is happening to them.

Before media was beamed across regions, the written word carried arguments formulated in the public sphere to private spaces. In *Fahrenheit*

451, televisual entertainment in private homes is a controlling mechanism of state power that threatens a cultural archive of literary works. Readers of the books, the cultural archive, seek knowledge suppressed by the televised façade of a determined society and the freedom to question that society. Bradbury juxtaposes readers with television viewers, who are pacified, exploited, and controlled by a television spectacle "which functions as either a supplement or simulacrum of the state" (Bukatman, 1993, p. 69). The homes of citizens in *Fahrenheit 451*'s society have transformed from private domestic spaces into public dissemination zones for state ideology. In Montag's home, his wife Mildred is almost constantly enraptured by the television media feed to the point that Montag and Mildred cannot have meaningful conversations with one another due to her focus on television programs portraying raucous, empty-headed characters: "the uncles, the aunts, the cousins, the nieces, the nephews, that lived in those walls, the gibbering pack of tree-apes that said nothing, nothing, nothing and said it loud" (Bradbury, 1953, p. 42). Likewise, Robin Reid notes *Fahrenheit 451* demonstrates "the extent to which technology can be used for social control, specifically through the use of the mass media for all education and entertainment" (2000, p. 59). The substitution of new media for books marked a great cultural shift in America. The new politics associated with this event-instant televisual archive represents a relinquishing of democratic values and the loss of individual subjectivity as demonstrated by the destruction of the cultural archive in *Fahrenheit 451*. The firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* further cripple the integrity of the private, domestic space with their removal of books from public discourse, thus regulating their society's



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intellectual landscape. In *Fahrenheit 451* televisual communications increase the range and effect of state ideology and make it public. The end result, as Robert Wilson notes, is a skewed “extension of the media pap-feed” where individuality and agency is lost (2013, p. 6).

Wall-to-wall screens in *Fahrenheit 451* also dominate private spaces, reinforcing state ideology in homes as if they were public spaces. While citizens once went to central meeting spaces to hear someone speak or witness some form of discipline, the television in *Fahrenheit 451* became a substitute for these areas. This example is reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s so-called “Discourse on Language” (1972), where the author discusses a means of social control that isolates individuals from discourse with each other. In Foucault’s model, discourse flows only between the source of power and the individual. By removing this capability for public discourse—and even through eliminating the home as a private state—Bradbury argues that televisual media has ensured that the only possible conversations occur between the state (or corporations) and the average citizen. The final private space that the state attempts to turn into a public arena is the individual’s mind. If the individual’s thoughts can be made to reflect the attitudes and policies of the state, the removal of private space is complete. In *Fahrenheit 451*, corporations have succeeded in turning the car into a measure of class and success and have simultaneously splintered a sense of community. While the state removes private space in *Fahrenheit 451*, highways afford the illusion of freedom, privacy, and isolation: the average citizen(s) can anonymously drive nearly one hundred miles an hour and run down anyone in their way without risking personal harm to themselves, as

exemplified by the youths that nearly hit Montag as he flees from the Mechanical Hound. The highways in *Fahrenheit 451* reflect newly built American highways of the 1950s; it was these highways that allowed developers to build suburbs, providing greater privacy and isolation. When Montag shares with his wife conflicted feelings about his work, that he would rather read books than burn them, Mildred advises a solitary drive, reinforcing his status as an outsider:

The keys to the beetle are on the night table.
I always like to drive fast when I feel that way.
You get it up around ninety-five and you feel wonderful. Sometimes I drive all night and come back and you don’t know it. It’s fun out in the country. You hit rabbits, sometimes you hit dogs.
Go take the beetle. (Bradbury, 1953, p. 62)

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the vehicle is but another agency-stealing technological prosthesis, and the act of driving further isolates the individual from society. The lack of penalties for killing another human reduces the ethical responsibility drivers would otherwise feel to their society, demonstrating a lack of social conscientiousness that would otherwise prevent such behavior.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, television blinds society while it dominates citizens. In Bradbury’s fictional America, the American Dream is to have a perfect setup to watch television, with rooms walled with floor-to-ceiling screens that perpetuate a dreamlike viewing experience. But the television’s dreamlike experience in *Fahrenheit 451* coopts the American Dream. David Mogen (1986) observes, “*Fahrenheit 451* warns that tyranny and thought control always come under the guise of fulfilling ideals, whether they be those of Fascism, Communism, or the American Dream” (p.



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107). Like the car, having a home with wall-to-wall television screens in *Fahrenheit 451* is a measure of class and success that only serves to isolate individuals from society. This need for televisual screens is artificial, just like the need to drive at high speeds. The television and its programming are a system of control, emphasizing that the American Dream has been co-opted, made to serve as a tool of the state ideological apparatus. Owning a television in *Fahrenheit 451* is costly, suggesting a class bias, but—more importantly—Bradbury highlights that people will willingly pursue their own subjection to enhance their cultural status. At \$2,000 a wall, Bradbury's wall-to-wall televisions were a major expense to his contemporary readers; by 1960, the average annual family income in the United States was still only \$5,620 (Markham, 2002, p. 325). Citizens in *Fahrenheit 451* consider having four screens in a room fashionable; owning a television room functions as a display of class. The four-television setup would have nearly cost the same as a house and so would have been impossible for families of lower socio-economic status to install.

Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* maps both the shift from the reliance on the written word to the emergence of the televisual archive as the primary site of a society's archive, and that archive's relationship to corporate and state powers seeking maximum control over the populace. Entering a public sphere of ideas via books—allowing individuals to take part in wider social discourse—is traded for a manufactured experience of isolation, including driving alone and faux-interaction with television

characters. Similarly, punishment in *Fahrenheit 451* is carried out in the isolation of vacant city streets. Citizens in the era of the televisual archive live and die in isolation, subjected to a society that puts death to nonconformists just as readily as it burns books.

Fahrenheit 451 is an iconic example of totalitarian government and corporate use of changed cultural archives to manipulate people in SF; the relationship between developing technology and new forms of control in modern society serves as a reminder why Bradbury's novel is part of the science fiction canon. Modern SF continues exploring anxieties about the use of new technology to manipulate the populace and establish social control in connection with changing cultural archives. In the 1980s and 1990s, SF authors like William Gibson and Neal Stephenson similarly used science fiction to explore shifting cultural archives, but they shifted the discussion of types of technology influencing individuals from televisual media to developing technology like cyberspace—as seen in *Neuromancer* (Gibson, 1986) and *Snow Crash* (Stephenson, 1992/2008)—and interactive books—represented in *The Diamond Age* (Stephenson, 1995/2003). In doing so, these authors imagined new permutations of social control and human interaction that could emerge and, thus, also create new cultural archives. Though technology evolves by the day, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* remains a touchstone in discussions of social anxieties and replaced cultural archives in modern SF.



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