

## THE THEME OF THE BOOK IN “FAHRENHEIT 451” BY REY BRADBURY

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**Annotation:** *This article is devoted to the key theme of the novel "Fahrenheit 451" by R. Bradbury - a book that is a symbol that embodies the idea of traditional human values, mind and spirit. Particular attention is paid to R. Bradbury's description of the book as a material object and the image of "people-books".*

**Keywords:** *book image, dystopian novel, mass culture, one-dimensional man, literary tradition.*

The past millennium, closely associated with mass culture, has become the era of "loneliness among the crowd" (Riesman), so the book, with its traditional closeness to a person, with a special "intimate bond between the author and his reader"<sup>1</sup>, with the possibility through it "to know the world individually, outside the collective consciousness of the community" [8, p. 15] turned out to be so important. Compared with aggressive methods of influencing consciousness (advertising, television, radio, Internet, consumption regulation), the book does not dominate a person, only he is "its master"<sup>2</sup>. In addition, against the background of the non-objective world of simulacra, the book turned out to be a repository of meanings. Therefore, the problem of the need for the continued existence of books is revealed in many books created in the 20th century dystopias, where the book is "the main symbol of the past, now denied, ... the main symbol of all old values".

The theme of the book is especially fully revealed in Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel Fahrenheit 451 (1953). Its plot is based on the fact that the state forbids reading and prescribes the destruction of books, and the one who reads them is declared insane. The theme of the book in the novel is closely connected with the phenomenon and symbolic meaning of the book, the importance of the book for a person, and therefore comes into contact with the eternal themes of human existence and consciousness. The theme of the book in the novel is connected with the process of the hero's understanding of himself through love for other people, a way out of alienation, which books can serve as a catalyst. Therefore, their image in the novel is revealed from different sides.

The book in the novel is the main enemy of the totalitarian state for several reasons. For Bradbury, she is a symbol of doubt, but doubt is being in instability, awakening the intellect, the ability to think. Therefore, the book is a dangerous tool that can resist the mass consciousness and, therefore, can destroy the integrity of the pseudo-happy society created by the state. In addition, the

<sup>1</sup> Quarry J.-K., Eco U. Do not hope to get rid of books! / Per. from French SPb., 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Bradbury R. 451 ° Fahrenheit // Bradbury R. The Martian Chronicles: Sat. M., 2002. S. 197-334.

book is a symbol of tradition, connection with the past, "one of the receptacles where we store what we are afraid to forget", which "show us the pores of life"<sup>3</sup>, the complex world of the human soul.

The love of the writer's own books allowed him to create this novel about books<sup>1</sup> (written, by the way, in the basement of the library), filled not only with quotations from the Bible, many literary works, conversations about books, but also with the very type of books, their description. In the novel, not only the attitude to book culture, the content of the book is important, the book as a material object, a form of expression is also of particular importance: "books smell of nutmeg or some other spices from distant overseas countries". Bradbury metaphorically connects the image of the book with a dove - contrastingly white in comparison with the black ash of the burning world, rustling its wings-pages, or with birds in general: "Magazines fell like dead birds, and a woman stood among these dead bodies", "a book, like a white the dove, fluttering its wings, obediently sank right into his hands". And this is not accidental: birds are symbols of the human soul, something that belongs to heaven, the world of the spirit, the connection of heaven and earth.

It is through books that the protagonist finds a way to his new self. After all, at first fireman Guy Montag is a typical person of mass society. He accurately fulfills the instructions, without thinking about the causes and consequences. He is incapable of feeling, almost incapable of thinking. But part of Montag's mind is not satisfied with working and living in such a society of persecution and consumption and his role. Almost unconsciously, he commits a crime - stealing books from a fire and trying to read them. However, his mind continues for a long time to resemble a sieve through which sand (the meaning of what is read) flows without stopping, because Montag himself is already cut off from the tradition of comprehending the text. Professor Faber becomes Montag's teacher, the same "semiotic personality" that, according to Lotman, is needed for the emergence of a new "semiotic personality", "a reader who keeps in memory some previous messages". After all, the life of a book as one of the sides of the circle of communication is connected with the bearer of tradition, memory, and knowledge.

The most striking embodiment of such an image in the novel is the representatives of a minority contrasting to the masses - people-books. Bradbury creates this metaphorical image, partly resorting to folk wisdom ("a walking encyclopedia"). Book people are a human community whose purpose the meaning is "to preserve knowledge". The image of people-books in the novel appears as a complete opposition to the image of the representatives of the majority - firefighters. After all, as the leader of the people-books says, "We also burn books. It is better to keep everything in your head, where no one will see anything, suspect nothing. We are all scraps and pieces of history, literature, international law". Bradbury implements in the novel "the idea of a book without the facts of its production", because books are most fully realized in people themselves. Thanks to the thoughts contained in books, book people hope to help humanity break the historical tradition, according to which one generation prints and another burns.

People-books are a powerful and original image of Bradbury (a kind of rethinking of the gospel image "The Word became flesh"), they fully manifest the writer's hopes for a peaceful transformation of life: people-books are not spiritual leaders, but "just book covers".

<sup>3</sup> Bradbury R. 451 ° Fahrenheit // Bradbury R. The Martian Chronicles: Sat. M., 2002. S. 197-334.

A book for mass culture is a "loaded gun" and a web of words, because sometimes this force is more serious than any media means. The book is able to show the irreparable catastrophe of the world and human life in that it turns on and stimulates his consciousness. For Bradbury, it is important that books are not only receptacles of information, that they are able not only to teach, but appeal to the soul of a person, enliven it. They manifest the transcendental nature of man, his highest spiritual nature - the ability to create, to create the world.

The destruction of books at all times of human history reveals the impatience of dissent, because this is not only a practical, but also a symbolic act of breaking with tradition, with a certain doctrine, the denial of knowledge perceived as false, "a kind of medicine". After all, the power of the word, the logos, becomes especially clear in the book. Therefore, in the novel, the book is also endowed with the sharpness of a scalpel, cutting through the shell of insensitivity and self-isolation of the "one-dimensional person". The book, as one of Mildred's friends says, "Wounds the soul" with words penetrating through the shell of mental sleep. And the eternal choice between such calmness and the rebelliousness of knowledge turns out to be a choice between participation in the divine and the life of an animal.

Bradbury's novel clearly shows the mechanism of the influence of a book on a person, this "limit of perfection in the sphere of the imaginary". In book culture, not only the past is manifested, but also the greatness of mankind, the ability of a person to a divine cause - creativity. Books never lose their relevance - after all, human nature, about which the best of them are written, is unchanged in any age, even in the age of technology. In an era of general disunity, spiritual loneliness, when a person seems to be a "stranger" for the whole world, a book turns out to be a friend, an interlocutor, a mirror and a repository of values and different points of view. The book can help you find yourself in the world of mass consciousness, teach you not to be afraid to be in the minority. In the words of I. Brodsky, literature teaches "the details of human existence". The book reveals to man not only the world, But and himself, "helps a person to clarify the time of his existence, to distinguish himself in the crowd of both predecessors and his own kind".

However, at present, books do not need to be burned or banned - the main danger lives in the people themselves, who are less and less interested in them. After all, it is not pressure from outside that is most dangerous - the danger lies in the consciousness of a person, in a latent unwillingness to think, grow, and recognize oneself as a being of a transcendental order. "In our society, books are no longer burned on the orders of Hitler or the Holy Inquisition. They are rendered useless, they are suffocated with images, sounds, objects," wrote Fr. Truffaut, creator of the film based on Bradbury's novel. Therefore, the novel Fahrenheit 451 is so relevant and important, in which the book is the dominant theme, helping to comprehend a person, revealing his consciousness. The image of the book in the novel is saturated with meanings, symbolic content, ultimately associated with biblical and Christian imagery and symbolism, including the text of the novel in the circle of the highest organization, the strongest semantic content. The image of the book goes back to its prototype - the Book of books, the Bible, making the person reading the bearer of the highest spiritual culture. The book in Bradbury's novel, as a special semantic spiral, spins the plot and characters around itself, so that the novel becomes a rare case of a "book about books". And the

book at present, as always, is, as the great Victor Hugo said, “the promised refuge for thought in the event of a new global flood, a new invasion of barbarians”.

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