

Editor's Introduction: Continuity and Change

Phil Nichols

The Return of *The New Ray Bradbury Review*

Welcome to this seventh issue of *The New Ray Bradbury Review* (*NRBR*)—which is also our first online edition. A lot has changed since our last issue was published in the pre-pandemic year of 2019, as I shall detail below, but this re-launched *NRBR* very much continues the tradition of our previous print incarnation. Moving online will, we hope, allow us to ramp up the publication schedule, and consequently provide more opportunities for scholars to publish new work on Ray Bradbury.

The year 2020 now seems a long way in the past, and it will of course forever be remembered as the pandemic year. For Bradbury scholars and fans, however, 2020 had long been anticipated as a landmark year: the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ray Bradbury. While a number of planned centennial events were cancelled—such as the San Diego ComicCon celebration of Bradbury's life and works—many new opportunities arose, and resulted in radio appearances, podcasts and various popular publications from key figures connected to *NRBR*. That same year also provided the opportunity to reconsider and refresh *NRBR*, which brings us to where we are today.

Before going any further, I would like to thank Dr Jonathan R. Eller for his magnificent work as the previous General Editor of *The New Ray Bradbury Review*. As co-founder of both the *Review* and its parent organization The Ray Bradbury Center, Dr Eller established a solid foundation for the future. Jon is now enjoying a well-earned retirement, although his scholarly

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THE NEW RAY BRADBURY REVIEW

work on Bradbury continues (for example with editorial work on the recent Library of America editions of Bradbury's novels and short stories,¹ and with *Remembrance*, a forthcoming volume of Bradbury's correspondence).² While no longer overseeing *NRBR*, Jon has graciously accepted a position on our editorial board, and provides valued counsel as we extend the work he began.

Dr Eller's successor as Director of the Ray Bradbury Center is Dr Jason Aukerman. Under Jon's initial guidance, Jason has developed the Bradbury Center's current mission, and I am particularly pleased that his article on Bradbury's lasting influence appears as something of a keynote in this new issue of *NRBR*. As the Center moves forward, by the way, it has quietly retired its former title "Center for Ray Bradbury Studies" in favor of the simpler and more direct "Ray Bradbury Center".

Dr Eller's successor as General Editor of *The New Ray Bradbury Review* is yours truly: Dr Phil Nichols. I am no stranger to the journal, having contributed to several previous issues, and having guest-edited issue 5 (the *Fahrenheit 451* film issue). My aim here is to continue the multidisciplinary tradition of *NRBR*'s approach to Bradbury studies, while transitioning to a free, online, open-access journal whose values echo those of the Bradbury Center. There are technical and other challenges in this transition, but I have been ably supported by Carrie Cooper and Ted Polley of Indiana University, who have helped steer the ship in response to my shout of "thataway!" Thanks are also due to the members of our new editorial board, who have contributed significantly to the honing of the articles in this issue.

Finally, thanks are also due to Kent State University Press, who published our print editions from issues 1 - 6 inclusive.³ The realities of academic publishing are such that *NRBR* would be difficult to sustain under the print model, and so it is that we reluctantly part company with our former publisher. But our new, free, online model will—we hope—allow a much wider audience than we were able to reach before.

As we enter this new phase of the *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, we hope to explore the four cornerstones of Bradbury's life and work which have informed the Bradbury Center's mission. The first of these, underpinning many of the articles in this current issue, is the advancement of literacy, a cause which seems ever more timely in 2023, where we see the states of Florida and Texas enacting policies which restrict readers' access—and especially young learners' access—to diverse voices. The Ray Bradbury Center's home state of Indiana is regrettably heading along a similar path, while there is a glimmer of light in the darkness in Illinois, which has legislated to ban book bans.

The other three cornerstones of Bradbury's life and work will be explored in future issues of *NRBR*: freedom of imagination and First Amendment rights; advocacy for space exploration; and the preservation of libraries.

¹ Ray Bradbury, *Novels & Story Cycles: The Martian Chronicles, Fahrenheit 451, Dandelion Wine, Something Wicked This Way Comes*, ed. Jonathan R. Eller (New York: Library of America, 2021); Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man, The October Country, Other Stories*, ed. Jonathan R. Eller (New York: Library of America, 2022)

² Ray Bradbury, *Remembrance: Selected Correspondence of Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Jonathan R. Eller (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023).

³ Back issues of *The New Ray Bradbury Review* continue to be available via Kent State UP's website: <https://www.kentstateuniversitypress.com/?s=new+ray+bradbury+review>.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Issue 7

Our opening article by Jason Aukerman lays out a case for the continuing significance of Ray Bradbury's works and influence in the twenty-first century. The article establishes Bradbury as a writer who was recognized within various genres and by the literary mainstream, and one whose influence has been noted by leading authors and presidents alike. The article also alludes to the four cornerstones mentioned above.

We welcome back to *NRBR* Jeffrey Kahan, who guest-edited our horror-themed issue 6. In his new essay, he interrogates *Fahrenheit 451*'s use of printed and memorized texts. This may sound a familiar topic, but "Ray Bradbury and the 'Tower of Babel,' or Why Great Literature is Good for Nothing" questions what *Fahrenheit* (and Bradbury) finds to be of value in books. Be prepared for a journey through not only *Fahrenheit* and its characters, but Shakespeare and the bardic tradition.

Theodore Giraud's "An Economy of Distraction: Ray Bradbury's Vision of Technology in the Modern Age" explores another aspect of *Fahrenheit 451*'s concerns: the rise of entertainment technologies, which conspire to drive out literacy. Giraud seems to suggest that successful critical thinking requires a level of *technological* literacy.

Tenley Sablatzky, in "The Internet is a Loaded Gun: Ray Bradbury's Prophetic View of Digital Literacy," focuses on the technologies of the internet, especially our increasing dependence on search engines to provide quick and easy answers. These need to be approached critically or skeptically due to their hidden biases; *digital* literacy thus becomes another necessary item in a critical-thinking toolbox.

Mark Jaynes demonstrates how Bradbury's works can be used directly in teaching literacy skills. His "Bradbury's Little Philosophies: Enhancing Middle and High School Literacy with the Thematic Analysis Model" echoes some of the concerns identified by Giraud and Sablatzky, and shows how educators can counter them.

Moving on from "little philosophies", Camilo Peralta shows how classical philosophy finds its way into Bradbury's stories. Many of the protagonists of Ray's classic period of the 1950s, it turns out, provide clear examples of "The Philosopher Hero in Ray Bradbury's Science Fiction."

Our final article for this issue, "Literacy is Freedom," draws pointed analogies between the events of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and the historical experiences of Black people in the United States. Inspired in part by a student's experience in studying and discussing *Fahrenheit*, it is an unusual collaboration between motherscholar Carissa McCray and her student daughter Harley Campbell. The term "motherscholar", which I confess was new to me, is defined in the authors' foreword.

Onward!

As mentioned above, we would like to pick up the pace of publication of *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, and so I have prepared a call for articles for the next issue, which will be themed around "space". Please see the call detailed below—and please share it far and wide. We particularly welcome contributions from new scholars, and articles which will appeal both to academia and to the many fans of the works of Ray Bradbury.

THE NEW RAY BRADBURY REVIEW