A Qualitative Analysis of *Fahrenheit 451°*: Mapping the Linguistic Make-Up of Literary Texts

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Abstract

This paper presents a qualitative analysis of a literary text, Ray Bradbury's (1953, 1964) *Fahrenheit 451°*, by considering the role of word systems in conveying its message. The word system is a matrix of words within a spoken or written text with a common denominator that may be semantic, phonological, etymological, conceptual, or associative. The analysis is based on a semiotic theoretical and methodological approach and focuses on the non-arbitrary choice of lexical/phonological/syntactic/semantic forms by the author as a means of achieving textual cohesion. Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451°* is a lyrical anti-utopia portraying the massive attack of 'consumer civilization' standards on the traditional cultural values of society. The message is conveyed via an array of word systems: the phonological system based on the alliteration of [s] creating the impression of burning paper, the conceptual-associative field '*dark-cold-empty*', the metaphoric-metonymic systems '*hands and body parts*' and '*show-carnival*', the use of internal dialogue and monologue, and such syntactic strategies as elliptical sentences, tag-questions, and more. The findings of this study obtained through a qualitative analysis show how the effect of Bradbury's work is created by the author's sophisticated use of multiple word systems at all levels of language structure.

Keywords: word systems; textual analysis; phonological systems; conceptual-associative systems

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the role of word systems in a literary text and analyses their contribution to construing the meaning of the text. The concept of word systems first inspired by William Diver in 1969 was later developed by Aphek and Tobin (1983, 1988, 1989) and Tobin (1989, 1990). The word system is a matrix of words within a spoken or written text with a common denominator that may be semantic, phonological, etymological, conceptual, or associative. Such organised systems comprise the quintessence of the text, where the meaning is synergetically multiplied and enhanced by the systematic use of interconnected words, constructions, and other forms. The textual analysis of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451°* (1953, 1964) approaches word systems as showing the relationship between the form of the message

and its meaning. The goal is to demonstrate how the synergetic effect of a simultaneous application of word systems of several types contributes to conveying the message of the novel.

The analysis relies on the theoretical premises stemming from the Saussurean school of linguistics that focused on the scientific study of the structure of a language. A literary text is viewed as a system of linguistic signs used for specific communicative functions that can be analysed semantically by establishing a network of their mutual relations. According to this approach, the literary text creates meaning by employing a system of interdependent language devices, and both language and text are regarded as "a set of systems – revolving around the notion of the linguistic sign – which are organized internally and interrelated with each other and used by human beings to communicate" (Tobin 1990: 47).

In this essay I present a qualitative study of the linguistic features of the text at different levels of language structure: phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic, all of which are interrelated as they operate simultaneously in the literary text. I explore how the meaning of Bradbury's text is conveyed, i.e., what allows readers to arrive at similar interpretations of the text by drawing on both the context in which it is embedded and general world knowledge. My aim is to relate linguistic facts to meaning and interpretation in an explicit way (cf. Short 1996: 5).

The paper contains the description of the method, summary of the text and its message, contexts and subcontexts, and a detailed presentation of the various word systems supporting the message.

2. Method

This paper implements a semiotic theoretical approach to linguistic analysis put forward by de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1983). Other linguists, among them Yishai Tobin, often in collaboration with Edna Aphek, consistently developed and elaborated on the application of the semiotic theory to linguistic analysis. According to the semiotic theoretical approach, each speaker exploits language—the universal system of signs—in their own non-random way and does it more or less unconsciously. In literary texts, the ratio between the conscious and the unconscious in the distribution of signs may be

defined only vaguely. Though it is generally believed that the said distribution relies on an intuitive use of language, it partially reflects the author's intended application of linguistic devices. Word systems serve as a junction where the extra-linguistic and linguistic dimensions converge.

The text is a plurality that is a tight, complex set of systems cutting through the entire discourse. Text is viewed as

> a multilayered, multi-textured and multidimensional structure, where the interrelated semantic systems are its most outstanding features; … as a prism, a crystal, a form consisting of facets which are parallel to the vertical axis and intersect the horizontal axes. (Aphek and Tobin, 1988: 4)

The goal of a written or spoken text is perceived as communicating a certain message to the reader or listener—a decoder. This is achieved by the combined effect of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, and the robustness of this impact is greater than the sum total of the linguistic and extralinguistic signs used. The analysis focuses on the non-arbitrary choice of linguistic forms by the author as a means of attaining textual cohesion and presenting topics. The non-random distribution of such forms may be viewed as relying on an intuitive use of language; however, in many cases it reflects the author's deliberate use of language tools: quantifiable, close-knit systems.

I am interested here in forms and constructions that are foregrounded (Short 1996: 10-16 and chapter 2; Verdonk 2002: 5-6). Foregrounding is implemented in this text through a repetitive use of phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic devices.

3. The Text and the Message

Our civilization's most precious products are intellectual treasures, and books occupy a special place among them. Books possess a spell that cannot be defined very well or undermined by Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or reality TV. Books do not promise pure entertainment; instead, they threaten to steal long hours of our lives, they may make us unhappy and desperate, or confused and helpless. In our age of dizzying speeds, cybermiracles and super-sophisticated technology books remain a sanctuary for the human soul, a powerful generator of deep emotions, and a priceless store of accumulated wisdom

of the 'remarkablest' minds throughout generations. The analysis of the word systems presented here could be equally applied to other novels focusing on the future of our planet and the role of the moral values in our survival as the species, such as *Brave New World* by Huxley or *Callocain* by Boye, as well as to other modalities, for example, Jeanne Luc Godard's film *Alfaville*, and others. These texts share the message that emotional and intellectual emptiness may lead to a catastrophe.

Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451°* is a novel about love in the broad sense of the word—love for the world, humankind, art, beauty, and knowledge. Bradbury has always been opposed to ignorance and fanaticism in his works: *The Martian Chronicles* (1950)*, The Illustrated Man* (1951), *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953), *Dandelion Wine* (1957), *The Halloween Tree* (1972), and others. Consumer civilisation is depicted in his writings as a real threat to moral values that impoverishes and empties human minds and hearts. According to Bradbury, moral and intellectual destruction leads inevitably to a physical disaster that can and must be prevented. This novel is also a hymn to love of a man and a book, where the message is conveyed by the interaction of the word systems as macro-textual units acting throughout the entire text and serving as a junction of form and content.

Fahrenheit 451° may be categorised as a lyrical anti-utopia, or dystopia, and reflects the massive attack of 'consumer civilisation' standards on traditional moral values of society. The suppression of literature signifies the development of an increasingly authoritarian political regime that attempts to abolish originality and independent thinking. In this novel, the science fiction genre serves as a medium for portraying a highly centralised, totalitarian social structure that sacrifices individual expression for alleged efficiency and social harmony, achieving them through technocratic means. The plot revolves around a single supposition that firefighters start setting fires instead of putting them out. The main character, Guy Montag, a firefighter, goes a long way from his usual thoughtless life of burning books and futile entertainment to an active protest against primitive existence, and finally joins a group of exiles, Harvard graduates, who have committed to memory hundreds of classic texts. His neighbours, professor Faber and Clarisse McClellan, as well as 'people-books' inspire and support him in his quest for regaining his personality. His wife Mildred, her girlfriends, and his co-workers are typical representatives of the society Montag

rebels against. The spiritual advocate of the 'Philistines' is captain Beatty, a well-educated and well-read man who has chosen to promote the ruling ideology. The society craving only fun and fire is consumed by the atomic war and faces annihilation. Montag and 'people-books' survive to save and rebuild the world.

The novel has plenty of layers of meaning to explore, and its major message is interpreted differently not only by the critics, but even by the author himself. Many perceived the main idea as criticism of state-sponsored censorship, and in the paperback edition published in 1979, Bradbury wrote a new coda for the book containing multiple comments on censorship and its relation to the novel. But in an interview in 2007, he said that the book explored the effects of television and mass media on the reading of literature. Sometimes, the word systems permeating the text tell the reader more about the underlying message than critics and authors, and their role is analysed below.

3.1. Themes

The message is reflected in the central themes and gets realised in contexts and sub-contexts, which are characterised by the non-random use of language tools and display numerous word systems.

Contexts
No protest: mindless existence.
Covert protest: search for reasons.
Overt protest: reading books.
Active protest: fight for the future.

Sub-contexts (page numbers)

No protest	Covert protest	Overt protest	Active protest
Montag (29-30, 34-36)	Montag (60-61, 78-83)	Reading books (84-87)	Burning own house (117-20)
Mildred (35-37, 40-43, 61-70)	Clarisse (30-34, 43-45, 48-51)	Professor Faber (87-88, 91-101)	Murder (122-123)
Mildred's friends (102-106)	Fire-house (45-48, 51-54)	Reciting poems (106-109)	Escape (123-130, 137-139)
Burning a woman (54-59)	Beatty (47-48, 70-78)	People-books (144-152)	Faber's help (130-136)

Word systems in Fahrenheit 451°

Conceptual-associative systems	Phonological-associative system
dark-cold-empty	sound symbolism - *[s]*
fun-happiness	

Syntactic systems	Metaphoric system
telegraphic language	*show-carnival*
tag-questions	hands and body parts
internal dialogue	

The conceptual-associative systems based on the notions of *dark-cold-empty*, *fun-happiness* act throughout the entire text and are intrinsically connected to the semantic contrast between the seemingly happy and actually tragic existence of the community designed "to have fun". The phonological system based on the alliteration of the sound [s] contributes to the auditory perception of the burning paper. The syntactic word systems found in the novel include incomplete sentences, clichés, the marked use of tag-questions, and internal dialogues. Metaphorical-metonymic word systems related to the notions of 'hands and body parts', *show-carnival* reveal the protagonist's mental state of hesitation and his search for solution.

3.2. The conceptual associative system **dark-cold-empty**

I shall show that each encounter with Mildred, Montag's wife, and her girlfriends, leading empty and meaningless lives, having no feelings, no thoughts, no goals, is associated with the *dark-cold-empty* conceptual field, involving both literal and figurative sense of the words. The coldness of their hearts, the emptiness of their thoughts, the darkness of their future are presented as having nothing genuine, nothing worth crying about. Their inner devastation resembles physical death—the world becomes dark and cold as a tomb, empty as a desert. Below are some text examples of this word system. (Note: here and elsewhere the emphasis in the quotations is mine.)

1. He opened the bedroom door.
   It was like coming into a <u>cold marbled</u> room of a <u>mausoleum</u> after the moon had set. Complete <u>darkness,</u> not a hint of a silver world

outside, the windows tightly shut, the chamber a <u>tomb-world</u> where no sound from the great city could penetrate. The room was not <u>empty</u>. (35)

2. <u>Darkness</u>. Without turning on the light he imagined how this room would look. His wife stretched on the bed, uncovered and <u>cold</u>, like a body displayed on the lid of a <u>tomb</u>, immovable... The room was indeed <u>empty</u>.

…The room was <u>cold</u> but nonetheless he felt he could not breathe. …So, with the feeling of a man who would die in the next hour for lack of air, he felt his way toward his open, <u>separate</u> and therefore <u>cold</u> bed.

He stood very straight and listened to the person on the <u>dark</u> bed in the completely <u>featureless night</u>. (36)

3. The woman on the bed was no more than a <u>hard stratum of marble</u> they had reached. Go on, anyway, shove the bore down, slush up <u>the emptiness</u>, if such a thing could be brought out in the throb of a suction snake. Did it drink <u>darkness</u>? (38)

4. The lawn was <u>empty</u>, the trees <u>empty</u>, the street <u>empty</u>. (51)

5. The voice-clock mourned out the <u>cold hour</u> of a <u>cold morning</u> of a <u>still colder year</u>. (52)

6. "Who is it?"

"Who would it be?" said Montag, leaning back against the closed door <u>in the dark</u>. He held his pants out into <u>an abyss</u> and let them fall into <u>darkness</u>. He balanced in space with the book in his sweating <u>cold</u> fingers. He stumbled towards the bed and shoved the book clumsily under the <u>cold</u> pillow. (60)

7. He lay far across the room from her, on a <u>winter island</u> separated by an <u>empty sea</u>. (60)

8. And he remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he wouldn't cry… a silly <u>empty</u> man near a silly <u>empty</u> woman, while the hungry snake made her still more <u>empty</u>.

…How do you get so <u>empty</u>? he wondered. Who takes it out of you? (62)

9. They read the long afternoon through, while the <u>cold November rain</u> fell from the sky upon the quiet house. They sat in the hall because the parlour was so <u>empty</u> and <u>grey-looking</u> without its walls lit with orange and yellow confetti… The parlour was <u>dead</u> and Mildred kept peering in at it with a <u>blank expression</u>… (84)

10. The three women fidgeted and looked nervously at the <u>empty mud-colored walls.</u>
    …The three <u>empty walls</u> of the room were like the pale brows of sleeping giants now, <u>empty of dreams</u>. (103-4)
11. The room was blazing hot, he was all fire, he was all <u>coldness</u>; they sat in the middle of an <u>empty desert</u> with three chairs and him standing… Then he began to read in a low, stumbling voice… and his voice went across <u>the desert</u>, into the whiteness, and around the three sitting women there in the great hot <u>emptiness</u>. (107)
12. Doors slammed and the house was <u>empty</u>. Montag stood <u>alone</u> in the <u>winter weather</u>, with the parlour walls the colour of <u>dirty snow</u>.
    Outside, crossing the lawn, on his way to work, he tried not to see how completely <u>dark and deserted</u> Clarisse McClellan's house was… (109)
13. And he shot a bolt at each of the three <u>blank walls</u> and <u>the vacuum</u> hissed out at him. The <u>emptiness</u> made an even <u>emptier whistle</u>, a senseless scream. He tried to think about <u>the vacuum</u> upon which the <u>nothingness</u> had performed, but he could not. He cut off its terrible <u>emptiness</u>, drew back and gave the entire room a gift of one huge bright yellow flower of burning. (120)
14. He was crushed by <u>darkness</u>… He felt back under the breaking curve of <u>darkness</u> and sound and smell, his ears roaring. This <u>dark land</u> rising was like that day in his childhood, swimming, when from nowhere the largest wave in the history of remembering slammed him down in salt mud and <u>green darkness</u>… (142)
15. He stood breathing, and the more he breathed the land in, the more he was filled up with all the details of the land. He was not *empty*. There was more than enough to fill him. There would always be more than enough. (144)
16. The camera, hovering in the belly of a helicopter, now swung down at <u>an empty street</u>.
    … It was suspended for a moment in their gaze, as if to give the vast audience time to appreciate everything, the raw look of the victim's face, <u>the empty street</u>, the steel animal a bullet nosing the target.
    <u>Blackout</u>.
    <u>Silence</u>.
    <u>Darkness</u>.
    Montag cried out in the <u>silence</u> and turned away.

> Silence.
> And then, after a time of the men sitting around the fire, their faces expressionless, an announcer on the dark screen said, "The search is over, Montag is dead: a crime against society has been avenged." Darkness. (147-8)

The word systems based on the semantic field *dark-cold-empty* present an instance of interlingual polysemy. The polysemous words *cold*, *dark*, and *empty* are used in the text in their perceptual meaning as well as in metaphoric, extended contextual meaning. (The metaphoric-polysemous extension of the primarily spatial or temporal meaning into existential meaning was acknowledged as a universal language tendency by many linguists (cf. Wierzbicka 1980, Tobin 1989). Mildred in her bed is *cold*, and the low temperature of her body reflects her depression, frigidity, and lifelessness that appear to be dangerously close to suicide – physical death. The meaning of *dark* in examples 1 and 2 is physical and reflects the absence of solar or electric illumination, but in example 14 the contextual meaning of the word corresponds to the dictionary meanings of "destitute of knowledge or culture; unenlightened", "gloomy; cheerless; dismal", and "sullen; frowning". This presents a striking contrast with the image of the society pretending to be "happy" and "having fun" reinforcing the author's idea of no happiness being possible without knowledge, art or literature.

The word *empty* in particular embodies the most convincing case of the application of the entire system. Each instance of *empty* calls forth a network of metaphoric and associative implications, *emptiness* conveys meaninglessness and futility accompanied by spatial vacuum. Not before his successful escape, when Montag finds himself in the forest—the kingdom of 'Harvard degrees'—does he part with the ruthless emptiness that was strangling him:

> He stood breathing, and the more he breathed the land in, the more he was filled up with all the details of the land. He was not empty. There was more than enough to fill him. There would always be more than enough. (144)

The message of the text viewed through the lens of this word system can be interpreted as 'Empty life is dark and cold, rather like death.'

3.3. The semantic-conceptual system *fun-happiness*

The semantic-conceptual word system revolving around the notions 'fun-happiness' permeats the entire text and is exemplified by the nouns: *fun, happiness, laughter, grin, smile, pleasure*; verbs: *laugh, grin, smile, enjoy*; and adjectives: *funny, happy*. The 'loyal' members of the society constantly emphasize that only fun matters and that their lives are pure happiness and joy. The pragmatic effect of multiple repetition of the words '*fun*' and '*happiness*' is contrary to their dictionary meaning and ironically close to that of '*dark-cold-empty*', as if they felt compelled to convince themselves of feeling happy in order not to "jump off the cap of a pillbox", as Mildred tried to do.

17. "Are you <u>happy</u>?" she said. […]
    "<u>Happy</u>! Of all the nonsense."
    He stopped <u>laughing</u>. […]
    Of course I'm <u>happy</u>. What does she think? I'm *not*?" he asked the quiet rooms. (34)
18. Darkness. He was <u>not happy</u>. He was <u>not happy</u>. He said the words to himself. He recognized that as a true state of affairs. He wore his <u>happiness</u> like a mask… (36)
19. When it comes time for the missing lines, they all look at me out of the three walls and I say the lines. Here, for instance, the man says, "What do you think of this whole idea, Helen?" …And I say, I say – "She paused and ran her finger under a line in the script. "'I think that's fine!' And then they go on with the play until he says, 'Do you agree to that, Helen?' and I say, 'I sure do!' Isn't that <u>fun</u>, Guy?"
    He stood in the hall looking at her.
    "It's sure <u>fun</u>," she said.
    "It's really <u>fun</u>. It'll be even more <u>fun</u> when we can afford to get the fourth wall installed..." (42)
20. [Beatty]: "…What do we want in this country, above all? People want <u>to be happy</u>, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want <u>to be happy</u>, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them <u>fun</u>? That's all we live for, isn't it? For <u>pleasure</u>, for <u>titillation</u>? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these." (75)
21. [Beatty]: "…The important thing for you to remember, Montag, is we're the <u>Happiness</u> boys, the Dixie Duo, you and I and the others.

We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone <u>unhappy</u> with conflicting theory and thought. We have our fingers in the dyke. Hold steady. Don't let the torrent of melancholy and drear philosophy drown our world. We depend on you. I don't think you realize how important *you* are, to our <u>happy</u> world as it stands now." (77)

22. [Montag]: "…Did you hear Beatty? Did you listen to him? He knows all the answers. He's right. <u>Happiness</u> is important. *Fun* is everything. And yet I kept sitting there saying to myself, I'm <u>not happy</u>, I'm <u>not happy</u>."
"*I* am." Mildred's mouth <u>beamed</u>. "And proud of it." (80)

23. Faber examined Montag's thin, blue-jowled face. "How did you get shaken up? What knocked the torch out of your hands?"
"I don't know. We have everything we need to <u>be happy</u>, but we aren't <u>happy</u>. Something's missing. I looked around. The only thing I positively *knew* was gone was the books I'd burned in ten or twelve years. So I thought books might help." (93)

24. "Clara, now Clara," begged Mildred, pulling her arm. "Come on, let's be <u>cheery</u>, you turn the 'family' on, now. Go ahead. Let's <u>laugh</u> and <u>be happy</u>, now, stop crying, we'll have a party!" (108-9)

The next group of quotations shows things that the characters find funny:

25. <u>It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed.</u> … He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house.
<u>Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by the flame</u>.
…Later, going to sleep, he would feel the fiery smile still gripped by his face muscles, in the dark. It never went away, that smile, it never ever went away, as long as he remembered. (29)

26. [Clarisse]: "Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to *stop* the flames."
He <u>laughed</u>.
She glanced quickly over. "Why are you <u>laughing</u>?"
"I don't know." He started to <u>laugh</u> again and stopped. "Why?"

"You <u>laugh</u> when I <u>haven't been funny</u> and you answer right off. You never stop to think what I've asked you." (33)

27. [Beatty]: "Montag, <u>a funny thing</u>. Heard tell this morning. <u>Fireman in Seattle, purposely set a Mechanical Hound to his own chemical complex and let it loose.</u> What kind of suicide would you call *that*?" (51)

28. She <u>laughed an odd little laugh</u> that went up and up. "<u>Funny</u>, how <u>funny</u>, <u>not to remember where or when you met your husband or wife.</u>" (61-2)

29. [Mildred]: "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. <u>It's fun out in the country. You hit rabbits, sometimes you hit dogs.</u> Go take the beetle."
"No, I don't want to, this time. <u>I want to hold on to this funny thing. God, it's gotten big on me. I don't know what it is. I'm so damn unhappy...</u>" (80)

30. Mildred snatched the book with a laugh. "…<u>Here's that really funny one you read out loud today. Ladies, you won't understand a word</u>." (107)

The intrusive reiteration of lexical items referring to fun and joy illuminate the actual search for happiness that sometimes ends tragically: Mildred, this allegedly happy woman, escapes death by a hairbreadth, overwhelmed by the vacuum she exists in: not working, not studying, not loving, not thinking, not feeling, not caring for anyone.

3.4. *Phonological associative word system: the sound [s]*

Generally, any word system if viewed as a linguistic sign represents a junction of sound and meaning as a reflection of the universal correspondence of form and content. Specifically, word systems based on a common phonological denominator are, as a rule, the most original non-translatable and non-transferable combinations or alliterations of sounds, roots, words, or phrases which function at the macro-textual level. The most vivid phonological-associative word system in our text relies on the effect of a sibilant produced by the deliberately massive number of lexical items containing the sound [s], which creates the

acoustic impression of burning paper (episodes of burning books, houses, people), running water (Mildred taking sleeping pills), or air sucked out of a container by vacuum. The sound [s] **s**creams of darkne**ss** and emptine**ss**, **s**eems to be an **SOS s**ignal, **s**earch for e**s**cape, hi**ss**ing of di**s**tant helicopters, **s**ymbolizing death and **s**ile**nc**e. It creates associative links between semantic and phonetic levels by fusion of sound and meaning.

31. It was a [s]pecial pleasure to [s]ee things eaten, to [s]ee things blackened and changed. With the bra[ss] nozzle in his fi[s]t[s], with thi[s] great python [s]pitting it[s] venomou[s] kero[s]ene upon the world… With his [s]ymbolic helmet numbered 451 on his [s]tolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came nex[ks]t, he flicked the igniter and the hou[s]e jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening [s]ky red and yellow and black. He [s]trode in a [s]warm of fireflies. (29)

32. Later, going to [s]leep, he would feel the fiery [s]mile [s]till gripped by his fac[s]e mu[s]cles, in the dark. (29)

33. He [s]lid to a [s]queaking halt… He walked out of the fire-[s]tation and along the midnight [s]treet toward the [s]ubway where the [s]ilent, air-propelled train [s]lid [s]oundle[ss]ly down it[s] lubricated flue in the earth and let him out with a great puff of warm air on to the cream-tiled e[s]calator rising to the [s]uburb. (30)

34. On[c]e as a child he had [s]at upon a yellow dune by the [s]ea in the middle of the blue and hot [s]ummer day, trying to fill a [s]ieve with [s]and, because [s]ome cruel cousin had [s]aid, "Fill thi[s] [s]ieve and you'll get a dime!" And the fa[s]ter he poured, the fa[s]ter it [s]ifted through with a hot whi[s]pering. His hands were tired, the [s]and was boiling, the [s]ieve was empty. [S]eated there in the mid[s]t of July, without a [s]ound, he felt the tears move down his cheek[s]. (89-90)

35. The Mechanical Hound was gone. It[s] kennel was empty and the firehou[s]e stood all about in pla[s]ter [s]ilenc[s]e and the orange [S]alamander [s]lept with it[s] kero[s]ene in it[s] belly and the fire-throwers cro[ss]ed upon it[s] flank[s] and Montag came in through the [s]ilenc[s]e and touched the bra[ss] pole and [s]lid up in the dark air. (111)

36. Beatty never drove, but he was driving tonight, [s]lamming the [S]alamander around the corners, his ma[ss]ive black [s]licker flapping out behind [s]o that he [s]eemed a great black bat flying above the engine, over the bra[ss] numbers, taking the full wind. (115)

37. And then he came to the parlour where the great idiot mon[s]ters lay a[s]leep with their white thought[s] and their [s]nowy dreams. And he shot a bolt at each of the three blank walls and the vacuum hi[ss]ed at him. The emptine[ss] made an even emptier whi[s]tle, a [s]en[s]ele[ss] [s]cream. (120)

38. It was half acro[ss] the lawn, coming from the shadows, moving with [s]uch drifting ease that it was like a [s]ingle [s]olid cloud of black-grey [s]moke blown at him in [s]ilenc[s]e.
It made a [s]ingle la[s]t leap in the air, it[s] [s]pidered legs reaching, the procaine needle [s]napping out it[s] [s]ingle angry tooth. Montag caught it with a bloom of fire, a [s]ingle wondrou[s] blo[ss]om… He felt it [s]crabble and [s]eize his leg and [s]tab the needle in for a moment before the fire [s]napped the Hound up in the air, bur[s]t it[s] metal bones at the joint[s], and blew out it[s] interior in the [s]ingle flushing of red colour like a [s]kyrocket fa[s]tened to the [s]treet. (122)

3.5. Metathesis
In addition to the word system based on [s] alliteration, Bradbury exploits a less common device—metathesis—to create a special effect of the phonological-semantic association.

39. He <u>felt</u> as if he had <u>left</u> a stage behind and many actors. He <u>felt</u> as if he had <u>left</u> the great séance and all the murmuring ghosts. (139)

These and many more instances of [s] alliteration make the sound of burning paper audible and enhance the message of the text through the acoustic effect of this word system.

3.6. Syntactic strategies: telegraphic language
The speech of the 'consumer society' members in the novel is markedly basic and colorless, giving away their spiritual emptiness and intellectual primitiveness. Language as a form of human behavior inevitably reflects societal values and priorities, and Bradbury portrays Mildred and her friends through their speech as using the 'telegraphic language': incomplete sentences, clichés, and excessive tag-questions. His goal seems to be demonstrating the correspondence between empty thoughts and impoverished syntax.

40. His wife said, "I don't know *why* I should be so hungry."
     "You –"
     "I'm *hungry*."
     "Last night," he began.
     "Didn't sleep well. Feel terrible," she said. "God, I'm hungry. I can't figure it."
     "Last night –" he said again.
     She watched his lips casually. "What about last night?" (41)
41. "Well, everything will be all right now," said an "aunt."
     "Oh, don't be too sure," said a "cousin."
     "Now, don't get angry!"
     "Who's angry?"
     "*You* are!"
     "*I* am?"
     "You are mad!"
     "Why should I be mad!"
     "Because!" (64)
42. "You know, the high-school girl. Clarisse, her name is."
     "Oh, yes," said his wife.
     "I haven't seen her for a few days – four days to be exact. Have you seen her?"
     "No."
     "I've meant to talk to you about her. Strange."
     "Oh, I know the one you mean."
     "I thought you would."
     "Her," said Mildred in the dark room.
     "What about her?" asked Montag.
     "I meant to tell you. Forgot. Forgot."

"Tell me now. What is it?"

"I think she's gone."

"<u>Gone</u>?"

"Whole family moved out somewhere. But she's gone for good. I think she's dead."

"We couldn't be talking about the same girl."

"<u>No</u>. <u>The same girl.</u> <u>McClellan.</u> <u>McClellan.</u> <u>Run over by a car.</u> <u>Four days ago</u>. <u>I'm not sure.</u> But I think she's dead. The family moved out anyway. <u>I don't know</u>. But I think she's dead."

"You're not sure of it!"

"<u>No, not sure.</u> <u>Pretty sure</u>."

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"<u>Forgot</u>."

"Four days ago!"

"I forgot all about it." (66)

43. "I had a nice evening," she said, in the bathroom.

"<u>What doing?</u>"

"<u>The parlour</u>."

"What was on?"

"<u>Programmes</u>."

"What programmes?"

"<u>Some of the best ever</u>."

"<u>Who?</u>"

"<u>Oh, you know, the bunch</u>." (68)

44. "<u>Doesn't everyone look nice!</u>"

"<u>Nice.</u>"

"<u>You look fine, Millie!</u>"

"<u>Fine.</u>"

"<u>Everyone looks swell.</u>"

"<u>Swell!</u>"

"<u>Isn't this show wonderful?</u>" cried Mildred.

"<u>Wonderful!</u>" (102)

45. "<u>Oh, they come and go, come and go,</u>" said Mrs. Phelps. "<u>In again out again Finnegan,</u> the Army called Pete yesterday. <u>He'll be back next week. The Army said so. Quick war. Forty-eight hours they said, and everyone home. That's what the Army said. Quick war.</u> Pete was called yesterday and <u>they said he'd be back next week. Quick.</u>.."

"I'm not worried," said Mrs. Phelps. "I'll let Pete do all the worrying." She giggled. "I'll let old Pete do all the worrying. Not me. I'm not worried." (103)

3.7. Tag-questions
Another syntactic strategy based on tag-questions creates the impression that the idea of 'happy' society needs a lot of reassurance and convincing. Captain Beatty, the main promoter of the 'having fun' philosophy, tries almost too hard to persuade Montag and other firemen that their society is the happiest and most harmonious one to secure their support.

46.   [Beatty]: "You like baseball, don't you, Montag?"
      "Baseball's a fine game."
      Beatty went on as if nothing had happened. "You like bowling, don't you, Montag?" (73)
47.   [Beatty]: "Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these." (75-76)
48.   [Millie]: "You are going to work tonight, though, aren't you?" (79)
49.   [Millie]: "They'll put you in jail, wouldn't they?" (80)
50.   [Millie]: "You've got to hand it back tonight, don't you know? Captain Beatty knows you've got it, doesn't he?" (88)

The excessive use of tag-questions emphasises how artificial and fake things are in this society. On the contrary, professor Faber for whom genuine human values hold great importance never uses them in his speech. Immortality of knowledge and art needs no confirmation, it exists objectively and fills life with meaning and purpose.

3.8. Word system based on internal dialogue
Word systems as linguistic entities share characteristics with internal dialogues which tend to develop semantic elements into a single linguistic sign. According to Vygotsky (1962: 148), words in internal

dialogues are overloaded with meaning and linked associatively on the basis of sense rather than meaning. Guy Montag is seeking answers to his thoughts and doubts in conversations with other people, but after he starts leading a double life of burning books and passionately reading them, most of his meaningful utterances are carried over to his internal speech. His internal dialogues contradict the sentences he pronounces aloud and eventually take precedence. The most essential questions he has for himself and his wife appear in the internal speech and serve as a vehicle for the text message: a search for meaning in life which would save the humankind.

51. Of course, I'm happy. What does she think? I'm not? (34)
52. There are too many of us, he thought. There are billions of us and that's too many. Nobody knows anyone. Strangers come and violate you. Strangers come and cut your heart out. Strangers come and take your blood. Good God, who were those men? I never saw them before in my life! (39)
53. ...and he wanted to call out to her, how many have you taken *tonight*! the capsules! how many will you take later and not know? and so on, every hour! or maybe not tonight, tomorrow night! (62)
54. "I can't call him, I can't tell him I'm sick."
    "Why?"
    Because you are afraid, he thought. (68)
55. I'm numb, he thought. When did the numbness really begin in my face? In my body? The night I kicked the pillbox in the dark. It'll take time, but I'll do it, or Faber will do it for me. Someone somewhere will give me back the old face and the old hands the way they were. I'm lost without it. (89)
56. ... and he thought, in a few hours, there will be Beatty, and here will be me handing this over, so no phrase will escape me, each line must be memorized. I will myself to do it. (90)
57. Well, he thought, let's see how badly off you are. On your feet now. Easy, easy... there.
    He wept. Come on! Come on, you, you can't stay here! (123)
58. Beatty, he thought, you're not a problem now. You always said don't face a problem, burn it. Well, now I've done both. Good-bye, Captain. (123)

59. .... he thought, <u>you are a fool, a damned fool, an awful fool, an idiot, an awful idiot; look at the mess, and what do you do? A fool, a damn fool, go give yourself up!</u> (123)
60. <u>The police, of course. They see me. But slow now, slow, quiet, don't turn, don't look, don't seem concerned. Walk, that's it, walk, walk.</u>
    He stumbled and fell.
    <u>I'm done! It's over!</u> (128)
61. <u>That's all for me, you thought, that's all taking place just for me, by God.</u> (134)
62. <u>What did you give to the city, Montag? Ashes.</u>
    <u>What did the others give to each other? Nothingness.</u> (153)
63. <u>I want to see everything now. Look at the world out there, my God, my God, look at it out there, outside me, out there beyond my face and the only way to really touch it is to put it where it's finally me.</u> (157)

3.9. Metaphoric system 'hands and body parts'
Another semantic word system I shall analyse expresses how Montag's protest and his attempts at recovering his personality are inspired by his hands, which symbolize independent agents of curiosity, desire for a change, and a thirst for understanding and explaining. His two hands are living creatures acting on their own, and the strategy of communication can be defined as personification. Montag is allegedly taken by surprise and completely unaware of what his hands 'dare' to do. This strategy can be illustrated by over 50 examples in the text:

64. He felt <u>his chest chopped down and split apart</u>. He felt <u>his hand plunge toward the telephone.</u> He felt <u>his lips move</u>, brushing the mouthpiece of the phone. ... He stood shivering in the dark, and <u>let his lips go on moving and moving.</u> (37)
65. <u>Montag's hand closed like a mouth, crushed the book with wild devotion, with an insanity of mindlessness to his chest…</u>
    Montag had done nothing. <u>His hand had done it all, his hand, with a brain of its own, with a conscience and a curiosity in each trembling finger, had turned thief…</u>

He gazed, shaken, at <u>that white hand</u>. He held it way out, as if he were far-sighted. He held it close, as if he were blind. (57)

66. So <u>it was the hand that started it all</u>. <u>His hands had been infected, and soon it would be his arms</u>. He could feel the poison working up his wrists and into his elbows and his shoulders. <u>His hands were ravenous</u>. And <u>his eyes were</u> <u>beginning to feel hunger</u>, as if they must look at something, anything, everything. (60)

67. <u>Montag's hands picked up the Bible</u>. He saw what his hands had done and he looked surprised. …
<u>His hands, by themselves, like two men working together, began to rip the pages from the book</u>. <u>The hands tore the flyleaf and then the first and then the second page.</u> (98)

68. In Beatty's sight, Montag felt <u>the guilt of his hands</u>. <u>His fingers were like ferrets</u> that had done some evil and now never rested, always stirred and picked and hid in pockets …If Beatty so much as breathed on them, Montag felt that <u>his hands might wither, turn over on their sides, and never be shocked to life again</u>; they would be buried the rest of his life in his coat-sleeves, forgotten. For <u>these were the hands that had acted on their own, no part of him</u>, here was where the conscience first manifested itself to snatch books, … and now, in the firehouse, <u>these hands seemed gloved with blood</u>. (112)

69. Montag saw the surprise there and himself <u>glanced to his hands to see what new thing they had done</u>. Thinking back later he could never decide whether the hands or Beatty's reaction to the hands gave him the final push toward murder. (121)

The stylistic device of personification is used here to create the semantic notion of the inner conflict and quest for solution. Conscience and curiosity, purely human features, are ascribed to the hands as well as the sense of guilt and innocence. The non-random use of language found here pursues the goal of emphasizing the message: thirst for knowledge and education is an inherent urge for humans, it cannot be destroyed and serves as a prerequisite for survival.

3.10. Metaphoric system **show–carnival**
This word system serves to convey the sense of artificial reality typical of a society that abandoned knowledge and education as pillars of

spirituality and happiness. The lexical items belonging in the semantic domain *show-carnival* – circus, arena, scene, stage, game – are used in the text in their figurative meaning, which allows for categorising this system as metaphorical.

70. Always at night the alarm comes. Never by day! Is it because fire is prettier by night? More spectacle, a better show? (58)
71. Lights flicked on and house doors opened all down the street, to watch the carnival set up. (117)
72. ...the great tents of the circus had slumped into charcoal and rubble and the show was well over. (120)
73. ... the house burnt like an ancient bit of stage-scenery. (123)
74. It was a vast stage without scenery, inviting him to run across, easily seen in the blazing illumination... (125)
75. The boulevard was as clean as the surface of an arena two minutes before the appearance of certain unnamed victims and certain unknown killers. (127)
76. The circus must go on, even with war beginning in an hour. (134)
77. ... the big game, the hunt, the one-man carnival. (135)
78. The show's got to have a snap ending, quick! (146)

The performance is cruel and ugly, it cannot last forever, and the message of the text is clearly stated: this illusory world is short-lived, the lights will be turned off and the stage will turn empty.

4. Conclusion
On the basis of the above illustrative examples, I would like to argue that the primary message of the novel can be postulated as *ignorance and emptiness lead to disaster*. In our opinion, the initial intent of the book is best expressed in Bradbury's claim that the novel touches on the alienation of people by media (Weller 2010). As a passionate book devotee, Bradbury sees the immediate connection between book burning, spiritual emptiness, and world destruction.

    The message of the text—the significance of intellectual and spiritual values for the survival of humankind—is conveyed by common denominators of various word systems: phonological-associative system reiterating the sound [s], semantic, conceptual, and metaphorical systems

involving '*fun-happiness*', '*dark-cold-empty*', '*show-carnival*', 'hands and body parts'; syntactic systems of telegraphic language, tag-questions, and internal dialogue. My analysis shows that the word systems serve as language devices (form) for creating a textual message (content) in *Fahrenheit 451°* by Ray Bradbury.

The text is viewed as an inseparable junction of the language with the message it nurtures and creates, and the data presented lends support to the argument that text is a system of systems where means is the message.

Primary Source
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