

*THE NEW*

Number 6 2019

*RAY BRADBURY*

*REVIEW*



# THE NEW RAY BRADBURY REVIEW

Number 6 (2019)



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Founding Editor, *The New Ray Bradbury Review*

*And even when the long twilight and the weariness of death come,  
you will not set in our sky, you advocate of life.*

—Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

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## Dedication

This special issue on Bradbury's supernatural fiction, the sixth in the overall journal series, celebrates the tenth anniversary of *The New Ray Bradbury Review*. The editors dedicate this issue to William F. Nolan, a prolific author in many genres and an award-winning horror writer in his own right. His close friendship with Ray Bradbury began in 1950 and spanned more than sixty years. Early in this relationship, Bill Nolan conceived and published the single-issue *Ray Bradbury Review* (1952), an essential first glimpse of the early Bradbury career. As his own writing career bloomed and flourished, Nolan remained one of the most insightful critics and bibliographers of his friend's career. His 1975 publication of *The Ray Bradbury Companion* remains an essential entry point for anyone who wishes to study the crucial first three decades of Bradbury's career. In 1991, Bill Nolan's *The Bradbury Chronicles* became the first homage anthology of stories written to honor Ray Bradbury. Bill's knowledge of the unpublished and uncollected Bradbury canon helped shape the contents of *Long after Midnight* (1976).

Over the years, Bill Nolan became a mentor to others, including Donn Albright, who would go on to become Ray Bradbury's principal bibliographer and close friend; Donn would help shape the many Bradbury story collections that followed *Long after Midnight*, remaining close to Bill Nolan down through the years. Bill Nolan also mentored our early work in extending Ray Bradbury's legacy into the academic world, writing the preface to *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* (2004), the first critical study of the author published by a university press.

When the late Bill Touponce, my colleague and coauthor on *The Life of Fiction*, asked Bill Nolan about reviving the tradition of *The Ray Bradbury Review* through our new academic journal, we received his full and unconditional blessing. For his unstinting support and many other kindnesses, this issue is also dedicated to the memory of William F. Touponce, who developed *The New Ray Bradbury Review* and served as founding editor for the first three issues. Countless scholars and students have benefitted from Bill Touponce's defining work on Ray Bradbury's legacy as a master storyteller.

—Jonathan R. Eller



# General Editor's Preface

## Forms of Things Unknown: Bradbury's Dark Fantastic

And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes  
—*Midsummer's Night Dream*, V.i.14–16

It's not a surprise that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was one of Ray Bradbury's favorite Shakespearean plays; like *The Tempest*, the dream worlds of that play reflect the surreal and sometimes disturbing reveries that constantly emerged from the depths of Bradbury's own subconscious. Shakespeare's observation on the imaginative power glimpsed through "forms of things unknown," spoken by Theseus in the final act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, eventually inspired the title of a late C. S. Lewis story, long disputed as to authorship, a tale that blends a science fictional plot with the mythological terrors of the Medusa. This title might also define both the atmosphere and the breadth of Bradbury's genre-bending tales of supernatural fiction, a self-defined form of things unknown representing his first major success as a writer of weird tales—a form that successfully evaded all the conventions of the horror and mystery traditions.

The genius found in many of his earliest fantasies continued to surface in long-deferred publications and occasional new stories throughout his seven decades as a professional writer, and assessing the legacy of his supernatural fiction is the objective of the articles selected for this issue of *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, masterfully gathered and edited by Professor Jeffrey Kahan. The essays in this issue examine a number of the stories and novels that stand at the core of Bradbury's legacy as a teller of dark tales, as well as adaptations of these tales and longer fictions for other media.

Jeffrey Kahan's introduction and the essays that follow raise the curtain on compelling new ways to understand Bradbury's never-ending quest for the intuitive truths of human nature, rooted in what Damon Knight defined as Bradbury's mastery of "the fundamental pre-rational fears and longings and desires" common to all: "the rage at being born; the will to be loved; the longing

to communicate; the hatred of parents and siblings; the fear of things that are not the self.”<sup>1</sup> Bradbury resisted genre labels, focusing instead on the author’s responsibility to develop a style centered on the revelation of emotional truth, no matter what the pressures from critics, publishers, or even governments.

This passion began with his earliest light-horror stories, inspired by his love of a literary tradition that he saw under threat of censorship in the years immediately following World War II. In fact, the long path to *Fahrenheit 451* includes his discarded first draft introduction to Theodore Sturgeon’s 1948 story collection *Without Sorcery*, where he passed judgment on a fundamental consequence of modernity: “We have lost faith not only in God but in God’s opposites, the devil, the apparitions, the werewolves and warlocks.” For Bradbury, the consequences for freedom of the imagination were obvious: “I cannot help but feel we have lost something essentially vital and stimulating. . . . At least there was white Whiteness as well as the dark Dark, while today all is a vast and monotonous plain of unvarying gray.”<sup>2</sup>

It’s not surprising, then, that today’s great writers of the dark fantastic acknowledge the inspiration of Bradbury’s fiction and his significance to the American gothic tradition. In a broader sense, Bradbury is considered a mythopoeic writer who, like C. S. Lewis, imagined fantastic worlds rich in emotional truths. Indeed, Lewis thought highly of *The Martian Chronicles* and regarded some of Bradbury’s short stories as self-contained worlds of wonder.<sup>3</sup> We may never know for sure if Lewis wrote “Forms of Things Unknown,” but his authorship may be ciphered indirectly through the story’s epigraph, a line from Lewis’s own interplanetary fantasy, *Perelandra*: “that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other.”<sup>4</sup> Bradbury’s best supernatural fiction centers on that same creative tension between the real and the imaginary. And, as we see in these essays, that made all the difference.

Jonathan R. Eller, Chancellor’s Professor of English  
Director, Center for Ray Bradbury Studies  
Indiana University School of Liberal Arts

## Notes

1. Damon Knight, “Readin’ and Writhin’,” review of *The Illustrated Man*, by Ray Bradbury, *Science Fiction Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Feb. 1953): 81. Revised for “When I Was in Knee-Pants: Ray Bradbury,” in *In Search of Wonder* (Chicago: Advent, 1956), 109.

2. Ray Bradbury, from his discarded first-draft introduction to Theodore Sturgeon’s *Without Sorcery: Thirteen Tales* (New York: Prime Press, 1948). This passage was first published in Jonathan Eller, *Becoming Ray Bradbury* (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2011), 189; and subsequently reprinted in Jonathan Eller, “My Name Is Dark,”

in Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), [275]–276. From a photocopy in the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies.

3. C. S. Lewis to Mr. Rutyarts, Apr. 28, 1951, Wade Center, Wheaton College; quoted in Jonathan R. Eller, *Ray Bradbury Unbound* (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2014), 94; C. S. Lewis, “On Science Fiction,” in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter J. Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Harvest, 1975), 71 (Bradbury’s copy, Center for Ray Bradbury Studies). Originally published posthumously in 1966; from a November 1955 Cambridge University lecture.

4. C. S. Lewis, “Forms of Things Unknown,” in C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter J. Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966); first U.S. edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967; reprinted New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Harvest, 1975, 119–26 (Bradbury’s copy, Center for Ray Bradbury Studies).



Ray Bradbury's abiding love for the works of Edgar Allan Poe was renewed after the 2009 issue of the forty-two-cent postage stamp bearing a portrait of Poe by Michael J. Deas (from an engraving by F. T. Stuart). Bradbury inscribed "MY PAPA" within this group of Poe stamps on an outgoing correspondence envelope. Like Poe, Bradbury came to be known as "The October Man." From Bradbury's correspondence with Frank Palumbo; archived on the "bradburymedia" website, <https://bradburymedia.blogspot.com/2014/03/bradbury-doodles.html>. Artifact and inscription used by permission of the Bradbury estate and Don Congdon Associates, Inc.

## Editor's Introduction

### Ray Bradbury, Horror Fiction, and the Problem of Critical Impasse

JEFFREY KAHAN

Writing on Ray Bradbury is often like writing on Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Middleton. Despite the best efforts of Gary Taylor and other high-powered academics to broaden the canon or at least to see Shakespeare's works in relation to those of his rivals, the reality is that we have been talking about Shakespeare for over 400 years; he dominates literary debates because, for so long, he was (and remains) the focus of the debate. As a consequence, talk of Shakespeare has tended to warp our objectivity. When gauging a rival, for example, we'll often say, "Sure, he's interesting, but he's no Shakespeare." Yet writers who are like Shakespeare are likewise dismissed as derivative, hence second-rate. In our ongoing romance with the word, there is only one King Arthur. Sure, Lancelot, Gawain, Percival, Kay (ye gods, that sounds like a law firm!) might have a fan or two, but everyone knows who pulled the sword from the stone or, in Bard-speak, the quill from the inkpot.

In the case of Ray Bradbury, we have a variant on the same phenomenon. Bradbury is a major author, celebrated—nonetheless, I would argue, short-changed. After decades of establishing a genre-specific canon and taxonomy devoted to shelving fiction correctly, a cadre of highly trained critics dedicated to author and oeuvre have relegated Bradbury to one genre (science fiction) and marginalized him in others (detective fiction, film scripts, poetry, and, yes, horror fiction). Like Macbeth, ranting at a ghost that only he can see, critics and fans of Bradbury's *other* works are eager to have their say, and their interruptions threaten the mannerly good cheer of the bibliographical table.

In fact, we might argue that, like Shakespeare, Bradbury dominates a genre that wants nothing to do with him. Read your Jonson, Marlowe, Massinger,

and Middleton; it's clear that they are far more like one another than they are like Shakespeare. Bradbury, one of the ABCs of science fiction (Asimov, Bradbury, Clarke), is, likewise, odd man out. He lacks the scientific chops of his cohort; moreover, he's tightly shoehorned not only into science fiction but almost anywhere he pops up in fan discussion or formal criticism. *Fahrenheit 451*, for example, is often described as if it were a work of horror fiction—John Betjeman, the UK's poet laureate from 1972 to 1984, refers to *Fahrenheit 451*'s "powerful horror"; Adrian Mitchell, a poet, novelist, and antinuke activist, refers to its "large-scale horror," and so on.<sup>1</sup> Yet Beatty, the apostate belletrist, is hardly cut from the same dark cloth as Cthulhu, Norman Bates, or Pennywise, and the novel can hardly be discussed appropriately alongside *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, or the *Exorcist*. Likewise, Bradbury's works may seem fantastical or magical, but no one is likely to argue that he's another William Morris, Lord Dunsany, J. R. R. Tolkien, or George R. R. Martin. There are weird tales in the Bradbury canon that might seem at a glance to be young adult—*The Halloween Tree*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, for example—yet these works are worlds away from J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series or Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Warrior*.

Many canonical classics suffer from this problem. Is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* a work of horror or science fiction; is George Orwell's *Animal Farm* a satire or a fable; is Frank Miller's *Batman: Return of the Dark Knight* a novel or a graphic? Of course, we might simply say that these works are hybrids, anomalies: *Frankenstein* is a work of horror and science fiction and feminism; it's also an Arabian-tinged romance and an Arthurian quest. *Animal Farm* is worthy of repeated bind-bending because it is mind-bending, and *Dark Knight* is a graphic novel and a work of political satire. But we haven't the same problem with their respective authors. When we discuss Shelley, it isn't difficult to relate one of her works to another—ditto Orwell or Miller. But Bradbury? His canon is simply too scattershot. I suppose the closest he has to a literary descendant is Neil Gaiman, who likewise allows his imagination free rein and then lets his agents, publishers, fans, and critics worry about how to classify and discuss; maybe he's Umberto Eco's American uncle, Italo Calvino's literary cousin, James Joyce's lost Irish relation. Or maybe he's *just* (there I go defining him again!) Edgar Allan Poe without the peculiar, the talent without the torment, the craft without the crazy—but don't you have to be a *little crazy* to write the sort of stuff he writes?

Do I contradict myself?  
 Very well then I contradict myself,  
 (I am large, I contain multitudes.)  
 —Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Perhaps we have been a bit too tame; perhaps it's time to unshackle ourselves from the chains of library classifications, to declare that, in Bradbury studies, the acronymic DDC, LCC, and UDC are all DOA; perhaps the time is at hand to endstop the silence, to exclaim with a Whitmanesque “barbaric yawp” that Bradbury's multitudinous works are not bound by traditional discussions and distinctions.

That, at any rate, is the intention behind this collection of essays on Bradbury's often-neglected horror tales. It begins with two bibliographical studies that awaken us to the surprising scope and difficulty of listing, much less intelligently discussing, his work. Clotilde Landais surveys Bradbury's critical reception and concludes that literary critics redub his science fiction, horror, and fantasy tales as collective works of “magic realism” because the latter term seems somehow more “literary.” The upshot is that his importance and influence have been distorted by critics who never foresaw our present paradigm, one in which horror writers like H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith are imprinted by Oxford, and Stephen King, once dismissed as a *schlock meister par excellence*, is awarded the National Medal of Arts. As a consequence, Bradbury has been overlooked in a field (horror fiction) that he should by rights overshadow.

Neglect of another sort informs Mark S. Gray's study of Bradbury's early scripts prepared for *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* and *The Twilight Zone*. While hitherto neglected by academics, these scripts, Gray argues, had a profound influence on a coming generation of writers, among them, Stephen King: “My first experience with real horror came at the hands of Ray Bradbury—it was an adaptation of his story ‘Mars Is Heaven!’ on *Dimension X*. This would have been in 1951, which would have made me four at the time.” A broader, mythopoetic approach is undertaken by Jamil Mustafa, who argues that *Something Wicked This Way Comes* functions as a “distinctively constructed allegory that represents and critiques American Cold War paranoia in a quintessentially gothic and carnivalesque fashion.” The latter, he notes, is reflected in the novel's funhouse mirrors, which render “people youthful or aged rather than simply grotesque, as a carnivalesque version of allegory.” Likewise, “the novel inverts, collapses, and mocks the conventional allegorical schema. . . . It offers instead a multiplicity of meanings, shattering traditional allegory in much the same fashion as Charles Halloway's laughter shatters the Mirror Maze.”

Ida Yoshinaga focuses on three scripts—“The Long Rain,” “Silent Towns,” and “Usher II”—all directed by Lee Tamahori for *The Ray Bradbury Theater*

TV show; Yoshinaga's contribution carefully explores the team-based complication of TV production, which, in her view, exposes the rival authority of director-as-auteur versus screenwriter-as-auteur. While this sounds like a hostile process, Yoshinaga argues that Tamahori's association with *The Ray Bradbury Theater* helped transform the young director "into an in-demand auteur" of noir/crime-thrillers, and sci-fi.

C. B. Stuckey reminds us that, genre issues to one side, the genius of Bradbury is not in the fecundity of his writing but in its disarming tone and quiet yet haunting craft: "The true fingerprint throughout his works is the language itself, a trustworthy hand or a strange welcome into velvet darkness." In her readings of "The Fog Horn" and "The Next in Line," Stuckey traces Bradbury's use of poetic devices to intimate a world of menace. In phrases like "Shadows *pencilled* and *slashed* under the bucketing lamps now this way, now that, here a shadow one instant, there a shadow next, now no shadows, all cold light, now no light, all cold blue-black shadow. The lamps creaked on their high metal hasps" she discerns "mirroring beats and slant rhyme," "whispering alliteration"; "Bradbury creates a portal to see beyond the language as ornamental, beyond surface-level understanding of character and theme, to elevate genre with style, connecting readers to story as well as untapped darker places within our own understandings of the human experience."

Paul Donatich argues that Bradbury's noir novel *Death Is a Lonely Business* (1985) opens itself to a biographical and literary retrospective: "The text's blend of detective fiction, horror, and autobiography allows readers to relive Bradbury's quest to become a successful novelist." Notably, Donatich explores how Bradbury incorporated details from the real-life murder of his uncle, Lester Moberg, which took place in 1932, when Bradbury was twelve years old. Six years later, when Bradbury graduated from Los Angeles High School, he wore "the suit his uncle Lester had been shot in." In a sense, Bradbury was doing more than honoring his uncle; he was turning the events of his own life into a literary whodunit, a retrospectively penned *Bildungsroman*, outlining what he had done all the years since the defining coming-of-age moment of his uncle's murder. As Donatich persuasively argues, the biographical interplay "adds a nuanced dimension to Bradbury scholarship that has thus far been overlooked."

The collection's penultimate essay is, I confess, my favorite: Miranda Corcoran's contribution on Bradbury's "The April Witch." By way of medical and cultural discourses concerning feminine psychology and biology, Corcoran surveys how "teenage girls are frequently depicted as monstrous, uncanny, or otherworldly" and goes on to argue that Bradbury "both draws upon and reimagines many of the key tropes associated with adolescent femininity in the horror genre." The collection rounds out with my admittedly quirky contribution, part biomemoir, part critical essay, on Bradbury's *The Halloween Tree*.

Rather than dwelling on the aspect of cheating on either side, something he explored to great comic effect in “One for His Lordship, and One for the Road!” the grand bargain between trickster and treaters in *The Halloween Tree* is honestly brokered and faithfully executed, but the cost of saving one life is enmeshed in a defeated, bittersweet recognition that the fun and games of Halloween rehearse the grimmer decisions and grayer realities ahead.

These essays, I heartily—or is it gravely?—expect will not be the last word on Ray Bradbury’s horror fiction. While a genre-defying giant in science fiction, Bradbury deserves a place—no less deserved because it is inimitable—alongside the traditional masters of the macabre. We are just scratching the surface of his genius; indeed, these essays demonstrate that, while much remains buried in the Bradbury corpus, none of it is dead.

—Jeffrey Kahan, from somewhere in October Country

## Note

1. See critical essays excerpts in Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451: A Novel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 224, 226.