

## Objectifying the Fetish: Revisiting François Truffaut's Adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451*

Maytawee Holasut

### บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ของการดัดแปลงบทภาพยนตร์เรื่อง *ฟahrenheit 451* ผลงานกำกับโดย弗รองซัวร์ ทรูฟิ จากนวนิยายดิสโทเปียนชื่อเดียวกัน ของเรย์ แบรดบิวารี นวนิยายเรื่องนี้เป็นที่รู้จักอย่างแพร่หลายด้วยเนื้อหาที่เชิดชูหนังสือ ในฐานะสื่ออันเป็นตัวแทนของคุณค่าอันสูงส่งของมนุษย์ และว่าด้วยโทรศัพท์ทัศน์เป็นสื่อที่ลดทอนคุณค่าดังกล่าว อย่างไรก็ตาม ภาพยนตร์ของทรูฟิได้ทบทวนการสร้างคุณค่า ของนวนิยายผ่านภาษาภาพยนตร์ที่ซึ่งให้เห็นถึงความเป็นวัตถุบูชา (fetish object) ของสื่อประเภทต่าง ๆ ทั้งหนังสือ โทรศัพท์ และตัวภาพยนตร์เอง อาจกล่าวได้ว่าการดัดแปลงหนังสือเป็นภาพยนตร์ของทรูฟิเปรียบเสมือนการเปิดพื้นที่เพื่อทบทวนคุณค่าที่แฝงอยู่ในนวนิยายต้นฉบับอย่างเป็นพลวัต

### Abstract

This article explores the dynamic relationship of François Truffaut's adaptation of Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. Bradbury's novel is known for its romanticization of books as a bastion of humanistic ideals, whereas television is depicted as a dehumanizing medium. However, Truffaut's adaption revises this dichotomy through cinematic language that foregrounds books and television as fetish objects. Thus, Truffaut's alteration to the original source material prompts us to consider a possible reexamination of the aforementioned dichotomy.

## I. Introduction: *Fahrenheit 451* and the Issues of Book and Reading

In his reexamination of Pierre Boileau's and Thomas Narcejac's French mystery novel *D'entre les morts* ("From Among the Dead", 1954), original source material for the now iconic Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* (1958), Peter Lev proposes that the study of the process of adaptation between the two mediums can "bring to light neglected works of literature (Welsh, M. James and Lev, Peter, 2007, p. 175)." Following his proposal Lev then proceeds to categorize and analyze the similarities and alternations of the film and novel; their plots, their characters, their themes, their stylistic narratives, their functions as the allegories of cinema, and finally their endings. Lev's comparison of the two mediums completes his objective of reviving interest in the neglected work of Boileau and Narcejac, but it comes at a price. Their novel gains literary significance in Lev's work not entirely on the quality of the work itself, but more as a point of reference for the film. Here, I would like to propose a similar feat of studying the conversion process of François Truffaut's adaptation of Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel, *Fahrenheit 451* (1966). However, the focus of the article will be on "bringing to light" not only the neglected work of François' film, but also formulate a reading of the film as a work of adaptation.

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) is commonly categorized as a dystopian novel in the same vein as George Orwell's *1984* (1949). The novel tells the story of a society in the future where citizens are systematically fed mindless propaganda via a state controlled virtual television set. The control of information is overwhelmingly complete to the point that the citizens are blind to the existence of a nuclear war. Books, an alternative information source, are forbidden and sought out to be burned by Firemen. Guy Montag, a reformed fireman and the protagonist of the story, joined with Faber, a retired literary professor, in a failed attempt to destroy the system, eventually fleeing the city to unite with the "Book People". The novel ends with Montag realizing his role in the new community as an archivist of books; memorizing the content to be recited for future generations to come.

The dichotomy of the novel is simple: it romanticizes the importance of books and reading, while denouncing television and viewing as a mindless medium and activity. Indeed, Jonathan Eller asserts that *Fahrenheit 451* has "come to symbolize the importance of literary and reading in an increasingly visual culture" as

they retain “the vital importance of an examined life (Bradbury, 2013, p. 186).” Bradbury, according to Eller, also shares a similar ideal of the book. Eller remarks that the bookshelves in the library signify “populations of living authors” to the novelist and “to burn the book is to burn the author, and to burn the author is to deny our own humanity (Bradbury, 2013, p. 168).” Even Harold Bloom, a renowned literary critic, announces how he forgives the novel for “its prophetic hope that memory (and memorization!) is the answer [to excessive visual consumption]” and insists that if “[we] cannot read Shakespeare and his peers, then [we] will forfeit memory, and if [we] cannot remember, then [we] will not be able to think (Bloom, 2007, pp. 7-8). Eller’s and Bloom’s readings, while conservative in regards to visual culture, allude to the significance of books as medium. Books, whether they exist in printed form or in memory, are not only just a vessel of information, but also a signifier of humanistic ideals. To be in *possession* of a book in all forms (physical object/ memory) is to be immediately associated with humanistic values such as individualism and collective memory, as opposed to being a part of a mindless herd of visual consumers. Playing devil’s advocate, does the premise of the novel not foreground the physicality and form of the book as an object, even a kind of *fetish*<sup>1</sup>, rather than a text to be engaged with? I argue that Truffaut’s adaption of Bradbury’s novel brings to light the passive consumption and fetishization of books, of memorizing and archiving their contents by rote to indicate the possession of a cultural signifier of humanity. Thus, the significance of Truffaut’s film is not in its

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<sup>1</sup>The author uses the term ‘fetishism’ to identify the misrecognition of the world by attributing false values to an object. For example, in his proposal of ‘commodity fetishism’, Karl Marx states that our perception toward the values of commodities is distorted as we failed to perceive the true value of commodities in relation to the labor cost of their production. Marx regards the consumer’s warped perception - the allure to the aura of commodities – as a form of fetish. Thus, to identify a fetish is to expose the misplacement of values, such as human labor, to the object.

fidelity<sup>2</sup> to the original source, but in its ability to critique the embedded values inherent in the very source itself. The next section will deal with the framework of adaptation used to analyze the relationship between the film and the novel.

## II. The Framework of Commentary Adaptation

Criticisms of Truffaut's adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451*, notably in the cinematic world for it being his first film in color, have also pointed out the problem of the director's portrayal of memorization as a method of resistance, as opposed to an act of engaged reading, to excess visual culture as an offense toward the essence of the novel. Bosley Crowther (1996), a film critic for the New York Times, questioned Truffaut's portrayal of the act of memorization by the Book People at the end of the film as whether the director truly have a "labored enthusiasm for the glories of literature". One could sense Crowther's disdain toward the ending of the novel which he describes as "people ambling through the woods of what looks to be a sort of adult literary camp", to be a betrayal of the glorification of literature, the spiritual essence of Bradbury's work. Pauline Kael (1966), another film critic from the New Republic, also shares similar opinion on Truffaut's portrayal of reading in the film. Kael states that Montag's reading of *David Copperfield* could have been shot better with filming techniques from "Warner's or MGM in the thirties" to portray Montag's face "light up and change with the exaltation of the experience the triumph of man's liberation from darkness". Instead, the audience is forced to endure a scene which the protagonist childishly recites the opening paragraph of the book in the voice of an automaton. Kael even went as far as branding Truffaut's film as lifeless because "the books [in this movie] represent the life that is not people", while suggesting that the Book People should "take more pleasure in language[?]" and "give themselves away

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<sup>2</sup>Brian McFarlane, a professor of film theory, proposes that one of the dominant discourses in adaptation study is the issue of fidelity – the faithfulness of the film to its novelistic origin in terms of reproducing the meaning, stylistic spirit, or authentic atmosphere and setting of the work. McFarlane suggests that the discourse of fidelity – of a film replicating the essence of its literature source – stems from a cultural presupposition that a literary tradition should be more important than its adapted counterpart (McFarlane, 1996, pp. 8-9). Likewise, the term 'fidelity' used in this article will be limited to McFarlane's definition.

by the words they use – the love of the richness of the words[?]" It is noticeable how both Crowther's and Kael's scathing criticisms of the film are rooted in their presumption that Truffaut's adaptation should have reproduced the humanity in reading literature better. In short, their criticism is an issue of fidelity. Truffaut's film is flawed in its inability to replicate what the critics perceived to be the humanistic essence of the original source.

The critics' concern with fidelity in Truffaut's film also reveals their framework toward adaptation as a process of 'transposition'. Julie Sanders indicates that transposition, one of the categories of adaptation, is an act of "[taking] a text from one genre and deliver it to new audiences by means of aesthetic conventions of an entirely different generic process (Sanders, 2006, p. 20)". Hence for Truffaut's adaption to be successful in the eyes of the critics he must transpose the text and its essence to a different media format. Truffaut did indeed set out to do just that; transposing Bradbury's novel into film as he remarks in his "*Journal of Fahrenheit 451*":

In point of fact, this film, like all those taken from a good book, half-belong to its author, Ray Bradbury. It is he who invented those book burnings that I'm going to have such fun-filming, which is why I wanted colour. An old lady who chose to be burned with her books rather than separated from them, the hero the film who roasts his Captain - these are the things I'm looking forward to filming and seeing on the screen, but which my imagination, tied too firmly to reality, could not have conceived by itself...Ray Bradbury comes to my aid, providing me with the strong situations I need in order to escape from the documentary

(Bradbury, 2013, p. 246)

Truffaut's directorial aim is to recreate what he perceives as the entertainment and spectacle aspects of the novel through filmic. Nevertheless, the demand for fidelity in transposition is there from all parties, abiding with different subjective intentions. Yet, approaching the film from a pure transpositional adaptation framework will severely limit the potential of the film to comment on the embedded values of the source text. I am proposing that instead of reading the novel and the film from a transpositional adaptation perspective, it would be more productive to read Truffaut's work as a form of 'commentary.' Referring again to Sanders, commentary, like transposition, is

another category of adaptation that “[comments] on the politics of the source text, or those of the new *mise-en-scene*, or both usually by means of alteration or addition” (Sanders, 2006, p. 21). Cinematographically speaking, Truffaut certainly made enough alterations from the novel to warrant a position in this adaptation category. More importantly, these transpositional alterations serve as points of reference for the deconstructive analysis of the politics of books and reading in Bradbury’s text. The changes made from novel to film will be catalogued in the next section.

### **III. Francis Truffaut’s Transposition of *Fahrenheit 451***

In terms of its transpositional capacity, Truffaut’s adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451* retains the core elements of the novel, namely the plot and the main characters, with some alteration to the context and setting of the story. Truffaut’s remarks in his “The Journal of *Fahrenheit 451*” note that he wants to make the film as a kind of “James Bond in the Middle Ages” by “bringing back Griffith-era telephones, Carole Lombard/Debbie Reynolds – style dresses, a Mr. Deeds – type fire engine” as he was “trying for anti-gadgetry” (Bradbury, 2013, p. 247). Truffaut’s vision and aesthetic translates into a kind of arty espionage film with very little fancy gadgetry involved, while dispensing with the apocalyptic atmosphere and tone of the book entirely. Truffaut conveys the novel’s sense of alternate history with retro-future setting design. The presence of the monorail gliding from the urban center to the country side suburb gives the setting a sense of futurism, while the totalitarian regime of the novel is signified on screen by the Firemen’s dark and foreboding militant uniform. However, there is a major change to the setting as the Mechanical Hound, a robotic animal that is somehow able to detect Montag’s changing attitude, is symbolically replaced by an unstable fire pole which shook whenever he approaches as if to signify the wavering faith of the system’s subordinate. The novel’s third person omniscient narration is also faithfully translated to the film. The camera focuses on Montag’s actions, rendering the film to be told from his point of view. This alteration results in removing the context of the nuclear war that will eventually obliterate Montag’s city at the end of the novel. What is left is closer to an art house film of a reformed book burner who fails in his attempt to overthrow the system that suppresses the access and consumption of information from books. Thus, the conceit of the film is not to transpose the

importance of literature and reading as a symbolic representation of humanity, but to foreground the presence of the mediums whether they are books or television.

The film stars Oscar Werner as Montag whose role is similar to the novel. He is still the reformed book burner who desires to overthrow the system that forbids reading. While Bradbury's novel focuses on the camaraderie between Montag and Faber, a retired literature professor and an amateur inventor, Truffaut omits the inclusion of this supporting character. Instead, Truffaut focuses on the relationship between the protagonist and the two female characters from the novel. The first is Clarisse, a former school teacher who introduces Montag to the community of the Book People, and Linda<sup>3</sup>, Montag's wife who eventually turned him over the authorities. Both female characters are played by the actress Julie Christie. The use of a single actress to play two dual roles reemphasizes their symbolic juxtaposition to one another in both the novel and the film. Clarisse acts as a representation of humanistic values in the novel through her curiosity towards the world and philosophical musings, particularly to the pre-history of book burning. Meanwhile, Linda is an obsessive consumer of the State sponsored television program, ominously called 'The Family', signifying its presence in the domestic sphere of people's lives. Truffaut's transposes their symbolic significances faithfully to the screen. Interestingly, Truffaut gives both women more prominent roles in the film. Clarisse acts as sort of Montag's 'Bond Girl', standing in for both the assisting role of Faber as well as Montag's love interest. Clarisse approaches Montag to stir his interest in reading and questioning of the world just as in the novel. She later replaces Faber as Montag's comrade and guides him to the community of the Book People. They even joined together to recite their memorized books at the end of the film. There is minimal change to Linda's character from the novel as she remains the excessive consumer of 'The Family.' Beattie, played by Cyril Cusack, Montag's commanding Captain at the Fire Department and the antagonist of the novel, retains the same role from the novel as a spiteful reader and denouncer of books who is later burned alive by his adversary. I argue that the alterations of the roles of the two female characters is to foreground the dichotomy of the text; the conflict between the

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<sup>3</sup>Truffaut changes the name of Montag's wife from Mildred to Linda.

mediums of book and television. They do not transpose the presupposed values of humanity, or lack thereof, to the film but to bring the dichotomy of the mediums to the forefront in order to challenge them.

Furthermore, if the film is aesthetically perceived in unison with the novel, Truffaut's adaptation exists as a conversion of Bradbury's story to a different medium along with some minor aesthetic changes. This transpositional reading is certainly legitimate, but it completely neglects Truffaut's cinematographic touch. Truffaut's cinematography, particularly his close-up shots of physical objects, should be read in congruence with the transposition of novelistic elements. There are three outstanding objects acting as leitmotif throughout the film: television antennae, television screen, and abundance of books. These three objects reinforce the dichotomy of book and television in Bradbury's story, accompanying the dualistic portrayal of Clarisse/Linda. Moreover, the fact that these objects are foregrounded prominently implies how the dichotomy of these mediums are the central focus of the film, not just its subtext. The next section will explore Truffaut's use of cinematography to foreground the mediums as fetishist objects.

#### **IV. Truffaut's Cinematography and the Objectification of the Fetish**

Truffaut's foregrounding of the mediums is immediately visible right at the opening of the film. The camera zooms in on the close-up monochrome images of television antennas as the voice over narration announces the names of the cast. The shots consist of extreme close-ups of the antenna's in a wide angle shot capturing the object as a whole. The physicality of the antennas is even more amplified when juxtaposed with various monochrome colors. These shots, as with other of similar compositions, are meant to foreground the presence and physicality of the medium. In fact, the film actually recalls the audience's attention to the antennas once more when Montag, after learning of Clarisse's disappearance from the inspection of the Fire Department, inquired of her neighbor about her whereabouts. The neighbor informs Montag that Clarisse and her family] were taken away and then urges him to look over at Clarisse's house referring to the missing antenna. At this point, the camera captures a wide angle shot of the antennas on the houses in the neighborhood. The female neighbor then remarks that Clarisse and her family

“weren’t like us. They were special.” On one level, this scene is a transposition of Clarisse as the incarnation of dogmatic beliefs in the humanistic value of individualism from the novel, where the missing antenna symbolizes her uniqueness and separation from the mindless masses of television viewers. Another way of reading the scene is to approach it purely from a materialist perspective. The antennas appear on screen as an ostensible object of consumption, a commodity. Truffaut’s vision of Clarisse is not representative of any humanistic value, but rather simply a woman who chooses to consume a different type of medium, books not television programs. Yet, the female neighbor treats the absence of the antenna at Clarisse’s house as a mark of distinction – a fetish.

If the antennas are objectified as a form of commodity fetish, the same could also be said for television. As previously mentioned, the television is readily identifiable with Linda. Here, it is necessary to look beyond the association of symbolic meaning between the object and the character, but to how the consumption of television is portrayed in the film. The wall-to-wall physical dimensions described in the novel are accurately depicted in the film. The television first appears on screen when Linda introduces Montag to ‘The Family’, an interactive television show that addresses the viewer of the show as its ‘cousins.’ Truffaut dramatizes Linda’s excessive consumption of television by carefully staging her interaction with the show, in which she must respond mechanically to scripted cues. The hosts, Bernard and Charlie, appear on the giant television screen as the camera closes in on them. The affect is akin to watching a television show inside a film as the screen is subjected to the audience’s gaze, this is how we can perceive Linda. The postmodern effect of television within a film successfully foregrounds not only the physicality of the medium, but also its mode of passive consumption. Linda’s response to Charles’ question after the cueing beep is irrelevant as the answer she gives will always be the right answer as in the following example of the cousins’ banally absurd debate:

Charles: Now what about Lottie and James? That’ll make 16.

Then if somebody’s ill, well at least we won’t be 13, will we?

Bernard: But there’s the problems of the rooms, Charles. Lottie has two children, Charles, two little boys: Freddie and little John.

Charles: I don't see any problem there at all. We can put two children in

Helen's room for instance. What do you think, Linda?

[the beeping of the cue rang]

Montag: Well go ahead. They're waiting for you.

Linda: I think that...

Charles: You see? Linda agrees with me. Lottie's children must go in with

Helen's children of course. Linda' absolutely right.

What appears as an 'active' consumption, the interactivity with the characters on screen, is actually a passive performance in the guise of participation. It is clear that the show is preplanned to proceed regardless of Linda's input. We begin to see Truffaut's unique approach to criticizing the fetishization of media consumption through this alteration of the portrayal of television. Linda's pleasure does not reside in her watching the television, but in the perverse acknowledgement of the television and its representative 'watching' her as she remarks "I gave all the answers. Wasn't it wonderful? I could have been an actress." In other words, Linda's pleasure of being a part of the family, at the most fundamental level, is literally *to be* with television. She is content to watch television, to simply sit and bask in its presence, with or without direct engagement.

The television becomes a fetish object that stands in for actual family ties in both the novel and the film. In the novel, Montag describes the experience with the screened walls in his living room as "always talking to Mildred" as there are "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, loud, loud[.]" to which his wife assumed the position of a passive listener of a one-way communication (Bradbury, 2013, pp. 41-42). He even goes as far as to suggest that Mildred's dream will be complete if the screens are built into all four sides of the room of their apartment. Truffaut's Linda ponders a similar scheme after she learned of Montag's promotion and suggests she would "rather have a second wall-set put in" as it is "like having your family grow around you" as opposed to moving into a larger house. The commonality in both Truffaut's and Bradbury's portrayals of television resides in the occupation of the object in the physical space. Both versions preferred

women to have *more* walls in their home as if their increasing quantities signified increasing numbers of actual family members. Both Mildred and Linda do not actually care about the content of 'The Family' on screen as the point is to have more signifiers of family ties. Thus, the fetishist illusion is this: by possessing more television, I will have more ties with my 'family'. The possession of the object, its physical, quantitative form, overrides the importance of the content.

Books also portrayed in similar manner to television to foreground its fetishist function. As with the previous two objects, books are positioned on screen with a closed up shot, focusing on their materiality. The books first appear in the film after the opening credits in a scene where Montag and the Firemen raided the apartment of the book keeper. The firemen search the house for books hiding in nearly every piece of furniture that could be modified for concealment. Truffaut composed his shot in a way that the camera lingers on the abundance and physical features of books – the folded pages, the cover, the sound of them falling on top of one another – even as they are burnt by Montag's flame thrower. Montag even teaches a class of Firemen trainees on how to search for books inside houses emphasizing to his students that "the most common area is to look for it in a rectangular object, like a cigar box or a chocolate box or any other objects in similar shape." They are even books hidden in a toaster. The material abundance of books reaches its climax when the firemen discover an old woman who hides an attic full of books. Transpositionally, the scene is replicated faithfully from the novel as the old woman is burned alive along with her books rather than to be separated from them. The books pile on the ground covering the entire hall of the ground floor of the house. The scene, as with others where books are the central focal point, is shot with the intent of portraying the destruction of literature as well as corroborating its excessive materiality, not unlike Linda's obsession of having a second wall-screen. Nevertheless, the most absurd scene reinforces Truffaut's foregrounding of books as fetish is a scene involving the

Fire Department's possible routine search for the forbidden object in the park<sup>4</sup>. The Firemen, as if putting Montag's lesson into actual practice, start rummaging picnic baskets, bags, and coats, but find nothing suspicious. But before the Captain exits the park, he turns back to inspect the pocket of an infant and procures a miniaturized book. Yet, its size makes it impossible for anything to be printed in the book or to be read by a child. In short, it has no practical use. It is there as a form of totem, a fetish object.

The portrayal of Montag's fetishist consumption is also similar to that of Linda's. The scene of Montag's reading alone at night is also shot with him surrounded by books, as if to parody the cliché image of an ancient scholar. After his wife went to sleep, Montag took out a book, *The Personal History of David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, and proceeded to read it. The uniqueness of this scene is that rather than having a camera panning out to show Montag reading accompanied by a voice over narration, Truffaut locked the camera on to the first page of Dickens' novel. The screen is filled with the image of Montag's finger moving along to the words as he read them out loud. Indeed, Montag's articulation of the words on page is a form of recitation without critical engagement with the text. Such scenes serve to foreground the material consumption of the book without any direct engagement, not unlike Linda's passive interactivity with 'The Family'. Montag's recitation parallels Linda's anticipation of the cue to participate with the cousins because both require the mechanism of memory. Actually, Montag's attraction toward the books is no different than that of Linda's. His reactive response to Linda after she reveals how she discovers his books in the house is "You spend your whole life in front of that 'Family' on the wall. These books are my family." He also insists that "behind each of these books, there's a man. That's what interests me. So leave them alone and go back to bed." It is apparent that Montag shares the same symptom as

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<sup>4</sup>The scene functions as a transitional scene. It is inserted between the scenes of Montag reading *The Personal History of David Copperfield* and his meeting with Clarisse. Hence, the scene does not contribute to the progression of the plot. The scene is more or less Truffaut's transpositional reference to Montag's meeting with Faber, the literary professor who is excluded from the novel. The scene ends with Montag searching the coat of an older man as half of the screen is blacked out. Thus, the image on screen resembles a folding page of a book.

Linda by referring to the books as his 'family'. To Montag, the persons behind these books are actual persons. His fetishist illusion lies within the possession of books as their abundant materiality substitutes real family ties. Thus, the memorization of the books is a further embodiment of the fetishization of books and their illusions.

It is no coincidence how the scene of mass-recitation – that of the Book People reciting memorized passages – appears as the ending to the film. The scene is a manifestation of the mediums fetishization emphasized throughout the narrative. As one film critic mentioned, the film ends with the portrayal of an "adult literary camp" where the campers either go about with their daily business or recite passages from books as if the very act defines their existence. Perhaps that is the case as everyone in the commune, bar Montag and Clarisse, are identified by the books they have memorized. The Book People are portrayed comically. They cannot be taken seriously for they are caricatures of the books they have remembered. The scene progresses with the leader, a Book Person who identifies himself as the Journal of Henry Brulard by Stendhal, introduces Montag to the members of the commune. The most memorable members, mostly because of their comic merits, are the following: a teenager who identifies himself as the "*Martian Chronicle* by Ray Bradbury", an obvious meta-reference to the original author of the film's story, a bold man who identifies himself with Machiavelli's *The Prince* and remarks that "as you can see, you can't judge the book by its cover", twin brothers who synchronize their introduction as volumes one and two of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and finally a boy who must memorize *The Weir of Hermiston* by Robert Louis Stevenson for his dying grandfather, possibly against his will. The fact that these Book People identified themselves – their names, appearance, and manners – to the materiality of books is in itself foregrounding of the fetish object. Their bodies act as the embodiment of the fetish objects through their articulation of their bookish identities as if to possess a book at the level of memorization is to obtain its materiality.

The Book People's articulation of their identified names with the print medium is a resounding display of possession. The fetish illusion is not to become the object of my obsession, but to live among the people who share similar obsession. To possess the book is to be among the family where the apparatus of identification is the commitment of a specific book to one's memory. The fetishist

function of the books exists in the paradigm of the capitalist mode of consumption, in which the possession of the book, a form of commodity, functions as symbolic status distinction. In short, *to own* a book is to have access to a bastion of human knowledge. There is no need to 'read' – to actually engage with the books – for this ideological mystification to work as recitation is in itself a sufficient access point. This is because recitation is a form of showing that one knows a book by heart. The obsessive passion, to the extent of erasing one's former identity and replacing it with name of a book is made visible on screen. Thus, the ending of the film, the scene depicting the synchronized performance of the mass-recitation of the Book People amidst the falling snow, could be read as a parody of books as an epitome of human knowledge. The synchronization of the movement, coupling with the incessant chatters of the Book People reciting the texts shows the scene to be an absurd parody of the act of reading. No one is engaging with the text. They are rehearsing their lines mechanically, no different than Linda watching 'The Family' or Montag reciting *David Copperfield*. Hence, the consumption of books is to be part of something more valuable than the self, the communes or the family. Therefore, the objective of books is not to communicate meanings or collect memory. The acts of reading and watching television in Truffaut's film are essentially identical as they share the same values of being fetish objects, totems lubricating social integration into the commune.

Ultimately, Truffaut's foregrounding of the mediums and their effects leaves us with a nagging question: what is the position of cinema as a medium in a film that criticizes the fetishization of mediums? At this point I am more than willing to defend Truffaut's position as a director as he displays a level of self-awareness to criticize the possibility of cinema turning into a fetish object akin to books and television. There is a scene during Montag's escape from the Fire Department that is not in Bradbury's original novel and is unique to the film. The scene in question is Montag's encounter with the Journal of Henry Brulard after he made his escape from the Fire Department. The Journal of Henry Brulard, prior to introducing Montag to the members of the community, shakes Montag's hand and leads him into the cabin to sit in front of a television set, as he puts it, "to witness your own capture" as "our cousins are particularly entertaining today." Montag sits on the couch as the television

in the cabin shows premeditated scenes, as opposed to the cousins' staged interactivity, of his failed escape and execution by the state, complete with helicopter firing machineguns at his doppelganger whose face, as the Journal of Henry Brulard remarks, was "never shown properly". I am proposing that what Montag is watching is not exactly 'news', but a hyper-stylized action film within a film; Truffaut's meta-rendering of a James Bond-esque chase scene. The cabin, in this context, becomes a kind of theater. Moreover, the cinematic nature of the show is foregrounded by the Journal of Henry Brulard's commentary of how the show cannot go on and must reach a climatic plot point. The audience is essentially watching a scene of characters watching a film. To repeat the recurring theme, the medium of cinema is foregrounded. It also performs a fetish function of integrating Montag into the commune.

The communal bonding between the Journal of Henry Brulard and Montag is established via the former's assumption that the man who wandered listlessly into the woods will be the same man who will appear on the television set. The Journal of Henry Brulard totally disregards the possibility that Montag might not be who he is presumed to be. One could imagine a scenario in which the Journal of Henry Brulard, having heard the news of runaway fugitive, waited patiently by the entrance of the commune, eagerly awaited anyone who happened to enter and greeted him or her with a generic welcome of "Yes we know who you are. You are the man of the hour." He then eagerly takes the fugitive into the cabin theatre to watch the film of his/her capture or execution. It is as if The Journal of Henry Brulard, having been caught in his cinematic imagination and framing, perennially waits for the arrival of the climax to his begotten narrative. To put it plainly, The Journal of Henry Brulard's role in the scene is that of a projectionist/theatre owner whose duty and ritual is to show a fugitive the film of his/her own demise. His existence is defined within the act of possessing the cabin and the television set, as well as the tautological narrative to describe the State's generic action film. In this instance, cinema acquires a degree of materiality similar to other mediums in the film. It too becomes a consumable fetish. Truffaut's decision to include this scene, a meta-commentary of his own art, in the film is crucial as it reinforces how any medium could be reduced to objectified fetish by means of possession.

## **V. Conclusion: The Film as a Commentary on the Novel's Fetishism of Literature**

Truffaut's alterations of Bradbury's novel greatly affect the significance of the dichotomy of the original source. Whereas Bradbury's novel emphasizes the oppressiveness of television to reinforce the value of books as a symbol of humanistic ideals, Truffaut's film deconstructs this binary opposition to show that if the mode of consumption is taken into consideration, both mediums function as an objectified fetish. This duality of media fetishism manifests itself in Truffaut's dualistic portrayal of Linda/Clarisse. The two characters and their dualistic obsession toward their respective mediums are meant to be two sides of the same coin. More importantly, by bringing the fetishist dimension of book and television to light, Truffaut's foregrounding of media as a fetish allows us to revise the relationship between the characters and literature in Bradbury's novel in the dichotomy of 'man' and 'commodity', bypassing the sacredness and humanistic values of literature particularly in the final scene of the novel.

Montag encountered Granger, one of the Book People, having made his escape from the Mechanical Hound. Granger, as with The Journal of Henry Brulard in Truffaut's film, introduces Montag to the commune. Granger's argument for archiving the books to memory is obviously more sophisticated than Truffaut's portrayal. Granger remarks that the memory of the Book People will be useful when "the war's over, some day, some year, the books can be written again, the people will be called in, one by one, to recite what they know and we'll set it up in type until another Dark Age, when we might have to do the whole dame thing over again (Bradbury, 2013, p. 146)." He further insists that the Book People must keep in mind that "[they] were not important, [they] mustn't be pedants; [they] were not to feel superior to anyone else in the world (Bradbury, 2013, p. 146)." The apocalyptic tone of the passages did not obscure how the Book People see themselves as egalitarian archivists, whose duties are to democratize the memorized knowledge to the masses by means of recitation. However, the image of this egalitarian archivist comes at the price of identifying themselves totally to the very materiality of the books, as exemplified in the following statement: "we're nothing more than dust jackets for books, of no significance otherwise (Bradbury, 2013, p. 146)."

Is Granger's statement not an assertion of books as a form of fetish? Granger's reaction resembles those of Montag's and Linda's response to the mediums. Granger assumes that the memorization of books or reprinting them again will automatically save the human race. Granger's argument foregrounds the importance of having a book in one's possession, preferably to memory, while excluding the act of reading or thinking of what is being read. The argument undermines itself as a novel that calls for the celebration of books and literature excluding the input of the human agency. Thus, Granger's fetishist illusion blinds him to the most obvious argument; to prevent what he calls the Dark Age, perhaps it would be more advantageous to read and engage with the text rather than to hold the books as a form of fetishist panacea for the human condition.

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