

Introduction to the Bradbury-Inspired Anthology

“Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you’re there.

It doesn’t matter what you do, he said, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that’s like you after you take your hands away. The difference between the [person] who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching, he said. The lawn-cutter might just as well not have been there at all; the gardener will be there a lifetime.”

— Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

Ray Bradbury left many things behind when he passed away in June of 2012—his stories, poems, films, plays, work with Disney, and his relentless advocacy for freedom of imagination, space exploration, libraries, and literacy. How fortunate we are that we’re able to interact with vestiges of Bradbury’s creative genius by reading his books, watching his films, or looking at our moon’s Dandelion Crater through a telescope.¹

But, Bradbury did not become an internationally renowned author overnight. He was a child of the Depression who couldn’t afford college. He even had to take remedial English during his senior year of high school because his grammar was poor. He learned to write by studying his favorite authors at his local library, and he sought out advice and mentorship from legendary Pulp Fiction authors such as Leigh Brackett, C. L. Moore, and Henry Kuttner. He cherished the way these authors coached him, and after he achieved broad acclaim, he paid it forward by coaching and encouraging a new generation of writers—from the Margaret Atwoods, Stephen Kings, Neil Gaimans, Clive Barkers, and Charles Johnsons to the writers that grace the pages of this magazine. Ray Bradbury’s creative grandchildren and great-grandchildren are right here, waiting to be read.

Bradbury often cautioned aspiring writers against being too ambitious by writing novels. “The problem with novels is that you can spend a whole year writing one, and it might not turn out well, because you haven’t learned to write yet. Beginning and intermediate writers should write a hell of a lot of short

¹ Scientists and astronauts who came of age reading Bradbury’s works have named a moon crater, an asteroid, and several Martian terrain features in his honor. A digital copy of Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* resides on Mars thanks to the Phoenix Lander.

stories and poems. If you can write a poem or a short story a week, it doesn't matter what the quality is, because you're practicing. And at the end of a year, you'll have 52 short stories and I defy anyone to write 52 bad short stories in a row! [...] After a year, you'll have at least one thing that's absolutely wonderful. I began writing when I was 12, and I was 22 before I wrote my first decent short story."

This special issue of *genesis* reflects Bradbury's desire to see aspiring writers blossom. What's absent from these pages are the failed attempts, false starts, error-riddled drafts, tears, frustration, and all other vestiges of a messy writing process. What you see is the final product, the harvest that comes from tilling the soil of one's imagination—the product of the hard work required to produce "something absolutely wonderful."

I'm eager to see how the creative careers of these authors evolve in the coming years, but I hope that they'll look back on this issue with pride, that they'll view it as an important milestone—a touchpoint that they've left behind.

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