physical and emotional connection to Ts'eh. Tayo is healed because he is able to release his personal self to join the mythical battle for his heritage.

The closing of *Ceremony* brings a resolution to the battle for Tayo's identity. Tayo takes on the care of his land and makes peace with his demons, becoming whole again in body, mind, and spirit. He witnesses the destroyers in action and is able to see clearly why his community is struggling for survival. Once he lets go of his personal barriers and lets the stories manifest themselves, he is able to see the path for the future. Tayo sees Grandmother-Spider, the life-giver, continuing the web of stories and guiding the future by reminding us that witchery has a way of coming back to haunt itself. She says, "It has stiffened with the effects of its own witchery. It is dead for now" (261). Tayo has let his individual self go and, in doing so, has defeated the witches and brought hope for his community.

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KEYWORDS

hero journey, identity, Native American, self-sacrifice, witchery

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"As the Constitution Says": Distinguishing Documents in Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451

In an important scene in Ray Bradbury's novella *Fahrenheit 451*, Captain Beatty (the leader of the firemen tasked with burning books in a futuristic, dystopian society) articulates for Montag (the protagonist) the fundamental

idea underpinning the laws and norms of this oppressive and ignorant society. "We must all be alike," explains Beatty, "not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal" (58; emphasis in original). Of course, this is a mistake. The phrase to which Beatty refers is found in the Declaration of Independence (1776), not the Constitution of the United States (1788). This is no small matter; separated by more than a decade, these documents had different purposes and audiences. Beatty's (or Bradbury's) confusion is significant when seen in the context of the work's larger concern over the loss of literacy (and, ultimately, knowledge) in modern society. But is the mistake the character's or the author's? The implications of each possibility open up levels of understanding this novella and its place in contemporary American culture.

If the error is Beatty's, it is important because it is precisely the kind of mistake a citizen of *Fahrenheit 451*'s dystopian society would make. Beatty is, after all, a product of his culture and, as readers later learn, a staunch advocate of its fundamental ideas. The novella presents a future in which reading has been cast aside by a society that prefers wall-sized televisions and "seashell" portable radios. In response, the government provides "firemen" to burn the remaining books in accordance with society's will. Bradbury frequently emphasizes that the law banning books descended from such a preference. As a result, society has become vapid, more interested in mindless entertainment than knowledge, understanding, and critical thought, and the ability to discern between two fundamental documents has no place.

If intentional, Bradbury has packaged the mistaking of the Declaration of Independence for the Constitution along with a notable corruption of the famous line to which Beatty refers. That line, taught in elementary schools across the country each year, comes from the Declaration's second paragraph: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." The difference between these two concepts, "created equal" and "*made* equal," is precisely what Bradbury's novella is about: the power of language and the tyranny of its misuse, censorship, or absence. In his speech, Beatty describes a society moved to self-censorship at the behest of minority interests to the point that, eventually, all literature is deemed offensive. People should not have to feel ignorant or inferior to others, Beatty suggests, and such censorship is done to provide and ensure happiness. He explains, "Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against" (58). Yet, in its effort to provide such happiness, in *making* it, the culture ironically denies it. After all, Bradbury suggests, a culture without literature lacks the imagination and perhaps even the language needed to

articulate its possibilities for happiness. It is significant, then, that Beatty has mistaken the document steeped in such revolutionary energy (and dedicated to imagining and articulating the principles of a new society previously stultified by oppression) for the document whose aim, more than ten years later, was to articulate the organs and mechanisms by which such a government would deliver that freedom. The mistake is remarkable both because Beatty is the product of a fictional society that has failed so miserably to do so, and because Bradbury, in his jeremiac lament, wished to warn readers against cultural changes that he feared would lead to ruin.

On the other hand, Bradbury makes a point of showing his readers that Beatty is not just a regular product of his society. He is, after all, unlike its most representative citizen: Montag's wife, Mildred. By the end of the work, she has betrayed Montag to Beatty, attempted suicide (only to forget—or pretend to forget—that she tried), and otherwise shown herself to be a selfish, vacuous, childish person. She is so devoid of introspection and reflection that, at one point, Montag discovers that she cannot even remember how they met. By contrast, Beatty appears to have been educated. He has, Montag learns, read a great deal of books, even if his experience with them led him to become a staunch supporter of book burning. In fact, he is the only character posited as an intellectual counter to Faber, the ex-professor who provides Montag with guidance and knowledge. This is evident in the climactic scene of the second part, "The Sieve and the Sand," in which Beatty and Montag (with Faber vicariously present through Montag's hidden earpiece) debate, essentially, the value of knowledge. Beatty does not debate Montag so much as himself (playing devil's advocate to his own arguments to illustrate, he thinks, the contradictory nature of textual knowledge). In other words, if Beatty can recite from memory Alexander Pope's "Essay on Criticism" or Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, is it reasonable to believe that he would confuse two of the most important, fundamental documents in the American tradition?

This leaves the possibility that the error lies with Bradbury. Confusing the source of this iconic phrase is, unfortunately, exceedingly easy to do. One possibility is that both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution have achieved a kind of platitudinous status and, therefore, many Americans seem to feel that they know these documents by virtue of "living" them. In another, more frightening possibility, this confusion signals a slippage in the power of language and the written word in contemporary culture not unlike the slippage depicted in *Fahrenheit 451*. In this ironic scenario, Bradbury is guilty of the same inattention that his book argues breeds ignorance.

Like many communities across the country in 2008, Baton Rouge participated in the National Endowment for the Arts's "Big Read" program

by reading *Fahrenheit 451*. The book was, no doubt, a popular choice for many participating in the program due in large part to concerns over the state of literacy in America. For example, a recent study conducted by the NEA, "To Read or Not to Read," found that Americans are spending less time reading and that, as a result, reading-comprehension skills are drastically eroding. If Bradbury's novella is to be posited and lauded in libraries and classrooms across the country as the great shield against a slide into illiteracy and ignorance, it is fitting to submit its basic tenets to the same scrutiny and close reading that it suggests are the bedrock of social and civic responsibility.

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KEYWORDS

Ray Bradbury, censorship, Constitution, Declaration of Independence, literacy, science fiction

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Oscar Wilde's DE PROFUNDIS: A Narrative of Sexual Sin and Forgiveness

Exegetes interested in the biblical imagery in Oscar Wilde's prison letter *De Profundis* have traditionally examined the way in which Wilde identifies himself as a Christ figure. For instance, Guy Willoughby asserts, "This unique aesthetic *apologia* [. . .] depends for its effect on a central rhetorical strategy: the speaker's identification with Jesus Christ" (103). However, a closer examination of how Wilde uses the story told in Luke 7.37 of a sinful woman anointing Jesus, the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15.11, and the adulteress referenced in John 8.3 demonstrate that Wilde portrays himself both as Christ and the forgiven sexual sinner. Because homosexuality is no longer a criminal offense, we can now read *De Profundis* through a different lens. It is evident that the use of these biblical allusions offered Wilde a mode in which to publicly redeem himself for his alleged "sins." Consequently, Wilde makes his homosexual sins synonymous with the het-