

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES



RAY WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY THE AUTHOR
BRADBURY



BOOKS BY **RAY BRADBURY**



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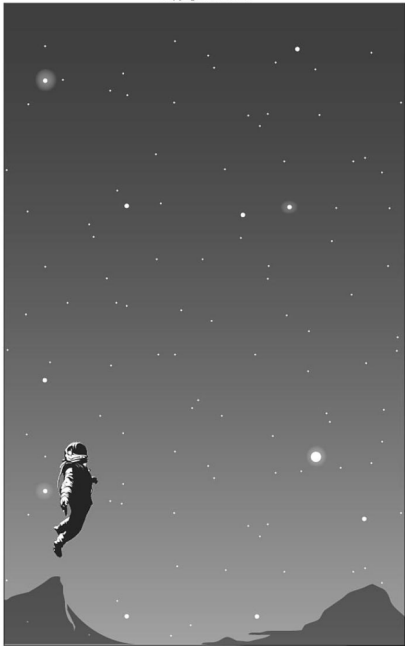
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**THE MARTIAN
CHRONICLES**

**RAY
BRADBURY**



WILLIAM MORROW

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WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,

*to Maggie/Marguerite,
who typed this manuscript
way back in 1949.*

And to

Norman Corwin

and

WALTER I. BRADBURY,

fine friends and midwives!

CHRONOLOGY



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EDITOR'S NOTE

The following essay was written by Ray Bradbury in 1950, after he turned in the final manuscript of *The Martian Chronicles* to Walter Bradbury (no relation), his editor at Doubleday.

This piece was found in Bradbury's home office files in the early 2000s. At the time, he said he'd originally intended to publish it, but he put it aside and subsequent work (editing, stories, books, etc.) diverted his attention. In 2006 it was released as a limited-edition chapbook by Hill House Publishers. A few years later it was included in the 2009 deluxe limited edition of *The Martian Chronicles: The Complete Edition*, published by Subterranean Press (US) and PS Publishing (UK).

"How I Wrote My Book" refers to cultural touchstones (e.g., authors, books, music, politics) that may not resonate with today's reader. Perhaps more disturbing will be some of the words and phrases Bradbury uses. Simply put, the language of the 1950s was *not* politically correct. Yet "How I Wrote My Book" offers fascinating insight into Bradbury's creative process and is, at the same time, a powerful, at times urgent, commentary on Bradbury's beliefs, thoughts, and fears about humanity and our world. And while expressions used by Bradbury in this essay may be anachronistic, his message is timeless and rings as true today as it did seventy-five years ago.

HOW I WROTE MY BOOK

In 1944 I was reading Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, and John Dos Passos. I wondered then if the same sort of human, interesting people couldn't be carried off to Mars. I wondered, for instance, what would happen to a Steinbeck man, a Cather woman, a Hemingway tough, suddenly confronted with fifty million miles of space, the most immense loneliness in man's history, and the task of providing food, shelter, and nourishment for the spirit of his fellow men. I

decided it was worth trying. In the autumn of 1944, I set out to do it.

I decided first of all that there would be certain elements of similarity between the invasion of Mars and the invasion of the Wild West in the years from 1840 until 1900. I had heard from my father's lips, and my grandfather's, stories of varied adventures in the West, even in the late year of 1908, when things were empty, still, and lonely. So I knew that Mars, in reality, would be that new horizon which Steinbeck's Billy Buck mused upon when he stood upon the shore of the Pacific and the "Going West" was over, and the adventurers were left with nothing else to do but simmer down.

The idea of jumping off to the other planets of our system is not only tremendous but self-propagating and unending. There is no limit to man's horizons and thinking in space. There is not one West there, but a billion Wests, a billion compass points where the rugged individual, the he-man, and yes, even the poet and writer, can go in search of a space huge enough to flex his muscles or indulge his brain in a little much-needed silence and isolation. Man will always be picking up and moving on, and space will give him the necessities whereby if the civilization follows too close at his boot-heels, he can toss his belongings into a sack, and, technology willing, rocket off to some other planet, some other star.

I decided that space could offer all things to all men. I decided that Mars could be a symbol of haven to old people, riches to young bucks, beauty to philosophers, adventure to adventurers. It could be a new field to open out the questions of God to the man of good faith. It would be a field day for anthropologists, a heyday for mineralogists, a proving ground for psychologists, and a wonderful vacation for Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith from Ashtabula.

I decided that Mars could not be anything like a crystal ball into which the people traveling there could see their future. I decided that Mars would be nothing more nor less than a mirror

in which Earth Man would be reflected, twice as large as life, with all of his wonders, beauties and terrors, his petty politics, his ravening greeds, and simple faiths. He would find no more and no less on Mars, than what he brought in his pocket and in his heart. Therefore, most Martian invaders were doomed to disappointment, for I knew that man, no matter how fast he traveled, might easily outdistance the speed of sound, but could never outdistance the speed of his wrong political decisions, his past, or the atom bomb. Running away from Earth to escape responsibility from the mess he had made of things would only involve mankind more deeply in their guilt, and so they would find, reflected one way or another, those troubles waiting for them, like unwanted children, on Mars.

There is an interpretation of the Einstein theory I believe (not being a scientist) that says space is curved. Some writers in the imaginative field have carried this on to the point where a character traveling into space for twenty trillion miles into the macrocosmos winds up in his own house on Earth, in the microscopic cells of the sunflowers there. Al Jolson put it very well years ago with a song, "Back in Your Own Back Yard."

*Go to Mars, go to Venus,
but don't expect anything but human problems
if you take humans with you.*

Once I had clarified overall philosophical factors, once I realized that space travel per se was not going to bathe man in the light of the Lord and henceforward allow him to act like Little Eva in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," I was well on my way to plotting, in separate links and episodes, the parts of the narrative that, five years later, would result in *The Martian Chronicles*.

The first thing I knew I must set myself to doing was to ensure the quality of everything in the book. Then I knew that this

book must not be rushed, it must take its own sweet time to finish itself up, and I would need anywhere from three to five years to do it in. Each of the stories, concerning different people who went to Mars, must be individual enough, and strong enough, to stand as stories alone, so I could sell them to magazines and thus support myself while finishing the rest of the book. And yet each story must be a part and parcel of the whole, so when the time came to finish the book and tie up the loose threads, I would be able to do it with a minimum of psychological or mechanical strain. Each story then was written in five to eight drafts over a period of two years for each story. In other words, I would work on a story for a week and then put it away in my files to cool for a period of six months, when I would take it out again, benefiting by a new objectivity, and rewrite it. This process continued until I was satisfied with a story, two years later, and sent it out.

In the meantime, each intervening week was taken up with other stories, which, in turn, went back to my file to wait out a five- or six-month interval.

Let me explain here that I feel that an author has a double responsibility, to his work, and to himself. I believe each story must have a rest, and that the author himself must be protected from his own ennui. After you have belabored a story for a week and given it a fairly good first draft, then it is only fair and right, the following Monday, to start something and say "damn and hell" to last week's work. This is not a mechanical Ford assembly-line technique, but only the sensible thing for a thinking writer to do. A familiar story, a story you have worked on for many days, soon hides its true face behind a mist of prejudice, tiredness, and boredom. Better to let it sleep and collect material unto itself, in your subconscious, for six months. A writer deserves to entertain himself as well as his public. The only way to insure this is by starting each Monday fresh with some story you haven't seen for months, or beginning an entirely new one.

This system will not work for everyone. Some people are psychologically incapable of putting a story away for many months. It hangs heavy in their conscience, it irritates and bothers them, and there is nothing for it but that they drudge through four more drafts, immediately, and get it out. All well and good.

But for the writer who feels that he cannot bear to look that story in the face again tomorrow morning, my method provides blessed respite.

Of course, it takes about a year to get a system of this sort going, to get a mine of material filed and forgotten, so that you can return, refreshed, and mine the lode at your discretion.

The answer to this is to start young. I have been lucky, for I started filing away stories when I was seventeen years old, and now have a monstrous backlog of second, third, and fourth drafts on stories that are good, bad, or indifferent now, but that some day, some month, some year, will turn into what I hope will be good stories.

The most important thing about a system, if you can call it that, of this sort, is the originality that it allows the writer. You have time to think a story over and add those telling details that make the difference between just a story and a story by "Mr. X." If this system still sounds mechanical and too self-conscious to you, consider that under it I was able to finish an average of only three stories a year for five years. Certainly not a great output, but one enabling me to give time and thought to each story. At the same time, utilizing the same consideration to each individual story, I was able to finish about fourteen stories each year on which to survive financially, but each of these had the same care and time taken with them, and were never slanted for any market.

Here I must pause and deviate once more, concerning this business of "slanting" for a market. I believe that writing has to do with a writer's personality reacting to the material at hand. He has no business reacting to the stories in a magazine at hand

or reacting to a formula at hand. His total intelligence must be invested in knowing what his true reactions are to a given situation. If he begins to react as he thinks editors wish him to react, he is over, done, finished and dead before he starts. Other writers may write what the editors think they should think about Man facing and conquering the stars, but the individual work of the future in this field will be done by men who ask "What do I really think, what do I really feel? What do I, Smith, know of my fears and hopes, if I should go to Mars tonight?"

I followed that formula exactly. I wondered what Ray Bradbury would do if he were taken unceremoniously off and dumped fifty million miles from his safe, circumscribed little existence. I knew that I would be afraid of many things, loneliness, time, even existence, so far away. I knew that I would fear for not only Earth men, but Martians also, for Martians would be the first cousins to Indians and I recollected only too well what we had done to the Indians. There were both sides to be considered, the logistics of parceling up and crating off religion to Mars, and there was the racial problem to consider, and the problem of the sociologist who knows everything about everyone and would like to run everything with neat charts and graphs. I knew that I was suspicious of science, of the so-called advancements of our civilization. I suppose I knew that I was a trifle old-fashioned and romantic about some things, perhaps I imagined that man should slow down a little when he moved out into space, take life a little easier, enjoy himself. But Earth man, as now constructed, could not do that. He would have to take with him his hot-dog stands, his television, and his atom bombs, and this very insistence upon 'business as usual' would, in the end, trip him up, and bring his excursion to nothing.

All in all, I tried to write a human story, for if stories of the future (I refuse to call them science-fiction) are not about truly human reactions to inhuman situations the result of a swift-

moving technology and a slow-moving individual, then they are not worth reading or writing at all.

Mr. Raymond Chandler of the mystery writers wishes to return the mystery to the man in the street. It is, was, and shall always be my hope to give the fiction of the future back to every man rather than to any one special clique or group of readers, scientist or otherwise.

Finally, *s-f* is the only remaining field today open to writers with ideas. You can dare to think in your stories about such things as materialism, commercialism, television, fascism, as long as you are entertaining. That is important, you can't write soap-box pamphlets, the stories must breathe out of the characters' nostrils, and move with their movings, there is no time to stop and lecture. The story must tell what it has to tell, entertain, divert, and leave behind it the seed, the kernel of thought you wish to germinate later. If you are worried about the vanished pedestrian, stories about the future can help you talk about it. If you wonder whether machinery is good or bad for man, here is your theatre of argument. As long as your imagination is equal to your indignation, as Mr. Christopher Isherwood put it, you are on safe ground. When your imagination fails and you are left pointing out your sociological indignation, you are a rabble-rouser alone in Union Square at sunset, deserted, and deservedly so.

And best of all you can write in this field without anyone calling you a Communist. This is the last refuge for people who want to think at a time when thinking seems to be looked upon as something pink by too many exponents of McCarthyism in this country. I have yet to be called a Communist, even though I have written stories against book-burning, excessive mechanization, police and thought control and fascism in high places. I imagine no one has thought to call me a Communist because I have laid the stories in the future.

I am therefore exempted from suspicion as some sort of day-

dreaming crackpot. After all, he's talking about fifty years from now, he can't mean us. But they're wrong of course. I do mean us, I do mean you, and the man next to you and the man behind you. The future is going to be full of McCarthys and Hitlers and Stalins and Francos of one color or another. I'd like to catch them in a cube of plastic that you can turn over and look at from all sides. That's what a story should be. I want to dangle all the petty little troublemakers and murderers by the napes of their necks for everyone to see. I don't want pressure groups censoring me or my work or telling me what to see, do, think, feel, or dream, be they SPCA or DAR or the Women's Shopping League of America.

As a writer I respect the printed word, as a human being I want to be left alone and I want to leave others alone and be sure they are left alone by others. I don't want book burning here, or blacklistings or smearings or favoritism. And one of the few ways I have to do something about this is through writing about the future, taking people and their problems today and blowing them up just one size larger.

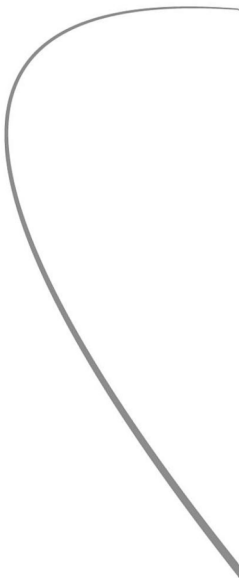
And if I ever get to preaching too much in my stories, I deserve to be kicked out of place, someone else deserves to come along who can tell a story, entertain, and tell it well. Futuristic writing is, first last and always, entertaining. If it makes people think, so much the better.

I believe that the realistic novels of this day are sordid because they are not real. I believe that instead of showing the face of reality, they show nothing at all but a shabby skeleton, half a bearded cheek, a waxy ear, a pendulous breast, a glazed eye. I believe the failure of the realistic novel today lies in not knowing the characters they work with. For if they knew them, they would understand them, and, in understanding them would paint a portrait of them so complete in every facet, that the characters would be sympathetic and pitiable instead of contemptible and hideous and vulgar. If one must write of sadistic brutes

and monosyllabic bawds, one must show them in the round, one must never forget that in the end the reader should think, "Ah, there but for the grace of God, go I," instead of, "How revolting!" The rat-like individual in the black midnight doorway, stuffing heroin into his veins with a safety-pin improvised as a hypodermic, is not the stuff of Shakespearean tragedy, but, once investigated in toto, he could be a study, at the very least, in steps going down from, perhaps, the very moment of his birth.

It is the failure of the realistic novelist to realize, or put over, the fact of some essential decency of a man at an earlier age, as against his decadence in later life, that causes most people to turn from realism with a shudder. To achieve validity, a study in decadence must be painted upon the old structure of cleanliness, devotion, pride and moral courage, so that the tragedy derives from the loss of noble virtues and what stature, no matter how small, each man contains of himself.

R.B., OCTOBER 17, 1950





"It is good to renew one's wonder," said the philosopher.

"Space travel has again made children of us all."



MARS WAS A DISTANT SHORE, AND THE MEN SPREAD UPON IT IN WAVES. . . EACH WAVE DIFFERENT, AND EACH WAVE STRONGER.

IN A MUCH-CELEBRATED LITERARY CAREER THAT SPANNED SEVEN DECADES, Ray Bradbury produced an astonishing body of work: unforgettable novels, essays, theatrical works, screenplays, and numerous short-story collections. But of all the dazzling stars in the vast Bradbury universe, none shine brighter than these masterful chronicles of Earth's settlement of the fourth world from the sun.

Bradbury's Mars is a place of hope, dreams, and metaphor—of crystal pillars and fossil seas—where a fine dust settles on the great, empty cities of a silently destroyed civilization. It is here the invaders have come to despoil and commercialize, to grow and to learn—first a trickle, then a torrent, rushing from a world with no future toward a promise of tomorrow. The Earthman conquers Mars . . . and then is conquered *by* it, lulled by dangerous lies of comfort and familiarity, and enchanted by the lingering glamour of an ancient, mysterious native race.

The Martian Chronicles is a classic work of twentieth-century literature whose extraordinary power and imagination remain undimmed by time's passage. In connected, chronological stories, a true grandmaster once again enralls, delights, and challenges us with his vision and his heart.



In a career spanning more than seventy years, **RAY BRADBURY** inspired generations of readers to dream, think, and create. A prolific author of hundreds of short stories and close to fifty books, as well as numerous poems, essays, operas, plays, and screenplays, Bradbury was one of the most celebrated writers of our time. His groundbreaking works include *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Illustrated Man*, *Dandelion Wine*, and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. An Emmy Award winner for his teleplay *The Halloween Tree* and an Academy Award nominee, he was the recipient of the 2000 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, the 2004 National Medal of Arts, and the 2007 Pulitzer Prize Special Citation, among many honors.

wm WILLIAM MORROW

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