CS Lewis’ Out Of The Silent Planet And Ray Bradbury’s Classic Novel Fahrenheit 451 Essay, Research Paper

The subject of people encountering ideas and objects that are alien is a common theme in many modern works of literature, including CS Lewis’ Out of the Silent Planet and Ray Bradbury’s classic novel Fahrenheit 451. Although there are different types of alien encounters, both of these books center around one or two pivotal encounters which changes a person’s perception of life forever. In Ray Bradburys’ classic novel of an alternate future filled with censorship and shallowness, the average life of a firefighter named Montag is turned upside down by two encounters with people who refuse to go along with the rules of a censorship-ridden society. The first of these encounters is with a young girl named Clarisse, who always asks questions of Montag which force him to really consider life. The second of these encounters is with an old woman who strikes the match which incinerates her house, killing her and destroying all her outlawed books. As a firefighter of the alternate future, Montags’ job is to set fire to houses in which people save books of literature, instead of preventing and stopping fires in houses. The reason that the firefighters’ don’t have to prevent fires is the fact that all houses have long since been fireproofed. The government has commissioned a new breed of firefighters to eradicate all literature, which may make people start thinking about their lives. Until Montags’ encounter with Clarisse, he has never questioned anything, not his life, and not his job. However, he can’t help it after Clarisse asks him questions such as what the meaning of life is and why. The free actions and thoughts of Clarisse also mystify Montag, such as when she stands in the rain, catching it in her mouth. This simple action on Clarisses’ part shatters any illusions Montag has about the pleasures of life.The second encounter which shatters Montag’s disillusions and makes him start thinking is with an old woman whose house has been reported as containing works of literature. The firemen move through the house, spraying everything with kerosene, until they find the old woman, who appears to be crazy. Frightened, they quickly retreat outside, watching the house for any movement. The old woman then steps out onto the porch and is given a choice by Beatty, the chief: either step out of the house or be burned with her books. The old woman, as a response, strikes a match and throws it into the house, causing the house to burst into flame, instantly killing her. Because of these two encounters, Montag’s life is forever changed. He goes on the run, killing Beatty, burning down his own house, and planting books in the house of a fellow firefighter and calling in an alarm so his house will be burned. After making his escape by floating down a river, Montag joins a band of rebels who are planning to gradually reintroduce society to literature. In CS Lewis’ novel Out of the Silent Planet, a Doctor by the name of Ransom is abducted by two scientists and taken on a great journey to a planet far away from Earth. After arriving on this planet and helping his captor’s to set up their camp, Ransom makes his attempt at escape, running from the captors and their allies, who are native to the planet. After running as long as he can, collapsing to sleep, and walking slowly on again, Ransom collapses once again near a body of water, from which a mysterious creature emerges a short time later, frightening Ransom. “Then he saw eyes and mouth-a puffing mouth bearded with bubbles.”(pg54) However, Ransom soon realizes the creature means no harm, and is trying earnestly to communicate with him through hand signals and the native language. “The creature … opened it’s mouth and began to make noises. “(pg 550After making small steps in understanding the language of the natives, Ransom is taken by the strange creature( called a hrossa) to a boat, in which they go on a long journey to the community of Ransoms alien host( named Hyoi). Hyoi and Ransom then go on a hunting expedition for the tribe of Hyoi. While on this expedition, Hyoi, Ransom, and another native of the planet named Whin, are seperated from the rest of the group. Hyoi is then shot by Ransom’s captors. After a pilgrimage over an entire mountain range to see the spiritual ruler of the planet, Ransom returns to Earth, making it against all odds but much enriched by his experience with the hrossa. At first, Ransom tries to create a malacandrian dictionary, but soon gives up. Not far after this, he begins to doubt weather or not his voyage really happened, and decides to publish it as a work of fiction. And thus you have seen how one single idea can be used in such radically different works of literature, while still being alike. The idea of encounters with things that are alien and how they change a persons? life is a prevalent idea in contemporary literature and doubtless will be for years to come.