

HONORABLE MENTION

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Burn the Ashes

Fire spreads.

Fire grows with each word it erases

With “wild devotion, with an insanity of mindlessness”

Let it spread

Burn. Burn! Let it burn the truth from your mind

Be blinded by the fire’s light. The light of lies

“Replace your answers with questions or questions with answers”

Stop.

Burn the questions

Burn the answers

Till your left empty

When everything is nothing

But the nothing is everything

Nothing is happiness

Take books, take words from infants with empty minds

Nothing is happiness

“Snatching them from the cradle”

Hidden from truth

Burning the ashes

Till words are letters are lines are specks of ashes in the sky

Floating away, lies left behind

Heavy minds reaching for truth gone up in flames

Heavy minds full of words that mean something

Light minds full of words that mean nothing

Nothing is happiness

They “told me so many lies that I started to believe it”

Started to believe the fire

Books are made of paper

Meant for burning

Empty mind, empty soul

Rise up with the ashes of lost stories, words, letters

“Books are sacred to free men”

Held close to the heart, to the mind

Books are feared by captured men

Locked up by lies

Quotes taken from:

Alexandra Petri’s “Take all books off the shelves they’re just too dangerous”

Kurt Vonnegut’s “1973 Letter to the Man Burning His Books”

Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 (Pages 34, 57)

Judge's remarks:

From its weirdly inflammatory title (pun intended) and the literary references that give this poem both context and history, to the repetitions of words and inversions, this poet is both playful (in a linguistic sense) and deadly serious. Burn the Ashes is an ambitious poem, and its ambition has been largely realized.