

Fahrenheit 451

Just My Soul Responding

AMINE M. BENKHELEFA

A M I N E M . B E N K H E L F A



JUST
MY
SOUL
RESPONDING

A Novel



فهرنهايت 451
محمود والبرصا

JUST
MY
SOUL
RESPONDING

Benkhelifa M. Amine

PHILOSOPHICAL FICTION.

Praise for Just My Soul Responding:

"I am not going to read your book. Stop nagging me."

-My mother.

"Ah sorry luv! I do not enjoy reading this kind of genre."

-Lovely woman on the bus.

"Is that you again? Look we have talked about this."

-My mother

An imprint of Fahrenheit 451 publishing house

Djelfa, Djelfa 17000

Copyright © 2021 by Amine M Benkhelfa

Fahrenheit supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Fahrenheit to continue to publish books for every reader.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Names: Benkhelfa, Amine M author.

Title: Just My Soul Responding: a novel / Amine M Benkhelfa.

Description: Algiers, Algeria : 2021.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018010456 (print) | LCCN 2018047855 (ebook) | ISBN 9781523243451 (ebook) | ISBN 9781624743444 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: General—Fiction. | Philosophical—Fiction. | BISAC: FICTION / Coming of Age. | FICTION /Philosophical Fiction / Psychological | FICTION / Young Adult / Contemporary.

Classification: LCC PS3607.R43285 (ebook) | LCC PS3607.R43285 A27 2018 (print) | DDC 813/.6—dc23

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Printed in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

نشر في الجزائر

Contents:

Prologue	II
Chapter I: 3 a.m. Thoughts	V
Chapter II: I am	XII
Chapter III: An Existential Soul Searching for meaning	XIX
Chapter IV: Dear God.....	XXVII
Chapter V: Present Anguish	XXXI
Chapter VI: A nostalgic soul longing for some fulfilling work	XLI
Chapter VII: Thinking about free will	XLIX
Chapter VIII: Moody & emotional	LX
Chapter IX: The split self	LXVI
Chapter X: Darkness, my old friend	LXXII
Chapter XI: The calm after the storm	LXXXI
Chapter XII: Beautiful things	LXXXIX
Chapter XIII: To Us, Sincerely	XCVI
Chapter XIV: Letters to Remember Who I am	CIV
Writer's Note.....	CVII
Index	CIX

|

**The world breaks everyone, and
afterward, many are strong at the broken
places.**

–Ernest Hemingway

Deleted[H]:

Prologue

It took me forever my dear friends to convince myself to pick up that old dusty typewriter on the shelf next to my bed. I would have never thought that a moment like this would be possible. Allow me to reveal to you a secret: I have been struggling to find something that I love and I haven't been happy in a very long time, to be completely honest I'm still suffering this terrible dread that I've been having since god damn infancy. Please let me share another secret: I almost jumped towards the great unknown down to that cold abyss. I was preparing for that moment for a week. In that week, I ate all my favorite food, spent the days with my loved ones and enjoyed good movies. Then that day came and I was ready. I was so ready. I got to the 12th floor, put one of my favorite bands *Nothing But Thieves* on repeat and I was ready. Yet something stopped me in the very last moments. If it weren't for that stop perhaps many would have been wondering now why come that young man pulled the plug so early on his life. Yet little did they know that this young man had more than his share of anhedonia, loss of purpose and existential

questions that filled my head with various conversations and inquiries since I can remember.

I have been fighting these endless battles with myself and against myself for a very long time. I am torn either I annul myself or keep on living. It seems I cannot decide at all. I contemplated on this forever and I decided to write this as a way to heal myself and as a way to be saved. Maybe one of you can relate to this. Maybe one of you can help me. It may be a long shoot but why not. This book is about the existential dialogues we have with ourselves. Following Descartes and other great philosophers, I too took upon myself to take this journey and finally converse myself, to rethink about everything ex nihilo drawing for within myself.

But my critical mind is running now and I have to accept that this will never be enough, realizing and accepting that I am bound of my own limited knowledge and the environment that shaped that knowledge, so I have to find an alternative, a counterpart to challenge my ideas and quench this awful fire that is: my thoughts. But how? Moreover, who would that person be? After all, the only person around here is myself. So, I decided to bring out to light that other person within me that I'm sure everyone have (well, I'm hoping you too dear readers have within you that second or third person you talk to. I do not want to sound crazy here) and that person will be highly critical and full of wisdom. Well I certainly hope so.

Since we all give in to the solutions that cheer up our hearts and put an end to the 3 a.m. endless conversations so we can just have a little sleep. Let us finally delve into my inner conversations with my other personality, who is nothing but a slight variation of myself. I know it sounds a little bit weird but I know you indulge in it too, so by knowing that it will make us deal with this issue together. Thus, these conversations resemble the silent yet so loud dialogues we all have with our selves before falling asleep, at the dinner table, when looking at the mirror... and of course during the all too familiar moments of melancholy, solitude and despair. No matter how grandly enchanted with your own reality you might be, I suppose you too happened to make certain decisions with your inner self.

In this moment, I am laying my soul here completely naked, sharing all of my emotions and thoughts so openly you could judge every possible aspect of me. I find my soul jumps from the awful to the wonderful, remember inside my soul no love is too secret, no thought is disguised, no anxiety is hidden and no smile is faked. In a moment, you might relate or you might be grateful that your soul is

nothing like mine. Either way by the end of this book, I hope you realize the certain thing: how extraordinary you really are.

Ps: "Neither novels nor their readers benefit from any attempts to divine whether any facts hide inside this story. I find such acts ruin the great pleasure of reading fiction.... I appreciate your cooperation and understanding in this matter."

Chapter I: 3 a.m. Thoughts.

'Hi, its 3 a.m. I am sure you know what would happen now! Let us indulge in prophecies about my thoughts and emotions so we can get overwhelmed with horrifying anxieties. Sounds fun right.'

It really puzzles me how we do that to ourselves. We keep stressing out then try so hard to suppress it.

'Go ahead; feel free to share with me anything you want. What fear are you having tonight?'

'Well, on occasions like this I am stressing out about some things. I envision myself as one of those god-forsaken souls whose terrible fortune doomed them to spend the rest of their lives in complete solitude, completely lonely. I am afraid to become like those people, completely senseless about the people around me. I am terrified that I will be completely forgotten in life as well as in death. I am petrified to be like those people who are buried in their daily routine, who are engulfed with a cruel silence that afflicts those who have nobody to have a word with or worse who chooses silence over friendly chat with a loved one. If one have a loved one after all. Those people doesn't even dare to think thoughts like this out loud, they tried so hard to escape them they eventually become them.'

'Can I ask why are you envisioning yourself to be like those people? How likely is this to come true?'

'Well of course, I have no rational reason to feel this way, but are human fears and anxieties rational after all? Let alone the fears that comes to you at 3 a.m. in the morning. My thoughts are just scenarios of different unlikely catastrophes, which I embed on myself to be highly probable. Maybe these worries are habits in the working and I am just doing what my mind thinks should be doing at times like this. Either way, I beg for you to let me continue.'

'My apologies please go on.'

'I do not see myself just like what I described only. I also fear outliving everyone I love or care about, and be the last to perish. I fear that nobody will witness my life story after I have witnessed everybody else's. Do you see my point?'

'Your existential thoughts kindled my heart. All humans feel at some point this way, even though you are technically not human but don't worry it is our little secret. All humans share these fears; the difference is everyone articulates it differently. Isn't this indeed one of the greatest and deepest of all human fears?'

'What would this great life mean if the crowds are gone and the curtain is about to close with no one to applaud or to appreciate us? We already feel bad enough even when this doesn't happen, can you imagine this terrible fate if it occurred? After all

most of the time, we feel unworthy audience of our own play! So here you are, imagining a situation where nobody triggers your emotions and you are left with memories of your past, but having nobody to attest to it.'

'You do understand me! This fear paralyzes me. I cannot decide which of these fears I fear the most: this one or being completely forgotten. This knowledge of me not knowing scares the shit out of me.'

'You seem to have a bit of Athazagoraphobia, which is completely normal almost everybody think of it sometimes. This fear and almost all other forms of fear is nothing but a way to suppress the recognition of your own mortality in the form of you imagining the loss of people you care about the most. After all, their existence served you to conceal this fact, so their absence for sure will force you to face the inevitability of your demise sooner than you probably would like to. Nevertheless, take a moment here and realize how our mind is working, how great our thoughts are. We are magnificent indeed. Just the fact that you are having thoughts like this is wondrous. Too bad most people won't see it this way if they really know.'

'It is indeed, but are you saying that all these thoughts are actually a way to express the fear of my own perish?'

'Correct. As natural your feelings are know this, one's courage is attested by the capacity of accepting death. Remember that death is the absence of this life, since we have no definite knowledge of what's happen after one demise. We cannot let fear swallow us. All we know is that when people die their life as we know it cease to exist. Remember that this is just a journey and when it ends, you start another one. The perception of this is that we are just human beings waiting for decay needs to be broken, because we are more than that, we always has been more than that. We are more than a name, more than a race or sexuality. We are consciousness. We are infinite awareness.'

'We know there is indeed a lot of religions, myths and stories about hereafter from hell, heaven to Valhalla to many more...You should remember death but not fear it. Death should remind you that you have a limited time in this experience we call Life'.

'Most of the times when I put that in mind, I still dread out death because I'll miss out things in the future, you know?'

'True, American philosopher Thomas Nagel suggested to think of it like this: great amazing things were happening way before you were created and you missed it. We will turn 21 years old in just a week from now. We were not there when Einstein put down the theory of relativity, and we weren't alive in Kierkegaard times, we totally missed Woodstock, we have never seen Pink Floyd or Led Zeppelin Live, we also missed The Great War and how our kind died for our liberty... You know where I am going with this, so if you don't feel some sort of deep sense of loss at what you have missed before you were even alive, why should you feel loss at what you will miss when you die?'

'Hmm you got a point! However, this still does not solve my previous worries I mentioned. In this moment, I find myself very hesitant to talk about this because I feel and I know that I have been very fortunate. I mean how can I say anything about this topic. How much does my pain even matter when there are people out there that can't even eat or people like me who have to hide their true self. I feel that we know all these anxieties only by their name, like we don't even have enough vocabulary to really talk about them. But we have to try anyway right?'

'I want to remind you of the past year, we have been so incredibly focused on figuring out who I am, after all, I am you. And true, sometimes without meaning to we've closed ourselves off from the vulnerabilities and messiness of relationships with other people. Loneliness has made us feel aliens in human costume all over again. But as we know in this journey of knowing ourselves there is going to be lonely moments. This is a price everybody have to pay, even real humans. To explore and question things that most people are too afraid to explore. You need to remember that these feelings are too part of this experience, therefore are also worthy of the same curiosity and intention that you give to everything else. I am glad to see you not running away from it.'

'Indeed, I have grown a bit accustomed to being on my own, although I believe that this life experience is also meant to be lived with loved ones. But sometimes loneliness doesn't just go away by spending time with other people.'

'I know how it feels the feeling of loneliness in this case often springs up in us almost as a consequence of being misunderstood, or when we are seeking a specific kind of connection that we cannot have physically or emotionally. In these moments, you have to spend your time with the right people if that makes sense. Remember if

we don't figure out how to not give up on people even when we are weak and down, the problem won't go away. As Marc Brackett once said "It is one of the great paradoxes of the human condition -we ask some variation of the question how are you feeling? Over and over again. Which would lead one to assume that we attach some importance to it. And yet we never desire or provide an honest answer."

It is indeed taking all our effort and energy, and it may be the optimistic personality talking here but I believe we can figure this out. Loving ourselves despite our existential crisis.'

By that cheerful final note, before I even know it I was asleep. All my life I have been running away from conversations like this with myself, but I am finally acknowledging it and accepting this. I found such a relief when I started to do that, I know this search of mental clarity is only in its early stages but it still count for something. Going through this almost every day can be really challenging, it is mentally exhausting and it had led me to depression in more occasions than I can remember. I am trying not to fall down the rabbit hole with pessimism and worry but what do you do when it feels like everything is falling apart?

One of the ways that helped me handle all of this was what the stoics call *Memento Mori*, which is why I have those words tattooed on my right arm; as a reminder. I can go on and on but I cannot neglect the fact that mostly all of us fear death. One day this made-up heart of mine will stop beating. The awareness of impending mortality is one of if not the most influencing force in our existence. The things we do, the thoughts we have and the feelings we experience. Everything is driven by our unconscious nature to stay away from death, and our terrifying conscious awareness of the fact that at some point, we will have to face it. This body, this mind, this image I have of myself are mere rentals gifted to us by the universe, or god or energy whatever you choose to call it and at some point, all of this must be returned. The place we all return to, however, is the same place in which we received them from. That place we were, that experience of no experience we had before we were born. Those 14 billion years of energy, time and matter that I cannot recall or describe. Even if you believe that your soul, spirit, energy or whatever you

might call it is infinite, then its infiniteness must go both forward and back. Moreover, if you believe in an afterlife then in principal don't you think there must be a before life? Because if you end up somewhere after your conscious physical form in this life then you must have came from somewhere before physical. You can argue that you must be born physically to access an afterlife but you will find yourself saying that you must be a physical entity to access a non-physical thing. I think about all these possibilities, and to be honest the knowledge that I will never have a definite answer depresses me. It really bothers me. I have only speculations that are influenced by the environment and the people around me. I know that only by death, those questions can be answered and I find this very relieving. Whether I go to a god that judges my deeds like the one that we find in Christianity or Islam or I reincarnate to something else, or I find the absolute nothingness -that nothing that we cannot describe understand or recall-. Whichever the answer is: In death, I will finally know.

Don't get me wrong, even though I find this very relaxing but you must put in mind I don't have a death wish, not anymore, I hope so. Those thoughts makes being dead not that scary, it helps me to be in terms with death and to shut my mind so I can sleep at night. Naturally though, coming in terms with death is extremely difficult, we rarely discuss or address it at a level of self-honesty and vulnerability. It is rare that this subject will pop up in a dinner conversations, and it is even rarer that we meditate on this subject. However, I think it is essential that we do confront those thoughts and meditate on them. *Memento Mori* teaches us that by becoming aware of our mortality, we intensify our experience of the everyday life.

The philosophy of stoicism teaches us this in remembering death, it encourage us to ignore the calls of the suppressing our emotions and thoughts. Additionally, it help us master them. "I cannot escape death, but at least I can escape the fear of it." those were Epicurus' wise words that I put on myself to start employing them in my life and that what myself had to tell me that night, it all started with a conversation but the conversation is only at its beginnings.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

