

# **The Representation of Women in 1950s American Society in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451***

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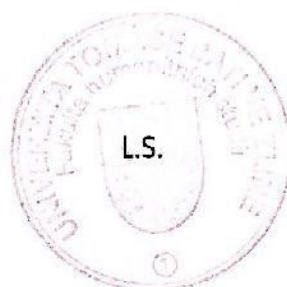
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat vyobrazení žen v americké společnosti padesátých let dvacátého století v dystopickém románu Raye Bradburyho *451 stupňů Fahrenheita*. Teoretická část práce zkoumá historické a kulturní pozadí románu a zabývá se žánrem science fiction. Praktická část obsahuje představení autora a románu. Posléze jsou charakterizovány ženské postavy románu a jejich podobnost s rolemi žen v americké společnosti padesátých let dvacátého století.

Klíčová slova: Ray Bradbury, *451 stupňů Fahrenheita*, vyobrazení žen, dystopie, americká literatura

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to analyze the representation of women in 1950s America in Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. The theoretical part focuses on the cultural and historical background of the novel and provides an insight into the genre of science fiction. The practical part introduces the author and the novel. The main goal of this thesis is to examine female characters in the novel and how they reflect the roles of women in 1950s American society.

Keywords: Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, representation of women, dystopia, American literature

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* is not considered a work dealing with women issues, thus the topic of representation of women in the novel has not been discussed as much as the topic of censorship and individuality. The aim of this thesis is to explore what were the roles of women in the 1950s and how they influenced the female characters in the novel. To understand how these roles developed, this thesis firstly explores the aspects of American post war society and their impact on women's lives. It is crucial to focus not only on the impact of WWII and economy but also take into consideration the family values and consumer culture, which was expanding in the 1950s. The influence of television on American society of that time is discussed, as it was one of the main themes of the novel and concerns of the author.

The topic of this thesis requires an insight into the development of the genre of science fiction and it is crucial to understand what the roles of women were – not only as characters but also as authors and recipients. Defining the genre and its features is important as well as its history containing significant works by both male and female authors, however with regard to the topic of this thesis, women authors and characters are analyzed in more detail. It is important to explore how the themes and characters changed throughout time and how it is present in the works.

The practical part of this thesis summarizes Bradbury's biography. It focuses on his career as a writer and provides an overview of his work. Attention is paid to his personal life, especially to his opinions on women and his relationship with them. The main themes of *Fahrenheit 451* are discussed and linked to the historical background. These observations are further applied to the analysis of female characters primarily in *Fahrenheit 451*, but also briefly in other Bradbury's novels. Each of the female characters is analyzed individually according to the performance in the novel. Works by science fiction critics are used to support the ideas and findings. The last chapter is dedicated to the legacy of women in science fiction. The depiction of women in the novel is then compared to the stereotypical roles of women in the 1950s American society and also in works of science fiction.

## **I. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

## 1 CULTURAL BACKGROUND

To understand the dystopian society portrayed in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, it is crucial to know the social, political and cultural situation present in the United States at the time the novel was written, that being the 1950s. This part of the thesis provides information about the aspects of American society with regard to women and their roles in the 1950s American society.

### 1.1 The Impact of WWII

Every war impacts a country in all possible aspects. One of the main contributions of WWII was that it ended the Great Depression. All the economic issues that originated in the Great Depression such as deflation, high unemployment and stagnating industry disappeared when WWII started. Government spending contributed by injecting more money into the economy, as the federal budget had grown, the gross natural product increased and personal incomes in some parts of the United States even doubled.<sup>1</sup>

The labor shortage led to a higher number of women and minorities in the workforce. Workers in heavy industry were needed as well as cooks, nurses and service jobs. In 1943, women were allowed to participate in the military to substitute men needed for combat.<sup>2</sup> There were about 350,000 women serving in the military, mostly in the Women's Army Corps (WACS) and in the women's branch of the Naval Reserve (WAVES), but also in the air force and State Guard. The iconic image of Rosie the Riveter became the symbol of women working during WWII.<sup>3</sup> However, after the end of WWII, more than half of the women who entered the labor market during the war left.<sup>4</sup>

The competition between Allies and Axis led to a technological improvement and new inventions. War supplies, as well as intelligence and science developed, leading the Allies to victory, which supported the sense of pride among people and gave them hope.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, eds., *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2011), 759.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Berkin, et al., *Making America: A History of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 578.

<sup>3</sup> Nash, and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 764-65.

<sup>4</sup> Daron Acemoglu, David H. Autor, and David Lyle, "Women, War, and Wages: The Effect of Female Labor Supply on the Wage Structure at Midcentury," *Journal of Political Economy* 112, no. 3 (2004): 499, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/383100>.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 621.

## 1.2 Economic growth

The post-war period is characterized by optimism, as the United States became the most powerful nation in the world. The economy rose because half of the world's goods were provided by the United States. With the return of men who fought in WWII, a baby boom contributed to great population growth.<sup>6</sup>

The American market was dominated by big corporations. The technological progress brought brand new products into the market and the demand for them increased. Workers earned more money and the consumer power represented by families helped the economy.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.2.1 Changes in work standards

After WWII, more white-collar job positions were held by Americans than blue-collar positions. This was caused by the spread of big corporations and bureaucracy connected with them. However, blue-collar workers, thanks to the union movement, were earning more and could afford the same products as the white-collar workers. Thus, the number of middle-class families increased. The standard of living was getting better and the consumption of mass-produced goods grew.<sup>8</sup>

The agricultural industry could serve as a contrast to the improving lives of the blue-collar workers. Even though farming got significantly more productive and efficient with harvesting machines and fertilizers, rural jobs started to disappear. Agricultural workers migrated to the North. Office jobs were taken by mid-western whites, whereas black farmers were discriminated against and faced troubles seeking employment.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2.2 Suburban life

After the housing crisis originating in the Great Depression and lasting until the end of WWII, the Housing Act of 1949 was passed. It included federal financing used to transform urban areas in order to make them more attractive and it provided funding to build 800,000 houses and farm units as well as for research on building techniques. The authorization for the Federal Housing Administration was raised and it made loans more available.<sup>10</sup> As families started to move to the West to work in various industrial plants, living in the suburbs

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<sup>6</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 810.

<sup>7</sup> Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 666.

<sup>8</sup> Shelley Nickles, "More Is Better: Mass Consumption, Gender, and Class Identity in Postwar America," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2002): 584, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30041943>.

<sup>9</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 817.

<sup>10</sup> Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 34-37.

became popular. Millions of people of the working and middle class were settling down in the Sun Belt, leaving big cities behind to fulfill their dream to live in one's own house. Besides the expanding population, the West was experiencing a boom in culture, infrastructure, and economy.<sup>11</sup>

The popularity of the suburbs was caused mainly by the importance of the nuclear family and the need for a bigger house to raise more children and to have more space for new goods. The race factor was present as well, because black people could not afford suburban houses. Overall, suburbs offered a safe place to live and became the housing standard of the post-war America.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3 Second Red Scare

After WWII, the vision of the United States was to spread the idea of freedom, democracy, and open market. There was an effort to get rid of trade barriers, as the United States government sought an opportunity to increase the economic growth. On the other hand, the Soviet Union aimed at maintaining its autonomy and Communist ideology. Driven by the fear of German recovery, the Soviets insisted on a strong military protection and stable politics in Eastern Europe, which they took over and hid behind the Iron Curtain. The will to cooperate vanished as WWII ended and the differences between these two empires led to confrontation and the beginning of the Cold War in 1947.<sup>13</sup>

The Cold War caused fear in the United States, which originated not only in the threat of nuclear war but also in the strong anti-Communist propaganda. In 1950, 40% of Americans considered the threat of war the most important problem and 70% of them believed that Russia is trying to take over the world. In 1951, 66% of Americans thought that the United States, if in an all-out war with Soviets, should drop the atomic bomb first and do not wait until Soviets use it.<sup>14</sup> Truman's Loyalty program was created to spot and infiltrate communists in the United States government but involved ordinary employees as well. Even though millions of United States citizens were investigated, only about 2,700 of them were dismissed.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the Truman's program, HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) was launched by the Congress. Investigations in Hollywood which

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<sup>11</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 818.

<sup>12</sup> Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 674.

<sup>13</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 777.

<sup>14</sup> George H. Gallup, "Foreign Policy Polls," *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls Great Britain, 1937-1975*, vol. 2 (1972), quoted in Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 803.

<sup>15</sup> "Truman's Loyalty Program," Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum, accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/dbq/loyaltyprogram.php>.

were supposed to spot left-wing sympathizers ended with sending ten Hollywood figures in jail as they refused to answer the question whether they are sympathizers of the left-wing party. A Republican senator Joseph McCarthy was the key persona in the anti-Communist propaganda. His power grew as he frequently appeared on the television and in the press and when Republicans took control over the Senate in 1952 he became chairman of the Government Operations Committee. He was convinced of the omnipresence of communists. His campaign caused that many people lost their job due to the accusations; suspicious books were prohibited or burnt. McCarthy even investigated the highest leaders in the United States Army, which eventually cost him his power. However, what remained was fear and paranoia.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.4 Family values

The idea of the nuclear family (mother, father, and children – no other relatives) was supported after WWII. It was intensively promoted by popular magazines and TV series that family is the only key to happiness and successful life. This idea was represented by TV families consisting of a well-paid father, a stay-at-home mother and well-raised children all together living in a white neighborhood. This pattern created stereotypical roles for men and women – the man being a breadwinner and the woman being in charge of running the household.<sup>17</sup> The term “togetherness” first appeared in the *McCall's* magazine in 1954. The idea of unity was stressed and it was believed by many Americans that every problem could be solved inside the family and it did not matter whether it was an issue concerning the Red Scare or disobedient child. After the war, it was crucial for people to amuse themselves and to make their homes a place to have fun at. One of the leisure activities promoted by popular magazines such as *American Home* and *House Beautiful* was watching TV together, later it even replaced the fireplace and became the essential of the typical suburban home, as it was meant to bring the family together.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.4.1 Baby boom

Post-war America's economic growth and optimism were followed by a baby boom that lasted from mid-1940s to the late 1960s. Millions of people wanted to settle down and began families and marriage and birth rates were peaking. Not only the return of men from war and

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<sup>16</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 804.

<sup>17</sup> Berkin, et al., *Making America*, 621.

<sup>18</sup> Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 37-40.

better economic conditions played a role in the rise of the birth rate, but also the fact that those young women who just graduated in the 1950s had to decide whether to work or have children. As mentioned before, there was a pressure on women to stay at home and many of them did so. According to a *Fortune* magazine survey from fall 1945, 63% of men and 57% of women were convinced that married women should not work.<sup>19</sup> Another cause of the baby boom could be the lowering age of married couples (in contrast to postponing marriage during the war), thus the permit to have sex in the most fertile years of their lives in combination with contraception methods not being as available as today. The number of intended births remained the same, whereas the number of unintended births grew.<sup>20</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Stay-at-home mothers

Living in a suburb meant isolation from work opportunities as opposed to living in a big city. Working men commuted to work and left their wives at home, where almost no work opportunities existed. Women were supposed to stay at home and be full-time mothers and for many of them it became their only mission.<sup>21</sup>

According to noted feminist Betty Friedan in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, these stay-at-home mothers and full-time wives were supposed to be satisfied and happy. If they were not, there must have been a problem with their marriage or with them. The picture of the perfect housewife they have been seeing in magazines and TV shows was not what they could refer to. These women felt bad because taking care of their children, cleaning their house and cooking for their husband left them rather empty than satisfied. They could not share these feelings with their husband, because he would not understand, nor with their friends, because they felt ashamed. Friedan collects the opinions of numerous women that all described their problem in similar words – not feeling happy (even though they should), having nothing to think about, and feeling like they have no personality. Paradoxically, a lot of women attended college at that time but still only a few of them thought about their own career.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Berkin et al., *Making America*, 607.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Van Bavel, and David S. Reher, “The Baby Boom and Its Causes: What We Know and What We Need to Know,” *Population and Development Review* 39, no. 2 (2013): 279, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41857595>.

<sup>21</sup> Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 674.

<sup>22</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1979), 14-19.

### 1.4.3 Working women

However, not every woman was a stay-at-home mother. The need for female workforce during the war increased and women who were old enough got used to working and having their own income, so they remained in the labor market and gained experience. These women together with men that returned from the war back to their job created strong competition for younger women who were willing to enter the labor market. The demand for inexperienced young women was low as well as wages. This contributed to higher birth rates among young families because women were more likely to stay at home and have children than go to underpaid work.<sup>23</sup>

In 1940, there were more than 30 million married women and almost 50 million single women working, whereas in 1950 it was the other way around. It shows that even though married, unlike in propaganda, women worked. Those who genuinely wanted to build a career were considered strange, neurotic, masculine or even lesbians. Women, who graduated from college were not supposed to find a job in a corresponding field, but stay at home and use their knowledge to help their husband. However, there were women (not only low-class) who worked in order to earn money. Middle-class families often needed two incomes to preserve the living standard. In 1960, there were 25% of middle class women working, which is 18% more than in 1950. Most of them worked in positions such as secretaries or receptionists, their wages being low.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.5 Feminism

The *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines feminism as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state: *She had a lifelong commitment to feminism.*”<sup>25</sup>

According to Claire M. Renzetti, Feminism perceives gender as a social concept rather than a role an individual is born with. Feminists believe that they are fighting bias connected to gender, which are taught in the social learning process. As this process begins in infancy, it is hard to distinguish between those traits we acquire through social and cultural influences and those that are innate, but at the same time it is important to focus on both. The feminist perspective on gender is the opposite of the perspective of structural functionalism, which

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<sup>23</sup> Van Bavel and Reher, “The Baby Boom and its Causes,” 270.

<sup>24</sup> Berkin, et al., *Making America*, 622.

<sup>25</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2008), s.v. “feminism.”



defines women's and men's roles as contrary, both biologically and socially, but complementary.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.5.1 The Second Wave

The Second Wave of feminism began in the early 1960s and it emerged also thanks to the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).<sup>27</sup> Friedan describes the lives of women trapped in the suburban homes, to which she refers to as "comfortable concentration camps."<sup>28</sup> These women were supposed to live for their family, to take care of their home and be happy. In fact, their aspirations remained unfulfilled and as opposed to TV housewives, most of these women were unhappy and led an empty life.<sup>29</sup> There was an increase of feminist critics who dealt with inequality connected to employment and motherhood. The number of female writers who explored new themes including female sexuality (even lesbianism), childbirth and abortion emerged as well.<sup>30</sup> Eventually, feminism evolved into gender studies, which take into account also class, sexuality or culture.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.6 Mass culture

Richard M. Ohmann says mass culture "includes voluntary experiences, produced by a relatively small number of specialists, for millions across the nation to share, in similar or identical form, either simultaneously or nearly so, with dependable frequency; mass culture shapes habitual audiences, around common needs or interests, and it is made for profit."<sup>32</sup> In the 1950s, the number and variability of consumer goods increased as well as the purchasing power of middle-class people. It was caused by the expansion of technologies after WWII and supported by the growth of marketing and advertising.

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<sup>26</sup> Claire M. Renzetti, Daniel J. Curran, and Shana L. Maier, *Women, Men, and Society*, 6th ed. (Harlow, Essex: Pearson, 2014), 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> Justine Tally, "Feminist Criticism," in *Approaches to American Cultural Studies*, eds. Antje Dallmann, Eva Boesenberg, and Martin Klepper, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 190.

<sup>28</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 306.

<sup>29</sup> Renzetti, Curran, and Maier, *Women, Men, and Society*, 18-20.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Procházka et al., *Lectures on American Literature*, ed. Justin Quinn, 3rd ed. (Prague, Czech Republic: Karolinum, 2011), 294-95.

<sup>31</sup> Tally, "Feminist Criticism," 197.

<sup>32</sup> Richard M. Ohmann, "The Origins of Mass Culture," in *American Studies: An Anthology*, eds. Janice A. Radway et al., (Madden: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009), 272.

### 1.6.1 Television

Even though the first mechanical television was demonstrated in 1926 in England, in the United States the technology occurred a year later in the Bell Telephone Laboratories. The mechanical television was later replaced by the electronic television developed by Philo Farnsworth. The first president that appeared on television was Franklin D. Roosevelt at the World's Fair in New York City, where the first regular broadcasting by the National Broadcasting Company was revealed and other networks followed.<sup>33</sup> In 1946, after a drop in production caused by WWII, there were less than 17,000 TV sets in the United States, whereas by 1960 a television had been purchased by 75% of all families.<sup>34</sup> In 1948, the first regular daytime broadcasting was started by the DuMont network. Considering the presence of competition in form of big networks such as CBS or NBC and the costs of prime time broadcasting, DuMont decided to target women at home. Even though there were concerns about the programs interrupting the schedules of housewives and not receiving enough attention (which was important to advertisers), it came out as a success and in 1951 even big networks aimed to broadcast regularly during the daytime, as it threatened their radio broadcasts. It was due to the increasing demand for advertising and lower costs of broadcasting in comparison to prime time. The early soap operas broadcasted during the daytime required almost no focus on visuals, enabling housewives to do household chores and keep up with the program at the same time. DuMont's show *At Your Service* provided housewives with cooking or shopping advice and included segments of advertising. Thus, there was an efficient solution on how to shift from listening to the radio to watching television.<sup>35</sup>

The purpose of television was to entertain and the broadcasts offered mainly situational comedies, westerns, and quiz shows. Milton Berle was given the nickname "Mr. Television" when he achieved great success with his comedy show *The Texaco Star Theatre* broadcasted on NBC. It was the first successful television show in American broadcast history.<sup>36</sup> Situational family-based comedies such as *I Love Lucy*, *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver* became popular. They were set in a home (usually suburban) and dealt with ordinary

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<sup>33</sup> Dustin Kidd, *Pop Culture Freaks: Identity, Mass Media, and Society*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014), 239-241.

<sup>34</sup> Nash and Jeffrey, *The American People*, 822

<sup>35</sup> Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 78-82.

<sup>36</sup> Robert J. Thompson, and Steve Allen, "Television in the United States," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, October 18, 2017, accessed February 06, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/art/television-in-the-United-States>.

family problems and it was easy for the viewers to relate to them. There were, however, elements present in these shows that were not as relatable – the character of June in *Leave It to Beaver* managed to do all the household chores in high heels. In *Father Knows Best*, one of the daughters gave up on a career in marketing and ended up as a wedding dress model. A research among individuals done by William Douglas and Beth M. Olson shows that sitcom families even influenced the behavior and thinking of individuals that watched them in terms of family and gender roles.<sup>37</sup>

Quiz shows became extremely popular; 84% of the television sets (about 55 million people) were on when Richard S. McCutchen won the first prize in *The \$64,000 Question*. The contestants in these shows were common people and viewers could easily relate to them. Fewer people were seen on the streets and even the visit rates of movie theatres dropped when these shows were on television. Advertisements on popular programs caused an extreme demand for the products advertised. The cosmetic company Revlon purchased *The \$64,000 Question*, and there was a 54% net sales growth in 1955 followed by 64% growth a year later. *21* was another successful quiz show, which allowed even highly educated people to participate. Thanks to this, Charles Van Doren and his victories helped him amaze the whole nation. Not only was he handsome, but also proved that one can achieve great thing with his intellect. However, it was no longer after the debut of these and other shows when concerns about their fairness started to arise. It was exposed by Time magazine that producers could ask questions of which they were sure the contestants know. This way they could eliminate less popular contestants. The rumors quickly spread and the producers of the shows were accused of manipulating the competition. Even though there were no indictments charged in the County of New York grand jury, in 1959 both *21* and *The \$64,000 Question* were proven to be a fraud by a formal congressional subcommittee.<sup>38</sup> The quiz show scandals embarrassed networks and made them broadcast more programs of high informative value such as documentary and educational films. This was a contribution of Newton N. Minow, who was chosen by John F. Kennedy to be the head of the Federal Communications

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<sup>37</sup> Timothy Allen Pehlke et al., “Does father still know best? An inductive thematic analysis of popular TV sitcoms,” *Fathering* 7, no. 2 (2009): 115, [https://www.academia.edu/30509972/Does\\_Father\\_Still\\_Know\\_Best\\_An\\_Inductive\\_Thematic\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Popular\\_TV\\_Sitcoms](https://www.academia.edu/30509972/Does_Father_Still_Know_Best_An_Inductive_Thematic_Analysis_of_Popular_TV_Sitcoms).

<sup>38</sup> Richard S. Tedlow, “Intellect on Television: The Quiz Show Scandals of the 1950s,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1976): 485-95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2712542>.

Commission and who criticized that networks produce dull content with no intellectual value.<sup>39</sup>

However, television was not only a tool exclusively for entertainment. Throughout time it has become an essential present in every household and played a major role in the consumer socialization, as it is ubiquitous. Television provides an insight into private situations of other people, which are not as accessible in real life. The representation of these people is different in television programs – there are more male characters in Hollywood movies (60%)<sup>40</sup> and people over the age of 60 represent 18.5% in the population, but only 11% in movies.<sup>41</sup> Even though viewers do realize that the representation of reality in television is different from the reality itself, they at the same time perceive it as familiar, e. g. they relate to the characters in films. The issue with this is the possibility of the line between real and fictional getting blurred. Viewers then accept the reality in television easily.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, "History on Television: A Growing Industry," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (1996): 1109, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2945804>.

<sup>40</sup> Martha M. Lauzen, *Boxed In 2017-18: Women on Screen and Behind the Scenes in Television* (San Diego State University: Center for the Study of Women in Television & Film, 2018), 2-3, [https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2017-18\\_Boxed\\_In\\_Report.pdf](https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2017-18_Boxed_In_Report.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Stacy L. Smith, et al., *Seniors on the Small Screen: Aging in Popular Television Content* (University of Southern California: Annenberg, 2017), 2, [http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/Seniors\\_on\\_the\\_Small\\_Screen-Dr\\_Stacy\\_L\\_Smith\\_9-12-17.pdf](http://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/Seniors_on_the_Small_Screen-Dr_Stacy_L_Smith_9-12-17.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Thomas C O'Guinn, and L. J. Shrum, "The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 4 (1997): 279, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489565>.

## 2 WOMEN IN SCIENCE FICTION

To define what science fiction (SF) is and to specify the features of it is a complex task. The *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* provides an uncomplicated definition which briefly summarizes some of the ideas present in this genre: “books, films or cartoons about an imagined future, especially about space travel or other planets.”<sup>43</sup> However, to provide a specific and complex overview of SF without omitting any characteristics requires deeper insight into this genre. The aim of this chapter is not only to analyze the genre of science fiction as such but mainly to describe the aspect and representation of gender in the genre.

### 2.1 Defining science fiction

Various definitions of science fiction exist and there are areas of disagreement among them, as for any definition there is a piece of work that does not meet the requirements. This is a reason why thinking of SF as a field where particular genres and subgenres meet is preferred rather than creating an exact definition. This field can thus combine not only scientific and technological themes but also themes of love or even prophecies and personal opinions of the author.<sup>44</sup> There is a phenomenon called *megatext* of SF which compounds all pieces of work including novels, comics or movies. Recipients of these works are well-versed in the megatext and writers unaware of it are less likely to succeed in coming up with something original. Without knowing the history of SF there is a risk of using an idea that has been already described and developed by another author. The concept of megatext distinguishes SF from most other genres, as it is not desirable to create any set rules or patterns in characters, situations, and actions. The issue with this complex approach to defining SF is the possibility of creating too many histories based on the megatext. Each of these histories than perceives the genre in a specific form. One for example sees alien encounters as a tool to explore and understand race whereas the other might focus more on the textual strategies used within a particular topic.<sup>45</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Features

It could be derived from the term science fiction that works within this genre are fictional stories influenced and inspired by science and technology. According to Darko Suvin, the

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<sup>43</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* 3rd ed. (2008), s.v. “science fiction.”

<sup>44</sup> David Seed, *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2010), 3.

genre is characterized by the presence of *novum*.<sup>46</sup> This phenomenon can be understood as an element nonexistent in reality, which is explored by “encounter with difference.”<sup>47</sup> Apart from concrete objects such as spaceships or robots, *novum* can stand for abstract ideas, for example consciousness. Not only is it necessary for SF to deal with *novum*, but also to preserve the recognizable elements of a particular society or world as such. Only then it is possible for the reader to relate and at the same time keep his mind open. Similar principles are applied in the genre of fantasy as well and to some extent, these two genres overlap. What distinguishes SF from fantasy is following the rules of science and work with ideas that could be achieved by it. Even though some works include inventions that have been proven to be unrealizable, it is the rational and logical thought that matters. Themes that often occur in SF and are typical for the genre are relatively easy to identify. Apart from describing utopian and dystopian worlds, exploring space and extraterrestrial creatures, inventing time travel devices, artificial intelligence and computers, works of SF can deal with alternative histories and catastrophic scenarios.<sup>48</sup> According to Richard Gray, SF is considered to be “a distinctively American Genre, since American writers have been at the forefront of developments in the genre since the time of H. G. Wells.”<sup>49</sup>

### 2.1.2 History

SF could be considered a young genre (the term was proclaimed by Hugo Gernsback in the 1920s), which did not originate earlier than in the nineteenth century with the emergence of technologies, but its features could be present in ancient literature as well. Therefore, more approaches to the history of SF could be described. The aim of this chapter is not to deal with different approaches, but to introduce significant events, authors and works which lead to the formation of the genre. Elements of SF, more specifically fantastic voyage and disaster, can be found as far as in the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was written probably in 2000 BC. Both in Cicero’s *The Dream of Scipio* from 51 BC and Plutarch’s *The Circle of the Moon* from AD 80, traveling to the solar system is depicted. Voyage of Greeks to the Moon is described in *True History* written by Lucian of Samostat in AD 165.<sup>50</sup> However, the outer space in these ancient works was considered godly and untouchable

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<sup>46</sup> Darko Suvin, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre,” *College English* 34, no. 3 (1972): 372-73, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/375141>.

<sup>47</sup> Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 13-15.

<sup>49</sup> Richard John Gray, *A History of American Literature* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 758.

<sup>50</sup> Guy J. Consolmagno, “Astronomy, Science Fiction and Popular Culture: 1277 to 2001 (And Beyond),” *Leonardo* 29, no. 2 (1996): 128, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1576348>.

rather than something that humankind can conquer with the power of technology. The work of Johann Kepler *A Dream*, published in 1634, contains his scientific observations (e. g. one half of the Moon is always facing the Earth) and could be considered one of the first science fiction novels. In the seventeenth century, the genre of SF emerged with the progress of understanding the cosmos and in the eighteenth century, SF novels and romances containing alien encounters and space voyages were widely spread across Europe. Utopias were written as well as speculations about future – for example *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift from 1726 combines visiting utopian societies with aspects of science (magnetic device keeping Gulliver afloat).<sup>51</sup> SF was influenced by Gothic fiction, as an example could serve *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley in 1818. An element of science is present, as Frankenstein was built by a scientist and is in a way an ancestor of modern robots.<sup>52</sup> Edgar Allan Poe and his hoax and SF stories played a role in shaping the SF genre and inspired Jules Verne, H. G. Wells or Ray Bradbury.<sup>53</sup>

As for the modern SF, one of the most influential authors was Jules Verne. In his *Voyage to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), elements of Gothic fiction such as dark caves and cellars are included, whereas his other works are more focused on technology and inventions, which were based on existing scientific foundations, thus easily imaginable for his contemporaries (e. g. submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*). This was not the case of another significant SF author Herbert George Wells, who dealt with time traveling, genetic engineering or invasion of aliens. In his book *The War of the Worlds* (1898), England is invaded by Martians. The late 1800s and early 1900s are characterized by rapid improvements of technology including the invention of radio, construction of airplanes, the use of electricity and also the excessive spread of popular press. This period of time is the starting point of the mainstream SF.<sup>54</sup> Pulp magazines arose; the first one was called *Thrill Book* and it began publishing in 1919, however the first durable magazine was *Amazing Stories* founded by Hugo Gernsback in 1926. A decade later, competing magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* was taken over by John W. Campbell, who, like Gernsback, insisted on making the genre not only entertaining but also educational, even though in reality SF magazines are rather famous for their eye-catching cover pages and breath-taking

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<sup>51</sup> Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 39-41.

<sup>52</sup> Kingsley Amis, "Starting Points," in *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Rose (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 20-21.

<sup>53</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "Allan Edgar Poe," October 24, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, [http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/poe\\_edgar\\_allan](http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/poe_edgar_allan).

<sup>54</sup> Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 42-50.

tales. However, these pulp magazines preceded a boom of publishing SF books in the 1950s. The era of the late 1930s and 1940s is referred to as Golden Age in SF, represented for example by Isaac Asimov and E. E. “Doc” Smith.<sup>55</sup>

In the 1950s, there was a shift from magazines to novels and the genre gained more respect. The Campbellian SF is being replaced by satiric, often sociological “soft” science fiction, as represented in two new coming magazines *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. In many works, protagonists shifted from being self-reliant to subjects of manipulation. The fear of the Cold War and anti-Soviet propaganda influenced many works and Soviets were often a subject of vilification.<sup>56</sup> As the popularity of television and cinema rose, the production of SF movies sprung as well. In 1957, the Soviet Union sent the first satellite, Sputnik I, into the Earth orbit. This was the beginning of the Space Age. Brian W. Aldiss in his book *Trillion Year Spree* (1988) argues that space traveling becoming a reality, in fact, meant disillusionment to the SF admirers and that it could be the reason why sales of SF magazines fell in the late 1950s.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.1.3 Utopia and dystopia

The term utopia originated from Thomas More’s eponymous work from 1516, which describes an island in New World. Utopia could mean both good place (eu-topos) and no place (ou-topos), it thus represents a perfect, but unachievable social, political and economic construct. Future SF narratives were heavily influenced by More’s work. In the eighteenth century, utopian elements are present in the works of Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, where utopias are isolated places, however still somehow accessible. Later utopias are different, as they aim (among other things) to provide a solution to social or political issues.<sup>58</sup>

Dystopia, on the other hand, represents a place of agony and injustice and it is rather argumentative. It could deal with various issues: political, environmental, technological and religious, and these forms are frequently combined. Dystopia often depicts post-apocalyptic and totalitarian visions of the future and reflects the beliefs and concerns of the author. Every aspect of a dystopian society is abominable and the author clarifies the society or the world

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<sup>55</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, “History of SF,” January 11, 2018, accessed January 15, 2019, [http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/history\\_of\\_sf](http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/history_of_sf).

<sup>56</sup> Martin Procházka et al., *Lectures on American Literature*, ed. Justin Quinn, 3rd ed. (Prague, Czech Republic: Karolinum, 2011), 242-43.

<sup>57</sup> Brian W. Aldiss, and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Grafton Paladin, 1988), 288-290.

<sup>58</sup> Christopher S. Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 3-6.



is out of order.<sup>59</sup> Some of the most famous dystopias are *1984* (1949) by George Orwell, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) by Ray Bradbury and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood. More recently, Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy begun in 2008. Both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Hunger Games* feature women protagonists, Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* is a more passive role, whereas Katniss in *The Hunger Games* is an active, powerful character who the whole series is built around.<sup>60</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Target Audience

The subculture of science fiction has its origins in the 1920s and 1930s when the pulp magazines emerged. As mentioned before, a concept called megatext started to form. A significant role in the evolution and improvement of the genre played communication between writers, editors, and readers. However, with the New Wave in 1960s, innovative authors were being criticized by conservative readers and the expansion of new themes, beliefs and styles in the 1970s lead to what Linda Fleming calls "a SF group identity crisis."<sup>61</sup> Not only the genre itself has been changing, but also the number of women interested in science fiction. In 1949, a survey in *Astounding* reported a 6.7% women readership, whereas in 1958 it was 11.9%. Data from the 1950s collected by magazines such as the British *New Worlds*, American *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and *Analog* show that the number of women reading SF was increasing. *New Worlds* reported 5% women readership in 1955, three years later it was 10%. According to the *Analog* survey in 1974, 25% of the readers were women.<sup>62</sup> These changes were most likely caused by the increase in the number of themes SF dealt with, thus the potential to attract more segments of readers, including women. Nevertheless, SF was considered a genre written mostly by males for a male audience.

## 2.2 Female authors

Even though it might seem that women involved in SF writing emerged in the 1960s, there are female authors such as Margaret Cavendish, Mary Shelley and Mary Griffith, who wrote

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<sup>59</sup> Peter Stockwell, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2006), 192.

<sup>60</sup> Devin Ryan, "Emerging Themes in Dystopian Literature: The Development of an Undergraduate Course," (honor's thesis, Western Michigan University, 2014), 1-5, [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses/2466/](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/2466/)

<sup>61</sup> Linda Fleming, "The American SF Subculture," *Science Fiction Studies* 4, no. 13 (November 1977), accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/13/Fleming13.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> Albert I. Berger, "Science-Fiction Fans in Socio-Economic Perspective: Factors in the Social Consciousness of a Genre," *Science Fiction Studies* 4, no. 13 (November 1977), accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/13/berger13.htm>.

fantasy and SF before it was even considered an established genre. It was found out by Roger C. Schlobin, one of the authors of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, that there were 375 women who wrote about 830 books between the years 1692 – 1982.<sup>63</sup> Elements of SF are present in Gothic fiction and works from spiritualist movement and female authors such as Mrs. J. H. Ridell, Edith Wharton and Sara Weiss should be mentioned. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote *Herland* (1915), a feminist utopia that describes a society consisting exclusively of women, where no war conflicts and domination exist, which reflects her beliefs as she was a feminist and a social reform lecturer. Many female authors found pulp magazines a place to explore their socialist and feminist ideas of strong female characters performing in social changes. Another feature that distinguished female authors from male authors was the positive and empathic portrayal of aliens cooperating and building friendships with humans, which could be also the reflection of socialist thinking.<sup>64</sup>

The first woman to publish in pulp magazine was Clare Winger Harris. Her story *The Fate of the Poseidonia* was included in *Amazing Stories* from 1927. Gertrude Barrows Bennett (writing under a pseudonym Francis Stevens) is considered one of the most important female writers of the pulp magazines, in one of her short stories *Friend Island* (1918), gender roles have become redundant. As well as many other women publishing in pulp magazines, she changed her name in order to make it genderless. In the first fantasy pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, stories written by women were commonly published from the beginning. From 1940 to 1954, the editor of this magazine was Dorothy McIlwraith and the magazine was illustrated by Margaret Brundage. Overall, there were about 127 women that have written 365 stories published in 279 issues of *Weird Tales* between 1923 and 1954.<sup>65</sup> One of the magazine's most liked stories, as proven by later letters and questionnaires, was *Three Marked Pennies* (1934) by Mary Elizabeth Counselman. *Weird Tales*, assuming from the number of letters published in the magazine, had about 27% of female readers. Other pulp magazines, even though rather male-oriented, published works of women as well. In 1920, the number of women writing short stories in pulp magazines was only six, however, there was a significant increase throughout the decades and until the 1960s there were 204 female authors publishing in SF magazines (excluding *Weird Tales* and other fantasy

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<sup>63</sup> Eric Leif Davin, "Science Fiction, 1900-1959: Novels and Short Fiction," in *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Robin Anne Reid, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 45.

<sup>64</sup> Davin, "Science Fiction," 45-49.

<sup>65</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "Weird Tales," July 30, 2018, accessed March 26, 2019, [http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/weird\\_tales](http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/weird_tales).

magazines) During the 1950s, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* involved 16% of women in publishing stories.<sup>66</sup> The legacy of women in science fiction and the emergence of female authors in the 1960s are discussed in chapter 4.5.

### 2.3 Female characters

When it comes to the representation of women in SF stories or novels, they are more likely to be portrayed as complements to male heroes. Stereotypical female characters were according to *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* usually portrayed as:

The Timorous Virgin (good for being rescued, and for having things explained to her), the Amazon Queen (sexually desirable and terrifying at the same time, usually set up to be “tamed” by the super-masculine hero), the Frustrated Spinster Scientist (an object lesson to girl readers that career success equals feminine failure), the Good Wife (keeps quietly in the background, loving her man and never making trouble) and the Tomboy Kid Sister (who has a semblance of autonomy only until male appreciation of her burgeoning sexuality transforms her into Virgin or Wife).<sup>67</sup>

Especially before the 1970s, the preferred role for women was a domestic heroine as depicted in American situational comedies and this role was reflected in SF literature as well. Female protagonists in science fiction literature were more likely to be passive than active, as opposed to male heroes. At the beginning of SF, women were often even omitted from the story, as present in the works of Jules Verne or H. G. Wells. A similar approach was adopted by later writers such as Isaac Asimov or Robert A. Heinlein, however, there were also male authors from that time who incorporated women into their stories as relatively complex and active characters, for example Frederick Pohl or Samuel R. Delany.<sup>68</sup>

*The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* mentions the Bechdel test,<sup>69</sup> an idea introduced by the feminist illustrator Alison Bechdel, which is a test focused on the relationships of female characters – are there at least two of them and both are named? Do they interact with each other or only with males? If they do, is there at least one conversation that does not concern a male character? If all of the criteria are fulfilled, the novel/movie passes the test.<sup>70</sup> The movie adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) passes the test as well as the novel. On the other

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<sup>66</sup> Davin, “Science Fiction,” 49-52.

<sup>67</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, “Women in SF,” August 31, 2018, accessed March 20, 2019, [http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/women\\_in\\_sf](http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/women_in_sf).

<sup>68</sup> Janice M. Bogstad, “Men Writing Women,” in *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Robin Anne Reid (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009), 170-175.

<sup>69</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, “Women in SF.”

<sup>70</sup> “Bechdel Test Movie List,” Bechdel Test Movie List, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://bechdeltest.com/>.

hand, out of the 11 *Star Wars* movies, only five of them meet the requirements to pass the Bechdel test.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> “Bechdel Test Movie List,” Bechdel Test Movie List.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

### 3 RAY DOUGLAS BRADBURY

#### 3.1 Biography

Ray Douglas Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920. In his works, he often reminisces about his childhood he spent in Waukegan, Illinois, which is referred to as Green Town in his eponymous series. His family left Waukegan, as his father sought employment in Arizona, but it was not until 1934 when they permanently settled in Los Angeles. After Bradbury graduated from high school, he decided not to attend university and sold newspapers instead. He focused on reading and found his interest almost exclusively in science fiction (SF) and fantasy novels and stories, which later inspired him to become an author. His first sold story was named *The Lake* and it was published in *Super Science Stories* in 1941. At that time, he met his future wife Marguerite McClure, who is the only woman he ever married and with whom he had four daughters. His first book *Dark Carnival* was published in 1947 and it consisted of horror stories. Some critics claim that the unusual Arizonian landscapes resembling Mars inspired him to write *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), which is a work that established Bradbury as one of the most significant authors of SF. In 1951, another collection *The Illustrated Man* was published and by 1954, more than twenty of his stories were transformed to comics and there were adaptations of his work in radio broadcasting.<sup>72</sup> In 1953, one of the most significant works was published, that being *Fahrenheit 451*. It is primarily a social criticism that has its roots in the Red Scare, consumerism, and censorship and overall reflects the fear of the 1950s.<sup>73</sup> Works such as horror anthology *October Country* (1955) and novel *Dandelion Wine* (1957) followed.<sup>74</sup>

Overall Bradbury wrote more than five hundred works including not only short stories and novels, but also plays and scripts. He remained dedicated to writing for the rest of his life and received numerous awards, however many critics favor his earlier works over those written after the year 1980. He was honored with the World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement at the World Fantasy Convention, he received a special citation by the Pulitzer Prize jury and in 2004 he was given the National Medal of Arts at a White House

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<sup>72</sup> Harold Bloom, ed., *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Chelsea House, 2008), 9-11.

<sup>73</sup> Gray, *A History of American Literature*, 760.

<sup>74</sup> Bloom, *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*, 9.

ceremony.<sup>75</sup> Apart from prizes and awards, there is a NASA Curiosity rover landing site on Mars called Bradbury Landing.<sup>76</sup>

Bradbury came from a lower middle-class Protestant family. His parents, Leonard Spaulding Bradbury and Esther Marie Moberg, raised two children – Bradbury and his brother Leonard. Leonard had a twin brother Samuel, who died in 1918, two years before Bradbury was born. Another tragic death followed when Bradbury’s sister Elizabeth died in 1927. Bradbury’s mother was thus overcautious when raising the two brothers. Two of the family members had a significant influence on Bradbury’s interest in literature – his father and his aunt Neva. The family lived in a small town and their house was a place where extended family and friends met. The fact that Bradbury grew up in such an environment and later had four children himself suggests that he preserved family values.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.2 Bradbury and women

In a *Playboy* interview from 1996, the interviewer says to Bradbury: “In fact, in *People*, you said that CD-ROMs are more for men than for women - and you were denounced as sexist on the letters-to-the-editors page shortly thereafter.”<sup>78</sup> The same interview provides Bradbury’s answer on the question why women are less interested in SF than men:

There are two races of people - men and women - no matter what women's libbers would have you pretend. The male is motivated by toys and science because men are born with no purpose in the universe except to procreate. There is lots of time to kill beyond that. They've got to find work. Men have no inherent center to themselves beyond procreating. Women, however, are born with a center. They can create the universe, mother it, teach it, nurture it. Men read science fiction to build the future. Women don't need to read it. They are the future.<sup>79</sup>

Further on, in a *Tangent* interview from 1976, he admits that he argues with the Women’s liberation movement a lot, but at the same time adds that there are certain opinions they share, for example that men and women are the same in terms of the need to release stress or express love. Then he is asked about his opinion on women in *Star Trek* and his answer

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<sup>75</sup> Bloom, *Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451*, 10-11.

<sup>76</sup> Brian Dunbar, “NASA Mars Rover Begins Driving at Bradbury Landing,” NASA, August 22, 2012, accessed April 10, 2019, [https://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2012/aug/HQ\\_12-292\\_Mars\\_Bradbury\\_Landing.html](https://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2012/aug/HQ_12-292_Mars_Bradbury_Landing.html).

<sup>77</sup> Steven L. Aggelis, ed., *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), xi.

<sup>78</sup> Ray Bradbury, “Playboy Interview: Ray Bradbury,” interview by Ken Kelley, *Playboy* (1996), accessed April 12, 2019, [http://www.raybradbury.com/articles\\_playboy.html](http://www.raybradbury.com/articles_playboy.html).

<sup>79</sup> Bradbury, “Playboy Interview: Ray Bradbury.”

is: “For the most part it was about tits and not ideas, and if the women’s libbers don’t like it to hell with them. The women had a multitude of tits and no brains.”<sup>80</sup>

When it comes to sexuality in Bradbury’s works, there is hardly any. To explain why he says that a “writer writes about those things that he can’t do,” and applies this philosophy to his own works – he writes about spaceships and fast cars, but he had never got a driver’s license and had been afraid of flying for a long time. Even though in the same 1976 *Tangent* interview Bradbury talks openly about sex and even answers a question whether he ever had a homosexual relationship, he does not apply the same approach to his books or stories, he says: “I believe in the power of the imagination.”<sup>81</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bradbury was married to Marguerite McClure for 56 years until her death in 2003. Thanks to his wife, Bradbury was able to become a full-time writer, as she was the breadwinner in their relationship in the beginning – she was employed in an advertising agency. Bradbury himself often said that she “took a vow of poverty,”<sup>82</sup> as she was born to a rich family to later marry an impoverished writer. Although she never finished her English and Spanish university studies, she was fluent not only in these two languages but also in French and Italian.<sup>83</sup> Bradbury says in an interview in *Listen to the Echoes* (2010) that he lost his virginity to a prostitute when he was sixteen years old and even though Marguerite was his only wife, he had two affairs with other women during their marriage. The first one was with a teacher employed at one of the universities where Bradbury held lectures. The affair lasted for several years and was ended by the woman. When he was fifty-four, he had another affair with a woman who was an admirer of him. This relationship lasted five years and ended because the woman wanted to marry him. Marguerite knew about one of the affairs and Bradbury had to spend a few nights in a hotel until she forgave him.<sup>84</sup>

Overall, Bradbury’s opinions on women were positive. In one of the interviews, he says: “The secret of males is this: We are jealous of women. They have all the power. The essence of a woman is the power she has to attract just by being. A lot of men beat the hell out of

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<sup>80</sup> Ray Bradbury, “Classic Ray Bradbury Interview,” interview by Dave Truesdale, *Tangent Online*, June 9, 2012, accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.tangentonline.com/interviews-columnsmenu-166/1864-classic-ray-bradbury-interview>.

<sup>81</sup> Bradbury, “Classic Ray Bradbury Interview.”

<sup>82</sup> Sam Weller, “An Appreciation by Sam Weller,” About Ray Bradbury, accessed April 1, 2019, <http://www.raybradbury.com/maggie.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Weller, “An Appreciation by Sam Weller.”

<sup>84</sup> Sam Weller, *Listen to the Echoes: The Ray Bradbury Interviews* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2010), chap. 9, <https://b-ok.org/book/1309797/41a497>.



their women because the women are too powerful.”<sup>85</sup> Later in the same interview he says: “Men are the inferior sex. And we pretend at being superior out of our inferiority. The male ego is the problem in the world everywhere. Women are much easier to get on with. Men don’t want to be told anything. And we’re arrogant and we make wars and we destroy so much, yet we also build.”<sup>86</sup>

### 3.3 *Fahrenheit 451*

*Fahrenheit 451* is probably the most distinct and most commercially successful work by Ray Bradbury. After his death in 2012, the novel was number 75 on Nielsen BookScan's list of overall bestseller and number 20 on Amazon bestseller list.<sup>87</sup> The novel is an extended version of a preceding story *The Firemen* (1951) published in *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine. It is a critique of contemporary American society and it expresses fears present at that period of time.<sup>88</sup> In an interview in *LA Weekly* from 2007 Bradbury says that the novel is often misinterpreted as (primarily) a criticism of censorship, however, it is more “a story about how television destroys interest in reading literature.”<sup>89</sup>

Bradbury’s concerns come from the period of American history when television sets were being purchased by the vast majority of households and became an essential form of entertainment. The novel was written before the quiz show scandals, which caused TV networks to broadcast more educational programs as mentioned in chapter 1.6.1. There were not many broadcasting channels during the 1950s and they all offered similar programs (that were meant to entertain in the first place), which is similar to the situation in *Fahrenheit 451*. In *Ray Bradbury Uncensored!*, Bradbury expresses his opinion on television: “The television, that insidious beast, that Medusa which freezes a billion people to stone every night, staring fixedly that Siren which called and sang and promised so much and gave, after all, so little.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Weller, *Listen to the Echoes*, chap. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Weller, *Listen to the Echoes*, chap. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Gabe Habash, “‘Fahrenheit 451’ Keeps Selling Following Bradbury's Death,” *Publishers Weekly*, June 26, 2012, accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/52779-fahrenheit-451-keeps-selling-following-bradbury-s-death.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Gray, *A History of American Literature*, 760.

<sup>89</sup> Amy E. Boyle Johnston, “Ray Bradbury: Fahrenheit 451 Misinterpreted,” *L.A. Weekly*, April 05, 2016, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://www.laweekly.com/news/ray-bradbury-fahrenheit-451-misinterpreted-2149125>.

<sup>90</sup> Gene Beley, *Ray Bradbury: Uncensored!: The Unauthorized Biography* (Lincoln, NE: IUniverse, 2006), 183.

Nevertheless, censorship is represented as well. In the novel, it is achieved by burning books, which is a reference to Nazis, who burned books that were considered un-German. Bradbury in an interview by Dana Gioia admits the influence of these events of burning books: “Well, Hitler, of course. When I was 15, he burned the books in the streets of Berlin. Then along the way I learned about the libraries in Alexandria burning 5000 years ago. That grieved my soul.”<sup>91</sup> The era of McCarthyism in the 1950s influenced Bradbury, as the threat of communism represented public and governmental fear of subversive infiltration, which is also one of the themes of the novel. Bradbury himself was investigated by the FBI because of his travel to Cuba, which was officially forbidden. However, the investigation ended when proved that Bradbury did not plan such travel.<sup>92</sup>

*Fahrenheit 451*, as well as other SF (dystopian) novels, is characterized by the presence of numerous metaphors and metonymy.<sup>93</sup> Bradbury frequently uses metaphors (more specifically similes) when describing the appearance and features of a particular character. Then, these characters often serve as mirrors reflecting the whole. Peter Stockwell states that metonymy and metaphors in SF are often meant to impress the reader, enhance his imagination and to build a bridge between the real and fictional world. The main character, in the case of *Fahrenheit 451* it is Montag, then often reflects either the values of the author (Bradbury stresses the importance of books and so does Montag) and often also the values of the reader, who is then able to sympathize with the main character. Another feature of dystopia is the presence of a character who explains to the reader how the world (and society) developed into the current state; in *Fahrenheit 451* it is captain Beatty.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ray Bradbury, “Creating Fahrenheit 451,” Interview by Dana Gioia. *NEA Arts Magazine* (2005), June 27, 2014, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.arts.gov/NEARTS/2006v3-poetry-out-loud-2006-national-finals/creating-fahrenheit-451>.

<sup>92</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Ray Douglas Bradbury,” FBI Records: The Vault, August 23, 2012, accessed April 20, 2019, <https://vault.fbi.gov/ray-douglas-bradbury-1>.

<sup>93</sup> Roberts, *Science Fiction*, 137-138.

<sup>94</sup> Stockwell, *The Poetics of Science Fiction*, 193.

## 4 WOMEN CHARACTERS IN *FAHRENHEIT 451*

This chapter focuses on women and their representation in the novel. Three important characters are analyzed - Mildred, Clarisse and the woman who burned herself together with her books. Then, female characters in selected works by Bradbury are analyzed with regard to the stereotypes of women in SF. The last part of this chapter explores the legacy of women in SF.

### 4.1 Mildred

The character of Mildred is introduced when Montag comes home and finds her lying in the bed after an attempt to commit suicide. Even before he enters their bedroom, he describes it as “cold marbled room of a mausoleum”<sup>95</sup> and knows that Mildred is “stretched on the bed, uncovered and cold, like a body displayed on the lid of a tomb.”<sup>96</sup> The second Montag realizes Mildred is not breathing he seems to be in real agony and pain, which shows that he actually cares for her. On the contrary, after she is saved by the operators, he wishes that they would “have taken her mind along to the drycleaner’s and emptied the pockets and steamed and cleansed it and reblocked it and brought it back in the morning.”<sup>97</sup> This shows that Montag’s relationship with Mildred is rather cold and probably unhappy, but as it is his wife, he is to some extent emotionally attached to her.

Montag’s behavior towards Mildred gets violent once when he “slapped her face, he grabbed her again and shook her,”<sup>98</sup> as he tries to prevent her from burning a book in their house. Montag also threatens Mildred’s friends when he tells them to “‘Go home, go home! [...] Before I knock you down and kick you out of the door!’”<sup>99</sup> There are no other signs of Montag abusing Mildred, thus it could not be concluded that she is a victim of domestic violence. The marriage of Montag and Mildred is significantly different from that of Bradbury and Marguerite. When Montag asks Mildred when and where they met, she does not know and neither knows Montag (he eventually recalls it at the end of the novel). Montag and Mildred do not have children, whereas Bradbury and Marguerite had four daughters.<sup>100</sup> In an interview in *The Guardian* from 1990, Bradbury says about Marguerite that “She has been my lifeline,” which is not the case of Mildred who betrays Montag at the end of the

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<sup>95</sup> Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 4th ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2004), 19.

<sup>96</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 19.

<sup>97</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 24.

<sup>98</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 73.

<sup>99</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 110-111.

<sup>100</sup> Weller, “An Appreciation by Sam Weller.”

novel. Throughout the novel, it is clear that Mildred does not appreciate books as Montag does and wants to incinerate them. On the contrary, Marguerite admired books as much as Bradbury did, in their home they had about 7,000 of them.<sup>101</sup> Considering these differences, it could be said that neither Bradbury's marriage nor his wife is reflected in the character of Mildred.

Mildred is a housewife and most of the time she spends watching three interactive television walls, which form "wall-to-wall circuit"<sup>102</sup> in the living room. She is enthusiastic about the plays broadcasted on television and even takes part in it by reading a script. She refers to the people in the show as "my family" and when she thinks about firefighters burning their house because of Montag's book, she is worried about the family in the first place. She tries to persuade Montag to buy a fourth television wall so "it'd be just like this room wasn't ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people's room."<sup>103</sup> The character of Mildred is similar to the housewives described in Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*. Friedan claims that there were thousands of women in the United States who sought psychiatric care and a lot of them were housewives dissatisfied with their lives.<sup>104</sup> Mildred undoubtedly takes sleeping pills, which she later overdoses with. According to Professor David Nutt, a neuropsychopharmacologist, depression and sleep are tightly connected. Sleep disturbance (for example insomnia and hypersomnia) is one of the main symptoms of depression, 83% of patients diagnosed with depression suffered from sleep disturbance, which is at the same time a factor that could lead to suicide.<sup>105</sup> Although Mildred seems happy and simple-minded, the suicide attempt convinced Montag "that [it] was another Mildred, that was a Mildred so deep inside this one, and so bothered, really bothered, that the two women had never met."<sup>106</sup>

In terms of the looks, Mildred is described by Montag as flawed with: "her hair burnt by chemicals to a brittle straw, her eyes with a kind of cataract unseen but suspect far behind the pupils, the reddened pouting lips, the body as thin as a praying mantis from dieting, and her flesh like white bacon."<sup>107</sup> This depiction of Mildred is an example of how Bradbury

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<sup>101</sup> Weller, "An Appreciation by Sam Weller."

<sup>102</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 28.

<sup>104</sup> Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, 25.

<sup>105</sup> David Nutt, Sue Wilson, and Louise Paterson, "Sleep disorders as core symptoms of depression," *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience* vol. 10, 3 (2008): 329-30. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181883/>.

<sup>106</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 59.

<sup>107</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 55-56.

uses similes to make the character even more unlikable for the reader. From confessing that she likes to hit rabbits and dogs with a car to the betrayal of her husband, she can be considered an antagonist. Reid argues that Mildred together with another antagonist Beatty mirror the American society, even though Mildred is not as active in her actions against Montag as Beatty. The character of Mildred depicts consumerism through her addiction to television, whereas Beatty serves as a symbol for the government.<sup>108</sup> These two characters serve as an example of metonymy, as they are individuals referring to a larger whole.

The character of Mildred is the only female character in the novel that interacts with other female characters - her neighbors and friends Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Bowles. If the Bechdel test is applied, all three of its criteria are fulfilled. There are three women, they all have a name and their conversation is not solely about other males. Thus, the novel passes the test. However, it is clear from the conversation between Mildred, her friends, and Montag that no serious topics are discussed, unless Montag proposes one. Mildred and her friends enter the house saying: “Doesn’t everyone look nice!” “Nice.” “You look fine, Millie!” “Fine.” “Everyone looks swell.” “Swell!”<sup>109</sup> When Montag asks about the war, Mrs. Phelps says: “I’m not worried, [...] “I’ll let Pete do all the worrying.” [...] “I’ll let Pete do all the worrying. Not me. I’m not worried.”<sup>110</sup> When presidential elections are discussed, it is clear that Mildred and her friends’ preferences were affected solely by the candidate’s appearance. Mrs. Bowles says: “I voted last election, same as everyone, and I laid it on the line for President Noble. I think he’s one of the nicest-looking men who ever became president.”<sup>111</sup> One of the women replies: “Fat, too [Hubert Hoag], and didn’t dress to hide it. No wonder the landslide was for Winston Noble. Even their names helped. Compare Wilson Noble to Hubert Hoag for ten seconds and you can almost figure the results.”<sup>112</sup>

The purpose of this conversation seems to be rather to inform the reader about the society in the novel than to express the characters’ opinions. As an example could serve the part of the conversation about the presidential elections, which indicates that the system of government is democratic. The contradicting names of the two presidents could be connected to Beatty’s statement: “If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one.”<sup>113</sup> Even though people might have two

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<sup>108</sup> Robin Anne Reid, *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 58.

<sup>109</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 101.

<sup>110</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 102.

<sup>111</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 105.

<sup>112</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 105.

<sup>113</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 68.

options, everyone voted for Noble, which was probably influenced by his name and appearance and it could also assign that the elections were manipulated. Mrs. Phelps provides the reader with information about the war: “Quick war. Forty-eight hours they said, and everyone home. That’s what the Army said. Quick war. Pete called yesterday and they said he’d be back next week. Quick...”<sup>114</sup> The women often repeat themselves and after another and this pattern of conversations is mentioned by Clarisse as well: “People don’t talk about anything. [...] they name a lot of cars or clothes or swimming-pools mostly and say how swell! But they all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else.”<sup>115</sup> Except for the conversation between Mildred and her friends and those in the TV show, Bradbury does not provide any other examples of interaction within women. This conversation is meaningless as for the content; however, it represents the society and serves as a criticism.

## 4.2 Clarisse

As well as Mildred, 16 years old Clarisse McClellan is introduced to the reader in the beginning of the novel. Even before she speaks to Montag, it is clear that he sees Clarisse as the opposite of Mildred, which is apparent from Montag’s description. While Mildred’s skin is compared to white bacon, Clarisse face was: “fragile milk crystal.”<sup>116</sup> Mildred is described as cold, whereas Clarisse is high-spirited. She is unpredictable and her behavior and actions lack pattern. It is her enthusiasm for nature and exploring the outside world that makes her stand out in a society entertained by TV walls and fast driving.<sup>117</sup>

The event of meeting Clarisse late in the night could be considered one of the most important events of the story, as her questions remind him of an encounter he had with Faber a year ago. Timothy E. Kelley points out that Clarisse awakens Montag’s memory and senses,<sup>118</sup> for example when she asks: “Have you ever smelled old leaves? Don’t they smell like cinnamon? Here. Smell.”<sup>119</sup> Or when she “had put the dandelion under his chin.”<sup>120</sup> Rafeeq O. McGiveron says that the character of Clarisse should serve as a looking glass into

<sup>114</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 102.

<sup>115</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 38.

<sup>116</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 15.

<sup>117</sup> Imola Bulgozdi, “Knowledge and Masculinity: Male Archetypes in *Fahrenheit 451*,” in *Fahrenheit 451: Ray Bradbury*, ed. Rafeeq O. McGiveron, (Ipswich: Salem Press, 2013), 154-155.

<sup>118</sup> Timothy E Kelley, “‘Where Ignorant Armies Clash by Night’: Love, War, and the Women of *Fahrenheit 451*,” *Critical Insights: Fahrenheit 451* (Hackensack: Salem, 2013), Accessed April 16, 2019. <https://online-salempress-com.proxy.sandburg.edu>.

<sup>119</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 36.

<sup>120</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 29.

Montag's mind ("he saw himself in her eyes"),<sup>121</sup> which raises questions that he never asked himself before. McGiveron further argues that Clarisse reflects the whole society and informs not only Montag but also the reader about her generation – they are dying in cars and fights.<sup>122</sup> Clarisse provides the reader with insight into the education system when speaking with Montag: "An hour of TV class, an hour of basketball or baseball or running, another hour of transcription history or painting pictures, and more sports, but do you know, we never ask questions, or at least most don't; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing, and us sitting there for four more hours of film-teacher."<sup>123</sup> However, Clarisse never advises or leads Montag towards his decisions; he uses her only as a mirror to look into.<sup>124</sup> In 1999, Bradbury said in an interview in *Alibi* that "She shouldn't know that she's teaching. There's the beauty of the relationship – that Montag, who is ignorant, is taught by a girl who doesn't know what she's doing."<sup>125</sup> Their relationship was platonic, not sexual in any way.

The McClellan family differs from the other, as Clarisse mentions in the first conversation with Montag: "Oh, just my mother and father and uncle sitting around, talking."<sup>126</sup> In the novel, Montag asks Beatty about the family and he says: "We've record on her family. We've watched them carefully."<sup>127</sup> However, it is never said or suggested that the family owns books. Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Touponce argue that it was her family that prevented Clarisse from growing into a shape that would fit the mass society of *Fahrenheit 451*.<sup>128</sup> The same idea is presented by Beatty: "Heredity and environment are re funny things. You can rid yourselves of all the odd ducks in just a few years. The home environment can undo a lot you try to do at school. [...] The family had been feeding her subconscious, I'm sure, from what I saw of her school record."<sup>129</sup>

There is a contrast between the family of Clarisse and Mildred. Montag is not considered a family to Mildred, as she says: "My family is people. They tell me things, I laugh, they

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<sup>121</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 15.

<sup>122</sup> Rafeeq O. McGiveron, "To Build a Mirror Factory": The Mirror and Self-Examination in Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451," in *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House, 2008), 65-66.

<sup>123</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 37.

<sup>124</sup> McGiveron, "To Build a Mirror Factory", 65-66.

<sup>125</sup> Ray Bradbury, "Alibi Flashback: An Interview with Ray Bradbury," interview by Devin D. O'Leary, *Alibi*, June 27, 2012, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://alibi.com/feature/42010/Alibi-Flashback-An-interview-with-Ray-Bradbury.html>.

<sup>126</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 17.

<sup>127</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 67.

<sup>128</sup> Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Touponce, "The Simulacrum of Carnival: Fahrenheit 451," in *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2008), 94.

<sup>129</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 67.

laugh! And the colors!”<sup>130</sup> when referring to a show broadcasted on the television walls. However, she is not able to tell Montag what is the show about. Instead, she says: ““There are people named Bob and Ruth and Helen.””<sup>131</sup>In Ray Bradbury *Uncensored*, he expresses his opinion on the role of television (which is depicted in a similar way as in *Fahrenheit 451*) in the family in *The Veldt*: “The fact that the TV room with the wall-to-wall TV and films on every wall, is actually a symbol for certain kinds of machinery in our society, which becomes the family image – the mother and father image to the children – so the real mother and father are cut out or cut between.”<sup>132</sup>The family of Clarisse represents the traditional family model, which is considered anti-social in the novel. After Mildred’s attempt to commit suicide, Montag observes as

Laughter blew across the moon-colored lawn from the house of Clarisse and her father and mother and the uncle who smiled so quietly and so earnestly. Above all, their laughter was relaxed and hearty and not forced in any way, coming from the house that was so brightly lit this late at night while all the other houses were kept to themselves in the darkness.<sup>133</sup>

In an interview, Bradbury said: “All the women in my life have been librarians, writers, teachers or booksellers! My wife was a bookseller when I met her and she was also a teacher.”<sup>134</sup> Andrea Krafft argues that Clarisse could be the representation of all these women because she inspires and awakens Montag in a similar way these women inspired Bradbury to read and write books. As Clarisse serves as a mirror, Bradbury might stress the importance of women’s voices which might not have been heard in the 1950s.<sup>135</sup>

### 4.3 The woman who burned herself

When the firemen enter the house that is to be burned, they notice a woman who is “spoiling the ritual,”<sup>136</sup> as she is not supposed to be present during the process of burning. However, the only one who is disturbed is Montag, as he realizes that until that “You weren’t hurting anyone, you were hurting only things! And since things really couldn’t be hurt, since things felt nothing, and things don’t scream or whimper, as this woman might begin to scream and cry out, there was nothing to tease your conscience later.”<sup>137</sup> Other firemen were “making

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<sup>130</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 80.

<sup>131</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 28.

<sup>132</sup> Beley, *Ray Bradbury: Uncensored!*, 15.

<sup>133</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 24.

<sup>134</sup> Aggelis, *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, 119.

<sup>135</sup> Andrea Krafft, “Housewives and Witches: Finding Feminism in Ray Bradbury’s Fiction,” *Critical Insights: Bradbury, Ray*, (Hackensack: Salem, 2017), Accessed April 20, 2019, <https://online-salempress-com.proxy.sandburg.edu>.

<sup>136</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 44.

<sup>137</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 44.



too much noise, laughing, joking to cover her terrible accusing science blow.”<sup>138</sup> Montag has contradicting thoughts, as he must cooperate with other firemen but at the same time cannot resist thinking about the woman. At this point, he happens to steal one book, which seems to be his first; however, it is revealed later in the novel that he already hides several books at home.

Even though Montag tries to prevent the woman from staying in her house and the firemen from setting the house on fire, he is not successful in either of his attempts. After the woman tells him that she does not want to leave and reveals a match she hides in her hand, Montag follows the other firemen outside. Then she “had come to weight them quietly with her eyes, her quietness a condemnation, [...] reached out with contempt for them all, and struck the kitchen match against the railing.”<sup>139</sup> Her action undoubtedly affects not only Montag but other firemen as well, as “They said nothing on their way back to the firehouse. Nobody looked at anyone else.”<sup>140</sup> Later in the novel, Montag confesses to Mildred that ““this fire’ll last me the rest of my life.””<sup>141</sup> He has been concerned about the value of books even before this burning, as later proven by the presence of books in his house, but seeing a human being die for them increased his curiosity and desire to read them.

The character of woman who chooses to burn herself with her books is not named in the novel. In an interview by Dana Gioia, a former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Bradbury refers to her as Mrs. Hudson. She plays a significant role in Montag’s rebellion. Bradbury answers the question on what is the turning point in the novel: “Well, when Mrs. Hudson is willing to burn with her books. That’s the turning point, when it’s all over and she’s willing to die with her loved ones, with her dogs, with her cats, with her books. She gives up her life. She’d rather die than be without them.”<sup>142</sup> She decides not to wait for the firemen to set her house full of books on fire and does it herself. This action made her one of the strongest characters in the novel and the only female character in the novel who is proven to read books and thus it could be said that she shares the same intellectual values as Faber and Montag. She is equal to them and the fact that Bradbury chose this character to be woman might show that he was convinced of the importance of women intellectuals in the society. Before her death, she quotes Latimer, an English bishop. As he was being burned for heresy together with Nicholas Ridley, the clergyman said to him: ““Play the man, Master

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<sup>138</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 44.

<sup>139</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 47.

<sup>140</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 47.

<sup>141</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 58.

<sup>142</sup> Bradbury, “Creating Fahrenheit 451.”

Ridley. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."<sup>143</sup> The quote assigns pride and acceptance of her death as well as evidence of the character's knowledge of history.

Even though Bradbury created a female character who reads books, he did not include any women in the group of people remembering books at the end of the novel, nor did he mention a book written by a female author. However, one of the men says that: "We'll pass the books on to our children, by word or mouth, and let our children wait, in turn, on the other people."<sup>144</sup> The fact that they want to pass their knowledge on their children suggests the presence of women in these separated groups of people remembering books, but they are not mentioned in the novel.

#### 4.4 Overview of female characters in other works by Bradbury

This chapter focuses on the representation of women in selected works by Bradbury and examines if they fit the stereotypical male-determined characters mentioned in chapter 2.3.: "the Timorous Virgin, the Amazon Queen, the Frustrated Spinster Scientist, the Good Wife and the Tomboy Kid Sister."<sup>145</sup> An example of the Good Wife character is presented in the short story *Marionettes, Inc.* (1949) which depicts the marriage of Nettie and Smith and his attempt to replace himself with a robot just to acknowledge that his wife has already done the same thing without him even noticing. Nettie thus escaped from the role of the stereotypical good wife, probably because she was not content with the marriage.<sup>146</sup>

*The Martian Chronicles* (1950) provides another example of such character in Mrs. Ttt (sic), who cares only about household chores when visited by people from Earth. In the eponymous short story included in "fix-up" novel *The Martian Chronicles*, another housewife is Ylla K, who has a vision of people from earth visiting Mars. Her husband does not believe her and says to her: "If you worked harder you wouldn't have these silly dreams."<sup>147</sup> Andrea Krafft argues that Bradbury even criticizes the role of housewives as represented by these Martian wives, whose marriage is lacking love and they are trapped in their homes. Mildred is similar to these characters, as she seems unhappy, too (as a proof could serve her suicidal attempt and finding her new family on the TV screen). The characters of Nettie, Mrs. Ttt and Ylla K were created before *The Feminine Mystique* was

<sup>143</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 47.

<sup>144</sup> Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 160.

<sup>145</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "Women in SF."

<sup>146</sup> Krafft, "Housewives and Witches."

<sup>147</sup> Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*, 17th ed. (London: HarperVoyager, 2008), 6.

published, however, they meet the requirements for the phenomenon of unfulfilled housewife that is described and criticized by Betty Friedan, and thus there is a possibility that Bradbury was aware of it.<sup>148</sup>

Hazel Pierce argues that numerous Bradbury's novels and short stories include elements of Gothic fiction, as he was heavily influenced by Allan Edgar Poe. She further states that a common feature of gothic fiction was creating a female character in distress (which is also mentioned as a stereotypical character in science fiction mentioned above). In a short story *The April Witch* (1952), Bradbury presents a strong female character Cecy who has supernatural powers and uses them to fulfill her need for love. On the other hand *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962), Bradbury presents the idea of a character in distress, however, instead of a female there are young innocent boys.<sup>149</sup> While the main characters are thus male, Robin Anne Reid mentions three female roles present in the novel: virgin (or spinster), mother, and crone (witch).<sup>150</sup> According to Reid, the spinster is represented by Miss Foley (a teacher). Other characters are the Dust Witch and Will's and Jim's mothers. Whereas the mothers are portrayed rather positively, Dust Witch and Miss Foley are both depicted as unfavorable characters.<sup>151</sup> Although the character of Cecy is strong, she also fits the stereotype of witch (even though the reader is more likely to sympathize with her).<sup>152</sup>

#### 4.5 The legacy of women in science fiction

As already discussed in chapter 2.2, women contributed to the development of science fiction from the beginning, even though the genre was dominated by men. The aim of this chapter is to provide further complementary information to chapters 2.2 and 2.3, specifically to briefly summarize the legacy of women in science fiction and then discuss changes of female characters portrayed in science fiction works.

Mary Kenny Badami in her *Feminist Critique of Science Fiction* (1976) argues that there were no women writing or reading science fiction and nor were they included in the stories or novels as characters before the 1970s. However, according to science fiction and fantasy writer Connie Willis, the hostility to women in the genre is a myth and because it was widely spread, women were not as encouraged as men to start publishing their stories.<sup>153</sup> As the

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<sup>148</sup> Aggelis, ed., *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, 119.

<sup>149</sup> Hazel Pierce, "Ray Bradbury and the Gothic Tradition," in *Ray Bradbury*, ed. Harold Bloom, (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2001), 66.

<sup>150</sup> Reid, *Ray Bradbury*, 86.

<sup>151</sup> Reid, *Ray Bradbury*, 85-86.

<sup>152</sup> Krafft, "Housewives and Witches."

<sup>153</sup> Eric Leif Davin, *Partners in Wonder* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 2-3.

research in chapter 2.2 shows, there were women publishing in pulp magazines and also women who read them. Bradbury even attempted to send some of his Martian stories to magazines which targeted exclusively to women, for example *Good Housekeeping*, *Today's Woman* and *Charm*, the latter of which was the only one that eventually published one of the stories (although it was not successful).<sup>154</sup>

David M. Higgins points out that with the New Wave in 1960s, more women were attracted to science fiction, as it offered the possibility to create strong female characters, explore new themes and thus get closer to the female audience. The shift was moved from hard to soft sciences and dystopian novels dealing with political or social concerns arose. The female characters became more realistic and there were more female protagonists (even among male authors), for example in works of famous Scottish writer Naomi Mitchison or Robert A. Heinlein. An important persona in the New Wave was an author and editor Judith Merril, who is famous for editing the *Year's Best* anthology.<sup>155</sup> Many critics argue that Bradbury's work (especially poetry and plays) published after 1960 is of significantly worse quality than his earlier novels and short stories. The film adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451* was directed by François Truffaut in 1966 and Bradbury admits that he agreed to let Clarisse survive in the film and that it was a correct decision.<sup>156</sup>

In 1970s, the women's movement influenced various aspects of society including literature. The stereotypical women characters present in pulp magazines were replaced by more complex characters and new ways of distributing power among female and male characters were explored. One of the most known authors from that period of time is Ursula K. Le Guin, who is famous for example for her novels *The Dispossessed* (1974) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), which won both the Nebula and Hugo award. Anthologies of women science fiction were edited, for example *Women of Wonder* (1975) by Pamela Sargent. Male authors such as Samuel R. Delany and Joe Haldeman were influenced by the influx of women into the genre as well and they started to incorporate strong female characters into their novels.<sup>157</sup> In the late 1970s, Bradbury wrote a script for the stage adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451*. Like in the movie adaptation, he decided not to kill Clarisse. He even let her meet Montag in one of the groups of people remembering books, which was

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<sup>154</sup> Eller, *Becoming Ray Bradbury*, 180.

<sup>155</sup> David M. Higgins, "Science Fiction, 1960-2005: Novels and Short Fiction," in *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Robin Anne Reid, ed., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), 75-76.

<sup>156</sup> Ray Bradbury, Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451*, 4th ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2004).

<sup>157</sup> Helen Merrick, "Fiction, 1964-1979," in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould et al., (London: Routledge, 2009), 107-109.

also the case in the opera adaptation. In an introduction to *Fahrenheit 451* written in 2003, he admits that: “She was too wonderful a character to be allowed to die and I realize now that I should have allowed her to appear at the end of the book.”<sup>158</sup> Perhaps he was influenced not only by “hundreds of letters from readers asking me [Bradbury] what became of Clarisse McClellan,”<sup>159</sup> but also by the changes in the perception of women during the Women’s movement, which also affected SF literature.

Even though *Star Wars* (1977) brought new audiences to traditional science fiction, 1980s were era of cyberpunk in science fiction with writers such as Bruce Sterling and William Gibson, whose *Neuromancer* (1984) was a landmark work.<sup>160</sup> As for female authors, Pat Cadigan contributed to cyberpunk for example with *Mindplayer* (1987) However, female characters in cyberpunk were often portrayed as victims or sexual objects or were not present at all. On the other hand, many authors focused rather on speculative and soft fiction, for example Angela Carter, Connie Willis along with Margaret Atwood and her famous dystopia *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985). In her *Eulogy for Ray Bradbury* (2017), Atwood praises Bradbury not only as a person, but also as an author. In 2012, a tribute volume of stories *Shadow Show: All-new Stories in Celebration of Ray Bradbury* was published and it included stories written by 26 authors including Atwood.<sup>161</sup> She states that: “Each one of us had responded [when asked to contribute to the volume] because we’d been influenced in some way by Ray Bradbury.”<sup>162</sup>

By 1990s, women were already accepted in the community of science fiction. Throughout the existence of the science fiction genre, there were significant changes concerning the preferable medium from pulp magazines and paperback to cinema and television. However, there are authors who are still committed to the Campbellian tradition; one of them is Connie Willis. In 2007, she published *The Winds of Marble Arch, and Other Stories*<sup>163</sup> and in 2010 she won a Nebula award for best novel with her *Blackout/All Clear*. She won the Grand Master Award in 2012, which she announces on her official website and

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<sup>158</sup> Bradbury, Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451*.

<sup>159</sup> Bradbury, Introduction to *Fahrenheit 451*.

<sup>160</sup> Michael Levy, “Fiction, 1980-1992,” in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould et al., (London: Routledge, 2009), 153-154.

<sup>161</sup> Margaret Atwood, “Voyage to the Otherworld: A New Eulogy for Ray Bradbury,” *The Paris Review*, August 15, 2017, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/08/15/voyage-to-the-otherworld-a-new-eulogy-for-ray-bradbury/>.

<sup>162</sup> Atwood, “Voyage to the Otherworld.”

<sup>163</sup> Brian Stableford, and Thomas R. Feller, “The Science-Fiction Story.” *Critical Survey of Short Fiction: Topical Essays* (Hackensack: Salem, 2012), accessed April 24, 2019, <https://online-salempress-com.proxy.sandburg.edu>.

adds: “I’m beyond thrilled! And so honored! To have my name on any list that includes Jack Williamson and Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury--all of whom I absolutely worshipped as a teenager--does not even seem possible.”<sup>164</sup> Another female authors who won the same award since 2010 were Jo Walton, Ann Leckie, Naomi Novik, Charlie Jane Anders, and N. K. Jemisin.<sup>165</sup>

Together with the research done in chapter 2.2 this shows that women have contributed to the development of science fiction from the beginning, and since the 1970s have been a vital part of the field, which is often considered by the general public to be male-dominated. It is important to mention that even though Bradbury was not an author who specifically dealt with women issues, he clearly influenced many well-known authors, including two very important female writers: Margaret Atwood and Connie Willis.

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<sup>164</sup> Connie Willis, “An Update from Connie in Regards to the Grand Master Award,” Connie Willis.net, January 17, 2012, accessed April 28, 2019, <http://www.sftv.org/cw/>.

<sup>165</sup> “Nebula Awards Nominees and Winners: Best Novel Nebula Awards,” The Nebula Awards, accessed April 24, 2019, <https://nebulas.sfwawards.org/award/best-novel/>.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed how the 1950s American society is reflected in Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Rather than the society in general, the focus is on the women and their roles. The novel does not deal with specifically women issues, thus it was clear from the beginning of the research that the author does not use the female characters to promote his ideas or beliefs about that particular issue. The novel is a critique of the contemporary society in the United States and the themes of fear, mass media, censorship and individuality have been discussed in more details than directly on the representation of women in the novel. I chose this topic because I think it is interesting to explore this novel from another perspective and to think about other themes than those that are evident from the first read.

The post-war period in the United States undoubtedly brought significant changes to the lives of its citizens. Economic growth established the United States as one of the most powerful countries in the world. The development of industry and infrastructure lead to a massive influx of people into the Sun Belt. Families sought a nice place to live and the suburbs offered a combination of access to work opportunities and a higher standard of living. The idea of the nuclear family promoted in magazines and on television in which men were supposed to be the breadwinners and women housewives slowly began to change by the end of the decade. However, the changes in the 1950s were not only positive. Americans experienced fear caused by the second Red Scare and the threat of nuclear war. Unlike in soap operas, real housewives were not as satisfied with their roles and often remained unfulfilled. A lot of them had to work for low wages to maintain the family standard of living and to afford the many more available types of consumer goods.

Considering the year of publication of *Fahrenheit 451*, it is clear that the representation of women in the novel is different from the stereotypical model of a stay-at-home mother and full-time wife as presented in situational comedies and popular magazines. Among science fiction novels and movies there was a wider spectrum of possible women roles, however the women characters in *Fahrenheit 451* do not seem to fit into any of these and Bradbury gave them a great power to contribute to the development of Montag. Whereas Mildred serves as an antagonist, Clarisse and the woman who burned herself had a positive impact on Montag's, and thus the whole stories' further development. At first, Mildred might resemble the "perfect wife," however at the end of the novel, she betrays and leaves Montag. Clarisse resembles the virgin, but she is not timorous and it could be said that she is the one who needs to save Montag. The woman who burned herself does not fit into any of these

stereotypical science fiction characters, as Bradbury uses her to show the willingness to die to preserve the ideal of freedom of thought through reading. Thus Bradbury uses both males and females to communicate his deeper philosophical ideas, i. e. women are not solely relegated to the kitchen, as was the stereotype at the time the novel was written.

The genre of dystopia does not deal primarily with the relationships between the characters. It rather provides an insight into the society during which the work is written and published. In *Fahrenheit 451*, each of the characters serves the purpose of informing the reader about the society and Bradbury uses metonymy to achieve this. The character of Mildred and later also two of her friends represent the majority of the population in the novel. The only form of their entertainment is either watching television or having meaningless conversations that often consist of the repetition of information broadcast on television. Mildred is an antagonist and even though she Montag's wife, he describes her in a negative manner. It could be argued that without her, Montag would never become as abhorred by the regime. At first sight, Mildred seems to be a simple-minded woman content with her life surrounded by three television walls. If analyzed in more detail, there are signs of depression (the suicidal attempt) as well as dissatisfaction with her marriage (the escapes from reality to her fictional family). Thus, also in this way Bradbury is criticizing the roles and possible choices of women in the 1950s.

On the other hand, Clarisse is without any doubt a protagonist, who is portrayed positively, except for Beatty's opinion. She is a mirror that reflects Montag's hidden opinions and values. Her ostensibly simple questions and actions revive Montag's memories and senses, which brings him back to his childhood (when the world was not yet under the totalitarian regime). Thanks to Clarisse, Montag also remembers his encounter with Faber. It can be said that meeting Clarisse was one of the most important events of the novel and without her there would be no change in Montag's thinking. Bradbury even said that he regrets not allowing Clarisse to survive and meet Montag in one of the separated groups of people remembering books for the future generations. Even without doing so, Bradbury gives Clarisse enough power to change the plot of the novel even without any active participation by her in Montag's rebellion. This is an important function in the story that Bradbury allocates to a woman character.

The last female character is the woman who burned herself with her books. She is the only woman in the novel shown to read and to know history, as she cites a historical figures such as the three martyred bishops from the time of Bloody Mary (Mary I), thus comparing her fate dying for one's beliefs with that of the three clergymen. Her intellect could be



considered equal to that of Montag and Faber and the event of her death was confirmed to be the turning point of the novel by Bradbury. She represents the minority of society that preserved the virtue of individual thought through resisting the government's attempt to eliminate critical thinking. Montag is disturbed by the fact that someone would die for books. The woman remains in his thoughts and he begins his rebellion shortly after this event. He steals one of the books from her house and later in the novel it is revealed that he already has several of them at home. This proves that he had been skeptical about the regime for a longer period of time, only after meeting Clarisse and seeing the woman die, however, is he encouraged to fight against it.

In conclusion it can be said that Bradbury gave the female characters power to influence the plot through encouraging Montag to rebel against the system. All three of these characters play an important role in the development of the plot and Bradbury used them to provide the reader with detailed information about the society of *Fahrenheit 451*. This novel is a unique work by Bradbury for several reasons, e. g. that it is really his only dystopia in a career based mainly on science fiction and his use of female characters is also unique for the time the novel was written and published. He portrayed women both as protagonists and antagonists and the number of main male characters was equal to the number of main female characters. With regard to the genre and the period of time, the representation of women in the novel is progressive and the novel as a whole remains highly relevant even in the contemporary world.

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