"Knowledge and Masculinity: Male Archetypes in Fahrenheit 451"

Chapter · October 2013

CITATIONS
0

READS
571

1 author:

Imola Bulgozdi
University of Debrecen
13 PUBLICATIONS **1** CITATION

SEE PROFILE

CRITICAL INSIGHTS

Fahrenheit 451

Ray Bradbury

Editor
Rafeeq O. McGiveron
Lansing Community College

SALEM PRESS
A Division of EBSCO Information Services, Inc.
Ipswich, Massachusetts

GREY HOUSE PUBLISHING

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fahrenheit 451 / editor, Rafeeq O. McGiveron. -- [1st ed.].
p. : ill. ; cm. -- (Critical insights)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN: 978-1-61925-224-0
1. Bradbury, Ray, 1920-2012. Fahrenheit 451. 2. Book burning in literature. 3. Censorship in literature. 4. Science fiction, American--History and criticism. I. McGiveron, Rafeeq O. II. Series: Critical insights.

PS3503.R167 F363 2013
813/.54

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Contents

Resources

About This Volume

Rafeeq O. McGiveron

Critical Insights: Fahrenheit 451 explores Ray Bradbury's most famous and most influential work of literature in a variety of contexts and from a number of different critical perspectives and intellectual foci. It is a cliché of the worst sort, of course, to observe that Bradbury's evocative, swiftly moving little novel is *more important now than ever*...and yet Del Rey editors of the 1990s did not hesitate, emblazoning the phrase upon the very cover of the book, so perhaps the editor of this volume could indulge as well. The statement is true, after all.

Yes, in *Fahrenheit 451*, we may catch the unmistakable, bygone flavor of the 1950s: the growing popularity of television in sensible little suburban houses, where cheery middle-class housewives pop Miltowns while looking ahead to the evening's cocktail party, the threat of atomic war never forgotten and yet never truly evaluated, and the McCarthyite climate of fear underlying it all. Even in a future of jet cars and motorcycle-helicopters and roboticized gizmos that butter the morning toast, still we recognize the quaintness of our long-vanished past. Readers once could only imagine ear-bud radios and four-wall televisions, but now we can truly *feel* the utter interconnectedness of the internet and ubiquitous smartphones and social media updated—and checked—around the clock.

Certainly, in our present world of fact, books in general are not banned, nor do the hoses of fire crews spew kerosene rather than water. The true future thus apparently is far, far different from Bradbury's cautionary nightmare, is it not? Why, we are not enslaved to our technology-enabled pleasures, are we? No, and our political parties are not merely the Ins and Outs, nor are our national elections only half a notch elevated from mere beauty contests. And in twenty-first-century America, our reading habits are not scrutinized by vast bureaucracies, nor can the publicly smiling agents of a seemingly beneficent government kick down citizens' doors to ransack their possessions, their rights, their very thoughts. Or— Hmmm...

Knowledge and Masculinity: Male Archetypes in *Fahrenheit 451*

Imola Bulgozdi

Meet Guy Montag, fireman, member of the happiest bunch in a society hell-bent on happiness, so much so that any cause for upset is quickly eliminated with the help of the incinerator. Consequently, firemen are considered "custodians of our peace of mind,...official censors, judges, and executors" (Bradbury 77). In other words, they are book-burners hailed as heroes, "stand[ing] against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought" (81). Our first glimpse of Montag shows him absorbed in the pleasure of burning, in a scene that operates with the macho imagery of man in control of fire and a dangerous beast at the same time: he pumps venomous kerosene from a great python, "his eyes all orange flame" (9) and a fierce grin on his face. Bradbury's description of all firemen as characterized by the "continual smell of burning from their pipes" and the "charcoal hair and soot-colored brows and bluish-ash-smeared cheeks" (46) points at an existential relationship with fire, but it is Montag's ever-present fiery smile that betrays how strongly he is influenced by the experience of burning.

The image of the contented hero soon crumbles, though, when probed by seventeen-year-old Clarisse, whose simple question of "Are you happy?" (Bradbury 17) is the final push to get Montag thinking, to feel his perpetual smile fade, and to realize that his happiness is only a mask, far from genuine. In the novel's bleak society, people are programmed to remember facts but are strongly discouraged from thinking, thus losing not only their decision-making ability but also the capacity for genuine human relationships, and Montag's search for a meaningful existence compels him to find a teacher who will help him make sense of the books he used to burn. Since he has to face the sobering fact that his identity as a macho fireman is built on lies, while he finds a mentor in the person of Faber, an old and frail English teacher, the relationship between masculinity, maturity, and knowledge calls for a closer look.

The society of *Fahrenheit 451* does not allow for a variety of subject positions—defined by Chris Barker as "empty spaces or functions in discourse from which the world makes sense" (450)—which can be taken up by the individual. The authorities keep the masses happy with unsophisticated entertainment: clubs, parties, acrobats, magicians, jet cars, motorcycle helicopters, sex, and heroin, thus encouraging "everything to do with automatic reflex" (80). In order to create individuals who will kill time happily in this manner, the state practically snatches children from the cradle, and everyone is "*made* equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against" (77). By this means, the state creates the discourse of happiness, defining the ideal subject position of the 'happy person,' as well as that of the enemy of the system—no wonder "the word 'intellectual'...became the swear word it deserved to be" (76).

Fire Captain Beatty's lecture on the history of firemen is the perfect example of the workings of the power of discourse. His explanation reveals that since houses all had been fireproofed, there was no need for firemen anymore, and therefore they were given the new job of guarding the happiness of the masses. They were given power; the firehouse "full of glitter and shine and silence, of brass colors, the colors of coins, of gold of silver" (Bradbury 45), is a display of prestige, and the subject position of the heroic fireman working for the good of the community was created. At the beginning of the novel, Montag happily fills in this subject position, enjoying the experience of burning. It is only later that he realizes he did not really have a say in his choice of a profession, having blindly followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather.

Montag's conversations with Clarisse raise his awareness of the discrepancies between the past as remembered and official history, and later Beatty himself also reveals the fabricated nature of the discourse of happiness: "If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none" (Bradbury 80). Nevertheless, the subject positions—the obedient happy citizen who reports

anyone in possession of a book, the fireman who solves the problem, and the intellectual branded as the enemy of the system—are produced by this discourse, and people "must submit to its rules and conventions" (Hall 55), regardless of truth value or fairness. This discourse, however, provides such a superficial basis for constructing a subjectivity—"the condition of being a person and/or the processes by which we become persons" (Barker, *Sage Dictionary* 194)—that those who unthinkingly submit, like Guy's wife Mildred, end up without possessing a single original thought or meaningful relationship.

Bradbury makes this clear by contrast: Mildred by night is "stretched on the bed, uncovered and cold, like a body displayed on the lid of a tomb" (20) and by day is engrossed in the three giant parlor walls, watching television shows that do not make sense, while Clarisse, labeled antisocial, is characterized by tireless curiosity, dark eyes "shining and alive" (12), and a face lit as if by the soft light of a candle. Thirty-year-old Mildred is the uncomplaining product of the system, an idle housewife, whose grotesque appearance puts one in mind of a puppet: "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" (65). The impression of a dummy-like existence is heightened by Montag's wish that her mind could be cleansed from poison just like her blood after her involuntary sleeping pill overdose.

Clarisse, on the other hand, comes from a family, which, despite some degree of outside conformity, refuses to take up "a pre-existent subject position and to be subjected to the regulatory power of that discourse" (Barker, *Cultural Studies* 229). She has learned to observe the world, to enjoy conversation and the life of the mind, and to realize how detrimental the system is for children, admitting she is afraid of people her own age, whose thrill-seeking irresponsible behavior leads to numerous lethal accidents. Clarisse, a stranger, asks Montag upsetting personal questions out of genuine interest, whereas he can hardly speak to his wife of ten years either

because of the blaring TV walls or the radio earplugs to which she listens in a trance by night.

The dominant discourse of the future society Bradbury envisions is very restrictive. However, not all individuals fit the mold, because the construction of personhood entails the continual acceptance and rejection of certain subject positions that are available at a given historical place and time. For instance, even the traditionally highly regarded subject position of the caring mother is denied the female characters in a society that regards children as a nuisance to be sent to school nine days out of ten. The rest of the time they are sat in the parlor to watch the walls: "It's like washing clothes; stuff laundry in and slam the lid" (Bradbury 125), says a mother, who betrays no emotional attachment to her children at all. Yet the existence of a person like Clarisse testifies to a loving and caring home environment and a real family, which, in Beatty's words, "had been feeding her subconscious" (79).

Nick Mansfield explains that, contrary to earlier essentialist theories, subjectivity in Michel Foucault's view "is not the free and spontaneous expression of our interior truth. It is the way we are led to think about ourselves, so we will police and present ourselves in the correct way, as not insane, criminal, undisciplined, unkempt, perverse, or unpredictable" (10). It is this socially constructed nature of subjectivity that explains how such a sudden change could take place in Montag, who goes from enthusiastic fireman fulfilling a prestigious subject position to killer on the run in a matter of days.

It turns out that Montag has been stealing and stashing books for about a year, since his meeting with an old English professor, Faber, but it was the shocking discovery of his own unhappiness, followed by Mildred's accidental near-suicide, that acted as a catalyst for the admission "I don't know anything anymore" (Bradbury 27). In retrospect, he pinpoints this event as the disappearance of his burnt-in smile, without which he feels lost and numb (101). At the same time, Clarisse's observation that his choice of a job does not seem to be right for him causes a split in Montag: "He felt his body divide itself into a hotness and a coldness, a softness and a hardness, a

trembling and a not trembling, the two halves grinding one upon the other" (34-35). Witnessing an old woman refuse to leave her house and burn along with her beloved books makes him conclude that there must be something in them, something he could use to change the lives of the "silly empty man" living along with "a silly empty woman" he realizes is scarcely his wife but instead merely "an unknown, a street face, a newspaper image" (59).

Montag's quest for a new self is interwoven with books and the search for knowledge from the very first step. Lacking any training in literature, however, he is unable to make sense of his odd assortment of looted books and contacts Faber. He expects to find himself with Faber's help, for otherwise "someone somewhere will give me back the old face and the old hands the way they were" (101), but first he has to face the truth about his profession: "Those who don't build must burn. It's as old as history and juvenile delinquents" (116). Yet this refers not only to Montag and the firemen, but to all the population, for Bradbury describes a society that does not require its members to grow up and take responsibility for their actions. Teenagers running over the rare pedestrian for fun is condoned, provided that the drivers have good insurance, for instance. And human relationships have lost any intimacy: Montag's bedroom is a "cold marbled room of a mausoleum" with windows tightly shut, where he gropes about in the complete darkness of "the chamber of a tomb-world" (19) toward "his open, separate, and therefore cold bed" (20). The lack of any commitment in relationships could not be more brutally presented than in the scene prior to Montag burning his own house. Mildred, after reporting her own husband to the fire brigade, flees the house in a puppet-like, stiff run, not even looking at him, but muttering "poor family" (148), the name by which Guy referred to the characters in her favorite television programs.

Bradbury's dystopian vision is eerily similar to the state of affairs, which Robert Bly, poet and founder of the first men's movement, laments forty years later in his introduction to *The Sibling Society*:

> we navigate from a paternal society, now discredited, to a society in which impulse is given its way. People don't bother to grow up, and we are all fish swimming in a tank of half-adults. The rule is: Where repression was before, fantasy will now be; we human beings limp along, running after our own fantasy. We can never catch up, and so we defeat ourselves by the simplest possible means: speed. Everywhere we go there's a crowd, and the people all look alike. (vii)

Stephen Wicks's historical overview of the concept of masculinity in *Warriors and Wildmen: Men, Masculinity, and Gender* demonstrates that the main underlying reason for the present crisis of masculinity is the relocation of the workplace outside the home in industrialized societies, which drastically reduced the time fathers spent with their children, and consequently, their influence as well. "Boys were beset with the task of forging their masculine identities at a distance from their fathers, and the industrial-age father sought new ways to retain his position in the family as a moral model and authority figure" (33-34). Although Montag is only thirty years old, his own father is but a distant memory, and all we find out about him is that he was a fireman. Bradbury's future sorely lacks authority figures with the exception of Fire Captain Beatty, but all he offers Montag is the advice to conform, based on the official views on books and the sociological changes that made the existence of the fire brigade necessary.

Montag's search for identity after his disenchantment with his job is further complicated by the fact that families have become dysfunctional. Since identity "represents the processes by which discursively constructed subject positions are taken up...by concrete persons' fantasy identifications and emotional 'investments' " (Barker, *Sage Dictionary* 93-94), he has run out of subject positions constructed by the official discourse of happiness. On the one hand, he refuses to be one of "the Happiness Boys, the Dixie Duo" (Bradbury 81), thus losing not only his identity as breadwinner but also the subject position of dominant masculinity, which sociologist Robert W. Connell defines as "hegemonic masculinity, the culturally idealized form of masculine character

(in a given historical setting)" (69). On the other hand, Mildred and her friends represent the brainwashed woman of the future, who is impossible to relate to, thus denying Montag the adult male identity of lover, husband, or father.

Bradbury does indeed describe a "sibling society" in the novel. "Out of the nursery into the college and back to the nursery; there's your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more" (72), admits Beatty, and Montag finds himself in the only other role the dominant discourse has scripted, that of the enemy of the system, simply because he wants to think for himself and not be ordered about like he was all his life. Significantly, Bly argues that the sibling society is prone to sliding into primitivism since children are credulous, will follow a leader, and easily become members of a pack (viii), characteristics all typical of the vast majority of people in *Fahrenheit 451*. Montag, setting about the task of growing up by trying to find the cause of his unhappiness, first hopes that his wife will be his partner in reading books to find a way out from the mess their life has become, but screen addict Millie is unable to grasp this need.

It is at this point that Montag turns to Faber, the only person he knows who understands books, and tries to persuade the professor to make a copy of the Bible he had saved from the fire. With this step he comes into contact not only with cultural tradition, but also with someone whose mind has not been manipulated and who can expose Beatty as the spokesman of "the most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom, the solid unmoving cattle of the majority" (Bradbury 140). Via their private radio connection, he listens to Faber read and feels "he was two people, that he was above all Montag, who knew nothing" and "he was also the old man who talked to him," while his mind absorbs knowledge so that at a certain point "he would be Montag-plus-Faber, fire plus water, and then, one day, after everything had mixed and simmered and worked away in silence, there would be neither fire nor water, but wine. .... Even now he could feel the start of the long journey, the leave-taking, the going away from the self he had been" (133).

While the most general definition of being a "man" is constructed in opposition to being a "woman" (think of the Freudian theory of gender formation), Judith Kegan Gardiner draws our attention to the fact that masculinity also can be conceptualized from a developmental aspect: in opposition to being a boy. By understanding gender developmentally, that is, "in terms of change over the life course and in history rather than in terms of a static and binary opposition between masculine and feminine" (91), Bradbury provides Montag with the opportunity to reach the next developmental step: he is initiated into a secret society of educated elderly men who, despite having become superfluous in the bookless society, devote themselves to the preservation of knowledge.

In Bly's view, the social problems typically attributed to men, such as violence, sexism, anger, or personal unhappiness, can be traced back to "men losing touch with their bonds to nature, or an inner self that reflects a kind of male gender heritage or archetype" (Wicks 64). He also places great emphasis on the process of male initiation, which must be completed with the help of an older man or group of men in a positive, encouraging—rather than humiliating—way (67). Montag, though definitely not in touch with nature—he does not remember if he knew there is dew on the grass in the morning or what rain tastes like—possesses some of the instincts of the hunter, which, according to Wicks, is the longest-standing personification of manhood in history (25). Before he bumps into Clarisse, for example, Montag senses someone has been there: "Perhaps his nose detected a faint perfume, perhaps the skin on the back of his hands, on his face, felt the temperature rise at this one spot" (Bradbury 11). The fact that the firemen deploy a robot called the Hound to sniff out suspicious individuals reinforces this imagery, and later they find the presence of the old woman disturbing during the burning because she "was spoiling the ritual" (50), the ancient all-male ritual of the hunt, where the magazines "fell like slaughtered birds" and "the books lay like great mounds of fishes left to dry" (51-52).

Nevertheless, there is nothing manly about what they accomplish: they batter down unlocked doors with their silver hatchets, tumble

through like boys rollicking, and try to drown out the old woman's accusing silence with jokes, laughter, and too much noise. The fact that the police have failed to adhesive-tape the victim's mouth and cart her away before the arrival of the firemen fills Montag with unease, and makes him rationalize that the fire brigade does not hurt anybody, only things, and is simply part of the cleaning process. "Janitorial work, essentially" (Bradbury 50), argues Montag to quiet his conscience, stripping the Happiness Boys of macho glamour. What is more, when the old woman flourishes a match in hand in the house soaked with kerosene, only Beatty backs out slowly to save face, while all the rest simply flee. This is not a real hunt, and the participants are not real men either. They are boys pretending to be men, without assuming the duties and responsibilities of an adult.

In *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover—Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*, Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette describe male psychological development based on their study of ancient myths and modern dreams, coupled with years of clinical practice of psychotherapy. Jungian archetypes—defined as blueprints similarly embedded in the human mind as the instincts of animals—are stored and passed on by heredity in the collective unconscious, which "contains the cumulative history of the human race, and its influences are universal and identical in every individual" (Wicks 71). However, the deep unconscious of each individual contains "an enormous variety of archetypes, that surface according to cultural, social, and personal conditions" (Wicks 71), which can explain why Montag is the only one to try to persuade the old woman to leave the house. He knows something has been brewing in him and needs to change: "I'm so damned unhappy, I'm so mad.... I feel like I've been saving up a lot of things, and don't know what" (Bradbury 84). He sets off, therefore, in search of a teacher and a purpose: "'I'm going to do something,' said Montag. 'I don't even know what yet, but I'm going to do something big'" (85).

At this stage, we hear the most advanced form of Boy psychology, the Hero archetype speaking through Montag, which, according to Moore and Gillette, is generally assumed to be the noblest approach to life or a task, although its immaturity is apparent from the fact

that the hero begins by thinking that he is invulnerable (37-38). Montag upsets Millie's two brainwashed friends by reading "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, and yet stares with disbelief later when the fire brigade, including himself, arrives at his own house. He feels petrified, his face "entirely numb and featureless" (Bradbury 147), until he is told to burn his own home with a flamethrower, which he turns into the opportunity "to change everything that showed that he had lived here in this empty house with a strange woman..., who had gone and quite forgotten him already..." (151).

This is how the real initiation ritual begins. Self-preservation compels Montag to kill Beatty and knock two of his colleagues unconscious before facing the Hound, which he also manages to burn, but not before being briefly stung. When one of Montag's legs is incapacitated by the anaesthetic and causes him excruciating pain, his situation recalls ancient and often painful rites of passage, which here turn into a manhunt. In order to reach Man psychology, a symbolic, psychological, or spiritual death is required and forms a vital part of any initiation ritual (Moore and Gillette 6), and now "[t]he big game, the hunt, the one-man carnival" (Bradbury 173), is on. This time, however, Montag is the prey chased by another Mechanical Hound and dies several symbolic deaths: he is almost killed by joyriders, dives into the depths of the dark river, and finally witnesses the death of a person declared by the voice on television to be Montag himself, followed by the reassurance that "a crime against society has been avenged" (192).

While on the run, Montag is aware of the power of the official discourse that attempts to constrain him into the subject position of the criminal. He knows that in all TV parlors, he could "see himself dramatized, described, made over,...a drama to be watched objectively,...large as life, in full color, dimensionally perfect" (173). Montag now struggles to rewrite his own story and to create a new subject position for himself in order to survive both physically and spiritually, and the only person to whom he can turn is Faber. Even though his chances are very slim, the psychology of the Hero "encourages him to dream the impossible dream that might just be possible after all, if he has enough courage. It empowers him to fight

the unbeatable foe" (Moore and Gillette 40), but he needs the help of a ritual elder to complete the initiation.

Old and frail Faber cannot boast of many of the values traditionally associated with masculinity, such as "strength, power, stoicism, action, control, independence, self-sufficiency, male camaraderie/mateship and work" (Barker, *Cultural Studies* 301). He is a recluse and admits having been too cowardly to raise his voice against the process that demonized books, but for Montag he represents both the freedom of thought and the moral support human contact can provide: "Faber's would be the place where he might refuel his vast draining belief in his own ability to survive. He just wanted to know that there was a man like Faber in the world" (Bradbury 161).

In a society that does not respect wisdom and knowledge, or considers them outright dangerous, mature masculinity as identified in the archetypes of the King, the Warrior, the Magician, and the Lover is hard to achieve (Moore and Gillette 43). While these archetypes ideally overlap and enrich each other, the embodiment of the Magician can be recognized clearly in the person of Faber:

> The Magician is the knower and he is the master of technology. .... He is the "ritual elder" who guides the processes of transformation, both within and without.
> The human magician is always an initiate himself, and one of his tasks is to initiate others. The Magician is an initiate of secret and hidden knowledge of all kinds. .... All knowledge that takes special training to acquire is the province of the Magician energy. (Moore and Gillette 98)

Even though Faber seems more pitiful than masculine, introversion and lack of the capacity to act are typical of this mature archetype.

Action is the specialty of the Warrior (Moore and Gillette 108), who seems to be embodied by Beatty in the novel, although he also betrays considerable knowledge of books and insight into the workings of the system. A closer look at this character reveals his

immaturity, though; the description of the Magician archetype when failing to reach its fullness is a perfect summary of Beatty's attitude towards Montag. He is the Manipulator, who does not guide or initiate but "maneuvers people by withholding from them information they may need for their own well-being" (Moore and Gillette 111). The negative influence of this archetype is compounded by the fact that he uses his learning not for the benefit of others but to intimidate and demonstrate his superiority, while he also hurts others "with his cynical detachment from the world of human values" (Moore and Gillette 114).

Montag, governed by the self-centred Hero archetype, originally sets out in search of personal happiness, but in the course of the initiation process, his scope widens: he recognises the inherent wrongness of the system that prevents people from growing up. He manages to get rid of the false mentor and also admits that it was his pride and temper that made him rashly read poetry to the women and precipitate the events. However, by the time he stops at Faber's and realizes the hunt is broadcast, he tries to come up with the right word or sentence "that would sear all their [viewers'] faces and wake them up" (Bradbury 174) in case he is overtaken by the Hound. Cutting all ties with his previous life has freed a new Montag, who can focus and access the Warrior energy "concerned with skill, power, and accuracy, and with control" (Moore and Gillette 83) of body and mind in order to survive the chase. When reaching the river, he strips naked, and drowns his own smell in whiskey, and while wearing Faber's old clothes, he watches the Hound fooled from the comfortable embrace of the river. He is preparing for a new life, "moving from an unreality that was frightening into a reality that was unreal because it was new" (Bradbury 180), and he defines his new purpose: "someone had to do the saving and keeping..., in books, in records, in people's heads..., free from moths, silver-fish, rust and dry-rot, and men with matches" (181).

Bradbury's description of Montag wading "alone in the wilderness" (185) and later admiring a strange fire with the "foolish and yet delicious sense of knowing himself as an animal come from

the forest" (187) shows him in harmony with nature, without which, as noted earlier, the construction of a masculine identity is in Bly's view impossible. He is the Wildman, the archetype standing for uncivilized but inherently good masculinity, the animal "drawn by the fire," finally joining the group of elders waiting for the successful candidate. Montag's whole worldview is altered, as symbolized by his new relationship with fire: "It was not burning. It was *warming*!" (Bradbury 187). The death of the Boy and the birth of the Man become all the more emphatic in Granger's words: "Welcome back from the dead" (192).

So what has really happened to Montag? M. Keith Booker considers rather questionable Granger's hopeful assumption that humanity will manage to avoid making the same mistakes over again by picking up "a few more people that remember, every generation" (209). Booker points out that "learning from the past, especially the distant past, requires more than individual memory, and Bradbury's individualist approach fails to account for the ability of those in power to distort official history" (84). In my opinion, Booker has taken Granger's words and strategy too literally. After all, as Tom Moylan—drawing on several works ranging from *Brave New World* to the cyberpunks—demonstrates, despite the fact that the dystopian protagonist is generally prohibited from using language in a meaningful manner—think of Clarisse's complaint about the superficiality of all human interaction—"control over the means of language, over representation and interpellation, is a crucial weapon and strategy in dystopian resistance" (149).

In this case, however, it is not the loosely organized network of book-savers that constitutes the main line of defence. Although they provide a purpose with which to identify, it is exactly Bradbury's individualist approach that makes the difference: Montag falls under the thrall of real conversation as soon as he first meets Clarisse, and it is his craving for a meaningful relationship that leads to his creating a new discourse and a new subject position, that of the mature adult. His journey from an easily manipulated representative of a malevolent authority to a responsible individual is the bedrock of any resistance, and the importance of self-examination to avoid

self-destruction is amply detailed by Rafeeq O. McGiveron in his analysis of the mirror-imagery in the novel.

While Booker dismisses individual memory as a valid means to learn from the past, he does not take into account the collective unconscious, whose archetypal images are part of every human. As Bradbury shows, what is crucial is not the books themselves but what they store. "[Q]uality of information," "leisure to digest it," and "the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from the interaction of the first two" (110) are the necessities to become a mature human being. Maturity and knowledge go hand in hand, but the presence of male archetypes and the initiation ritual in *Fahrenheit 451* proves that it is not book-learning but the ability to think and make choices that makes a man out of a boy. Montag's story, on the one hand, demonstrates the fact that mature masculinity is learned and cannot be achieved without the help of a mentor, and, on the other hand, it points to a more fundamental and deeper level of remembering than the memorization of books: the blueprint of how to be a human being.

Works Cited

Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies—Theory and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: Sage, 2003.

_____. *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. London: Sage, 2004.

Bly, Robert. *The Sibling Society*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996.

Booker, M. Keith. *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946-1964*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. 1953. London: Harper Voyager, 2008.

Connell, Robert W. *The Men and the Boys*. St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen and Unwin, 2000.

Gardiner, Judith K. "Theorizing Age with Gender: Bly's Boys, Feminism, and Maturity Masculinity." *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions*. Ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. 90-118.

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation." *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage, 1997. 13-74.

Mansfield, Nick. *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway*. St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000.

McGiveron, Rafeeq O. "'To Build a Mirror Factory': The Mirror and Self-Examination in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*." *Ray Bradbury's* Fahrenheit 451. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase, 2008. 163-69. Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations Ser.

Moore, Robert and Douglas Gillette. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover—Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. San Francisco: Harper, 1990.

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000.

Wicks, Stephen. *Warriors and Wildmen: Men, Masculinity, and Gender*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1996.

Reading Montag as a Postmodern Don Quixote

Guido Laino

"There must be something in books, things we can't imagine" (58), Guy Montag says, thinking back to the old woman who died staying in her burning house with her books. There must be so much in books that people struggle, kill, and die for them, while others rebel, as Montag will. The whole idea of the *Fahrenheit 451* world seems to be built on books, that is to say, on the project of their complete destruction or on the mission of their salvation.

Bradbury's dystopian architecture is barely sketched, and it is defective in many of its parts. As readers, we ignore many details of this society, such as the power machine that dominates it, the type of government it has (we just know that citizens choose between two body doubles who run for presidency), or its main social, economical, and political apparatus. We could define it a *cultural dystopia* because it is entirely grounded on media and cultural hegemony, assured by the suppression of any form of written culture and knowledge in favor of the spectacle, which is mostly spread by a technologic evolution of the TV screen. On the other side, the novel's final utopian perspective is even blurrier. It does not include a project for the future but keeps its gaze pointed, nostalgically, toward the past. The new foundation of the world destroyed by the bomb, the rebirth of the phoenix, will rest on memory; it will look backward, not forward. In this sense, *Fahrenheit 451* looks more like a bibliophile's dream/nightmare, than a classic utopian/dystopian novel with an organic view of an alternative world. *There must be something in books* and *Fahrenheit 451* explores all those things that otherwise, as Montag says, *we can't imagine*.

From Big Brother to the Relatives

What kind of nightmare world does Montag live in? And why does the totalitarian power in this world hate not only subversive books, but any kind of books? Captain Beatty has the assignment of