

The Cinema of Lost Films: Ray Bradbury and the Screen

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by Philip Nichols.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the fiction and screenwriting of Ray Bradbury (1920-2012), the American author best known for novels and short stories in the genres of science fiction and fantasy. Bradbury's screenwriting has previously received little critical attention, but is examined here in an archival study of four of his extended film-making projects, two of which came to fruition in completed films, and two of which remain unproduced.

Moby Dick (John Huston, 1956) is a strong work of structural adaptation from Herman Melville's novel, and the experience of adapting it is shown to have had a significant impact on Bradbury's own work in prose fiction and radio drama.

The development of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Jack Clayton, 1983), a film based on Bradbury's own novel, is traced through multiple pathways of adaptation, revealing Bradbury as an effective story analyst and self-adapter. The conflict of authority between screenwriter and film director is shown to be a manifestation of Ian W. Macdonald's concept of 'the screen idea' as the controlling force in film production.

Bradbury's un-filmed screenplays for *The Martian Chronicles* (1961, 1963-5, 1978, 1997) are found to have developed a grand narrative displaying Bradbury's philosophy of humankind's place in the cosmos. His novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) is shown to be a fundamentally cinematic fiction, and the film adaptation by François Truffaut (1966) is revealed to have stimulated Bradbury's own re-vision of the work for stage and screen.

The serial re-composition of prose works as cross-media re-visions is proven to be central to Bradbury's working method. Self-adaptation is considered as a challenge to established theories of adaptation, such as Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006).

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Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Contents	iii
Introduction	1
1 A New View of Bradbury	1
2 Established views of Bradbury	4
2.1 Bradbury as prose writer	4
2.2 Bradbury as dramatist	11
3 Three critical frameworks	13
3.1 Adaptation studies	13
3.2 Cinematic fiction	19
3.3 Screenwriting studies	21
4 The Thesis.....	24
Chapter 1: <i>Moby Dick</i>	27
1 Introduction	27
2 ‘The Fog Horn’	29
3 Screenplay and film	32
3.1 Bradbury’s Screenplay: Comparison with Melville.....	34
3.2 Bradbury’s Screenplay: Developing Starbuck	41
3.3 Bradbury’s Screenplay: Dance of the Eyes	43
3.4 Script and Film Diverge.....	44
3.5 Critical Responses.....	48
4 Because of the Whale	54
4.1 <i>Leviathan</i> ’99 – radio play.....	54
4.2 <i>Leviathan</i> ’99 – novella	63
4.3 <i>Green Shadows, White Whale</i> – autobiographical novel	69
5 Conclusions	73

Chapter 2: <i>The Martian Chronicles</i>	74
1 Introduction	74
2 The Novel	74
3 The Screenplays	80
3.1 Chronology	80
3.2 Comparisons	84
3.2.1 1961 Screenplay (unpublished): story & themes	87
3.2.2 1961 Screenplay (unpublished): the cinematic	95
3.2.3 1963-65 Screenplay (published)	99
3.2.4 1978 Screenplay (unpublished)	111
3.2.5 1997 Screenplay (published)	115
4 Fluid Ideas	119
5 Conclusions	123
 Chapter 3: <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	 125
1 Introduction	125
2 Precursors	126
2.1 <i>They Clash by Night</i>	127
2.2 'Pillar of Fire'	128
2.3 'The Veldt', 'The Meadow'	128
2.4 'The Fireman'	130
3 The Novel	134
3.1 Re-balancing the cast	135
3.2 Linearizing the narrative	138
3.3 Extending the satire on media	139
3.4 Extending the use of the cinematic	141
3.5 Emphasis on Montag's point of view	145
4 Truffaut's Film	146
4.1 World and characters	148
4.2 Validating Bradbury's cinematic construction	156
4.3 Eliminating text	163

4.4	Critique of television	170
4.5	Downplaying SF	173
4.6	Summation	175
5	Bradbury's Stage Play	176
6	Bradbury's Screenplay	184
7	Conclusions	188
 Chapter 4: <i>Something Wicked This Way Comes</i>		190
1	Introduction	190
2	Sources of <i>Something Wicked</i>	191
2.1	'The Black Ferris'	191
2.2	Fragments	194
2.3	Lao vs. Cooger	196
2.4	Cinematic influences	197
3	The Screen Treatment: <i>The Dark Carnival</i>	199
3.1	Development	199
3.2	Final version	201
3.3	Mise en scène	209
3.4	Montage	211
4	The Novel	213
4.1	Literary and visual innovations	213
4.2	Reviews of the novel	221
5	The Screenplays	222
5.1	1974 Screenplay	222
5.2	1976 Screenplay	228
5.3	1981 Clayton/Mortimer Screenplay	235
6	'Re-writing' <i>Something Wicked</i> in Post-Production	239
6.1	The trellis	241
6.2	The balloon	242
6.3	The storm	243
6.4	The mirror maze	243
6.5	Song and dance	244
6.6	Voice-over	245

6.7	Re-shoots and battle for control	245
6.8	Reviews of the film	248
7	Conclusions.....	249
 Discussion and Conclusions		251
 Bibliography.....		258

Introduction

‘All of my work is photogenic. I’m a child of cinema. I grew up seeing thousands of films. That goes into your blood stream, and when you begin to write you write for the screen automatically’.¹

- Ray Bradbury, 1998

1 A New View of Bradbury

All of Ray Bradbury’s best-known novels – including *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962) – emerged from a re-working of precursor works, suggesting that the author was a frequent reviser of his own material. His repeated adaptations of his own works across prose, film, television, radio and theatre reveal his re-visioning to be extensive and unrelenting. In this thesis I show that cross-media re-visioning is central to Bradbury’s authorship, and poses a challenge to accepted models of adaptation which fail to account for the idea of author as self-adapter.

Ray Bradbury (1920 - 2012) frequently claimed to be equally at home writing prose and writing for the screen, boasting, ‘I’m a screenwriter [...] Every one of my stories can be lifted right off the page, because I grew up in films. [...] I’m a child of cinema’. At the same time, he offered good reason to distance himself from full-time screenwriting: ‘Because no one remembers any screenwriter. [...] Name all your favourite films from the last twenty years: you can’t tell me the writer of any of them. So I didn’t want to become unknown’.² By the time of his death in 2012, Bradbury had accumulated a mere handful of credits on completed feature-length films, most notably *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), *Moby Dick* (1956), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983) and *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit* (1998). These successes were outnumbered by projects which fell by the wayside, including the following:

¹ Marchi, Jason, ‘An Interview with Master Storyteller Ray Bradbury’, in *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Steven Aggelis, PhD thesis, Florida State University (2003), pp. 122-126 (p. 123).

² Ray Bradbury, ‘Q&A’, Butler University, 30 March 2000, VHS recording in Center for Ray Bradbury Studies.

- Multiple, independent attempts (1961, 1965, 1978, 1997) to film his own book *The Martian Chronicles*
- Multiple attempts to film his *The Illustrated Man* (1951) from Bradbury's own scripts (although a version was made without Bradbury's participation in 1969)
- Multiple attempts to film his novel *Fahrenheit 451* (although a version was made without Bradbury's participation in 1966)
- *The Halloween Tree*, an original concept for screen developed by Bradbury with animator Chuck Jones (abandoned in 1967, but later turned into a short novel (1973) and a less ambitious television adaptation)

The list of unfulfilled projects might give a first impression of Bradbury as a failure at screenwriting, but to jump to such a conclusion would be to overlook the oft-made observation that the vast majority of all screenplays end up unproduced.³

In the last decade of his life, a number of Bradbury's filmed and un-filmed scripts were finally published, mostly in limited-edition volumes from small presses. The best of these include scholarly apparatus, and some attempt to place the script in the context of the making of the film and of Bradbury's overall body of work.⁴ Too many, however, have appeared with little or no contextualisation. The 2009 volume entitled *The Martian Chronicles: the Complete Edition*⁵ is an egregious example of this: it contains the preferred text of Bradbury's novel, a set of additional Mars-based stories, and two different un-filmed screenplays by Bradbury; but there is no attempt to contextualise the screenplays, account for how they came into being, or explain why no film was ever made from either of these scripts.

The paucity of scholarship relating to Bradbury's screen works leaves unanswered a number of important questions. Is Bradbury's claim to be a hybrid writer - instinctively writing in a form which can be read interchangeably as literature or as screenplay⁶ - justified by examination of his prose fiction and screenwriting? And is this sufficient to

³ Syd Field, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, revised edn (New York: Delta, 2005), p.8; Ian W. Macdonald, 'Finding the Needle', *Journal of Media Practice*, 4.1 (2003), 27–39 (p. 31); Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 132–3.

⁴ See especially: Ray Bradbury, *It Came From Outer Space* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gauntlet Press, 2004); *The Halloween Tree* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gauntlet Press, 2005).

⁵ Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles: the Complete Edition* (Burton, MI: Subterranean, 2009).

⁶ Jason V. Brock, *Disorders of Magnitude: A Survey of Dark Fantasy* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), p. 291.

account for the extensive intertextuality of his film and prose creations? What drives Bradbury's tendency to revisit his works over and over again? What is the nature of Bradbury's adaptational screenwriting, and is there a model in theories of adaptation for this practice? These were the questions which informed my research, which followed three basic methods:

1. Close, comparative reading of Bradbury's published prose fiction and published screenplays;
2. A search for, and analysis of, Bradbury's un-published screen works; and
3. A search for, and analysis of, empirical evidence of Bradbury's collaboration with film directors.

For the last two methods, I studied Bradbury's original manuscripts and correspondence, held on file (and still largely uncatalogued) at the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis. In comparing multiple drafts and versions of Bradbury's screenplays alongside the known, published novels they relate to, it became clear that any idea of direct adaptation from 'source' to 'target' text would be oversimplistic. Instead, a complex pattern emerges: sometimes a novel will be completely reimagined for screen; a screenplay will evolve into a novel; and in many more instances, ideas arise in one context but are developed in a completely unrelated context many years later.

This thesis, the first to ever examine Bradbury as a screenwriter, provides a whole new perspective on the interplay between fiction and film in Bradbury's body of work, using ideas from adaptation studies and screenwriting studies to shine new light on our understanding of his best known works, and revealing the central role of cross-media revision (narrative alteration) and re-visioning (textual re-conceptualisation). The title, 'The Cinema of Lost Films', derives from a previously unknown Bradbury short film script I discovered in the Bradbury papers. Its central conceit is of an old movie theatre capable of showing films that were never made:

The ghosts of the never-to-be, the fantasy child shot dead in the projection booth and buried in the cutting-room [...] the ghosts of films promised and re-promised, done to death by palaver and misappropriation of funds, conceived at Paramount and miscarried at The First National Bank!⁷

At face value a lament for Hollywood's golden age, the era into which Bradbury was born, this lively and unproduced screenplay provides an apt metaphor for much of Bradbury's screenwriting, which also resulted in a series of 'lost films'.

In the sections below, I discuss established views of Bradbury which point to his being a repeated reviser of his own work, and to the presence of the cinematic in his prose fiction. I then examine three related fields of study which inform my research.

2 Established views of Bradbury

2.1 Bradbury as prose writer

A full understanding of Bradbury's fiction is difficult to obtain from his books alone, since, according to the first critics to consider the full compositional history of Bradbury's works, Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Touponce, 'Bradbury's books usually have something to hide'. What they mean by this is that Bradbury's novels, almost without exception, are constructed or expanded from earlier, shorter works, but do little or nothing to announce this to the reader. Similarly, Bradbury's short story collections typically mix stories from various periods in Bradbury's career, while failing to make this evident. Furthermore, Eller and Touponce observe that the 'warp and woof of his works is *always* stories in progress' [emphasis added], indicating that any given work is somewhat provisional.⁸ Eller and Touponce's realisation, in 2004, was that much more was still to be learned about Bradbury's works by considering their detailed textual histories.

Earlier critics were aware that Bradbury's novels were patchworks, but were not cognisant of this provisional nature of Bradbury's texts. For example, George Edgar Slusser noted that Bradbury's art develops not on 'the horizontal plane but the vertical plane', alluding to

⁷ Ray Bradbury, 'The Cinema of Lost Films', unproduced screenplay, 1996. On file at Center for Ray Bradbury Studies, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. To minimise repetition, all archive documents referred to in this thesis are from this collection, unless indicated otherwise.

⁸ Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Touponce, *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2004), p. xv.

Bradbury's tendency to combine or expand short works into 'larger, more complex literary structures'.⁹ Thus *The Martian Chronicles*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Dandelion Wine* (1957) all build upwards from a small foundation, and can be considered adaptations and elaborations of ideas already expressed. Slusser's observations on the re-working of 'The Fireman' (1951) into *Fahrenheit 451* emphasise the greater detailing of fireman Montag's experiences, and the extent to which 'clear issues' in the short version transform into 'atmosphere and vague oppressions' in the full novel.¹⁰ *The Martian Chronicles*, meanwhile, is a 'masterpiece of lyrical organization' of materials mostly already published as separate short stories in magazines.¹¹ While Slusser is aware of the revisions leading up to these novels, he shows no awareness of later changes, such as the series of reconfigurations and updates *The Martian Chronicles* passes through in its many successive editions, and certainly not the significance of Bradbury's developments of those works for film and theatre. David Mogen was the first critic to examine any of Bradbury's revisions in any detail, by making explicit comparison of two versions of a short story, 'The Wind' (1943), whose original version appeared in Bradbury's first book *Dark Carnival* (1947), and revised version in *The October Country* (1955). The key (and unannounced) revision in this instance is to introduce a 'clean' style to an otherwise florid introduction by removing melodramatic content and using 'taut, dramatic dialogue'.¹² Similar comparisons of original and revised texts would later become a central tool of Eller and Touponce's analyses.

To be aware of the extent of Bradbury's further, ongoing development of his works, it is necessary to be familiar with many texts published outside of the mainstream, such as theatre plays published by specialist theatrical publishers, or his screenplays published as limited editions by small presses; and with works which may not have been published at all, including many screenplays and theatre plays, some of which exist only in archives. The first clue that the archive is important to understanding Bradbury came in the first book-length study of his work, William F. Nolan's *The Ray Bradbury Companion* (1975). Nolan discusses Bradbury's 'cellar', which 'overflows with publications', all of them largely uncatalogued.¹³ The *Companion* captures images of some of the manuscripts, along with letters, screenplay pages and other primary documents, making it the first of many works to show curiosity about Bradbury's practices and processes, and sowing the seed of

⁹ George Edgar Slusser, *The Bradbury Chronicles* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1977), p. 8.

¹⁰ Slusser, p. 53.

¹¹ Slusser, p. 54.

¹² David Mogen, *Ray Bradbury* (New York: Twayne, 1986), pp. 37-8.

¹³ William F. Nolan, *The Ray Bradbury Companion* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1975), p. 16.

archival interest which others scholars would later grow. (Indeed, my own study draws directly upon Bradbury's own manuscripts, most of which were formerly stored in that very 'cellar', but now archived at the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies.)

Regardless of the limitations of studying just the books, many scholars have of course investigated Bradbury's fiction, and some have revealed cinematic and dramatic strengths in his prose. Among the findings of greatest relevance to the present study are those relating to the style of Bradbury's prose fiction - despite Slusser's assertion that 'problems of style and form' are "'safe'" and by implication not worthy of serious study. The best known essay addressing on Bradbury's style is Sarah-Warner J. Pell's 'Style is the Man: Imagery in Bradbury's Fiction', but this is limited to an uncovering of his metaphorical language, mostly at the level of individual word and phrase choices.¹⁴ More relevant here, though, is Wayne L. Johnson's emphasis on the 'experiential aspect' of Bradbury's style, referring to strong sensory images which the reader recalls long after details of plot have been forgotten, and thus stressing the signified rather than Pell's signifiers.¹⁵ Johnson chooses the description of the dinosaur from the short story 'A Sound of Thunder' (1952) as an illustration of this, pointing out that a succession of metaphors or images is used to conjure up each part of the dinosaur as described, assembling the creature 'like a jigsaw puzzle' before the reader's eyes – or, I would suggest, like a film montage.¹⁶

Of course, what Johnson calls 'style' is really something much broader, something that William F. Touponce refers to as Bradbury's 'rhetorical strategies'. This encompasses style, but should also include the 'theatricality' of some of his fiction and poetry.¹⁷ Mogen sees some of this performative element in the same dinosaur sequence 'prose poem', which he identifies with a theatrical metaphor: an 'aside'.¹⁸ Marvin Mengeling concurs with Mogen on the importance of this narrative technique, but uses a different performative metaphor, referring to such a sequence as a 'cadenza', and the place where the poetic turns of phrase are commonly found in Bradbury.¹⁹

¹⁴ Sarah-Warner J. Pell, 'Style is the Man: Imagery in Bradbury's Fiction', in *Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1980), pp. 186-94.

¹⁵ Wayne L. Johnson, *Ray Bradbury* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), p. 5.

¹⁶ Johnson, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ William F. Touponce, *Ray Bradbury* (Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House, 1989), p. 14.

¹⁸ Mogen, p. 39.

¹⁹ Marvin E. Mengeling, *Red Planet, Flaming Phoenix, Green Town: Some Early Bradbury Revisited* (Bloomington, IN: 1stBooks, 2002), p. 141.

Johnson claims that this literary/cinematic technique couples with Bradbury's wide-ranging interests in popular culture – among which he lists horror films, comic books and carnival rides – to lead the reader to 'surrender to the dominant, if primitive mood' like a rider on a rollercoaster. This is literature as immersive spectacle since, for Johnson, Bradbury is an entertainer, but 'conscious of the link between his art, his own dreams, and the dreams of his audience'.²⁰ Mogen comes to a similar conclusion, relating Bradbury's 'flair for striking metaphor and vivid detail' to his eclectic influences – examples given include *Buck Rogers*, The Bible and Walt Disney – but adding that these influences tend to possess what he calls 'mythic overtones'.²¹ Echoing Johnson, Mogen also writes of Bradbury's 'showman' tendencies, which are in turn a source of Bradbury's frequent media appearances and consequent celebrity status: accompanying Bradbury's rising fame and reputation as a stylist during the 1970s and onwards was a rise in appearances in anthologies aimed at schools, in turn leading to a rise in further critical attention through academic articles assessing his writing 'artistry'.²²

A further cinematic element common in Bradbury's fiction is what Johnson refers to as 'reality determined by point of view', and ties Bradbury's style to one of his recurring themes, validating Touponce's exhortation that we shouldn't look for themes alone in Bradbury. It is evidenced by stories such as 'The Dwarf' (1954), whose central character's reality is distorted in a funhouse mirror, and 'Night Meeting' (1950), where an Earthman and a Martian view the same landscape in two contrasting ways; 'because each person has his own fantasies, each person's view of reality is unique', Johnson writes. The cinematic presentation of point of view in each case is strongly tied to the theme of 'metamorphosis', such as humans who turn into Martians and vice versa, as well as other kinds of bodily and spiritual change.²³

In the twenty-first century, there have been many attempts to re-evaluate Bradbury's works, and move on from the oft-cited canon of critical essays assembled in 1980 by Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander, and perpetuated in later anthologies edited by others (including Harold Bloom).²⁴ These later re-evaluations take a partly biographical position in

²⁰ Johnson, p. 9.

²¹ Mogen, p. 35.

²² Mogen, p. 23-5.

²³ Johnson, p.10; Touponce, *Ray Bradbury*, p. 14.

²⁴ Martin Harry Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander, *Ray Bradbury* (Paul Harris, 1980). See also Harold Bloom, ed., *Ray Bradbury, Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea House, 2001); Harold Bloom, ed., *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Chelsea House, 2000); Katie de Koster, ed., *Readings on Fahrenheit 451* (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven, 2000).

presenting Bradbury the man as well as Bradbury the author. Jerry Weist's *Bradbury: an Illustrated Life* (2002), something of a scrapbook like Nolan's *Companion*, presents images and found documents relating to Bradbury's career - once again implying that the archive is important to understanding Bradbury – to show him as a visually motivated writer and an active collaborator with visual artists such as illustrator Joseph Mugnaini and theatre directors Terrence Shank and Charles Rome Smith, and thus enmeshed in visual, popular culture.²⁵ Where Weist opens up the visual dimension, Steven Aggelis confirms, through interviews, the notion of Bradbury as showman. *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* reproduces interviews conducted during the period 1948-2002, and allows many recurring themes to be observed in Bradbury's responses to questions. What emerges is Bradbury's developing repertoire of anecdotes which become embellished with each telling, perhaps analogous to Bradbury's tendency to re-work and re-present his fiction.²⁶ Sam Weller's authorised biography, *The Bradbury Chronicles*, is similarly informed by interviews (later published more or less unedited as *Listen to the Echoes: the Ray Bradbury Interviews*), and perhaps gives the clearest version of this repertoire, such as Bradbury remembering the moment of his own birth, and his encounter with 'Mr Electrico' at a carnival sideshow.²⁷

After Bradbury's death, the work of critical re-evaluation briefly accelerated, and highlighted other facets of his work: his active support of the real-life space programme, his characteristics as a 'regional' writer of both the American Midwest and Southwest,²⁸ providing new readings of established works.²⁹ Only one of these studies - David Seed's entry in the Modern Writers of Science Fiction series, *Ray Bradbury* (2015) – considers works published well outside of Bradbury's 'classic period', such as the *Moby Dick*-inspired novella *Leviathan '99* (2007), or key cinema and television adaptations of Bradbury. Seed sustains throughout an appreciation of the visual in Bradbury's work, in a sense locating the cinematic elements in his prose fictions which might be taken as a jumping-off point for a

²⁵ Jerry Weist, *Bradbury: An Illustrated Life : A Journey to Far Metaphor* (New York: William Morrow, 2002), p. xii.

²⁶ Steven L. Aggelis, 'Conversations with Ray Bradbury' (PhD thesis, Florida State University, 2003); Steven L. Aggelis, ed., *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* (Jackson, MS: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2004).

²⁷ Sam Weller, *The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury* (New York: William Morrow, 2006), pp. 11-12; 56-9; Sam Weller, ed., *Listen to the Echoes: The Ray Bradbury Interviews* (New York: Melville House, 2010).

²⁸ Gloria McMillan, ed., *Orbiting Ray Bradbury's Mars: Biographical, Anthropological, Literary, Scientific and Other Perspectives* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013).

²⁹ James Arthur Anderson, *The Illustrated Ray Bradbury: A Structuralist Reading of Bradbury's The Illustrated Man* (Rockville, MD: Borgo Press, 2013); Rafeeq O. McGiveron, ed., *Critical Insights: Fahrenheit 451* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013).

study of Bradbury's parallel career as a screenwriter: Seed specifically points to the framing device of Bradbury's collection *The Illustrated Man*, which exploits both an 'oral' narration and – through the tattoos on the title character's body – a film-like narration; other examples given include the 'visual perspective' of the short story 'The Veldt' (1950), and the 'strong visual elements' in the narrative of *Fahrenheit 451*.³⁰

Of the re-evaluative twenty-first century critical writing on Bradbury, the single most extensive reconsideration is Eller and Touponce's *Ray Bradbury: the Life of Fiction* (2004), a study of his developing thematics (particularly focusing on the recurring use of masks and carnival), but also couched in terms of the detailed textual history of each work. It establishes the centrality of revision and self-adaptation in all of Bradbury's major works. In this respect, Eller and Touponce greatly extend Mogen's discussion of the significance of revision, and also deepen both Weist's and Nolan's consideration of the importance of the archival record. Since much of Bradbury's work originated as magazine short fiction, in many instances there exists a published short version of a work and a better-known extended version ('The Fireman' and *Fahrenheit 451*; 'The Black Ferris' (1948) and *Something Wicked*), prompting Eller and Touponce's investigation of Bradbury's process of self-adaptation. It is here that we learn that the shorter/longer dimension known to Slusser and others is inadequate for a full understanding of this process; instead Eller & Touponce invite us to consider clusters of related works showing the real 'life' of Bradbury's fiction, in contrast to the first impression Bradbury's books give. The idea that Bradbury's fiction has something to hide and typically remains provisional is developed thoroughly here. While Eller and Touponce claim their study to be the 'first attempt to bring textual criticism to bear in an in-depth study' of Bradbury, they can equally claim to be the first critics to have fully taken into account the chronology and circumstances of composition. Their insights for the first time allow a view of Bradbury as an author who not only revises his works but, to use Adrienne Rich's term, re-visions them, viewing them 'with fresh eyes' and approaching them 'from a new critical direction'.³¹

The provisional nature of Bradbury's works is demonstrated further in Eller and Touponce's ongoing series of critical editions of Bradbury's short fiction, *The Collected Stories of Ray*

³⁰ David Seed, *Ray Bradbury* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 15; 112.

³¹ Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', *College English*, 34.1 (1972), 18-30 (p. 18).

Bradbury, which establishes the extent of the fluidity of Bradbury's texts.³² Critical editions in general have been characterised by John Bryant as 'well-crafted, scholarly patchwork[s] of texts designed typically to approach a form of an author's socially unimpeded intentions', and deriving from a study of extant, 'fluid texts' which exist as multiple versions or variants.³³ Such fluid texts themselves provide insight, since they provide 'material evidence of *shifting* intentions'.³⁴

In a series which complements the critical edition, Eller's literary biographies *Becoming Ray Bradbury* (2011) and *Ray Bradbury Unbound* (2014) extend the chronological investigation of Bradbury's compositions begun in *The Life of Fiction*, and relate this to the incidents in Bradbury's life, attempting to provide a biographical underpinning to the author's works. Eller's most remarkable conclusion here is that Bradbury's short time spent working in Ireland writing the screenplay for the John Huston film *Moby Dick* in 1954 marks a distinct dividing line in Bradbury's writing career. Prior to *Moby Dick*, Bradbury was heavily engaged in prose writing to the exclusion of all else. After *Moby Dick*, much of his time would be taken up by writing 'unproduced screenplays, teleplays, and screen treatments'.³⁵ The vast quantity of this output would remain hidden from public view for decades while, alongside, a series of more visible adaptations of Bradbury works would grace the screen without Bradbury's personal participation (e.g. *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), *The Illustrated Man* (1969)).

The current state of scholarship, then, is that Bradbury has been shown to be a visually-inspired showman of a writer whose work builds from a performative rhetoric. The vital role of revision in his work has been established, and accounts for its fluidity. Working in film has been pinpointed as providing a dividing line in Bradbury's career, but screenwriting itself has yet to be shown as enmeshed with Bradbury's prose works, or as a site of extensive re-visioning – in fact, there is no substantial scholarship on Bradbury as a screenwriter, although there has been some limited examination of him as a dramatic writer for radio, stage and screen.

³² Beginning with Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Touponce, eds, *The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury: A Critical Edition Volume 1, 1938-1943* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2011).

³³ Bryant, John, *The Fluid Text: a Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 22.

³⁴ Bryant, *Fluid Text*, p. 9.

³⁵ Jonathan R. Eller, *Ray Bradbury Unbound* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), p. 4.

2.2 Bradbury as dramatist

Bradbury's work as a dramatic writer has drawn far less attention than his prose fiction, with just one monograph assessing his theatrical work, and some theses and articles assessing aspects of his scripts for film, stage and radio. Bradbury's screenwriting has, additionally, attracted some journalistic attention in popular articles for film magazines, and his many essays and interviews have also helped promote the image of him as screenwriter.

Ben Indick's pamphlet *The Drama of Ray Bradbury* (later expanded as *Ray Bradbury: Dramatist*) is, to date, the only study of Bradbury as a dramatic writer. As well as identifying a thematic unity between Bradbury's prose fiction and dramatic writing, Indick identifies adaptation as a key aspect of Bradbury's theatrical craft. He begins with brief observations on Bradbury's Hollywood-inspired radio play, 'The Meadow' (1947), which displays Bradbury's concern with the 'supra-mundane imagination' – a mind-set common to a number of Bradbury prose-fiction characters who would become important in Bradbury's stage and screen scripts, notably Clarisse in *Fahrenheit 451* and Spender in *The Martian Chronicles*.³⁶ Indick's discussion of screen works is limited to *Moby Dick* and films based on Bradbury stories (but scripted by others). Indick's key observations on Bradbury as screenwriter are of the author's careful imitation of Melville's dialogue style, and parallels between the imagery and symbolism of Bradbury and Melville – chiefly through the 'illustrated man' that is Melville's Queequeg, and the foreshadowing of Ahab's fate through the prophecy delivered by Elijah.³⁷ The expanded version of Indick's study discusses one further screen work, the un-filmed screenplay for *And the Rock Cried Out*. The latter, one of Bradbury's best un-filmed scripts, is described as vivid in its depiction of a post-atomic war world, and convincing in its characterisations.³⁸ Indick considers Bradbury's screen version in relation to the short story version – and makes similar comparison with other Bradbury stories adapted for one-act stage plays – and thus establishes self-adaptation as a common element in Bradbury working across media.

Two theses on Bradbury's dramatic work shine some light on his processes of adaptation, but are limited by their focus. Douglas Carter's study is limited to structural parallels between books and screenplays (and, in related conference papers, between theatre

³⁶ Ben P. Indick, *Drama of Ray Bradbury* (Baltimore, MD: T-K Graphics, 1977), p. 3.

³⁷ Indick, *Drama*, pp. 5-6.

³⁸ Ben P. Indick, *Ray Bradbury: Dramatist* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1989), p. 18.

scripts and radio scripts).³⁹ While there is much to learn from this approach, it overlooks the extensive and often two-way cross-overs between prose and scriptwriting across Bradbury's body of work. Mary Beth Petrasik McConnell's systematic search for cinematic techniques in the television series *The Ray Bradbury Theater* reveals aspects of Bradbury the short story writer. However, by focusing on the short story McConnell misses out on the consideration of the longer form. While she provides a close assessment of 'The Pedestrian', for example, the scope of her thesis necessarily omits the film-like narrative construction of *Fahrenheit 451*, arguably the Bradbury novel most structured like a screenplay.⁴⁰ As with Carter's studies, there is an unspoken assumption of adaptation as a one-way process from 'source' text to media artefact which overlooks the distinctive two-way process I argue to be characteristic of Bradbury's work.

The earlier book-length studies of Bradbury by Mogen and Johnson also make brief observations on Bradbury as a dramatic writer, which it is worth considering here. Mogen finds that 'drama sometimes allows Bradbury's descriptive powers to function effectively', but that Bradbury's weak characterisations lead to the risk of his theatrical works becoming 'merely rhetoric and stage effects.'⁴¹ Johnson's judgment is that Bradbury's interest in drama had given him a 'sharp ear for speech patterns' even when constructing dialogue in short stories.⁴² However, Johnson is critical of the dialogue of the stage plays, although he attributes this to the needs of adaptation, with stage dialogue being relied upon to provide more exposition than would be the case in a short story.⁴³ Johnson's assessment of Bradbury on screen is that none of the films made (up to 1980) had successfully translated 'Bradbury's poetic and evocative imagery', but he judges Bradbury's own screenwriting in terms only of completed films, thus overlooking the substantial body of un-filmed scripts.⁴⁴ Johnson is seemingly also unaware of the true extent of Bradbury's input into films where screenwriting credits are shared, such as *Moby Dick* (screenplay credited to John Huston

³⁹ Douglas Carter, 'A Cross Media Narrative Analysis of *The Martian Chronicles*: Novel, Radio, Theater, Film and Television' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio University, 1983); Douglas Carter, 'Leviathan '99: *Moby Dick* for the Space Age', paper presented to the National Convention of the Popular Culture Association, Philadelphia, 13 April 1995; Douglas Carter, 'Ray Bradbury's *Leviathan* '99: Adapting the Adaptation', paper presented to the Popular Culture Association in the South convention, October 2003.

⁴⁰ McConnell, Mary Beth Petrasik, *The Ray Bradbury Theater: A Case Study of the Adaptation Process from the Written Artifact to the Cinematic Text* (PhD thesis, Ohio State University, 1993).

⁴¹ Mogen, p. 143.

⁴² Johnson, p. 8.

⁴³ Johnson, p. 141.

⁴⁴ Johnson, p. 138.

and Ray Bradbury) and *It Came From Outer Space* (screenplay credited solely to Harry Essex, from a screen story by Bradbury).

Finally, two critics have provided useful insights into Bradbury's un-filmed screenplays for *The Martian Chronicles*. The sidebar to John C. Tibbetts' survey article 'The Illustrating Man' finds Bradbury's 1997 *Chronicles* screenplay to have 'crisp and spare' dialogue, but to show a tendency to 'rhapsodic speech-making'.⁴⁵ Bill Warren's exploration of an earlier screenplay finds it to possess 'an aura of tragedy'.⁴⁶

Taken as a whole, then, studies of Bradbury as a dramatic writer have tended to view his plays and scripts in isolation, valuable as a reflection of his prose fiction, or as instances of simple source-to-target adaptation. A richer understanding requires a sophisticated conception of the role of the screenplay, especially as it relates to cross-media adaptation.

3 Three critical frameworks

My thesis considers Bradbury's screenwriting alongside his prose fiction, rather than as something apart from it, because his fluid ideas tend to shift seamlessly from one medium to another and back again. His screenplays typically (but not exclusively) present themselves as adaptations of some kind, facilitated by the inherent cinematic properties of his writing. My thesis therefore builds upon ideas from adaptation studies, cinematic fiction, and screenwriting studies, which I examine here.

3.1 Adaptation studies

Adaptation studies is a field that seeks to explain how a text in one medium transfers or translates to a different medium. The issues for adaptation studies have evolved over time, and have variously considered how accurate or faithful an adaptation is, or the role of the adapter in comparison to the role of the originating author, or – the dominant current state of scholarship – how source and target texts interrelate or interpenetrate in terms of their

⁴⁵ John C. Tibbetts, 'The Illustrating Man: the Screenplays of Ray Bradbury', *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, 1, 63-80 (p. 76).

⁴⁶ Bill Warren, 'The Martian Chronicles Part One: the History', *Mediascene*, 36 (March-April 1979), 4-7.

meanings and their cultural contexts. Although adaptation theory can apply to exchange between any two (or more) media, a common area of study has been that of novel to film.

An early, influential theorist of adaptation was George Bluestone, whose *Novels into Film* (1957) discourages the assumption that an adaptation is a copy doomed to always be inferior to the original text. Instead, he introduces the idea of medium specificity, that each medium has its own innate strengths and weaknesses. Where the novel is primarily linguistic, film is mainly visual; the novel is conceptual, film is perceptual; the novel discursive, film presentational.⁴⁷ Inevitably, a filmed version of a novel will end up with different strengths to those of the novel itself. Although Bluestone's intent seems to be non-judgmental in respect of different media, and thus avoiding the moralising tone of those who would judge an adaptation solely on the basis of its 'fidelity' to its source, he nevertheless tends to present the novel as inherently more complex, self-conscious and reflexive.

Geoffrey Wagner considers the inferred intention behind an adaptation, by allowing three basic types. The method of 'transposition' perhaps naively allows a novel to be 'given directly on the screen', and therefore would yield something of a 'faithful' adaptation, whereas 'commentary' permits the adaptation to be 'altered in some respect', and in the alteration allows 'a different intention' to be discerned from that of the novelist. Wagner's third type of adaptation is the 'analogy', where the source text is a mere point of departure, usually revealing the adapter's lack of intention of reproducing the original work.⁴⁸ While Wagner's model is a useful tool for classification of adaptations, by measuring the distance between a source and an adaptation it still seems indirectly to be judging the fidelity of the adaptation. And while allowing space for the adapting author, it would seem to be guilty of the intentional fallacy.⁴⁹

The question of whether to consider the author or author function in relation to film adaptation has a distinctly mixed history, since the emergence of the concept of the film *auteur* coincided with the apparently contradictory challenge to the significance of all authors. The 'politique des auteurs' inspired by Francois Truffaut's polemical 1954 essay 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' elevated film directors as authors of their

⁴⁷ Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1957), pp. 8-9.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 1975), pp.222-7.

⁴⁹ William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54.3 (1946), 468-488.

cinematic works, typically at the expense of screenwriters and other collaborators in the film-making art.⁵⁰ While Truffaut's essay solely addresses a single type of French film adaptation, American film critic Andrew Sarris's extension of auteurism into a 'theory' led through the 1960s and 1970s to the tendency among critics to discuss films principally in terms of their directors' visions. This allowed for Wagner's inferred author of an adaptation to now be embodied: as the director of the film.⁵¹ Around the same time, paradoxically, Roland Barthes 'The Death of the Author' (1967) signalled a shift in literary criticism away from consideration of the role of the author and instead towards the primacy of the reader's interpretation of a text, which consequently became 'a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.' For Barthes, every text draws meaning from prior texts, and is inescapably a 'tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.'⁵²

The putative death of the author freed some adaptation theorists to consider a richer interconnection between texts and their adaptations, especially where it was apparent that, contrary to Bluestone's media specificity, different media could build from the same ingredients. Keith Cohen recognised that visual and verbal signifiers are to be found in both literature and film, creating a potential single 'global system of meaning' which encouraged his search for the 'dynamics of exchange' between the two media.⁵³ For Dudley Andrew, this implied a need for adaptation studies to take a 'sociological turn' and consider the multiple ways that different cultural influences might control and drive acts of adaptation.⁵⁴ Among recent critics, for Robert Stam it suggests that film adaptations are engaged in an 'ongoing whirl' of intertextuality,⁵⁵ while Kamilla Elliott argues for a model of adaptation which is 'reciprocally transformative', where film metamorphoses novel and vice versa.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ François Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema', in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), pp. 9–18.

⁵¹ Andrew Sarris, 'Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962' in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 585–588

⁵² Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), p.146.

⁵³ Keith Cohen, *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 3.

⁵⁴ Dudley Andrew, 'The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory', in *Narrative Strategies: Original Essays in Film and Prose Fiction*, ed. by Syndy M. Conger and Janice R. Welsch (Macomb, IL: Western Illinois UP, 1980), pp. 9-17; p. 14.

⁵⁵ Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: the Dialogics of Adaptation' in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000), pp. 54-76; p. 66.

⁵⁶ Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 229.

Clearly, adaptation theory is related to the idea of intertextuality, whether taken as Julia Kristeva's original concept of all texts being an 'absorption and transformation of another'⁵⁷ or Gérard Genette's more restrictive 'relationship of copresence between [...] texts', or 'the actual presence of one text within another'.⁵⁸ In Bradbury's prose works, intertextuality is far from hidden and can be seen most obviously in the direct quotations that litter the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, and frequent passing references to popular songs in the novel *The Martian Chronicles* and elsewhere. There is also an extensive intertextuality arising from the simple fact that nearly all of his works have come into existence from earlier, shorter ones. As we shall see, *The Martian Chronicles* derives from an assembly of short stories, while *Something Wicked This Way Comes* derives from a screen treatment which in turn derives from earlier short stories and unpublished fragments. The extent of intertextuality in Bradbury is so great that it may be useful to consider the concept of 'the shadow of the precursor', introduced by Diana Glenn, Md Rezaul Haque and Ben Kooyman. They propose that an artist's relationship to prior texts may manifest variously through 'accommodation, appropriation or resistance'.⁵⁹ Bradbury's screenwriting frequently engages with his own prior texts, creating an unusual struggle to variously re-capture, improve or overcome his earlier drafts from a different medium.

The most succinctly formulated synthesis of the multiple views of adaptation is Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Unlike many previous critics, Hutcheon recognises the complexity of film adaptation, albeit mainly in terms of considering how many additional collaborators are involved in creating an adapted film (director, producer, actor, editor etc) rather than in terms of any added complexity for the screenwriter.⁶⁰ She also poses fundamental questions which are frequently overlooked, such as 'why adapt?' – where she considers 'economic lures', 'legal constraints' which can include contractual entitlements to possessive credits, the 'cultural capital' whereby an adapted author may perceive some esteem from an adaptation, and other 'personal and political motives'.⁶¹

There are, though, two aspects of Hutcheon's approach which would seem to exclude Bradbury's screen-related work as adaptations. The first is her formal definition, which

⁵⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 34-61 (p. 37).

⁵⁸ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹ Diana Glenn and others, *The Shadow of the Precursor* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012)

⁶⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 80-2.

⁶¹ Hutcheon, pp. 85-95.

identifies an adaptation as ‘an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art’.⁶² Such a definition is not problematic with a film called *Ray Bradbury’s Something Wicked This Way Comes* (the official title of the 1983 Disney film based on Bradbury’s novel). However, Hutcheon’s definition *would* exclude as an adaptation the novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* itself, even though it is actually adapted from an earlier screen treatment by Bradbury (see Chapter 4, below). In this instance the relationship between screen treatment and novel is wholly unannounced – it is an instance of Eller and Touponce’s ‘something to hide’ - and therefore doesn’t count as an adaptation in Hutcheon’s terms. In case this might seem a pedantic point, we shall see below that there is remarkable fluidity between Bradbury’s prose fiction and his screenplays, with story, situation and character ideas frequently popping up in and across multiple works. To put boundaries on certain works as ‘adaptations’ and yet exclude others would actually be to miss out on much of the vibrant intertextuality of Bradbury’s work.

The second problem with Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* when applied to Bradbury’s work is the question of *self*-adaptation. Hutcheon tackles the fundamental question of ‘who is the adapter?’ – but in the specific case of an author adapting their own work, the answer is dismissed as ‘easy’. Hutcheon’s discussion offers no special place for artists who adapt their own works; they are to be considered equally with any other artist who adapts an existing work. The key function of an adapter is considered to be that of ‘an interpreter’ before it is that of a ‘creator’.⁶³ And yet, as we shall find below, the fluidity of Bradbury’s work across media offers very few distinct cut-off points between creation and interpretation, but is instead a continuous process of revision and re-conceptualisation.

In general, Hutcheon observes, in a process of adapting from prose to film there is ‘an increasing distance from the adapted novel’ as the industrial processes of film-making take over.⁶⁴ In addition, there are less obvious corollaries of a shift of medium. For example, Hutcheon points out that adaptation from text to a ‘performative’ mode such as a play or a film will also imply ‘a shift from a solo model of creation to a collaborative one’.⁶⁵ This is something we shall see Bradbury grappling with, and indeed experiencing some difficulty with in the cases of *Moby Dick* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Hutcheon goes on to observe that in a collaborative medium, it is difficult to identify precisely ‘who is the

⁶² Hutcheon, p. 170.

⁶³ Hutcheon, p. 84.

⁶⁴ Hutcheon, p.83.

⁶⁵ Hutcheon, p. 80.

adapter': is it the writer of the script, the director, or even the actors, cinematographer or editor?⁶⁶ In the case of film, this unanswerable question is sidestepped by Ian W. Macdonald's more recent concept of 'the screen idea' (see below), which recognises that there is no single embodiment of what a filmmaking team creates, unless and until the film itself is complete.⁶⁷

A further oversight of most extant theories of film adaptation is the tendency to consider only the finished film, and to ignore or overlook the adaptational screenplay, which Jack Boozer identifies as inherently 'transmedial', and the most 'consistent and crucial example of intertextuality at work'. For Boozer, the adapted screenplay is the exact site where adaptation first manifests, since it is the point at which the 'single-track medium', the string of words that is literature, becomes a 'multitrack medium', the specification of audio and visual elements which can be directly filmed.⁶⁸ Boozer posits several reasons why this oversight so frequently occurs, chief of which is that typically in adaptation the source text (novel) exists as an artefact, and the adapted end product (film) also exists as an artefact. The script, though, is usually lost in the process of adaptation, and rarely comes to exist as an object which can be directly studied; it is at best a 'skeletal blueprint' which is either consumed into the film, or simply discarded.⁶⁹ However, Boozer points out, it is generally the screenplay rather than the source text which 'guides the screen choices for story structure, characterisation, motifs, themes and genre' and 'settings and tonal register'.⁷⁰

Boozer's championing of the screenplay, and by extension the screenwriter, in the act of adaptation would appear to be at odds with the 'death of the author' undercurrent of much adaptation theory, and equally at odds with Andrew's 'sociological turn' referred to above – but the contradiction is rebutted by two aspects of Boozer's argument, and resolved by a third. First, he argues outright against 'dogmatic theorizations [...] that slam[med] the door shut on all claims of authorship'. Second, he insists that the very study of intertextuality can show 'the screenwriter's take on pre-existing literary material' precisely because the adapted screenplay is revealed to be a crucial intertext in any process of adaptation. The resolution Boozer arrives at is a question of scale: the closer

⁶⁶ Hutcheon, p. 81.

⁶⁷ Ian W. Macdonald, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Jack Boozer, ed., *Authorship in Film Adaptation* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), p. 1.

⁶⁹ Boozer, p. 2. See also Ted Nannicelli, 'Screenplays as Literature', in *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, ed. by Noël Carroll and John Gibson (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 127-36.

⁷⁰ Boozer, p. 4.

examination of script development materials reveals a distinct 'series of decisions attributable to individuals', while the consideration of author functions detached from actual authors can equally validly be seen as 'analytical distance from the daily reality' of film production.⁷¹

Where even Boozer falls short is in considering the possible scope of adaptation. Like Hutcheon, he omits to consider the admittedly special case of the self-adapting writer. And in his eagerness to limit intertextuality to servicing his notion of the role of the screenwriter, he tends to equally limit the significance of types of adaptation which fall outside of the standard binary model of 'novel becomes film'.

3.2 Cinematic fiction

Works of prose fiction whose 'impression of the real' might compete with film have been referred to as 'cinematic fiction' by Alan Spiegel and others.⁷² The very phrase 'cinematic fiction' implies two media in conjunction, or is a recognition that properties of one medium may be found in another. While this is perhaps not a surprising concept, it is not one that is universally recognised. For example, critic Robert Scholes argues that film is closer to 'undifferentiated thoughtless experience' than is literature, which has to 'exert extraordinary pains to achieve some impression of the real', somewhat echoing Bluestone's media specificity argument.⁷³ Scholes' view is evidently based on a conception of the photographic image as being inherently highly indexical, and its reception as essentially passive. However, an opposite view is held by film editor and director Walter Murch, who sees film-viewing very much as an interpretive act. While showing a film creates images that objectively 'dance the same way every time the film is projected', the effect of those fixed images is to 'kindle different dreams in the mind of each beholder'.⁷⁴

The difficulty of locating cinematic perception along a spectrum that runs from objective to subjective underlies Béla Balázs' apparently contradictory phrase 'subjectivity of the object'

⁷¹ Boozer, pp. 22-3.

⁷² Alan Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1976), p. xi; David Seed, *Cinematic Fictions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 1-6.

⁷³ Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 61; 72.

⁷⁴ Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: a Perspective on Film-Editing*, 2nd edn. (West Hollywood, CA: Silman-James Press, 2001), p. 144.

to describe a camera,⁷⁵ but also leads to Spiegel's working definition of cinematic fiction. A camera, according to Spiegel, is 'an objective medium' which can 'neither think nor feel' – and yet at the same time it is a 'subjective medium, for it cannot show any object without at the same time revealing its own physical position'.⁷⁶ The type of prose fiction analogous to this, 'cinematic fiction', is thus for Spiegel capable of presenting in words not just a sense of theatrical space as if a stage is present in front of the reader, but of subdividing space and time through 'a sequence of truncated images', and to be able to 'thrust the eye of the reader [...] near the object that the author is describing'.⁷⁷ This notion therefore combines ideas of space, montage and camera placement.

Spiegel points out that 'cinematic authors' of novels usually do not write this way because of any intention to make films of their works, but rather because prior cinematic literature has served as a 'formative context and stimulus', or because to write cinematically simply 'suits their expressive purpose'.⁷⁸ To support the latter supposition, he points to examples of cinematic techniques in fiction that existed before the invention of film. He cites the 'precinematic' (c. 1897) works of Joseph Conrad as being determined to make his readers 'see [...] through and finally *past* his language [...] to the hard, clear bedrock of images'.⁷⁹ The motivation of an author in creating cinematic fiction may not, then, always be related to cinematic influence, but may come more from the simple wish to show rather than tell. This leads Spiegel to a definition of narrative with 'concretized form' as: 'a way of transcribing the narrative, not as a story that is told, but as an action that is portrayed and presented'.⁸⁰ In such cinematic fiction, he suggests, analysis is eschewed in favour of 'exposition through action', enabling a character to be revealed 'gradually, as she [...] emerges before us'.⁸¹ This echoes Claude-Edmonde Magny's observation, which ties the cinematic in literature more specifically to character, and has cinematic novelists tending more to 'objective description' of characters' acts rather than attempt to directly indicate their thoughts.⁸² This is a screenwriter's technique, too: the scene descriptions in a screenplay are conventionally referred to as 'actions', since they are intended to prescribe

⁷⁵ Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952), p. 90.

⁷⁶ Spiegel, pp. 31-2.

⁷⁷ Spiegel, p. 38; 42.

⁷⁸ Spiegel, p. 186.

⁷⁹ Spiegel, p. xii.

⁸⁰ Spiegel, p. 6.

⁸¹ Spiegel, p. 20.

⁸² Claude-Edmonde Magny, *The Age of the American Novel: The Film Aesthetic of Fiction Between the Two Wars* (New York: Ungar, 1972), p. 40.

what characters actively do. The narrative imperative of a screenwriter – according to screenwriting guru Syd Field – is: ‘Film is behavior; action is character and character, action; what a person does is who he is, not what he says’.⁸³

To cinematic fiction’s concern for revealing character through action using techniques that parallel cinema’s use of staging, montage and camera positioning, we may also add Magny’s (and Cohen’s) identification of ellipsis as a cinematic technique in novels.⁸⁴ This allows for gaps in narrative which act as a spur to questions, as well as for manipulating pace and creating other forms of discontinuity that we might expect to see in film, which make use of editing and montage as part of their standard toolkit.

3.3 Screenwriting studies

The comparatively new field of screenwriting studies combines theoretical considerations of the role of the screenwriter with historical and empirical study of screenwriting in practice.⁸⁵ It builds in part upon the research of adaptation studies, such as that of Boozer. Indeed, Boozer’s unique consideration of screenwriting authorship is situated very much within adaptation studies, but opens up key points of concern to the more generalised study of screenwriting. Boozer’s observation of the typical working conditions of, specifically, the adaptive screenwriter, contrasts the pressure of the ‘myriad narrative expectations [...] in a complex environment of business, industrial, and artistic considerations’ with the imagined ‘solitary, imaginative origin of most [prose] fiction’; the collective activity of film-making in practice runs counter to any individualistic ethos of creation.⁸⁶ Steven Maras similarly identifies screenwriting as a ‘complex entity’, encompassing a wide diversity of ‘conditions, practices and materials [and] traditions’.⁸⁷ Among the complexities are those arising from the ‘politics’ surrounding screenwriting, including what Maras calls ‘tensions between “literary” and cinematic approaches’, and the industrial practice (in Hollywood at least) of the screenwriter typically not being involved in

⁸³ Syd Field, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, revised edn (New York: Delta, 2005), p. 69.

⁸⁴ Magny, ch. 3.

⁸⁵ See Craig Batty, ‘Screenwriting Studies, Screenwriting Practice and the Screenwriting Manual’, *New Writing*, 13.1 (2016), 59–70.

⁸⁶ Boozer, p. 5.

⁸⁷ Steven Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Wallflower, 2009), pp. 1-3.

film production beyond the script-writing phase. The result is a development of the screenwriter's art as a peculiarly 'autonomous area'.⁸⁸

Maras provides a historical perspective on the evolution of discourse on the function of the screenplay, ranging from Edward Azlant's early concept of 'design plan or scheme' and V.I. Pudovkin's concept of script as 'blueprint' (which has a direct echo in Boozer's 'skeletal blueprint'), through to more sophisticated ideas: Sergei Eisenstein's belief that a script should be a novella so that writer and director can each explore their 'passion' for a project in their own respective languages;⁸⁹ and conceptions due to John Gassner, Dudley Nichols and Douglas Garrett Winston of the screenplay as a new form of literature.⁹⁰ Regardless of the most apt metaphor for the screenplay, Maras makes clear that a film script has always been seen as 'an "intermediate" entity, a structure that wants to be another structure, destined to "vanish" into the film.' He argues that the script is by definition 'transitional and transformational', and consequently 'a very unusual textual form'.⁹¹ As for the creative writing that goes into a screenplay, Maras is in no doubt that there exists a 'distinctive poetry of the screenplay: the marriage of content and expression', and that from the earliest days of Hollywood, writing for the 'camera eye' has been encouraged – an echo of Spiegel's terminology for the cinematic novel.⁹²

Screenplays, then, carry their own conventions of expression. In his consideration of character in screenwriting as compared to prose fiction, Steven Price discusses mechanisms for revealing 'inner life' which are available to the novel-writer but largely unavailable to the screenwriter (seemingly an echo of Bluestone's media specificity), such as interior monologue and free indirect speech. Price judges that the only equivalent techniques are very approximate: 'montage signifying a succession of thoughts', plus the voiceover and its specific variant, the 'authoritative narrational commentary about characters'.⁹³ In addition, Price notes that the need to be economical on the screenplay page, in order to keep the narrative moving, is contrary to a novelist's permitted 'leisurely description of people or places'.⁹⁴ In this regard, Price echoes Robert McKee's observation that film stories exist in

⁸⁸ Maras, *Screenwriting*, p. 4-5.

⁸⁹ Maras, pp. 32-36.

⁹⁰ Maras, pp. 51-60.

⁹¹ Maras, *Screenwriting*, p. 6.

⁹² Maras, *Screenwriting*, p. 67; p. 144.

⁹³ Steven Price, 'Character in the Screenplay Text', in *Analysing the Screenplay*, ed. by Jill Neldes (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 201-16 (p. 204).

⁹⁴ Price, 'Character', p. 204

*'an absolute present tense in constant vivid movement [...] unlike the novel, film is on the knife edge of the now - whether we flash back or forward, we jump to a new now.'*⁹⁵

Returning to the peculiar ambiguity of the screenwriter's role – is the screenwriter a technician laying out plans for others to follow, or a contributor to a larger process? - Price discusses the varying notion of authorship as reflected in the evolving industrial practices of film-making, and in critical approaches to film-making. 'Literary' writers who preceded Bradbury in the Hollywood of the 1920s and 1930s were 'shocked' by the lack of regard for writers, and many found any romantic notion of 'the author' completely undermined by the collaborative nature of film-making.⁹⁶ According to Price, at the heart of the writer's lack of authorial voice in Hollywood film – quite apart from the notion of director as *auteur* - is the idea of the screenwriter as 'worker for hire'. The screenplay consequently becomes 'widely dismissed as corporately authored'. Any implied ownership that an author has over a 'literary' text is just not found in the case of writing for film, and this contributes to the 'near-invisibility' of the screenplay in critical studies.⁹⁷ We might note here the consonance with Bradbury's remark above about screenwriters being 'unknown'.

Price's later *A History of the Screenplay* (2013) goes beyond industrial practice and general technique, to consider the style of screenwriters, teasing out the diversity of their poetics and the extent of the rhetorical devices chosen in practice – in contrast to the supposed 'rules' of screenwriting often found in screenwriting manuals. Here we find, for example, supporting evidence for the creative use of the frequently deprecated practice of using screenplay text to provide 'comment' on action.⁹⁸

Most recently, Ian W. Macdonald has shone further light on the distinction between the practices of the film industries and the idiosyncratic practices of individual screenwriters, identifying them respectively (after Pierre Bourdieu) as 'doxa' and 'habitus'.⁹⁹ Macdonald also seeks to resolve some of the difficulty surrounding the true function of the screenplay, by recognising that even a final draft script is merely an attempt to capture on the page a 'screen idea' which has a nebulous existence as 'a proposal for a screenwork' on its way to being 'sometimes' realised as a completed film:

⁹⁵ Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 395. Italics in original.

⁹⁶ Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 5-6.

⁹⁷ Price, *Screenplay*, pp. 12-3.

⁹⁸ Steven Price, *A History of the Screenplay* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 212-3,

⁹⁹ Macdonald, *Poetics*, pp. 23-5.

Any notion held by one or more people of a singular concept (however complex), which may have conventional shape or not, intended to become a screenwork, whether or not it is possible to describe it in written form or by other means.¹⁰⁰

The sheer diversity of viewpoints informing screenwriting studies makes it seem likely that a single, unified model of screenwriting will ever emerge, but it is a field rich in insightful perspectives which can inform the present study.¹⁰¹

4 The Thesis

I have chosen to focus this thesis on clusters of works which have entailed substantial cross-media adaptation by Bradbury: *Moby Dick*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. In the case of Bradbury's self-adaptations, I have chosen those based on familiar, major works so that the thesis is comprehensible even to a reader unfamiliar with Bradbury's screenplays. As a result, I have largely chosen to avoid focus on short works (short stories, short films, television episodes, portmanteau films based on short stories), although many short works will be discussed where relevant. This is not to dismiss the short form, or the importance of the short story to Bradbury's body of work; rather, it is a recognition that issues surrounding short fiction in film are deserving of a separate study. By 'clusters of works' I mean works in any medium which have a related origin. An example of a cluster is: *Moby Dick* (Bradbury screenplay); *Moby Dick* (Huston film); *Leviathan '99* (Bradbury work in at least three media); *Green Shadows, White Whale* (Bradbury autobiographical novel about the writing of *Moby Dick*) (see chapter one, below).

Chapter one explores Bradbury's work relating to *Moby Dick* (1956), the John Huston film made from Bradbury's first full screenplay. While adapting the work of another writer is somewhat atypical of Bradbury, most accounts of his career point to this film as pivotal. I examine it here for three reasons. First, for the insight it provides into Bradbury's abilities as an adapter. In writing the screenplay Bradbury had to adapt a largely non-linear novel into a conventional, linear Hollywood narrative, a problem he would face again when trying

¹⁰⁰ Macdonald, *Poetics*, pp. 4-5; 15.

¹⁰¹ See Steven Maras, 'Some Attitudes and Trajectories in Screenwriting Research', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 2.2 (2011), 275-86.

to adapt his own book *The Martian Chronicles* for the screen. Second, Bradbury would also encounter the problem of accommodating a collaborator (Huston) whose claim of co-authorship of the screenplay would challenge Bradbury's romantic sense of screenwriter as author. Third, the screenplay for *Moby Dick* itself becomes the 'source' of Bradbury's cross-media creation *Leviathan '99*, and the entirety of the *Moby Dick* experience proves an endless stimulus for subsequent Bradbury works in various media, giving a first indication of the fluidity of ideas shifting in and out of Bradbury's own works.

Chapter two examines Bradbury's multiple attempts over several decades to adapt *The Martian Chronicles* for film. Each attempt takes a different approach to accommodating the novel's fragmentary structure and origins, and shows Bradbury to be an innovative self-adapter. As with *Moby Dick*, his efforts reveal a strong appreciation of structure, even as he struggles to identify a unified, linear narrative in his own fragmented novel. I show Bradbury's screenwriting on the aborted *Chronicles* film projects to be remarkably fluid, pulling in ideas from outside of the novel, and generating new ideas which would later be published as stand-alone short stories. The un-filmed screenplays lead Bradbury to a grand narrative extending far beyond *The Martian Chronicles*.

Chapter three analyses *Fahrenheit 451*, another novel with origins in precursor fragments which in this case creatively converge to become Bradbury's most cinematic novel - and therefore the one novel most likely to work when adapted for screen. The novel's McLuhan-inspired critique of media led to it becoming the only one of Bradbury's works to have been filmed in his lifetime by a major figure in world cinema. François Truffaut's 1966 adaptation was made without Bradbury's direct participation, but I examine it closely for two reasons. First, because Truffaut's screenplay choices serve to validate cinematic aspects of Bradbury's novel; and second, because the film had a direct impact on Bradbury's own future adaptations – for stage in the 1980s, and for film in the 1990s.

Chapter four examines *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, concluding the thesis with a rare success as, on the face of it, a Bradbury novel is filmed from a Bradbury screenplay. I show that once again fragmentary ideas from early works converge, but this time in a screen treatment which only later develops into the familiar novel, and later still being adapted back for screen. It is with this work that Bradbury's claim to being a 'hybrid writer', at home in both the novel and the screenplay, is chiefly evident, although Bradbury's three separate phases of screenwriting here result in some vastly different presentations of the same basic narrative, as Bradbury experiments with different models of adaptation. My

study of the unfortunate circumstances of production of the film is unique in providing an account of Bradbury's true role in the film's chaotic post-production. Late in life, Bradbury would bizarrely claim to have 'directed' the film's troublesome re-shoots. Here, I examine the veracity of such claims, and show Bradbury for the first time truly having to struggle with the collaborative nature of film-making.

The process of adaptation that emerges below – a form of serial re-creation – is more complex and more nuanced than any binary model of transfer from source to target text. Bradbury's cinematic prose style is key to facilitating a near endless cross-media revision and re-visioning, previously 'something to hide', but now for the first time revealed as central to his authorship.

Note: This published version of the thesis has several quotations removed due to copyright issues, although references have been retained. The removed quotations are on pp. 97, 98, 203, 205, 210, 225, and 228.

Chapter 1: *Moby Dick*

1 Introduction

In 1953, Ray Bradbury was invited by John Huston to write the screenplay for his planned film of *Moby Dick*. The Herman Melville novel had been on Huston's mind for years, but he had always struggled to find the right approach or screenwriter.¹ According to several accounts, it was Bradbury's short story 'The Fog Horn' (1951) that convinced Huston that Bradbury would be right for the job.²

This was not Bradbury's first project as a screenwriter – he had already completed the treatment for the feature film *It Came From Outer Space* (Jack Arnold, 1953) by this time – but *Moby Dick* would become his first full screenwriting credit. More importantly, though, working on the adaptation would prove a turning point in Bradbury's career. According to literary biographer Jonathan Eller, Bradbury's attentions as a writer underwent a complete change as a result of this one experience, to the extent that his career can be divided into two distinct phases: before *Moby Dick* he was primarily a writer of original short stories (and novels-in-progress); after *Moby Dick* he was mainly a dramatist, with only a small output of prose fiction.³

Huston was fully aware of the difficulty of translating *Moby Dick* to film. Looking back twenty-five years later, he commented on a central conflict at work in his attempt at adaptation. On the one hand, the 'wonderful, random, disparate quality' of Melville's book requiring an 'adult mind' to appreciate it; and on the other hand the preconceptions of 'those who thought of *Moby Dick* as an adventure story'.⁴

Bradbury was also aware of the immensity of the task. Many of his comments on his process of adaptation emphasise the sheer quantity of exploratory writing needed before he could condense the novel down to a manageable two-hour film. He told Nolan that he

¹ Lawrence Grobel, *The Hustons: The Life and Times of a Hollywood Dynasty* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, Inc., 2014), p. 416.

² Weller, *Chronicles*, p. 212;

Oswald Morris, *Huston, We Have a Problem* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), p. 84;

Jonathan R. Eller, *Becoming Ray Bradbury* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011), ch. 46.

³ Eller, *Becoming*, p. 288.

⁴ Joseph E. Persico, 'An Interview With John Huston: The Dean of American Movie Men at Seventy-Five', *American Heritage*, 33.3 (April/May 1982). [online]

< <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/interview-john-huston?page=show> > [accessed 12 January 2017].

had to read the novel nine times, re-write scenes up to thirty times, and in the process generate '1,500 pages to get a final 150'.⁵ Bradbury had earlier made an identical statement in evidence to the Writer's Guild, when contesting Huston's claim to be the script's co-author.⁶

Under Huston's direction, Bradbury created a viable screenplay, thanks to a largely shared vision of Melville's novel. But after Bradbury completed his work on the screenplay, Huston continued to develop it, which explains why Bradbury's screenplay and Huston's film ultimately diverge.

This chapter examines the significance of Bradbury's pursuit of the Great White Whale, addressing three key areas:

First, the significance of 'The Fog Horn' as precursor to Bradbury's adaptation of Melville. Can we see here any cinematic or other elements which may have attracted Huston to Bradbury as a possible adapter, or any stylistic or other indicators of where Bradbury might take the adaptation?

Second, Bradbury's contribution to the completed film, drawing upon his own published version of the screenplay, and comparison with Huston's release version of the film. Huston fought for (and won) a shared screenwriting credit. To what extent can we identify Bradbury as 'author' of the adaptation?

Third, the long lasting impact of the *Moby Dick* experience on Bradbury's later writing, which led him to develop such diverse works as: the autobiographical novel *Green Shadows, White Whale* (1992); a series of plays and short stories inspired by his time in Ireland working on the film; and his forty-year development of the play and novella *Leviathan '99*. How does Bradbury's work shift across multiple media, apparently unconcerned about the limits and constraints of different media?

⁵ William F. Nolan, *Nolan on Bradbury* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2013), p. 61.

⁶ Ray Bradbury, letter to Mary Dorfman of Writer's Guild of America West, 11 May 1955.

2 'The Fog Horn'

'The Fog Horn' first appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in June 1951 under the title 'The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms'.⁷ It tells of a pair of lighthouse keepers whose fog horn lures a monster from the deep. It turns out to be a dinosaur, a lonely creature, and the last of its kind. When the fog horn is switched off, the creature becomes vengeful and destroys the lighthouse.

According to Bradbury's own account, he had long wanted to work with John Huston, a film-maker he admired. He gave Huston copies of all of his books, among which was *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953), whose opening story is 'The Fog Horn'.⁸ Huston does not seem to have mentioned 'The Fog Horn' in any of his published remarks on Bradbury, but did say of Bradbury's writing that there was 'something of Melville's elusive quality in his work'.⁹

'The Fog Horn' has a number of elements which put the reader in mind of Melville's *Moby Dick*, such as the broadly nautical setting and the rising up of a monstrous creature from the sea. More specifically, though, Bradbury is able to engage the reader with a cinematic and a sensory use of language, as well as engender sympathy for the lonely 'monster', and hint at a mystical dimension. The story's opening is a blend of cinematic description and a typical Bradbury appeal to the senses:

Out there in the cold water, far from land, we waited every night for the coming of the fog, and it came, and we oiled the brass machinery and lit the fog light up in the stone tower. Feeling like two birds in the grey sky, McDunn and I sent the light touching out, red, then white, then red again, to eye the lonely ships. And if they did not see our light, then there was always our Voice, the great deep cry of our Fog Horn shuddering through the rags of mist to startle the gulls away like decks of scattered cards and make the waves turn high and foam.¹⁰

The lighthouse's beam is a 'God-light' to the fish, but it is the repetitive, deep bass 'Voice' of the fog horn which communicates with a larger creature from the deep, which first manifests itself as 'a ripple, followed by a wave, a rising, a bubble, a bit of froth' and later

⁷ 'The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms' was not Bradbury's title, but it was retained for the 1953 film (director Eugène Lourié). Bradbury was not involved in this production.

⁸ Arnold Kunert, 'Ray Bradbury On Hitchcock and Other Magic of the Screen', in *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Steven L. Aggelis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 56-57; Weller, *Chronicles*, p. 212.

⁹ John Huston, *An Open Book* (Boston, MA: Da Capo, 1994), p. 251.

¹⁰ Ray Bradbury, *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (New York: Knopf, 1980), p. 266.

swims 'with a dark majesty out in the icy waters, far away.' Later, the monster answers the fog horn:

A cry came across a million years of water and mist. A cry so anguished and alone [...] The monster cried out at the tower. The Fog Horn blew. The monster roared again. The Fog Horn blew. The monster opened its great toothed mouth and the sound that came from it was the sound of the Fog Horn itself. Lonely and vast and far away. The sound of isolation, a viewless sea, a cold night, apartness.¹¹

Bradbury here establishes an evocation of mystery and primeval time surrounding the barely glimpsed creature, recalling the whale of Melville's *Moby Dick*.

As well as having a clear visual (and aural) dimension, Bradbury's presentation of the text on the page is sometimes suggestive of the technique he had also developed in his screenwriting for *It Came From Outer Space*, and would continue to use throughout his screenwriting career. He makes distinctive use of paragraphs – often very short – to create an effect similar to cinematic montage, and in so doing he anticipates modern screenplay practice in which, by convention, a paragraph of description equates to a single shot on the screen:

The monster was rushing at the lighthouse.

The Fog Horn blew.

'Let's see what happens,' said McDunn.

He switched the Fog Horn off.

The ensuing minute of silence was so intense that we could hear our hearts pounding in the glassed area of the tower, could hear the slow greased turn of the light.

The monster stopped and froze. Its great lantern eyes blinked. Its mouth gaped. It gave a sort of rumble, like a volcano. It twitched its head this way and that, as if to seek the sounds now dwindled off into the fog [...] ¹²

There is an element of parataxis at work in this sequence – the placement of ideas in succession, without the use of conjunction – which is typical of Bradbury's approach to

¹¹ Bradbury, *The Stories*, p. 269.

¹² Bradbury, *The Stories*, pp. 270-1.

action scenes in his short stories, and according to Steven Price is typical of the screenplay as a form.¹³

There is a curious duality in Bradbury's use of the term 'monster'. With its root in the latin *monstrum*, the word usually indicates something repulsive or frightful, but also means 'omen' or 'warning'. It has connotations of showing or revealing, particularly of something divine breaking through to the mundane world. In Bradbury's story, it first appears not in identifying the sea creature, but in characterising the 'monster voice' of the fog horn. This encourages the reader to think of the fog horn from the point of view of the creature yet to emerge, building sympathy for it. Once the creature appears, it is unhesitatingly referred to by the narrator as 'the monster', and yet it continues to be presented in a deeply sympathetic way, with an emphasis on its loneliness. Bradbury is dealing with attitudes to 'alienness', our quickness to adopt an easy label and yet our equally quick tendency to anthropomorphise, in a way that also emerges in his screen work for *It Came From Outer Space*.¹⁴

Ultimately, the monster resolves to destroy the lighthouse, now recalling Moby Dick's immense destructive capacity. Both the creature and Moby Dick break through from an essentially unknowable other world; ominously suggest threat and destruction; and finally bring about ruin.

There is one further way in which 'The Fog Horn' indicates Bradbury's suitability for adapting Melville, and that is its structure. The story is told in the first person by a mariner newly arrived at the lighthouse, just as Melville's Ishmael is freshly arrived on Ahab's Pequod. Within the story, however, there is another tale, since much of 'The Fog Horn' consists of the experienced lighthouse keeper McDunn myth-making in telling his tall tales of the sea. While not nearly as complex as the narrative strategies of Melville's novel, there is a sense of a narrative pieced together from different viewpoints and with differing levels of authenticity.

¹³ Price, *Screenplay*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁴ Jonathan R. Eller, 'Bradbury's Web of Fear: the Lost Metaphor Behind the Screen Treatment', in Ray Bradbury, *It Came From Outer Space* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gauntlet, 2004), pp. 27-41.

3 Screenplay and film

Bradbury's writing of the screenplay for *Moby Dick* occupied him for much of 1953-4, and was carried out mostly in Ireland, but with brief interludes in London and elsewhere. He left the production before shooting began, but continued re-writing the script after returning home to California. Huston, meanwhile, continued to develop his shooting script as filming got underway, and incorporated a number of changes that lead the completed film to diverge somewhat from Bradbury's version of the script, principally in the final third.

Other writers were also involved in the re-writing after Bradbury's departure: journalist John Godley, a friend and neighbour of Huston's; and novelist Roald Dahl (who worked for a brief period making the dialogue closer to Melville, but reported that Huston refused to pay him).¹⁵ Huston, who began his film career as a screenwriter, also reported writing some scenes personally, and would ultimately insist on a shared screen credit with Bradbury. Even Orson Welles, who appears in a single sequence as Father Mapple, claimed to have written his own dialogue¹⁶. This complexity of authorship is not unusual in film production, and has led to Ian W. Macdonald's proposed reduced emphasis on 'the screenplay' as the focus of screenwriting studies, and the substitution of the more nebulous 'screen idea', which he characterises as 'a label for the singular project that people are working on', and 'the focus of the practice of screenwriting [...] a term which names what is being striven for'. According to Macdonald, as each screen work develops, each draft of the script becomes 'one more fixed version' of the screen idea.¹⁷

As is so often the case, the shared credit has blurred all questions of who is responsible for ideas in the finished film, in some cases leading to a distinct false attribution. For example, David Lavery discusses some of the 'wrongs' of the ending of Huston's film, and attributes to Bradbury some bad choices which are not found in Bradbury's screenplay.¹⁸ Apart from Bradbury's own recollection, the most detailed account to date of the writing of the script is given by Eller in an afterword to Bradbury's published version of the screenplay.¹⁹

¹⁵ Donald Sturrock, *Storyteller: the Life of Roald Dahl* (London: HarperCollins, 2011), p. 342.

¹⁶ Charles Higham, *Orson Welles: The Fall and Rise of an American Genius* (London: New English Library, 1986), p. 286;
Phil Nichols, 'Bradbury vs. Welles', *Bradburymedia*, 18 Aug 2009
<<http://bradburymedia.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/bradbury-vs-welles.html>> [accessed 2 January 2017].

¹⁷ Macdonald, *Poetics*, p. 4.

¹⁸ David Lavery, 'Melville's Moby-Dick and Hollywood' in *Nineteenth-Century American Fiction on Screen*, ed. by R. Barton Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 94-105.

¹⁹ Ray Bradbury, *Moby Dick: a Screenplay*. (Burton, MI: Subterranean Press, 2008)

Although Eller acknowledges that the published version is compiled from more than one source (principally Bradbury's own complete draft with some additional pages sent later to Huston as amendments), and possibly includes some small content that might have been re-written by Huston, it would appear that the published version largely represents Bradbury's fixed intentions for the adaptation.

Bradbury's intentions are also made available to us in a number of published and unpublished reflections where he discusses *Moby Dick*, although it should be borne in mind that he will necessarily be adopting a different mask in each of these, depending on the circumstances of composition and publication, and that his views will likely have changed with the passage of time. The most useful of his own commentaries include the essay 'The Ardent Blasphemers' (1962) which draws contrasts between Melville's Ahab and Jules Verne's Captain Nemo. Although setting out to prove a point about Verne's composition of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea* (1870), Bradbury here reveals his own interpretations and prejudices about Ahab.²⁰

Other helpful observations appear in 'The Whale, the Whim and I' (published in 2006, but date of composition unknown) in which Bradbury gives an account of an epiphany which helped him complete the screenplay.²¹ This account is quite similar to his fictionalised version of the same events in the novel *Green Shadows, White Whale* (1992). Bradbury also talked through his work in an unpublished interview with Craig Cunningham in 1961, and in several published interviews.²² His reflections on *Moby Dick* in each case are consistent, and tend to fall into three areas. First, the structural arrangement of narrative elements into a coherent, causal sequence of events, meeting with Hollywood expectations for a broadly linear plot. Second, his method of condensing narrative into efficient visual metaphor, making for a narrative which is cinematic. Third, his method of absorbing narrative elements and re-writing until the point where he can produce a fresh draft which accurately captures the essence of the source material.

²⁰ Ray Bradbury, *Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon from the Cave, Too Far from the Stars* (New York: Wm. Morrow, 2005), pp. 170-186.

²¹ Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 16-22.

²² Craig Cunningham, UCLA Oral History Programme interview with Ray Bradbury (unpublished transcript, 1961), pp. 250-63; Thomas R. Atkins, 'The Illustrated Man: An Interview with Ray Bradbury', *Sight and Sound*, 43 (1974), 96-100; George Stevens Jr., *Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood's Golden Age at the American Film Institute* (New York: Knopf, 2006), pp. 363-384.

The next section discusses some of the key characteristics of Bradbury's screenplay, following which will be a comparison of the screenplay with the finished film, which we can take to be Huston's fixed intention for the project.

3.1 Bradbury's Screenplay: Comparison with Melville

The challenge in adapting *Moby Dick* should not be underestimated. On the one hand, the novel has a large number of chapters that might be considered disposable in the sense that they do little to propel the narrative in the way customarily expected in a feature film. On the other hand, many of those 'disposable' chapters illuminate the themes of the book. It is both a highly fragmentary book, leading James McIntosh to assert that 'the reader is not to bask in any given mood long enough to get attached to it' and yet full of alternative explanations and different ways of viewing the commonplace, which McIntosh attributes to 'a fluid consciousness at work rather than the precisely selecting mind of an anatomist and historian of the psyche'.²³

Bradbury's approach to the screenplay, guided by Huston, was to streamline the events of Melville's narrative, producing a linear plotline with a dramatic sense of momentum. He simplifies Ahab to a monomaniacal madman, while taking some of the more rational side of Ahab and transferring it to Starbuck. Ahab's and Starbuck's individual story arcs are resolved somewhat differently than in Melville's novel, with Starbuck ultimately seeming to kill Moby Dick. The resulting screenplay amounts to what William F. Touponce calls 'a fascinating hybrid mixture of Bradbury's poetic prose and Melville's imagination', and which 'striv[es] to achieve a kind of "cinematic" significance'.²⁴

In producing a streamlined narrative for the screenplay, Bradbury makes two strategic decisions. First, he eliminates most of Melville's non-narrative passages which, for example, document types of whales, methods of whaling, and philosophise on 'whiteness' – all of which accumulate to generate the mythic status of Moby Dick. This logical narrative decision does, however, have one negative consequence in that the screenplay has difficulty in mythopoeically presenting the whale. Further, Robert Zoellner argues that the non-narrative passages represent Ishmael seeking (but failing) to gain an objective scientific

²³ James McIntosh, 'The Mariner's Multiple Quest' in *New Essays on Moby Dick*, ed. by Richard H. Brodhead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 23-52.

²⁴ William F. Touponce, introduction to Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 9.

understanding of the whale, in contrast to Ahab's irrational quest. To redact these passages is to reduce Ishmael's dramatic function and his understanding of events. The result is a telling of *Moby Dick* as just a whale hunt, and stops it being 'Ishmael's story'.²⁵

Bradbury's second strategic decision is the removal of Fedallah, a figure he characterised as 'a terrible bore'.²⁶ In Melville's novel, Fedallah is a mysterious figure secreted on the Pequod by Ahab as leader of his own personal whaling team. He has the ear of Ahab as no other character does, and functions as a prophet whose predictions urge Ahab on to pursue Moby Dick. Fedallah is killed by the whale and, attached to Moby Dick by tangled ropes, beckons Ahab to continue, to his own certain doom.

The removal of Fedallah inevitably undermines the dramatic structure of Melville's text, but Bradbury compensates with significant adjustments which enable Ahab to become something closer to a central, driven character of the type favoured by conventional Hollywood narrative. In Bradbury's version, Ahab's forward momentum is entirely self-provided.

Bradbury's explanation of his method of condensing narrative into efficient visual metaphor is best exemplified by his account of how he formulated the opening sequence of his screenplay. Taking Melville's opening as a cue, Bradbury chooses to emphasise Ishmael's reflection on how men are drawn to the sea, and constructs 'a sea of land and showing the undulations of the land'.²⁷ As Ishmael speaks an abbreviated version of Melville's chapter one, the visual directions of the screenplay take him on a journey from a hillside source of water down to the whaling town of New Bedford, as if the water is destiny carrying him down to the coast:

A sea of hills over which the titles appear.

[...] Ishmael as he begins walking again, vigorously, looking at the hills as he moves.

[...] As Ishmael speaks, the CAMERA peers right and left at ponds, lakes, standing pools, a creek, a river. The bigger the stream, the faster the water rushes, the faster walks Ishmael.

²⁵ Robert Zoellner, *The Salt-Sea Mastodon: a Reading of Moby-Dick* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 9.

²⁶ Weller, *Listen*, p. 282; Atkins, pp. 96–100.

²⁷ Cunningham, p. 247.

In a series of shots, Ishmael strides, the rivers grow larger and the sound and the look of them seem to rush him on.

[...] The CAMERA sees what Ishmael sees. The ocean. Not a sea of hills this time, but now an endless sea of blue. On the shore of this sea is the town. Storm clouds are gathering in the sky.²⁸

Note the use of instructions for the camera, which is to adopt Ishmael's point of view more or less throughout this sequence. This careful use of the 'camera eye' is one of Bradbury's key screenwriting techniques for establishing what we might call the controlling consciousness of the script, akin to the choice of narratorial stance in prose fiction. Here coupled with first-person voice-over narration, Bradbury is able to emulate Melville's use of Ishmael as narrator – although as the screenplay unfolds it becomes clear that the first-person approach is not used systematically throughout the script, but is instead adopted periodically. We should here note that the consequence of using the first-person narrator in the novel differs from the equivalent strategy in the film in one major respect: in the novel, Ishmael is never 'seen'; whereas in the screenplay and film he *is* seen, since the camera eye (except in exceptional circumstances which don't apply here) is never fully subjective. However, Bradbury's physical detailing of Ishmael is limited to 'a man walking with a stick and a carpetbag'; the screenwriter defers to the director in the matter of physical character design.

Bradbury points out that the sequence above takes less than a minute, although it takes Melville eight or nine pages to cover the same ground. In explaining the philosophy behind such adaptation, Bradbury says, 'Look interpretatively at the thing you are adapting and find visual ways of extracting it. Put this chapter into a wine press and crush delicately down upon it to get that essence'.²⁹ In his metaphorical way, Bradbury clearly believes that something almost indefinable passes from one work to another when an adaptation is carried out. As Kamilla Elliott has demonstrated, such a view 'holds firmly in filmmaker, popular and critical accounts' despite the weight of critical frameworks resisting it. As Elliott puts it, such a belief that 'content' can somehow be separated from 'form' (and then, in Bradbury's metaphor, be decanted into some other form) goes against poststructuralists who 'have exploded form/content binaries'; against structuralists when 'words and images are decreed untranslatable as whole signs'; against semioticians such as Umberto Eco who

²⁸ Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 15-6.

²⁹ Cunningham, p. 247.

maintain that there is no relationship whatsoever between a novel and a film adapted from it, except for the same title being applied to both.³⁰

The screenplay runs to 169 pages as published. In the first half Bradbury presents selected events drawn directly from the novel, and in the same sequence as in the novel, although he occasionally shifts dialogue from one part of Melville's narrative to another, as well as creating new dialogue. This first half of the screenplay gives us the introduction of Ishmael as narrator and occasional viewpoint character, and the introduction of all the key characters of the story: Ishmael's harpooneer companion Queequeg; the three ship's mates Starbuck, Stubb and Flask; and the mysterious and obsessive Captain Ahab. The first half also shows the preparations and departure of the whaling ship Pequod, Elijah's prophetic warning about the fate of the Pequod, a view of daily life on board the ship, a representation of Ahab's control over his crew, and the first lowering of the whaling boats for a successful hunt.

The one exception to Melville's chronology in the first half of the screenplay is bringing forward the appearance of the doubloon: its first mention in Melville comes in chapter 99, quite late in the novel, but Bradbury brings it forward to a point equivalent to about chapter 30. The doubloon represents an important symbol for Bradbury, and its early appearance is important to his plotting.

Bradbury's first demonstration of Starbuck's role comes in pages 83-93 of the published screenplay, in a scene which builds on at least four separate chapters from the novel (chapters 44, 46, 97 and 109). The scene takes Starbuck into Ahab's cabin, and gives the first insight into Ahab's personal world. Ahab reveals his complex charts on which he has been plotting the reported movements of Moby Dick. He reveals that he plans to prioritise the hunting of Moby Dick, putting him in conflict with Starbuck, who wishes the Pequod to fulfil its mission of hunting *many* whales rather than irrationally pursuing just one. Ahab declares Moby Dick to be evil; Starbuck declares that to seek vengeance on a dumb brute is blasphemous. Ahab clarifies his view of Moby Dick: as a mask which must be punched through; as an embodiment of all the things that have plagued man. Finally, Ahab wishes to know if Starbuck is with him or against him, to which Starbuck replies that 'Ahab need only fear Ahab'.

³⁰ Kamilla Elliott, 'Literary Film Adaptation and the Form/Content Dilemma', in *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. by Marie-Laure Ryan (University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 220–43.

While this scene synthesises ideas from Melville, it reveals a key departure from Melville's characterisations of Ahab and Starbuck. In Melville, Ahab himself is rationally and schemingly aware of the need to maintain a working balance between his personal mission to destroy Moby Dick and his professional duty to his crew and the Pequod:

[...] it may have been that he was by nature and long habituation far too wedded to a fiery whaleman's ways, altogether to abandon the collateral prosecution of the voyage [...] For all these reasons then, and others perhaps too analytic to be verbally developed here, Ahab plainly saw that he must still in a good degree continue true to the natural, nominal purpose of the Pequod's voyage [...]³¹

In Bradbury's screenplay, though, the two sides of Ahab's calculation become applied quite systematically to Starbuck and Ahab, with Starbuck always adopting the position that the Pequod's stated mission is right contractually, morally and spiritually, and Ahab pressing for the single-minded pursuit of Moby Dick at any opportunity.

Bradbury later solidifies Starbuck's opposition to Ahab with a scene which has no direct counterpart in the novel: Starbuck tries to gain the support of Stubb and Flask in removing Ahab from command. Starbuck is again cool and rational, and reads from maritime law to back his argument, but the other ship's mates are fearful of the consequences, leaving Starbuck alone in his opposition to Ahab. Although this is a scene entirely of Bradbury's creation, it does dramatise another of Ahab's trains of thought from chapter 46 of the novel: his awareness that he could face an 'unanswerable charge' of usurping the vessel, allowing his crew to take command away from him. Starbuck and Ahab become, in Bradbury's screenplay, approximate halves of Melville's Ahab, allowing the inner drama of Ahab to be externally enacted in scenes of character conflict.³²

According to Eller, one of Bradbury's influences as a playwright and screenwriter was Lajos Egri's *How to Write a Play*.³³ Egri advocates a dialectical approach, in which a writer should identify a clear thesis and antithesis to drive the narrative.³⁴ In the *Moby Dick* screenplay, Bradbury appears to take Egri's recommendation literally by allocating these two functions to two distinct characters. However, this is a technique that Bradbury had used several times before in his early *Weird Tales* short stories such as 'The Wind' and 'The Crowd' (both published in 1943). Shortly after *Moby Dick*, he would also return to the technique in

³¹ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (London: Chancellor Press, 1985), pp. 216-8.

³² Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 110-115.

³³ Eller, *Becoming*, pp. 62-3.

³⁴ Lajos Egri, *The Art of Dramatic Writing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), pp. 49-59.

structuring his novel and screenplay versions of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* with its twin protagonists, and later in his career he would dramatise for stage his single-character short story 'The Pedestrian' (1951) by splitting the protagonist into two characters.

The second half of the screenplay begins to substantially re-order the novel's events, and sees Bradbury inventing new actions, and giving a new logic to the symbolic sequence of events that lead to the demise of the Pequod. It is in this section that Starbuck is transformed into something of a rational hero in contrast to the wholly deranged Ahab.

The sequence of symbolic events draws to some extent on otherwise unrelated incidents in the novel. Bradbury places them not in an exact causal relationship, but in a sequence of danger and unpredictability which implies a magical connection between them:

- Ahab nails a doubloon to the mast, promising it to the first man to spy Moby Dick (Melville's chapter 99, 'The Doubloon').
- An over-eager seaman falls from the mast to his death in the sea, an intrusion into Moby Dick's domain (inspired by Melville's chapter 126, 'The Life-Buoy').
- The Pequod is becalmed. Days spent in baking sun, which reflects off the doubloon.
- Queequeg consults the bones and foresees his death, requiring the construction of a coffin (Melville's chapter 110, 'Queequeg in his Coffin'), and sending him into a trance (whose only counterpart in Melville is the much earlier chapter 17, 'The Ramadan').
- A sadistic crew member is tempted to cut the comatose Queequeg.
- Ishmael protects Queequeg, but finds his own life in danger.
- Queequeg rescues Ishmael, just as Moby Dick's 'spirit spout' is sighted (referring to Melville's chapter 51, 'The Spirit-Spout').
- Unable to pursue the whale at this point, Ahab orders the crew to row the Pequod to find the wind.
- They find the wind, which brings on a storm which almost destroys the ship.

This whole section is almost entirely Bradbury's own creation, stitching together various incidents from Melville, and implying a cat-and-mouse game in which the whale is able to tease and out-manoeuvre Ahab. In many places, Bradbury is confidently able to locate the cinematic within Melville's text. A good example of this is his representation of the

doubloon. In Melville's novel, Ahab's walking about the quarter-deck is punctuated by his 'strangely eyeing' objects of his interest, his glances shooting 'like a javelin'.³⁵ The relationship between viewer (Ahab), the action of shifting the gaze, and the object of the gaze seems equivalent to classic cinematic montage of character glancing cutting to a shot of what they are looking at. Bradbury reproduces this effect in his screenplay, while also replicating Melville's succession of points of view of sailors looking at the doubloon.³⁶

In the midst of the chain of events listed above, Bradbury shows the extent of the friendship of Ishmael and Queequeg, with each one risking his life for the other. Melville, of course, places these two characters in much more intimate connection, beginning with them intertwined in bed (chapter 7), but apart from their declaration of friendship earlier in the screenplay, this is the only sequence in which Bradbury really has the two interact.

The Pequod rides out the storm, with Starbuck and Ahab at loggerheads over Ahab risking the ship purely out of blasphemous vengeance. Bradbury's screenplay then moves to the final phase, the ultimate encounter between Ahab and his quarry, triggered by Ishmael's realisation that Elijah's prophecy is coming true.

Ahab instructs Starbuck to remain on the Pequod, while he lowers with one of the boats. Starbuck considers this order, but deliberately disobeys by lowering himself in another boat. Moby Dick is sighted and pursued, with Ahab getting dragged under by the whale. Shortly after, the whale surfaces and Ahab is seen tied to its side, entangled in harpoon ropes, 'like a corpse borne on a great white bier'; a conflation of Melville's fates for Fedallah and Ahab.³⁷ The storyline of Bradbury's Ahab is thus resolved by Ahab and the whale, whose fates have been intertwined for years, becoming permanently and finally joined as one. (The completed film adds the detail of Ahab's corpse beckoning to the crew, exactly re-purposing Melville's image of Fedallah.³⁸ The beckoning is not found in Bradbury's script, so it presumably represents Huston's choice rather than Bradbury's).

Starbuck now seizes upon the opportunity for resolution, ordering that his crew will do what whalers do: kill the whale. After further pursuit, Moby Dick is seriously wounded, with Starbuck boldly seeming to make a successful fatal blow with his lance. In his apparent

³⁵ Melville, p. 440.

³⁶ Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 117, 119, 121.

³⁷ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 178.

³⁸ *Moby Dick*, dir. by John Huston (MGM, 1956; Shock Entertainment, 2014) [on BluRay].

death throes, the 'dying whale' thrashes the ocean into a whirlpool, sucking in the Pequod and her crew; all except for Ishmael, who survives by clinging to Queequeg's coffin.³⁹

Bradbury's resolution allows Ahab's destiny to be fulfilled, and also allows the rational Starbuck to prove himself right, but of course this 'Hollywood ending' with the whale defeated is a deviation from Melville's more open-ended tale: Melville's *Moby Dick* is ultimately unknowable, and is last seen re-entering the unknown world from which it sprang. As we shall see, Bradbury's interpretation – which did *not* actually make it into the finished film – triggered some highly critical responses to *Moby Dick*.

3.2 Bradbury's Screenplay: Developing Starbuck

Although Bradbury's restructuring of the events of the narrative, including his changing of the ending of *Moby Dick*, have attracted most attention from critics, more interesting from the point of view of dramatization are his attempts to flesh out Starbuck. Starbuck is humanised beyond Melville's characterisation, and is additionally shaped into the primary 'window character' through whom we can approach and understand Ahab.⁴⁰ Bradbury's revisions to Starbuck can best be appreciated in four key scenes.

First, Bradbury specifically introduces a scene of wives and mothers waving off the ship when the Pequod sets sail, and singles out Starbuck's wife for portrayal in a highly cinematic presentation which dramatises her parting thought of her husband (a scene which plays differently in the completed film):

The CAMERA takes a second huge step up the hill and now a single house stands clear, and on top of this house, a widow's walk, and on the walk a woman stands looking out to sea.

The CAMERA takes a third step and now the widow's walk is MEDIUM CLOSE and the woman, STARBUCK'S WIFE, standing motionless. The only sound is the sound of the sea wind blowing about the eaves of the house, softly blowing the black of her dress and the black of her shawl.

The CAMERA stands looking over her shoulder at the distant port and the ship going out in the soft light of mid-day in December, and the wind blowing

³⁹ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 180.

⁴⁰ Dan Decker, *Anatomy of a Screenplay* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1998), ch.2. Kindle ebook; Michael W. Shurgot, *Shakespeare's Sense of Character: On the Page and From the Stage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 57.

quietly about her and no other sound and no movement save the ship going out and away.⁴¹

Starbuck is the only character singled out for depiction as having connections to characters outside of the Pequod, and this especially places him in antithesis to Ahab, who has no emotional bonds to any character.

Second, Bradbury's Starbuck repeatedly uses rational thought to counter the irrational Ahab whereas Melville's Starbuck often finds himself unable to break out of his role of First Mate. While Melville's Starbuck finds himself instantaneously, almost as a surprise to himself, taking up a gun against Ahab without prior thought of this action (chapter 123, 'The Musket'), Bradbury's Starbuck takes a firearm as a deliberate act for potential future use. The opposition between Starbuck and Ahab comes to a head in Bradbury's screenplay when Starbuck determines to save the ship during a storm, by cutting the mainsail free, directly defying Ahab's orders.

Third, Bradbury makes frequent use of Starbuck to prompt the viewer (reader) to reflect on Ahab's behaviour, often by the very simple technique of intercutting Starbuck's reaction to something Ahab has said or done. A good example of this is in the sequence towards the end of the screenplay where Captain Gardiner of the ship Rachel makes a heartfelt plea for Ahab to join him in his search for his lost son. Each of Gardiner's pleas is met with silence from Ahab, but is intercut with Starbuck's increasingly concerned looks:

AHAB does not answer. STARBUCK looks at him. [...]

STARBUCK watches every muscle and line in AHAB'S face[...]

AHAB is frozen. Behind him the crew stand, waiting.

STARBUCK speaks.⁴²

The focus on Starbuck as a key character, and as a window into Ahab, risks confusing the screenplay's attempt to establish a clear narratorial voice. Ishmael is ostensibly the direct narrator (through voice-over at the beginning, end, and intermittently during the script) but is not consistently the main active observer of events. As film narrative, it would be more conventional to make Starbuck the primary focalising character, but Ishmael is

⁴¹ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 54.

⁴² Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 143.

‘required’ by an audience expecting to see *Moby Dick* as they remember reading it. Such a dilemma can be one of the chief difficulties for an adapter-screenwriter.

3.3 Bradbury’s Screenplay: Dance of the Eyes

Bradbury’s use of intercutting shows a deft appreciation of the principles of montage, particularly in his exploitation of what film editor Walter Murch has referred to as ‘the dance of the eyes’.⁴³ In some instances he uses exchanged glances to create a sense of understanding between characters, while in others he exploits a character’s gaze to establish a point of view, most typically for Ishmael. A good example of both techniques at work is where prophet-of-doom Elijah is shown on shore and is seen by Ishmael, who promptly looks to Ahab’s cabin as if to link Elijah’s prophecy with the reality of the so far unseen Ahab:

We see ISHMAEL look from ELIJAH to the CABIN of AHAB, and then ignore the matter, quickly.⁴⁴

Like Melville, though, Bradbury allows the focalisation to shift to other characters where appropriate, and this occasionally allows us a rare moment of intimacy with the thoughts of Ahab. The most distinct example is an entire scene of ship’s activity taking place while Ahab watches. Bradbury’s choice of placing some of the activity off-screen and evident in sound only allows us to side with Ahab without the formality of a literal point-of-view shot.

AHAB looks as the men come down the ropes, as the men cross the deck and ready the boats [...] we *hear their voices* off-scene, we hear the *sounds* of preparation [...] The panorama of it all is in AHAB’s face, each and every small bit and part of it is reflected there [...]

We stay with AHAB’s face while the great unravelling *sound of the ropes* letting down the boats is heard [...]

As we watch his face we begin to hear the *sounds coming back*, even as they went away.⁴⁵

[emphasis added]

⁴³ Walter Murch, interviewed in *The Cutting Edge: the Magic of Movie Editing*, dir. by Wendy Apple (Warner Bros, 2004) [on DVD]

⁴⁴ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 97-98.

The presentation of the first paragraph above implies a panning action or shift of focus, so that we begin seeing the activity on board ship, and then move to Ahab's face while the activity plays on in sound only; a shift from an objective view to a more subjective impression, favouring Ahab's consciousness of the scene. This scene is one of the few occasions where Bradbury suggests any sympathy for Ahab, and therefore one of the few places where the complexity of Melville's Ahab is suggested.

Overall, Bradbury's screenplay provides a clear narrative pathway through Melville's complex story, but at the risk of over-simplifying the actions and motivations of both Ahab and the great white whale. The simplifications in particular would fuel some of the film's critics, but the deviations from Melville were evidently problematic also for Huston, who chose to develop Bradbury's screenplay further, and to demand a shared screenplay credit.

3.4 Script and Film Diverge

The reality of film production is that multiple scripts exist, and for multiple purposes, as a film develops from initial idea to final release.⁴⁶ The published version of Bradbury's screenplay is partially a reconstruction from multiple documents, but in terms of the film's production it represents a preliminary phase of planning. Shortly before the film's release, Bradbury was shocked to learn that producer-director John Huston would be credited as co-writer of the screenplay, ostensibly on two grounds: he had guided Bradbury through the entire writing process; and he had made substantial alterations to Bradbury's writing after Bradbury had left the production.

In arguing for sole credit for the screenplay, Bradbury revealed something of his working method. In a frank letter to the Writer's Guild, he wrote that the process common to his screenwriting and his prose fiction is that his early drafts are vague, poorly constructed and in need of cutting. Later, in subsequent drafts, through furious work he is able to re-integrate the necessary elements into a complete and coherent final text. The final quarter of the script, he claimed, was written in a day, and the majority of the final draft screenplay was produced in his final two weeks on the film.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Price, *Screenplay*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Bradbury to Dorfman, 11 May 1955.

Huston's claimed screenplay credit was upheld by the Writer's Guild (overturning an initial decision in Bradbury's favour), and this decision – while questionable – reflects the presence of some differences between Bradbury's screenplay and the completed film. Quantitatively, there may not be much difference, as the film follows Bradbury's screenplay for the majority of its running time, but there are qualitative differences between 'Huston's' *Moby Dick* and 'Bradbury's' *Moby Dick*.

If we look to 'The Ardent Blasphemers', Bradbury's essay comparing *Moby Dick* to Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, we see that Bradbury's conception of Ahab is of a 'madman': 'Thinking maddens Ahab [...] Ahab is mad at the God universe [...] being irrationally disturbed at the Invisible, can do little'. Ahab's ship 'pursues an unpursuable God, crying out against His uncharacteristically ill behaviour', and Ahab 'would go down with his ship, shaking his fists at fate'.⁴⁸ To some extent, this characterisation is a convenient polarisation of Ahab for the purposes of the essay, where Bradbury's goal is to demonstrate differences between Ahab and Nemo; the character in the screenplay itself is restrained for much of the time.

Huston, on the other hand, in interviews offered a more nuanced view of Ahab's particular blasphemous madness. Ahab is not a man obsessed by a whale, but a figure in pursuit of 'a malignant deity. Melville doesn't choose to call the power Satan, but God'. While Ahab and his crew are undoubtedly 'engaged in an unholy undertaking', and Ahab 'shakes his fist at God almighty and challenges him', for Huston this is not enough to signify any particular diabolic meaning. The real sin, he believes, is that 'they were not doing what they were supposed to do, which is to furnish oil for the lamps of the world'.⁴⁹ Huston refers to his realisation of this idea as being vital to making the screenplay work: 'I think of a script as an organisation, like an engine [...] that scene made it spark and the wheels began to turn on each other'. Curiously, Huston speaks in this interview as if he had written the film's script alone. When asked how he communicated the idea to the audience, he replies 'I sat down and wrote the script'.⁵⁰

The 'lamps of the world' concept derives from Melville's chapter 24: Ishmael seeks to establish the nobility of the whaleman's profession by reference to the unwitting 'profoundest homage' paid to the profession by 'almost all the tapers, lamps, and candles

⁴⁸ Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 170-186.

⁴⁹ Stevens, p. 62.

⁵⁰ Grobel, p. 424.

that burn around the globe, burn, as before so many shrines, to our glory!’⁵¹ This idea is carried over in Bradbury’s published version of the screenplay, where Ishmael reports:

And from the whale’s great head we ladled 500 gallons of spermaceti. And the rest of him was swung into the rendering pit of the ship and boiled down to a pure fine oil to light the lamps of the world...⁵²

Later, Ahab tries to persuade Starbuck that pursuing Moby Dick is not a diversion, since the whale is a direct threat to their ability to undertake normal whaling activity:

Mister Starbuck, it is our task in life to capture whales and furnish up their oil for the lamps of the world. Moby Dick challenges all this. He would drive us whalers back to the land; his plan and purpose is to terrify man and himself rule over the seas!⁵³

In the finished version of the film, Huston removes the ‘lamps’ line from Ahab, and instead gives it to Starbuck, adding it to Starbuck’s pious critique of Ahab. Huston’s re-deploying of the line can be taken as evidence of his typical method of working with writers: ‘When I do not write alone [...] I work very closely with the writer. [...] The writer will do a scene and then I’ll work it over, or I’ll write a scene and then the other writer will make adjustments later. Often we trade scenes back and forth until we’re both satisfied’.⁵⁴

Where the film differs most strongly from Bradbury’s screenplay is in the denouement, but Huston also largely rejects Bradbury’s development of Starbuck in favour of something closer to Melville’s conception. Huston’s version of the story restores a number of elements from Melville, not least of which is the extent of the Pequod’s voyage. Huston, like Melville, has Ahab chase the great white whale across the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Japan and into final conflict in the Pacific, specifically at Bikini, a location referred to twice in the film, and probably chosen because of its contemporary ‘apocalyptic’ resonance; Bikini being the location of US nuclear weapons testing in the 1940s and 1950s. It is likely that Huston is here influenced by the artist-writer Gilbert Wilson, who in 1952 had equated the atomic tests with *Moby Dick* in an essay for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*⁵⁵, which included a cartoon map similar to the one shown

⁵¹ Melville, p. 110.

⁵² Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 81.

⁵³ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 90.

⁵⁴ B. Gideon, ‘How I Make Films: an Interview with John Huston’, *Film Quarterly*, 19.1 (Autumn 1965), 3-13.

⁵⁵ Gilbert Wilson, ‘Moby Dick and the Atom’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 8.6 (1952), 195-197

in close-up in Huston's film.⁵⁶ Huston was certainly familiar with Wilson's work: he owned copies of several of Wilson's librettos and outlines for *Moby Dick*-related projects.⁵⁷

There is no such apocalyptic resonance in Bradbury's screenplay, and what's more Bradbury simplifies the voyage considerably, so that the encounter with Moby Dick occurs around Cape Verde in the Atlantic. The timescale for the voyage is correspondingly shorter in Bradbury's version to allow for this.

Bradbury's published screenplay refers explicitly to the whale's death, but the completed film restores Moby Dick's presumed survival at the end of the chase, although Huston's overall approach is to depict the whale as a simple quarry in a hunt, rather than as a symbol of something greater. Huston is content to allow parts of Moby Dick to appear from time to time, while Bradbury maintains a distinct barrier between the world of the Pequod and the domain of Moby Dick, with only occasional and significant breaks through that barrier – the sailor falling from the mast; the pursuit of the mystical spirit spout while Moby Dick remains invisible; the final breaching of the white whale. Bradbury's respecting of the 'barrier' reflects his presentation of the monster of 'The Fog Horn' discussed above, and perhaps also reflects a science-fiction writer's consciousness of the significance of barriers between the known and the unknown, identified by Gary K. Wolfe as a key mechanism by which SF writers may externally represent conflict.⁵⁸

Finally, where Bradbury engages Starbuck throughout the script by showing his reactions to Ahab, Huston limits this to just a few scenes where Ahab and Starbuck are placed in direct conflict. Huston's Starbuck becomes more of a mouthpiece of a philosophy than a real character, but in the final confrontation with Ahab, Huston's intention for Starbuck becomes clear. He draws a gun on Ahab, but Ahab calls him a coward. Starbuck realises the truth: 'I plainly see my miserable office: to obey, rebelling'. Ahab then makes quite a Melvillean observation: 'Starbuck, ye are tied to me. This act is immutably decreed.' This sets the scene for Huston's resolution to the film, distinct from Bradbury's resolution in his screenplay. Where Bradbury's Starbuck defies orders to follow Ahab in lowering for the

⁵⁶ Seed compares Wilson's view with that of Huston's film, although he assumes the atomic resonance in the film derives from Bradbury. Since Bradbury's published screenplay makes no such references, it can be argued that this element reflects Huston's intent rather than Bradbury's. See David Seed, *Under the Shadow: the Atomic Bomb and Cold War Narratives* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 20132), pp. 149-151.

⁵⁷ John Huston papers, 35-f.33 to 35-f.36, Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.

⁵⁸ Gary K. Wolfe, *The Known and the Unknown: the Iconography of Science Fiction* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1979), pp. 30-31.

final hunt, Huston's Starbuck *dutifully* follows Ahab in futile pursuit of Moby Dick, specifically being motivated to chase the whale by Ahab's corpse beckoning him on.

3.5 Critical Responses

From the day of its release, critical reaction to *Moby Dick* was mixed: as a film it received positive comment, but as an adaptation of Melville's novel it provoked vigorous criticism. Central to some reviews was the screenplay, leading Bradbury's work to be closely examined. The issue of authorship became significant, because some reviewers assumed Bradbury to be the main or sole screenwriter, while others taking a more auteurist view of film-making assumed Huston to be the principal author. The battle over on-screen credit between Bradbury and Huston should have been the first clue that the film was based on some hybrid of the two men's work, but it was not until the publication of Bradbury's preferred screenplay draft in 2008 that it became possible to tease out Bradbury's contribution from Huston's.

The film was a box-office success, with Hollywood trade papers reporting "'Moby" wow', "'Moby" boffo' and 'Moby doing whale of a biz'.⁵⁹ Reviews were more mixed, with *The Nation* complaining that Huston 'has no time for characterisation in any depth', and that 'too much [...] has been jettisoned'.⁶⁰ *The Daily Express* found value in the film's 'picture of the sea in all its fury and beauty', but also criticised the characterisation, which 'failed to give any insight into the emotions'.⁶¹

One of the earliest extended critiques was written before the film had even been seen, and drew upon a studio-provided screenplay which evidently bore only Bradbury's name (according to Bradbury, Huston's Moulin Productions had copies of the screenplay sent out to over a thousand newspapers and critics; these copies named Bradbury as sole screenwriter).⁶² Milton Stern, writing principally for an audience of teachers of American literature, states clearly that he has not seen the film of *Moby Dick*, but is making a detailed evaluation based on the screenplay alone. This provides a rare opportunity to see a contemporary review of the screenplay unencumbered by any consideration of what a

⁵⁹ Headlines from *Variety*, 18 July 1956, p. 8; *Daily Variety*, 6 July 1956.

⁶⁰ Robert Hatch, Review of *Moby Dick*, *The Nation*, 14 July 1956, p.46.

⁶¹ John Lambert, Review of *Moby Dick*, *Daily Express*, 11 August 1956.

⁶² Bradbury to Dorfman, 11 May 1955.

director brings to a film. For example, Stern criticises the ‘sentiment like the farewell closeups of the women [...] and Starbuck’s wife on the widow’s walk’, and in doing so he is criticising Bradbury’s work.⁶³ Had he seen the actual film, however, he would have found that the close-ups look far from sentimental: Huston chooses to show some very glum faces, emphasising resignation and depression far more than ‘sentiment’.

Unfortunately for Bradbury, Stern’s thesis is that the film (screenplay) is a very good teaching aid precisely because it is a bad adaptation of Melville, ‘destroying symbolic unity in the attempt to meet the demands of the film medium’.⁶⁴ Stern proceeds to identify instances where the screenplay modifies, eliminates or conflates key scenes from the novel, in order to show that Bradbury generates ‘confusion and thematic pointlessness’. To a degree, the article suggests an obsession with the fidelity of the adaptation which might be rejected today.⁶⁵ However, Stern does at least recognise the different requirements of the two media of literature and film, and his argument comes to focus on the contrast he sees between the reflexiveness of Melville’s novel and the ‘helter-skelter’ linearity of Bradbury and Huston’s work.

In his discussion of the final stages of the script, Stern concentrates on the actions and words of Starbuck, who heroically rallies the Pequod’s crew into one final chase and defeat of Moby Dick, following Ahab’s demise. Starbuck provides what Stern takes to be the film’s message, ‘that the movie is about men, who, given a job, do not run from it’.

The weakness of Stern’s article is not so much with his restricted access to appropriate materials by which to judge the film, but instead in a limited grasp of what adaptation to another medium can bring. He is unable to concede any value in eliminating Fedallah: for Stern, the character is essential to the novel, and it never occurs to him that there might be new potential in dramatising Ahab in action, if Ahab has to make all his own decisions. He is unable to concede that any symbol in the novel could be permitted to take on a different meaning in the film: he describes the film’s ‘fuzzy disregard’ for the Melville chapter ‘The Candles’, and the audacity of altering the role of St Elmo’s fire in the film. However, few of the flaws in Stern’s review affect his ultimate purpose, which is to provide an excellent series of discussion points arising from the comparison of book with film.

⁶³ Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 52-55.

⁶⁴ Milton R. Stern, ‘The Whale and the Minnow: Moby Dick and the Movies’, *College English*, 17 (1956), 470–73 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/495699>>

⁶⁵ See Stam, pp. 54-76.

Another early reviewer of *Moby Dick* was François Truffaut, who would a few years later make the film of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. As the originator of the auteurist view of film-making (with his essay 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema'), Truffaut writes of *Moby Dick* entirely in terms of John Huston, as if everything about the film derives from its director.⁶⁶ This approach can be helpful for the examination of a complete film as text, but it does completely obscure the true source of any creative ideas the film may contain. Truffaut's review is an opportunity for him to assess Huston's cinematic output, and consider the significance of Huston's film authorship. There is no mention of Bradbury as the screenwriter, but the subheading of Truffaut's article states 'John Huston, an excellent scriptwriter, is a second-rate director', clearly implying Huston's authorship of the film.

In contrast to Stern, Truffaut is not at all concerned with the liberties taken in the adaptation, and this is consistent with his earlier lambasting of the 'literalness' of French literary adaptation, which triggered his first writing on the idea of the director as auteur in 'A Certain Tendency'. In fact, unlike Stern, he plainly states the impossibility of condensing Melville's text into a feature-length film without it being transformed in some way. This transformation then becomes the key to understanding *Moby Dick* as the work of Huston. For Truffaut, it is a film about Huston's recurring theme of 'failure' and, in particular, an examination of characters who 'pay less attention to the object than its conquest'. Truffaut finds similar themes in Huston's earlier works such as *The Maltese Falcon*, drawing particular attention to the way a moment of apparent triumph quickly turns into a moment of complete loss. Ultimately, though, Truffaut is dismissive of Huston as a true auteur, declaring that he 'deludes himself with the thought that he gives subtlety to a script by evading the outcome that logic and dramatic psychology demand'. Since the final section of *Moby Dick* – the section which involves this reversal of fortune, or 'pirouette' as Truffaut calls it – is the section that departs furthest from Bradbury's script, Truffaut's conclusion turns out to be appropriately critical of Huston alone.

A third early opinion on *Moby Dick* comes from Truffaut's *Cahiers du Cinema* colleague Eric Rohmer, whose 1957 review addresses the artistry of the film's presumed auteur, and the impossibility of adapting Melville.⁶⁷ Rohmer has no hesitation in calling the film a failure and a 'useless adaption' on the grounds that it 'add[s] nothing to the sublimity of a work

⁶⁶ Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency', pp. 9-18.

François Truffaut, 'Will John Huston always be no more than an amateur?', in *The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut*, ed. by Wheeler Winston Dixon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1993), pp. 101-103.

⁶⁷ Eric Rohmer, *The Taste for Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), pp. 105-111.

that is perfect in every respect'. It emerges that Rohmer sees Melville's novel as Stern does, as a model of thematic consistency and self-reflexiveness, and therefore leaving nothing for the film-maker to work with. Rohmer makes a useful distinction between a myth, 'which in the hands of ten different artists can produce ten works of art of equal importance', and a perfectly formed literary work. What's more, he ascribes to Melville's novel a unique property, in that it displays 'the type of beauty that the screen is most able to highlight: [...] this novel is already a true film'. This bizarre claim justifies Rohmer's contention that any attempt to adapt *Moby Dick* will result not in an adaptation, but (at best) a slavish 'remake'.

Twenty years on from these initial reactions to Huston and Bradbury's adaptation, Brandon French wrote a fresh evaluation of the film and its achievement.⁶⁸ Like Truffaut, French willingly allows that film ought to be different to book, on the grounds of quantity of contained information alone. Like Truffaut, she acknowledges that the film has its own logic and agenda, indeed its own 'universe', deriving at least in part from the selections it makes from Melville. However, like Stern and Rohmer, French is primarily concerned with the considerable strengths of Melville which fail to translate into the film.

French's critique is based both on a viewing of the film and on a reading of the screenplay. The screenplay, she declares, was supplied to her by Bradbury himself, and because French makes no mention of the scriptwriting credits, the reader is led to assume that Bradbury is the sole author of the film. Internal evidence in the review suggests that French is reading a studio-derived script draft, rather than Bradbury's own manuscript: she quotes a passage of Starbuck's dialogue which corresponds with the finished film, but not with Bradbury's published screenplay text. This leads to an unfortunate misattribution of words and ideas to Bradbury, when those words and ideas are actually due to Huston or his uncredited collaborators.

French's chief criticism of the film is that the deletions or omissions from Melville result in a loss of the ambiguities inherent in the novel. Her argument is that the 'multiplicity of possible meanings' are the definition of the novel, and that without them the film founders. The ambiguities are not just to do with the meaning and significance of the whale, but are also found throughout Ishmael's narration, whereas 'Bradbury's Ishmael is drawn to the sea for adventure and his quest is for his own identity'; an accurate nutshell

⁶⁸ Brandon French, 'Lost at Sea', in *The Classic American Novel and the Movies*, ed. by Gerald Peary and Roger Shatzkin (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar, 1977), pp. 52-61.

characterisation which demonstrates the inevitable simplification of the film and its screenplay.

French does provide some of the first true examination and constructive critique of Bradbury's screenwriting, focusing on the passage of the script described above which shows Ahab's face responding to events heard off screen.⁶⁹ The cinematic quality of the scene leads French to consider that it is perhaps the casting of Gregory Peck as Ahab which leads to the weakness of this scene in the completed film, and to the weakness of the film overall.

David Lavery's 2001 re-evaluation of *Moby Dick* considers the film in the context of other attempts to film Melville's novel. Lavery forefronts the inevitable acts of selection that any adaptation requires, and equates this to Roland Barthes' pondering over any reader's tendency to read a text selectively, or without a consistent level of attention. Lavery's verdict on the film is that it is 'superficially faithful and ambitious' and like a later adaptation (Franc Roddam, 1998) is a 'failure'. Somewhat surprisingly, given the current prevailing view of fidelity as a non-issue in adaptation, Lavery's principal concern is with seeing a faithful adaptation of Melville. Because of this, however, the main value of Lavery's article is in his consideration of key elements of Melville ignored or overlooked by adapters: the humour; a meaningful implementation of Ishmael's point of view in telling the story; and adherence to the 'metaphoric structure' (rather than just the plot) of the novel.⁷⁰ For Lavery, the novel's controlling metaphor is the loom, referenced in the title of Melville's chapter 1, 'Loomings', Pip's seeing 'God's foot on the treadle of the loom' and forty other uses of the word and related imagery of weaving. In contrast to this, Bradbury's use of the word 'metaphor' is often vague, as when he asserts that his 'gift' is 'to make metaphors that are clear and that fuse many dissimilar things together', at the same time choosing not to discuss the precise meaning of the metaphors in question.⁷¹ It seems clear that while Bradbury tends to equate 'metaphor' with 'image', Lavery is calling for the adaptation not of individual metaphors, but of Melville's extended image *system*.

As with other reviews, Lavery's view of Bradbury's screenwriting is flawed. He assumes that Bradbury alone scripted the film, despite the fact that his review is based on a viewing of the film only (with its Bradbury-Huston shared screenwriting credit), and that he has never seen the screenplay in printed form; he relies on French's earlier flawed assessment for his

⁶⁹ Bradbury, *Moby*, pp. 97-8.

⁷⁰ Lavery, pp. 94-105.

⁷¹ Atkins, p. 98.

attribution of the shortcomings of the script. However, taken as implied criticism of Bradbury's work, Lavery's wish-list is helpful. It is undoubtedly true that the Huston-Bradbury *Moby Dick* is largely without the humour of the type that Lavery outlines, although there are humorous scenes involving Ishmael and Queequeg, Ishmael in the Spouter Inn, and – Bradbury's invention – a much criticised comical rendering of Captain Boomer of the ship Samuel Enderby.⁷² It is true, as well, that Bradbury struggles to achieve any consistency to the focalisation of the screenplay: Bradbury and Huston seem to forget who is supposed to be telling their story. More importantly, though, from a dramatic viewpoint, the Bradbury adaptation misses the opportunity to give Ishmael any significance to the narrative other than introducing us to the world of the Pequod and – inexplicably in the screenplay's narrative logic – making him the only survivor of the whole adventure.

Lavery's final call, for an adherence to the *metaphoric* structure of Melville, is most interesting for any study of Bradbury's work in media. As we shall see in later chapters, it is a frequent observation that adaptation of Bradbury stories fail because of their sticking to Bradbury's plot without paying attention to his metaphors. '*Moby Dick* is a book, a poem really,' writes Lavery, pointedly observing that 'the films made from it are prosaic, literalist glosses'. This latter phrase would make an apt description of the 1980 television adaptation of *The Martian Chronicles*, or of several other attempts to bring Bradbury's work to the screen.

Finally, Thomas Inge's 1986 review of the film places it in the context of all the other attempts to film Melville up to that time. Inge recognises that 'Bradbury has stripped the novel down to its pure narrative form but with respect for Melville's intentions', while at the same time acknowledging Huston's observation on the impossibility of direct translation from book to screen and that 'calling the picture *Moby Dick* is, in a sense, only a means of identification.' Inge also provides an overview of the critical response to *Moby Dick* in the popular press, which he characterises as overwhelmingly positive: he cites eight reviews ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Newsweek* which praise the film, and criticise it solely for the casting of Gregory Peck as Ahab. In contrast, Inge finds that 'academic critics' had a broadly negative response to the film.⁷³ Inge's placing of the film in its historical, popular and critical contexts leads to the possibility of a balanced conclusion: that the Huston-Bradbury *Moby Dick* is a satisfying cinematic experience for the viewing public, and

⁷² French, 'Lost at Sea', p. 60; Lavery, p. 95.

⁷³ M. Thomas Inge, 'Melville in Popular Culture', in *A Companion to Melville Studies*, ed. by John Bryant (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 695-739.

one which has sustained over several decades; but that high regard for Melville's novel tends to become an obstacle to academic-critical appreciation of what the film seeks to achieve.

4 Because of the Whale

Although Bradbury spent less than a year working with Huston on the adaptation of *Moby Dick*, the experience cast a long shadow over the remainder of his career. Almost immediately upon his return from Ireland, he began work on *Leviathan '99*, his own science-fictional re-telling of *Moby Dick*, which would shift from one medium to another until finding a fixed form as a novella in 2007. He also began writing about his experiences in Ireland in comedic short plays, which would similarly shift media, finding fixed form as part of the autobiographical novel, *Green Shadows, White Whale* (1992).

4.1 *Leviathan '99* – radio play

The science-fictional *Leviathan '99* links Bradbury's screenplay for *Moby Dick* and his attempts to launch his own film projects based around *The Martian Chronicles* from 1961 onwards (see below): this is a Bradbury who was becoming closely associated with the real-life Space Race thanks to a series of journalistic commissions, despite his prose fiction having by this time moved away from SF and the imagery of space. He appears to have begun work on *Leviathan '99* as prose fiction around 1960; a few pages of typescript and outline exist from this version of the project. Later in the decade he returned to *Leviathan*, working it into a radio play to be directed by famed American director-dramatist Norman Corwin. NBC Radio initially encouraged Bradbury to develop it, but with the 'golden age' of American radio drama well and truly over, it was finally rejected by the network in 1966. Bradbury next sent the script to the BBC in London, where it was produced for radio in 1968, directed not by Corwin, but by H.B. Fortuin.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Phil Nichols, 'A Sympathy with Sounds: Ray Bradbury and BBC Radio, 1951–1970', *Radio Journal*, 4.1-3 (2006), 111-23;

Bradbury later reworked the material into a longer stage play which he put on at his own expense in Hollywood, and continued to refine and re-write, before ultimately returning to his prose manuscript. The only print version of *Leviathan* to have been published is this novella, collected in *Now and Forever* (2007). The radio script survives in Bradbury's papers in the form of a complete 'NBC' 1966 draft, slightly different from the play as broadcast by the BBC. The stage play script survives in the William F. Nolan collection of Bradbury papers at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. The primary differences between the radio and stage versions lie in a series of divergences in the plot.⁷⁵

Bradbury's own comments on *Leviathan* in his introduction to the novella speak of his being 'under the influence of Herman Melville and his leviathan whale', and his 'taking the Melville mythology and placing it in outer space'.⁷⁶ Beyond this, there is little indication of Bradbury's purpose, although we may speculate that he may have been seeking to present his own interpretation of Melville without the mediation of Huston; or that, somehow dissatisfied with his screenplay or the experience of screenwriting, he felt the need to continue re-writing and re-shaping Melville's story.

Bradbury shapes the play by weaving in any number of connections to imagery from his own fiction, but also recasts Melville's imagery into space-opera equivalents: his approach is to produce an almost direct parallel to his *Moby Dick* screenplay, with every principal character and scene in the play having some analogue in the screenplay. Some of the parallels are obvious, such as replacing sailing ships with rocket ships, but others are more inventive, such as becalming the rocketship in a timewarp. Even so, apart from creating a loving homage to Melville, it is difficult at times to see what the point might be of making such a one-to-one adaptation which only barely goes beyond what Geoffrey Wagner calls 'transposition'.⁷⁷

The characters of *Leviathan* are also direct analogues of what we find in *Moby Dick* – or at least in Bradbury's screenplay of *Moby Dick*, since only a selection of Melville characters who made it into the film are represented in the radio play. The hero and narrator is Ishmael Hunnicutt Jones; his travelling companion is Quell; the ship's Captain is unnamed throughout.

Phil Nichols, 'Echoes Across a Half Century: Ray Bradbury's *Leviathan* '99', in *When Genres Collide*, ed. by Thomas J. Morrissey and Oscar De Los Santos (Waterbury, CT: Fine Tooth Press, 2007), pp. 203-9.

⁷⁵ Carter, '*Leviathan*'.

⁷⁶ Ray Bradbury, *Now and Forever* (New York: Wm. Morrow, 2007), pp. 117-9.

⁷⁷ Wagner, pp. 222-3.

While Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay makes only cursory use of voice-over narration, *Leviathan* embraces the American radio convention of directly voiced narration. An extensively soliloquising Ishmael is at the centre of events throughout, somewhat restoring the narrational strategy employed by Melville. Throughout, Bradbury metaphorically links space and water ('the far islands of Andromeda'; 'ships that sailed for stars'; 'pulled up to drown in the summer lake of space'⁷⁸), cementing the parallel with *Moby Dick* – but also echoing the parallel made in his own earlier *The Martian Chronicles*, where a rocketship moves 'in the midnight waters of space like a pale sea leviathan'.⁷⁹

Bradbury's Ishmael was born in space, *en route* from Mars to Earth, and tells us that 'My father [...] recalled yet another outcast, one who wandered lost deserts and dead seas long before Christ [...] And he did indeed...call me... Ishmael'. This Ishmael, with 'deep space in my eyes' is drawn to space. He speaks of the 'magic in air that pulls all men up', not just as a metaphor for space, but as an explanation for the lure of flight.⁸⁰ Ishmael's language has strong echoes of Bradbury's short story 'Icarus Montgolfier Wright' (1956), which Bradbury was adapting for screen during the same period that he was drafting *Leviathan*, and both Icarus and Daedalus are mentioned several times in the text. In other places, the flying Ishmael is likened to a kite and to wind-born autumn leaves - both common images in Bradbury's fiction, in works such as 'The Flying Machine' (1953), *The Halloween Tree* (1972), *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and *The Martian Chronicles*.

The decision to use a narrator provides a convenient way to compensate for the loss of the visual when writing for radio, and through Ishmael's voice we learn about the distinctive appearance of many of the other characters. But Bradbury's script also makes careful use of sound effects to provide context, the all-important science-fictional atmosphere, and dramatic punctuation. The specification of sounds is succinct: 'We hear the soft hum of the sidewalk moving'; 'Soft music plays as the sidewalk glides him on'; 'A buzz. A hum. A bell'.⁸¹ The spaceship's Captain has his own sound, 'the sound of the radar-mask' that enables this blind man to see.⁸² Finally, Bradbury provides a creative challenge to the sound designer with more vague specifications such as 'a drift of cosmic sound' and 'the cosmic dust drifts off'.⁸³ Fortunately, in the BBC production, electronic sounds and music were created by the

⁷⁸ Ray Bradbury, *Leviathan '99: a Radio Drama* (unpublished radio script, 1966), p. 7.

⁷⁹ Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* (New York: Wm Morrow, 2006), p. 44.

⁸⁰ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 2.

⁸¹ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 3.

⁸² Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 20.

⁸³ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 41.

accomplished *musique concrete* composer Tristram Cary, who was well able to interpret Bradbury's requirements.⁸⁴

In general, Bradbury is commendably sparing in his use of parenthetical instructions to actors, leaving it to the director and actors to find the right tone of voice and delivery. He does, though, make quite frequent use of ellipses in dialogue to control pacing and delivery of lines such as the Captain's 'Then run your hands here ... and here ... and here ... here the paths where the planetoids go ... here the planetary tracks ... and here upon universal deeps the vast long mark of Halley's Comet, the Comet of Aristophanes...'⁸⁵ The dialogue is generally a little stilted, but there is a clear difference between the stylised speech patterns of the Captain - a pseudo-Shakespearean Ahab analogue - and the more naturalistic dialogue of the other characters. Ishmael's narration, though, also tends to the mock-Shakespearean style.

Just as Melville establishes the otherness of Queequeg when he is first introduced, so Bradbury establishes the alienness of Quell, but there is a distinct contrast in how the two authors achieve their end. Queequeg behaves in a way that looks bizarre to Ishmael, whereas Bradbury – restricted by the need in radio to present information in dialogue only – reveals Quell largely through physical description as he slowly becomes visible to Ishmael. Quell's chief characteristics are his enormous height, his communication solely through telepathy, his tattoos and, in his own words, 'too many eyes... not enough nose...too many ears... *far* too many fingers...a greenish skin'.⁸⁶

Prior to boarding their ship, Ishmael and Quell are confronted with Elijah, a 'Warning Man' who tells them 'You tread the rim of the abyss'. From him we learn of the unnamed ship's Captain, and of the Captain's physical condition.⁸⁷ Just as Melville's Ahab is physically damaged and scarred from his previous encounters with Moby Dick, so Bradbury's Captain is 'burnt blind' by the Great White Comet, 'his skin, his mind, his soul all burnt but somehow hung together'.⁸⁸ Elijah questions whether the Comet was really doing God's work in injuring the Captain.

⁸⁴ Nichols, 'Echoes', pp. 203-9.

⁸⁵ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 32.

⁸⁶ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 6.

⁸⁷ On page 33 of the 1966 typescript, Bradbury has accidentally typed 'Ahab' instead of 'the captain' in one line. Apart from this one slip, the captain remains unnamed (as he is in the novella.)

⁸⁸ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 10.

Throughout the script, Bradbury's characters give interpretations of what space is, comparable to Melville's constant attempts to understand the sea and the whale:

'...the greater sea of space...'

'the summer lake of space'

'his long night in space'

'a sea of dark and measureless stars'

'our fall into Deep Space'

'great cathedral of space'

'All longitudes, latitudes, meridians, and hours, all nights and days, all time, yes, time, too, gone. No sunrise, no sunset, no sound, no wind. How lonely'.⁸⁹

Ishmael's description of death in space ('cast forth on a sea of dark and measureless stars. No air. Eternal cold. Such men, their space suits both coffin and shroud, stay young forever'⁹⁰) recall Bradbury's short story 'Kaleidoscope' (1949), in which the crew of a destroyed rocket is dispersed into space, each astronaut to face a slow death as they drift further and further apart.

Much of the science-fictional language of *Leviathan* builds on familiar, clichéd imagery of pulp SF; jet packs, moving sidewalks and robots abound. Bradbury also re-uses some of the recurrent and specifically science-fictional imagery from his own stories, such as the animatronic robots in the museum, which can easily be seen as extensions of his 'Fantoccini' robots in stories such as 'Marionettes, Inc.' (1949) and 'I Sing the Body Electric!' (1969). However, Bradbury also uses his direct knowledge of the space industry, gained through his journalistic work in the 1960s, to inform some of his terminology, and so we hear of the narrator's flying down to 'the Cape', declaring 'condition Go' and observing rocket tests.⁹¹ Ishmael speaks of the elaborate computer controls and systems of recycling which are at the heart of the ship's operations:

'Computerize the decisions, going on a billion, for each trip. The nursing bottles full of super-homogenized gunk for suckling men. Botanical gardens, rare small compacted jungles which inspire bad, suspire good oxygenated airs. Capsuled ocean seas which grow algae [sic] for atmospheres and salads.

⁸⁹ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, pp. 2-19.

⁹⁰ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 13.

⁹¹ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 3.

Machines which spin the sweats of rocket men until fresh as new rain, to be drunk again'.⁹²

Douglas Carter reads this passage as 'typical of Bradbury's jaundiced view of technology', but it would seem to be more a poetic-comic presentation of the very systems which were typical of the American manned space programme, with which Bradbury had become intimately familiar by 1966.⁹³

The Captain finally makes his entrance, but is apparent at first only through non-verbal sounds: 'we only *heard* our Captain step upon the landing'.⁹⁴ Later he is heard walking on the outer hull of the ship, wearing magnetic boots. Surprisingly, little is made of the Captain's blindness, despite the opportunities offered by radio – where the play's audience is equally 'blind'. His entrance is accompanied by 'a faint breathing of electric equipments'.⁹⁵ Now Ishmael is able to make his first true assessment of the man:

'I saw a man tall in stature and tall in years, a man not old but with oldness skinned over him. A prime man unprimed by lightnings and bleached to a color of whiteness. His face white, all, everything, cut from the same nothings. This was our blind captain, who led us toward the stars. [...] eyes the color of minted silver [...] White, the man was white, all white to match the whiteness of his much affrighted soul. I felt some years ago, the Universe had shot off a photographic flash, God blinked! And bleached the captain to this color of sleepless nights and lonely terror'.⁹⁶

The shocking whiteness of the Captain echoes Melville's chapter 42, 'The Whiteness of the Whale', in which we are led to an understanding that while whiteness in itself is capable of being positive, when combined with something already capable of inducing terror the result is an amplification of that terror. Ishmael as narrator tries to understand this, but ultimately suggests that our reactions are innate, instinctive, somehow programmed into us from a long-ago past. In *Leviathan*, then, the Captain's stark whiteness combines with his other characteristics to make him terrifying – and also a mirror reflection of the Great White Comet which made him this way.

The Captain's descriptions show that he clearly sees his and the comet's fates to be intertwined:

⁹² Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 11. The broadcast version of the play re-renders the last line as 'Machines which spin the sweats of rocket men to fresh new rains, to be drunk again', emphasising the directness of the recycling.

⁹³ Carter, '*Leviathan*', p. 25.

⁹⁴ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 24.

⁹⁶ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 25.

‘Comet? No. A vast exhalation of pale mystery upon the Deeps. A pale bride with flowing veil come back to bed her lost unbedded groom. Isn’t she lovely, men? Isn’t she a holy terror to the sight?’

‘I touched the hem of its great billion mile long bridal veil [...] that virgin whiteness, jealous of my loving glance, rubbed out my sight.’

‘[...] my brother-sister self come preening by to try my Job-like patience [...]’

‘O whiteness there, my awful bride, my pale and wandering dread.’⁹⁷

At the same time, the Captain recognises the Comet as a fearful embodiment of the uncaring universe:

‘The great number terror, the brute chemistry of the Universe thrown forth in light and trailing nightmare, yes...’

‘That thing is lost and evil. Its great face hovers over the abyss.’⁹⁸

The Starbuck figure in *Leviathan* ‘99 is Redleigh. He has an authoritative bearing, and long experience of the Captain’s unusual behaviours. He characterises the Captain as a worrier, obsessive, and a loner. ‘If he knew God were out here’, he reports, ‘he might stroll out for a chat. But you or me, boy? (A faint snort.)’⁹⁹

In the pivotal confrontation in the Captain’s cabin, where the Captain shows his elaborate charts to Redleigh, we find the first true thematic indication of why Bradbury has found it useful to transpose *Moby Dick* to outer space. Redleigh and the Captain both see the same behaviour and history in the comet’s past trajectories, but they interpret it in distinct ways. The Captain reads every move as ‘God’s circuitings and maunderings, his long thoughts’; Redleigh reads it as a ‘dumb thing [...] chemistry birthed out of chaos, now pulled by this tidal star, now ruled by that’. Redleigh allows that ‘if [...] all Space is one flesh with us, [...] then that Ghost [...] is but an outmouthing of God indeed’, but he projects a clear, Newtonian view of how the universe operates, in opposition to the Captain’s magical thinking.¹⁰⁰ There are strong echoes here of Melville’s constant efforts to rationally comprehend the whale, in contrast to Ahab’s tendency to non-rational reactions.

⁹⁷ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, pp. 27-41.

⁹⁸ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 28; p. 34.

⁹⁹ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 32-3.

To a great extent this is an analogue of the respective readings Ahab and Starbuck have of the whale in Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay, but where Moby Dick's behaviour is unpredictable and partially autonomous, the movements of Leviathan are almost totally predictable. Ahab might be battling against the forces of nature, God, and the fickle character of one whale, but *Leviathan's* Captain is railing against a largely mechanistic universe. In this context, his obsession is more thoroughly irrational and self-centred than even that of Ahab. We can see a close parallel here to Bradbury's explication of Ahab as expressed in his essay 'The Ardent Blasphemers', where Ahab is characterised as becoming maddened by thinking, in contrast to Verne's Nemo who Bradbury characterises as *inspired* by thinking. Bradbury writes that Melville and Verne 'represented two halves of the newly emergent American attitude to the world', with Ahab irrationally angered by the world, and Nemo's anger driving him to exploration and invention.¹⁰¹ Nemo is, for Bradbury, 'the constructive side of a scientific experiment which says I will go with nature instead of striking against it.'¹⁰² In *Leviathan*, the Captain reincarnates Ahab, and Redleigh inherits the rationalist attitude of Nemo, at least as Bradbury conceives of Melville's and Verne's creations.

As the ship continues its journey, it passes through a cloud of static carrying remnants of old radio broadcasts from Earth, still expanding out through the universe – a notion Bradbury possibly picked up from his scientific friends Carl Sagan and Walter Sullivan.¹⁰³ Bradbury was likely drawn to the poetic possibilities of this encounter, especially in the context of a radio drama, and his script makes reference to specific audio clips that should be used, including the voices of Hitler, Churchill, Rudy Vallee, Orson Welles and 'a line or two' from Norman Corwin's play *On a Note of Triumph*. Bradbury subsequently took the concept of the cloud of radio static and re-used it when he adapted his short story 'Kaleidoscope' into a one-act play.¹⁰⁴

The cloud of static seems to represent the beauties and wonders of the cosmos and – like a passing moon which attracts Redleigh ('very old and very lovely'¹⁰⁵) – possibly serves as a symbol of the seductiveness of such beauty. Redleigh, committed to a scientific, exploratory mission is disturbed by the Captain's lack of interest in these wonders. Quell

¹⁰¹ Bradbury, *Speaks*, p. 183.

¹⁰² Atkins, p. 98.

¹⁰³ Carl Sagan and I.S. Shklovskii, *Intelligent Life in the Universe* (San Francisco, CA: Holden-Day, 1966), p. 393; Walter Sullivan, *We Are Not Alone: The Search for Intelligent Life on Other Worlds* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 195.

¹⁰⁴ Ray Bradbury, *On Stage: a Chrestomathy of his Plays* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1991), pp. 356-7.

¹⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 38.

attempts a furtive telepathic reading of the Captain's thoughts, which are presented as a soliloquy which reveals his irrational obsession with the comet. Redleigh is now prepared to mutiny, but finds the crew unpersuaded:

ROGERS

At ease, Mr Redleigh. The captain blind sees more than you with two fine much too frightened eyes.

SMITH

The thoughts we just now stole from him, how do they differ from our own, which we tell no one? All men are poets in their souls, and fall ashamed if asked to speak it out.¹⁰⁶

When Redleigh declares that the ship is 'doomed' (changed to 'damned' in the broadcast version, rendering the line more appropriate for a ship which is set against God), Quell is driven to commission a metal spacesuit-coffin from the ship's metal-worker. He enters a trance state, and shortly afterward the great white comet Leviathan is sighted for the first time.¹⁰⁷ The Captain orders that the ship head directly for Leviathan, and as they approach, the comet disappears. It has warped space and time and sent them back to an earlier moment. The ship is effectively becalmed at this point, in direct analogy with the becalming of the Pequod in Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay.

By some undramatised method, Ishmael's narration glibly reports that 'we fought the storm of Time in Space...and freed ourselves', and the ship is brought back to encounter Leviathan once more.¹⁰⁸ The Captain orders that they take to the life rafts, from where they will fire powerful lasers at the comet. The rafts are scattered, and men are thrown from them, 'each man thrown out to a different warp in time...', again recalling the scattering of the doomed astronauts in 'Kaleidoscope'.¹⁰⁹ The weapons gone and the ship lost, the Captain takes to attacking the comet with his hands. Ishmael alone survives, floating on the coffin spacesuit of the dead Quell.

¹⁰⁶ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ In the radio script, 'Leviathan '99' is the spaceship, the analogue of the Pequod, while 'Cetus' is the comet analogue of Moby Dick. By the BBC broadcast, these names had been switched. Perhaps Bradbury realised the title of his work should refer to the object of the hunt, just as the title *Moby Dick* refers to the whale. 'Cetus', of course, is Latin for 'whale'.

¹⁰⁸ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 51.

4.2 *Leviathan '99* – novella

The novella follows the plot of the radio play quite closely, but with some extended and amplified scenes. Like the play, the novella is more of an adaptation of Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay than it is an adaptation of Melville, although the first-person narration by Ishmael brings this version of *Leviathan '99* closer to Melville's novel. Much of the introductory material is a direct transcription of Ishmael's monologue from the radio play. Bradbury makes minor adjustments to the flow of the text in these early pages, but few changes that are noticeable. The only adjustment of (minor) significance reflects a developed sense of the reader's (listener's) comprehension of space travel. Pushing the time period of the novella forward to 2099 (instead of the 1999 of the play), Ishmael speaks of when 'strange new ships head *beyond* the stars instead of merely *toward* them' rather than 'when strange new ships head *toward* the stars, instead of *under* them' (emphases added).¹¹⁰ Ishmael, an astronaut-in-training, no longer has to make a comparison of spaceship with sailing ship, but of interstellar spaceship with simple rocket.

The novella effectively reintroduces the Spouter Inn from *Moby Dick* (novel and screenplay) by setting some new scenes in a reception foyer/bar. Here, in place of Melville's painting of the great white whale, is a vast video screen displaying a photo of the great white comet pulling ships towards it with powerful gravitational attraction, so that Melville's ekphrastic description of the painting gives way to this curious echo of a movie screen.¹¹¹

Ishmael's initial meeting with Quell is given much more detail, emphasising the alienness of the character. There is yet greater emphasis on his rumoured spider-like qualities (which turn out to be false), with Quell playing on Ishmael's evident fear as his eyes become adapted to the dark of the room:

'A spider,' something whispered from the far side of the room.

The large shadow trembled.

I flinched back into the doorway.

'And,' the whisper continued, 'a shadow of a spider? No. stand still.'

¹¹⁰ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 123; Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 126.

I stood still as commanded and watched as the room was illuminated and the shadow fell away and there before me was a great figure [...] ¹¹²

The use of shadow here provides apprehension, the idea of unseen spider being more frightening for Ishmael than a seen one. The image conjured up by the passage above is quite cinematic, combining a vagueness of the shadow with the disturbance of the tremble in a single 'shot'. It is interesting to compare this moment with the equivalent scene in the radio script, which is carried through real-time narration: 'I hope my room-mate is not a huge spider... I *do try* to like spiders, but... [...] there on the far side, in bed, in the dark lies... a shape hidden...' ¹¹³ The 'shape hidden' is the equivalent of the trembling shadow, and the imagination of the listener is relied upon to fill in the shape, just as the novella text relies upon the reader to resolve the ambiguous trembling shadow.

The scene above also makes an interesting connection back to Bradbury's first professional work for the screen, *It Came From Outer Space*, and to what Eller has identified as that film's progenitor, the short story 'A Matter of Taste'. ¹¹⁴ This story deals with the first contact between humans and a race of giant arachnids, and the 'primal loathing' expressed by the humans. The story is narrated by one of the sentient, telepathic arachnids, and reveals its bafflement at the revulsion displayed by the Earthmen.

In the spaceman's chapel, Bradbury's analogue for Melville's memorial stones for whalers lost at sea is a holographic projection of shapes and voices of the dead. This seems a simple extension of technology, from 19th century stonemasonry to 21st century holography, but Ishmael's description of the chapel is much more than this. 'Chapel' suggests a small and modest place of worship, but when Ishmael looks up and he sees a 'panoramic ceiling' he senses a much vaster space than that physically contained by the building:

Memorials, images, and voices of those who have died and are buried forever in space. Here, in the high air of the cathedral, at dawn and at dusk, their souls are projected, their voices broadcast, in remembrance. ¹¹⁵

Earlier, Ishmael comments on the space academy as being 'part meadow for mind, part gymnasium for flesh, and part theological seminary, reaching ever skyward in its thoughts'. At least in part, then, Ishmael is being prepared for a religious undertaking, which is extended further when his attempts to describe space itself emerge in terms of cathedrals:

¹¹² Bradbury, *Now*, p. 128.

¹¹³ Bradbury, *Radio Drama*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Eller, 'Web', pp. 27-41.

¹¹⁵ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 137.

For does space not have the look of a vast cathedral?¹¹⁶

[...] For even the thundering rocket, which rips the soul on Earth, walks silently some few miles high, treads the stars without footfall, as if in awe of the great cathedral of space.¹¹⁷

The projected souls and broadcast voices anticipate the cloud of radio voices which will be encountered by the Cetus 7 later in the novella. What seemed like unrelated scenes in the radio play are now linked through imagery in the novella.

As in his radio play, Bradbury throws in little more than descriptions of space and technology that seem more appropriate to a 1920s pulp magazine, or perhaps aim to evoke a past view of technology such as we might today find in the work of Verne; and there is one direct allusion to Captain Nemo, 'And in that instant, our captain played some keys of the main computer console and the engines of our rocket throbbed to hysteria.'¹¹⁸ His terminology often uses technical sounding language, but in forms that are really quite meaningless (for example, 'Ten million miles beyond the outermost circumscape of Saturn's transit'¹¹⁹). Elsewhere, though, Bradbury builds upon the two aspects of the comet's nature: its astronomical predictability, and its magical ability to appear by surprise. While at times it is clearly on a periodic orbit of thirty years, at other times it is impossible to predict. It seems to travel between the stars – hence requiring the interstellar Cetus 7 to chase it – and yet remains in a single constellation as if it were a fixed star.¹²⁰ While scientifically illogical, this results from a successful analogue between the animal unpredictability of the Great White Whale and the portentous chaos which comets have traditionally represented.¹²¹ This view comes to the fore in chapter 6, when the comet's chaotic nature is confirmed by Enderby, thus undermining any sense of logic to the lunatic mission of the Cetus 7's Captain:

'Do you hear that, Redleigh?' our captain cried. 'It is still on course!'

'Course?' The *Lightfall 1* captain laughed. 'What course? Do you think it knows what it is doing, where it is going? How can chaos be plotted, planned, coursed?'

¹¹⁶ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 124.

¹¹⁷ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 142.

¹¹⁸ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 207.

¹¹⁹ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 172.

¹²⁰ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 143

¹²¹ See Carl Sagan & Ann Druyan, *Comet* (London: Michael Joseph, 1985), pp. 15-32.

[...] 'My charts are right and true,' said the captain, grabbing Redleigh's arm and spilling gin in the process. 'I will go to meet that ghost!'¹²²

But even Enderby may be wrong, since Redleigh runs a simulation which proves the Cetus 7 captain's calculations to have always been incorrect; the captain is either a liar, or is deluded, or possibly both.

Redleigh, the Starbuck figure, is characterised more deeply in the novella than in Bradbury's radio play. Although the viewpoint character throughout the novella is Ishmael, for one brief section we are permitted a direct insight into Redleigh's thoughts through a single page from his log. He pens a brief biography of himself in terms of his own perceived plainness, 'a dry biscuit, an unbuttered bun, flat wine [...] Feed zero, get zero? So I, John Redleigh, sum myself'.¹²³ Redleigh both curses himself for his inadequacy and prompts himself to be more than he is. It is after this brief interlude that he confronts the Captain and seeks to change his plans.

When the Captain shows his charts to Redleigh, he reveals his view of how the universe functions:

Here, the deep night plans for all God's circuitings and maunderings, all his long thoughts. God dreams joy: green Earths appear. God suffers torments: Leviathan issues from the vast portal of His raving eye and mouth. It rushes here!¹²⁴

Shortly afterward, the Captain places himself and the comet within this view:

'This flesh offends me!' cried the Captain. 'If it is all one, God manifesting himself in minerals, light, motion, dark, or sensible man, if that comet is my sister-self come preening by to try my Job-like patience, was it not blasphemy it first tried on me? If I am God's flesh, why was I felled, struck blind? No, no! That thing is lost and evil.'¹²⁵

The Captain clearly sees the comet as a female which is tethered to him – in the radio play as 'bride', now as 'sister' – and seeks a way to be free from it. In the novella, the term 'bride' is later used by the captain of the ship Rachel, who has lost his son in pursuit of the comet, 'The Great White Bride'.¹²⁶ This use of the term confirms the Cetus 7's captain's conviction that he has a future appointment to be united with the comet. Redleigh, on the

¹²² Bradbury, *Now*, p. 172.

¹²³ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 146.

¹²⁴ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 160.

¹²⁵ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 162.

¹²⁶ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 175.

other hand, is presented as a man of no significance to any other, a character forever unbound.

When the Cetus 7 reaches the cloud of radio voices, it takes on a different character to its equivalent in the radio play. Now the radio signals are like true clouds, 'safely trapped':

'...with a touch, if we find them, we can recapture those echoes of sad, forgotten wars, long summers, and sweet autumns.'¹²⁷

These radio signals are no longer just a technical marvel, but are a reiteration of the ghosts Ishmael encountered in the chapel, and their sounds move Ishmael to tears.

Why do I weep? I wondered. Those voices were not my people, my times, my ghosts. And yet once they lived. Their dust stirred in my ears, and I could not stop my eyes.¹²⁸

Captain Enderby and his crew of the Lightfall 1 broke out of the comet as the biblical Jonah broke free from the whale, but did so through wild dance and laughter: 'We poisoned it with laughter. All round within it we rose, we fell, we rose again, mystified by Fate, hysterical with chance. We fired our laughs like cannons at its heart'.¹²⁹ This escape from death has a remarkable parallel with the concluding scenes of Bradbury's novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* where Mr Halloway and his son Will finally overcome the evil of Mr Dark:

'[...]Get up! Get off your knees, damn it! Jump around! Whoop and holler! You hear! Shout, Will, sing, but most of all laugh, you got that, laugh! [...] Death's funny, God damn it! Bend, two, three, Will. Soft-shoe. Way down upon the Swanee River-what's next, Will?'¹³⁰

When Leviathan is at last sighted, it plays havoc with time, but restores the Captain's sight. Redleigh tries to persuade the Captain to accept that he is healed, but the Captain believes it is trickery from Leviathan and resolves to pursue the comet to the end. Time, it seems, is Leviathan's ultimate weapon, as the comet is able to fling the Cetus 7's crew to different temporal destinations.

If *Leviathan '99* represents a personal achievement for Ray Bradbury – the completion of an adaptation of Melville's *Moby Dick* on his own terms, a winning-out over John Huston, perhaps even the working through of an obsession with Melville – what does it represent

¹²⁷ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 165.

¹²⁸ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 166.

¹²⁹ Bradbury, *Now*, p. 171.

¹³⁰ Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (New York: Wm Morrow, 1999), p. 281.

for the listener or reader? His reliance on the Newtonian predictability of a comet, as opposed to the inherent mystery of the whale, appears to simplify the obsession of the Ahab figure, making this adaptation of Melville yet more simplistic than his earlier screenplay. The science-fictional device of the time warp enables an analogue of the Captain's loss of control, but in the radio play it is implemented arbitrarily and undramatically. For all of the dramatic power of some of the pseudo-Shakespearean dialogue, especially as performed in the BBC production, *Leviathan '99* seems less of an achievement than Melville's novel or Bradbury's own screenplay. The novella version is more unified, undoubtedly because it has more time to deal with linking together different elements of plot and theme.

A strong indicator of Bradbury's intent might be found in his renewed enthusiasm for the SF form in the early 1960s, triggered by a feeling of vindication when the space age turned his childhood dreams into some sort of reality. In 1962 – when he was developing both *Leviathan* and a screenplay for *The Martian Chronicles* – Bradbury wrote a *Life* article entitled 'Cry the Cosmos', in which he argues that the tensions of the Cold War and the emergence of space technology and nuclear weapons all indicate that our world has become a 'science fiction world'. 'This given', he continues, 'the single urgent direction for creative writers is surely toward the producing of a fiction exposing man at the center of and sore beset by his machines'.¹³¹

His attitude of vindication is voiced further in another *Life* article published shortly after the completion of his radio script. In 'An Impatient Gulliver Above Our Roofs', Bradbury tells of how the scientists, engineers and astronauts he encountered at NASA in the mid-1960s were:

[...] the science-fiction people... that is, the boys who used to read *Astounding Stories* beneath winter bedsheets in olden nights, or hid Jules Verne behind algebra texts [...] In a room crowded with three dozen astronauts [...] we were all from the same school. We had all shared out the dream to the now incredibly shared reality.¹³²

Leviathan '99, especially in its form as a radio play, represents an unusual blending of the 'high culture' of literature and the formerly 'low culture' of genre fiction by a writer once feeling tainted by the SF label, but now feeling vindicated by the emergence of a 'science fiction world'.

¹³¹ Ray Bradbury, 'Cry the Cosmos', *Life*, 14 September 1962, pp. 87-94.

¹³² Ray Bradbury, 'An Impatient Gulliver Above Our Roofs', *Life*, 24 November 1967, pp. 31-7.

4.3 *Green Shadows, White Whale* – autobiographical novel

Green Shadows, White Whale (1992) is one of Bradbury's patchwork novels: it is constructed largely out of previously published short stories which have been slightly re-worked and then stitched together with new linking material, in the manner of *The Martian Chronicles*, *Dandelion Wine* (1957) and *From the Dust Returned* (2001). The linking material deals mainly with Bradbury's work in Ireland on the *Moby Dick* screenplay, albeit in a fictionalised way; the writing of the screenplay is one declared aim of the book's narrator. The previously published material consists largely of Bradbury's Irish tales: humorous and occasionally poignant tall tales of somewhat stereotypical silver-tongued natives of the Emerald Isle, with an equally stereotypical perverse sense of logic. These chapters are often slight and inconsequential except in broadly exploring 'the Irish', the other declared aim of the book's narrator. The result is what we might call a hybrid of short stories and autobiography, one which attempts to mythologise the struggle between Bradbury and Huston.

In themselves, the Irish tall tales are not of great relevance to the present study, as they have little direct connection to Bradbury's *Moby Dick*. It should be noted, however, that most of the Irish tales were first developed as theatrical plays during the 1960s, a decade in which Bradbury devoted much of his writing output to various kinds of scripts, apparently at the expense of his short story output.¹³³ The first Irish plays to see print were collected in *The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics* (1963), and these one-act works were among Bradbury's first scripts of any kind to see publication.¹³⁴ Bradbury later conflated a number of the events of the one-act plays into *Falling Upward* (1988), a full-length play centred around Heeber Finn's pub, based on a real pub in County Kildare.¹³⁵

Of far greater interest here is the new linking material, in which Bradbury details his working relationship with the director John Huston. To an extent, the fictional Bradbury's attempt to understand his director has echoes of the Pequod's crew's attempts to understand the mysterious Ahab. This is brought about partly through having Huston as a distant presence: he is out of Dublin, lording it up in the stately manor of Courtown House;

¹³³ Eller, *Becoming*, p. 288.

¹³⁴ Ray Bradbury, *The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics* (New York: Dial Press, 1963).

¹³⁵ Ray Bradbury, *Falling Upward* (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Publishing, 1988).

he is a disembodied voice on the phone, calling in from Paris where he is casting actors for a film. Huston is occasionally directly equated with Ahab, as in this metafictional scene inspired by Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay, with the narrator cautioned not to accept the screenwriting assignment with Huston:

Even as I spoke, astonished, a woman in the far corner of the shop turned and said, very clearly:

'Don't go on that journey.'

It was Elijah, at the foot of the Pequod's gangplank, warning Queequeg and Ishmael not to follow Ahab off 'round the world: it was a dread mission and a lost cause from which no man might return.

'Don't go,' said the strange woman again.

I recovered and said, 'Who are you?'

'A former friend of the director's and the former wife of one of his screenwriters. I know them both. God, I wish I didn't. They're both monsters, but your director's the worst. He'll eat you and spit out your bones. So - '

She stared at me.

'- whatever you do, don't go.'¹³⁶

A further instance of Huston cast as Ahab occurs when the director domineeringly teases Bradbury over a review of his new book: 'John lifted the *Times* and read, like Ahab, from the holy text.'¹³⁷ Later still, Bradbury seeks a rare moment of influence over Huston, hypnotising him, and trying to persuade Huston to take a ferry rather than fly: '[...]like Ahab, you will go to sea with me, two nights from now.'¹³⁸

The covert criticism implied by Huston-as-Ahab is complicated by the narrator's frequent identification of *himself* with Ahab. The first instances are when he contemplates with dread the lonely nights of writing ahead of him in his hotel room: 'Then, like Ahab, I thought on my bed, a damp box with its pale cool winding sheets and the window dripping next to it like a conscience all night through';¹³⁹ 'I sat alone listening to the rain and the rain on the cold hotel roof, thinking of Ahab's coffin-bed waiting for me up there under the

¹³⁶ Ray Bradbury, *Green Shadows, White Whale* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 24.

¹³⁷ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 200.

¹³⁸ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 252.

¹³⁹ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 27.

drumbeat weather'.¹⁴⁰ Later, as the narrator buckles down to the task of adapting Melville's novel, he allows himself a small but more heroic moment as Ahab:

I was and remained a pursuer of the Whale. I was a small ahab, with no capital up front. For I felt that as fast as I swam, the Whiteness outpaced my poor strokes and my inadequate boat: a portable typewriter and great white pages waiting to be covered with blood.¹⁴¹

Ultimately, *Green Shadows, White Whale* is more engaging as an attempt at autobiography than as a re-imagining of *Moby Dick* or as a portrait of 'the Irish'. The most powerful moments are those in which Bradbury touches on Huston's streak of cruelty, sometimes directed towards Bradbury, but on other occasions directed to Huston's wife. True events all, according to Bradbury's biographer.¹⁴² Nevertheless *Green Shadows, White Whale* is a fictionalised account: in real life, Bradbury's family accompanied him to Ireland, but the novel's fictionalised Bradbury travels alone.

To an extent, Bradbury is here contributing to the growing Hollywood mythology surrounding John Huston, initiated by novelist Peter Viertel, whose experience of working with Huston on the film *The African Queen* (1951) forms the basis of the *roman à clef*, *White Hunter, Black Heart* (1953). Viertel disguised the identity of Huston ('John Wilson' in the novel), but the disguise is thin, and Viertel admits that the novel directly addresses Huston.¹⁴³ Bradbury's title *Green Shadows, White Whale* consciously echoes Viertel's, but Bradbury names the director openly, so that his addressing of Huston becomes even more direct, especially in the 'Banshee' sequence where Bradbury is able to exact a fantastical revenge on Huston.¹⁴⁴

More engaging still is the narrator's short but intense account of how he finished the screenplay following a blaze of insight into Melville's text:

I awoke and stared at the ceiling as if it were about to plunge down at me, an immense whiteness of flesh, a madness of unblinking eye, a flounder of tail. I was in a terrible state of excitement. I imagine it was like those moments we hear about before an earthquake, when perhaps the dogs and cats fight to leave the house, or the unseen, unheard tremors shake the floor and beams, and you find yourself held ready for something to arrive but you're damned if you know what.

¹⁴⁰ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 30.

¹⁴¹ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 65.

¹⁴² Weller, *Chronicles*, pp. 223-228.

¹⁴³ Peter Viertel, *White Hunter, Black Heart* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 411-6. In 1957, Bradbury worked on a screenplay of Viertel's novel; see Weller, *Chronicles*, pp. 244-5.

¹⁴⁴ Bradbury, *Shadows*, pp. 197-211.

I sat up quickly, put my legs down, my feet to the floor, arose, walked to the mirror over my typewriter and announced:

'I am Herman Melville!'¹⁴⁵

Again, a fictionalised account, but this passage proceeds to incorporate several pages of text which Bradbury also published as the non-fiction essay 'The Whale, the Whim and I', blurring all distinctions between fiction and reminiscence.¹⁴⁶

The narrator describes a frenzied seven hours of writing, an uninterrupted working day in which, he claims, he wrote the last third of the *Moby Dick* screenplay in one rush. He moves on from that confident proclamation, 'I am Herman Melville!', indicating the fictional Bradbury's repositioning of himself in relation to Huston as an authority on *Moby Dick*.¹⁴⁷ Then, adopting the moment when Ahab nails a doubloon to the mast as his starting point, the narrator finds all of Melville's metaphors rushing through him: 'Capture the big metaphor first, the rest will rise to follow. Don't bother with the sardines when the Leviathan looms. He will suction them in by the billions once he is yours'.¹⁴⁸

Bradbury declares that the gold coin embodies all that the Pequod's crew want, and symbolises 'what Ahab insanely desires above all [...] the men's souls'.¹⁴⁹ The hammer that drives the nail through the coin is, unknown to the crew, the hammer that nails their coffins shut. Ahab's offer of the doubloon for the first man to spy the whale causes a man to fall overboard, consumed by the sea, in turn becalming the Pequod. The becalmed ship begins to bake in the sun, and the men begin to fade and die. When this is reinforced by his roll of the bones, Queequeg prepares for his death, builds a coffin and enters a trance state. Bradbury's resolution of this now static tableau is his own invention:

Only one thing, I reasoned, could break the spell. Love. That banal thing: friendship. If Ishmael were threatened with death, would not Queequeg, from the depths of his own inner hiding places, spring forth, summoned by possible murder? It seemed the strong, and thus the proper, solution. Let the men then, in the first case, threaten dying Queequeg. Ishmael intervenes when he sees a sailor cutting a new tattoo in Queequeg's stolid flesh with a knife. Thus Ishmael proves his love, his friendship.

¹⁴⁵ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 257.

¹⁴⁶ Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 16-22. Pages 19-22 of the essay match pp. 257-260 of *Green Shadows, White Whale* almost word for word.

¹⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 257.

¹⁴⁸ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁹ Bradbury, *Shadows*, p. 258.

In the non-fiction version of this account, Bradbury declares, 'Let's face it, adapting any other writer to the screen, or into any other form, is all but impossible [...] And yet, impossible as it seems, it must be done. The screenwriter sets out to masquerade for a few months, in the flesh, and look out the eyes of some author'.¹⁵⁰ It is through this act of inhabiting Melville that Bradbury believes he was able to complete the screenplay (and thus the fictionalised Bradbury is free to leave Ireland, his work complete). This remarkable passage, blending fact with fiction, at once provides an insight into the thought processes of Ray Bradbury, screenwriter, and shows the elation of the fictionalised Bradbury in finding a solution to the impossible challenge set for him by his director. The scene is cathartic for the character, as well as 'gloriously cathartic' for the author who had become entangled with Melville for nearly half a century.¹⁵¹

5 Conclusions

While 'The Fog Horn' establishes Bradbury as a cinematic writer suited for adapting Melville, Bradbury's screenplay *Moby Dick* shows him to be an effective story analyst, identifying unifying dramatic elements within Melville's text which can be re-purposed to support a strong, linear narrative which nevertheless retains some of the symbolism of the novel.

Working with his hero John Huston should have been a dream come true for Bradbury, but the strained professional relationship ending in Huston's claim of co-authorship of the screenplay for *Moby Dick* seems to have become a nightmare. *Green Shadows, White Whale*, a narration of Bradbury's misgivings of working with Huston and adapting an almost unadaptable novel can be taken with the print publication of Bradbury's version of the *Moby Dick* screenplay and the novella version of *Leviathan '99* as Bradbury's attempt to finally wrest back control over the whole experience.

Shortly after working on *Moby Dick*, Bradbury would seek to bring his own published fiction to the screen. The next chapter explores his screenwriting for another almost unadaptable novel, *The Martian Chronicles*.

¹⁵⁰ Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁵¹ Ken Kelley, 'Playboy Interview: Ray Bradbury (1996)', in *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Steven L. Aggelis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 150-169 (p. 157).

Chapter 2: *The Martian Chronicles*

1 Introduction

As we saw with Ray Bradbury's screenplay for *Moby Dick*, a significant challenge in adaptation can be structural: identifying adaptable elements in a work which can be selectively re-aligned to form a dramatically satisfying new structure. Bradbury's own fragmented novel *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) – itself a work of adaptation, pieced together from originally unrelated short stories – presents similar difficulties for any would-be adapter, and Bradbury's own screenplays based on the book use a wide range of possible strategies, from streamlining the story into linear narrative, to emulating the novel's structure.

Bradbury's efforts to adapt *The Martian Chronicles* for the screen span forty years, and his earliest script represents the first time he had attempted to adapt one of his own books in its entirety. The early screenplays for the *Chronicles* show a freshness of approach, suggesting a writer trying to extend his earlier work, but unfortunately no actual film emerged. Although a television version of *The Martian Chronicles* was eventually produced (1980), it was not from Bradbury's script. This chapter explores Bradbury's extended engagement with *The Martian Chronicles* and examines the four screenplay versions that he created, each taking a different approach to adaptation.

In returning again and again to *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury develops a grand narrative extending far beyond the screenplays, one that reflects (and reflects upon) the American frontier, and the technological tension Bradbury sees between the rocket and the bomb, explored differently in each of the screenplays.

The process of adaption leads Bradbury into remarkable fluidity, not only allowing his *Martian Chronicles* to appear differently nearly every time he adapts it, but driving him to create new material, some of which eventually finds an outlet outside of the *Chronicles* film projects.

2 The Novel

The Martian Chronicles, a book made up largely of previously published short stories, has been referred to variously as a 'composite novel' or a 'novelised story cycle'.¹ Bradbury himself refers to it as a 'half-cousin to a novel'.² It has no single protagonist, nor a continuous narrative. Instead, its depiction of the colonisation of Mars is achieved through a patchwork of encounters between various Earth people and the Martians, who resist each encounter through the use of aggression, cunning or mind control. The Martians are brought down only by an epidemic of chicken pox brought from Earth, just as many Native Americans had been killed by disease brought to the New World from Europe in the fifteenth century.

Bradbury's own account of his creation of *The Martian Chronicles* has been much repeated.³ He originally wrote his Mars stories as a very loose cycle, with no sense that he was creating either a novel or a 'future history'. At some point in the 1940s he became aware of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), a novelised short story cycle of small-town American life, and conceived the notion that his disparate Mars stories could be aggregated into a collection of related episodes. It was a meeting with editor Walter I. Bradbury in 1949 that finally prompted him to coalesce his stories into something more tightly woven, what he would come to refer to as a 'book-of-stories-pretending-to-be-a-novel'.⁴

Beginning in 1951, the text of *The Martian Chronicles* started to become somewhat unstable due to the first in a series of alterations to the contents of the book. From this point on, several episodes would shift in and out of the *Chronicles* with almost every new edition as Bradbury or his editors saw fit to add or remove 'Usher II', 'The Fire Balloons', 'The Wilderness' and 'Way in the Middle of the Air'.⁵ The instability of the text becomes an issue when trying to establish a coherent view of *The Martian Chronicles*. For example, Douglas Carter's meticulous analysis of the patterns and rhythms of the book doesn't fully take into account the troublesome four stories that variously appear and disappear in

¹ Eric S. Rabkin, 'The Composite Novel in Science Fiction', *Foundation* 66 (Spring 1996), 93-100. Eller and Touponce, *Life*, p. 358.

² Ray Bradbury, *Zen in the Art of Writing* (Santa Barbara, CA: Joshua Odell, 1996), p. 93.

³ Ray Bradbury, 'How I Wrote My Book' in *The Martian Chronicles: The Complete Edition* (Burton, MI: Subterranean, 2009), pp. 203-7. Bradbury, *Zen*, pp. 91-98.

Bradbury, 'Green Town, Somewhere on Mars; Mars, Somewhere in Egypt' in *The Martian Chronicles* (New York: Avon, 1997), pp. vii-xii.

⁴ Bradbury, 'Green Town', p. x.

⁵ Eller and Touponce, *Life*, pp. 130-1.

different editions of the book, shifting the axis of symmetry, or even rendering the work asymmetrical.⁶ The instability is likewise a potential issue for any screenwriter seeking to adapt *The Martian Chronicles*: which *Martian Chronicles* to adapt? Which episodes are essential to the *Chronicles*?

One other aspect of the text which has a considerable bearing on its adaptability is Bradbury's prose style: many of the poetic effects of *The Martian Chronicles* that so pleased critics are dependent on the imagination of the reader, and are less suited for direct visual depiction. In broad terms, Bradbury's prose in *The Martian Chronicles* and elsewhere adopts two distinct styles, which Eller & Touponce have compared to that of Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe. The *Chronicles*' narrator's Hemingway-like 'mistrust of abstractions [...] naïve truth-telling and understatement [...] moving from detail to detail and from cause to effect' will often give way to a Wolfe-like syntax which they characterise as 'lyrically rhapsodic,' and where '[...] meaning is generated primarily by resemblance'.⁷ In relation to screenwriting, Hemingway is a highly pertinent reference point. The effect of his economy of description has often been likened to a cinematic immediacy, and his use of 'montage [...], decentred perspective [...] and partial glimpses' in a work such as *In Our Time* make his writing a strong analogue of screenwriting.⁸

Bradbury himself goes so far as to claim that all of his own prose fiction reads like a screenplay: 'All of my short stories can be shot off the page [...] Each paragraph is a shot,' he writes.⁹ He perhaps exaggerates, and he certainly overlooks his more metaphorical, Wolfe-like, flourishes which are far from being directly filmable. Nevertheless, Bradbury was gripped by the conviction that he was made for the medium of film, and so from 1957 onwards began his almost lifelong journey in adapting *The Martian Chronicles* for the screen.

A number of critics have pointed out *The Martian Chronicles*' dependence on the 'frontier myth', which we may see as part of Bradbury's grand narrative. The frontier myth derives from Frederick J. Turner's *The Frontier in American History* (1920), which identifies numerous significant ways in which the frontier determined American culture, democracy and character. Among these are claims that the frontier gave to Americans 'that practical,

⁶ Douglas, 'Cross Media'.

⁷ Eller and Touponce, *Life*, pp. 9-10; see also Mogen, pp. 32-3.

⁸ Seed, *Cinematic Fictions*, p. 73.

⁹ Bill Warren, 'At Work in the Business of Metaphor', *Starlog*, 153 (April 1990), 29-32 & 58 (p. 31).

inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; [...] that restless, nervous energy'.¹⁰ Eric S. Rabkin characterises Bradbury's use of the frontier as a place for a second chance for the 'American myth'.¹¹ Gary K. Wolfe persuasively argues that the frontier myth is the key to understanding the novel, and cites the centrality of the chapter 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright' as particularly important to this reading.¹² That chapter's threat of lawlessness and shootout confrontation strongly resembles a Western, that genre of fiction which builds most directly on the frontier myth.

The frontier myth, however, cannot account for *The Martian Chronicles* in its entirety, not least because some of the key episodes have little resonance with it. For example, 'The Third Expedition' gains its power from its use of nostalgia for small-town 1920s America, and from its horror-style suspense and shock ending. While 'The Martian' has an ostensibly frontier setting, its success primarily depends on Todorov's fantastic effect, that oscillation in the reader's comfort in trying to grasp whether Tom is really back from the dead, or whether he is something else. And surely the effects of the pivotal 'There Will Come Soft Rains' lie entirely in the pathos of humankind's machinery continuing to do its servile work long after humans have all died. However, when we consider the cinematic appeal of *The Martian Chronicles*, the imagery of the frontier becomes compelling, with its shanty towns, temporary structures and desert landscapes.

A further contributing element to Bradbury's grand narrative – especially as it is developed in the *Martian Chronicles* screenplays – is the tension he sees with the rocket and the bomb. 'The basic fact of our time is machinery,' Bradbury wrote in 1960. 'The two most important developments in machinery, the atom bomb and the rocket, can either destroy us or save us. This given, it is surprising, even since Sputnik, how few articles have concerned themselves with the impact of the latter in our civilisation'.¹³ Bradbury was writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, a short opinion piece in which he urged artists and writers to recognise the real factors shaping our lives and, essentially, to adopt SF as a mode of expression appropriate to the times. *The Martian Chronicles* involves the destruction of Earth civilisation followed by a muted renaissance of humankind on the planet Mars. The *Chronicles* makes extensive use of that most definitive of science-fictional devices, the

¹⁰ Frederick R. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Bremen: Outlook, 2011), p. 24.

¹¹ Eric S. Rabkin, 'To Fairyland by Rocket: Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*', in *Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1980), pp. 110-126.

¹² Gary K. Wolfe, 'The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury', in *Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1980), pp. 33-54.

¹³ Ray Bradbury, 'Writer Takes Long Look Into Space', *Los Angeles Times*, 10 January 1960, p. E7.

rocketship, albeit with little consideration given to the technology of the vehicle. Bradbury's rockets are a means to an end, a symbol of escape from the decadence of life on earth, and by extension a symbol of hope. The first chapter of the book, 'Rocket Summer', uses the metaphor of the heat of the rocket's flames turning winter into a transitory summer; the rocket has a transformative power, but a very short-lived one. Much of the episodic content of the novel is built around various rocket crews and captains, and the pioneers and settlers who are brought to Mars by rocket, so we are constantly reminded of the rocket, but the rocket itself rarely takes centre stage.

The other of Bradbury's two 'machineries', the atom bomb, is more significantly transformative in *The Martian Chronicles*, but actually figures remarkably little in the book. In fact, 'There Will Come Soft Rains', the only chapter to give us a close-up of what the A-bomb can do, was one of the last chapters to be written, and was first published as a stand-alone short story mere months before the book itself came out. While many of *The Martian Chronicles*' chapters look backward to what SF had been in the early 1940s, reflecting a pre-Hiroshima sensibility, it is the way the stories are assembled into an over-arching narrative that reflects post-Hiroshima concerns. Although the bomb takes up a small amount of the narrative, Bradbury is careful to quietly build its threat through passing references in earlier chapters of the book. The destruction of Earth civilisation is pivotal and epochal, making the *Chronicles* a haunting piece of apocalyptic fiction.

David Ketterer in *New Worlds For Old* (1974) sees an intellectual value in the destruction we witness in apocalyptic literature. It is concerned, he writes, 'with the creation of other worlds which exist, on the literal level, in a credible relationship with the 'real' world, thereby causing a metaphorical destruction of that 'real' world in the reader's head'.¹⁴ Frederick A. Kreuziger in *The Religion of Science Fiction* balances this with the emotions we feel, the strange comfort: 'The precise comfort offered is hope, the promise that a new age is coming'.¹⁵ Ernest Yanarella in *The Cross, The Plow and the Skyline* (2001) argues that it is this hope that is all important to the reader, making the fictional apocalypse into a mode of 'imminent expectation'.¹⁶ It is this mode which Bradbury adopts (exploits) in *The Martian Chronicles*, and it is something he achieves with just a few, carefully seeded references to

¹⁴ Ketterer, David, *New Worlds For Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction and American Literature* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 13.

¹⁵ Frederick A. Kreuziger, *The Religion of Science Fiction* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986), p. 6.

¹⁶ Ernest Yanarella, *The Cross, The Plow and the Skyline: Contemporary Science Fiction and the Ecological Imagination* (Parkland, FL: Brown Walker Press), p. 34.

the coming apocalypse.¹⁷

Finally, we should consider the cinematic, visual potential of *The Martian Chronicles*. There are numerous instances where the novel adopts a cinematic strategy, sometimes on the small scale and sometimes on a larger scale. 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright', with its shoot-out and stand-off, bears some resemblance to a western. 'The Third Expedition', with Earthmen finding that Mars exactly resembles the Earth of their childhood, gives the impression of being staged on a film set. We will see how these episodes lend themselves to screenplay adaptation below.

We can also see cinematic strategies in the selection of focalisation at various places in the novel. For example, in 'The Off Season' a humble hotdog salesman and his wife watch from Mars as the distant Earth self-destructs, and the narration holds strictly to their remote point of view:

Earth changed in the black sky.

It caught fire.

Part of it seemed to come apart in a million pieces, as if a gigantic jigsaw had exploded. It burned with an unholy dripping glare for a minute, three times normal size, then dwindled.

'What was that?' Sam looked at the green fire in the sky.

'Earth,' said Elma, holding her hands together.

Later, in 'There Will Come Soft Rains,' we get a close-up view of the destruction on the Earth itself. This chapter is Bradbury's prose-poem offering a montage of close-ups and cinematic freeze-frames of an automated house continuing to serve its human masters' needs, despite their deaths. And in 'Night Meeting', we witness two simultaneous, conflicting views of the reality of Mars, as seen by an Earthman and a Martian; the point of view of each character is shown by focalising through each in turn, leading to a conclusion that both must be seeing some version of reality.

¹⁷ In *The Martian Chronicles*, there are really two apocalyptic events. The first is the near destruction of the Martian population, brought about by infection from Earth. Bradbury's mission is not to present a portrait of an alien civilisation, though: his Martians are really ghosts haunting the human colonists, or reflections of them. It's the other apocalypse in the novel that I want to concentrate on: the human one. Earth civilisation is destroyed, leaving the few pioneers on Mars to carry life forward.

Throughout the novel, there are many instances of Bradbury's style looking very similar to that of a screenplay, evident in the example above, and in the following example, from the chapter 'The Martian':

In the morning the sun was very hot.

Mr LaFarge opened the door into the living room and glanced all about, quickly.

The hearthrugs were empty.

LaFarge sighed. 'I'm getting old,' he said.¹⁸

His use of very short paragraphs (mostly single sentences in this example) suggests the brief 'actions' that make up a standard screenplay; his use of paragraphs echoes the screenplay rule of thumb that each paragraph equates to a camera shot; and his control of the 'camera eye' mimics cinematic montage, with an establishing shot, a shot of a character, what he sees, and his reaction.

3 The Screenplays

3.1 Chronology

Until the present study, the chronology of Bradbury's various screenplay versions of *The Martian Chronicles* has never been accurately tracked.¹⁹ My reconstruction here provides more detail than previously available, and also corrects errors made in accounts provided by others. Table 1 shows the key dates, related also to Bradbury's novel and stage play versions.

1950	Publication of novel
1957	TV pilot script 1
1958	TV pilot script 2
1961	Screenplay 1, for MGM

¹⁸ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles*, p. 185.

¹⁹ The best previous accounts are: John Gosling, 'Ray Bradbury's Chronicles', *SFX* 64 (May 2000), 62-9; and Bill Warren, 'The Martian Chronicles Part One: the History', *Mediascene*, 36 (March-April 1979), 4-7.

1963-65	Screenplay 2, for Pakula-Mulligan
1977	Premiere of stage play, Los Angeles
1978	Screenplay 3, for Charles Fries
1980	Broadcast of miniseries (teleplay by Richard Matheson)
1986	Book publication of stage play script
1997	Screenplay 4, for Universal
2009	Book publication of two screenplays (in <i>The Complete Martian Chronicles</i>)

Table 1: Martian Chronicles screenplay chronology. The only version actually produced for screen was the 1980 miniseries, but this did not use a Bradbury script.

Bradbury's first attempt to adapt the *Chronicles* for screen came in 1957, with his TV series proposal *Report From Space*.²⁰ (Previous writers have erroneously dated this to 1955: Nolan's *The Ray Bradbury Companion* reproduces script pages dated thus, but they are attributed to Bryna Productions, which didn't join this production until 1958;²¹ Tibbetts also dates the proposal to 1955, but is probably relying on Nolan's account.²²) Through two separate Bradbury pilot scripts²³, a series concept for thirty-nine weekly episodes was developed with Kirk Douglas's Bryna Productions.²⁴ Despite Douglas's professed personal support for the project, the contractual completion date of 25 March 1959 came and went with no film having been shot.²⁵

Late in 1959, Bradbury approached producer Julian Blaustein with a feature film proposal.²⁶ He was soon at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) developing a screenplay from his second TV pilot script.²⁷ MGM had produced *Forbidden Planet* (1956), one of the better SF films of the 1950s boom, and Blaustein's previous credits included another SF classic, *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951). The MGM-Blaustein combination would, therefore, seem well suited to realising *The Martian Chronicles* on screen. The screenplay occupied Bradbury for a year.

²⁰ Contract papers dated 1st May 1957.

²¹ Nolan, *Companion*, pp. 249-50.

²² Tibbetts, 'Illustrating Man', p. 74.

²³ Forrest J. Ackerman, 'Scientifilm Marquee', *Space Travel*, 5.4 (July 1958), 118-122 (p. 122). The second pilot script referred to here is likely the extant 1958 adaptation of 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright'.

²⁴ Information obtained from papers held by the Kirk Douglas archive, Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research, University of Wisconsin - Madison.

²⁵ Kirk Douglas, letter to Bradbury, 3rd March 1959.

²⁶ Bradbury, letter to Ben Benjamin of Famous Artists Agency, 14th March 1963.

²⁷ The earliest dated document from this phase is Bradbury's sixteen pages of character outlines, 26 July 1960.

For reasons which are not entirely clear, production stalled once again. It is evident that six weeks after turning in his February 1961 script revisions, Bradbury left MGM ostensibly because Blaustein was too busy with other projects to progress the *Chronicles*.²⁸ In January 1962 he asked Blaustein to declare his hand, boldly stating that he was already circulating *The Martian Chronicles* to other major film-makers, citing David Lean, Akira Kurosawa, Carol Reed and Jack Clayton. Blaustein stressed his continuing interest in the property, but effectively withdrew from any further development.²⁹ Bound studio copies of the screenplay, including Bradbury's revisions, have survived, but the MGM screenplay has never been published, and no part of it was ever filmed.

In 1963 Bradbury took bids from other potential producers for *The Martian Chronicles*, and chose to proceed with Alan J. Pakula and Robert Mulligan, whose adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) he greatly admired.³⁰ Thanks to the commitment of proposed star Gregory Peck, this version of *The Martian Chronicles* would be financed by Universal Studios to the tune of \$10 million; according to Bradbury, the most expensive film ever made up to that point.³¹ The new screenplay Bradbury developed for this version occupied him for much of 1963-65. He turned in his last pages in April 1965, gloomily but accurately predicting to his agent that Universal would reject the screenplay.³²

Surviving correspondence confirms Universal's rejection, but not *why* the script was turned down.³³ According to Bradbury, the potential expense killed it.³⁴ Eller has speculated that Universal may have been expecting from Bradbury another 'terror fiction' film like *It Came From Outer Space*, whose treatment Bradbury had written for Universal in 1952.³⁵ Pakula-Mulligan offered the project to other studios without success, and by May 1966 decided not to renew their option.³⁶ According to Pakula's biographer, 'Bradbury gradually became more interested in other projects'.³⁷ The script is one of two *Martian Chronicles* screenplays

²⁸ Bradbury, letter to Don Congdon, 18th March 1961.

²⁹ Bradbury, letter to Julian Blaustein, 30th January 1962. Blaustein to Bradbury, 31st January 1962.

³⁰ [Anon.], 'A Portrait of Genius: Ray Bradbury' (1964) in *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), ed. by Steven Aggelis, pp. 27-28; Jared Brown, *Alan J. Pakula: His Films and His Life* (New York: Back Stage Books, 2005), p. 60.

³¹ Warren, 'Chronicles', p.8.

Bradbury, letter to Frederik Pohl, 21st July 1964.

³² Bradbury, letter to Don Congdon, 11th April 1965.

³³ Bradbury, letter to Congdon, 5th May 1965.

³⁴ Kunert, 'Bradbury', p. 77.

³⁵ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 216.

³⁶ Alan J. Pakula, letter to Bradbury, 11^h May 1966.

³⁷ Brown, pp 60-61.

to have been published.³⁸

A decade would pass before Bradbury returned to adapting *The Martian Chronicles*, this time with a stage play first mounted at the Colony Theatre in Los Angeles in 1977 (directed by Terrence Shank). His rationale for self-adapting was simple: '[...] various students wrote to tell me that they had 'declaimed' scenes from my Martian stories in class. Others had acted them on high school stages, or in college drama meetings [...]. I decided to learn from my young teachers. If they could adapt me, so could I'.³⁹ Bradbury's stage play script was published in 1986.⁴⁰

Around this same time, Bradbury contracted with Charles Fries Productions for a TV miniseries. Bradbury's contract included provision for him to serve as a consultant on the production, but screenwriter and novelist Richard Matheson (a long time friend of Bradbury) was to write the teleplay. However, when Fries suggested that a feature-length version of the script might help secure additional funding for the production, Bradbury opted to write such a script himself. Fries intended only that Matheson's teleplay be condensed to feature-length, but Bradbury went further in his editing, producing a substantially different screenplay drawing more on his own theatrical production than on Matheson's miniseries. By 1979 the miniseries was completed as an international co-production directed by Michael Anderson – best known for films such as *The Dam Busters* (1955), *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956) and the more science-fictional *1984* (1956) and *Logan's Run* (1976). Unfortunately for all concerned, in a press conference to launch the mini-series, Bradbury himself declared the finished production to be 'boring', earning him a reprimand from the Fries' lawyers.⁴¹

In June 1997 Bradbury finished a fourth screenplay adaptation, for Universal. Bradbury spent a year working with producers Lauren C. Weissman, Gerald R. Molen, John Philip Dayton and Duane Poole on multiple drafts. Another writer, Michael Covert, eventually re-wrote Bradbury's script, but this version was also abandoned. Bradbury's original script (in

³⁸ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 389-577.

³⁹ Ray Bradbury, 'The Chronicles Remembered', programme note from Colony Theatre Production, July 1977. <http://colonytheatre.org/shows/MartianChronicles.html> (Accessed 30 Sept 2011).

⁴⁰ Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* [stage play] (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Publishing, 1986).

⁴¹ Jeff Szalay, 'Starlog Interview: Ray Bradbury', *Starlog*, 53 (December 1981), 35-39 (p. 39).
Pacht, Ross, Warne, Bernhard & Sears Inc, Attorneys at Law, letter to Ray Bradbury, 17th January 1980.

second draft) is the only other *Chronicles* screenplay to have been published.⁴²

3.2 Comparisons

Bradbury's early screenplay versions of *The Martian Chronicles* are quite different from his later adaptations. In the early 1960s he wrote that he found it 'fascinating' to 'let [his] current subconscious run free with old subconscious devices and people [...] riding happy piggy-back on the younger writer who did the book'.⁴³ By the late 1970s, though, he would occasionally invoke the reputation of his book in arguing for fidelity in adapting it.⁴⁴ In every instance, however, Bradbury's screenplays retain two fundamental elements in common. First, each one establishes Captain Wilder - protagonist of the pivotal episode 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright' - as a continuing presence throughout. Wilder is the most active and decisive of all of Bradbury's spacefarers in the novel, and in the screenplays he replaces some of the other space captains of individual episodes. Second, each screenplay places 'And The Moon' as the dramatic hub of the adaptation, functioning to separate the screenplay into distinct phases of exploration and colonisation. In other respects, however, each iteration of *Chronicles* screenplay adopts a new strategy in adapting the novel. Table 2 summarises the principal similarities and differences between the *Chronicles* versions.

⁴² Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 579-744.

⁴³ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 168.

⁴⁴ For example, Bradbury to Charles Fries, Malcolm Stuart & Dick Berg, producers of *The Martian Chronicles* miniseries, 6th June 1979.

	Book	1961 Screenplay (MGM) (unpublished)	1963-5 Screenplay (Pakula- Mulligan) (published)	1978 Screenplay (Fries) (unpublished)	1986 Stage play (published)	1997 Screenplay (Universal) (published)
Protagonist/ Role of Wilder	No central protagonist. Wilder is one of several captains, leader of first successful mission.	Captain Wilder is made the central character.	Captain Wilder is made the central character.	Captain Wilder is made a recurring character.	Captain Wilder is made a recurring character.	Captain Wilder is made a recurring character.
Structure	Episodic structure	Structured around Wilder's personal story, against episodic backdrop.	Structured around Wilder's episodic adventure.	Episodic structure, Wilder in more episodes and linking material.	Episodic structure, Wilder in more episodes and linking material.	Episodic structure, Wilder in more episodes and linking material.
Climax:	Earth people become the new Martians	Wilder achieves control over his destiny, loses his marriage, gains his dreams.	Wilder personally achieves dream of leading humankind beyond Mars – to the stars – the seeding is successful, but Wilder himself dies.	Earth people become the new Martians, and Wilder foretells humankind reaching out to the stars, which is achieved by future generations.	Earth people become the new Martians.	Earth people become the new Martians.

Table 2: Comparison of Scripts and Book

Each new adaptation of the *Chronicles* provides Bradbury with the opportunity to pick and choose which episodes from the novel to put in and leave out. Thus, the novel's fragmentary nature turns into a source of enormous flexibility in adaptation, as can be seen in Table 3.

Chapter/Story Title	1961 screenplay	1963-5 screenplay	1978 screenplay	1980 NBC miniseries (teleplay by Richard Matheson)	1986 stage play	1997 screenplay
Rocket Summer	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
Ylla	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summer Night, The	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Earth Men, The	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Third Expedition, The	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
And The Moon Be Still as Bright	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Morning, The	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Night Meeting	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓
Fire Balloons, The	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wilderness, The	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X
Way in the Middle of the Air	X	X	X	X	X	X
Usher II	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Martian, The	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓
Off Season, The	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Silent Towns, The	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long Years, The	X	X	X	✓	X	X
There Will Come Soft Rains	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
Million-Year Picnic, The	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[The End of the Beginning]*	✓	X	X	X	X	X
[Kaleidoscope]*	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
[The Lost City of Mars]*	X	✓	X	X	X	X
[The Messiah]*	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[The Rocket Man]*	✓	X	X	X	X	X
* Stories which are not from <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> book, but used in a number of adaptations.						

Table 3: Stories included/excluded in successive adaptations of The Martian Chronicles (bridge passages removed for clarity).

3.2.1 1961 Screenplay (unpublished): story & themes

The 1961 screenplay for MGM is presented as a writer's draft, and shows no signs of studio formatting other than the studio binding.⁴⁵ It has never been published; my analysis here is the first critical assessment it has received. The screenplay is a bold attempt to re-structure the highly episodic book into the form favoured by Hollywood production: a dramatic linear narrative centred on a single protagonist. Drawing selectively on various themes from the novel, Bradbury shapes the conquest of Mars into a personal journey for Captain Wilder. To some extent, therefore, Bradbury's technique of adaptation repeats his approach to *Moby Dick*, namely in the selection and re-ordering of disparate episodes to support a new narrative arc thematically consistent with the novel. The screenplay carries a light dusting of a philosophical view of humankind's place in the cosmos which will be carried forward as an important theme in the subsequent screenplays. The script is presented as continuous narrative, without voice-over and without breaks to delineate separate episodes.

Although the screenplay carries the complete story for a feature-length version of *The Martian Chronicles*, it is unfinished (or at least unrefined) in the sense that there are many passages still expressed only in outline form; that is, yet to be fully dramatised. This led to criticism from Bradbury's Hollywood agent Ben Benjamin that the script fails to show 'in a step-by-step progression, how this picture will look on the screen'.⁴⁶ The implication is that further drafts are needed, coupled with some editing since the 158-page length of the screenplay already exceeds the typical 120 pages expected for a two-hour film.

According to Eller, Bradbury conceived this version of *The Martian Chronicles* for Cinerama.⁴⁷ With its almost wrap-around screen, this widest of the widescreen film formats was also the one most associated with visual spectacle, and so it is that the 1961 screenplay depends on spectacle for much of its impact with frequent sweeping camera movements along the Martian canals and shots of rocketships hurtling toward or away from the camera – capitalising on the most dynamic visuals Cinerama had shown itself capable of (rollercoaster, water-skiing, aerial footage of the Grand Canyon) in the demonstration feature *This is Cinerama* (1952).⁴⁸ The camera moving along the canal becomes a form of shorthand, which Bradbury repeats in all of his subsequent screenplays – and it echoes a

⁴⁵ Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*, unpublished screenplay, 11 January 1961

⁴⁶ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 170.

⁴⁷ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 169.

⁴⁸ *This is Cinerama*, dir. by Merian C. Cooper (BelAir Classiques, 2012) [on BluRay].

description from the novel, where Martians Ylla and K travel to town: 'She didn't watch the dead, ancient bone-chess cities slide under, or the old canals filled with emptiness and dreams. Past dry rivers and dry lakes they flew [...]'.⁴⁹

From January to April 1961, concurrently with his work on this screenplay, Bradbury was interviewed by Craig Cunningham for the UCLA Oral History Program. In this interview he talks about his previous experience of self-adaptation, principally his attempt in the 1950s to dramatise *Fahrenheit 451* for the stage, for Charles Laughton and Paul Gregory.⁵⁰ His method, to directly transcribe what was in the novel into what would be performed on the stage, was an abject failure, as judged by Laughton and himself. He learned instead to approach adaptation in a different way: without reference to the book. He says, 'It would have been better if I had disremembered my own novel [...] and then emotionally tried to recreate the essence of that novel in the new form'. Only after a first draft would he then go back to his source and determine if he had left out anything important. Bradbury notes that he 'discovered this secret' in writing his early teleplays, and specifically mentions his then current work of adapting *The Martian Chronicles* as an instance of this improved technique. The fluidity of the character and story developments leading up to the 1961 screenplay provide direct evidence of this approach. Bradbury's July 1960 character outlines show that he had a strong early grasp of who his key players would be, and how they would inter-relate⁵¹. Unlike his novel, which has no single protagonist, the screenplay would effectively merge his succession of rocketship captains into the single character, John Wilder. Wilder would have a wife, Martha, from whom he was becoming increasingly distant. He would be drawn to the Martian woman Ylla. He would bounce ideas off the priest Father Peregrine. Among the minor characters, though, there would be some significant developments as he worked towards a complete screenplay draft. Martha's friend Janice Hamilton, outlined in some detail as if she is an important character, diminishes by the time of the draft script, while Yll – Ylla's husband, barely mentioned in the character outlines – grows to become the primary antagonist in the screenplay.

What Wilder wants 'no more, and no less, is the stars'. In his character biography, Bradbury piles up plenty of analogies for Wilder, variously comparing him to Columbus, Cortez, Galileo, the Wright Brothers and Icarus; and describing him as politician, psychologist,

⁴⁹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, 'Interview', pp. 189-195.

⁵¹ Ray Bradbury, 'The Martian Chronicles character outline', 18 pages, 26 July 1960. Fourth item in Bradbury file labelled 'Martian Chronicles screenplay – MGM 1960'.

brother and father. Wilder 'knows how to dramatise what he wants;' 'He must keep moving;' he believes that 'space travel is the single most important step taken by human beings'.⁵² A driven man, Wilder seeks the adventurous life of travelling to the planets, but he also has a wife and children, a fact which tethers him to Earth. In addition, he is haunted by recollections of another woman. Once on Mars, the visions and ghosts on the planet sometimes prompt Wilder's thoughts of missed and lost opportunities. No longer a loose cycle of related episodes, this *Martian Chronicles* screenplay becomes a unified dramatic narrative focused on Wilder, and thus broadly conforming to the 'personal drama' subgenre defined by Philip Parker.⁵³

Successive outlines reveal Bradbury slowly piecing his unified narrative together from multiple building blocks - not just from the episodes within *The Martian Chronicles* novel, but from elsewhere. An early scene on the lawn derives from his non-*Chronicles* short story 'The End of the Beginning' (1956), with the general domestic situation also recalling 'The Rocket Man' (1951), another non-*Chronicles* tale.⁵⁴ A section where an explosion throws astronauts out into space is derived from the non-*Chronicles* short story 'Kaleidoscope' (1949).⁵⁵ These episodes remain throughout the development process and into the complete screenplay draft. Meanwhile, stories which are 'native' to *The Martian Chronicles* drift in and out of the overall scheme through successive draft outlines.

Despite repeatedly referring to his novel as a fantasy, Bradbury seems determined to anchor the screenplay in the reality of the space race, something he repeats in his later *Chronicles* screenplays. The 1961 script includes a note specifically identifying his factories on Mars as being scientifically based, and elsewhere Wilder experiences the time delay of sending and receiving messages from Earth.⁵⁶ In addition to the science, he seeks to make the domestic reality plausible, with the relationship between spaceman, wife and sons carrying distinct echoes of the press articles on real-life astronauts' wives which had begun

⁵² Bradbury, 'Martian Chronicles character', 26 July 1960.

⁵³ Philip Parker, *The Art & Science of Screenwriting*, 2nd edn (Exeter: Intellect, 1999), pp. 159-62.

⁵⁴ Ray Bradbury, 'The End of the Beginning' in *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 880-4.

Ray Bradbury, 'The Rocket Man', in *The Illustrated Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), pp. 97-111.

⁵⁵ Ray Bradbury, 'Kaleidoscope', in *The Illustrated Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), pp. 28-39.

⁵⁶ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 119; p. 123.

to appear around the end of the 1950s.⁵⁷ Historical American experience is also important: Bradbury's character biography likens Martha to the female American pioneers, whom he characterises as following their husbands whilst always desirous of putting down roots. Although she has no direct counterpart in Bradbury's novel, Martha provides a clear echo of the frontier theme of the novel (particularly those editions containing the story 'The Wilderness', in which we see Mars through the eyes of the women of the second wave of colonisation).

Martha Wilder is reluctant to go to Mars, ostensibly due to a wholly rational fear of the risks involved in space travel, but Bradbury embellishes her fears with concerns about the 'madness' which has overtaken some space travellers, and her awareness of the irrational 'lure of the deeps' of space - a *Moby Dick* parallel - which draw some men to 'reach for the unattainable stars'. Martha's fears are vindicated to an extent by the catastrophic explosion in space which claims the lives of several astronauts, although her own husband escapes unharmed.⁵⁸

The Wilders' relationship is summarised with an observation that John must always continue outwards, while Martha must always return to the familiar, embodying the two opposing forces that Bradbury sees in humankind and represents in the novel: the outward force of colonisation, and the return force of retreat to the homeland. In this screenplay, more so than in the novel, these forces are strongly gendered, with Martha determined to put down roots, and Wilder wanting to do the right thing for the future of humankind. Wilder at first speaks of space travel from a distinctly religious position: humankind represents 'God opening an eye to see himself' and consequently 'If we stay on Earth, some day the race dies, and some small part of God dies'.⁵⁹

Martha becomes increasingly distant as the story progresses, and through the section based on 'The Wilderness', Bradbury allows her to separate herself from Wilder. And yet she recognises and acknowledges in their sons the same urge to explore. In an early scene, Wilder is shown attending the test of a rocket engine (just as Bradbury had recently done, as shown in Terry Sanders' short documentary film *Story of a Writer*).⁶⁰ The two sons are

⁵⁷ For example, Anna Glenn, 'Seven Brave Women Behind the Astronauts', *Life*, 47.12 (21 September 1959), 142-44.

⁵⁸ Character outlines, pp. 5-7.

⁵⁹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 3-6; *Ray Bradbury: Story of a Writer*, dir. by Terry Sanders (1963) [On DVD].

later shown playing with toy rockets.⁶¹ The implication here is that the boys are following in their father's footsteps – or that boys never grow up, again emphasising the heavily gendered nature of this screenplay.

An important theme that emerges in the screenplay, particularly for Wilder and his sons, is the transporting power of the imagination. Martha looks in on the boys' bedroom while they sleep, with 'audio cornucopias' in their ears (just like the sea-shell radios in *Fahrenheit 451*) as a planetarium show projects onto the ceiling, a strongly cinematic image. The boys are clearly there but not-there, and she next experiences a fearful moment of fantasy in relation to Wilder: as he sleeps she thinks she sees his bed drift away into darkness; he, too, is there but not-there.⁶²

This first, Earth-bound section of the screenplay gains much of its power – and its gendered view - from the short story it builds upon, the non-*Chronicles* 'The End of the Beginning'. The story tells of the parents of the first astronaut, and their excitement, elation and fear on the night of their son's launch into space. It begins with the father mowing the lawn one summer night, a scene which could be straight out of Bradbury's 1957 novel *Dandelion Wine*. The father has a heightened sense of touch as he feels the sun go down, the fresh grass showering his face, and his wife watching him. There is an equation of father with son, and of father with every man alive. The father makes reference to an old Negro spiritual, 'Ezekiel Saw the Wheel', with its line 'Way in the Middle of the Air', a line Bradbury also used as a title and reference point in his *Martian Chronicles* chapter of the same name (present in only some editions). The song indicates a prophetic vision, and adds to a suggestion that humankind has a destiny in space.

In one brief passage, the mother declares that she never understood the 'because it's there' argument for climbing Mount Everest, which serves as an invitation for the father to philosophise on why we explore. The father posits the first space launch as part of a critical turning point in the history of humankind:

'Don't know where they'll divide the Ages, at the Persians who dreamt of flying-carpets, or the Chinese who all unknowing celebrated birthdays and New Years with strung ladyfingers and high skyrockets [...] But we're in at the

⁶¹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 8.

⁶² Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 12-14d.

end of a billion years' trying, the end of something long and to us humans, anyway, honourable'.⁶³

The father declares that the species will move on out to the planets and the stars, adding:

'We'll just keep on going until the big words like immortal and for ever take on meaning [...] Gifted with life, the least we can do is preserve and pass on the gift to infinity [...]'

The speech echoes the long American tradition of expansion, and gives a view of space travel that would, over succeeding decades, become distinctively Bradbury's, not only in his fiction but in his personal pontifications in interviews and lectures.

The ambition of 'The End of the Beginning', of linking ordinary man to extraordinary experience and thereby unlocking a philosophical debate, is consistent with the ambition of the 1961 *Martian Chronicles* screenplay which it informs. In the screenplay, Bradbury adopts the basic situation and setting of the short story, and plays upon the same contrast of the 'domestic' and the cosmic. Martha is now the wife who 'doesn't get it', and her role becomes that of an important antagonist, champion of secure domesticity. Bradbury also metaphorically returns to that perfect lawn by having Wilder at the end of the screenplay landing in a vast field of wheat. One major inversion takes place in the adoption of this story into the *Chronicles* screenplay, though: now it is not the son going off into space, but the father.

In the screenplay, Ylla – the first Martian we encounter – has a more pivotal role than in the novel. She is the welcoming, curious spirit of Mars, and one of the few Martians to assist Wilder. Bradbury's character biography tells us that Wilder is 'Prometheus, bringer of fire', whereas Ylla is a 'snow maiden'. In this contrast of fire and frost, some of the metaphors from the *Chronicles* chapter 'Rocket Summer' are brought into the Ylla-Wilder encounter, although these strong conceptual presentations are not here given any visual or dramatic description to indicate how the viewer would come to know these things about these characters; this, again, is part of Bradbury's failure to adequately dramatise events. Ylla's curiosity leads her into close contact with Wilder, appearing to him as Ellen, his lost love from many years ago, during the 'Third Expedition' section of the story.

Ylla's husband Yll, conversely, represents the sterile, passive, declining Martian civilisation, hostile to Wilder and all the people from Earth before he has encountered a single one of

⁶³ Bradbury, 'End', p. 33.

them. He, too, extends throughout the script, as the chief antagonist. His selection of masks, one for every occasion, allows him to shift identity at will, and attempt to overpower the Earthmen.

The dramatic centrepiece of the 1961 screenplay is the section based on 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright', a recognition of its strong character conflict, adapted here with just a few refinements to the character of Spender and his relationship to Wilder. Spender, the conscience of Wilder's crew, is established earlier in the screenplay than in the novel, first appearing during the 'Third Expedition' section. When he discovers some Martian books, he learns that the largely extinct Martians recognised the folly of killing and so instead used 'special dream machines, fantastical physical devices' to direct destructive urges but without destroying. This turns Spender into a Martian-inspired pacifist – and it is a pacifism he struggles with, explaining why, in this version, he does not kill, but instead destroys the rocket in order to delay further exploration of Mars. When under threat, though, he is visibly torn between his physical instinct of picking up his rifle for self-defence, and his intellectual instinct towards a peaceful, Martian-style life. Spender chooses not to take cover when he knows that he is about to be fired upon by his fellow astronauts.⁶⁴ Like the old woman in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Spender is a martyr: he makes a target of himself, and Wilder reluctantly, slowly, shoots him.

As the planet is colonised, and the Martians are assumed to be largely extinct, Wilder is aware that some of them still roam the hills, taking the form of blue lights, and seem to be benevolent. The priests Peregrine and Nolan, though, disagree on how to interpret them. Nolan calls them ungodly. Peregrine argues: they are 'The shark in the sea, the snake on the shore. They are not ungodly, Father. They are the dumb brutes of chaos,'⁶⁵ sounding like Starbuck in *Moby Dick*, who refers to the whale as a 'dumb brute' in both Melville's novel and Bradbury's screenplay.⁶⁶ Other types of Martian re-emerge from hiding, leading to Wilder's concern that 'the whole terrible business of the winning of the West, the horrors of the settler against the native, the Pioneer against the Indian, as Spender feared, seems about to be repeated' – an explicit voicing of the frontier parallel that *The Martian Chronicles* represents.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 111-6.

⁶⁵ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 128.

⁶⁶ Melville, p. 167; Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 90.

⁶⁷ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 135.

Bradbury uses 'Kaleidoscope,' his 1949 story of astronauts thrown away from an exploding spaceship, as the basis for the spectacular climax of Wilder's battle with the shape-shifting Yll. Having repeatedly emerged from the shadows, Yll uses a shape-shifting mask to pose as one of Wilder's colleagues. Yll causes Wilder's rocket to collide with another, and the crews from the two ships are flung outward, rapidly drifting apart. Wilder overcomes Yll in the vacuum of space and uses his spacesuit's control jets to re-enter safely through the atmosphere of Mars.

Ylla uses her powers to appear as Wilder's former wife, but Wilder rejects this, insisting on accepting her for what she truly is. This resolution satisfies Ylla's fantasy of being with the Earthman, and provides Wilder with a convenient new family on Mars. At the screenplay's end, Wilder and his new family watch dozens of rockets fly out to the stars.⁶⁸ The script doesn't spell this out, but this is a seeding of the stars by humankind, an idea which Bradbury will develop much further in his subsequent *Martian Chronicles* scripts.

As noted earlier, *The Martian Chronicles* is an apocalyptic book. Noticeably absent from Bradbury's 1961 screenplay, however, is any reference to atomic war. This isn't to say that Bradbury didn't consider it. As well as the unpublished complete version of the 1961 screenplay, there also exists in Bradbury's manuscript files an outline⁶⁹ for the film which shows Captain Wilder returning to Earth and visiting his destroyed home, in an episode based on the chapter 'There Will Come Soft Rains'. By the time of the completed screenplay, though, this section was gone. There is no documentation to indicate why the end of the world was removed, but there is a possible clue in a studio memo Bradbury wrote to the film's producer, Julian Blaustein, on completion of the first draft treatment. Bradbury writes, 'I've never been so excited about a project in my life. I feel that we can make the motion picture about the Space Age that we and our children live in'.⁷⁰ Despite the ambivalence to technology of Bradbury's works of the early 1950s (*The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man* in particular), the Bradbury of the Space Age seems to have developed a distinctly optimistic outlook, wishing to emphasise the great future ahead. Bradbury made similar remarks about his book when urging Doubleday to bring the *The Martian Chronicles* back into print in 1957. Spurred on by the launch of Sputnik, Bradbury requested a complete resetting of the book, an adjustment to the contents, and the addition of 'a new introduction that would reflect the public fascination with the space

⁶⁸ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 158.

⁶⁹ Bradbury labels this a 'sequence arrangement'.

⁷⁰ Bradbury, letter to Julian Blaustein, 9th August 1960.

race'.⁷¹

This was a time when Bradbury was becoming a vocal advocate of space exploration. In 1960 he wrote an article for *Life* magazine in which he discussed the early steps in the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence, ending with a confident 'In our time, this search will eventually change our laws, our religions, our philosophies, our arts, our recreations, as well as our sciences. Space, the mirror, waits for life to come look for itself there'.⁷² This was followed in 1962 by a second article in which he argued for the millennial significance of space travel;⁷³ and a third in which he wrote about the Apollo space programme.⁷⁴ Bradbury didn't write these articles as a technical expert, but as an enthusiastic advocate of space travel and space science. Over two decades later, he would explain his position: 'To heck with the technicalities. I cannot build a rocketship. They can. But I can sell it, see? I'm a great salesman'.⁷⁵

3.2.2 1961 Screenplay (unpublished): the cinematic

On the whole, the 1961 screenplay shows a strongly cinematic approach, employing spectacle, character drama, ideas for dynamic camera shots, and techniques for montage. Bradbury constructs his scenes visually, making effective use of point-of-view, and integrates the Martian masks well in a dramatic context. Even beyond the sections presented in outline form, though, there are occasional passages in the screenplay which are difficult to visualise in a concrete way, suggesting that further revision is needed to make this script filmable. For example, we can imagine that with the right performance, the action 'Ellen is watching him with the strangest look' is filmable; but the action 'The woman Ellen is overshadowed by the soul of Ylla within' is difficult to visualise; and the evocative, 'Their own pale images in the great wall mirror full of undersea tides which surge invisibly and might drown or blow them away' is pictorially unclear because of its reliance on metaphor.⁷⁶

The spectacle here includes innovative ideas for representing rockets in space. Instead of

⁷¹ Eller and Touponce, *Life*, p. 128.

⁷² Ray Bradbury, 'A Serious Search for Weird Worlds', *Life*, 24th October 1960, 116-130.

⁷³ Bradbury, 'Cry the Cosmos', pp. 86-94.

⁷⁴ Bradbury, 'Impatient Gulliver', pp. 30-36.

⁷⁵ *A Taste of Dandelion Wine*, Bradbury interviewed by Brian Sibley, BBC World Service, 1989.

⁷⁶ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 75; p. 89.

the (by 1961) typical shots of rockets flying across the screen or past the camera, Bradbury's call for many shots to be directly into (or out of) the camera – exploiting the impact of the Cinerama format - emphasises the speed and power of the rockets in a way that was still not common in film until Ron Howard's *Apollo 13* (1995). Later, when astronauts are flung from their rocketships by a collision, they too fall into (and out of) the camera, giving them a similar speed and power.⁷⁷ In addition, two of the rocketship journeys shown in the film feature a dangerous manoeuvre through a radiation cloud and meteoroid storm, causing their crews to seek shelter within the rocketship's 'storm-cellar'; the suspense in these scenes is somewhat arbitrary, but Bradbury is seeking to portray the hazards of space travel. Another spectacle that supports the narrative well is the spontaneous, sequential night-time collapse of the house in the pseudo-midwestern town the Martians construct in 'The Third Expedition,'⁷⁸ almost the opposite of the carnival that constructs itself in the dead of night in Bradbury's novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

In addition to establishing spectacle unfolding before the camera, Bradbury seeks to generate spectacular effects through the dynamic use of the camera. Specific camera instructions are usually considered beyond the remit of a screenwriter (falling more properly into the domain of a film's director), and in most instances Bradbury uses camera directions sparingly to provide atmosphere or mystery, or to clearly establish spatial relationships. However, the very first appearance of Mars in the script is accomplished by having the camera race out ahead of one of the rocketships, which dwindles in size on the screen. The camera then descends through the Martian sky and clouds, settling to a landscape view of the Martian hills taking in the dead sea-bottoms, a dead city, and a newer house of crystal pillars. This one sweeping shot clearly defines the scale of Mars, and establishes the existence of a current, living civilisation with a long past.⁷⁹ This is in distinct contrast to Bradbury's novel, where Mars is rarely viewed from above: it is not until the third expedition lands on Mars that the novel shows a landing, and this is focalised from the surface as the rocketship descends from 'the black velocities' and 'silent gulfs' of space.⁸⁰

We saw in his *Moby Dick* screenplay that Bradbury made careful use of characters' eyes to control the focus of a scene. We see a variation of that technique here, too. For example,

⁷⁷ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 140

⁷⁸ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 92

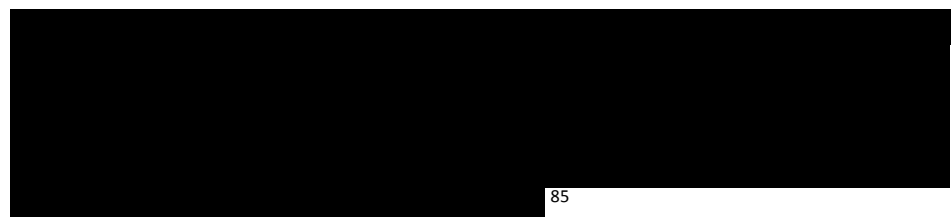
⁷⁹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 24-38.

⁸⁰ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles*, pp. 43-44.

Yll's adoption of a mask enables him to completely pass for astronaut Hinkston, but what lets him down are his eyes: 'The eyes are, quite suddenly, not Hinkston's eyes'.⁸¹ The eyes reveal him and betray him, breaking through his mask. In another scene, Ellen (really the shape-shifted Ylla) sees Wilder in a window up above and is able to subtly pantomime her wish for Wilder and his crew to leave on their rocket.⁸² When, eventually, the crew get to the rocket a line of Martians opposes them. Ellen is off to one side, a hand raised, '[...] caught between one people and another, her people and Wilder's, she cannot speak again, but her eyes are filled with warning'.⁸³ (This of course leaves the question of precisely what 'eyes filled with warning' would look like, but we can imagine a good actor would be able to intuit such a look.)

As well as pictorial techniques, Bradbury makes effective use of sounds and shadows to create clear but unnerving representations of things not actually present within a scene. As Wilder and Hinkston try to leave town in 'The Third Expedition', a shadowy figure on the porch challenges them. It has the voice of Hinkston's grandfather, but physically it is a 'great shadow' which moves with 'immense motion'. The grandfather's presence is evident not directly, but from the results of his movements, such as a potted plant falling over and wind-chimes tinkling. Wilder shoots, and the shadowy grandfather visibly turns into something else when it dies.⁸⁴

In another sequence, derived from 'The Wilderness', Martha and her friend fly over town on 'hovering machines' (an idea with strong potential for Cinerama, but derived entirely from Bradbury's novel). That same night, the two women discuss frontier days:



The sequence is visually set in a bedroom, but the contrasting sounds from another place and time position the characters (and the viewer/listener) in the frontier context that the drama parallels. The technique is similar to the one Bradbury uses in his *Moby Dick* script to

⁸¹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 140.

⁸² Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 88.

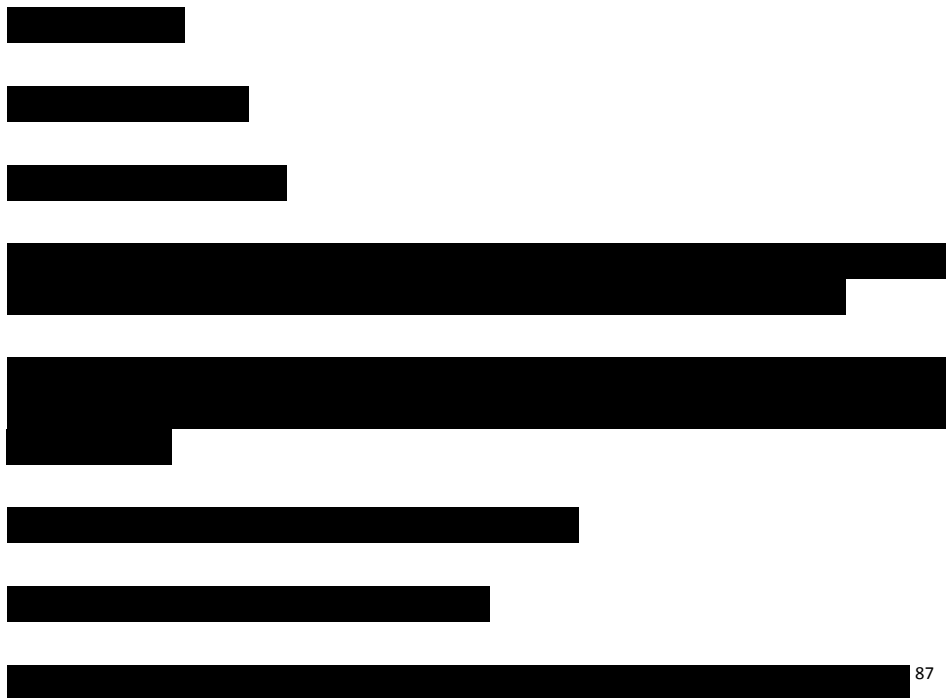
⁸³ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 94.

⁸⁴ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 90-1.

⁸⁵ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 122.

concentrate the viewer's attention on Ahab while he surveys the work taking place around his ship, although in that instance the unseen sources of sounds are assumed to be from Ahab's immediate environment. This is an instance in the screenplay of Bradbury conceiving of what Michel Chion calls an 'element of audio setting', sounds which help to create and define a film's space'.⁸⁶

Perhaps the most powerful combination of the visual and performative elements of the script come towards the end when Wilder and his son both encounter Ylla. The son sees Ylla in the guise of his mother, while Wilder sees her in the guise of Ellen, his lost love. Remarkably, Ylla is able to sustain the illusion of two identities at once (as long as, we suspect, she has eye contact with only one of them at a time). Equally remarkably, Bradbury is able to construct this idea in terms of separate shots:



While Ylla holds this dual illusion to please Wilder and his son, she and Wilder know that this can only be temporary. He tells her she must be herself, and soon 'Her image trembles before him, and is almost "YLLA"', as she now wavers between three identities.⁸⁸ The screenplay ends with this new 'family' watching the rockets fly out to the stars.

⁸⁶ Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), pp. 54-5.

⁸⁷ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, pp. 155-6.

⁸⁸ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles* 1961 screenplay, p. 157.

3.2.3 1963-65 Screenplay (published)

The 1963-65 screenplay tends to favour *Martian Chronicles* episodes which dwell on illusions, dreams, mind control and the relationship of sleep/dreaming to illusion. To that extent, it is less realistic than the 1961 screenplay, and tends to avoid the domestic reality of astronaut life. It is less hero-centred, with the focus of episodes shared among a range of characters just as in the novel, although Wilder continues to be a central, recurring presence. Very few female characters are seen outside of the episode based on 'The Third Expedition' (where the women are illusions anyway). As Bill Warren has pointed out, this screenplay adopts a predominantly Martian view of the human invaders, so that the tone of this *Chronicles* is very different from the novel.⁸⁹

Among the innovations in this script are major new sequences, which Bradbury would later re-develop as short stories and publish separately: 'The Messiah' (1971) and 'The Lost City of Mars' (1967).⁹⁰ The 'Messiah' sequence makes a strongly cinematic use of the controlling gaze. The 'Lost City' sequence seems something of a variation of 'The Third Expedition,' and with many individual characters' fantasies being played out, makes for a very long diversionary episode. Unlike the 1961 screenplay, this version includes the novel's atomic war on Earth, but thematically balances it with the explicit seeding of the stars. Wilder dies a self-sacrificing death, perhaps (as Warren argues) pointing to a theme of the randomness of survival, but perhaps reflecting Bradbury's response to events contemporary to the writing of the script.

The 1963-65 screenplay runs to 188 pages, making it the longest of Bradbury's *Chronicles* screenplays. It is divided into episodes with separate titles, although titles and episode breaks do not relate directly to titles and breaks in the novel (see Table 4). The script was published in 2009.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Warren, 'Chronicles', p.19.

⁹⁰ Ray Bradbury, *Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales* (New York: Wm. Morrow, 2003), pp.278-287.

Ray Bradbury, *I Sing the Body Electric!* (London: Corgi, 1971), pp. 264-297.

⁹¹ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 389-577.

1963-65 screenplay sections		Corresponding sections in <i>Martian Chronicles</i> novel
July 11 th 1999:	Something Near	The Summer Night
July 14 th 1999:	The Visitors	And The Moon Be Still As Bright (start)
July 15 th 1999:	Homecoming	The Third Expedition; Mars is Heaven
August 22 nd , 1999:	The Martian	And The Moon Be Still As Bright (remainder)
October 1 st 1999:	The Castaways	(None)
July 1 st 2001:	The Locusts	(Various bridge passages)
April 21 st 2002:	The Green Morning	The Green Morning
November 2009:	The Visitor	The Martian; [The Messiah (non- <i>Chronicles</i> story published in 1971)]
July 2015:	The City	[The Lost City of Mars (non- <i>Chronicles</i> story published in 1967)]
August 10 th 2020:	Night Meeting	Night Meeting
May 7 th 2028:	The Time of Going Away	The Silent Towns; The Watchers; There Will Come Soft Rains; Kaleidoscope (non- <i>Chronicles</i> story published in 1949); The Million-Year Picnic

Table 4: Sections of 1963-65 screenplay and how they relate to the novel

When Bradbury was in transition between the abandoned 1961 screenplay and the new version he would develop for Pakula-Mulligan production, he published the second of his *Life* essays, the one that best reveals how passionate he had become about space by the early 1960s: ‘Cry the Cosmos’ (1962). The essay proclaims that ‘space travel is the single greatest step in the single greatest age in history’. As well as claiming a spiritual dimension to the manned space programme, ‘Cry the Cosmos’ again sees Bradbury arguing for the centrality to our culture of science-fiction itself (as he had done in his *Los Angeles Times* article two years earlier):

Any society where the family structure has been fragmentized and dispersed, where morality has been given a severe shake and brought to a re-focus in drive-in theatres as the result of one idea in motion, the automobile, is a science-fiction society. Any society where natural man, the pedestrian,

becomes the intruder and unnatural man, encased in a steel shell, becomes his molester is a civilisation of science-fiction nightmares.⁹²

In this analysis, Bradbury sees a vindication of the SF genre he grew up in, and sees ways in which he can continue his own SF in forms which are meaningful for the times.

The two 'machineries' that so impressed Bradbury in his *Los Angeles Times* article – the rocket and the bomb – were both developments of the Second World War, and it is easy to overlook how significant their real-life emergence was to SF genre readers and writers. We can see this quite starkly in two non-fiction articles published in a single issue of the leading SF magazine *Astounding Stories* in the immediate aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 'Atomic Age', editor John W. Campbell reflects on the true meaning of the use of the A-bomb, and how few people truly recognise its significance:

People do not realise civilisation, the civilisation we have been born into, lived in, and been indoctrinated with, died on July 16, 1945, and that the Death Notice was published to the world on August 6, 1945.⁹³

Later in the same issue, in 'The Road to Space', Campbell discusses the V-2 rocket. He calls it 'a V-2 rocket cargo ship – cargo: sudden death'. While not playing down the lethality of the weapon, Campbell's main purpose in this article is to consider the stability of the rocket, and what significance this has for manned space flight. Could a man survive the 'brutal violent force' of its gyro rocket corrections, he asks.⁹⁴ This is a curious moment where a weapon of mass destruction is seriously looked upon as the bringer of the space age. *The Martian Chronicles*, whose component stories were written mostly in the aftermath of Hiroshima, perhaps reflects the ambivalence of the SF field at that time. But by the late 1950s, Sputnik had brought about the hope of peaceful uses of rocket technology, perhaps prompting Bradbury's removal of the apocalypse from his 1961 *Chronicles* screenplay. With the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 as a lingering reminder of the potential danger of the two 'machineries' of rocket and bomb, by the time of drafting the 1963-5 screenplay Bradbury had re-introduced the Earthly apocalypse into his *Chronicles* chronology.

⁹² Bradbury, 'Cry', p. 91. Parts of 'Cry the Cosmos' are closely paraphrased by Bradbury in his commentary in the 1963 documentary *Ray Bradbury: Story of a Writer*.

⁹³ John W. Campbell Jr, 'Atomic Age', *Astounding Science Fiction*, 36.3 (November 1945), 5-6 & 98 (p. 5). The first issue of the magazine to have been entirely assembled after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

⁹⁴ John W. Campbell Jr, 'The Road to Space', *Astounding Science Fiction*, 36.3 (November 1945), 99-100 (p. 100).

The 1963-65 screenplay is narrated by voice-over from a pseudo-Biblical 'Story Teller'. This elevates the mythic quality of the events, and also tends to style the film as an 'epic'. Bradbury wrote similar narration for Nicholas Ray's Biblical epic *King of Kings* (1961), and this may have influenced his choices here.⁹⁵ The Story Teller's first speech adopts an ominous tone of imminent expectation, and later makes explicit reference to Eden (the Earthmen 'went forth from the Garden').⁹⁶ The coming of the Earth people is anticipated by the Story Teller intoning that 'in the midst of summer, the sky seemed filled with winter birds, with cries of far-travelling,' an inversion and reflection of 'Rocket Summer', the opening chapter of the novel.

This version of *The Martian Chronicles* begins on Mars with familiar elemental scene descriptions – dead sea bottoms, low blue hills, ruins, organic houses. The first face we see is a mask hanging on a wall, leading into a bustling sequence of masked Martians which establishes a sense of community and a fearful populace. The narration tells us that the Martians have a need for 'protection', 'company', 'warm their mutual souls'.⁹⁷ The Martians are panicked by a fear of psychic possession by the Earth people, who have yet to arrive. When the Martians scatter, they abandon their masks, driven by shock and fear. Some of them find themselves uncontrollably taking on human form (or voice), a strong pre-echo of 'The Martian', an episode from the novel which proves pivotal in this screenplay. Wearing a mask comes to indicate control, and abandoning a mask signifies loss of control or even surrender.

The first Earth arrival on Mars is of a 'giant, striding, robot spider,' an automated probe with all manner of scientific tools, antennae and cameras bursting out of it to assess the red planet's properties.⁹⁸ The idea is a development from Bradbury's 1961 screenplay, where Ylla witnesses cameras and soil scoops emerging from the first rocketship, and likely reflects Bradbury's familiarity with NASA's Surveyor program which planned to send robotic probes to the Moon ahead of the Apollo landings.⁹⁹ Here, though, the robotic spider and the terror it induces recalls the fighting-machines of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and also echoes the Mechanical Hound of Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. This

⁹⁵ Eller, *Unbound*, pp. 172-4.

⁹⁶ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 391; p. 442.

⁹⁷ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 393-4.

⁹⁸ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 399.

⁹⁹ NASA, 'Surveyor 1', *NASA Space Science Data Co-ordinated Archive*, < <http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/nmc/spacecraftDisplay.do?id=1966-045A> > [Accessed 5 September 2016].

autonomous probe provides cinematic spectacle by running amok through the Martian town, creating chaos and damage. It also, as it turns out, inadvertently carries microbes from Earth which rapidly kill the Martians.

The screenplay calls for careful visual control over the portrayal of the first humans as ominous, shadowy figures. Their feet crunch into the soil of the newly ruined town: these faceless people are invaders; evil, destructive, anonymous. Their faces are hidden – masked – behind their helmet visors, just as the Martians were masked. The first human face we see is Wilder's, when he opens his sun-protection visor.

With the arrival of the Earth people, the screenplay uses events from 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright' to immediately investigate the mystery of what happened to the Martians; by eliminating (or postponing) the novel's second and third expeditions, this dramatic situation arrives quickly. The town, they discover, is full of black 'autumn leaves,' the flaking remains of the Martians;¹⁰⁰ an expansion of a passing idea in the novel (in 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright', and returned to in the brief 'The Musicians').¹⁰¹

The planet's air may contain Martian disease as harmful to the astronauts as chicken pox has proven for the Martians and yet Spender, the archaeologist in awe of Mars, deliberately opens his visor and breathes deeply.¹⁰² This sets up the suggestion that Spender has been infected or affected by the planet in a way that no other crew member has, a strong idea new to this adaptation – but perhaps developed from the 1961 screenplay, which implied that all the astronauts might be light-headed from breathing the thin air.

Asleep, the Earthmen succumb to a shared hallucination. One by one, they awaken as they hear sounds: a rooster crowing, a school bell, a piano, a 'waterfall of children's voices at play'.¹⁰³ This is the section of the screenplay based on 'The Third Expedition'. The men are shown from above making their way across a misty field as if sleepwalking, all moving in isolation from each other. When they reach the town, they begin to see their parents and grandparents. The town, an illusion constructed by Martians, is evidently more extensive than shown in previous versions of the episode, since the script specifies that: 'a great Earth Moon rises upon the town'¹⁰⁴ (a clear and direct indication that this isn't the sky of Mars,

¹⁰⁰ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 408.

¹⁰¹ Bradbury, *Martian Chronicles*, p. 69; pp. 145-7.

¹⁰² Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 414.

¹⁰³ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 417.

¹⁰⁴ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 427.

since the screenplay has already shown Mars to have *two* moons¹⁰⁵).

Wilder hears 'Beautiful Ohio' building up, note by note, with chords later added, an interesting development from the mechanical pianola music heard in the novel, as it suggests an intelligence and a learning process behind the performance. Having orchestrated this first occurrence of the piano, the screenplay then orchestrates a whole body of sounds, a rare instance of Bradbury making a detailed specification for musical development:

WILDER breaks into a jogging trot and we CUT from him to that house, each time nearer, as the piano plays BEAUTIFUL OHIO this time without stopping, all the way through, chorded and full, accompanied by the summer wind in the town, WILDER'S rhythmic pound on the sidewalk [...]¹⁰⁶

The piano motif is expanded further when we discover that the pianist is Wilder's mother. He puts his hands over her eyes, and she knows it is him from touch alone. They dance. These actions are new to this screenplay, but Bradbury re-uses them in his 1990 adaptation of the story for *Ray Bradbury Theatre*.¹⁰⁷

Wilder is drawn in to the illusion as much as his crew, but has conscious thoughts against it. He wants to believe, but has trouble reconciling it with reality. His mother asks 'do you fear...something evil is here?'¹⁰⁸ A double-edged question, since Wilder and the other Earthmen are portrayed as threatening or evil from their first appearance on Mars. At this point, the Martians are clearly controlling this illusion. As we saw earlier, they can be in control as long as they are masked, and here they are masked in the sense that they are taking on human identities.

Wilder may be unable to penetrate to the reality of their situation, but Spender – perhaps because he has breathed deeply of the Martian air – is more able to do so. He resists sleeping that night, and instead explores his 'parents' house. He finds them asleep, but their shape on the bed gives him a vivid flashback of the Martian corpses he saw earlier. Where other crewmen are haunted entirely by memories from long ago, Spender is haunted by these most recent events.¹⁰⁹ Soon, 'there is a hint of a silver mask echoed out

¹⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 390.

¹⁰⁶ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 421.

¹⁰⁷ 'Mars is Heaven', *Ray Bradbury Theatre*, 20 July 1990, dir. by John Laing (Platinum Disc, 2006) [On DVD]. 'Mars is Heaven!' was the original title of 'The Third Expedition' in its magazine appearance.

¹⁰⁸ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 429.

¹⁰⁹ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 432.

from beneath the familiar face' of his 'brother', and Spender begins to vocally question the reality around him. This causes the whole town to be threatened, as the fantasy begins to collapse – everything trembles, leaves drop from the trees all at once, and the roofs begin to rip off the houses. The 'brother' runs, his clothes fall apart, and his skin changes colour. Finally, 'He resembles the Martians we saw before'.¹¹⁰ Killing the Martian out of fear, Spender is transfixed, and remains like a statue in the town as it collapses, while his colleagues escape, and the landscape dissolves out to reveal the real Martian ruins underneath.

Spender's true awareness of Mars is what allows him to see through the illusion, but his killing of the Martian personalises his guilt for the death of Martians – no longer is it accidental, distant killing by infection, it is now killing for which he takes personal responsibility. He puts on a discarded mask, and it transforms his vision: 'The Martian world wheels through the eye-slots of the mask, motions and stops. Spender's gaze burns white-hot at what he sees'.¹¹¹ The masks are not just symbolic of adopting another identity, but are genuinely transformative of perceptions and of character.

All through the screenplay, up until this point and beyond, Bradbury describes a very active camera, which makes moves of its own and also parallels the motions of the characters. In this section, the motions become extreme, as the camera adopts a point of view of a jet-packed Spender killing for the second time, pursued by other airborne crewmen, flying amongst gigantic ruins resembling Mount Rushmore.

Wilder shoots Spender, but only because he mistakenly thinks Spender is armed. This is unlike the novel, where Wilder shoots for the right reasons, albeit reluctantly. Spender's death is marked on the face of Mars with a big red ribbon of blood. He is then carried aloft by the other jet-packed astronauts, as if by angels. The 'Third Expedition' events which split the 'And The Moon' events into two parts, now seem to have been an interlude which has informed Spender's developing thought and worldview; during this whole section we have witnessed Spender's story rather than Wilder's, seeing him progress from the conscience of the expedition to being possessed by the idea of being a Martian to the point where his uncontrolled destructiveness makes his own death inevitable.

Their rocket destroyed, the surviving astronauts have nothing left, so they reluctantly move

¹¹⁰ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 436.

¹¹¹ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 445.

into the Martian town and are seen using the lava-table for cooking, and dressing in Martian clothing. When at last another rocket arrives, the new crew think the old crew are Martians and are surprised when they speak English, an understated, early introduction of the idea that Earth people are now the Martians, foreshadowing the *Chronicles* conclusion in 'The Million-Year Picnic'.

The hazards of the Martian atmosphere are maintained through much of the script, with the new towns shrouded in protective bubbles; anyone who ventures outside must wear a breathing mask. This makes the script more scientifically plausible than the 1961 version, where lip service is paid to the testing of the atmosphere, even while the events of this screenplay favour the dream-like fantasies from the novel.

The *Chronicles* chapter 'The Martian' is accurately reproduced in the screenplay, and extends into a wholly new section which would later be developed into the short story 'The Messiah'. Both 'The Martian' and 'The Messiah' shows Martians as capable of reflecting human concerns straight back at us. LaFarge sights his deceased son Tom, a distant ghostly figure who turns out to be a shape-shifting Martian. Unconsciously, he leaves the front door open to allow Tom to enter the LaFarges' lives. As so often in this screenplay, sleep is associated with susceptibility to illusion, and so Tom enters Mrs LaFarge's mind as she sleeps: 'The face of the woman eases free of ancient burdens. She seems ten years younger now'.¹¹² The Martian's loneliness mirrors that of the LaFarges: 'Tom's face implores. It asks to be summoned home'; 'The boy shivers and begins to cry'.¹¹³ Tom says something which echoes the illusions of the section based on 'The Third Expedition': 'If you can't have the reality, a dream is just as good. Perhaps I'm not their dead son back, but I'm something almost better to them; an ideal shaped by their minds'.¹¹⁴

When we see the Martian change his adopted human form, it is through a cinematic technique: in a series of cuts, his identity changing slightly with each new shot as he physically conforms to the expectations of the person looking at him. Later, we see the Martian struggling to hold a clear identity when under attack from a group of humans. At this point, sections of his face change within a single shot.¹¹⁵ He takes refuge in the church. Father Peregrine, planning his sermon, thinks specifically of Christ's ghost appearing to the

¹¹² Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 491.

¹¹³ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 496; p.498.

¹¹⁴ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 494.

¹¹⁵ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 497.

apostles in Galilee, and so he sees and hears the Martian as Christ. The gaze of Peregrine locks the identity of the Martian, and LaFarge has to force Peregrine to look away in order to release him.

The screenplay section 'The City' is entirely new, having no counterpart in Bradbury's novel. Bradbury would later extract the story from the screenplay and adapt it into a short story, 'The Lost City of Mars' (1967).¹¹⁶ The published version of the screenplay, without explanation, reproduces the short story text written in past tense and with third-person narration for this part of the script, since the original screenplay-formatted pages have not been located.¹¹⁷

Wilder joins a number of other characters on an expedition to find a mythical lost city, 'the most beautiful, the most fantastic, the most awful city in the history of this old world'.¹¹⁸ The arrival of the expedition by underground canal awakens the sleeping city; once again in this version of *The Martian Chronicles*, emerging from sleep triggers fantastical happenings. There follows a series of adventures, somewhat mirroring 'The Third Expedition'. Where that earlier episode allowed each character to relive encounters from their past, here it seems as if each is to have a wish fulfilled. One, a beautiful woman who realises that she is aging, hopes to escape the aging process, finding the answer in a maze of mirrors (an idea which turns up again in the Bradbury-scripted film *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983)).

Wilder's own opportunity for wish-fulfilment begins with him entering a vast space which he sees first as a church, then as 'cathedral darkness', echoing the metaphor of space as a cathedral which Bradbury develops in *Leviathan '99*, his *Moby Dick*-inspired play and novella. Wilder is given the stars – and he recalls a scene similar to Bradbury's short story 'The Gift' (1952), his father taking him to a place of dark skies and showing him the stars. The stars are, to Wilder, like gazing on the face of God. He soon realises that the whole of space is being offered to him, but he rejects it on the grounds that such an immense offering should be worked for, not given. Wilder's rejection of the gift upsets the City, and his team must make an escape as it reverberates and shuts down, again mirroring the episode based on 'The Third Expedition', where the illusory town collapses upon itself. The lesson from this episode for Wilder - that the only things worth having are those that have

¹¹⁶ Kunert, 'Bradbury', p. 77.

¹¹⁷ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 504-535.

¹¹⁸ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 509.

been worked for – sets up the idea of Wilder earning the stars in the remaining sections of the screenplay.

The ‘Night Meeting’ episode of the script is among the most revealing. While the novel places this chapter at the centre, appropriately suggesting the Martian-dominated Mars and the Earth-dominated Mars as reflections of each other, the screenplay places it much later. It is as if Tomas Gomez meeting with the Martian is, at last, an opportunity for Earth and Mars to recognise each other. Tomas and the Martian approach each other and appear as mirror images: ‘Slowly, Tomas raises one hand. Slowly, the man in the sandship does the same’. The two characters reconcile by accepting that each one may be a ghost, or each one may be from the past or the future. For the first time, Martian and Earth viewpoints are allowed to coexist without conflict, each entitled to have a controlling hold over the appearance of Mars. The Martian is masked, but is not disguised as anything other than Martian; the mask is seen to be a mask. Their recognition of each as a reflection of the other perhaps suggests Lacan’s mirror stage, implying that both Earthman and Martian have reached a decisive turning-point in their mental development.¹¹⁹

The concluding section of the screenplay is rushed, attempting to draw in materials from four chapters of the novel, plus an episode based on Bradbury’s short story ‘Kaleidoscope’. An atomic war breaks out on Earth, triggering two impulses in the Earth people living on Mars. One is the retreat to earth, as in the novel. The other, though, is an outward impulse: the desire to launch rockets to the stars, eliminating the risk of the end of civilisation, and preserving humankind forever. Hundreds of people climb into coffin-like cabins in which they will sleep for the hundred-year journey, reflecting the strong possibility that they will not survive – but also reminiscent of Ishmael’s survival by clinging onto Queequeg’s coffin at the end of *Moby Dick*.

This outward impulse is, for Wilder, the response to his experience in ‘The Lost City of Mars’. It is new in this screenplay and new to *The Martian Chronicles*, but it is foreshadowed in that *Life* essay, ‘Cry the Cosmos’ from 1962. There, Bradbury again refers to the twin critical inventions of our age, and how they can both be used for good or for ill:

The atomic power which can cure our cancer can also broil us up in cauliflower clouds of radioactive chaff.

¹¹⁹ Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 1.

The rocket that can lift us to the greatest freedom since Creation can also blow us to kingdom come.

[...] Panicked not only by the darkness in the universe, by the natural dark in man, we fear we may suicide ourselves away with hydrogen bombs before the saviour rockets pluck us by our bootstraps and walk us on firepaths of escape.¹²⁰

As far back as 1953, Bradbury had speculated that our fascination with space travel is rooted in a survival instinct, as we seek to 'get[ting] off a single, unstable planet and seed[ing] space to its farthest boundaries, where no natural catastrophe, no congealing of sun or passing comet, can destroy man'.¹²¹ Now, in 1962, his solution is for the expansion of our species out into space. 'Once man is continuous [...] infinite and immortal from Mars to Pluto and the Coalsack nebula, [...] the questions about Annihilation will be meaningless'.¹²² This is Bradbury the preacher, urging us to make the space age more than just a tentative examination of near-space, and driving us onwards to the stars so that, as a species, we might live forever.

The sense of urgency in Bradbury's calling humankind to the stars in 'Cry the Cosmos' is present, too, in the 1963-5 screenplay, where the juxtaposition of 'The Lost City of Mars' with the Earthly apocalypse provides a challenge to Wilder. The response to this challenge is a flight beyond Mars, to the nearest star system. Bradbury would re-visit these ideas some years later in another essay, 'From Stonehenge to Tranquillity Base' (1972), now specifically talking in terms of Arnold Toynbee's 'challenge and response'¹²³ interpretation of history, something which would later also inform Bradbury's short story 'The Toynbee Convector'.¹²⁴

And so in the 1963-65 screenplay, Wilder's desire to attain the stars turns into a reward earned through his first bold steps out to the red planet; into a re-birth for humankind; and is achieved as a response to the devastation of Earth. Once civilisation has been effectively destroyed on Earth, they begin the outward journey in earnest, heading out from Mars towards Alpha Centauri. Following a brief scene based on 'The Million Year Picnic' –

¹²⁰ Bradbury, 'Cry', p. 88.

¹²¹ Bradbury, 'Day After Tomorrow', in *Yestermorrow* (Santa Barbara, CA: Joshua Odell), p. 99.

¹²² Bradbury, 'Cry', p. 88.

¹²³ Ray Bradbury, 'From Stonehenge to Tranquillity Base', *Playboy* 19.12 (December 1972), 149.

¹²⁴ Bradbury, *Bradbury Stories*, pp. 820-9.

providing this screenplay's second sequence to involve a Lacanian mirror idea - the screenplay ends with a visual metaphor of a small boy blowing the seeds off a dandelion, which blend in to an image of the starships heading out. Eller has referred to this metaphor as 'an inspirational glimpse of humanity's destiny'.¹²⁵ It is also, of course, an echo of another Bradbury work, *Dandelion Wine*.

If seeding the stars sounds familiar, it's because the outward urge has a long tradition in SF. It's there in the H.G.Wells-scripted 1936 film *Things to Come*, which Bradbury listed among his favourite films.¹²⁶ There, Cabal declares: 'But for MAN no rest and no ending. He must go on - conquest beyond conquest. This little planet [...] Then the planets about him, and at last out across immensity to the stars'.¹²⁷

And it's echoed in Bradbury's own short story 'The Strawberry Window' (1954):

But if there's any way to get hold of that immortality men are talking about, this is the way – spread out – seed the universe. Then you got a harvest against crop failures anywhere down the line.¹²⁸

It's nothing new in SF, then, and this gung-ho drive to colonise the galaxy is precisely the attitude mocked by Kurt Vonnegut's short story 'The Big Space Fuck' (1972), in which human genetic material is fired out into space.¹²⁹ But it is new to the developing grand narrative emerging in the *Chronicles* screenplays, presenting an expansionist version of the narrative consonant with the glory days of the manned space programme. Concurrently with his work on the 1963-65 screenplay, Bradbury wrote the Cinerama-based 'American Journey' attraction for the US Pavilion of the 1964 World's Fair, which culminates with 'the hard challenge of space':

The cures you find in rocket flight will cure your maladies at home. [...] You go to find [...] And move on yet again [...] Looking back from space see your

¹²⁵ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 216.

¹²⁶ Eller, *Becoming*, p. 35.

Phil Nichols, 'Ray Bradbury's Favourite Films (1993)', *Bradburymedia*, < <http://bradburymedia.blogspot.com/2014/04/ray-bradburys-favourite-films-1993.html> > [accessed 6 January 2017].

¹²⁷ *Things to Come*, dir. by William Cameron Menzies (1936; Network, 2007) [on DVD].

¹²⁸ Ray Bradbury, 'The Strawberry Window' in *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 481-7.

¹²⁹ Kurt Vonnegut Jr., 'The Big Space Fuck', in *Again, Dangerous Visions*, ed. by Harlan Ellison (London: Pan, 1977), pp. 282-92.

birthplace earth. The old wilderness dwindles as the human race reaches for eternity, survival and immortality in the next billion years.¹³⁰

Bradbury's grand narrative is not confined to the screenplay, then, but reflects his true philosophical belief in humankind in space.

However, Bill Warren rightly emphasises the 'aura of tragedy' at the screenplay's end. As two starships proceed on their journey, a meteor forces Wilder to sacrifice his escort ship in order to save the 'seed ship'. The ship's destruction results in the 'Kaleidoscope'-inspired section of the screenplay, ending with Wilder's death as he burns up in the Martian atmosphere and is seen as a shooting star from the planet's surface. Against this background, the final symbolism of randomly-drifting seeds may imply a grand lottery in space exploration, a tone of 'resignation' seemingly at odds with Wilder's grand philosophy, and which Warren sums up as: 'if man can go to the stars, great – if not, well, you can't win 'em all'.¹³¹ What Warren overlooks, though, is a key event contemporary with this particular screenplay: the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It occurred in the midst of Bradbury's work, and indeed he recalls learning of the assassination when he arrived for a *Chronicles* script meeting with producer Alan Pakula.¹³² Wilder's bold pronouncements on reaching the stars, but dying before he can achieve this, perhaps reflects Kennedy's optimistic projection of a manned Moon landing and his own untimely death.

3.2.4 1978 Screenplay (unpublished)

The 1978 screenplay bears a parenthetical note: 'additional materials/revision of six-hour script down to two-hour version for theatrical release', referring to its genesis as Bradbury's edit of Richard Matheson's miniseries teleplay. However, a study of its structure and content reveals it to be more complex than this note might suggest. No prior scholarship exists on this script, probably due to its abandonment within Bradbury's files. The surviving manuscript is an unrevised draft, made up of a patchwork of different materials. An initial eleven pages of new material gives way to pages taken directly from Matheson's teleplay. Later, extensive passages from Bradbury's stage play script are incorporated, sometimes

¹³⁰ Ray Bradbury, 'The American Journey', script for US Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1964. <<http://www.nywf64.com/unista09.shtml>> [accessed 13 December 2016].

¹³¹ Warren, 'Chronicles', p. 19.

¹³² Eller, *Unbound*, p.213.

transposed into screenplay terminology, but often retaining theatrical references such as 'stage left', 'stage front' and 'the audience'.¹³³ Because of their survival into this draft, we can infer that Bradbury was happy to use Matheson's adaptations of much of 'Ylla', 'The Summer Night' and 'The Earthmen', but preferred his own theatrical adaptations of the remainder of the episodes. The inclusion of pages from the stage play gives a clue to Bradbury's overall strategy with the composition of this screenplay: the structure of the screenplay is identical to that of the stage play.

The screenplay runs to 153 pages, which is excessive for an intended two-hour running length. Once again, Bradbury seems to have difficulty in constraining his story to meet the conventions of the feature-film medium. The fact that this version has ceased to be a mere condensation of Matheson's material means that it would no longer suit the purposes of producer Charles Fries, and hence this screenplay stood no chance of being filmed. Nevertheless, it allows us one further insight into how fluid Bradbury's approaches to his material can be.

Bradbury's broad strategy here is to include as much of the incidental and linking material of the *Chronicles* as he can, and not be afraid of shrinking some episodes down to their essence. 'The Fire Balloons' becomes merely a page serving as a set-up for the sequence derived from 'The Messiah'. 'The Wilderness' is condensed to a couple of pages in which Leonora announces she is coming to Mars, arrives, marries and gives birth, all in a rapid montage of scene fragments. The whirlwind pace of this transitional section is given a thematic boost by being interwoven with Driscoll sowing seeds across Mars and the use of time-lapse to show the forests developing and the towns being forever enlarged.

The rapid pace is inherited from the strategy of Bradbury's stage play, whose published version bears a note declaring that the play's division 'into acts and scenes [is] only as a convenience to the actors and staff. It is to be played as a continuous collage of action, sounds, light and experience'.¹³⁴ Ben P. Indick's study of the play reports that its debut run (Los Angeles, 1977) was 'brilliantly directed' and 'enormously popular', leading to an extended, sold-out run, no doubt vindicating the ostensibly cinematic play script.¹³⁵ Warren, though, finds the play's breakneck speed meant that audiences were unable to dwell long enough on the events of the play, and concludes that 'Bradbury may have erred

¹³³ Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* [unpublished screenplay], 1978, p. 56; p. 79; p. 106.

¹³⁴ Bradbury, *Chronicles* play, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Indick, *Dramatist*, p. 32.

by including too many stories and vignettes'.¹³⁶

However, when this theatrical content is transposed into the 1978 screenplay, the pacing is most uneven since staged events occurring in succession on different isolated patches of the stage now equally occupy the attention of the camera, as a single stream of visual information. The pivotal story once again is 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright', but this occurs late in the script.¹³⁷ This results in a rushing of the subsequent settlement of Mars by colonists, and the retreat from Mars when Earth is destroyed. Bradbury's inclusion of 'Usher II' shows no continuity with the rest of the script, and takes up many pages; its deletion would provide a more coherent script, and helpfully reduce the running time.

The script has other serious problems in its current form, which is not surprising in an unrevised draft. One is a serious inconsistency in the voice-over narration. For the most part, Bradbury uses a pair of voices emanating from an abandoned Martian mask and book, but in other places uses a nondescript narrator voice. Pages carried over from the Matheson script, meanwhile, specify 'Bradbury's Voice' for the narration. While this inconsistency could easily be fixed, the effect on the script in its current form is to produce a wavering sense of where the authority in the story derives from. Are we witnessing the surviving consciousness of the planet Mars itself as Bradbury's new opening suggests, or is this an objective depiction of events told by a 'voice-of-God' narrator? Or are these fictional tales presented by their author?

Where this screenplay is successful as drama is in its concluding section, based on 'The Million-Year Picnic'. The survivors on Mars, amounting to 'seventy men, sixty women, forty children' become a community or even an extended family. They welcome the itinerant Walter Gripp into their fold, and declare their intention of all living and working together. There are echoes here of the community of book-people in Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*: just as the book-people survive the atomic bomb and offer the promise of restoring civilisation, so the community on Mars promises to sustain human civilisation in the only place it survives, on Mars. The parallel to *Fahrenheit* is especially marked when the community decides to burn all their old maps of Earth, echoing the book-people burning their books after they have memorised them.

Identically with Bradbury's stage play, Wilder recites a poem during the final scene, an

¹³⁶ Warren, 'Chronicles', pp. 4-7.

¹³⁷ Bradbury, 1978 screenplay, pp. 84-113.

extended passage from Bradbury's own 1971 poem 'If Only We Had Taller Been'.¹³⁸ It encapsulates Wilder's ambition for humankind to reach the stars (as in the earlier screenplays), yet reveals that this Wilder is a mouthpiece for Bradbury's own philosophy. Ben P. Indick has pinpointed this closing scene as highlighting a 'characteristic dichotomy' of Bradbury's attempts to dramatise for the stage, where 'realism battles with purpose in language self-consciously poetic'.¹³⁹ With the same scene transposed directly into a film script, any sense of realism seems driven out.

Fortunately, the very ending of the scene is significantly more cinematic. When Wilder takes his son – Ishmael, an echo of *Moby Dick* – down to the canal to see 'the Martians', the community travels together. As Wilder points out 'the Martians' in the water (reflections of the children), the whole crowd leans forward to see what he is pointing at. One by one, familiar characters in the crowd (Leonora, Peregrine, Gripp) confirm Wilder's conclusion that *they* are the Martians now.

Where Bradbury's 1963-5 screenplay had humans setting off for the stars at the very end, the 1978 screenplay has Wilder foretell that in a few thousand years humans will pack up their bags, move on, and 'keep going forever', to the stars. In this screenplay, then, the personal journey of Captain Wilder is but a tiny part of a much grander journey of all of humankind. The screenplay ends as it begins: abandoned human settlements on Mars alongside the ruins of the Martian city, while 'a thousand starships blast, move, fire, past Jupiter, past Saturn, past Pluto [...] in a grand thunder!'¹⁴⁰

Although Bradbury's screenplay was not used, NBC's miniseries of *The Martian Chronicles* did proceed to production using Richard Matheson's teleplay. Critics are divided over Matheson's work. Warren, writing solely on the basis of the teleplay prior to production, found him to be a 'highly appropriate' choice owing to Matheson's and Bradbury's common membership of the so-called 'Southern California school of fantasy writers'. While the two writers have contrasting styles, Warren saw this as a strength, ensuring that Matheson could 'offset [Bradbury's] tendency to a dreamy lack of clarity with sharper, precisely focused ideas'. Matheson's 'diligent and professional' work would balance out the 'inspired

¹³⁸ Ray Bradbury and others, *Mars and the Mind of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 19-20. The poem appears on page 87 of Bradbury's stage play, and pp. 150-1 of the screenplay.

¹³⁹ Indick, *Dramatist*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ Bradbury, 1978 screenplay, p. 153.

but impractical' elements in Bradbury's work.¹⁴¹ The end result is a teleplay which preserves 'more of the kinetic energy' of Bradbury's novel than Bradbury himself was able to achieve in his own 1963-65 screenplay.¹⁴² In contrast, Tibbetts, writing on the basis of the completed miniseries, found that Matheson's fidelity to Bradbury's novel contributed to a 'wordy, languid, shapeless, and utterly improbable film'. Tibbetts particularly found the narration to 'underscore the obvious'.¹⁴³ The most scathing review comes from Steven Dimeo, who maintains that Matheson's attempt at 'faithfulness and screen realism' is incompatible with Bradbury's novel, dooming the miniseries to 'never work[s] as a coherent film'.¹⁴⁴

3.2.5 1997 Screenplay (published)

The 1997 screenplay once more represents an attempt to adapt the bulk of the episodic structure of the novel, but is again a completely new adaptation. In its episodic contents it bears a close resemblance to Bradbury's stage play, although it eschews narration, except in some very specific contexts. Most of the episodes follow the novel chapters closely; this is one of Bradbury's most faithful adaptations of his novel. That said, it does still have moments of innovation. Like the 1961 screenplay, it features Wilder as the dominant central character, but like the other screenplays it allows individual episodes to feature different characters. There are no titles for individual episodes. The script runs to 165 pages.¹⁴⁵

The unique feature of the 1997 screenplay is its opening sequence, which Tibbetts characterises as 'a flurry of specific audio and visual cues' in place of the novel's 'metaphor-laden opening'.¹⁴⁶ Four separate spaceship crews assemble, about to launch into space at intervals of forty-eight hours. They travel as an extended convoy for a rapid succession of landings on Mars, allowing the screenplay to maintain a rapid pace between its first four episodes. Wilder and his crew effectively provide the framing device for the first three episodes, since they are able to introduce and comment on each successive failed landing

¹⁴¹ Warren, 'Chronicles', p. 8.

¹⁴² Warren, 'Chronicles', p. 19.

¹⁴³ Tibbetts, p. 73.

¹⁴⁴ Steven Dimeo, 'The Martian Chronicles: Classic SF Comes to TV Without Class', *Cinefantastique*, 10.1 (Summer 1980), 19-23 (p. 20).

¹⁴⁵ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 579-744.

¹⁴⁶ Tibbetts, pp. 61-78. P73.

attempt, letting us gain an early insight into the developing conflict between Spender and Wilder before their own mission begins.

As in the 1963-65 screenplay, Wilder voices Bradbury's philosophy of humankind's purpose in travelling into space, and, indeed, of humankind's purpose for existing. We are the universe's way of knowing itself, and our imperative is immortality, to be achieved by seeding the stars:

Because... we are a mystery upon this Earth. How we were born here, we do not know. But somewhere in a billion year history, the eye was invented. We saw the stars and wanted them. [...] For what is the use of a Universe if it is not seen and known? [...] And with Mars as space station seedbed, fly on forever [...] To be immortal!¹⁴⁷

Despite the heavy reliance on the 'seed' metaphor in dialogue, this version of the screenplay avoids the dandelion ending of the 1963-65 screenplay.

As with the 1978 screenplay which uses a Bradbury poem in dialogue, so here we sense that Wilder is speaking not with his own voice, but with Bradbury's - much in the way that Cabal acts as Wells' 'spokesman' in *Things to Come*. Tibbetts finds the screenplay's dialogue to be mostly 'crisp and spare', but finds the 'rhapsodic speechmaking' to be out of place, in much the same way that Ben Indick does in Bradbury's stage play.¹⁴⁸

Wilder returns to this philosophy when debating with Spender in the section based on 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright'.¹⁴⁹ Unlike the 1963-65 screenplay, however, all talk of flying beyond Mars to Alpha Centauri is just talk; it does not materialise in this telling of the *Chronicles*.

Ylla, once established as a character, is allowed to recur across the screenplay, extending her presence. She partially narrates the sequence based on the story 'Ylla'. Later, she is specifically identified as one of the dead Martians in the section based on 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright'.

'The Earthmen', an episode excluded from Bradbury's first two *Chronicles* screenplays, returns in this version. The adaptation is very close to the chapter in the novel, but has one small cinematic innovation, externally depicting the thoughts of the insane Martians:

¹⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 583-4.

¹⁴⁸ Tibbetts, p. 74. Indick, *Dramatist*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁹ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 666-7.

‘Above UUU’s head, ghostly visions swarm’; ‘Ghost jungles appear in green smokes and green fires on the air’; ‘the oceans appear faintly on the air’.¹⁵⁰

‘The Third Expedition’ is another faithfully adapted episode from the novel, but it does carry small ideas across from the 1963-65 screenplay, as when Captain Black places his hands over his mother’s eyes at the piano.¹⁵¹ Likewise, ‘And The Moon Be Still As Bright’ – another faithfully adapted episode – carries across the black leaves which were an innovation in the 1963-65 script.¹⁵²

Following the events of ‘And The Moon Be Still As Bright’, Bradbury includes a scene which for the first time addresses the question of exactly *who* is chronicling Mars, by having Wilder dictate a series of historical reports and reflections into a recorder (a clumsily named ‘computer-typewriter voice-writer’). The scene self-consciously has Wilder ask Driscoll ‘How do you like it so far?’ and playing back some of the recording. Driscoll suggests it’s ‘A bit rich’, and on reflection Wilder agrees.¹⁵³

Not for the first time, Bradbury adopts an element from someone else’s adaptation of his material. Here, ‘Night Meeting’ follows the strategy of Richard Matheson’s miniseries teleplay, in replacing minor character Tomas Gomez with Captain Wilder – although he then makes a further substitution, by replacing the Martian with Yll, the husband of Ylla, an attempt to tie the various episodes together more tightly. Although Ylla herself is not mentioned in this episode, the effect nevertheless is to extend her influence on the story further.

There is one further attempt to tightly bind the disparate episodes of the later section of *The Martian Chronicles*, and this is with the simultaneous arrival on Mars of sets of characters from several different episodes. Mr and Mrs LaFarge (‘The Martian’) arrive on the same ship as Fathers Stone and Peregrine (‘The Fire Balloons’) and Stendahl (‘Usher II’). The script parallels their actions as each set of characters is shown travelling onward to their destination and settling, prior to the main part of their story being told. Although this is a useful move to create unity between the episodes, it actually draws attention to the fact that the stories are unrelated, and causes the script to dwell on unnecessary detail.

¹⁵⁰ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 618-9.

¹⁵¹ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 638.

¹⁵² Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 654.

¹⁵³ Bradbury, *Complete*, pp. 670-1.

As in the 1963-65 and 1978 screenplays, 'The Martian' is extended so that it develops into 'The Messiah'. The mechanism used is different in this case however. Instead of the fearful Martian running for cover and finding himself trapped in a church, in this version the Martian is overwhelmed by the transformational energy required to change his appearance for so many Earth people in a crowd. He collapses and is left for dead. After the crowd disperses, rainfall triggers his re-awakening, and he seeks shelter in Father Peregrine's church. While his collapse is dramatically satisfying, his abandonment and revival seem altogether too unlikely and convenient.

'Usher II', always a problematic story in *The Martian Chronicles* – dropped from the original UK version of the novel, and omitted from Bradbury's first two screenplays – makes a re-appearance here. Once again, this is a very faithful adaptation with just a little updating (Stephen King is added to the list of horror writers reeled off by Stendahl). Unfortunately, even Bradbury's attempts to more tightly bind the story into the whole are unsuccessful, and 'Usher II' looks out of place here.

Finally, the screenplay ends with a re-telling of 'The Million-Year Picnic', whose only innovation here is a distant presence of Martians watching over the scene: 'And the SANDSHIPS there with the pilots in GOLDEN MASKS. WILDER lifts his head as if to ask their agreement. THE GOLDEN MASKS nod back'.¹⁵⁴ The screenplay's final shot is almost a reversal of an early shot from the 1961 screenplay, with the camera pulling back from Wilder and his family, rising up through the Martian atmosphere to reveal the entire red disc of Mars – over which are superimposed the words 'THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES', and 'THE BEGINNING'.¹⁵⁵

This final screenplay, like the three that precede it, has flaws deriving from Bradbury's attempt to innovate while at the same time preserve his favourite episodes from his novel. With further drafts, it would have the potential to make a strong film. From moment to moment, Bradbury demonstrates a keen sense of the cinematic, making strong use of visuals to convey complex moods and emotions, and creative use of sound to extend and enhance the visual. Tibbetts effectively summarises this particular screenplay as 'the work of a man who both understands the limitations of the screen [...] and is determined [to]

¹⁵⁴ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 743.

¹⁵⁵ Bradbury, *Complete*, p. 744.

extend and even defy them'.¹⁵⁶

4 Fluid Ideas

In studying Bradbury's writing, it becomes apparent that he will frequently take on ideas from elsewhere in his body of work. We saw earlier, for example, that *Leviathan '99* drew as much on his own screenplay for *Moby Dick* as it did on Melville's novel; and that there was a three-way interchange of ideas between the short story 'Kaleidoscope', *Leviathan '99*, and the stage play of 'Kaleidoscope'. In the case of *The Martian Chronicles* screenplays, we have again seen ideas drawn in from 'Kaleidoscope' and from other of Bradbury's space stories. This fluidity of ideas, flowing almost seamlessly from one work to another, is symptomatic of Bradbury's writing method, and in the case of the *Martian Chronicles* screenplays also throws up new materials which would see publication separately from the *Chronicles* project, namely the short stories 'The Lost City of Mars' and 'The Messiah'. The latter is an interesting case study of a cinematic idea which Bradbury seems to have become attached to, retaining its essential scenic structure throughout successive stages of adaptation.

From the 1963-65 screenplay onwards, the *Chronicles* episode 'The Martian' – where a shape-shifting creature uncontrollably takes a physical form drawn from the thoughts of those around him – is extended. The creature enters a chapel, where a priest sees him as Christ, a projection of the priest's current preoccupation. The sequence uses a highly cinematic conceit: as long as the Priest's gaze is fixed on the Christ figure, the Martian is trapped in that identity. The Priest is enraptured, and struggles to look away. This sequence later becomes the dramatic centre of Bradbury's 1971 short story, 'The Messiah' – albeit with an altered context – and Bradbury returns to it in his 1978 and 1997 screenplays and in his *Martian Chronicles* stage play. A close examination of parts of the sequence in its different appearances reveals the extent to which it retains its shape in adaptation.

First, Figure 1 shows a side-by-side comparison of the earliest known draft of the scene with the same scene from the published short story. We can see that most of the actions in Bradbury's screenplay draft are expressed as simple sentences, and with barely an adjective

¹⁵⁶ Tibbetts, p.75.

to be seen. His use of the screenplay convention that one paragraph equals one shot gives the sequence a strong montage effect. The line 'The outstretched palms, which, wounded, bleed' is more unusually constructed, and has the effect of elongating that shot's impact. His use of the Priest's gaze is central, and is echoed in the Martian, who is as fascinated by what he has become as the Priest is. The 'camera eye' of the screenplay is thus allowed to favour each character's viewpoint in turn.

In the short story version of the sequence, the most striking aspect of the composition is the use of short paragraphs, exactly mimicking the screenplay pattern, and appearing to support Bradbury's claim that his short stories are screenplays. However, we can also see that there is much visual embellishment to the descriptions, although probably nothing that is ambiguous or unfilmable. There is also a more expansive use of complex sentences whose overall effect is to control the pace of reading. Finally, there is a subtle control over the focalisation in the short story, which is constructed to favour the point of view of the Priest, allowing us to experience his thoughts and emotions, while keeping the Martian as a more externalised presence. (To some degree, the different handling of point of view in these two versions is related to the context of the incident: the screenplay's immediately preceding scene had accompanied the Martian as he tries to find sanctuary, so it is logical to include the Martian's point of view in the structuring of the scene. Conversely, the short story begins with the Priest alone in the chapel.)

Earliest draft of 'Messiah' scene (c.1963)	'The Messiah' short story (1971)
CLOSEUP, we see the bright clear full eyes of the MAN trapped here in a new shape looking with curiosity down at:	
The outstretched palms, which, wounded, bleed.	There was fixed a jagged hole, a cincture from which, slowly, one by one, blood was dripping, falling away down and slowly down, into the baptismal font.
The drops of blood echo in the fount. PEREGRINE stares. THE MAN stares, similarly fascinated with its own miracle.	The drops of blood struck the holy water, coloured it, and dissolved in slow ripples.
The palms are held out on the air. The fount water echoes with the drops.	The hand remained for a stunned moment there before the Priest's now-blind, now-seeing eyes.
[...] The burden is too much. PEREGRINE falls against the wall of the baptistery [...]	As if struck a terrible blow, the Priest collapsed to his knees with an out-gasped cry.

Figure 1: Comparison of 'The Messiah' sequence
(dotted lines inserted to clarify corresponding actions in the two texts)

If we now compare the short story text with the 1997 screenplay (Figure 2), we see Bradbury being even more economical with actions:

'The Messiah' short story (1971)	1997 script version of 'Messiah' scene
	THE FIGURE beyond the font lifts its hand.
There was fixed a jagged hole, a cincture from which, slowly, one by one, blood was dripping, falling away down and slowly down, into the baptismal font.	We see his wrist, CLOSEUP.
The drops of blood struck the holy water, coloured it, and dissolved in slow ripples.	Blood falls. To strike the baptismal water.
The hand remained for a stunned moment there before the Priest's now-blind, now-seeing eyes.	PEREGRINE gasps. PEREGRINE ...we've waited so long...
As if struck a terrible blow, the Priest collapsed to his knees with an out-gasped cry.	He sinks to his knees.

Figure 2: Comparison of 'The Messiah' sequence
(dotted lines inserted to clarify corresponding actions in the two texts)

The same fundamental sequence of shots is preserved, which is all the more remarkable if Bradbury is being truthful in claiming that he doesn't look at the source material when

adapting his stories for screen. One obvious difference between these two extracts is the intrusion of dialogue in the 1997 version. This isn't just confined to this brief extract, but permeates the full sequence. It's not entirely clear why this should be a more 'talkative' script, but it is consistent with a tendency towards more dialogue in Bradbury's later-career writing.

This three-way comparison – where the short story adapts a screenplay, and is then in turn adapted into another screenplay – tends to support Bradbury's claim that his stories *are* screenplays, and his claim to being a 'hybrid writer', whose work flows across media.

5 Conclusions

The Martian Chronicles is a 'lost film'. Alas, the popularity of SF films had waned even before Bradbury had submitted his 1961 screenplay, and by 1965 – thanks to *Dr Strangelove* – even atomic war was something difficult to take seriously.¹⁵⁷ By the end of the 1960s, the reality of the Apollo programme stimulated a return to space in film, as in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), but by then it was too late for *The Martian Chronicles*, whose 1963-5 screenplay had long been shelved. The producers assigned to the 1997 script struggled to align the *Chronicles*' fantasies with contemporary notions of the real Mars, and feared that previous SF films had by now destroyed any interest in 'space age' ideas, much as Adam Roberts has suggested that Hollywood's space opera excesses has diminished interest in the real space programme.¹⁵⁸

Study of Bradbury's screenplays, hidden from view for decades, reveals that he was still very much committed to the exploration of SF as a mode even while his prose fiction of the same period seems to have moved away that genre. Most importantly, Bradbury's development of the screenplay adaptations afforded him the opportunity to resolve the tension between the optimistic and pessimistic views of 'machinery' which had long been apparent in his prose fiction.

¹⁵⁷ For more on the decline of Hollywood interest in SF, see Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). See also Bill Warren, 'Preface to the Original Volume II (1986)' in *Keep Watching the Skies! American Science Fiction Movies of the 1950s, the 21st Century Edition* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010) [Kindle eBook].

¹⁵⁸ Adam Roberts, 'Who Killed the Space Race?' in *Boarding the Enterprise: Transporters, Tribbles, And the Vulcan Death Grip in Gene Roddenberry's Star Trek*, ed. by David Gerrold and Robert J. Sawyer (Dallas, TX: BenBella, 2006) [Kindle eBook].

There is a natural tendency for un-filmed scripts to be thought of as uninteresting or invalid, because the purpose of a script is to be filmed.¹⁵⁹ However, literary values developed in the process of scriptwriting can have their own aesthetic interest, which is of course why some screenplays (like Bradbury's) are published as books.¹⁶⁰ In the specific case of *The Martian Chronicles* we see two things pertinent to all screenwriting. First, the creative processes of screenwriting generate a substantial amount of material that will always remain invisible. Second, to return to Ian Macdonald's terminology (adapted from Bourdieu), the *doxa* of screenwriting and film-making idealises a linear process that leads from initial idea, through outline, treatment and screenplay, to a finished film. In reality, the *habitus* of creative writers entails a largely invisible non-linear process.¹⁶¹

What emerges from a study of Bradbury's *Chronicles* screenplays is a fluidity that generates strong visual or dramatic set-pieces. In some cases, a cinematic episode from the novel (such as 'And the Moon Be Still As Bright') will maintain its structure and themes through adaptation, but in other cases the exploratory screenwriting results in a highly visual sequence (such as 'The Messiah'). These are Bradbury's building blocks, highly developed scenes, incidents or moments, out of which he can build many different structures. We will see in the next chapter that similar building blocks emerge in the development of *Fahrenheit 451* – and these building blocks become 'validated' when a leading figure in world cinema adopts them for his own screen adaptation of a Bradbury novel.

¹⁵⁹ Nannicelli, pp. 127–36.

¹⁶⁰ M-R. Koivumaki, 'The aesthetic independence of the screenplay', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 2(1), 2011, 25-40.

¹⁶¹ Macdonald defines the *doxa* as 'the internalized practice of a set of norms based around a particular orthodoxy'. The *habitus* describes 'how individuals form a system of dispositions within a culture and area of activity, and which then work to structure practice'. Ian W. Macdonald, "'...So it's not surprising I'm neurotic'- The Screenwriter and the Screen Idea Work Group', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 1 (2010), 45-58.

Chapter 3: *Fahrenheit 451*

1 Introduction

Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) has become an iconic example of 1950s cold war satire, whose place in American literature was cemented by its adoption in US classrooms and literacy programmes, such as the 'Big Read' scheme.¹ With its 'canonisation' in this way, we might assume it to be a fixed text, but as with *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury shows a process of continuous re-creation: *Fahrenheit 451* as a novel emerges from shorter works, and continued to be developed in other media after the novel's publication, despite Bradbury's claim that he didn't believe in re-writing his younger self.²

The variants Bradbury created for stage and screen might be seen as 'just' adaptations of his novel, were it not for two key factors. First, the precursor works leading up to the established novel – especially the directly preceding novella versions 'Long After Midnight' and 'The Fireman' – show a continual flux of ideas and variation of narrative methods, suggesting that the novel is just one encapsulation of those ideas among many. Second, his 'adaptations' show a positive development of the story: an adoption of new ideas, correction of perceived errors, and an updating of the cultural critique.

As with *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury's development and re-development of *Fahrenheit* took place over many decades. While certain aspects of the early history are far from hidden – Bradbury often spoke of how he wrote *Fahrenheit 451* in the basement of UCLA's library – much of the detail was obscure until the 2007 publication of *Match to Flame: the Fictional Paths to Fahrenheit 451*.³ This collection of stories, drafts, fragments and textual essays reveals that the earliest extended variant of the story that became *Fahrenheit 451* was a dramatic script.

¹ National Endowment for the Arts, 'Fahrenheit 451', <<http://www.neabigread.org/books/fahrenheit451/>> [accessed 1 August 2016].

² Bradbury, *Zen*, p. 75.

³ Ray Bradbury, *Match to Flame: The Fictional Paths to Fahrenheit 451*, ed. Donn Albright and Jonathan R. Eller (Gauntlet Press, 2006).

See also: Eller and Touponce, *Life*, pp. 164-207;

Jonathan R. Eller, 'The Story of *Fahrenheit 451*', in Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 60th anniversary edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), pp. 167-187;

Jonathan R. Eller, 'Speaking Futures: the Road to *Fahrenheit 451*', in *Critical Insights: Fahrenheit 451*, ed. by Rafeeq O. McGiveron (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013);

Eller, *Becoming*, chapter 45.

Bradbury's satirical critique of audio-visual media developed significantly in his expansion of 'The Fireman' into *Fahrenheit 451*, and is a major part of the McLuhanesque dialogue between the novel and the well-known film adaptation by François Truffaut (1966). While I generally focus only on adaptations with which Bradbury was directly involved, an exception is made here since Truffaut is the only major figure in world cinema to have adapted Bradbury for the screen to date. Truffaut's film in turn triggered Bradbury's own revisiting of *Fahrenheit*, first for theatre and later for film. This chapter will explore this and other ongoing dialogues taking place between the novel, its precursors, and its adaptations.

2 Precursors

Bradbury's oft-told tale is of how *Fahrenheit 451* grew out of his visually powerful short story 'The Pedestrian' (1951), giving the impression that the novel is an extension of that story alone. 'The Pedestrian' carries distinct echoes of David H. Keller's earlier 'The Revolt of the Pedestrians' (1928), where members of a doomed species of pedestrian struggle against a motorised, car-driving majority. The idea of a *flâneur* at odds with the expectations of the industrialised world clearly appealed to Bradbury, and although walking is just a small part of the actions of characters in *Fahrenheit 451*, he clearly presents walking as a defining characteristic of fireman Montag. (Keller's story also seems a likely influence on *Fahrenheit's* attitude to cars, and on the novel's rural hideaway.) However, Bradbury's preface to *Match to Flame* acknowledges that he was mistaken in tracing *Fahrenheit's* origin solely to 'The Pedestrian', and admits that other stories appear equally natural precursors to *Fahrenheit 451*; *Match to Flame* then gathers the materials to trace the broader and longer paths to the novel.⁴ What is true is that the basic idea of the pedestrian's walk is present in the earliest extant manuscript of what would eventually become *Fahrenheit 451* ('Long After Midnight' (composed 1950)), and in the earliest published form of the story ('The Fireman' (1951)), as well as in the novel *Fahrenheit 451* itself.

This section considers the main evidence in such precursor works for a cinematic or dramatic line of development leading into the novel.

⁴ Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 9-10.

2.1 *They Clash by Night*

One of the earliest direct precursors of *Fahrenheit 451* is a 1947 outline and partial script for a play entitled *They Clash By Night*.⁵ The story centres on 'Muerte, the Killer' – an assassin in a post-apocalyptic world. He refuses to conform, goes on the run and is hunted down. He tries to preserve literary works by memorising them, and seeks someone who can write the stories down, being himself unable to write. In this condensed form, the story bears a striking resemblance to *Fahrenheit 451*: replace assassin Muerte (Spanish for death) with fireman Montag; replace 'tearing' of books with burning of books, and you have the basic scenario for *Fahrenheit*. The fact that this earliest precursor is a theatrical script provides a tangible anchor for all that we might expect of a stage play: the development of a small and balanced cast of characters, a focused and character-driven sense of conflict, a linear narrative, and the prospect of visual/performative spectacle. The play's three-act structure may also have carried over directly into *Fahrenheit 451*, a novel with a distinct three-part structure – a feature which can be considered cinematic, although not exclusively so.⁶

The play's dystopian world (like *Fahrenheit's*) epitomises Raymond Williams' characterisation of 'utopian thinking' as dealing with an 'isolated intellectual' pitted against the "'masses" who are at best brutish, at worst brutal'.⁷ Muerte claims to embody great authors and philosophers, and this suggests a strong performative potential, which survives through to *Fahrenheit 451* with its occasional enacted quoted passages. In this regard, Muerte's story parallels the better known Bradbury story 'Pillar of Fire' (1948; discussed in more detail below), and is also a primitive expression of the extended metaphor of the final section of *Fahrenheit*, in which book people adopt fictional identities as they commit works of literature to memory. Later fragments developed from *They Clash By Night* introduce a scene where a baying crowd is forced to listen to a recital of Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach', a work to be destroyed as a prelude to the destruction of Shakespeare ('Dover Beach' is, of course, the source of the *Clash by Night* title).⁸ Performance of 'Dover Beach' becomes a central dramatic episode in 'Long After Midnight',

⁵ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 278-86.

⁶ Three-act structure as a 'norm' of film narrative is best accounted for in Jennine Lanouette, 'A History of Three-Act Structure', *Screentakes: Studies in Screenwriting for Writers, Directors and Creative Professionals*, 2012 <<https://www.screentakes.com/an-evolutionary-study-of-the-three-act-structure-model-in-drama/>> [accessed 9 September 2016].

⁷ Raymond Williams, 'Science Fiction', in *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia*, ed. by Andrew Milner (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 13-19 (p. 16).

⁸ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 320-1.

'The Fireman' and *Fahrenheit 451*, and Bradbury retains the episode through all versions of *Fahrenheit*, including his 1980s stage play and 1990s screenplay – evidence of this early precursor casting a long shadow over the development of *Fahrenheit 451*.

2.2 'Pillar of Fire'

'Pillar of Fire' (1948), which Bradbury refers to as a 'rehearsal' for *Fahrenheit 451* (note the performative term) details the story of Lantry, an undead who rises from his grave. This angry character is like the enraged early version of Montag found in 'The Fireman'. 'Pillar of Fire' defines Lantry as a rebel: '[...] You cannot tell him what to do. If you say you are dead, he will want not to be dead. If you say there are no such things as vampires, by God, that man will try to be one just for spite'.⁹ It seems a small step from this view of innate rebellion to the Juan Ramón Jiménez epigram which Bradbury uses to introduce *Fahrenheit 451*: 'If they give you lined paper, write the other way.' 'Pillar of Fire' is a sufficiently dramatic story that Bradbury adapted it for theatre, as a one-act play. His own declared interpretation is that Montag and Lantry are complementary; Montag the 'burner of books [...] obsessed with saving mind-as-printed-on-matter', and Lantry 'the books themselves, [...] the thing to be saved'.¹⁰ Lantry comes to believe that he is 'all that is left of Edgar Allan Poe, and [...] of Ambrose Bierce and all that is left of a man named Lovecraft [...] and now these last [books] will be burned [...] I am all that remembers them'. The idea of preserving text through memories is strong here, but not as systematically thought out as in *Fahrenheit*.

2.3 'The Veldt', 'The Meadow'

In addition to the ancestral lines of development that lead directly to *Fahrenheit 451*, there are two Bradbury works which parallel key themes and ideas from *Fahrenheit*. The short story 'The Veldt' (1950) is another clear rehearsal, this time for the satirical extrapolation of the dangers of the then new medium of television, while the Hollywood-inspired radio play

⁹ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 117.

¹⁰ Ray Bradbury, *On Stage: a Chrestomathy of his Plays* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1991), p. 284

'The Meadow' (1947; developed into a short story in 1953) is a presentation of a character at odds with the world around him.

'The Veldt' (1950) is another sufficiently dramatic and visual story that it has been adapted for stage and television by Bradbury himself. Its inherent visual and dramatic potential is also confirmed by adaptations for film and television carried out by others.¹¹ It presents a future domestic setting similar to that of *Fahrenheit*, with the norms of 1950s American culture extrapolated so as to allow satiric comment on the author's own world. The technology providing the story's novum – an immersive virtual reality environment that can simulate anything the user wishes – is an extrapolation of television, and is clearly the same technology that Bradbury transports into the heart of the Montags' home in *Fahrenheit*. For Gary K. Wolfe, Bradbury's technologies generally tend to link fantastical delights to distinct hazards, and he cites 'The Veldt' specifically for its children's nursery which turns out to be murderous.¹²

James Arthur Anderson identifies 'The Veldt' as 'cinematic', and in his consideration of its structure, he finds a use of 'enigma' and satisfying resolution, all of which accounts for its popularity with audiences.¹³ Anderson's analysis takes the story beyond 'warning' and considers what the children have become by story's end: by creating their own reality in the nursery, they assert their dominance over their parents; by creating their own world, they have effectively become adults.¹⁴ That same technology, resurrected in *Fahrenheit 451* as the immersive television environment of the 'parlour walls', carries with it the same sense of hazard, the danger that people will become more comforted by its artifices than by the harsh real world – and clearly the fantasies of Mildred Montag's interactive soap opera 'family' correspond to the fantasies of the children of 'The Veldt'. The satiric view of television shines through, although a key difference here is that Mildred is already an adult. She has lost (if indeed she ever possessed it) the rich play-world of childhood, and is unable therefore to place her control over the technology, and instead it dominates her.

'The Meadow', Bradbury's 'great notion' radio play in the manner of dramatist-director Norman Corwin, focuses on a film studio worker who manages to convince his bosses that there is worth in preserving the unique values of a film studio backlot earmarked for

¹¹ *The Veldt*, dir. by Diane Haak (CBS-TV, 1979); Savannen, dir. by Tord Pääg (Swedish TV, 1983); *Vel'd*, dir. by Nazim Tulyakhodzayev (Uzbek Film, 1987); *The Illustrated Man*, dir. by Jack Smight (Warner Bros, 1969) [on DVD].

¹² Wolfe, p. 37.

¹³ Anderson, p. 33.

¹⁴ Anderson, p. 47.

destruction.¹⁵ It demonstrates the fundamental importance of what Indick refers to as the 'supra-mundane imagination', which here triumphs.¹⁶

The protagonist is remarkably similar to *The Martian Chronicles*' Spender, the outsider in the chapter 'And The Moon Be Still As Bright' who alone is able to perceive the vitality of the now-dead Martian civilisation. Just as Spender prompts a pause for reflection in the inexorable colonisation of Mars, so the hero of 'The Meadow' prompts a reflective moment before the walls of the studio set come tumbling down. The 'supra-mundane imagination' is surely a corollary of Williams' 'utopian thinking', and is the very characteristic which underpins both Clarisse and, eventually, Montag in *Fahrenheit 451*. Indick later linked the triumph of the imagination to a nostalgic element in the character, which seems to connect 'The Meadow' to a common theme often identified in Bradbury's prose works.¹⁷

While 'The Veldt' and 'The Meadow' are outside of the direct development of Bradbury's other works that evolved directly into *Fahrenheit 451*, their strongly cinematic and dramatic nature combined with the themes they share with *Fahrenheit* make them significant candidates for influencing the development of that novel.

2.4 'The Fireman'

The immediate precursor to *Fahrenheit 451* is Bradbury's novella 'The Fireman' (1951). It is often assumed to have been absorbed into the longer *Fahrenheit 451* and therefore little evaluation has been given to the novella or the act of expansion (for example, both Nolan and Eller give it only a fleeting assessment¹⁸). Richard Matheson gives one of the few evaluative assessments when he writes that 'The Fireman' is 'a complete examination of an important theme' whereas *Fahrenheit 451* is 'a virtual grand opera of intense emotion', perhaps detecting a more performative, theatrical tone in the novel.¹⁹ An earlier draft of

¹⁵ 'The Meadow', *World Security Workshop*, written by Ray Bradbury, ABC Radio, 2nd January 1947.

¹⁶ Indick, *Drama*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Indick, *Dramatist*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Nolan, *Nolan on Bradbury*, pp. 105-7.

Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁹ Richard Matheson, foreword to Bradbury, *Match to Flame*, p. 14.

'The Fireman' is titled 'Long After Midnight' (Bradbury would discard this title, re-deploying it for an unrelated short story and collection).²⁰

One development in 'The Fireman' adds to the cinematic dynamism of the story in comparison to Bradbury's earlier book-burning stories. Those earlier works showed books burned in incinerators, kilns or ovens, consequently echoing Nazi concentration camps. In 'The Fireman', though, flamethrowers are used, giving the firemen mobility and allowing them to intrude into people's homes, thus making them more like Nazi SS officers.

The novella's most striking cinematic scene is the burning of the old woman's house, with its strong visual construction, physical conflict and spectacle, which remains central to Montag's story through all subsequent versions – including Truffaut's film, Bradbury's play, and Bradbury's own screenplay. In developing 'Long After Midnight' into 'The Fireman', Bradbury gives the scene the lightest of changes, but these are so significant as to begin a major transformation of the scene (a transformation completed in *Fahrenheit 451*). The first slight change is to the woman's dialogue: instead of 'I like it here', she now says 'I want to stay here'; a switch from present contentment to a statement of desire.²¹ The second change is spectacular. Before the Fire Chief can routinely light his match, the woman draws a match of her own, taking control of the destruction. The action is a surprise, the match appearing without warning, and the firemen are shocked by her actions, running terrified from the house as flames take hold. The woman shifts from victim to somebody who cannot bear to be parted from her books, and would give up her life for them. These small changes make the scene much more haunting in Montag's memory (and in the reader's memory, too) in 'The Fireman' than in 'Long After Midnight'. Crucially, the scene as revised also provides Montag with a powerful model of an act of resistance.

Quotations – a prominent feature of *Fahrenheit 451* – come late in the novella: the first actual reading comes as Montag forces Mildred to read with him. If (as early scenes indicate) Montag has been reading these books previously, the experience has not been directly shared with the reader, something which breaks with what is otherwise a 'show, don't tell' cinematic narrative.

²⁰ *Match to Flame* presents 'Long After Midnight' alongside 'The Fireman' as if they were different stories, but the two are almost identical; 'The Fireman' can be seen as a more coherent edit of the inconsistent 'Long After Midnight.' However, the small and scarce differences between the two are also subtly dramatic, affording an opportunity to see the development of the cinematic as Bradbury moves towards *Fahrenheit 451*.

²¹ Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 353-5.

The most extensive quotation comes when Montag recites 'Dover Beach' (in its entirety in 'Long After Midnight; just two verses in 'The Fireman'). This specific performative action is carried over from Bradbury's novel version of *They Clash By Night*, where it is used as an emotionally rousing prelude to the ritual destruction of the last surviving volume of Shakespeare. Here, in contrast, the context for the performance is domestic, as Montag insists on reading to Mildred's gathered friends. The performance as it differs between 'Long After Midnight' and 'The Fireman' reveals Bradbury's fine-tuning of Montag's emotions in relation to the women's responses. In 'Long After Midnight', Montag pulls the poem from his pocket 'with irritation', but in 'The Fireman' he is 'shaking with rage and irritation'. His abrupt instruction to Mrs Phelps switches from a firm 'Sit down' to an angry 'Sit down and shut up'. The 'Fireman' version ends with a more knowing and emotional reaction from Montag to how his audience has responded to his reading. When he finishes, he allows the page to flutter to the ground, and then curses himself for what he has done in provoking them.²²

Montag's emotions and impulses are further made visible – a useful cinematic technique – through the 'guilt of his hands', as detailed in a scene when he returns a stolen book to the Fire Chief, and in earlier actions where his hands carry out destructive acts. Montag's hands are 'never at rest,' as if separate from him and acting independently, as the repressed guilt he feels is manifested unconsciously through them: 'these were the hands that acted on their own, that were no part of him, that snatched books, tore pages, hid paragraphs and sentences in little wads.'²³ The description reflects the earliest depiction of Muerte the Killer in the dramatic outline for *They Clash By Night*, where Muerte must 'tear books' to destroy them, suggesting that the image held power for Bradbury. The notion of 'hiding paragraphs' returns and expands very specifically in Bradbury's 1997 screenplay for an un-filmed version of *Fahrenheit 451*, where Montag is shown treasuring tiny fragments of text long before he pockets an entire book, again suggesting this imagery retained some fascination for the author (see screenplay section, below).

The 'hands' passage in 'The Fireman' is almost unchanged from that in 'Long After Midnight', except for some important refining of the psychological aspects of the scene. Montag's hands are now also 'his swift and clever conscience', suggesting the independent hands have some moral sense. This layering of conscious agency over and above the alien-ness of his hands adds to our understanding of what happens later, when Montag turns

²² Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 383-8.

²³ Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 388-90.

against the Chief. The same passage reveals Bradbury's determination to keep the narrative in a continuing present, as 'The Fireman' version of the scene curtails the 'hands' interlude, excising Montag's very specific thoughts that break outside of the present moment. Deleting a single sentence keeps the scene 'in the moment', and assists the unity of time and space in this part of the narrative. This same passage returns, virtually unchanged, in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*. There, it is immediately followed by the Chief instructing Montag not to hide his hands in the card game. This change dramatically externalises what, until now, has been a purely interior passage, and has a cinematic effect of re-focusing the scene.

'Long After Midnight' introduces electronic media, which are placed in opposition to print media, and are cited specifically as being what divides Montag from Mildred.²⁴ The revisions for 'The Fireman' go further in strengthening and rationalising the attack on media, and *Fahrenheit* will go even further in denigrating television especially. Newly introduced in 'The Fireman' is Mildred's 'thimble radio', 'tamped into her ear, listening, listening to far people in far places, her eyes peeled wide'.²⁵ This one sentence brings Mildred's passivity into specific focus to illustrate technology allowing her to be physically present in the scene while being mentally absent. It is clear that Faber's interpretation of history is supported by Mildred's behaviour: book-burning was never strictly necessary anyway, because when the new entertainments were introduced, people just lost interest in reading.

'Long After Midnight' shows the hobos – migrants, outside of the social mainstream, and precursors of the 'book people' of *Fahrenheit 451* – as people whose eidetic memories can retain texts with presumed perfection. 'The Fireman' refines them. When Montag says he thought he 'had' the Book of Job in his mind, but is unable to recall it with accuracy, Granger tells him that they have methods of hypnosis for retrieving poor memories. They have learned something from their methods, which is that 'we were not to be superior – we were covers for books'. This is one of the first explicit metaphors provided for the hobos, people as 'covers', and it is a rich one, suggesting a re-packaging of the old texts, perhaps a re-framing; but also protection for the texts, or even concealment or disguise. This will lead, in *Fahrenheit 451*, to a consideration of what is more important, the content of a medium, or the medium itself, a McLuhanesque question which will become a central dialogue between the novel and the 1966 film adaptation.

²⁴ Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 355-8.

²⁵ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 420.

3 The Novel

The novel *Fahrenheit 451* is a re-working of 'The Fireman' into a considerably longer work with a carefully structured narrative. More distinctly than before, Montag's life is shaped around three strands: an unsatisfactory home life, where technology has undermined his relationship with Mildred; his freewheeling, enjoyable times with Clarisse; and his skittishness at the firehouse due to the newly named Mechanical Hound's uncanny rattling of him, as if sensing his guilty conscience.

All three published versions of Montag's story – 'Long After Midnight,' 'The Fireman' and *Fahrenheit 451* - have the same fundamental structure: three distinct parts resembling dramatic acts, although there is continuous action that runs across the 'act breaks'. The first part deals with Montag's rising consciousness as he discovers books and their powers, becoming an illicit reader. The second part deals with his struggles to accommodate this new knowledge and this new love, until a crisis point is reached and he is ironically called to inflict the firemen's punishments upon himself. The third part sees him irretrievably rebel, killing his boss and escaping to the countryside where he finds like-minded people committing books to memory for the future benefit of humankind.

The novel is roughly twice as long as 'The Fireman', and all three sections have been expanded upon. The first section, 'The Hearth and the Salamander,' is expanded the most: while the three sections of 'The Fireman' are of more or less equal length, the first section of *Fahrenheit 451* amounts to nearly half of the book's total length. This reflects the number of additional scenes Bradbury provides in the novel, and the deepening of the portrayal of events which are only mentioned in passing in the shorter versions of the story.

In expanding 'The Fireman', Bradbury consolidates and builds upon the cinematic and media-related elements. This transformation from novella to novel is an important one for present purposes since 'The Fireman', already constructed as a cinematic story, transforms into *Fahrenheit* through further cinematic means. Bradbury achieves the transformation through five broad techniques, each one of which serves to enhance some aspect of the story's cinematic character:

1. Re-balancing the cast of characters through revisions to the primary and secondary characters, so that Montag's psychological drama is capable of expression largely through visible external events.
2. Linearizing the narrative, giving the sense that the story is unfolding in real-time, and without recourse to incidents (e.g. flashbacks) which occur outside of story-time, so that we live the story as Montag lives the story.
3. Extending the satire on media, taking a McLuhanesque consideration of how a particular medium may (or may not) impact on the delivery and appreciation of content.
4. Extending the use of cinematic narrative techniques, including the 'camera eye' and montage.
5. Emphasising Montag's point of view throughout, so that the camera eye nearly always accompanies him, although this sometimes means stepping out of the externalised action and into Montag's thoughts.

I shall consider each of these techniques in detail below.

3.1 Re-balancing the cast

The re-balancing of the cast of *Fahrenheit 451* is consistent with the principles of dramatic story construction advised by writing 'gurus' such as Robert McKee and Lajos Egri, which helps support the novel's impression of being cinematic. For McKee, 'Each role must fit a purpose, and the first principle of cast design is polarization. Between the various roles we devise a network of contrasting or contradictory attitudes'.²⁶ For Egri – whose book Bradbury had studied – the 'orchestration' of a cast of characters demands 'well-defined and uncompromising characters in opposition, moving from one pole toward another through conflict'.²⁷ The secondary characters of 'The Fireman' already pull Montag in four directions: to the progressive Clarisse and the regressive Mildred; and to the authoritarian Captain and the liberal Faber, but in *Fahrenheit* the polarisation of these four characters is considerably refined.

In this new telling of the story, Montag's identity as a character is strengthened by a new appellation: he has a new first name - Guy, alluding to Guy Fawkes - and is most often referred to as 'Montag' rather than the more formal 'Mr Montag'. He is perhaps less a cog

²⁶ McKee, *Story*, p. 183.

²⁷ Egri, *Dramatic Writing*, p.115.

in a machine, and more of an individual, helping the novel's ambition in presenting his story as a psychological drama. The psychological aspect shines through most clearly in Montag's emotional responses, which show him to be more of a hurting, driven man and less of the angered, enraged figure of 'The Fireman'. Mildred is the main beneficiary of this softer, more sympathetic Montag. No longer does he angrily force her to read ('So you're not in this with me? You're in it up to your neck!'), but instead he determines to read himself and tries to drag her along, apologising for not thinking about the consequences of his actions: 'I'm sorry [...] I didn't really think. But now it looks as if we're in this together.'²⁸ Where the 'old' Mr Montag threatened, 'I'm going to start to kill people,' the 'new' Montag is more reflective: 'Right now I've got an awful feeling I want to smash things and kill things.'²⁹ The conclusion of Montag's relationship with Mildred is expressed when Montag burns his own house starting not with the technology that the 'old' Mr Montag had angrily been drawn to, but with the twin beds, the bedroom walls and the cosmetics chest that signify their marriage. Montag's destiny is more specific and focused: he doesn't just join the community of book people, he leads them back towards the destroyed city. The novel's simple final line – 'When we reach the city' – encapsulates the sense of community, the sense of a directed journey, and the prospect of restoring a destroyed civilisation.³⁰ Each facet of the final line is in distinct contrast to the entirely self-centred Montag of the novel's opening passage, concisely summing up how much Montag develops during the novel.

With the re-defining of Clarisse and some re-arranging of plot points, the new Montag's wholehearted embracing of books appears as his substitute for the absent Clarisse's eclectic modes of thought, since he now turns to books after her disappearance. Similarly, with the 'old woman' sequence now held to a much later point in the story - after Clarisse's disappearance - Montag has no one to help him through the trauma he has witnessed, in turn making his psychological illness all the more motivated.

Mildred is significantly extended so as to embody nearly everything that Montag comes to despise. She is here shallow, completely taken in by the melodramas which play out on her 'parlour walls'. Our very first encounter with Mildred sees her already unconscious: drugged, and with her 'seashell' radio in her ears.

²⁸ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 436;

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 60th anniversary edn. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 63.

²⁹ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 435;

Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 61.

³⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 158.

Clarisse, no longer just a mirror of Mildred, is re-shaped so that she is part of Montag's everyday routine, always there when he walks to or from the subway. Her first encounter with Montag is moved up so that she is now a stimulus or catalyst for all behavioural changes Montag undergoes. Her naive question to Montag is no longer 'Why do you do what you do?', but the more challenging 'Are you happy?'³¹ Her significance as a trigger of change is alluded to by the Captain, who explains her disappearance with a simple 'The girl? She was a timebomb' and 'The poor girl's better off dead.'³²

As well as fine-tuning the mirrored female characters, *Fahrenheit 451* adjusts the mirrored male characters of Faber and the Fire Captain. Although acting as a guide to the literary world and something of a role model, Faber is now a declared coward, telling Montag how he failed to stand up to the repressive government in the past. In contrast, he declares Montag 'brave'. The novel introduces Faber's secret communication device, through which he can provide Montag with a running commentary of advice wherever he goes, discreetly functioning as Montag's counsel, conscience and intelligence in his verbal battles with the Fire Captain.

The Fire Captain is also re-drawn, and renamed from Leahy to Beatty, a name with possible connotations of 'beatitude' (Bradbury's own pronunciation of the surname gives it three syllables, not two³³), referring either to his sense of moral superiority or his blessed good fortune in not being caught for his own probable acts of book reading; his behaviour and knowledge of literature even has Faber suggesting 'He could be one of us.'³⁴ Beatty's dialogue in the novel is enriched with literary quotations, indicating that he has spent a lifetime absorbing what he has read, and the verbal sparring between him and Montag/Faber presenting a stronger sense of Montag torn between the two poles represented by Beatty and Faber. As a final refinement, Beatty is more fascinated by fire than ever: 'What is there about fire that's so lovely? No matter what age we are, what draws us to it?'³⁵ Given this, his death by fire seems almost inevitable, and Montag goes so far as to realise that '*Beatty wanted to die.*'³⁶

³¹ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 426;

Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 7.

³² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, pp. 57-8.

³³ *Fahrenheit 451* [LP].

³⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 87.

³⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 109.

³⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 116. Italics in original.

3.2 Linearizing the narrative

Bradbury's revisions to his story in *Fahrenheit 451* follow a general strategy of eliminating flashbacks or narration of events prior to the main narrative, and maintaining the linearity of the narrative, such that the reader feels that events are unfolding in real time. Seymour Chatman's explanation of the key differences between literary narrative and cinematic narrative focuses on the comparative ability of a novel to pause 'story-time' for passages of description or reflection, and the contrasting inability of a film to do this. Chatman asserts that 'narrative pressure' tends to thwart any attempt to pause 'story-time' in a film, resulting in a tendency for film narrative to give the impression of playing out more or less linearly and in real time (within a given scene, at least), a position echoed by McKee.³⁷ *Fahrenheit 451*, more so than 'The Fireman', tends to follow Chatman's cinematic narrative principles, with just occasional exceptions. Consider, for example, the scene where paramedics pump out Mildred's stomach. In 'The Fireman' this is an incident from a year in the past, presented as Montag's reflection. It is very brief, but nevertheless represents a stop in the ongoing 'now' of the story.³⁸ In *Fahrenheit*, the scene becomes a major event that plays out in the 'present' of the novel, and is expanded accordingly. There are two major exceptions to this strategy. One is the transitional sequence where Montag reaches the river, walks into it and is floated away. With time to contemplate, his reverie takes us into a deep past, a passage which runs for several pages. The second is where Montag observes the destruction of the city and contemplates what might have happened to Mildred and Faber.

As well as the novel's tendency to sustain a real-time narrative pressure, there is a rich attention to direction. More so than 'The Fireman', *Fahrenheit 451* provides a sense of geography so that the reader is conscious of Montag's direction of travel, both as he escapes the city and as he travels with the book people, who have a sense of constant motion: '[we] move downstream a little ways, just in case'; 'they moved along the bank of the river, going south'; 'they all laughed quietly, moving downstream.'³⁹ The actions themselves are small, and much the same as in 'The Fireman', but the hobos of 'The Fireman' stay in one place, while *Fahrenheit's* book people are going somewhere. Equally important are the *changes* in direction, as when Granger proposes 'we'll turn around and

³⁷ Seymour Chatman, 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (And Vice Versa)', *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), 121–40 (p. 126);

McKee, p. 395.

³⁸ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 421.

³⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 147–8.

walk upstream. They'll be needing us up that way,' and when Montag begins the walk north, leading the book people back towards the destroyed city.⁴⁰

3.3 Extending the satire on media

When extending 'The Fireman' into a novel, Bradbury wrote to Richard Matheson that he wanted to explore how the medium of radio has contributed to 'our growing lack of attention'.⁴¹ The tendency of the medium to deal in short bursts of material leads to what he called a 'hopscoching existence' for the listener who inevitably becomes unable to focus on any more demanding activity. By the time he wrote *Fahrenheit 451*, though, Bradbury's ire had shifted entirely from radio to television; in the interim, television had become the dominant medium in American homes, 1951 being the year when peak-time audiences for television exceeded those of radio for the first time.⁴² That same year, Bradbury read Marshall McLuhan's critique of mass media advertising, *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), which characterised industrial society in a way which reads like a prospectus for *Fahrenheit 451*:

For people carried about in mechanical vehicles, [...] listening much of the waking day to canned music, watching packaged movie entertainment and capsulated news, for such people it would require an especial heroism of effort to be anything but supine consumers [...].⁴³

A decade on, an angered Bradbury had come to despise television. In an article based on his own experience of working in the medium, he roundly condemned the producer who 'does not trust an audience to come to an idea' but instead 'tries to tailor a garment to fit a moronic giant he guesses to be that audience.'⁴⁴ McLuhan's analysis coincided with Bradbury's own conception of electronic media, and both fed into *Fahrenheit 451*'s depiction of a world where modern media were the enemy.

The world of *Fahrenheit* is much more obviously futuristic than that of 'The Fireman', with *Fahrenheit*'s media technologies in particular satirically exaggerated as the novel clearly

⁴⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 156.

⁴¹ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 16.

⁴² Jim Cox, *American Radio Networks: a History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), p. 171.

⁴³ Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, 60th anniversary edition (London: Duckworth, 2011), p. 21.

⁴⁴ Ray Bradbury, 'T-V Article for Rick Debrow and Associated Press', 12 Dec 1962 (unpublished).

identifies trends and attacks them. In 'The Fireman', radio is as harmful as television, but in *Fahrenheit* radio falls into the background, and most references to 'television' or 't-v' are replaced by the room-dominating 'parlour walls', bringing into the lives of Montag and Mildred ideas which Bradbury had already explored in 'The Veldt'.

While the parlour walls appear periodically throughout the novel, their greatest danger comes in the house-party scene, where they are described in action. Each wall is capable of showing a different facet of whatever is broadcast, or combined together they are able to simulate 'a rocket flight into the clouds' or 'plunge[d] into a lime-green sea' or 'whip[p]ed out of town to the jet cars wildly circling in an arena.'⁴⁵ The viewer becomes immersed in both picture and sound, epitomising what Bradbury calls 'the great centrifuge of radio, television, pre-thought-out movies' that give 'no time to 'stop and stare'.⁴⁶ This fictional technology has many of the properties which McLuhan would characterise as 'hot' media, media of such intensity and detail that they require little mental engagement.

Although Montag can switch off his own parlour walls, even he is not immune to the draw of the flickering screen, as when he walks past several houses and is conscious that everyone is watching his pursuit on TV. He finds he has to 'shout[ed] to give himself the necessary push away from this last house window, and the fascinating séance going on in there.'⁴⁷ It does seem that, for Bradbury, the danger lies primarily in the 'hotness' of the medium, since the rational Faber is able to make controlled use of television, by keeping one which no bigger than 'a postal card'. He explains, 'I always wanted something very small, [...] something I could blot out with the palm of my hand, if necessary [...]'⁴⁸

Thus far, *Fahrenheit 451* would appear to be a McLuhanesque novel, showing an awareness of the impact that a particular medium can have on any message it seeks to convey. However, through the character of Faber – and ultimately through to the resolution of the entire novel – *Fahrenheit* takes a different tack, suggesting that 'content' is more important than medium, a position almost the polar opposite of McLuhan's view, in which the impact of a medium 'has nothing to do with programming in any way'.⁴⁹ Faber's analysis is essay-like in its identification of three things wrong in their world: (1) 'Quality, texture of information' (2) 'leisure to digest it' (3) 'the right to carry out actions based on what we

⁴⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ *Match to Flame*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 131.

⁴⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 126.

⁴⁹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 366.

learn [based on] the first two.’⁵⁰ Although Faber reveres books, he gives the first hint that physical embodiment is not important: ‘It’s not books you need, it’s some of the things that were in books. The same things *could* be in the ‘parlour families’ [...] but are not. [...] Take it where you can find it, in old phonograph records, old motion pictures, and in old friends.’⁵¹ This realisation strikes Montag more fully when he discovers that the book people burn books once memorised. The quotations scattered throughout the novel can in this light be seen as ‘content’, capable of being carried in any medium, and far more important than any physical carrying medium. It is tempting, too, to see this as a metaphor for Bradbury’s attitude to adaptation.

3.4 Extending the use of the cinematic

Fahrenheit 451’s cinematic narrative technique places an emphasis on what we might call ‘objective’ action, that is action which is externalised and especially visualisable. One particular device in the novel that allows for this is the Mechanical Hound (known as the ‘Electric Hound’ in ‘The Fireman’, and renamed by Bradbury in acknowledgment of McLuhan’s *The Mechanical Bride*⁵²). In the case of Montag, it is his internalised guilty conscience which translates into the Hound’s visible responses. In ‘The Fireman’, the evidence of his guilty conscience comes from his thinking about it in the middle of the card game, and from Leahy provoking him by asking if he has anything to be guilty about; but in *Fahrenheit* it is as if the Hound *knows*. Another device is Montag’s own hands, which act independently of him, externalising his inner turmoil: ‘Montag had done nothing. His hand had done it all, his hand, with a brain of its own, with a conscience and a curiosity in each trembling finger, had turned thief.’⁵³ Later, when Montag rips a Bible to pieces, we are told ‘He saw what his hands had done and he looked surprised.’⁵⁴ This overall scheme is present, too, in ‘The Fireman’, but in *Fahrenheit* begins much earlier and is used more consistently as an indicator of action. The hands play a key part in the ‘old woman’ scene, for instance. Montag’s hands also suggest a separation of intellect from animal function, and separation of the conscious from the unconscious, providing a rich metaphor for a complex process

⁵⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 79-81.

⁵¹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 78-9.

⁵² Ray Bradbury, interviewed by Jonathan R. Eller and Donn Albright, Los Angeles, Oct. 14 2005. Transcript in ‘Bradbury Eller Interviews’, Center for Ray Bradbury Studies.

⁵³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 84.

taking place within the character. Nevertheless, the outcome is a physical, visual manifestation.

Further development of the cinematic can be seen in the refined use of the camera eye in the novel's narration, and the careful use of montage effects to variously build suspense and emphasise surprise. These are perhaps best explored through consideration of the sequence where the old woman is burned with her books. As we have seen, this exists in 'The Fireman', but in the novel it is refined and moved to a later position in relation to other story events. The scene is no longer the sole trigger of change in Montag (Clarisse is now also part of the trigger of change, as discussed above), but it is much more of an emotional climax within the first section of the novel, the drawing together of a crisis for Montag.⁵⁵

The sequence in 'The Fireman' gives the impression at first that the old woman is trying to escape: '[they] caught a woman, running'. In itself quite dramatic, since it brings us into a scene already unfolding, it is made more oppositional in the novel by the woman most definitely *not* running away. Instead, she is here to stay, and stands her ground. She asserts herself now with a quotation, the first performance of a piece of literary text that Montag witnesses, as she begins "Play the man, Master Ridley"⁵⁶. Even if the reader (like Montag) is unfamiliar with the quotation, it is clear from the context that it is about remaining strong and standing one's ground, and that consequences will flow from whatever happens on this day. While the woman is the victim in this whole sequence, she is nevertheless able to assert her control over the situation, ultimately taking charge of her own death by striking the match that starts the blaze that will consume her. The triumph of the re-written version of the scene in the novel is in the focus on the match concealed in her hand, which she uses to set the fire. By revealing it earlier in the scene than in 'The Fireman,' it allows the scene to pivot, so that Beatty and his men back away in fear, and she takes control. It is not just a surprise (as it is at the end of the scene in 'The Fireman'), but the source of suspense: what will happen now? Further, Bradbury isolates the revealing of the match in a single-sentence paragraph: 'An ordinary kitchen match.'⁵⁷ By using the short paragraph, Bradbury makes it stand out on the page, isolating it. It is an implied close-up, full of meaning in terms of narrative cause and effect and in terms of threat. The reader re-conceptualises the woman's intent because of this single sentence, as she shifts here from victim to agent, and

⁵⁵ Bradbury, *Match*, pp. 417-9.

⁵⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 36.

martyr. Immediately following the revelation of the match, the camera eye of the novel accompanies Montag as he withdraws: 'Montag felt himself back away and away out the door, after Beatty, down the steps, across the lawn, where the path of kerosene lay like the track of some evil snail.'⁵⁸

The isolation of 'An ordinary kitchen match' resembles the screenwriting convention of using a paragraph to imply a single shot, and therefore to control the 'focus' of the implied camera, and to indicate where one shot yields to another; to suggest the montage in other words. While Bradbury doesn't always maintain a strict relationship between paragraphs and 'implied shots' in *Fahrenheit 451*, he does so more often than not, making his whole approach like that of a screenwriter – echoing what we saw above in *The Martian Chronicles*.

Other aspects of this particular sequence also suggest strong control over montage. An example of this is the modification to the short section where Montag grabs at a falling book. In 'The Fireman', the book's descent 'like a white pigeon', 'wings fluttering' is a momentary slowing of the action, but is accompanied by a reminder of the 'rush and fervour' which works against Montag trying to read the book's text.⁵⁹ In *Fahrenheit*, though, the slowing is held to a momentary stop as Montag is able to catch the quotation 'Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine' – before the scene resumes once again. The quotation here is from Alexander Smith's essay 'Dreamthorp', a reflection on a small village whose human construction suggests deep historical roots, but which appears unchanged. Were Montag able to read to the end of the passage in 'Dreamthorp,' he would encounter the narrator's description of a tableau, which he then describes placing a frame around as if to hang in a gallery. This suggestion of something dynamic captured in a still life - time standing still - seems highly appropriate for this brief flash of text which will burn into Montag's mind. (It's also an appropriate trigger for Montag's questioning of his own personal deep time, which flares up later in the novel when he asks Mildred 'When did we meet?') This one small modification, the inclusion of a quotation, has a big impact in slowing the pace of this momentary scene, and thus contributing to the pacing and montage of the sequence as a whole. The quotation itself isn't enough to be an example of Chatman's pausing of story-time, since the 'narrative pressure' of the falling books keeps the scene moving.⁶⁰ But the deeper meaning and referencing of the quotation might allow

⁵⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 37.

⁵⁹ Bradbury, *Match*, p. 417.

⁶⁰ Chatman, p. 126.

such pause for any reader that recognises the quotation. If this scene were filmed as written here, it is easy to imagine a film editor 'cheating' real time in order to hold the quotation on screen just long enough to be read.

As well as the central action scene of the old woman's self-immolation, Bradbury's cinematic method runs through scenes of lesser spectacle. An example of this is in his meeting with Faber, where Bradbury's use of the camera eye once again implies a cinematic montage. In this case it exploits Murch's 'dance of the eyes', which we have already encountered in the discussion of Bradbury's screenplay for *Moby Dick*.⁶¹ The scene begins with Montag and Faber either side of a door, and talking through it, an instance of the camera eye adhering to one position outside with Montag. The scene continues as follows:

'Sit down.' Faber backed up, as if he feared the book might vanish if he took his eyes from it. Behind him, the door to a bedroom stood open, and in that room a litter of machinery and steel tools was strewn upon a desk-top. Montag had only a glimpse, before Faber, seeing Montag's attention diverted, turned quickly and shut the bedroom door and stood holding the knob with a trembling hand. His gaze returned unsteadily to Montag, who was now seated with the book in his lap.⁶²

The scene can be visualised as primarily seen through Montag's eyes, or through a camera eye that sits alongside Montag. Faber backs away from him, but with his eyes fixed on the book. The objective statement 'the door to a bedroom stood open' can be seen as a cutaway shot, indicating that Montag's attention is drawn to the background, behind Faber. We are then made to imagine a shot where Faber notices where Montag is looking, then turns and shuts the door, the camera lingering on Faber's trembling hand. Then as Faber recomposes himself, we see his own gaze turn towards Montag, triggering a cut to a view of Montag sitting with book in lap. The point, laboured as it is, is that Bradbury's novel text clearly suggests the corresponding cinematic visuals, which includes not just the camera eye (as so often discussed in attempts to compare literature with film), but also the montage of the sequence, and the required performative elements. The cinematic correspondence is present not just in principle, but in detail.

Fahrenheit's expanded satiric treatment of media leads to an important climactic action that actually refers to cameras. The death of the 'false Montag' includes an implied account of how the TV/wallscreen pictures of Montag's pursuit are gathered, and indeed

⁶¹ *The Cutting Edge: the Magic of Movie Editing*, dir. by Wendy Apple (Warner Bros, 2004) [DVD].

⁶² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 77.

manipulated to satisfy the parlour-wall viewers' demand for spectacle: 'The helicopter lights shot down a dozen brilliant pillars that built a cage all about the man [...] The camera rushed down. The Hound leapt up into the air.' The camera (the medium of television itself, we could say) is a physical threat here, as much as the Mechanical Hound is. The Hound's actions are choreographed ' [...] with a rhythm and a sense of timing that was incredibly beautiful [...] It was suspended for a moment in their gaze, as if to give the vast audience time to appreciate everything.' And the camera's actions are co-ordinated with the Hound's, to the point where it is impossible to distinguish one from the other: 'The camera fell upon the victim, even as did the Hound. Both reached him simultaneously.' The scene completes with more of Bradbury's impactful short sentences, again implying the immediacy of a rapidly-cut cinematic sequence: 'Blackout. Silence. Darkness.'⁶³ Along with the implied camera eye, this sequence implies the need for a 'camera ear'.

3.5 Emphasis on Montag's point of view

Much of the cinematic method found in *Fahrenheit 451* relates directly to the adherence to Montag's point of view. At the end of section 2, Montag finds himself on the fire truck heading to his own house. His point of view is strictly maintained – with text which combines what he sees with what he is thinking about – up to and through the single-sentence paragraph 'At last Montag raised his eyes and turned.'⁶⁴ The camera eye of the text holds to Montag's face, then Beatty's, then back to Montag's, as he realises he is at his own house. The text 'withholds' the view of the house (that is to say, the actual house is not explicitly described or even mentioned in this sequence), in favour of showing Montag's reaction. Furthermore, the end of the section might be taken as the equivalent of a 'fade to black', or a lowering of the theatrical curtain; Mildred's emergence from the house, and the explanation of how this situation arose is then held over into the next section, like a cliffhanger.

The visual narration from Montag's point of view is fairly strict, but this doesn't prevent Bradbury from narrating scenes outside of Montag's present, but still with 'narrative pressure'. This is demonstrated when Montag is on the run, and hears a news announcement about his own pursuit, instructing the populace to be on the lookout for

⁶³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 142.

⁶⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 106.

him. The novel then presents what Montag *imagines* is the response of the people, and it is in the form of what we might call a series of shots: 'He felt the city rise [...] He felt the city turn to its thousands of doors [...] 'The people sleepwalking in their hallways [...].'⁶⁵

Although the events here are fantasies as imagined by Montag, the narration still presents them in visual terms, each image as a separate single-sentence paragraph, again resembling a screenwriter's technique. (A similar sequence exists in Francois Truffaut's film based on the novel (see below), where it is presented objectively rather than as an imagined scene.)

One final example of the controlled point of view of the novel is Montag's first approach to the book people's encampment. As with Montag's escape from the old woman's house, the narration details precisely what Montag sees as he moves, as if the camera eye accompanies him. The camp fire that he spots is 'gone, then back again, like a winking eye [...] he approached warily from a long way off [...] he drew very close indeed to it, and then he stood looking at it from cover.' Once again, though, Bradbury interweaves other sensory impressions into the narration. Montag observes that 'It was not burning, it was *warming*', giving the impression that he can feel the heat. The progression through this sequence goes from the intermittent visual of the fire, becomes focused as the camera eye approaches it, then detailed enough for the warming to be noticed, and the smell of the fire to be evident ('even the smell was different'), and finally for the silence to give way to the sound of voices.⁶⁶

4 Truffaut's Film

Despite his many professional credits as a screenwriter, by the mid-1960s Ray Bradbury had still not seen any of his own major creations reach the screen. *Fahrenheit 451* would be the first, and what's more, it would be directed by a major figure in world cinema: François Truffaut. Truffaut had been a leading film critic in France. His seminal *Cahiers du Cinéma* essay on film authorship, 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' (1954) established the concept of the film director as *auteur*, and became one of the foundations of the emerging 'new wave' in French cinema, and the jumping-off point for the 'auteur theory' as popularised in the English-speaking world by Andrew Sarris. As if to enact his own notion of authorship, Truffaut soon began proving himself as a filmmaker. Starting with the semi-

⁶⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 132.

⁶⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 139.

autobiographical *Les Quatres cents coups* (1959), and arguably peaking with *Jules et Jim* (1962), his fresh new style brought him a degree of fame world-wide. As a critic, he had been scathing in his assessment of films made by 'scenarists', filmmakers for whom the script was all, and for whom the role of director was merely that of 'the gentleman who adds the pictures to it'.⁶⁷ Truffaut himself took on the dual roles of scenarist *and* director: he wrote or co-wrote the screenplay for every one of his films. Alongside Truffaut's passion for film was a matching passion for books. This had brought him through a troubled childhood, and prompted his interest in *Fahrenheit 451* - a book about books - despite his prior lack of enthusiasm for the SF genre.⁶⁸

Ray Bradbury had no direct involvement in Truffaut's production, declining an invitation to write the screenplay; according to Jonathan Eller, Bradbury was scarred by the recent failure to film *The Martian Chronicles*, and by his previous failure to adapt *Fahrenheit 451* for the stage for Charles Laughton.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Truffaut's film has multiple significance for this study of Bradbury's work on screen. It was another endorsement of Bradbury's work by a leading filmmaker, following on from John Huston's recruiting of him as screenwriter for *Moby Dick*, and fuelled his growing ambition to work with the best. Truffaut would be added to a list of filmmakers who had already chosen to work with Bradbury: John Huston, Carol Reed, Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas, Alan Pakula and Robert Mulligan.⁷⁰ Further, Truffaut's adaptation would validate the cinematic aspects of Bradbury's novel while also demonstrating the currency of its decade-old McLuhanesque satire. Finally, Bradbury's own reaction to Truffaut's work would drive him to create a stage play of *Fahrenheit 451* and, eventually, a new screenplay for a movie version which remains un-filmed.

⁶⁷ Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency', p. 15.

⁶⁸ Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana, *Truffaut: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 190-1.

Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut, ed. by Anne Gillain (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 169.

⁶⁹ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 242.

⁷⁰ Nine months after Truffaut's first approach to Bradbury, Bradbury wrote that he hoped to work with David Lean, Akira Kurosawa, Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman and Fred Zinneman. The letter was re-worked into an article, later published in Forry Ackerman's *Spacemen* magazine. Bradbury, letter to Senor Jotti, Jan 12 1963. Published as Ray Bradbury, 'The Fahrenheit Chronicles', *Spacemen*, 8 (June 1964), 30-33

4.1 World and characters

One could argue, with Roland Barthes, that any adaptation creates (or adds to) an intertext, and that the intertextual relationship between book and film eliminates the need to consider any filial relationship between the adaptation and the adapted text. By this logic Bradbury, as author, is no longer a controlling voice in the narrative of Truffaut's film, no longer 'privileged and paternal, the locus of genuine truth.'⁷¹ However, it clearly suits the present study to consider where Bradbury's voice shows through, even if only as a 'guest'. For this reason, Kamilla Elliott's pragmatic typology of adaptations is useful, since it allows us to characterise the nature and tone of the intertextual relationship. While Aristeia Chryssohou argues that Truffaut's film is a straightforward transposition of the novel's narrative into a filmic container, the film actually drops significant and substantial components of Bradbury's book.⁷² But this doesn't make it a 'classic cut to fit' (as Fire Chief Beatty mockingly characterises truncated media dramatisations in Bradbury's novel), since Truffaut's film also invents new narrative and thematic strategies of its own. According to Elliott there is a 'perception that something passes between book and film in adaptation.'⁷³ Of her different classes of adaptation, the most appropriate to characterise Truffaut's adaptation of Bradbury is the 'de(re)composing concept', since the intersection of the two texts is not entirely direct and yet some of the essence of the novel finds its way into the body of the film - in this extended metaphor, we are asked to consider film and book buried together, 'decomposing and merging underground'. The adaptation is considered to be a '(de)composite of textual and filmic signs merging in audience consciousness together with other cultural narratives'.

While presenting much of Bradbury's story without change – Truffaut himself estimated that 60% of the film was due directly to Bradbury - Truffaut found a number of critical adjustments necessary in his adaptation, co-written with Jean-Louis Richard.⁷⁴ He makes moderate adjustments to Montag, changing him from Bradbury's emerging potential saviour of civilisation into something akin to a child struggling to come of age. He switches Clarisse from a naïve, questioning teenager acting as catalyst to Montag's transformation,

⁷¹ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Poststructuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josue V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1979), pp. 73-81

⁷² Aristeia Chryssohou, 'Fahrenheit 451: Filming Literary Absence', in *Science Fiction Across Media: Adaptation/Novelization*, ed. by Thomas Van Parys and I. Q. Hunter (Canterbury: Gylphi, 2013), pp. 151-166.

⁷³ Elliott, 'Literary Film Adaptation', pp. 220-43.

⁷⁴ *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 171.

into an adult who is much more a co-conspirator. He changes complacent fireman's wife Mildred into denunciator Linda. He maintains the Fire Captain (who is unnamed in the film) as Montag's tormentor and primary representative of the somewhat obscure governmental system. With these character adjustments, and through casting and costume choices, the film's narrative is imbued with an undercurrent echoing the Second World War, with firemen as occupying Nazis, and book people as the resistance (Truffaut grew up in Nazi-occupied Paris).

In common with the novel, the film points to a loss of literacy linked directly to the rise of visual mass media, but where the film differs from the novel is in its reluctance to bring this civilisation to crisis point. Truffaut's Montag has no potential to return as a saviour of a collapsed civilisation for a simple reason: in the film, it doesn't ever collapse. Instead, at film's end, Montag appears doomed to wander uncommunicatively with his kind.

The world of Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* spans three general settings. The monochrome urban areas are largely grey concrete, populated by firemen in their black SS-like uniforms and black-banded helmets. The greener suburbs consist of modern (1960s) bungalows set amid lawns and pine trees, alternating with older 1930s-style semi-detached houses. The forest, shown only in winter, appears lifeless, or under a blanket of snow. The toy-like fire truck, with its comical echo of the Keystone Kops, presents a bold dash of red, the dominating single colour throughout the film, signifying danger, power, and destructive rage. The combined result of these three settings is a world somehow otherworldly, but with no clearly identifiable geographical or political location.⁷⁵ It looks like England in some respects, but far from consistently so. That urban architecture could easily be Eastern European; the suburbs could be northern Europe; and the area surrounding the monorail could be anywhere. The actual locations used for filming were mostly in England, as it happens: this was Truffaut's first film made outside of his native France.

From a temporal point of view, too, the film is inconsistent - almost contradictory in fact, with its odd combination of new and old: futuristic post boxes sit alongside antique telephones; electric doors alongside vintage fire trucks; jet-packed police alongside tandems and rocking chairs. The absence of a clear sense of period is shared to an extent with Bradbury's novel, which is also set in some unspecified future, but the film's placement of obviously anachronistic elements within an otherwise futuristic setting

⁷⁵ David Robinson, 'Two for the Sci-Fi', *Sight and Sound*, 35 (1966), 57-61

generates a sense of a past lost to memory. Truffaut's intended 'violent ancient-modern contrast' in Montag's house in particular doesn't quite come off, leaving instead a sense of vague inconsistency, what Tom Whalen describes as 'emblems of memory, vestiges of lost things'.⁷⁶ The lack of personal memory is an emerging theme in Bradbury's novel, and this gives his characters a weakening sense of history: they live in some future time where few recall how they got here, or where they came from, presumably a consequence of the loss of literacy. The film plays on this idea, too, both through dialogue and through production design. The notion is a common one in dystopias, which paradoxically both depend upon and deny history.⁷⁷

Truffaut's version of Montag follows a similar overall trajectory as in the novel, as he progresses from duty-bound career fireman dead set against books, to becoming curious about them and latterly devoted to them, eventually undergoing a symbolic death and rebirth as he travels downstream to join the book people. But it is through the accumulation of small details that Montag gradually comes to differ from Bradbury's version of the character.

The casting of Austrian actor Oskar Werner is in one sense a logical choice for a character with a Germanic surname, but results in a Guy Montag whose English is noticeably accented, creating what George Bluestone calls a 'dissonance of voices'.⁷⁸ Dressed in the black jack-booted fireman's uniform, and with blond hair – in accordance with Truffaut & Richard's instruction in the screenplay that 'All of the men are blond' – Werner provides a strong impression of being a Second World War Nazi.⁷⁹ This inevitably creates a resonance with the Nazi book-burnings, one of the most recent historical reference points for book-burning.⁸⁰ Strangely, though, Truffaut attempted to distance himself from this impression, claiming 'I did *not* want an actor with a German accent', and that his instructions to 'play

⁷⁶ François Truffaut, 'Journal de *Fahrenheit 451*, part one', *Cahiers du Cinema*, 176 (March 1966), entry for 1st Feb 1966.

Tom Whalen, 'The Consequences of Passivity: Re-Evaluating Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 35 (2007), 181–91.

⁷⁷ *Dark Horizons*, ed. by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 115.

⁷⁸ George Bluestone, 'Three Seasons with *Fahrenheit 451*', *Sacred Heart University Review*, 6 (1986), 3–17.

⁷⁹ Truffaut & Richard, p. 3. That the firemen should conform to the 'Aryan' stereotype is explicit in two scene directions in Truffaut & Richard's screenplay. The second is late in the script, when we encounter the first true book person: 'He is the first dark-haired man we will encounter in this film.' As filmed, all firemen do indeed appear to be fair-haired (or grey), whereas civilian men and boys have mixed hair colour.

⁸⁰ Nicholas Harrison, 'Readers as Résistants: *Fahrenheit 451*, Censorship, and Identification', *Studies in French Cinema*, 1 (2001), 54–61

Montag gently' were ignored by Werner, who was determined to 'play the man as a Nazi'.⁸¹ The Nazi impression is further supported by the casting of Anton Diffring, an actor familiar for his feature roles as a German officer in British war films of the 1960s. Brief scenes throughout the film - including the very first scene, where a man is given an anonymous tip-off about a raid – reinforce the Second World War analogy by suggesting an organised underground, like the French resistance, an idea that Truffaut encouraged during the writing of the screenplay, although the primary action of the film's 'résistants' ultimately turns out to be withdrawal from the fight.⁸² Finally, if the viewer misses all these cues to a Nazi interpretation of the firemen, the captain obligingly picks up a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* during a key scene where he is lecturing Montag.

Truffaut's Montag is shown to be a teacher as well as a fireman, instructing cadets on searching for illegal books. 'To learn how to find,' he says, 'one must first learn how to hide'. This embeds him firmly in the apparatus of the state, as he must both act on the instructions of the state *and* indoctrinate future generations. His lesson plan foreshadows his own behaviour in stealing and concealing, but it also foreshadows his later escape: in order to find the book people, Montag first has to hide from the authorities. Montag's teaching is undermined by interruptions from the classroom's tannoy system, when first two cadets are called out of class, and then he is himself called out. It soon becomes clear that he is treated almost as a naughty schoolboy.

In developing the theme of Montag as child, Truffaut draws on elements in Bradbury's novel, such as Montag becoming ill as he battles with his subversive urges. The illness, a metaphor for his growing dissatisfaction with his life, coincides in the novel with his loss of Clarisse. Montag is afraid to make the call to Beatty: 'A child feigning illness, afraid to call.'⁸³ Truffaut himself saw this telephone scene in similar terms, although in the film, Montag isn't actually ill (it is Clarisse who pretends he is ill so that she can take him to school with her).⁸⁴ Later, we see Montag pocket a book entitled *Gaspard Hauser*. Hauser was, of course, a mysterious child who turned up without a past – a personified instance of absence of personal history; rather like Montag himself in both the film and in Bradbury's novel. Ironically, Truffaut later reflected that his films were 'accepted by the public' whenever he

⁸¹ Charles Thomas Samuels, *Encountering Directors* (New York: Da Capo, 1987), p. 45.

⁸² Seed, *Bradbury* (University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 114; Robinson, pp. 57–61; Harrison, pp. 54–61.

⁸³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 48.

⁸⁴ Truffaut, 'Journal', p. 21.

focused on a child, or young man or women, but were rejected when he focused on adult men.⁸⁵

When Montag takes up reading, the first book he chooses to read is *David Copperfield*. Chapter one of the book, 'I am born', begins with the line 'Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.' The first person narrative fits perfectly as a self-reflexive metaphor for Montag's intellectual birth, and as Annette Insdorf points out, Montag's reading 'signals how literature is the process of recording and recounting', allowing him to experience recall for the first time.⁸⁶ Bradbury's novel, on the other hand, has Montag begin his reading in a state of confusion, with an ostensibly nonsense passage from *Gulliver's Travels*, which allows Montag's wife to object to the reading on the grounds that 'it makes no sense'. Truffaut makes the everyday act of reading alien and new to Montag by having him haltingly read every part of the book's beginning: title, subtitle, copyright notice, publisher's address, the lot. The same actions connote a savouring of every word, as if Montag cannot know which ones might be full of meaning. Throughout, the camera stands in for Montag's eye, so that the viewer experiences his initial estrangement from the text and experiences his breakthrough most directly.⁸⁷ Logically, of course, he must be *re-learning* how to read (in a similar way that Winston Smith re-learns how to write in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), but the effect is like a child learning for the first time. From this point on Montag is a voracious reader, getting up in the middle of the night to read, and wearing a bathrobe that makes him look 'like a medieval monk', symbolising his devotion to books.⁸⁸ He seems aware not just of his personal joy in reading, but of the importance of cultural memory when he insists to his wife that he has 'got to catch up with my remembrance of things past' (as it appears in the screenplay; in the finished film, the line is delivered as the slightly less Proustian 'remembrance of the past').⁸⁹ This memorable scene is key to the

⁸⁵ Joseph McBride, 'The Private World of *Fahrenheit 451*', in *Critics' Choice*, ed. by Philip Nobile (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 44–52

⁸⁶ Annette Insdorf, *François Truffaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 52.

⁸⁷ Gill Partington, 'Films in Books/Books in Film: *Fahrenheit 451* and the Media Wars' in *Kittler Now: Current Perspectives in Kittler Studies*, ed. by Stephen Sale and Laura Salisbury (London: Wiley, 2015), pp. 154–72 (p. 159).

Laura Carroll, '*Fahrenheit 451*', *Senses of Cinema*, 34 (2005)

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/cteq/fahrenheit_451/> [accessed 16 July 2016].

⁸⁸ François Truffaut and Jean-Louis Richard, *Fahrenheit 451* [unpublished screenplay] (London: Vineyard Films Ltd, 1965), p. 68.

⁸⁹ Truffaut & Richard, p.90.

presentation of Montag's transformational love affair with books rather than with a woman.⁹⁰

Montag's wife gets a change of name in Truffaut's film. The dated and unflattering 'Mildred' becomes the more youthful and vigorous 'Linda' ('pretty').⁹¹ When she first appears, played by British actress Julie Christie, we see her from behind, and then in profile. This is part of Truffaut's intended directorial scheme for differentiating Linda and Clarisse, as he detailed in his journal of the making of *Fahrenheit 451*: 'In this role of Linda, I will generally film her in profile, reserving the full face for the role of Clarisse. Her profile is very beautiful, in the manner of a Cocteau drawing.'⁹² The effect of this choice of camera framing, minimising the interaction between Linda and Montag, is to echo a thought that passes through Montag's mind in Bradbury's novel: 'Well, wasn't there a wall between him and Mildred, when you came down to it?'⁹³ Although this scheme isn't upheld throughout the film, Truffaut does dwell on Linda's profile in several key scenes. For example, when in bed with Montag she puts earphones in, and we see her from the side, as if from Montag's point of view, emphasising her detachment. In these early scenes, the only deviation from profile is to show Linda's contrasting thorough engagement with the interactive drama unfolding on her wallscreen. As in the novel, Linda/Mildred is shown as the perfect consumer of media 'entertainment,' an embodiment of McLuhan's 'ostrich head-in-sand.'⁹⁴ Linda's drug habit (as with Mildred's in the novel) leads her to be occasionally unconscious literally as well as figuratively. These two types of consumption have removed Linda's 'past, memory, consecutiveness [and] coherent self' and make her into an automaton.⁹⁵

Linda can't bear books on any level, referring to them as 'these things', and is even shown reacting in horror when one drops unexpectedly from behind a picture frame, just like the bird unexpectedly dropping down from behind a mirror in Hitchcock's *The Birds*. This

⁹⁰ Robert Murphy, 'Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*: A World Without Books', in *Memory In/of English-Speaking Cinema*, ed. by Melvyn Stokes and Zeenat Saleh (Paris: Michel Houdiard, 2014), pp. 431-43 (p. 435).

⁹¹ Truffaut (journal, 21 June 1966) reported his choice of 'Linda' was inspired by Linda Baud, a woman embroiled in the Jaccoud murder trial of 1960.

⁹² Truffaut, 'Journal', p.26.

⁹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 41.

⁹⁴ McLuhan, *Understanding*, p. 337.

⁹⁵ Whalen, pp. 181-91.

Pedro Blas Gonzalez, 'Fahrenheit 451: A Brave New World for the New Man', *Senses of Cinema*, 55 (2010) <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2010/feature-articles/fahrenheit-451-a-brave-new-world-for-the-new-man-2/>> [accessed 16 July 2016]

represents a slight shift from Bradbury's novel, where Mildred does try to join Montag in reading, before finding it all too confusing.

Truffaut's presentation of Clarisse is very different from Bradbury's. She is here Montag's contemporary and, like him, also teaches professionally. This might theoretically put her in a position of authority in state apparatus, except that her questioning ways get her into trouble with the authorities. While she never finds out precisely what she has done to upset those in power, it is easy to imagine that her constant inquisitiveness puts her at odds with the rote learning methods identified with the school (evidenced in one scene through the endless chanting of the thirteen times table). As a teacher she is also in a position to educate Montag, reinforcing the notion of Montag as developing child. This older Clarisse has some of the questioning and subversion of Bradbury's Clarisse, but with little of the naiveté – and she doesn't unexpectedly disappear. She stays with Montag through most of the film, and actually takes on some of the functions of Bradbury's character Faber (for whom Truffaut finds no use).

As it turns out, Clarisse happens to be facially identical to Montag's wife, thanks to the distracting double casting of Julie Christie in the dual roles of both Clarisse and Linda. This odd creative choice, usually attributed to Truffaut, is actually down to producer Lewis Allen, who was presumably inspired by a single line of dialogue in Truffaut & Richard's script, where Montag says his wife is 'rather like you...except that her hair is long'.⁹⁶ The only other element of the script that might support a similarity between the two women is Clarisse's phone call to the firehouse where she pretends to be Linda, reporting Montag as sick. This scene is never built upon, however, and just contributes further to an unaddressed narrative mystery of the Linda/Clarisse doubling. In symbolic terms, we might interpret the doubling as suggesting why Montag is drawn to both women, or that Clarisse and Linda are two sides of one character⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ Truffaut & Richard, p. 34.

⁹⁷ The casting divides critical opinion. For Peter Nicholls it is 'enigmatic.' For John Baxter, it's 'a muffled double role'. For Don Allen it reduces any contrast between Clarisse and Linda. On the other hand, Philip Strick believes it 'at one stroke reveals and emphasises one of the most important patterns of the Bradbury original'. Most recently, Seed has suggested that 'the two women act out rival voices in the morality play of Montag's consciousness'. Julie Christie, in the DVD commentary, suggests the casting shows two 'genetically similar' characters can live entirely different lives following different sets of values - a bizarre position which presupposes the two women to be genetically linked rather than coincidentally alike.

Peter Nicholls, *Fantastic Cinema: An Illustrated Survey* (London: Ebury Press, 1984), p. 55; John Baxter, *Science Fiction in the Cinema* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1970), p. 202; Don Allen, *Finally*

Clarisse's sacking by the school is for reasons she is unable to articulate, but which are naturally to do with her non-conformism. She reports that she has been seeing an analyst, but there is no direct statement or evidence of why she has been doing this – whether it is voluntary or enforced. This is in distinct contrast to Bradbury's novel, where the 'craziness' that sends her to psychiatric treatment is directly linked with her creative spark: 'I've got to go to see my psychiatrist now. They *make* me go. I made things up to say.'⁹⁸ The creativity of Bradbury's Clarisse contrasts her further with Montag's wife, who is only able to engage in pseudo-creative activity such as her interactive TV dramas. Truffaut's version of Clarisse is impulsive, but not nearly so creative as Bradbury's version. In the film, it is immediately after Clarisse's rejection by the school system that she impulsively challenges Montag: what drove him to become a fireman? In the confined privacy of an elevator he reveals to her that he has begun to read books, and it is at precisely this moment of revelation that Truffaut cuts to an unusual, high angle, a signifier of a shift of perspective: we have reached a turning point; a point of no return for these two characters. Clarisse and Montag now have a shared destiny.

The film also points to a shared destiny for Clarisse and the old woman who dies in fire with her books, and this is done with a curious further doubling. The two are shown together, when Clarisse furtively pursues Montag, and in a later dream sequence Montag imagines Clarisse as the old woman as he replays the book-burning scene in his head.

The last of the major characters in the film is the Captain, who is very similar to Bradbury's version of the character. The major antagonist, he possesses power over Montag not only due to rank, but to his superior knowledge of books and history. He is one of the few characters in the film with a deep understanding of the past, although he is what Gonzalez characterises as an 'anti-philosopher [...] a hater of freedom and possibility'.⁹⁹ While the characterisation in the film is similar to that in the novel, the immediate context in which the Captain operates is altered. He is arguably less powerful without his infallible Mechanical Hound, the 'super-gadget' from Bradbury's novel which Truffaut chose to drop in favour of a human spy, Fabian.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the Captain no longer has to outwit Faber, the pro-book character Truffaut dropped because of how audiences react with

Truffaut (London: Paladin, 1986), p. 119; Philip Strick, *Science Fiction Movies* (London: Octopus Books, 1976), p. 106; Seed, Bradbury, p. 115.

⁹⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Gonzalez.

¹⁰⁰ *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 173.

annoyance to the good guy ('le bon').¹⁰¹ Without these two forces acting for and against him, he is weakened as a character, his weakness most evident in his sometimes poor recall, as when he offers a special medal to a fireman who has already received one.

4.2 Validating Bradbury's cinematic construction

One of Bradbury's frequent claims, as we have seen, is that his prose fiction is inherently cinematic. While the film includes several major scenes of Truffaut's own invention, including the highly regarded sequence showing Montag first attempts to read, it also provides an opportunity to validate Bradbury's claim, since it appears to translate directly a number of 'set pieces' from the novel. I shall consider here three key scenes and the transformations the film applies to them: the house-burning scene in which the old woman dies; the house-party scene where Montag confronts his wife's friends with a book reading; and the burning of Montag's own house.

The dynamics of the sequence in the old woman's house are very similar to the novel: the overall shock of finding someone in the house (which was supposed to have been evacuated); the Captain and his team going upstairs, separating from Montag while books pour down on him; the soaking of the books with kerosene; the firemen preparing to light the flame; the old woman revealing a match; the firemen backing away in fear; the old woman striking the match. (For the sake of clarity, I treat the scene as one, although the film splits it in two, divided by an interlude in the attic where the Captain lectures Montag on the harm of books.)

Where the film sequence differs from the novel is in its connection to earlier narrative events. In the novel, it is a shocking yet isolated incident, midway through the first section of the book. As we saw above, at this point Montag for the first time begins to see books not as 'things' but as text, and it is as if time is suspended:

A book lit, almost obediently, like a white pigeon, in his hands, wings fluttering. In the dim, wavering light, a page hung open and it was like a snowy feather, the words delicately painted thereon. In all the rush and fervour, Montag had

¹⁰¹ *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 171.

only an instant to read a line, but it blazed in his mind for the next minute as if stamped there with fiery steel.¹⁰²

At this same point in the novel, Montag's hands begin to act separately from him, instinctively grabbing the book and holding it to him 'with wild devotion', while his mind is able to rationalise away this emotive instinct. The destruction of the objects, books, is for the first time linked to a destruction of a consciousness, the old woman.

In the film the scene still has a shocking impact on Montag, but its new placement at the approximate mid-point of the narrative now acts to *confirm* Montag's feeling that books are important: he is already reading books and dressing in his monkish habit by now. Further, the scene is no longer an isolated book-burning, but linked to earlier events in that the old woman is known to the viewer prior to this scene (but not to Montag, as he didn't see her in the earlier scene) – and it narratively links to later events, in Montag's nightmare where he sees Clarisse taking the place of the old woman in the pyre. Although Truffaut's construction of the scene itself is very similar to Bradbury's, then, the purpose of the scene is somewhat different, possessing an arguably stronger narrative function in the film.

The narrative positioning of the scene in relation to others also affords Truffaut the opportunity to embellish the role of the old woman as a character, rather than just through her symbolic martyrdom. Truffaut & Richard's screenplay makes it explicit that the old woman recognises Montag from before, and because of this recognition she follows him closely with her eyes, unlike Bradbury's old woman whose primary concern is tending to her treasured books.¹⁰³ When she notices him read some text (an action which goes *un-*noticed in the novel), she therefore takes advantage of the brief time alone with him to speak to him as if he is a sympathiser. This begins to reveal her motives, explaining why she and Clarisse had followed him earlier, and even opens up the possibility that the firemen's presence at this house call might have been a trap. None of this at all undermines the structure of the scene itself, which retains strong points of contact with Bradbury's construction of it, but it does provide a stronger narrative enmeshing of the scene and the characters than in the novel.

In this scene, as throughout the film, Truffaut follows his own path in choosing the quotations that Montag (and the audience) will be exposed to. In the novel, the fragment of

¹⁰² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 34.

¹⁰³ Truffaut & Richard, pp. 72-4; pp. 78-81.

text which 'blazed in his mind [...] as if stamped there with fiery steel' is 'Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine', from Smith's 'Dreamthorp', discussed above. Truffaut does something different, choosing to have Montag puzzled over a line about a woodcutter which he never gets to finish reading. This is the one of many instances, spread throughout the film, of a narrative thought initiated but never completed, thus reinforcing the sense of frustration felt by characters suffering the consequences of the loss of literacy. (The woodcutter line is the beginning of *Pinocchio*, the story of a manufactured puppet who desires to become a fully human child, a playful echo of Montag's desire for self-actualisation.)

As well as adopting Bradbury's scenic structure, Truffaut also takes considerable inspiration from Bradbury's presentation of the scene. The old woman's recitation of the speech of Hugh Latimer, burned as a heretic in 1555 ('Play the man, Master Ridley [...]'), is taken directly from Bradbury's novel. Here, as in the novel, it is the first poetic speech that Montag witnesses, but it is given additional depth by the way it stands out from the banality and incompleteness of much of the dialogue heard in the film up to this point: it is the first overt quotation heard in the film, and incidentally the only quotation Truffaut chooses to borrow from Bradbury's novel. Again, Truffaut takes the opportunity to weave the old woman's speech into the fabric of the film, as she mocks the firemen by chanting a multiplication table, an echo of the rote learning heard in the school scene.

As the flames begin to overcome the old woman, she dizzily descends into them. The screenplay simply describes this as 'woman swaying behind the flames'.¹⁰⁴ Truffaut's direction of the scene, however, seems largely inspired by Bradbury's initial presentation of the old woman, long before the fire is set: 'She was only standing, weaving from side to side, her eyes fixed upon nothingness in the wall.'¹⁰⁵

A major difference with the scene as filmed is its ending. Bradbury's novel ends the scene with the match being lit: the twist of the old woman lighting a match before the fireman can do so is itself sufficiently dramatic that Bradbury stops the scene at that point, then breaks to a short time later as the firemen reflect on what just happened. The inevitable explosion of flame is not described, but is left to the reader to imagine. Truffaut, though, provides the cinematic spectacle of the interior of the house going up in flames, in

¹⁰⁴ Truffaut & Richard, p. 81.

¹⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 33.

prolonged shots which also afford the opportunity to see details of various books – texts this time - being consumed by fire.

While the house-burning in the novel occurs at night, allowing Montag to observe inwardly that all of the house-burnings occur at night ('More spectacle, a better show?'¹⁰⁶), Truffaut's staging of the scene is in the daytime. This was not always Truffaut's intent, however. The Truffaut & Richard screenplay specifies night shooting, and calls for 'luminous belts, similar to those worn by the German policemen directing traffic' to make the firemen visible (yet another German reference, and yet another contribution to the sense of Nazi occupation, although this element of costuming turned out not to be used in the film).¹⁰⁷ The screenplay also includes a scene of the firemen reflecting on the house-burning, very similar to the one in the novel (and including an explanation of 'Play the man [...]'), but this didn't make it into finished film.¹⁰⁸

A second key sequence showing Truffaut's validation of Bradbury's cinematic scene construction is Montag's reading at the women's house party, where Montag aggressively determines to make the women confront the emotional truths in his book. As Bradbury presents it in the novel, the pace of the scene is modulated through rapid description of the ever-changing parlour-wall show that engulfs the room; through the inane banter of the women; and through interjections of Montag's conscious thoughts, Mildred's attempts to play down Montag's behaviour, and Faber's conscience-like objections to Montag's self-endangering actions. There is a visual orchestration: of the colourful, loud and busy wallscreen entertainment; of the three women as they turn to glare at Montag with 'unconcealed irritation'; and of Montag who goes from observing from the parlour door to entering the room and shutting off the power to the wallscreen.¹⁰⁹ There is, too, a temporal orchestration, as the women's empty chatter about children and politicians builds quick-fire to be punctuated by Montag's challenging interruptions. The switched-off wallscreens show as 'empty mud-coloured walls', then appear to Montag as 'pale brows of sleeping giants', and finally after he is done with reading, they provide 'winter weather [...] the colour of dirty snow'. The women, as they fidget listening to Montag's reading, sit 'across the desert' from him.¹¹⁰ Bradbury's version of the scene is a combination of

¹⁰⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ Truffaut & Richard, p. 81.

¹⁰⁸ Truffaut, 'Journal', 3rd Feb 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 90.

¹¹⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 91-8.

theatrical dialogue and staging, shifting cinematic focus, and metaphorical mood indicators.

As with the old woman sequence, the positioning of the house-party scene within the overall narrative serves slightly different purposes in the film compared to the novel. In the novel, it represents the peak of Montag's confidence in literature, and illustrates how far he has come since the old woman triggered his interest in reading. In the film, however, it follows immediately on from the old woman scene, so that Montag's anger here seems like a direct reaction to the horror he has just witnessed, and the women's meaningless chatter is therefore rendered even more trivial than in the novel. Truffaut leads into the scene in a different way, too, not with Montag as a bystander who gradually gets drawn into argument with the women, but as a subdued figure who would prefer to be alone. Linda eventually permits him to sit on his own in the bedroom, but tells him it is 'very naughty', like a mother rebuking a child. What triggers Montag's intervention here is the false news reporting on the TV, trivialising the events he has just witnessed with his own eyes.

Truffaut's staging of the confrontation with the women directly echoes Bradbury's presentation of the scene, with a continuous tracking shot holding Montag in close-up as he storms out of the bedroom, swinging round to a theatrically-framed wide shot as Montag switches off the TV and wanders around the room confronting each woman in turn. Visually, then, the camera direction matches the narrational focus of the scene in the novel, and the staging captures the theatricality of the novel's staging. The dialogue is not identical to the novel, but it clearly picks up on many of the dialogue threads from the novel, such as the discussion of war and the gossipy trivia about the TV personalities the women have been watching. The film weaves in Truffaut's strategy of incomplete or evasive language, as the women are markedly reluctant to use the word 'war' ('Why do you call it that?' asks one of the women; 'the point about...wars is... if you want to call them that' says another; 'I never knew anyone who got killed in a - ' says the third).

In staging Montag's reading, Truffaut is able to take advantage of film's ability to show one thing visually while saying something else aurally. Just before the reading begins, the camera, shot by shot, moves closer in on the women so that we see them in close-up for the first time. As he reads, we see their reactions in the moment, whereas Bradbury presents the full text of the reading with just a single 'cutaway' to the women fidgeting in their chairs. The novel's Faber – the off-screen character who guides Montag through a

hidden earpiece – is completely eliminated from Truffaut's film (discussed below), and this scene is probably the better for it, since it would add a layer of complication to the staging, camera shots and audio track. The other omission from the film version of the scene is the prolonged influence of the wall-screen TV on the visual mood of the scene, partly necessitated by the TV being physically less dominant.

Again, to support the overall weave of the film's narrative, Truffaut provides a completely different text for Montag to read. Gone is Arnold's 'Dover Beach', and in its place is another passage from *David Copperfield*, a continuation of the same text Montag is shown reading earlier in the film, reinforcing Montag's development as a reader and also paralleling Montag's and Copperfield's character development. The passage concerns Dora, David's first wife. Dora is a character who David allows to behave as a spoiled child, much as Linda behaves as one in the Montag household¹¹¹. One of Linda's friends, Doris, is deeply upset by the passage, and says she cannot bear the feelings. There is a distinct echo of how Bradbury's characters respond to the reading, but whereas in the novel the reactions are tinged with anger, the film gives a distinct tie-in to the film's concern with the loss of memory that accompanies the loss of literacy, as Doris pointedly responds 'I'd forgotten all those things'. The film scene ends with Montag becoming dizzy, as the combined effect of watching the old woman burn and watching the women break down in tears finally gets the better of him.

The third example of a scene which validates Bradbury's cinematic construction is Montag's own house-burning. Leading into the scene in the novel, Bradbury once again takes Montag's visual point of view as he starts to approach the house: Montag sits 'on the cold fender [...] moving his head half an inch to the left, half an inch to the right, left, right, left, right, left...' ¹¹² The scene narration provides Montag's subjective impressions, such as 'a crash like the falling of parts of a dream fashioned out of warped glass' and 'the earthquake was still shaking and falling and shivering inside him and he stood there, his knees half-bent under the great load of tiredness and bewilderment and outrage'. ¹¹³ These impressions are interlaced with Faber's questioning through Montag's earpiece, and with Beatty's running philosophical monologue on the nature of fire.

¹¹¹ The choice of text was evidently a late decision, since the screenplay notes simply that 'it's something sad, a girl on the verge of dying (probably an excerpt from David Copperfield)'. Truffaut & Richard, p. 89.

¹¹² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 108.

¹¹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 108; p. 112.

The film deals with this preamble much more swiftly, with camera shots favouring Montag's point of view as the fire truck edges closer to his own home and a simple montage which cuts from Montag's face, to what he sees (his house), and back to his reacting face. One very brief shot of Montag actually incorporates the 'left, right' head motion of Bradbury's description of the scene. The forward motion of this sequence is punctuated by Montag's very brief collision and confrontation with Linda on the doorstep, before she staggers off on her own, suitcase in hand – all of which is sufficient to convey the idea that Linda has informed on him and is now leaving him, so that the dialogue (Montag's 'This is my house'; Linda's 'I couldn't bear it any more') is actually redundant.

In the novel, once Montag is instructed to burn the books, he does so. He turns his flamethrower on the beds, and then the dining room, in that order. He needs reminding of the books, so returns to burn more of them, before torching the despised parlour walls. Truffaut's presentation of the sequence uses the very same visual elements, but puts them into a different sequence so that the effect is to see Montag enraged primarily by his failed marriage – the bed goes up in flames first – and secondarily by the TV. It still takes a reminder from the Captain for Montag to eventually turn the flames on the books. It should be noted that the ordering of these actions is scripted as such, and was not a post hoc editing decision.¹¹⁴ The effect is to emphasise that Montag is acting out of personal rage, but 'steady and remorseless' rather than 'spontaneous or trancelike'; this version of the scene has little to do with Montag carrying out his duties.¹¹⁵ The sequence ends with a further montage of burning books, but this time the books are arguably more significant than any we have seen up to this point: this is protagonist Montag's personal library. The screenplay is more specific than before in identifying which books should be shown: Conrad's *Typhoon*, Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, Borges' *Labyrinths*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Audubert's *Marie Dubois*, Kafka's *The Trial*, Genet's *The Blacks*. Montag has evidently advanced as a reader, and is now associated with morally challenging, rebellious and subversive literature. This burning also shows details of textual passages as they burn; the transformation in Montag's mind from books as 'things' to books as texts that speak is complete. Meanwhile, Truffaut uses the audio track to lay over Beatty's voice, as he lectures on the nature of fire. Whereas Bradbury is 'forced' by the sequential nature of text to present Beatty's voice interlaced with the narration of the scene, Truffaut takes advantage of the opportunity to present the two streams of thought in parallel.

¹¹⁴ Truffaut & Richard, pp. 114-5.

¹¹⁵ T.J. Ross, 'Wild Lives', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 1 (1973), 218–24 (p. 221).

In the confrontation with Beatty which leads to his death, Bradbury's novel text uses a cinematic montage effect. A fast sequence of 'shots': the safety catch, Beatty's glance and reaction, Montag spotting the reaction, Montag's glance at his own hand. But as we saw with Montag's first glimpse of text ('Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine'), Bradbury suspends time by drawing us out of current events and into Montag's thoughts – and in this instance we and Montag are taken completely out of current time to some future: 'Thinking back later he could never decide whether the hands or Beatty's reaction to the hands gave him the final push toward murder'.¹¹⁶

Once again, Truffaut validates Bradbury's cinematic conception of this sequence, but only to the extent that it can remain in the moment. Truffaut chooses a rapid series of close-ups, of faces, hands on triggers, erupting flame and reacting faces to convey the action, but without the intellectualising step out of 'story-time'. Instead, though, he generates a suspense effect by holding the facial reaction shots slightly longer than the other shots. The suspense, in other words, emerges not just from the sequencing of shots, but from the precise timing of them.

4.3 Eliminating text

Truffaut's film takes the premise of Bradbury's novel, and pushes it to extremes by eliminating not just books but text itself. If we invoke McLuhan's tetrad – a debating tool which considers four key aspects of any change in the media landscape (what the change enhances; what it renders obsolete; what it retrieves; what it 'reverses into' when taken to extremes) – we can see that it is primarily in the 'reverses into' step where Truffaut differs with Bradbury. For Truffaut, the banning of books when pushed to extremes 'reverses into' a complete loss of literacy, the chief symptom of which throughout the film is the inability to communicate, leading to inwardness and narcissism. The absolute extreme is reached at the end of the film, where the book people are reduced to what McLuhan refers to as a 'ditto device', mechanically reproducing the texts they have learned.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 113.

¹¹⁷ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2001), pp. 49-50.

The film's approach to books is to make them tangible, fulfilling Truffaut's declaration that he and his film look on books as physical objects to be cherished¹¹⁸. The ability of the camera to show books as physical objects possessing mass, shape and form (books are often shown falling, pages are often shown turning, touched by hands and licked by flames) gives more variety to their presentation than Bradbury seeks to achieve. Diana Holmes and Robert Ingram go so far as to refer to Truffaut's 'reverential treatment of the book as object', pointing out that the film shows great detail in how books are 'hidden, sought, discovered, treated with scandalous irreverence, [...] died for'.¹¹⁹ In contrast, on the rare occasions where Bradbury refers to books by any physical property, it tends to still be quite ethereal, with the books floating in air.¹²⁰ As the film develops, there is a general progression from books in bulk to books as characters, following Montag's changing perspective.¹²¹ The selection of books is different to Bradbury's, leading to much speculation on the respective 'canons' of Bradbury's and Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* – and future adaptations (discussed below) lead to even more 'canons', to the point where choosing which books to burn becomes something of a game for adapters to play.¹²² Truffaut claims that the chosen books do not represent a 'preferential catalogue', but that he tries to provoke emotion through recognition.¹²³ Bluestone found the selection to be random.¹²⁴ Carroll, though, finds an eclecticism that shows true reading to be omnivorous.¹²⁵ Partington finds a gleeful attempt to dismantle the 'literary hierarchies' beloved of Bradbury's book people, with a substitution of a more chaotic mixture of high and low culture.¹²⁶ Other critics have gone even further in a quest to decipher the hidden meaning in Truffaut's canon.¹²⁷

The film's spoken (rather than written) credits provide an unexpected break with convention which immediately introduces the first clue that the film's world will be empty

¹¹⁸ *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 172

¹¹⁹ Diana Holmes and Robert Ingram, *Francois Truffaut* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 168.

¹²⁰ Partington, p.161

¹²¹ Seed, *Bradbury*, p. 117.

¹²² Phil Nichols, "'Classics Cut to Fit'? *Fahrenheit 451* and its Appeal in Other Media', in *Critical Insights: Fahrenheit 451*, ed. by Rafeeq O. McGivern (Amenia, NY: Salem, 2013), pp. 92-106.

¹²³ *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 172

¹²⁴ Bluestone, 'Three Seasons', p. 12.

¹²⁵ Carroll.

¹²⁶ Partington, p. 170.

¹²⁷ Jaime Campomar, 'The Use of a Burning Canon: The Mechanics of Book Burning in Ray Bradbury and François Truffaut', *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, 5 (2016), 33-44.

Marie-Pierre Jaouan-Sanchez, 'The Election and Presentation of Books in *Fahrenheit 451*', *The New Ray Bradbury Review*, 5 (2016), 45-58.

of written texts. In Bradbury's novel it is clear that lawful *non*-book texts abound: Montag's wife reads from a script for her interactive TV play ('She paused and ran her finger under a line in the script'); a fireman reads a written message on a 'telephone alarm card'.¹²⁸ By bringing about 'the end of typography', Truffaut is able to further elevate the significance of oral and visual culture, but is also able to suggest an even greater discontinuity from the past, as his characters are cut off from recorded history.¹²⁹

As the film progresses, the full extent of Truffaut's text-free world becomes apparent. Filing cabinets labelled only with numbers, not words, and containing only photographs, including photos of the backs of people's heads; files with visual symbols stamped on them to indicate suspects captured or still on the loose; suspects labelled by number rather than name, an echo of numbers used to identify people in dystopian fiction such as Zamiatin's *We* (1921) and Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (1938); no street names (Montag lives in 'block 813'). The effect of withholding text from the viewer is to make the rare glimpse of text in the forbidden books into a 'privileged moment', which then causes us to 'race against the flames and compulsively read the words'.¹³⁰

In the novel, Clarisse's unexpected disappearance leads to a demonstration of the fragility of memory seemingly afflicting Montag and his wife. Mildred struggles to explain the disappearance: 'I meant to tell you. Forgot. Forgot [...] Four days ago. I'm not sure. But I think she's dead. The family moved out anyway. I don't know. But I think she's dead.' The struggle to remember is a recurring background theme in the novel, and is built upon in the film. Truffaut links the inability to recall with an even greater struggle to articulate, reason, and communicate, and it is this which the film relies on to show the consequences of the loss of literacy. This is demonstrated in an extended scene in the school corridor. Clarisse has just been sacked. She doesn't know exactly why this happened to her – or perhaps she is unable to recall the reason, or articulate the reason; or perhaps those who sacked her are unable to articulate *their* reasoning to her. She is bewildered by a child running away from her and Montag, seemingly an instance of minor paranoia, suggesting that even young children have come to expect trouble from those in authority. Assuming it is Montag's uniform that scares the child, Clarisse tells Montag to hide. But a second child appears, and also runs away, demonstrating that what scares them is Clarisse. There is no explicit

¹²⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 18; p. 33.

¹²⁹ Denis Hollier and Alyson Waters, 'The Death of Paper: A Radio Play', *October*, 78 (1996), 3–20.

¹³⁰ Insdorf, p. 50; Carroll.

account of what is so upsetting about her, merely hints that she is a disturbing or sinister force, and at the possibility that this might be the true reason for her sacking.

A further instance of failed communication is shown when Montag finds his wife unconscious. He phones the hospital for assistance, and is given the reply 'hospital listening', then 'poison section listening'; the state system does not engage in dialogue with the populace, it simply 'listens'. Lest we think this is merely a comment on totalitarianism, however, we are in the same scene shown Montag's own inability to cope with dialogue. He has to run from one phone to another to another to be able to piece together the information he wishes to get across. There is plenty of communication technology here, but precious little communicating. In the monorail scene, we see the consequence of such inability to communicate: instead of conversation with others, passengers are turned inward, engaging in narcissistic self-touching. Even in the Montags' home, Mildred is shown self-touching. The idea of a descent into narcissism seems to have developed late in the making of *Fahrenheit 451*. The screenplay calls for background chatter for these scenes, some of which is quite intriguing in suggesting that the inhabitants of Montag's world have an active and shared fantasy life in contrast to their docile real lives. For example, in the following exchange between two background characters:

'Did *you* get that dream as well, the same one?'

'Yes!'

'About the paratroopers?'

'Yes!'¹³¹

Close examination of the finished film reveals that some of the actors in the background are actually talking, but any diegetic sound has been replaced with Bernard Herrman's melancholy musical score. Any impression of conversation has been thoroughly eliminated during post-production.

When Truffaut's Montag observes an informant deliberating over whether to denounce someone, he describes the man's behaviour as 'like a man circling a woman'. This line is a jolting reminder that *Fahrenheit* is one of the few Truffaut films to avoid dealing with intimate relationships between men and women. We see some manhandling of suspects, a

¹³¹ Truffaut & Richard, p. 7-8.

martial arts lesson played out on the wallscreen, the fire chief apparently beating two cadets, Linda judo-throwing Montag onto the bed, and a bizarre Masonic handshake between the Fire Chief and Fabian: nearly all of this physical contact is combative, and there is no affectionate touching whatsoever, other than the recurring motif of narcissistic *self*-touching.

One particular manifestation of the failure of communication is the film characters' inability to form coherent thoughts or make complete utterances. The Captain repeatedly berates his cadets, and it is apparent that he is incapable of expressing what his issue is with them. In one scene, we and Montag can only see the action through frosted glass, with muffled sound, serving to obfuscate matters further. When Beatty talks to Montag about the cadets, he does so in an elliptical manner. The closest he can get to solving whatever unstated issue exists is to suggest that Montag, their teacher, should put more sport on the curriculum. The conversation they have here is actually taken almost word-for-word from Bradbury's novel, although Bradbury uses the dialogue in a vastly different context (during Beatty's 'lecture' to Montag on how the book-burning world came into existence). The overall impression is that the chief's ability to recall and to articulate his thoughts has become corrupted, although he has no such problems when he lectures Montag on the evils of books. Indeed, his recall and his coherence is thoroughly restored when he is able to relish his inspection of the old woman's library.

It is evident that explanations or recollections actually go uncompleted for nearly all characters, not just the Captain, and this scheme is maintained throughout, suggesting that memory and recall are not functioning in this illiterate society. An early example is where Montag tells Clarisse that he saw her watching him at the monorail. Clarisse says that reminds her of something: a girl who waited for a soldier outside a barracks. But she is unable to retrieve the memory further, and her explanation leads nowhere. What she is recalling sounds very much like the story of 'Lili Marleen'. Being unable to recall it, she cannot even determine whether it is a memory, an idea, or a fiction.

In both Bradbury's text and Truffaut's film, a key scene in the relationship between Montag and his wife is where Montag asks her when they first met. Neither one of them can remember. Once again, this sad failure of memory is shown as a symptom of the book- or text-free world, and so even intimates are strangers to each other in the world of *Fahrenheit*, echoing Montag's thought in the novel that 'There are too many of us [...]

nobody knows anyone'.¹³² The critical difference between the Bradbury and Truffaut versions of the story, though, is that Bradbury resolves this particular failure of memory, while Truffaut prefers to leave it incomplete. The leader of the book people says in Bradbury's novel 'all of us have photographic memories, but spend a lifetime learning how to block off the things that are really *in* there'.¹³³ The implication is that the problem of memory is not storage, it's recall. In the novel, the resolution (he and Mildred met in Chicago) comes suddenly and unbidden to Montag just as the city self-destructs in an atomic war; Montag's repressed memories are only released when society's problems are put paid to.

As Truffaut's film moves into its final phase with the introduction of the book people, so the consequences of the illiterate society begin to focus. Only the written word can convey emotional depth, while the spoken word is 'doomed to skim the surfaces'.¹³⁴ The book people, many of them novice readers like Montag, will struggle to articulate the texts as they learn them. Inherently poor memory will cause them to struggle with the memorisation process. The education system built on rote learning – all those thirteen-times tables – equips them only for mechanical and shallow chanting of the texts they are struggling to commit to memory. The original French-language script for *Fahrenheit 451* called the book people *hommes livres*, punning this with *hommes libres* (free men), a designation tinged with irony as, the more we see these book people, the more they seem trapped within themselves.¹³⁵ Far from setting them free, the rote learning of a text seems to render them even less capable of interacting with others. As Bluestone observes, they are without the 'spontaneity of invention' of a storyteller, and they 'talk at, not to, each other';¹³⁶ or, as Strick has it, they 'mutter[ing] to themselves like madmen'.¹³⁷ The book people are described in the film's dialogue as 'tramps, outwardly, but inwardly libraries'. This characterisation is inaccurate, in that it overlooks the fact that each book person is learning a single book – we meet *Alice in Wonderland*, *Plato's Republic*, *Wuthering Heights*, Byron's *The Corsair*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Jewish Question*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Pickwick Papers*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and *Pride and Prejudice* – a departure from Bradbury's novel where each book person is identified with a single

¹³² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 14.

¹³³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 145.

¹³⁴ Insdorf, p. 49.

¹³⁵ The English version of the script (and the completed film) replaces the untranslatable pun with Montag mishearing 'book people' as 'good people'.

¹³⁶ George Bluestone, 'The Fire and the Future', *Film Quarterly*, 20 (1967), 3–10.

¹³⁷ Strick, p. 106.

author, embodying the storyteller; the ability to perform a repertoire of works is what matters.¹³⁸ For Truffaut, though, each book person embodies a text; the ability to accurately preserve the sense and meaning is what matters.

For many critics, though, the evidence of the film is that sense and meaning are *not* preserved. John Brosnan observes that 'the books may be preserved in this manner, but literature as a living art form is dead.'¹³⁹ Phil Hardy finds that the book people are 'as brainwashed in their commitment to what they don't understand as their book-burning persecutors.'¹⁴⁰ For Allen, the book people's commune offers 'safety in numbers' but is far from 'life-enhancing or fulfilling'.¹⁴¹ For Insdorf, the book people are as self-absorbed as the narcissistic monorail passengers.¹⁴² Seed implies that the medium of film itself puts Truffaut at a disadvantage compared to Bradbury, since in the novel Bradbury is able to represent 'oral delivery' through simple 'typographical conventions' which do not need to indicate how lines are delivered; Truffaut, though, has no choice but to show the performative element in relation to those lines.¹⁴³ His lack of proficiency in English – Truffaut struggled to learn the language throughout his adult life – ultimately brings a lack of subtlety to those performances.¹⁴⁴

Study of Truffaut & Richard's screenplay shows that the overwhelmingly common interpretation of the final shots of the film is not what was intended. The script actually calls for something much more harmonious: 'a sort of oral chorus, a multi-lingual litany' and voices that 'blend together, welling up into a sound that evokes pure music'.¹⁴⁵ In light of this, it is clear that Truffaut either had a change of heart about the ending, or he didn't direct the performances consistently with his own script. Regardless of the intent, the effect of the final shots is clear. The change from books-as-print to books-as-people amounts to a change of medium, and according to McLuhan a change of medium brings about certain gains and losses. Truffaut has pushed the ban on books to its extreme, and

¹³⁸ Mark Bould, 'Burning Too: Consuming *Fahrenheit 451*', in *Literature and the Visual Media*, ed. by David Seed, *Essays and Studies*, 58 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005) pp. 96-122. Note, though, that Bradbury's earlier versions – 'Long After Midnight' and 'The Fireman' – do not adhere to the scheme of equating book person with a single author, and nor do Bradbury's later stage and screen versions.

¹³⁹ John Brosnan, *Future Tense: The Cinema of Science Fiction* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1978), p. 164.

¹⁴⁰ *The Aurum Film Encyclopedia Vol. 2: Science Fiction*, ed. by Phil Hardy (London: Aurum, 1984), p. 251-2.

¹⁴¹ Allen, p. 9.

¹⁴² Insdorf, p. 55.

¹⁴³ Seed, *Bradbury*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁴ Samuels, p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ Truffaut & Richard, p. 169.

what it reverses into is: book people as ‘mechanical’, as ‘tape cassette[s]’;¹⁴⁶ or, in McLuhan’s terms, book people as ‘ditto device.’

4.4 Critique of television

The film’s opening montage, showing a series of rapid zooms picking out individual TV aerials amid a crowd of others, prepares us for a story where, per McLuhan, television ‘permeates nearly every home in the country, extending the central nervous system of every viewer.’¹⁴⁷ The TV aerials were originally conceived as the stuff of nightmares, since they were scripted to be part of Montag’s bad dream, and only in editing moved to become the background for the film’s title sequence. Even in this new context, though, they retain a sense of threat. For both Truffaut and Bradbury, television is a “disaster’ for a literate, specialist culture’ just as McLuhan identifies.¹⁴⁸ In both novel and film, the ever-present television stands in for family, providing what Ross calls ‘a steady drug against loneliness’, and drawing Linda/Mildred and her friends into what McLuhan calls ‘total involvement of an all-inclusive nowness’.¹⁴⁹ This ‘nowness’ (both the novel and the film date from a time before home video recording) can barely even be ignored by Montag, who feels drawn to watch live coverage of his own pursuit on neighbourhood TV sets even as he seeks to escape the city. But Truffaut and Bradbury take very different approaches to showing television as ‘disaster’, with Truffaut adopting a stance close to McLuhan’s mid-1960s view of television as a small-scale medium demanding engagement, and Bradbury satirising the medium through exaggeration of scale.

For Bradbury, television completely takes over the American living room. Three ‘parlour walls’ are not enough for Mildred; she must have a fourth in order to keep up with her friends. Truffaut chooses not to replicate this aspect of the satire, although movie technology of the time would have allowed various options for him to do this. Instead, he opts to strike a balance between using something that looks and behaves like a

¹⁴⁶ Bluestone, ‘Three Seasons’, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Eric Norden, ‘The *Playboy* Interview: Marshall McLuhan’, *Playboy*, March 1969, 53-74.

¹⁴⁸ McLuhan, *Understanding*, pp. 365-6.

¹⁴⁹ Ross, pp. 218–24.

McLuhan, *Understanding*, p. 366.

Both novel and film were made when television was still largely ‘live’, and certainly before home video brought control into the hands of the viewer.

conventional TV set, and something that still dominates the Montags' living space but without 'crowding out' the 'domestic or psychological space'.¹⁵⁰ The Truffaut & Richard screenplay calls for their TV to be 'bigger than the ones we know: about four feet wide [...] in format 1x1.75 or 1x1.66', and in scene directions frequently refers to this as a 'magnavision'.¹⁵¹ For Gerald Peary, however, this is a 'shrunk down' and 'anaemic' choice.¹⁵² In addition to the main screen, Truffaut populates his world with an array of smaller TV sets (Linda refers to the one in the kitchen as 'the little family'), so that television is a constant presence in the domestic environment and beyond (Granger's portable TV in the forest). TV cabinets even become hiding places for books, and when Montag reads for the first time, he uses the TV as a reading light - two McLuhanesque visual puns: the books inside the TV echo McLuhan's assertion that old media form the content of new media; using the TV as a light relates to McLuhan's characterisation of TV as a 'light-through' medium that projects its image outwards.¹⁵³

Regardless of the difference in scale of the Montags' TV, both Bradbury and Truffaut mock the content of TV through their depictions of Mildred's/Linda's interaction with trivial soap operas. In Bradbury's novel, the whole interaction is completely scripted, and Mildred plays a fictional minor character. When a figure on-screen asks her 'What do you think of the whole idea, Helen?' she must give the vacuous reply 'I think that's fine'. The drama is trivial, the adoption of the 'Helen' role is escapist, and the interaction requires no intellect. In Truffaut's film, on the other hand, Linda can't learn a script - because text is forbidden. Therefore she must improvise, effectively playing herself, rather than a fictional character. 'They ask me a question and I have to say *what I think*' [emphasis added], Linda says. On the face of it, this is more intellectually demanding, but of course Linda struggles to actually improvise a response. And yet, when the TV characters tell her she is 'absolutely fantastic', Linda is, as specified in the screenplay 'exultant, overjoyed and terribly excited'.¹⁵⁴ Our own engagement with this sequence is quite paradoxical, as we become acutely conscience of the act of viewing.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Seed, *Bradbury*, p. 113-4.

¹⁵¹ Truffaut & Richard, p. 9.

¹⁵² Gerald Peary, 'Fahrenheit 451: From Novel to Film', in *Omni's Screen Flights/Screen Fantasies: The Future According to Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Danny Peary (Garden City, NY: Columbus, 1984), pp. 127-132.

¹⁵³ McLuhan, *Understanding*, p. 333; p. 341.

¹⁵⁴ Truffaut & Richard, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ Seed, *Bradbury*, p. 114-5.

The slight differences in the level of engagement with the interactive drama in the novel and film are trivial compared to the difference in the overall sensory impact of the TV. Bradbury's highly immersive parlour walls reflect a fear of what this new (in 1953) medium might become. One of Montag's first experiences is of the sound and the physical power of the TV: 'Music bombarded him [...] his bones were almost shaken from their tendons [...] he was a victim of concussion'; and 'You drowned in music and pure cacophony'.¹⁵⁶ Later, as Montag idly watches the women gathering for their house-party, he is both an observer of the parlour walls, but also outside of them, looking in from the periphery. What he witnesses is all-engulfing, an experience for the eyes, the ears, and the whole body: 'Abruptly the room took off [...] it plunged [...] immense incoming tides of laughter [...] the room whipped out of town [...]'.¹⁵⁷ This extension of television clearly owes much to the large-screen spectacle of cinema which, is typically enjoyed in 'psychological solitude'¹⁵⁸ – and which Bradbury would seek to employ in his 1961 for-Cinerama screenplay adaptation of *The Martian Chronicles*.

In contrast to Bradbury's dominating 'parlour walls', Truffaut's film shows TV as far from immersive. While very large by the standards of the 1960s, the Montags' main TV is far smaller than the room it occupies. Its programme content is not the rollercoaster-ride material of Bradbury's novel, but consists of so much 'talking-head' material. Apart from interactive drama, what we see on the screen is news, propaganda and instructional material, as television takes on an insidious role.¹⁵⁹ Truffaut's TV is what McLuhan characterises as a 'cool' medium, one with such a 'low definition' engagement of the senses that there is still something for the mind of the viewer to do. For McLuhan, the cool medium of TV 'demands social completion and dialogue'.¹⁶⁰ Linda's interaction with the drama is, for her, a form of social interaction (albeit a false and empty one) – and it does after all require some level of quick wittedness, but of a much lower level than required for reading a book, which is the coldest of all media for McLuhan.

¹⁵⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁸ McLuhan, *Understanding*, p. 318.

¹⁵⁹ Allen, p. 121-2.

¹⁶⁰ McLuhan, *Understanding*, p. 319.

4.5 Downplaying SF

Truffaut's less exaggerated demonstration of the danger of television may derive in part from his general determination to downplay the science-fictional elements of *Fahrenheit 451*. Truffaut's film has no place for the Mechanical Hound, no Faber counselling Montag by earpiece, no all-pervasive threat of atomic war, and no cataclysmic destruction of the city at story's end. While each of these choices has its own logic, the cumulative result is a film which barely sits within the same genre as the book it derives from.¹⁶¹ Most seriously, though, the novel's constancy of surveillance and threat of destruction is removed, which then has consequences for our understanding of Montag's motives and for the significance of his actions.

According to Truffaut's journal, his initial concept of *Fahrenheit 451* shifted over a period of three years from SF 'backed up by inventions and gadgetry' to something akin to a period film: 'I am trying for anti-gadgetry [...], a little as if I were doing a 'James Bond in the Middle Ages.'" His growing distaste for the visual trappings of SF came from his recent experience of seeing their widespread exploitation in popular culture, as exemplified by 'James Bond, *Couarrèges*, Pop Art – and Godard'. This shift of attitude perhaps explains the film's inconsistency with regard to technology, although Truffaut also admitted to a tendency to 'wave problems aside and say: "[...] we'll look at it later on"'.¹⁶² While the film's 'period' props – old fire engine, telephones, bath taps – help establish the anti-gadgetry agenda, these exist in the same world as the wallscreen TV, automatic doors, the self-ascending firemen's pole, and policemen on jetpacks.¹⁶³

It is not clear that the elimination of the Mechanical Hound is strictly necessitated for the creation of such a world, but there is some evidence that the Hound was dropped quite early in development. Jean Gruault, who wrote the first screenplay version of *Fahrenheit* for Truffaut, seems to have replaced the Hound with increasingly antagonistic technology: first, Montag's automatic front door stops responding to him; second, he is unable to go up the automatic firemen's pole; third, he stops trusting the pole for a downward descent, and instead uses the stairs. Gruault's script was abandoned, but the pole was retained in future

¹⁶¹ Nicholls, p. 55.

¹⁶² Truffaut, 'Journal', 16 Jan 1966.

¹⁶³ Truffaut's post hoc justification for the flying policemen was to provide contrast with the low-tech book-people. *Le Cinema Selon François Truffaut*, p. 173.

drafts.¹⁶⁴ Bradbury's Hound, though, implies surveillance *and* relentless pursuit, and provides not just a general antagonism, but actually proves key to Montag's struggle to escape; the best Truffaut's technology can do is stop working, and thereby provide a passive obstacle.

In the film, surveillance is much less determined by technology, and not just because there is no Mechanical Hound. The authorities depend upon informants for any insight into domestic activity, and we see Linda and others use the 'informant' box prominently displayed outside the fire station. Later, when Montag is on the run, a loudspeaker car urges the populace, 'Let each one stand at his front door, look and listen.' The people themselves, then, are the surveillers as well as the surveilled. (The original line in the screenplay makes this even more direct: 'Let each one stand at his front door and keep his own sector under constant surveillance'.¹⁶⁵) The overall effect in the narrative is to yet again echo a Nazi occupation, with the people called upon to report on their neighbours.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the multiple allusions to the Second World War, the *threat* of war is downplayed in the film. In fact, only one scene clearly mentioning war exists in the entire film: the house party scene, when Montag confronts the women. The women are upset that anyone would mention it - one woman is able to distance herself from it by saying 'It's only other women's husbands who get killed in wars,' and another repeatedly says 'war, if you want to call it that'. Such evasion is reminiscent of the euphemistic phrase 'police action', used to downplay the level of military interventions in Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s. This isolated reference is, however, yet another late development: the Truffaut & Richard screenplay contains multiple references to a war, performing a similar function to comparable brief passages in Bradbury's novel, but these do not find their way into the finished film. From the very first page, where 'some planes are flying by', to a point near to Montag's escape where 'Jet bombers are flying overhead. There are many of them. [...] The planes fly over in threes', and reaching maximum noise level that blocks out Montag's and Clarisse's conversation, the aircraft ultimately come to nothing. Once Montag is in the forest, the sound of jet planes is heard on two occasions.¹⁶⁶ It is the lack of narrative purpose which presumably led to the planes being removed entirely from the completed film. Without the planes, once the 'false Montag' is shot, the city has no

¹⁶⁴ Carol LeBerre, *François Truffaut at Work* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp. 80-1.

¹⁶⁵ Truffaut & Richard, p. 118.

¹⁶⁶ Truffaut & Richard, p. 1; pp. 104-5; p. 120.

further interest in the real Montag – the fact that he is off in the forest is neither here nor there; the book people are of no interest to the city.

Truffaut's film ends on a note of ambiguity far greater than that of Bradbury's novel.¹⁶⁷ Where Bradbury shows a world stricken by atomic war, from which rebirth seems inevitable, Truffaut shows stasis as the ultimate fate of his world. In the novel, the book people move slowly downstream, until they see the city destroyed, whereupon Granger suggests they start heading upstream, back towards the city, and he tells Montag about the myth of the Phoenix rising from the ashes. At first in retreat, by the end of the novel the book people have a definite sense of purpose and re-birth, so that the novel 'gestures beyond the end of the text'.¹⁶⁸ In the film, though, the book people – no threat to the city – wander back and forth, seemingly going nowhere; they have no Phoenix myth to consider. Truffaut's camera finally adopts a fixed frame, which his characters cross to and fro, reciting their memorised texts. The 'oral chorus' called for in the screenplay is downplayed in the finished film, amounting to little more than what Whalen refers to as a 'quixotic gesture', while Bernard Herrman's score sounds an unresolved chord sequence.¹⁶⁹

4.6 Summation

When seen in the context of his entire body of film work (twenty-one films made over a period of twenty-four years) François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* would appear to be his least personal film. With its lack of intimacy and absence of romantic and sexual relationships – all defining characteristics of his previous films – it seems to show Truffaut losing much of the promise of his earlier works. This, coupled with its distancing and contradictory production design, and its attempts to show characters who struggle to articulate, makes *Fahrenheit 451* an interesting but ultimately cold and alienating adaptation of Bradbury's novel. Hardy's assessment ('undoubtedly Truffaut's worst film') seems blunt and harsh.¹⁷⁰ Strick is able to see through the 'awkwardnesses' to the merits of the film, which amount to 'study of loneliness'.¹⁷¹ Bluestone and Murphy both recognise that as critics have

¹⁶⁷ Brosnan, p. 164.

¹⁶⁸ Seed, *Bradbury*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁹ Whalen, pp. 181–91.

¹⁷⁰ *The Aurum Film Encyclopedia*, pp. 251–2

¹⁷¹ Strick, p. 106.

attempted to find a proper place for the film in Truffaut's body of work, there has been much re-evaluation of it.¹⁷²

On the surface, Truffaut's process of adaptation appears to make few major changes to the story, but through an accumulation of minor adjustments he succeeds in making a point which is quite distinct from Bradbury's: the rote learning of the book people turns them into McLuhanesque 'ditto devices'. Bradbury emphasises and celebrates the liberating power of literature as a restorative, where Truffaut examines the fate of one man in a world where the abolition of text itself undermines all attempts at human communication. His characters, starved of the written word, are consequently doomed by their deprivation of thought and memory.

Significantly, though, Truffaut's film demonstrates the effectiveness of Bradbury's overall sense of story construction, and validates the cinematic power of key scenes. Bradbury's claim to write books as if they were screenplays is supported by the evidence of this film.

5 Bradbury's Stage Play

When Truffaut's film of *Fahrenheit 451* was released in 1966, the immediate critical response was lukewarm. Film historian Arthur Knight recognised its 'vivid and imaginative' approach to adapting Ray Bradbury's novel, and called it both 'highly original' and 'thought provoking' – but at the same time 'distressingly superficial'.¹⁷³ Critic George Bluestone found a deeply unsatisfying lack of passion in Oskar Werner's portrayal of Montag, resulting in the character's awakening being largely unmotivated.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps the most scathing review of all came from Pauline Kael, who noted Bradbury's gimmick – that firemen don't put out fires, but instead burn books – as being inexplicably compelling, while the film's exploitation of it was 'clumsy' and 'unformed'.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Bluestone, 'Three Seasons'.

Robert Murphy, 'Truffaut in London', in *Je T'Aime... Moi Non Plus: Franco-British Cinematic Relations*, ed. by Lucy Mazdon and Catherine Wheatley (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 205–16

¹⁷³ Knight, Arthur, 'Shades of Orwell' [Saturday Review, 3 December 1966], in Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 60th anniversary edn (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), pp. 241–3 (p. 243).

¹⁷⁴ Eller, *Unbound*, p. 248

¹⁷⁵ Kael, Pauline, *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 184.

Bradbury's own response was much more positive. He was pleased with Truffaut's 'visual poetry'. Not at all bothered by the film's modifications to his story, he declared that Truffaut had captured the book's essence and had produced a film 'about a lover and a loved one [...] Man as lover, book as loved one.' What's more, he recognised a kindred spirit in Truffaut, and their 'parallel loves had, by an optical illusion, somehow joined'.¹⁷⁶ He appreciated the boldness of Truffaut's independent vision of his story, and was impressed that the film seemed to reflect – and reflect *upon* – his novel. Immediately following a private screening in Los Angeles, and prior to the film's release, Bradbury sent a telegram to Truffaut, proclaiming 'My novel looks at your picture and sees itself, your picture looks at my novel and sees itself!'.¹⁷⁷ In a follow-up letter, Bradbury went into more detail. The film sets were 'absolutely right' as were the costumes. Bradbury was pleased with both Julie Christie ('beautiful[ly] in her double roles') and Oskar Werner – a completely opposite view to many contemporary critics, who found the principal casting to be baffling. Bradbury offered but one criticism, couched as a 'minor suggestion': to make Montag's escape from the city much more difficult, reasoning that 'we need a longer period of tension in the running chase before the lovely quiet period at the very end, which is just right'.¹⁷⁸

In Bradbury's review for the *Los Angeles Times*, he confirmed publicly the assessment he had communicated privately, amplifying his view that Truffaut had created a work which thoughtfully reflected the source text: 'Truffaut has managed the difficult task of transmuting the written word into the visual form of poetry that we call motion pictures', and had captured its 'essence'. Having deliberately distanced himself from the making of the film, declining invitations to write the screenplay or visit the sets in London, in his review Bradbury stated his belief that 'either you trust a director to deliver your child intact, or you should never have taken him on as a midwife in the first place'.¹⁷⁹ Bradbury drew particular attention to the partially serendipitous ending of the film, set in a snow-covered landscape: 'In the unexpected gift of softly falling snow, Truffaut moves his actors like all mankind, whispering their poetries and dream to the cold sky and the sifting whiteness'. This and other 'special moments of beauty' convinced Bradbury that his and Truffaut's 'loves had [...] somehow joined out there at the edge of tomorrow.'

¹⁷⁶ Ray Bradbury, 'Fahrenheit on Film.' *Los Angeles Times*, 20th November 1966, page M1.

¹⁷⁷ Ray Bradbury, Telegram to Truffaut, 31st August 1966.

¹⁷⁸ Ray Bradbury, Letter to Truffaut, 31st Aug 1966.

¹⁷⁹ Bradbury, 'Fahrenheit on Film.'

Decades after the publication of *Fahrenheit*, Bradbury wrote, 'I don't believe in tampering with any young writer's material, especially when that young writer was once myself',¹⁸⁰ and '[T]he book is complete and untouched. I will not go back and revise anything. I have a great respect for the young man that I was when I [...] plunged into the passionate activity that resulted in the final work'.¹⁸¹ Despite holding these views in relation to the novel, Bradbury was not averse to re-writing in other media. His own theatre version of *Fahrenheit 451* (published in 1986), while announced as an adaptation of his novel, is actually something much more significant: a re-writing and re-casting of the novel, in response to Truffaut's film. In developing his play, Bradbury consciously adopts a number of Truffaut's innovations, and (possibly unconsciously) displays influence from a number of others. The play later also served as the basis for Bradbury's own screenplay version of *Fahrenheit 451* (written in 1997, but as yet unpublished and un-filmed). The result of this continued revision of his story is – to use terms from Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* – a multilaminated adaptation, a palimpsest layered of novel, film and theatre.¹⁸²

With the passing years, Bradbury's view of the film would shift. In 1982, around the time he was developing his stage play of *Fahrenheit*, an interviewer asked him if he would like to remake the film. His reply was simple: 'It's not necessary, because I love the Truffaut film'.¹⁸³ But in the early twenty-first century, after Bradbury had remade *Fahrenheit* for himself as a stage play, he arrived at a new position: Truffaut's film was 'very good, but he made a mistake by casting Julie Christie in double roles'.¹⁸⁴ A blunter re-assessment cited by *USA Today* (2009) had Bradbury saying that Truffaut had 'ruined' *Fahrenheit* by downplaying the role of Clarisse, the free-spirit teenager who catalyses the changes undergone by the fireman, Montag.¹⁸⁵

Bradbury's stage play was first performed in the early 1980s. It follows the same story as the novel, but with some scenes inevitably removed or shortened. More significantly the play incorporates several key aspects which show it to be a further development of the

¹⁸⁰ Bradbury, *Zen*, p. 75.

¹⁸¹ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 50th anniversary edn. (London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 6.

¹⁸² Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸³ Bradbury, *Zen*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁴ Weller, *Listen*, p. 69.

¹⁸⁵ 'Graphic novel of *Fahrenheit 451* sparks Bradbury's approval,' *USA Today*, 2nd August 2009 <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2009-08-02-bradbury-fahrenheit-451-graphic-novel_N.htm> [accessed 23 March 2015].

story. All of them can be seen to be responses to Truffaut's film, in some cases adopting an invention of Truffaut's, and in one case seeming to react against Truffaut.

Some of the elements adopted from Truffaut are minor, and yet deeply influence the dramatic impact of the story. For example, Bradbury borrows the idea of Montag using the despised television screen as a reading lamp: Montag 'goes to turn on the TV screen to no particular station, to a station gone off for the night'.¹⁸⁶ The idea that the TV has no content to offer surely resonates with Bradbury's own conception of television in his novel, where the medium is good only for mindless engagement with interactive soap operas and for watching falsified news coverage, but the moment is drawn from Truffaut rather than from the novel.

More significantly, instead of Montag's first act of reading in this scene being of a nonsensical text (a satirical passage from Jonathan Swift), the play adopts Truffaut's idea of using a Dickens text to reflect Montag's situation and state of mind – although instead of using the 'I Am Born' opening chapter of *David Copperfield*, Bradbury selects *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'.¹⁸⁷ The reading process, too, is mirrored on the film, with Montag tracing his fingers under the text as he haltingly reads, like a child learning to read.

Later, Bradbury re-works one of Truffaut's more memorable scenes, in which a dying old man is helping a young boy to memorise Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston*. Bradbury substitutes Clarisse for the young boy, but otherwise the scene plays as in the film, with the old man passing away when the appropriate text is correctly recited – 'And he died as he thought he would, as the first snows of Winter fell'.¹⁸⁸ This scene is so directly drawn from Truffaut that it uses not Stevenson's actual text, but Truffaut's paraphrase of the text. Truffaut had originally scripted his scene to quote from Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, but unexpected snowfall at the time of filming prompted him to improvise a change to *Weir of Hermiston*, but using lines not found in Stevenson.¹⁸⁹

While all these minor elements show up in the play without direct acknowledgment of Truffaut, Bradbury does openly refer to the influence of the film on his thinking. Bradbury recounts some of his writing process for the play in his 1982 essay 'Investing Dimes:

¹⁸⁶ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play] (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Publishing, 1986), p. 51.

¹⁸⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], p. 51.

¹⁸⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], p.89.

¹⁸⁹ Truffaut & Richard, p. 127.

Fahrenheit 451, later repurposed as an afterword to the novel.¹⁹⁰ Here, he addresses two major changes influenced by the film: the survival of Clarisse; and the fleshing out of Beatty.

Bradbury's explanation of Clarisse's survival is brief, and directly credits Truffaut. 'Many readers have written protesting Clarisse's disappearance, wondering what happened to her' Bradbury writes, continuing 'Truffaut felt the same curiosity and [...] rescued her from oblivion [...] I felt the same need to save her'.¹⁹¹ So it is that Clarisse, presumed dead in the novel, is actually safe among the book people and able to welcome Montag into their fold, in both Truffaut's film and Bradbury's play.

Bradbury's account of the Fire Chief is more extensive. According to Bradbury, he 'came [...] out of the wings in answer to my question: How did it start?' The revised Fire Chief is not just opposed to books because of the system he works in. Instead he is an embittered character, who in a time of trouble had turned to books for comfort and consolation, but had found their words irrelevant, empty or hurtful: 'Oh, the words were there, all right, but they ran over my eyes like hot oil [...] Offering no help, no solace, no peace, no harbour, no true love, no bed, no light'.¹⁹²

This explanation of Beatty's back-story is clearly important to Bradbury, and takes up several pages of the essay – and yet it barely touches the surface of the transformation the author has wrought for the Fire Chief. A fuller explanation requires a slight detour to consider how the Chief is depicted in both the original novel and Truffaut's film.

There are many dimensions to Beatty in Bradbury's novel. A lowly official, he is nevertheless the highest-ranking representative of the system of government we see, and therefore the closest the reader gets to seeing the mechanisms of the state. He functions as a military commander, a censor, a judge, an executor. Montag also refers to him – albeit only after his death – as a friend.¹⁹³

In terms of his function in the story, Beatty is clearly a father-figure, not only keeping control over his squad but intervening in their personal lives. Mengeling points out that when Montag feigns illness, Beatty comes to his home and watches over him at his bedside;

¹⁹⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, pp. 199-205.

¹⁹¹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 204.

¹⁹² Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 203.

¹⁹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 124.

Beatty wisely claims to have experienced the difficulties Montag is now experiencing, and lectures him on the dangers of his waywardness; and Montag hides things from Beatty as one might hide things from a disapproving parent.¹⁹⁴ To Montag and to the reader, Beatty fully embodies the authoritarian state, and so when Montag rebels he is driven to destroy Beatty.

This Oedipal reading of *Fahrenheit 451* is amplified in Truffaut's film. Anne Gillain observes that Truffaut's version of the firemen's world is both masculine and childish, in the sense that the fire truck and the firemen seem to be like a child's toy. Indeed, there is one scene where Montag's rival, Fabian, plays with a toy version of the truck. Gillain relates Beatty's squad to a Freudian 'primitive horde', referencing Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. Here, she says, the father-king (the Fire Chief in this instance) maintains the immaturity of his sons (firemen and cadets), so that they will be forever dependent upon him, thus ensuring his continuing reign.¹⁹⁵ The clues to this are many. Beatty looks down upon his men/boys from a throne-like seat on the fire truck. He addresses Montag like a child throughout, infantilising him by calling him by name rather than by using the pronoun 'you'. He inflicts arbitrary, brutal violence, particularly on the younger cadets. As a consequence, the firemen's dependency on the Chief keeps them in a state of rivalry with each other; they are rivals for the Chief's attention and approval.

Furthermore, Gillain likens immaturity of the firemen – and of most of the populace – specifically to Lacan's 'Mirror stage', that pre-lingual stage typically observed in children around two years old. The narcissism of the characters in Truffaut's film – they repeatedly look at themselves in windows and mirrors – supports this notion.

Gillain's most telling observation is the logical extension of her Freudian reading of the firemen. If the Chief is a Freudian castrating father, then he should reserve for himself the exclusive use of 'the women' of the horde – except that in *Fahrenheit 451*, books take on the symbolic role of being the object of Montag's desire, taking the place of 'the women'. *Fahrenheit* is a story of a man in love: a man in love with books – a notion consistent with Bradbury's 1966 review of Truffaut's film.

¹⁹⁴ Mengeling, pp. 131-2.

¹⁹⁵ Anne Gillain, *François Truffaut: The Lost Secret* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 161-86.

In contrast to Truffaut's enriching of the Freudian undercurrents in the *Fire Chief*, Bradbury's play moves in a very different direction. There are allusions to a father-son relationship, particularly in dialogue, and more so than in the novel, with Beatty's sarcastic lines (directed at Montag): 'My son has come out in pimples and started adolescence;' 'Come on, child, give as good as you get;' and 'Someone help the baby, someone help the child'.¹⁹⁶

However, far from embracing the Oedipal struggle implicit in the novel, the play unexpectedly reveals Beatty as a nurturing parent who wants Montag to have what he couldn't have for himself. 'You're so much like the fool I was, I can't help but want you around long after I'm gone,' Beatty says, as he prepares a diversion which will allow Montag to escape.¹⁹⁷ Beatty draws the deadly Mechanical Hound to his own location, and away from Montag. He then awaits his inevitable death as a victim of the Hound, while Montag escapes. This is a stark contrast to Bradbury's novel and Truffaut's film, both of which fulfil the Oedipal struggle with Montag killing Beatty.

The seeds of the Chief's suicidal action and redemption are sown earlier in the play, when a linkage is made between Beatty and Mrs Hudson, the old woman (unnamed in the novel, but here named after Sherlock Holmes' housekeeper) who chooses to burn herself along with her books. As Beatty and Montag watch Mrs Hudson's house in flames, stage directions call for 'the light of a burning and flickering house' to play over their cheeks, and for Beatty to 'rub[bing] his chin, recollecting'. His 'Master Ridley' dialogue exchange with Mrs Hudson reveals a distinct commonality between two literate characters, and Beatty's silent reflection allows for the possibility that Beatty is considering his own position in relation to books and literature. Far from being a representative of the system that Montag despises, and therefore 'needing' to die in order for Montag to be free, this version of Beatty is a tragic figure who, unable to break the system himself, is at least able to prepare the way for his 'child'.

Bradbury's own 1966 review of the film indicates that he agreed with Truffaut's view at the time: the 'seemingly rash elimination' of technology from Truffaut's film, he wrote, prevented a 'properly balanced drama' from being turned 'into one more ride on the James Bond computerised carousel' – there having been three James Bond films released at this

¹⁹⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], pp. 75-7.

¹⁹⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], p. 82.

point.¹⁹⁸ By the 1980s when the stage play was in development, we can assume, this was no longer a risk, and so Bradbury's play makes confident use of the Mechanical Hound.

Later still, Bradbury would become increasingly critical of Truffaut's removal of the Hound. In a 1993 interview he claimed that it was one of the things 'that has always bothered me' and in 1996 he called Truffaut 'a coward' for leaving out the Hound: '[it] should be included, because it's a metaphoric adventure thing'.¹⁹⁹

The Hound in the play is more sinister than in the novel, since it is represented largely through the use of lights and sounds, except for a couple of instances where the script calls for projection to display a pictorial representation of the robotic animal. In his 1975 essay 'A Feasting of Thoughts, a Banqueting of Words: Ideas on the Theatre of the Future,' Bradbury speculates on the potential of holograms for creating 'ghosts', and gives an example of summoning up the Hound of the Baskervilles, bounding forth, and projected in three-dimensions.²⁰⁰ While such technology would not be a reality in his lifetime, his play calls for the next best thing: a projected 'image of a half-realised, blueprinted, x-rayed HOUND' which changes in response to Beatty's gestures, and is occasionally animated into running motion. For the most part, though, the Hound's threatening presence is to be represented through 'greenish light', 'a faint green glow [...] with a great shadow' and through 'snuffles and soughs'. Fittingly, though, Beatty names the Hound 'Baskerville', jokingly referring to this as 'literary reference number 977'²⁰¹ – and, as noted above, the old woman in the play named after Sherlock Holmes' housekeeper.

Bradbury concludes 'A Feasting of Thoughts' with a recognition that technology was never to be the centre of theatre. He writes, 'no matter how large the multimedia, or how complex the stage of twenty-first century houses, the single actor in the lone spotlight will still be the thing'.²⁰² *Fahrenheit 451*, for all the multimedia innovations called for in the play script, puts this philosophy into action from its opening scene, in which a solitary Montag delivers a monologue version of the 'pleasure to burn' passage from the novel: 'There is a

¹⁹⁸ Bradbury, 'Fahrenheit on Film.'

¹⁹⁹ Judith Green, 'A few words with Ray Bradbury: The 'Fahrenheit' Chronicles - It Did Happen Here', *San Jose Mercury News*, 30th October 1993, 3c.

Ken Kelley, 'Playboy Interview: Ray Bradbury (1996)', in *Conversations with Ray Bradbury*, ed. by Steven L. Aggelis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 150-169

²⁰⁰ Bradbury, *Yestermorrow*, pp. 205.

²⁰¹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], pp. 20-1; pp. 51-2.

²⁰² Bradbury, *Yestermorrow*, p. 213.

thing about burning. It is so fine... so complete... so beautiful' (ellipses in original text).

Montag declares that 'we were born of fire' and that 'we go back to it'.²⁰³

The closing scene of Truffaut's film, with the book people wandering back and forth in the snow, while contentious for many contemporary critics, was admired by Bradbury, who found that Truffaut 'move[d] his actors like all mankind, whispering their poetries and dreams to the cold sky'.²⁰⁴ Despite his admiration, however, the play opts for something more directly optimistic, as Montag and Clarisse look to the dawn horizon. Montag asks, 'The light at the edge of the land. Is that the Sun...?' – a question linking back to Montag's opening monologue: 'We are born of fire.' Clarisse's reply affirms the self-determination open to the liberated book people, and simultaneously shows the actualising power of language: 'Morning? If we say it is, yes. If we say so... it must be'.²⁰⁵

This play is clearly not a simple translation of the novel, but nor is it an innocent updating of the story, or an attempt to fix whatever may be wrong with the novel. Bradbury's own metaphor for his process in self-adapting *Fahrenheit 451* is 'You float over your material. You don't descend into it. You don't retype it. You float over it like a salmon fertilising your own eggs'.²⁰⁶ But this metaphor overlooks the significance of the cross-fertilising from Truffaut's film. The play is best seen as a re-thinking of the novel in light of Truffaut's film, or a play engaged in a dialogue with the film. The result, for the viewer, is a multi-layered drama through which flicker memories of the novel *and* memories of the film.

6 Bradbury's Screenplay

In 1995, Mel Gibson's Icon Productions bought the film rights to *Fahrenheit 451* and began developing a new cinematic adaptation of the novel. Several screenwriters were attached to the project at various times, including Bradbury himself. Bradbury's 1997 script was rejected along with all the others, and remains un-filmed and unpublished despite being an accomplished script. (The acclaimed writer-director Frank Darabont subsequently wrote a completely new screenplay, which also failed to reach production. At the time of writing, a new screenplay is being written by Ramin Bahrani for HBO.)

²⁰³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], p. 5.

²⁰⁴ Bradbury, 'Fahrenheit on Film', page M1.

²⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [play], p. 90.

²⁰⁶ Weller, *Listen*, p. 99.

The 1997 screenplay gave Bradbury a chance to revise *Fahrenheit 451* once more. It is as much an extension of his stage play as it is an adaptation of the novel, although it manages to break the story free of the confines of a stage set. Bradbury builds filmic spectacle, making full use of the Mechanical Hound and – surprisingly – a car chase to enliven the story. But he also develops his characters further, this time not just re-building Beatty, but ensuring that Montag remains the central character undergoing dramatic growth. The screenplay confidently builds upon the best elements found in the novel, the stage play and Truffaut's film, creating a synthesis that is arguably his best un-filmed screenplay.

The script wastes no time in establishing what the story is about, and calls for on-screen spectacle from the very first scene, the burning of a house and its hidden books. The books' ashes are put into fireworks ('burn 'em to ashes, then burn the ashes'²⁰⁷) which are then blasted into the sky as public celebration and, perhaps, public warning.²⁰⁸ This is a new addition to the firemen's ritual, calling back to the novel, and Faber's remark: 'Even fireworks, for all their prettiness, come from the chemistry of the earth. Yet somehow we think we can grow, feeding on flowers and fireworks, without completing the cycle back to reality'.²⁰⁹

From the firework display, ash fragments fall out with the odd full or partial page: something survives even this process, providing a symbol of hope which the screenplay will fulfil. Montag collects one such fragment, hiding it in his glove. Later on, he empties it into a drawer, where we see he has many more of them. He is collecting fragments of text, not whole books; until the old woman's house is torched.

The screenplay, like the novel and especially the stage play, uses quotations for their performative value, but unlike previous versions of *Fahrenheit*, the use of physical fragments of text gives the script a visual analogue of quotations, allowing the idea that Montag can be entranced by the texts even when he cannot understand them. (Truffaut did something similar, of course, in withholding all text from the screen except for glimpses of pages writhing in flames.)

As if to provide a logical demonstration of the limited way that permitted texts function in this society, Bradbury shows his firemen engaged in rote learning from text: Beatty gives

²⁰⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 6.

²⁰⁸ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [unpublished screenplay] (1997), p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit*, p. 79.

Montag a packet of instructional papers to read, instructing him to memorize them, so that he can easily recite every word to his subordinates when required.²¹⁰ Later, Beatty calls on Montag to recite a long litany of arguments about the state of the world and why it is necessary to burn books. Whereas in the stage play Beatty does all the lecturing himself, here it is as if Montag and the other firemen have previously been lectured to by Beatty, and have had to learn his lectures by heart. This neatly confirms the normality of rote learning in this society, and demonstrates that text is not forbidden here as long as it is broadly factual, functional and cut short, especially in TV news bulletins and the like.²¹¹ The importance of rote learning, perhaps inspired by the (textless) rote learning in Truffaut's film, makes the book people's memorization of texts much more plausible than in any previous telling of *Fahrenheit 451*.

The science-fictional elements determinedly played down by Truffaut – and marginalised in Bradbury's stage play due to the pragmatic considerations of theatre – are emphasised much more in the screenplay, reminding us that *Fahrenheit 451* is what Bradbury referred to as his only SF novel.²¹²

The Montag's wall-screen TV is a late-1990s upgrade to the large TV screen used by Truffaut, and more reminiscent of the parlour wall found in the novel, although this one has a multi-picture-in-picture display which can present a variety of images, including Orwellian surveillance images from outside the house and from elsewhere in the city.²¹³ This multi-imaged representation of the reality is, though, only of interest to Montag. Mildred, as in the novel, uses it to watch and engage in her fantasy soap-opera world.²¹⁴

Another dominant technology in the screenplay recalls the high-speed freeways of Bradbury's novel. Mindless drugged drivers of 'flivvers' provide a major obstacle to Montag as he attempts to escape from the city. The term 'flivver' of course harkens back to Bradbury's childhood in the 1920s and 1930s, with added echoes of Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and suggests cheapness, oldness, rough rides and bad maintenance. In opposition to this, Beatty's sleek car is the 'Mantis,' which is later borrowed by Montag to escape the city. Inevitably, there is an almighty car crash (beautifully described – Bradbury

²¹⁰ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 27.

²¹¹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* [unpublished screenplay] (1997), pp. 48-50.

²¹² Steven L. Aggelis, *Conversations with Ray Bradbury* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), p. xviii.

²¹³ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], pp. 10-12.

²¹⁴ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 16.

is an unlikely but evocative action-screenplay writer), which might be compared to Bradbury's classic short story 'The Crowd' (1943).²¹⁵

The Mechanical Hound remains central to Montag's story, and Bradbury here revels in the possibilities that 1997 film-making might bring. The broad description makes the creature similar to the one in the novel – a creature of nightmare, silvery, with eight spidery legs. This Hound is shown to be mass-produced on an assembly line, and indeed a whole pack of them is unleashed in pursuit of Montag.²¹⁶

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Bradbury's screenplay is its re-balancing of two central characters. Beatty – whose redemption threatens to over-dominate the stage play – again makes a sacrifice in order for Montag to escape from the city. This time, however, Montag's journey becomes more directed: as he moves through the screenplay, he more clearly seeks to find someone or something to identify with.

Beatty's father-figure role is teasingly emphasised in places, but more important is Beatty's repeated attempt to forge an identity between himself and Montag (Beatty, too, was sick once; Beatty, too, secretly brought home books for years). Beatty encourages Montag to see himself as a torch-bearer, receiving a baton from Beatty. Montag might easily come to see himself as Beatty's successor, were it not for Beatty's insistence that he forget about Clarisse and the old woman, and believe that they had never existed. Montag's existential crisis is seemingly tipped in favour of escape when a flivver 'dopester' tears Montag's helmet off. From this point on, he is no longer a fireman. There is an echo here, perhaps, of Truffaut's film, where Montag consciously throws away his helmet as he begins his escape.²¹⁷

Montag ventures into Clarisse's now abandoned house, and announces to whoever might be there that he is a friend to Clarisse: his first acknowledged identification with her. No longer a fireman, and no longer having Clarisse to talk to, he feels the need for assistance, and goes in search of Faber.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 97.

²¹⁶ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 21; p. 31.

²¹⁷ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p.35; p. 44; p. 52; p. 55; p. 57-8.

²¹⁸ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 62.

The final scenes take place not in the snow that Truffaut had used so well – but in rain.²¹⁹ A re-united Montag and Clarisse leave behind the bonfire used to burn the books they have been memorizing. Fragments of burned pages blow away in the wind, just like the ones which survived the house-burning at the start of the script. The rain that falls has the power to put out fire, as well as cleanse.

In the screenplay's final literary allusion, Montag inadvertently likens himself to Dickens' Marley when quoting from *A Christmas Carol* - he accidentally says his own name instead of Marley's when reciting: 'To begin with, Montag was dead...' He embarrassedly corrects his mistake – but, of course, it is a correct analysis of what his own character had been at the start of the story.

7 Conclusions

Just as the novel *Fahrenheit 451* can be seen as the convergence of ideas developed in various precursor writings from the earliest years of Bradbury's professional career, so his active engagement in the story can be traced forward through his revisitations of the story for stage and screen. Far from creating a mere transcription of a settled story into a new medium, Bradbury tackles his story anew, making new discoveries about his characters and their world. The base layer is the series of building-block set-pieces that make up the fundamental story, substantially unchanged since the already cinematic 1953 novel.

In his play Bradbury finds much to absorb and reflect upon from Truffaut's film, and in the 1997 screenplay - the top layer of this palimpsest - he achieves an effective updating of his story that draws upon the structures, characters and relationship developed in the underlying tellings of *Fahrenheit 451*. The screenplay, one of Bradbury's consistent and polished, is unfortunately another 'lost film'.

As we have seen with *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury's engagement with what we think of as 'a novel' turns out to be a career-spanning near continuous engagement with the material. His ideas are fluid, shifting comfortably from medium to medium. In the next chapter, we will further see how it becomes difficult to identify a strict starting point for Bradbury's story development: in the case of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*,

²¹⁹ Bradbury, *Fahrenheit* [screenplay], p. 109.

fragmentary ideas converge first in a *screenplay*, only later becoming the more familiar novel. We will also see, at last, a Bradbury screenplay making it to the screen as a completed film.

Chapter 4: *Something Wicked This Way Comes*

1 Introduction

The 1983 film of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is that rare item: a produced film of a Ray Bradbury book, scripted by Bradbury himself. This allows a detailed consideration of the progress of Bradbury's concept and screenwriting in a way that hasn't been possible with the earlier projects – *The Martian Chronicles* and *Fahrenheit 451* – which failed to reach fruition. As a result, this chapter is unique in bringing together all the previous threads of the study so far, as well as bringing into play for the first time what Steven Maras calls the 'textual politics' surrounding the struggle for narrative authority between screenwriters, directors and producers.¹

This chapter takes a chronological approach to the origin and development of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, showing how its apparent point of origin – a 1948 short story – led to its cinematic development as a screen treatment, which was then further developed into the 1962 novel - before being re-adapted for screen through a series of screenplays. The successive works under discussion may give the impression of each being adapted from the other, but in reality they should be seen as a serial re-composition of the same basic narrative, each incarnation evolving organically from its predecessor, with Bradbury shifting fluidly from one medium to another as the work develops over many decades. Bradbury's approach is shown to evolve over time, and we shall discover an interplay of cinematic and literary ideas.

When Bradbury finally teams up with a director, Jack Clayton, who translates his words to concrete visual images, we discover that the assumed shared vision of writer and director can prove illusory, when Bradbury's understanding of how cinematic fantasy should function is shown to be at odds with that of his director. The concept that drives a production team - what Ian W. Macdonald calls 'the screen idea' – proves to be nebulous and unexpressed, and not necessarily that which is captured in the screenplay.²

¹ Maras, *Screenwriting*, p. 96.

² Macdonald, *Poetics*, pp. 4-5.

2 Sources of *Something Wicked*

2.1 'The Black Ferris'

Just as Bradbury's screenwriting for *Moby Dick* was triggered by the atmospheric, cinematic short story 'The Fog Horn', so *Something Wicked This Way Comes* owes its existence to an atmospheric, cinematic short: 'The Black Ferris' (1948).³ This fast-moving tale draws from various influences, such as the language of Edgar Allan Poe, and the disobedience-within-limits of Mark Twain's Tom and Huck. Its carnival setting links it to other Bradbury stories such as 'The Dwarf' (1954), 'The Jar' (1944). Its small town clearly places this story in Bradbury's familiar 'Green Town', and its boy protagonists, Hank and Pete – one a leader, the other reluctantly led – are prototypes of Doug and Tom of Bradbury's Green Town novel *Dandelion Wine* (1957), as well as primitive versions of what they would directly evolve into: Jim and Will of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962). The short story reveals the emergence of Bradbury's use of a scenic method of storytelling which develops as this unassuming tale evolves first into a screen treatment and, later, a novel.

The story begins ominously and elementally, with a monochrome depiction of the place where a strange carnival has arrived: 'grey, restless lake of October, [...] black weather [...] leaden skies'.⁴ The vivid description anchors 'The Black Ferris' in the *Weird Tales* tradition, recalling Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839) which takes place on a similarly 'dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens' – a story Bradbury himself quotes in his story 'Usher II' (1950).⁵ The night-time setting invites the imagination to fill in unseen spaces. Even things which *can* be seen are rendered strange, so that the carnival tents become grey, their canvas 'flapping on the wind like gigantic prehistoric wings'.⁶ The darkness is broken only by the dominating, vertical presence of a Ferris wheel, 'like an immense, light-bulbed constellation against the cloudy sky, silent'.⁷ In a Twain-like discussion, an excited Hank claims the Ferris wheel can remove years from a rider's life if run in reverse. His friend Pete is sceptical.

³ Bradbury, *The Stories*, pp. 851-7.

⁴ Bradbury, *The Stories*, p. 851.

⁵ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 90.

Ray Bradbury, 'Usher II', in *The Martian Chronicles* (New York: Wm Morrow, 2006), pp. 161-81.

⁶ Bradbury, *The Stories*, p. 852.

⁷ Bradbury, *The Stories*, p. 852.

The Ferris wheel is exploited by Mr Cooger who transforms himself into a child, Pikes, in order to commit crimes. The logic of the story is driven through a continuous process of hypothesis and confirmation, according to David Bordwell a characteristic of cinematic narrative.⁸ The dialogue between Pete and Hank initially prepares us to witness something debatable, and so we construct a hypothesis that something unlikely is about to be seen. Bradbury's description of the wheel's actions then leads us to construct a specific hypothesis about what it does, and Hank's jubilant reaction to its repeating of what he has seen previously confirms this hypothesis. Immediately the story moves on, putting the boys in pursuit of Pikes, and leaving little time to reconsider alternative interpretations of what may have happened.

The entire story is told by a third-person narrator, but is consistently focalised through the boys. The first proof of Hank's claim about the carnival comes when they hide in a tree to spy on Cooger. Like Tom and Huck in the graveyard in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, they whisper to each other about what their limited viewpoint allows them to see.⁹ While Twain allows his two boys to run off during the detailing of the graveyard crime, with the graveyard activity narrated in their absence, Bradbury's narration accompanies Pete and Hank when they run in pursuit of the transformed Cooger; the 'camera eye' of the story thus travels with them, just as the camera eye in *Fahrenheit 451* tends to accompany Montag.

The boys' close observation of Cooger and pursuit of his alter ego Pikes demonstrates a common feature of Bradbury's conception of the fantastic. According to Tzvetan Todorov, a story event which appears supernatural leaves us in a state of uncertainty – which he calls 'the fantastic' – unless and until that state is relieved by a determination that the event was either illusory or rationally explicable. If illusory, the event is 'uncanny'. If explicable, the event is 'marvellous' (so stories in the SF genre are marvellous). The curious thing about Bradbury's fantastic tales is that their subject matter might suggest the uncanny, but his presentation makes them look marvellous. 'The Black Ferris' is a clear example of how he achieves this: not by rationalising, nor by explaining. And not by having any character explain it, nor by entering into the inner thoughts of a character. In 'The Black Ferris' we *know* that the reversing Ferris wheel can turn back time because we witness it in exactly the way that the boys witness it. The logic of the story is cinematic; seeing is believing.

⁸ David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 37-47.

⁹ Twain, Mark, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 9.

The same technique is also found in a number of other Bradbury short stories, typically in situations where a character appears paranoid, and works by localising the point of view. In 'The Crowd' (1943), a man irrationally believes that the same ghoulish people gather around every car crash.¹⁰ In 'The Wind' (1943), a man believes that the wind is out to get him.¹¹ In 'Skeleton' (1945), a man believes that his own skeleton is against him.¹² In each case, the character's apparently irrational belief becomes a logical state of mind given the events that the character witnesses – and which the reader also witnesses through a focalisation which tightly binds the reader to the character. However, these stories rarely have the protagonist as narrator; Bradbury's method of focalising allows him to position the reader both with the focalising character yet outside of that character. The reader, then, oscillates between seeing as the character sees, and seeing from an external position. The cinematic analogue of this is plain: from the subjectivity of showing a character in close-up, to the detachment of a long shot.

A further cinematic dimension of this method of presentation is achieved through a montage technique. For example, when Cooger first becomes Pikes:

A ten-year-old boy stepped out. He walked off across the whispering carnival ground, in the shadows.

Peter almost fell from his limb. [...] ¹³

Here we see action and reaction, with no explanation between the two, as if they are successive shots in a film sequence. The first paragraph shows what Peter sees, the second breaks to an external viewpoint to show his reaction, in a 'reverse angle'. This montage technique is part of Bradbury's use of the scenic method, the term introduced by Henry James when he realised that theatrical presentation of external behaviours could be revealing of the inner lives of characters.¹⁴ The scenic method provides much of the pace of 'The Black Ferris'. By avoiding exposition and panoramic methods, the story moves rapidly, giving the reader little time or incentive to question events.

¹⁰ Bradbury, *The Stories*, pp. 47-54.

¹¹ Bradbury, *Bradbury Stories*, pp. 197-206.

¹² Bradbury, *The Stories*, pp. 324-336.

¹³ Bradbury, *The Stories*, p. 852.

¹⁴ Quay Grigg, 'The Novel in John Gabriel Borkman: Henry James's *The Ambassadors*', *The Henry James Review*, 1.3 (1980), 211-18.

Having carefully shown the reverse operation of the Ferris wheel at the beginning of the story, Bradbury now runs it forwards, and has it adding years on to Pikes/Cooger's life. It runs out of control. When it grinds to a halt, Pikes/Cooger has aged so much that he is now a skeleton. A clichéd 'twist' ending, it is also total proof of Hank's theory: Pikes is seen to turn into Cooger, and the Ferris is proven to be a marvellous, predictable mechanism, not an arbitrary wish-fulfilling device.

Despite the story's weird framing, its events are presented with cinematic logic, not the emotional logic of an uncanny tale, nor the expository logic of SF. What is lacking, though, is a reason for these events to happen in the first place, and this is perhaps why Bradbury would return to this story and position it at the heart of a larger work: *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

2.2 Fragments

'The Black Ferris' provides many of the elements that would develop into *Something Wicked*, but a study of Bradbury's unpublished story fragments shows that other ideas central to the novel were forming as far back as the early 1940s. The fragments I discuss here are all undated in Bradbury's files, but are from c. 1944, and informed the construction of his first story collection *Dark Carnival* (1947) without finding a place in that collection.¹⁵

In a pair of typescript pages headed 'Dark Carnival', Bradbury describes the arrival of a carnival at 'supertime, a strange hour', as opposed to the much stranger after-midnight arrival in the later *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Townsfolk speak of the carnival's 'ebon black' tent poles and 'bats' wing' canvas going up in total darkness. Children are drawn to the calliope, a 'brass monster'. The 'wondrous' carnival appeals to the young and the old, while 'medium-lived' people show no interest, an early expression of the commonality of children and old people which would show up in Bradbury's last published novel, *Farewell Summer* (2006).

Other discarded manuscript pages show carnival sideshows, including the earliest description of the Mr Electrico electric chair act, inspired by a supposed real experience

¹⁵ Prose fragments contained in Bradbury's file 'Dark Carnival treatment 1955'.

Bradbury had of a similar act in his childhood, the basis of one of Bradbury's persistent anecdotes, re-told in many interviews and documented in at least two non-fiction articles.¹⁶ With his 'shocked-up' hair, Mr Electric 'sizzled if you touched him'. This act is later expanded in *Something Wicked*. In this early version, Mr Electric is non-threatening, a male equivalent of Mamzelle Electra in William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley* (1946) and the film based upon it.¹⁷ Other sideshows include Siamese Twins (as in Bradbury's short story 'Corpse Carnival' (1945)), the Fat Lady 'imprisoned in her curved pink walls' (as in his novel *Death is a Lonely Business* (1985)), and a Tattooed Man whose 'most secret tattoos' are covered by 'censoring' tape, as in Bradbury's short story 'The Illustrated Man' (1950) and subsequent collection *The Illustrated Man* (1951).

In 'House of Mirrors'/'Mirror Maze', some people are trapped permanently inside, deluded by the reflections as to the true passage of time. This device finds its way into *Something Wicked*, and also into 'The Lost City of Mars', discussed previously. Another fragment plays with the idea of reflections causing confusion: 'the first [...] passing the reply on to the fourth. The fifth, sixth and seventh mirrors interblending and cross-cutting and confusing'. Yet another fragment has a man thrashing about inside the Maze in 'rising insanity' as he encounters himself 'walking down the years toward him, old and terrible, reeking of ancient urine, rheumy eyed'.

Such sinister visions – which will continue in development well into *Something Wicked This Way Comes* – continue in other fragments, such as one showing a merry-go-round whirling in a vacuum, carrying silent children. The carousel's horses are gone, but in their place, skewered by the rising and falling brass poles, are six children 'going around and down and around and up in a gala carnival'.

The most engaging of the longer fragments repeatedly return to the idea of the carnival changing a character into a younger or older version of themselves, usually manifested to their loved ones as a changeling, as in the *Martian Chronicles* chapter 'The Martian'. In one of these fragments, a woman encounters a boy with the same name as her husband. He urges her to go to the carnival, because 'Things happen'. She has no interest in it or the boy, until he reveals that he knows she has a mole on her thigh. This man-child is rendered

¹⁶ Ray Bradbury, 'Mr Electrico', *Guideposts*, June 1991, 24-7;
Ray Bradbury, 'The Secret of Immortality', *True: the Man's Magazine*, 57.460 (September 1975), 18-20 & 71

¹⁷ William Lindsay Gresham, *Nightmare Alley* (New York: New York Review Books, 2010) p. 49;
Nightmare Alley, dir. by Edmund Goulding (Intdvd, DAD-339, 2005) [On DVD]. The film changes 'Mamzelle Electra' to 'Madame Electra'.

sinister by the contrast between his childlike appearance and adult knowledge, a clear precursor to the thoroughly sinister Cooger/Pikes of 'The Black Ferris'.

Most of these fragments remain just isolated pieces of prose containing at best a vivid idea, and yet they provide intriguing evidence that many of the 'magical' and fantastical elements of *Something Wicked* have their origins at a very early stage of Bradbury's career, even before publication of his first book, much as we have seen before with *The Martian Chronicles* and *Fahrenheit 451*.

2.3 Lao vs. Cooger

The influence on Bradbury of Charles G. Finney's *The Circus of Dr Lao* (1935) has long been assumed, especially given Bradbury's seeming endorsement of it in the 1956 anthology he edited, *The Circus of Dr Lao and Other Improbable Stories*.¹⁸ According to Eller, however, Bradbury was dissatisfied with Finney's story – calling it 'very sparse, only fitfully imaginative' – despite the recommendation of friends like Robert Bloch. The inclusion of *Dr Lao* in Bradbury's anthology seems to have been forced by the publisher.¹⁹ And yet there remain some superficial similarities between *Dr Lao* and *Something Wicked* which are worth considering briefly.

The strongest similarities between the two works lie in the premise of the travelling show, and specifically the sideshows, where characters are isolated, and confronted by their own fears and the consequences of curiosity. Janet Whyde observes that the actions of Finney's isolated characters become 'physically bound within the tents, exhibits, and particular rules of behaviour'. Each character's confrontation with a mythical beast (particularly the sexual fantasy scenes of Agnes encountering the satyr) 'bind(s) the isolated experiences of

¹⁸ Ray Bradbury, *The Circus of Dr. Lao and Other Improbable Stories*, (New York: Bantam, 1956). Examples of the assumed influence of Finney on Bradbury include: Peter Nicholls, *Fantastic Cinema* (London: Ebury Press, 1984), p. 49 & pp. 171-2; John Clute, 'Charles G. Finney', in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/finney_charles_g> [Accessed 7 September 2016]; Brian Stableford, *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* (Langham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005), p. 150.

¹⁹ Eller, *Unbound*, pp. 74-80.

characters'. In each case, though, the intrusion of Dr Lao breaks the spell of these sequences in which space and time are suspended.²⁰

In contrast, much of the jeopardy in *Something Wicked* is not suffered in isolation, but is experienced by two boys who have each other for emotional support. While isolated characters do get drawn into sideshows such as the mirror maze, we learn and experience more by seeing the boys' reactions to those events. And while there is some implied sexual content in *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Jim's solitary experience of voyeurism, in the 'theatre' sequence), it is not linked to the travelling show.

The mode of operation of Lao's *circus* and Cooger & Dark's *carnival* are also very different. Lao enchants and entices with the end result of drawing characters *into* his circus, whereas Cooger and Dark pointedly go out into the world, their parade through town an invading army. Bradbury is interested in the sideshow which knows no bounds, the tricks of wit and cunning which break out of the frame of 'travelling carnival' and become a threat to the small town. Finney, on the other hand, is concerned with drawing the townsfolk out of their normal environment and placing them in confrontation with their fears. The end destination of his townsfolk is the Big Top show, that controlled, scheduled one-off event which may change their lives forever.

2.4 Cinematic influences

Bradbury's decision to develop a carnival-themed story into a film script seems an obvious one. His first book, *Dark Carnival*, had collected a number of stories with a carnival theme, and his collection of linked stories *The Illustrated Man* used a carnival character as the thread that wove the constituent stories together. Further stimulus for reviving the cinematic 'The Black Ferris' and creating a screenplay from it came from cinema itself.

In numerous interviews Bradbury spoke of his affection for classic horror films, including *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Cat People* (1942).²¹ His own concept of horror, presented in the

²⁰ Janet Whyde, 'Fantastic Disillusionment: Rupturing Narrative and Rewriting Reality in *The Circus of Dr Lao*', *Extrapolation*, 35.3 (Fall 1994), 230-240.

²¹ Sandy Hill, 'Science Fiction Supernova: a Visit from Author Ray Bradbury is in Charlotte's (Near) Future', *Charlotte Observer*, 12 October 1997, Art section p. 1F; Jason Marchi, 'An Interview with Master Storyteller Ray Bradbury', *The Hollywood Scriptwriter*, Jan 1999; Geoff Gehman, 'Ray

essay 'Death Warmed Over', is that civilised man created stories to cope with the inevitability of death: 'we do not approve of death. We hate the rules he plays by. He must be cheating'. Unable to cope with the end of existence, 'We called it death and finally even gave death a gender. We spoke not of it but of he who comes with the scythe [...]'.²² Having reified death in this way, Bradbury argues the role of horror is to empower viewers/readers by allowing them to become a player in the drama:

So you, the acting, as well as the acted-upon audience, seize the cedar stake, place it against the dead heart of Dracula and strike it [...]

Bang! The echoes flee. Bang! The echoes run! Bang! The echoes dies.

And Dracula is dead.

And for some little while this night, death, why, he is dead too.²³

Much of the essay dwells on Bradbury's distaste for what the horror genre had become in the late 1960s, and argues for a return to earlier methods of storytelling using symbolism, shadow and atmosphere rather than a 'factual' presentation of slit throats and torture. With *Something Wicked This Way Comes* we can see this philosophy enacted: as Bradbury develops 'The Black Ferris' into more sophisticated forms, he creates increasing jeopardy for his child protagonists, while summoning up 'death' as the powerful Mr Dark, leader of the travelling carnival who insinuates himself into the small town.

Bradbury's use of the carnival as a vehicle for evil is also influenced by early horror films, especially those starring Lon Chaney, whose *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) he saw at a young age. Both films' title characters are marginalised figures operating in the darker, unknown side of public places. The influence of these films can be seen even more directly in Bradbury's late-career novels *Death is a Lonely Business* (1985) and, especially, *A Graveyard for Lunatics* (1990). Other Chaney films which particularly interested Bradbury were *The Unknown* (1927), *The Unholy Three* (1925), *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* (1928), and *He Who Gets Slapped* (1924), all of which are set in circuses, carnivals or sideshows, a milieu with a clear influence on the development of 'The

Bradbury Sees the Future in Books, Not in Cyberspace', *Morning Call*, Allentown, PA, 31 October 1999, Arts & Travel section p.F01; Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 133-136.

²² Ray Bradbury, 'Death Warmed Over', *Playboy*, Jan 1968, pp.101-2 & 252-253. Bradbury later developed this into an outline (dated 12 May 1970) for a TV documentary, unproduced.

²³ Bradbury, 'Death Warmed Over', p. 252.

Black Ferris' into *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. The trigger for that development taking place was yet another travelling show in film, in 'Circus', the pantomimed opening story of Gene Kelly's portmanteau feature *Invitation to the Dance* (1956).²⁴

'Circus' takes place in a medieval European town, where a travelling show has arrived. Kelly portrays a whiteface clown (like Chaney's Tito in *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*) whose heart is broken by unrequited love for a dancer. Ultimately, he falls from a tightrope and dies, landing on her abandoned red cape, which from a high-angled shot resembles a pool of blood. While this may sound quite unlike 'The Black Ferris' and *Something Wicked*, it is easy to see how this visually strong mid-1950s Technicolor film might re-awaken Bradbury's passion for similarly themed Chaney films of his youth. The play-within-the-play of 'Circus' also deals in ideas of the entertaining and safe fictions of the travelling show erupting into 'real life', one of the central horrors of *Something Wicked*.

A viewing of *Invitation to the Dance* prompted Bradbury to look through his files for circus stories to develop into a screenplay for Kelly.²⁵ 'The Black Ferris' was the story that surfaced, which Bradbury then developed into a treatment, *The Dark Carnival*.

3 The Screen Treatment: *The Dark Carnival*

3.1 Development

Producer Dore Schary emphasised three key purposes of a screen 'treatment': telling the story; bringing out the 'kernel of appeal' to attract a mass audience; and presenting the action 'in the medium', that is, to demonstrate how a story can come across cinematically.²⁶ A treatment is usually briefer than a full screenplay, condensing action and minimising dialogue.²⁷ Inspection of Bradbury's screen treatment *The Dark Carnival*, however, reveals it to be long (87 pages), to extensively detail the content of shots, and to

²⁴ *Invitation to the Dance*, dir. by Gene Kelly (Warner Archive Collection, 1000200920, 2012) [On DVD].

²⁵ Bradbury, *Speaks*, pp. 8-10.

See also Ray Bradbury, 'Afterword: Carnivals, Near and Far', in *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (New York: Wm. Morrow, 2001), pp. 290-3.

²⁶ Quoted in Price, *Screenplay*, p.67.

²⁷ Field suggests treatments should be 4-20 pages including 'some dialogue'. McKee suggests 60 pages or more (calling anything shorter an 'outline'). Parker is silent on length, but suggests 'minimal' dialogue. Field, p. 214; McKee, *Story*, p. 415; Parker, p. 45.

include nearly all the dialogue required to make a film. A few sections are expressed in summary form, particularly in the final pages. On the whole, though, while labelled as a treatment, it is much more like a full screenplay.

Surviving papers in Bradbury's files suggest at least seven stages to his work. With each stage of work, *The Dark Carnival* edges closer to what we recognise as the story of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. It is clear that the treatment began as something short and synoptic and evolved over time until Bradbury stopped work on it around 1960 (the date on the last located cover page for any draft), at which point it had evolved into a hybrid of treatment and screenplay of 87 pages, but was still not fully fleshed out.²⁸ It was eventually published, in the limited edition volume *Dawn to Dusk* (2011).²⁹

The first drafts of *The Dark Carnival* explore Hank and Pete (characters from 'The Black Ferris') and their moral code, and explain how the carnival turns adults into children in order to re-educate them with a skewed morality. The second stage of work sees the addition of the night-time arrival of the carnival in a form close to what we see in *Something Wicked*, and the first appearance of the carnival parade. The 'Illustrated Man' emerges as an additional evil character (later to develop into Mr Dark). The third stage of work shows a divergence in Hank and Pete's characterisations, and the introduction of the symbolic barber's pole. The fourth stage introduces dialogue, the foreshadowing of the carnival's arrival, and the establishment of Peter's absent father (a contrast to Hank's family situation, and an echo of Twain's Huck Finn³⁰). The fifth stage introduces the Mirror Maze and clarifies differences between Hank and Pete. Stage six shows development in the relationship between Hank and his father. Stage seven clarifies the purpose of the carnival, but highlights some structural awkwardness over the overlapping roles of Hank's father and Ellis the library janitor. It also introduces the lightning-rod salesman, who will become a major part of *Something Wicked's* powerful foreshadowing.

As we have seen with attempts to adapt *The Martian Chronicles*, the hybrid approach to treatment/screenplay is part of Bradbury's method, with a synoptic treatment gradually expanding towards a screenplay but not always completing the journey, resulting in something that looks like a script but which still contains too much summary. Indeed,

²⁸ Ray Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival: a screen treatment*, 1959, unpublished.

²⁹ Ray Bradbury, *Dawn to Dusk: Cautionary Travels* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gauntlet Press, 2011), pp. 17-138.

³⁰ Huck's father is absent due to being the town drunk. Pete's father's absence is unexplained. Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, ch. 6.

comparison with Bradbury's earliest screen work *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) shows that the hybrid approach was nothing new for Bradbury. Although employed to create only the screen story for that film (the full screenplay to be written by Harry Essex), what he created ran to 111 pages, with most scenes fully specified as in a screenplay. His explanation was, 'I was so excited by it, that I wrote a whole screenplay. And I called it a treatment [...] I didn't realise what I was doing'.³¹ By the time of *The Dark Carnival*, however, Bradbury had gained significant experience of writing teleplays and had scripted *Moby Dick* for John Huston. His continued use of the same method of presentation as for his earliest film project suggests that his preferred approach was the hybrid document, something that served the narrative purpose of a treatment with the narrational style of a screenplay.

3.2 Final version

The Dark Carnival has three acts (not explicitly labelled, but signified by conventional fades to black), and so conforms to Syd Field's 'paradigm', whereby a screenplay is structured into 'set up', 'confrontation' and 'resolution'.³² Act One introduces the carnival and shows it to be threatening. Act Two brings the protagonists into confrontation with those who operate the carnival. Act Three uncovers its purpose and shows its destruction.³³ This broadly cinematic structure carries over as the three-part structure of the novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

The first half of 'The Black Ferris' becomes the key part of the treatment's central mystery. Leading up to the 'Ferris' incidents is an establishment of the 'small Midwestern town' and its people; and following those incidents is an ever-tightening mesh of problems for Hank and Pete as they seek to overcome Cooger's evil carnival which threatens the town itself.

³¹ Ray Bradbury, *It Came From Outer Space* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gauntlet Press, 2004), p. 16.

³² Field, p. 21. Others have re-purposed Field's 'paradigm' as a formula (e.g. Blake Snyder's *Save the Cat*). Field and others attribute three-act structure to Aristotle, but usually without specific citation; the allusion is assumed to be to Aristotle's 'beginning', 'complication' and 'unravelling'. My use of Field here is purely to provide a broadly recognised metric for considering the structure of Bradbury's composition. The best account of the origin of three-act structure is Lanouette, 'A History of Three-Act Structure'.

³³ Field's paradigm suggests Act One of a feature film should be about 25% of a screenplay's length; Act Two 50%; Act Three 25%. *The Dark Carnival* breaks down as Act One 25%; Act Two 46%; Act Three 32%. The true length of Act Three would be significantly greater if some scenes were not written as highly condensed summary (see below for discussion).

The towering Ferris wheel is here replaced by the ground-level carousel, a machine with a more obvious sense of running either forwards or backwards. Its rising and falling horses create the danger of moving parts and an illusion of life, two features also exploited in the carnival climax of Alfred Hitchcock's earlier *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

The Dark Carnival was the first time that Bradbury had created a depiction of a small Illinois town for the screen. Although unnamed, this is clearly Green Town, as seen in *Dandelion Wine*, which Bradbury was writing concurrently with *The Dark Carnival*. The town's barber's shop and cigar store are the first things we encounter, establishing the normalcy and apparent security of a town where everyone knows everyone. It is October, but an Indian summer has gripped the town, leading to a feeling that something isn't right. As Hank and Pete run through town, they see and hear the wind 'flap the long line of canvas awnings' over the shops, anticipating the tent canvases of the yet-to-arrive carnival. The twin protagonists from 'The Black Ferris' have swapped their basic characteristics: Peter now rushes into dangerous situations, while Hank is more cautious. Both boys are fourteen: children, but with a dawning concept of what it means to be grown-up, and what it is to die. Hank Simpson has two parents. Peter, on the other hand, has only a mother. His family name is Webster, derived from 'weaver,' reflecting the tangled web of trouble he will get into due to his curiosity, but perhaps also suggesting Stephen Vincent Benét's 'The Devil and Daniel Webster' (1937), where the devil is sent packing.

Deliberately mirrored shots of the boys' bedrooms are intercut, and their ability to talk to each other between houses emphasises that they can be considered complementary aspects of a single character. Hank is the conscience, Peter the animal instinct, and perhaps the Freudian death drive.

The first hint of the carnival comes when Mr Simpson bumps into Cooger putting up advertising posters for the carnival. Mr Simpson calls it a circus, but there is no big top on the poster, or indeed anywhere in the treatment.³⁴ The carnival's attractions sound mythic, like those of *Dr Lao*, such as the Cave of the Sphinx and the Oracle of Delphi. Then there are exotic acts like Bradbury's recurring Mr Electrico and Illustrated Man - and the Tarot Witch, here a living character, but familiar from Bradbury's novel *Dandelion Wine* as an automaton.

³⁴ The ambiguity persists periodically throughout. Later, on page 24, a scene direction describes Cooger as 'the circus barker', and the Illustrated Man plays 'Circus Days' on the calliope.

The encounter between Cooger and Simpson raises the first major theme of *The Dark Carnival*: how a person reconciles their own past, present and future. For Simpson, a man on the brink of forty, reflection brings regret and frustration. For the two boys, reflection divides them as they discover their differing ambitions. In the present scene, though, the theme is raised half-jokingly to establish the contrast of the travelling show's grand claims with its unlikely ability to deliver:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ³⁵

A principal location in *The Dark Carnival* is the library, another recurring element from Bradbury's fiction (*Dandelion Wine*; 'Exchange' (1948)).³⁶ The only visible staff is janitor Mr Ellis, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of books and unlimited after-hours access. The antithesis of the false oracles of the carnival, Ellis knows much and knows how to find out more. Hank and Peter run instinctively to him for advice.

The first library scene raises a second major theme of *The Dark Carnival*: choices relating to good and evil. Ellis shows the boys where to find books with 'sweet-as-candy heroes' and 'double-dyed villains,' then ponders whether heroes still wear white hats. When the boys gravitate to books on dinosaurs and cavemen, Ellis sees an opportunity to give them direct advice: 'Learn about the Wilderness first. Then see how we moved out of the jungle, stopped killing sabre-tooths, and learned to – well – turn the other cheek'. The suggestion here is of the dangers in life, which will come very rapidly to the boys as *The Dark Carnival* progresses. But the language also has much in common with Bradbury's horror essay, 'Death Warmed Over', where he claims:

When we, the human race, were very young, death was immediate [...] lurked in everything we could see, hear, smell or touch [...]

³⁵ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, pp. 3-4.

³⁶ Ray Bradbury, *Quicker Than The Eye* (New York: Avon, 1996), pp. 207-19.

Then, when the nit-picking ape [...] left knuckle marks in the jungle dust on his way to brick cities, we walled out real death'.³⁷

At nightfall, the sound of a calliope blows on the wind, evoking for Crozetti the barber a childhood memory which makes him cry. It's a brief episode of involuntary memory – a 'madeleine moment' – of a type that occurs again both here and in the novel *Something Wicked*. For Bradbury, involuntary memory is transformative, perhaps best shown in his story 'A Scent of Sarsaparilla' (1953), where a smell from a man's past is enough to sweep him back in time.³⁸ The boys' encounter with Crozetti introduces a final major theme of *The Dark Carnival*: the eternal cycle, as Crozetti watches the perpetual red and white stripes of his barber's pole – 'Where does it *come* from? Where does it *go*?'³⁹ The endless cycle is echoed by the rotation of the carousel later in the treatment.

A dark, antique train trundles in: the carnival arrives in the dead of night. Peter persuades Hank that they should watch the carnival set up, and they take a high vantage point to observe it. The carnival's strangeness comes from three atmospheric factors, all drawing their power from the idea of what's 'visible' and what isn't: the complete silence of the carnival folk; the eerie sound of the wind blowing over the calliope pipes, breathing life into the otherwise inert mechanism; and the blackness of everything, inviting the boys (and the viewer) to imagine details that cannot be seen: 'Everything's *painted* black, black canvas, black poles' observes Hank [emphasis added], feeling that he never wants to come here again, because 'It's real funny'.⁴⁰ The word 'painted' suggests disguise, or an attempt to cover up. Is the carnival really disguised? Or does the night make it appear so? The carnival's night-time construction recalls a similar sequence in Disney's *Dumbo* (1941).

The darkness of Act One gives way in Act Two to the morning sun awakening the boys. When they return to the carnival by day, they are disappointed by how ordinary it now is: 'white-tan canvas tents, sawdust, flags [...]'. Its normalcy emphasises the power of the previous night's darkness to deceive, but also suggests that the evil they sensed is gone. As the carnival empties of late-afternoon visitors, they come across a carousel. The calliope plays 'a windy [...] wailing and whining song' – a variation on its earlier organic, night-time breathing – which is made 'barbaric and unearthly' by running backwards. The two boys watch from their hiding place as Cooger operates the mechanism. The abrupt

³⁷ Bradbury, 'Death Warmed Over', p. 102.

³⁸ Bradbury, *The Stories*, pp. 487-92.

³⁹ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 20.

transformation in 'The Black Ferris', where Cooger steps in as an adult and steps out as a child, is here slowed, with Cooger growing taller then shorter, and his face 'like wax shaped to an unseen hand'.⁴¹

The carousel's actions complete, the young Cooger steps off, now the same physical age as Peter and Hank, but 'with ancient wisdom and evil in his eyes and mouth, in the way he moves and walks'.⁴² Hank wants to turn him over to the police, whereas excitable Peter sees an opportunity for *them* to ride the carousel. Peter is succumbing to the lure of the carnival – a story development new to this treatment – and speculates that running the carousel forwards will allow them to become older.

The carousel sequence draws together the three major themes of *The Dark Carnival*. First, the theme of things that come and go from nowhere, as the carousel's endless rotation - like that of the barber pole - brings into existence the supernatural being that is the younger Cooger. Second, the theme of choices relating to good and evil, as this turn of events leads the boys to take up opposing positions on the spectrum of good and evil – Hank wanting to do the right thing, Peter being drawn in to whatever evil the carnival represents. Third, the reconciliation of present and future, as Peter sees the carousel as an opportunity to become an adult, a typically immature conception of what adulthood is about, full of wants but devoid of responsibilities:

[REDACTED]

43

This brings conflict, with Peter eager to leap recklessly ahead, while Hank insists that a sensible person grows up in proper time: '[...] growing slow, getting used to it. You got to take time to get used to it [...] We all got to do our own growin"'. For Hank, what Peter proposes is cheating. Peter acknowledges this, but argues 'I bet if you steal and get on the merry-go-round and let it grow you to an older age, you don't even *remember* stealing!' For Peter, *being* guilty and *feeling* guilty are different. The dialogue here, as in parts of 'The

⁴¹ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 26.

⁴² Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 27.

⁴³ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 31.

Black Ferris', reminds us of Twain: Hank is the conscience-torn Tom Sawyer, and Peter the less socially concerned Huck.⁴⁴

The younger Cooger runs the carousel forwards, ageing himself back into Mr Cooger. As in 'The Black Ferris', the machine runs out of control, and when it stops, Cooger is an 'ancient mummy' with a 'dying wheeze' of breath.⁴⁵ Having seen the result of running the carousel forwards as *he* wished to use it, and having caused it to run out of control, Peter for the first time begins to consider consequences of his actions. For a while, he and Hank are of one mind again as they call the police.

The police are shown the electric chair: a performer receives a charge which they use to shock audience members, a routine Bradbury had described in his short story 'The Electrocutation' (1946). Here, the Illustrated Man uses it to revive Cooger, thus suggesting the boys are lying about Cooger's death. The police's interpretation and the boys' diverge: the police see a harmless carnival act, while the boys see a horrific re-animation of a corpse.

Simpson insists on the truth from his son, but Hank finds the truth isn't believed and yields to telling a simpler lie, which is to 'confess' to being the thieves Mrs Foley claims them to be (and which we know them to be innocent of). Unable to reconcile this odd state of affairs, Simpson lies awake all night as he lives up to his earlier stated belief that 'After midnight, a man's thoughts belong to him. They just happen, in the dark. And they can't be bought or sold...'. His need to find answers sends him across the dark night meadow to see the carnival for himself, convinced that it 'is up to something'.⁴⁶ A black shadow crosses over him, simultaneously awakening the boys in their respective houses. Although in three different locations, Peter, Hank and Simpson are united through the use of parallel action by their sense of foreboding brought on by a dark balloon which (according to Peter) is searching for them.

Mr Simpson is drawn to the open-air mirror maze, and sees himself reflected endlessly.⁴⁷ This sequence reinforces the theme of personal past, present and future, by confronting him with increasingly aged reflections of himself. He is staggered to 'see what waits for

⁴⁴ Compare, for example, Tom Sawyer's conscience on show in chapter 11 of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, when he tosses and turns in his sleep after witnessing the murder of Muff Potter.

⁴⁵ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 36.

⁴⁶ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, pp. 55-6.

⁴⁷ Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928) features a sequence in a hall of mirrors. Another prominent cinematic mirror maze is in the climax of Welles' *The Lady From Shanghai* (1947).

every man up ahead in the years'.⁴⁸ The treatment has, by now, firmly established the idea that the carnival is evil and is 'up to something', and has brought the sceptical Simpson to a shared understanding of the boys' unlikely story. But the momentum is not carried forward into the final Act, which starts with another new, normal day.

The boys meet a girl who begs them for help. They discover that she is really Mrs Foley, the third character to have been shown in an age-transforming relationship with the carnival (after Cooger and Simpson). Hank asserts without evidence that Mrs Foley gave the carnival all her possessions in return for restored youth - the first point at which the treatment provides answers about the carnival's purpose. It is, unfortunately, also the point where the treatment begins to look seriously underdeveloped, with a final Act which fails to satisfactorily resolve all that it has carefully laid out.

Hank's theory doubles as a Faustian warning to Peter - 'It's all in the books. If you want something you're not supposed to have, you got to sell your soul' - and once again echoes Tom Sawyer ('It's so in all the books'⁴⁹). However, when Peter questions what a carnival could want with souls, the best answer Hank can manage is 'Evil people just love to torture other folks'.

The sound of the calliope again alerts the boys to the carnival parade. The parade's social legitimacy is a cover for the carnival's insinuation into the town, the breaking out of the frame of the controlled entertainment, and violating the normalcy of the people's lives. The parade acts like the Pied Piper, attracting everyone into the street, and luring some into joining its caged attractions. The parade sequence, like the carnival arrival, carousel and Mr Electrico sequences, is a highlight of the treatment, using careful intercutting of the parallel actions of (1) the parade behaving normally; (2) the boys sneaking around the parade, trying to watch it yet not be seen by it; and (3) members of the parade furtively trying to locate the boys' hiding place. Bradbury's use of space and pace is carefully controlled during the sequence. The parade is brought to a halt by a silent whistle blown by the Illustrated Man. The parade line disperses and infiltrates the crowds, seeking more souls to recruit for the carnival. The Illustrated Man strides forward, parting the crowd into two. This elegant control of the two-dimensional space is enhanced further with a camera descent down to (and through) a drain grating to reveal the boys hiding under the street.

⁴⁸ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 60.

⁴⁹ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 67.

Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, ch. 33.

While the 'set-piece' of the parade is executed well, the linking material and expository dialogue shows weaknesses, such as Hank's unconvincing rationale for the boys now turning to Ellis for assistance, rather than to their parents ('He's the only one in town might help us! The whole town's against us now'⁵⁰).

Ellis seeks to divert the Illustrated Man by engaging him in conversation. The Illustrated Man claims to be the boys' symbolic father: 'The marrow of my bones; the blood of my heart; all the passion of my life lies in them'. As he speaks, his tattooed face 'hides one emotion under another,' a metaphoric detail with little possibility of being directly filmable, as he refers to 'My boys, my lost boys!' - a possible reference to J.M.Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911). He generates tattoos of the boys' faces on the palms of his hands and, enraged by Ellis' obstructions, squeezes his hands until they bleed, self-inflicted stigmata. The blood drips down onto the boys in the drain below. When finally alone, Ellis suggests to the boys that he is now implicated with them - just as Simpson was earlier with the passing of the balloon- and proposes that they meet in a safe place: the library. Soon, however, the Illustrated Man arrives there, and the place of enlightenment is invaded by a force of darkness. He pursues the boys through the stacks. The Witch appears, rapidly moving her hands to magically sew up the boys' eyes and ears.

As the treatment heads rapidly towards a conclusion, it resorts to an enormous amount of plot summary - a reminder that this is still an unfinished work whose details have yet to all be expanded. One block of exposition gives an account of Simpson finding and reviving Ellis, taking part in a 'Bullet Trick' act, and how the Tarot Witch is killed by Ellis. Her death brings the peremptory closure of the entire carnival and dispersal of the crowds. Furious, the Illustrated Man pounds out a chord on the calliope keyboard, like Lon Chaney in the *Phantom of the Opera*.

Finally, in rapid succession as written, but much in need of expansion into proper screenplay style, the boys, Ellis and Simpson 'know' that the way to destroy the carnival is to destroy Cooger, and so they cut the power to his electric chair; the tattoos on the Illustrated Man are found to control the freaks 'by changing the shape and form of their Fates on his body'; and the Illustrated Man is shot by Peter firing 'a bullet through the

⁵⁰ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 72.

thousand mirrors, killing a thousand images of evil' in the mirror maze. The tattoos fade away from the Illustrated Man's dead body.⁵¹

As narrative, *The Dark Carnival* has some severe weaknesses in this form. Its conclusion is more a de-fusing of the carnival and a tidying-up operation than a dramatic resolution. The logic of killing Cooger is unexplained. The library as a place of knowledge in opposition to ignorance and evil, implied in Act One, survives in principle into Act Three, but becomes little more than a hiding place for the boys. The three major themes carefully raised in Act One, and followed up in Act Two, are barely addressed in the resolution. The reconciliation of personal past, present and future is never achieved by any of the characters drawn into this theme, and indeed this theme is not alluded to beyond Act Two. The themes of good and evil and of the eternal cycle disappear with the carnival itself, but there is no reflection on these themes by any character. The treatment succeeds primarily through audio-visually powerful set-pieces in the first two acts in contrast to the normalcy of the small town, but fails to provide an adequately resolved narrative except in the broad sense of good defeating evil. The presence of so much condensed action in Act Three; the ambiguity of the role of Cooger; the indecision as to whether this is a circus or a carnival; and the ultimate failure to resolve any of the characters' needs combine to create the impression that this is a work in progress, perhaps two-thirds of the way to becoming a coherent screenplay. Eventually, this partial screen work was abandoned in favour of developing it as a novel – and the novel, fortunately, addresses most of these weaknesses.

3.3 Mise en scène

Stephen Price identifies three modes of possible scene description in screenplays: 'Description' details elements such as costume, 'reporting' gives detail of any action that takes place, and 'comment' provides editorial information that cannot transfer directly onto the screen (and therefore tends to be deprecated).⁵² Through description and reporting, a screenwriter is able to contribute to the film's *mise en scène*, traditionally understood as the artistic control of elements presented to the camera, as enacted through

⁵¹ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 86.

⁵² Price, *Screenplay*, p. 114.

scenic design, costume, lighting, and movement of performers.⁵³ While the practice of *mise en scène* is considered the responsibility of a film director assisted by technical crew, a screenplay inevitably draws up minimum requirements for each scene, and often more.

The Dark Carnival is silent about some aspects of *mise en scène*. For example, there is little detail in description of costumes, and not much emphasis on the time period of the film – it is only through signifiers like the ‘small town’ and its traditional barber and cigar-store Indian that the treatment suggests an early twentieth-century setting. On other elements, however, Bradbury has much to say. In the opening scenes, he establishes the heat by describing shoppers in shirtsleeves and light dresses, hardware store parts gleaming in the intense sun, dialogue about hot bed sheets, the barber applying a hot towel to a man’s face intercut with the refreshing ‘snake-hissing’ cooling of a soda being poured. In all of these uses of visual (and aural) imagery, he is using the two sensory channels available to the filmmaker, sight and sound, to generate another sense impression (heat) which is not directly available.

In other places, he uses simile to indicate both what should be shown and the impression it should make. For example, his repeated use of Moon imagery to emphasise the boys’ faces in their windows ‘like small moons’, or the ‘round lunar face of the court house clock’.⁵⁴ Sometimes similes are used to supplement more direct description, so as to provide both a specification for the content of the shot and a sense of the mood or feeling that shot should elicit. This allows Bradbury as screenwriter to make use of metaphor while avoiding the criticism of detailing the unfilmable. Two examples of this technique occur in different places in the electric chair sequence:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁵³ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: an Introduction*. 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), pp. 112-140.

⁵⁴ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 44-5.

In each example, the first sentence states unambiguously the action that needs to be captured on camera, while the second sentence by itself would be too literary to serve the descriptive or reporting function of scene description – it is an example of Price's deprecated 'comment'.⁵⁶ It so happens in each example that the second sentence presents a gothic metaphor conveying a strong atmosphere, and perhaps represents an attempt by screenwriter-novelist Bradbury to gain directorial control over how the narrative is imagined, taking us back to the issues of 'textual politics' and the debate over how specific a film script should be.

We see the same issues with Bradbury's attempt to choreograph camera movement in relation to the unfolding of a scene. The most striking and stylistic choices are the occasional use of a free-flying camera as 'we rush across from town to country'; and again where 'Far from above the town, as if the CAMERA were a nightbird flying, we see the two small figures running in the middle of the moon-washed streets'.⁵⁷ This sequence develops into the scene where the carnival arrives and sets up in total darkness, the carnival folk just silhouettes. The effect gives a sense of geography, indicating the relative position and isolation of the meadow, along with a sense of scale and of the urgency of the boys' mission. A similar technique on a smaller scale is used in several places to emphasise the boys' fleetness of foot, as where 'the camera runs with their feet' and where the camera follows the boys weaving in and out of the crowd during the parade sequence.⁵⁸

3.4 Montage

Bradbury's awareness of the power of editing is displayed in four major 'set-pieces' of *The Dark Carnival*, namely the setting-up of the carnival, the carousel sequence, the Mr Electrico sequence, and the carnival parade.

The set-pieces make use of what might be called an 'Eisensteinian' montage, in the sense of constructing a story out of a sequence of juxtaposed images to illuminate a theme. In Sergei Eisenstein's words, 'any two pieces of film stuck together inevitably combine to

⁵⁶ Price, *Screenplay*, p. 114.

⁵⁷ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 16-18.

⁵⁸ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 10; p. 68.

create a new concept, a new quality born of that juxtaposition'.⁵⁹ This is a re-statement, without attribution, of the so-called Kuleshov effect. From this basic principle, Eisenstein develops two notions of montage: a common but weaker form where individual film sections can be more or less anything; and a more demanding, stronger form where each clip itself illuminates something of the theme which eventually emerges from the montage.

The theme of the carnival arrival sequence is of the threatening blackness of the carnival and its natural oneness with the night.⁶⁰ Bradbury creates such individual images as:

- the canvases that come to life in the wind with the corresponding 'prehistoric sound of the pterodactyl as the tents arch'
- The tents which the darkness renders as 'velvet tents, like mourning cloths and bits of funeral wrapping'.
- The dark figures who move everything.
- The silence, punctuated by the sighs of the calliope 'when the wind touches its high gothic pipes'.

The sequence is carefully broken down so that each paragraph suggests a single camera shot, and this provides the montage effect, with the individual images listed above cutting to periodic reaction shots of the boys. At the same time, the use of adjectives, metaphors and similes makes the sequence literary in the sense defined by Viktor Shklovsky, where 'A work is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception'.⁶¹ This impeding of the reader's perception would be inappropriate in the context of a shooting script where immediacy and clarity are essential, but in a script or treatment designed to sell an idea to a producer, it is arguable that 'literariness' may be a strong attractor, particularly from a writer with an established literary reputation.

Bradbury makes similar use of Eisensteinian montage in the carousel sequence, but pointedly avoids cutting during the ageing of Cooger, where the 'seeing is believing' principle is relied upon. Here, he instead describes the action with a single paragraph (implying a single camera shot), but allows the repetitive, cyclical action of the rotating

⁵⁹ Sergei Eisenstein, *Problems of Film Direction* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), p. 11.

⁶⁰ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 19-20.

⁶¹ Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, edited by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24.

merry-go-round to break up the action as, with each rotation, Cooger clicks another year younger.⁶² In the Mr Electrico sequence, he relies much more on actions and reactions as Cooger is brought to life.⁶³

4 The Novel

4.1 Literary and visual innovations

Bradbury's 1962 novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* carries forward many of the elements of the un-filmed treatment *The Dark Carnival*, but revises the entire cast of characters. Additional themes emerge which allow the treatment's troublesome third act to be more satisfactorily resolved. In overall structure, the novel inherits its three distinct stages from *The Dark Carnival* (here identified as 'I Arrivals', 'II Pursuits', and 'III Departures'), making *Something Wicked* Bradbury's second successive novel to adopt a film-like three-part structure, the earlier one being *Fahrenheit 451*.

The novel's title moves away from carnival allusion, instead invoking a prophetic utterance from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Act IV, scene I): 'By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes'. Equally important as the prophecy is the idea of being in one fixed place and being visited by evil, in this case the carnival which comes to take over the town. The Shakespearean quotation may further give promise of a literary experience elevated from the level of 'weird tale', since the very use of a quotation from a literary work produces, according to Gérard Genette, 'echo[es] that provide the text with the indirect support of another text, plus the prestige of a cultural filiation'.⁶⁴

Before entering into the narrative, we encounter an array of paratextual elements which give further prospect of the work to follow, beginning with a dedication to Gene Kelly, whose *Invitation to the Dance* sparked Bradbury's creation of the novel, and followed by a series of literary epigraphs and a prologue. The epigraphs form a sequence: the first (from Yeats) defining the human condition, and the second (from Proverbs) defining the evildoer. The third, the jauntily resigned 'I'll go to it laughing,' comes from Stubb, second mate of

⁶² Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 27.

⁶³ Bradbury, *The Dark Carnival*, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), p. 91.

Melville's *Moby Dick*. Here, it ironically foreshadows the resolution of *Something Wicked* itself, which is different from the resolution of *The Dark Carnival*.

The prologue establishes the third-person narration of the novel, which contrasts with the voice-less narrative of *The Dark Carnival*. In place of the treatment's immediate establishment of place and time through visuals, the novel's prologue appeals instead to childhood memory:

Take September, bad month: school begins. Consider August, a good month: school hasn't begun yet [...] October, now. School's been on a month and you're riding easier in the reins'.⁶⁵

This 'you' rhetoric might appear to treat the reader as a child, perhaps suggesting this is a book *for* children, but it more strongly suggests an interlock of adult recollection of childhood, and thus casts the reader into a nostalgic mind-set. The effect is to place the reader into a comfortable situation from which to be disrupted later, and also to set up the theme of adult and child perspectives which runs throughout the novel.

A distinctive difference between *The Dark Carnival* and *Something Wicked* is the cast, indicating that this is not just a simple translation from one medium to another. Hank becomes Will Halloway, a name suggesting determination or desire, coupled with saintliness. In striking contrast, Peter is now Jim Nightshade, with a forename echoing Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and a surname reminding us of a deadly plant and darkness, appropriate for a character drawn to the appeal of the evil Mr Dark.

In one of the most striking introductions of symbolism into the novel as it is transformed from a screen treatment, Will and Jim are positioned as clear opposites. Although the same age, the pair were born one minute either side of midnight at Halloween. The boys are a week away from reaching the age of fourteen, suggested as a significant age, the time they 'grew up overnight'.⁶⁶

In a new sequence with no counterpart in *The Dark Carnival*, lightning-rod salesman Tom Fury arrives in Green Town 'just ahead of the storm'.⁶⁷ His name suggests anger or rage, and even his 'storm-dark clothes' and 'cloud-coloured hat' identify him with the very storm he announces. He intuits the opposites that Will and Jim represent when he says that 'Some folks draw lightning, [...] Some folks' polarities are negative, some positive'. In his

⁶⁵ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁷ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 5.

prophetic tone he could be *Moby Dick*'s Elijah, but in his obsession to track storms and tame lightning he sounds like Ahab himself as he declares, 'I'll chart hurricanes, map storms, then run ahead shaking my iron cudgels, my miraculous defenders, in my fists'.⁶⁸ Fury's experience of lightning is summed up with a photographic metaphor:

'Any boy hit by lightning, lift his lid and there on his eyeball [...] find the last scene the boy ever saw! A box-Brownie photo, by God, of that fire climbing down the sky [...]'⁶⁹

This is another echo of Ahab, whose 'scorched face' in Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay is equally etched by 'a livid, whitish scar, an endless seam cut in the trunk of a tree by white-hot lightning'.⁷⁰

The novel's third-person narration uses what Gérard Genette refers to as variable internal focalisation: the narrator is able to alter the viewpoint amongst a limited set of key characters, and to detail not just visible behaviour (as is the case in the scene directions in the treatment), but to enter into their thoughts, all the while reporting in the third person.⁷¹ This narrational choice emerged through experimentation, as Bradbury had earlier attempted a draft of the novel in the first person, with Will Halloway as narrator.⁷² The subjective nature of that draft is emphasised by its working title, *Jamie and Me*, which casts the work as one character's account. From surviving pages of the *Jamie and Me* draft it is possible to see how the first-person approach draws the narrative more closely to the experiences and thought processes of Will. For example, during the carnival arrival scene, Will reports:

I don't say a spider was there, I don't say it. It was as if the ropes of the tent and the wires, the few of them, and the poles themselves caught hold of the clouds and tore them away from the sky in flags [...] And when the clouds had gone on, the tent was all built and rippled its black canvas under the stars. And me and Jamie were shivering there, far from town.⁷³

While the events in this scene are broadly the same as in the treatment (and in the finished novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*), this intermediate draft demonstrates an

⁶⁸ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Bradbury, *Moby*, p. 62.

⁷¹ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1983), p. 190.

⁷² Eller & Touponce, *Life*, pp. 256-92.

⁷³ Ray Bradbury, *Jamie and Me* (unpublished novel draft). Located in Bradbury's "Something Wicked This Way Comes!" Discarded Pages 1961-62 folder.

inserted consciousness which becomes increasingly personal. The domination of Will's consciousness remains through to the final, third-person narration of the published novel, which tends to focalise through Will even while the narrator's voice is detached from him.

Bradbury's switch to third-person narration may have been to accommodate the rising importance of Mr Halloway in the story. The *Jamie and Me* draft retains the dual characters of Ellis (library janitor) and Mr Halloway (Will's father), and with the narration focalised strictly through Will, Mr Halloway remains sidelined. The merger of Ellis and Halloway into a single character who is both parent *and* library janitor seems to have coincided with the switch from first-person to third-person narration. The consequent focalisation of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, operating mostly through Will and just occasionally through Mr Halloway is thus able to negotiate a path that reflects an adult's perspective on a child's view of the world. For example, chapter 3 is focalised entirely through Halloway as he thinks about the two boys, and about his own life so far.

Whereas *The Dark Carnival* is surprisingly noncommittal in visualising the boys' appearance, the novel is specific and poetic. Will is 'blond-white as milk thistle', while Jim's hair is 'wild, thick, and the glossy colour of waxed chestnuts'. Will has a naïve eye, 'bright and clear as a raindrop', while Jim's eyes are 'fixed to some distant point within himself' and are 'mint rock-crystal green'.⁷⁴ The language here references nature, but the specific metaphors suggest physical and behavioural opposites, so that the potential for conflict is stored within the boys. The novel's description of them - 'they just wanted to run forever, shadow and shadow' - seems like a translation of the running, camera-tracking scenes in the screen treatment, but the novel extends the metaphor with a succession of images resembling a cinematic montage: 'their hands slapped library door handles together, their chests broke track tapes together, their tennis shoes beat parallel pony track over lawns [...]'.⁷⁵ The novel's symbolism, therefore, often finds expression in cinematic imagery.

A key addition to the cast is Mr Dark, who in *The Dark Carnival* had been a largely unseen presence. His entrance is grand and theatrical, described in nautical terms which recall the first appearance of Ahab in Bradbury's *Moby Dick* screenplay:

But then a tall man stepped down from the train caboose platform like a captain assaying the tidal weathers of this inland sea. All dark suit, shadow-

⁷⁴ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 12.

faced, he waded to the centre of the meadow, his shirt as black as the gloved hands he now stretched to the sky.⁷⁶

Mr Dark completes the carefully crafted cast of the novel. Jim aches for adulthood, Mr Holloway is tired and saddened by it; Will is torn between the two. The distinct absence of a father for Jim, giving him no reference point for what it is to be a man, creates a vacuum into which Mr Dark can step. Mr Holloway resolves the story of *Something Wicked* by realising the power of unplanned joy, in a way re-finding his youthful self. The novel makes great play of comparison and contrast of pairs of characters, Will and Jim especially. As well as their physical differences, the placement of their two houses creates a mirror effect. We learn that Jim usually looks directly at things (he can't look away) but Will looks off to one side. Will's fear of losing Jim – Jim repeatedly running ahead, disappearing from sight, going off on his own – occasionally casts Will as a worried parent. Later, other character mirrors are introduced. Jim and Dark are presented as reflections of each other, 'each examining the other as if he were a reflection in a shop window'.⁷⁷ There is also a mirroring of Mr Holloway and Mr Dark, and the novel's resolution effectively puts Mr Holloway in place of Mr Dark in Jim's world; he becomes the surrogate father.

There is a pairing, too, of major locations, derived directly from *The Dark Carnival*. The carnival is a reflection of novelty, excitement and spectacle; and of the unknown, darkness and nightmares; and of the end of innocence and the approach of difficult adolescence. In opposition to this, the town library is presented as a beacon of knowledge, enlightenment; and is a refuge. It is a place of escape, both in the sense of 'escapism', but literally, too, as the boys try to escape from Mr Dark. This pairing quite obviously provides a frame of reference for good and evil, albeit with no apparent reference to religion.

The pairing of characters and settings is given greater thematic reinforcement through the novel's cinematic development of reflections and mirrors. Will comes to an early realisation that his father resembles him – 'like *me* in a smashed mirror!'⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Mr Holloway sees the Mirror Maze, which lies in wait, housing 'a multifold series of empty vanities'. Holloway oscillates: 'I'll *go* there [...] I *won't* go there. I *like* it [...] I *don't* like it'.⁷⁹ Whereas *The Dark Carnival* had Holloway as the first to enter the mirror maze and see himself getting older, in the novel it is Miss Foley who is the first to experience its age-changing

⁷⁶ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 52.

⁷⁷ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 76.

⁷⁸ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 56.

magic, and she sees her younger self. When Jim vanishes, giving Will a severe fright, he turns up half-in, half-out of the mirror maze. Having seen the allure of the glass and having witnessed Miss Foley's experience, he is drawn to the Maze's fathomless depths. He can't articulate why this should be, or what he hopes to achieve, but there is something magical and 'adult' about going in there and risking death.

We saw above how Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* uses a broadly cinematic, scenic method of storytelling. Now in *Something Wicked* we see a similar approach, especially in scenes carried forward from *The Dark Carnival*: Bradbury breaks the novel text into chapters, often short ones, with local climaxes. This naturally has a counterpart in the screen treatment, where action progresses through individually climactic scenes. However, there are many passages where a more literary approach is adopted, and others with a blend of the cinematic and the literary.

An effective example of the latter is Will and Jim's first meeting with Halloway in the library. On their arrival, Bradbury halts the action ('They stopped') and presents a tableau, a prose-poem in which the library is 'a land bricked with paper and leather', contains the screams of thousands of people, spices from far lands, alien deserts. This is an accumulation of sense-impressions which exceeds what could easily, directly, be rendered in a film, and which deepens the impact that the library has for the boys – and for the reader.⁸⁰ Out of the tableau emerges an 'oldish man', focalised via Will, whose stream of thoughts first sees an old man, then considers how other people might see the man as an 'ancient uncle', and finally acknowledges the old man as his father. The surprise – 'always a surprise' – of seeing his father in this way is mirrored by Mr Halloway looking back at Will, or at least is mirrored in Will's *impression* of his father's response. The narration seems to speak Will's thoughts as it considers, 'Was Dad shocked to see he owned a son who visited this separate 20,000 fathoms-deep world?' The narration's reply is that 'Dad always seemed stunned' by the gulf of age between them, which seems to have deepened as Halloway has become not older, but just old.⁸¹ While this sequence could be conceived as a conventional sequence of camera shots, it is difficult to imagine a direct cinematic translation that could manage the subtle fluidity of perspective that the narration achieves here.

⁸⁰ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 13.

⁸¹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p.14. Note the '20,000 fathoms' reference - the place from which the creature of Bradbury's 'The Fog Horn' rises up.

There is more sophisticated layering of signification in an event not present in *The Dark Carnival*. Mr Halloway is apprehensive when the man putting up posters in the street incongruously whistles a Christmas song in October. The passage depends for full effect on the reader's recognition of a popular carol. The whistled tune resolves in Halloway's mind as 'I Heard the Bells', which in turn triggers his recollection of the the song's lyrics. Only the first and last verse are reproduced in the text, the intermediate verses remaining unspoken, interrupted by Halloway's 'terrified elation' as he recalls images of 'the innocents of the earth wandering the snowy streets [...] among all the tired men and women whose faces were dirty with guilt, unwashed of sin'.⁸² Halloway's reaction, we might assume, is to the omitted portion of the carol, which derives from the poem 'Christmas Bells' by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.⁸³ After Halloway's reaction comes the final, upbeat verse of the carol/poem, in which 'the Wrong shall fail/The Right prevail', after which the man's whistling dies. The obvious ellipsis in an extended chain of signification relies heavily on a literary effect, in a similar way that *Fahrenheit 451* depends for some of its effects on extended literary allusion.

A later scene depends firmly on a cinematic effect, the 'dance of the eyes'. Halloway holds a crumpled carnival flyer and tries to hide it. Will spots it, and wants to discuss it – but decides that he can't, as it would force his father to reveal it. His mother knows nothing of the handbill, the carnival, or of what preoccupies her husband. The scene is ostensibly about the handbill, but it develops into Will's thoughts on his inability to communicate with his father: 'He could not often speak with Dad anywhere in the world, inside or out'. In this instance, though, Will perceives that things are different; his father in his response to the carnival is the voice of truth, which makes 'the ear want to follow and the mind's eye to see'.⁸⁴

Chapter 11 sees the arrival of the carnival train. Whereas the treatment describes the engine only as 'small and antique', thus giving an immediate impression of the whole as if in long shot, the novel conjures up something more powerful and threatening, as revealed by the equivalent of a series of close-ups: 'link by link, engine, coal-car, and numerous [...] cars that followed the firefly-sparked churn, chant, drowsy autumn hearthfire roar'.⁸⁵ With the carnival's arrival, the novel uses a specifically non-cinematic technique to contrast what

⁸² Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 25.

⁸³ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, complete edition. (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1871), p. 334.

⁸⁴ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, pp. 36-7.

⁸⁵ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 47.

a carnival 'should' be – 'all growls', 'roars', 'explosions of lion dust', 'men ablaze with working anger' – with what the boys actually witness in the quiet dark. Bradbury uses a filmic metaphor for the monochrome activity of the carnival setting up:

But this was like old movies, the silent theatre haunted with black-and-white ghosts, silvery mouths opening to let moonlight smoke out, gestures made in silence so hushed you could hear the wind fizz the hair on your cheeks.⁸⁶

The novel has several scenes with strongly visual innovations. The 'frost maiden', a woman frozen in a block of ice, is new to the novel, and has no counterpart in *The Dark Carnival*. Tom Fury sees her as the equivalent of various art forms: the marbles of Rome and Florence, paintings in the Louvre, and – significantly – films he has seen on the big screen, 'towering and flooding the haunted dark'.⁸⁷

Chapter 6's 'theatre' scene is also new to the novel. A curious scene which shows the boys grasping for an adult perspective; it finds Jim up a tree, from where he can look through a window and see people engaging in sexual activity. The relatively innocent watching in the short story 'The Black Ferris' has here evolved into a highly charged voyeurism. Jim is strongly drawn to the 'theatre'. Will is curious, but exhibits a mix of bafflement ('What're they *doing!* [...] What's wrong with them, what's *wrong!?*') and moral revulsion ('Don't look back!').⁸⁸ The scene underlines the difference between Jim and Will – Jim's disregard of morality and his curiosity; Will's moral sense and suppression of curiosity – and signals a shift in their relationship when Jim looks down at Will and sees a stranger. The overt metaphor of the theatre – implying a performance watched from a distance by an unseen audience – is actually represented in the novel cinematically, with the camera eye strictly holding to Will and Jim's point-of-view.

The novel makes extensive use of the allure of the visual. For example, Jim's first confrontation with the 'personality' of the carnival is through his encounter with Robert (Mr Cooger transformed into a child). Robert exhibits a strange oscillation between boy and man – a mirroring of what is happening to Jim throughout *Something Wicked*. The description of Robert in action, physically a boy, but behaving in a much more alien way, makes him more horrifying and 'weird' than in previous tellings of the story:

[...]a small pretty boy's face, but almost as if holes were cut where the eyes of Mr Cooger shone out, old, old [...] And through the little nostrils cut in the

⁸⁶ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, pp. 52-3.

⁸⁷ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 44.

⁸⁸ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 29-30.

shiny mask, Mr Cooger's breath went in steam, came out ice. [...] Cooger, somewhere behind the eye-slits, went blink-click with his insect-Kodak pupils.⁸⁹

Something Wicked's characters are drawn to curious visual detail: Tom Fury is drawn to the woman in the ice; Miss Foley is drawn to the mirror maze; Jim is drawn to the carousel. Often they are irreversibly changed by what they see – 'It's too late...we saw!' yells Jim in chapter 18.⁹⁰

The final paragraph of the book resolves the symbolism, and restores normality through a Hollywood ending:

Then, as the moon watched, the three of them together left the wilderness behind and walked into the town.⁹¹

4.2 Reviews of the novel

Something Wicked This Way Comes received mixed reviews. Irish novelist and short story writer Val Mulhern found the novel 'a sorry lapse', a piece of 'horrific whimsy', and 'incredibly puerile'.⁹² *The Guardian's* Norman Shrapnel praised its 'devilry' which 'manages to be at the same time both sinister and moral,' but found it 'smokier and windier' than Bradbury's previous work.⁹³

Historical mystery novelist Lillian De La Torre acknowledged Bradbury as a writer of horror stories and thoughtfully discerned the role of Halloway as the boys' 'champion', and found suitably 'eerie' and 'sinister' qualities in the depiction of the carnival. However, she found fault in the novel's absence of 'rationale, some co-ordinated scheme of evil' which can finally be 'countered in its own terms' rather than be driven out by Mr Halloway's constructive use of laughter.⁹⁴

The most scathing review echoes De La Torre's criticism, and pinpoints Bradbury's logic – the cinematic strength of the novel – as the book's biggest shortcoming. Novelist and critic Kingsley Amis, already established as a proponent of satirical SF and familiar with

⁸⁹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 87.

⁹⁰ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 81.

⁹¹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 289.

⁹² Val Mulhern, 'Black and White', *Irish Times*, 2 March 1963, p. 3.

⁹³ Norman Shrapnel, review of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Guardian*, 1 March 1963, p.7.

⁹⁴ Lillian De La Torre, 'Nightmare Unlimited', *New York Times*, 4th November 1962, p. BR28.

Bradbury's work, begins his review with an outline of what he sees as the difference between SF and fantasy - the one built on logic and extrapolation, the other built on 'whimsy'. Amis then scathingly summarises the plot of *Something Wicked*, finding most of Bradbury's plot choices to be arbitrary:

A carnival turns up from somewhere under the management of Mr Dark, who is death or the devil or somebody. He operates a carousel which adds to or subtracts from your age somehow, so that a small boy becomes 200 years old and his aunt regresses to childhood. A freak show includes a Fat Man who grew fat through lusting too much or something, and an ex-lightning-rod salesman squashed into dwarfism because he was really a small man in some way.⁹⁵

The amusing review refuses the possibility of symbolism or magic as organising principles of fantasy, and suggests a reviewer hostile to the genre itself as much as to the work under review. Nevertheless, Amis' and De La Torre's reviews identify the issue of rationalising narrative logic in fantasy fiction, an issue which arose again when *Something Wicked* was further developed for screen.

5 The Screenplays

5.1 1974 Screenplay

Bradbury's 1974 attempt to adapt his novel back into a screenplay, written for producers Chartoff-Winkler and Twentieth Century-Fox, runs to 262 pages, immensely long for a feature film script of that time, and indicative of a running time of over four hours. The length comes from its scene-by-scene adaptation of the novel, with few deletions or modifications. Although no director was ever assigned to this script, Bradbury had Sam Peckinpah in mind to direct, and given Peckinpah's supposed recommendation of 'Rip the pages out of the book and stuff them in the camera', it is perhaps not surprising that Bradbury felt empowered to directly translate his novel into screenplay form.⁹⁶ In 1965 correspondence with producer Paul Maslansky, Bradbury had suggested that his earlier

⁹⁵ Kingsley Amis, 'The Words Are Wild', *Observer*, 24 February 1963, p. 24.

⁹⁶ Marchi, p. 124.

screenplay versions were now defunct, and that 'now the novel IS the screenplay. Everything in the novel must be in the screenplay'.⁹⁷

The 1974 screenplay, then, represents a remarkably extreme example of fidelity in adaptation. That said, it does exhibit small but significant alterations of event, character and mode of story advancement, making it more than just a transposition of a text from one form to another. The changes fall into three categories: responses to 'artefacts' of the process of adaptation, where something is carried over from the novel but doesn't work well in the film medium; adjustments to take advantage of the film medium; and adjustments to improve the narrative.

One negative aspect to attempted fidelity in adaptation is constraining the filmic storytelling to whatever was available for use in the novel text. The 1974 screenplay shows two major instances of this. The first is a somewhat abortive use of voice-over narration. The opening pre-credits sequence uses an unidentified third-person narrator whose words establish the strangeness of the early arrival of Halloween, accompanied by visuals of the accelerated arrival of storm conditions: 'a wind blows and the summer dissolves [...] The trees wither before our eyes [...] The leaves run like mice on the sidewalk'.⁹⁸ The narrator disappears for the remainder of the screenplay, and ends up functioning as a paratextual element, corresponding vaguely to the prologue of the novel.

The second instance of the filmic narrative constrained to the novel is also narrational: characters talking to themselves. These are presented not as voice-overs, nor as direct asides to the audience (two conventional methods of allowing expression of inner thoughts) but as characters speaking under their breath, often while others are present. This seems to be an attempt to mimic the novel's fluid focalisation, such as where Mr Holloway talks to himself about the carnival arriving at three in the morning.⁹⁹ In this one instance there is an attempt to use the technique dramatically, since on the other side of the wall, Will is simultaneously talking to himself about what he thinks his father might be doing. It's a potentially awkward technique, but it adds to a visual element in the scene: both Will and Charles touching the wall (from opposite sides) as they speak, creating a sense of communion between them, and an impression that they are mirrors of each other. This visual motif is later picked up when father and son are in the Mirror Maze. In most other cases, however, the muttered commentaries add nothing to the story, compromise

⁹⁷ Ray Bradbury, Letter to Paul Maslansky, 2 August 1965.

⁹⁸ Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, unpublished screenplay, 1974, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, pp. 48-9.

the priority of the visuals, and seem nothing more than an artefact of the story's previous incarnation as a novel.

Despite the ill-advised novelistic narration, Bradbury shows himself to be a capable screenwriter in the adjustments he makes for film. He does this through visual-compositional elements, as well as through implied editing techniques, specification of soundscapes, and creative description of camera coverage.

A particular cinematic technique used systematically throughout is the quick cutaway to past events, recollections, or imagined events. In film editing, these are sometimes referred to as 'concept edits', quick cuts breaking out of the diegetic narrative space to something related to the narrative conceptually rather than by continuity.¹⁰⁰ One early use of the concept edit occurs during the opening sequence, cutting briefly to a party scene with Will lighting the candles on a cake, and Jim blowing them out, an illustration of the boys as complementary characters. It may be a flashback, or it might just be an imagined scene; the reader/viewer isn't to know at this point. Indeed, the very ambiguity of the device is something that the screenplay plays with, as if to unsettle the reader/viewer's sense of what is real and what is illusory. Later, there are quick cuts which are definitely memories, as when the boys recognise Miss Foley's 'nephew', and we see quick flashbacks to him on the carousel and running through town.¹⁰¹ On other occasions, though, the cutaways are evidently to the purely imagined or dreamed. For example, after the boys' encounter with the Dust Witch's balloon, Jim reports dreaming of a forty-foot-long coffin containing the balloon, and there is a brief fantasy cutaway to illustrate this.¹⁰²

The presence and timing of cutaways seems somewhat arbitrary. However, the use of them at all, regardless of the utility of each one, establishes a precedent for conceptual leaps out of continuity which pays off near the end of the script. As Jim approaches the carousel and contemplates jumping on it, there is a quick cut of what he imagines, 'his mouth open eager, his eyes shining, then his hand in which he holds a ticket'. This is followed by intercutting between the real Jim, whose 'eyes turn, turn, follow, follow' the hypnotic rotation of the carousel, and the imagined Jim, 'getting older, older, becoming 18, 19, 20 years old, growing tall, tall before his eyes'.¹⁰³ The intercutting represents deliberation, and

¹⁰⁰ Roy Thompson & Christopher Bowen, *Grammar of the Edit*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Focal Press, 2009), pp. 93-4.

¹⁰¹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, pp. 84-5.

¹⁰² Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 159.

¹⁰³ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 241.

extends the crucial moment of decision, stretching out the suspense of the scene, and is something of a fulfilment of the technique used teasingly throughout the screenplay.

Another area of film/screenplay technique which Bradbury exploits well is the soundscape, best demonstrated in the first library sequence. Will and Jim's touring of the stacks is augmented by sounds, echoing the language already used in the novel:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XX

XX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XX¹⁰⁴

Where the novel text flows more generally between sights, sounds and smells of the library to create an immersive sense impression, here there is a tight, causal association between each image and each sound, a cinematic logic which helps to anchor the more fanciful metaphors in the 'reality' of what we see.

A further use of soundscape simplifies a character moment, but by more active dramatization of the character's musings: in the scene where the Lightning-Rod salesman gazes at the 'most beautiful woman in the world' frozen in a block of ice. In the novel, his appreciation of her beauty triggers recollections of travels to see paintings and sculptures in Rome and Florence. In the screenplay, however, the salesman's reverie is more personal and tragic:

[REDACTED]

105

The combination of visual and aural elements here suggests an unfulfilled promise, implying a powerful want in Tom Fury, in turn echoing the apparent wants and needs of the other characters – specifically Jim's want of his missing father.

¹⁰⁴ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, pp. 33-4.

Finally, when Cooger later becomes extremely aged by the carousel, his scream – ‘of a million dead souls’ - is specified to be ‘the same sound we heard last night when the train passed the tombyard’.¹⁰⁶ This ties together two otherwise disparate elements of the story, and unites two of the strange technologies of the carnival, train and carousel.

In the screenplays considered so far in this study, Bradbury has tended to minimise his reference to camera shots, generally reserving his directions for quite specific and special moments. In this screenplay, perhaps because it is a scene-by-scene dramatization of the novel, he is much more likely to specify camera shots, as if he also sees himself as a director bringing the textual narrative to filmic life. The carnival arrival scene calls for the camera ‘in a long glide and run’ to follow the boys through town, and then film ‘as if the CAMERA were suspended from a helicopter’ as they make their way to the carnival. Throughout, the ‘helicopter-camera paces, follows, hovers, never taking its eye off them’. The idea of this camera technique is prefigured fictionally in Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451*, with the televised pursuit of Montag by the Mechanical Hound. It is likely, too, that Bradbury would have seen helicopter shots used in many films through the 1960s and 1970s, including Truffaut’s creative use of them in *Jules et Jim*.¹⁰⁷

Another sequence where camera shots are specified is where the boys are hiding in a drain. While *The Dark Carnival* implies camera shots through phrases like ‘under the grille’ or ‘above the grille’, the 1974 screenplay blends this style with more frequent explicit specifications such as ‘we shoot up through the iron struts’, and ‘medium close-up’.¹⁰⁸ This gives a sense of the screenwriter anxious to control visual construction and montage, making explicit what is built into the scene descriptions.

We have seen that Bradbury’s screenwriting for *The Martian Chronicles* was an opportunity for the author to re-work or even re-write his text. While the fidelity of the 1974 screenplay of *Something Wicked* shows a much more conservative approach, it nevertheless reveals Bradbury’s tendency to use screenwriting as an opportunity for narrative revision, particularly in its development of Jim. He is here further differentiated from Will, responding even more hot-bloodedly to the lure of the carnival. He appears distinctly ahead of Will in sexual maturity, but still not in intellectual maturity. While the childlike Will sleeps in pyjamas, across in the Nightshade house Jim lies with ‘his arms out over the cover

¹⁰⁶ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 110

¹⁰⁷ For more on Truffaut’s helicopter shots, see Phil Powrie, ‘The Ecstatic Pan’, in *A Companion to Truffaut*, ed. by Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 184-204.

¹⁰⁸ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 166.

so we can see that his shoulders are bare'.¹⁰⁹ To an extent, this merely builds upon dialogue in the novel, retained in the screenplay, to the effect that boys like to keep windows open because of 'warm blood'. Later in the scene, though, he appears at his bedroom window 'stark-bare' and 'naked to the wind'.¹¹⁰ While there is an echo in this element of the early Hank character in 'The Black Ferris' (who runs naked in the rain), the nakedness here emphasises not Hank's child-like desperate determination, but Jim's hot-blooded, approaching adulthood, and his desire to *be* an adult.

There is just one sequence in the screenplay where the action deviates substantially from the novel, albeit briefly. In the novel (chapter 12), Jim impulsively runs off on his own, emphasising his impetuosity, and leaving Will to feel abandoned. The screenplay takes away this action of Jim's, and the boys now become separated for a different reason: Will is torn between his desire to chase after the frightened Miss Foley, and wanting to accompany Jim in looking at the Mirror Maze which frightened her. 'Trapped between, unable to move to follow the teacher, or go back,' it is now Will who becomes separated and, alone on a hill, he sits and contemplates his situation. Eventually Jim appears, but now with the windows of the distant town lighting up, Will is 'stricken with the need for that far warmth'.¹¹¹ This small change in Jim's action benefits the narrative through a brief change of pace, an enhancement of Will as character in conflict, and a potentially greater pay-off when Jim does, at the script's end, act alone. Other changes in the narrative have less overall dramatic significance, but function to clarify the story through enhancements of tone, by the addition of exposition, or by presenting the narrative in a more linear fashion.

Lastly, the screenplay has some passages which give a more sequential presentation of events than in the novel, best exemplified in Halloway's despatch of Mr Dark, who has transformed into a child. The screenplay follows the method of the novel, with Halloway essentially loving Dark to death through a prolonged embrace, but when we compare the texts we can see that the novel implies an all-at-once image of Dark's dying moment, compared to the screenplay's measured succession of images. The novel text is:

There lay dragons slaughtered, towers ruined, monsters from dim ages
toppled into rusted coinages, pterodactyls smashed like biplanes from old and
always meaningless wars, crustacea the color of emeralds abandoned on a

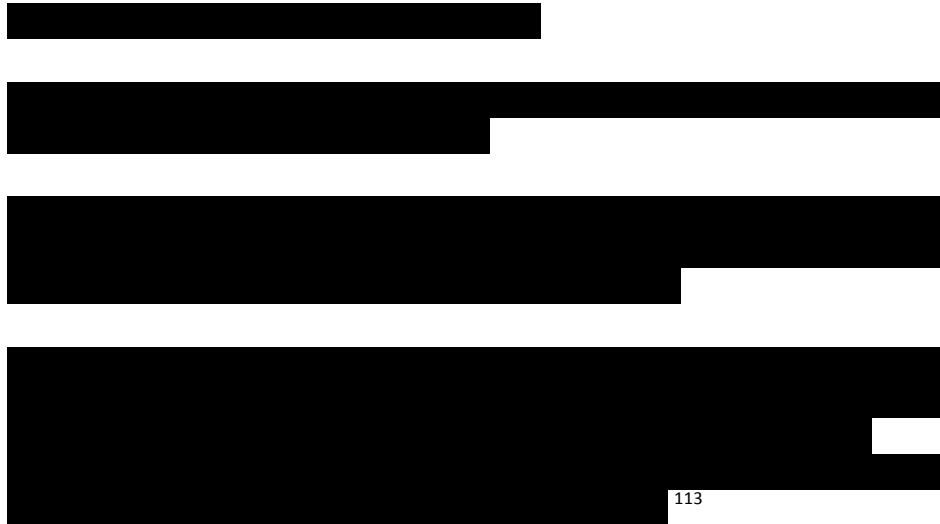
¹⁰⁹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, p. 32.

¹¹¹ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, pp. 60-4.

white sand shore where the tide of life was going out, all, all the illustrations changing now, shifting, shriveling as the small flesh cooled¹¹².

The screenplay text, on the other hand, uses the convention of paragraphing to linger visually on what remains of the carnival owner:



This imagery is now more sequential (and appropriately cinematic) in its transformation from ‘figure’ to ‘fragile body’ to ‘collapsed tissue’. With Dark’s physical dissolution comes disposal of his hold over the freaks, and they are now free.

5.2 1976 Screenplay

The work for Chartoff-Winkler Productions and Twentieth Century-Fox stalled, and in 1976 *Something Wicked* was optioned as a film property by Paramount Pictures and Kirk Douglas’s Bryna Productions.¹¹⁴ Here, film director Jack Clayton was attached to the project for the first time, some years after he and Bradbury had made a promise to work together. Clayton’s credits prior to *Something Wicked* were few, but impressive. ‘I don’t believe in categories of any kind, most particularly for directors’, he said in an interview, explaining why his films ranged from the social realism of *Room at the Top* (1959) through the supernatural *The Innocents* (1961), to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1974).¹¹⁵ Elsewhere, he would explain the diversity of his work by saying ‘I have an absolute horror

¹¹² Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 273.

¹¹³ Bradbury, *Something Wicked* 1974 screenplay, pp. 250-1.

¹¹⁴ Twentieth Century-Fox Option Agreement, 27 September 1976.

¹¹⁵ Gordon Gow, ‘The Way Things Are: Jack Clayton’, *Films and Filming*, April 1974, p. 12.

of repeating myself,' adding 'it's terribly important to try and do something different'.¹¹⁶

This personal dread would eventually lead to a serious schism between Clayton and Bradbury over their respective conceptions of fantasy narrative.

Of all Clayton's films, the one closest to *Something Wicked* is *The Innocents* (1961), based on Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. However, while *Something Wicked* determines that evil is at play in the world, *The Innocents* deliberately courts ambiguity: are the visions seen by the governess ghosts, or a figment of her imagination? While Clayton rightly viewed *The Innocents* as an exploration of the supernatural, his stated reason for being drawn to *Something Wicked* was that it was a fantasy, and 'something I hadn't done before'.¹¹⁷ With both films, though, Clayton's desire was to anchor the unreal elements in reality whenever possible. Describing how this relates to *The Innocents*, he said,

[...]I thought how it might be if I actually saw a ghost sitting at my desk. What would really be the most terrifying thing for me? I might think I was having a hallucination or that it was a trick of the light. But if I suddenly saw a tear[drop] on a piece of paper, I think it would really frighten me very much, as well as being very sad.¹¹⁸

In the case of *Something Wicked*, he expressed his belief that 'unless you set the film solidly in reality from the very beginning, you'll never get the audience to believe the fantasy,' and hence his insistence – as we shall see below – on strong early shots to establish the normalcy of the town.¹¹⁹ *Something Wicked* was, to Clayton 'real 'fantasy-fantasy'', and he felt it necessary to 'keep the fantasy going without the book's absurdities', by which he meant elements such as the Dust Witch's balloon.¹²⁰ These beliefs shaped part of his initial response to Bradbury's 1974 screenplay, a document he took issue with, leading him to prepare a critique which challenged Bradbury's notion mentioned earlier, that 'the novel IS the screenplay'.

Clayton's critique begins by noting a difference between the solitary reader who can be 'completely hypnotised' by Bradbury's prose, and the collective audience who will watch a film. He then identifies seven areas where the 1974 screenplay needs attention in order to make it suitable for filming:

¹¹⁶ John Preston, 'Never Caught Napping in the Same Genre Twice', *The Times*, 22 September 1983.

¹¹⁷ Preston.

¹¹⁸ Gow, p. 14.

¹¹⁹ Preston.

¹²⁰ Randy Lofficier & Jean-Marc Lofficier, 'Ringmaster to a Dark Carnival: Jack Clayton: Directing *Something Wicked This Way Comes*', *Starlog* no. 71, June 1983, pp. 53-55.

- Immediately establishing the normalcy of the small town prior to the arrival of the carnival
- Condensing the script, which is 'infinitely too long'
- Juxtaposing scenes to increase excitement, tension and pace
- Enhancing the horror by removing 'Disneyesque' elements
- Reducing the dialogue
- Varying the horrors, since Clayton specifically 'never believed that everyone is obsessed by the temptation to become younger or older'
- Replacing the 'bullet trick' sequence, because it is 'out of character' for Halloway to kill the Dust Witch so deliberately

In his critique, Clayton also reveals what is for him a fine distinction between the aim of horror and effect of fantasy:

Fear and horror are much more effective to normal people [...] if presented in a way with which they can associate through their everyday lives and do not become fantasy. [...] Fantasy takes one onto a plane of unreality and, I think, dispels true fear.¹²¹

Clayton is not telling Bradbury anything new – many of Bradbury's weird tales from the 1940s begin with characters firmly grounded in the reality of 'normal' lives before the intrusion of fantastic happenings – but he has detected in Bradbury's screenplay the sense of a story whose logic – per Kingsley Amis' scathing review - has drifted further into the fantastic realm and which has consequently diminished its ability to evoke fear.

To demonstrate solutions to these problems, Clayton created a 'rough new construction,' a 34-page treatment condensing the story and giving it more pace. This would go on to form the spine of further screenplay drafts and, eventually, the completed 1983 feature film. Ironically, some of his suggestions are reversions to what Bradbury had earlier written in *The Dark Carnival* - for example, starting the film with a fast sequence of images from the town with Will and Jim running through it. The Lightning-Rod Salesman becomes a crazy man talking to a small crowd as the boys run through, showing him in passing in order to speed up the action. This simple move has the advantage of no longer beginning (as the novel does) with an unusual situation of a salesman selling lightning rods to two talkative

¹²¹ Jack Clayton, 'Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES – Suggested Rough New Construction', 16 September 1976.

children – but it also brings the disadvantage of losing the Salesman’s prophetic sense of foreboding.

Clayton’s other suggestions quicken the pace and make the storytelling more efficient, but some of them take the story more in the direction of Finney’s *Dr Lao*:

- Showing things in passing rather than dwelling on them (such as the barber’s pole).
- Greater use of ellipsis, such as removing a breakfast scene, and showing the sheriff meeting the boys next to a phone box, rather than showing the phone conversation.
- Replacing dialogue with visuals - for example, Halloway talking about books with the boys is replaced by a shot of his pre-chosen books.
- Using direct statement instead of complex allusion - Clayton heads the carnival flyer with the direct ‘All Your Dreams Fulfilled’, and has Will say, ‘Joy is the only true weapon against evil’, a direct statement of the film’s theme.
- Replacing the ‘theatre’, something which both the novel and the 1974 screenplay strive to explain largely through metaphor and euphemism, with a more direct new sideshow act, the ‘Temple of Temptations’. Ironically, given Bradbury’s anxiety over comparisons with Finney, this scene reads like something from *The Circus of Dr Lao*.
- Using cinematic shorthand, so that the viewer will quickly grasp certain actions and events, and easily recall them when they re-appear. (We will know it’s Sunday because Halloway ‘lounges comfortably, reading the Sunday paper’. The Dust Witch silences the boys by simply passing her hand across their mouths.) The most striking use of shorthand comes in a much more systematic use of ‘Free Ride Tickets’ used to entice townsfolk to come to the carnival.
- Replacing the Cooger jewel robbery – a story complication which is really nothing more than an artefact of the screenplay’s origin in ‘The Black Ferris’ - with a much simpler act.
- Removing the Dust Witch balloon sequence, a change which in fact reverts to *The Dark Carnival*.
- Some elements which occur without reason – the basis of Amis’ sarcastic dismissal of the novel – are now ‘planted’ so that they pay off later: the tattoos of the boys

on Mr Dark's hands, Halloway's 'one a day' cigar habit which he later deliberately breaks.

Not mentioned in Clayton's critique, but quite evident in his treatment, is his desire to make the Dust Witch more exotic, deliberately raising her ambiguity. She adopts a different guise each time she appears, suggesting that she is changeable and unpredictable. Her death is then accompanied by a shattering, as her many facets split apart. Clayton is also much more precise about the passage of time, carefully plotting the events of the story over a Friday-Saturday-Sunday sequence, with the characteristics of each day indicated in visuals or dialogue, again adding to the 'weave' of the story.

When Clayton and Bradbury met to discuss the 'rough new construction', the meeting was carefully minuted.¹²² Eight pages of minutes give us a rare glimpse of Bradbury the screenwriter engaging in creative dialogue with a director, and suggest substantial agreement between the two. But here we discover Clayton's desire to eliminate much of the story's repetition, particularly by reducing visits to the mirror maze and the carousel. The minutes capture this in a curious postscript, recording what would eventually become the source of major disagreement between Bradbury and Clayton, ending their friendship:

Special note: If at any time during his writing, Ray feels that it might be possible not to use the carousel – in case there is a danger of over-doing it, on the principle, again, of 'Never coming out of the same hole twice' – it might be worth considering whether it could be eliminated and/or something else substituted.¹²³

Bradbury's new 1976 screenplay adopts almost all of Clayton's suggestions, resulting in a script of 113 pages, less than half the length of the previous one.¹²⁴ This version has more pace, variety and texture than its predecessor. However, in his quest to weed out repetition, Bradbury inadvertently cuts some of the strength of character built up through the novel and the 1974 screenplay draft. The 1976 script succeeds in enhancing the Dust Witch as a disturbingly deceptive character, deliberately cultivating the ambiguity that Clayton had suggested: the script repeatedly prompts the reader to wonder whether the Dust Witch and the 'Most Beautiful Woman in the World' from the block of ice are one and the same. Another key achievement is the enlarging of Dark's frustration in trying to

¹²² R.B./J.C. Meeting: 30 Sept/1 Oct.

¹²³ R.B./J.C. Meeting (continuation 1 Oct), p. 8. In his critique of Bradbury's 1974 screenplay, Clayton had written 'There is a famous saying, I think by a rat, which is: 'Never come out of the same hole twice.'" The expression appears to have originated with Noel Coward, as advice to David Lean.

¹²⁴ Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, second draft screenplay, unpublished, Dec 1976; bound, in Bryna Productions cover.

identify the boys. It also efficiently telegraphs many of the incidental ideas that Clayton had suggested, but in eliminating one of the carousel rides – the out-of-control ageing of Mr Cooger - the screenplay forces an entirely new final act which fails to dramatically resolve several of the major character arcs.

The 'Temple of Temptation' makes a fair substitute for the novel's 'theatre', and Bradbury manages to get more out of the scene by indicating that the Temple's belly-dancers should seem quite normal except when seen through Jim's eyes, thus suggesting that Jim is hyper-curious. However, all other references to Jim's rapid advance through puberty are removed, so the Temple scene now serves no purpose from a character standpoint, but just seems like another demonstration of the carnival's ability to entice.

Following Clayton's suggestion, Halloway is no longer a janitor, but is now the Town Librarian. Now in charge, he can do what he pleases (including playing a harmonica, establishing early on why he conveniently has one at the end of the story).

The library confrontation scene, carefully developed since its first iteration in *The Dark Carnival*, now incorporates two enhancements. From Bradbury's 1974 screenplay, Mr Dark tears page after page from a Bible, the pages turning to ash as they hit the floor as he tries to get Halloway to yield to his enticements. And from Clayton's treatment, Mr Dark's enticement no longer counts down in time, but counts up in age, as Halloway is denied chance after chance of becoming younger. In combining the two actions – Bradbury's visually striking, and Clayton's dramatically clarified – this version of the screenplay results in the most powerful confrontation yet between Dark and Halloway. The scene is so strong that it survives intact into the version of the film actually shot seven years later.

In all previous iterations, Bradbury's story had shown Cooger riding a fairground machine in reverse to turn into a boy, and taking a second ride forwards but losing control, resulting in a hyper-aged Cooger who then becomes Mr Electrico. In the 1976 screenplay, Bradbury follows Clayton's urging in removing the ageing scene; he instead reserves it for the climax of the film (transferring the ageing to Dark instead of Cooger), where it becomes merged with Jim's ride on the carousel.¹²⁵ However, because there is no second ride for Cooger, there is no longer an imperative for the boys to have chased the Cooger/Boy to the fairground; and nor is there a mechanism for Mr Electrico to be created from the aged Mr

¹²⁵ A Clayton memo suggests eliminating Cooger's second ride, or having the boys hear it (not see it). He also suggests eliminating the Electrico scene or moving it to later in the story. Jack Clayton, 'General Notes on October Script', 17 Oct 1976.

Cooger. To work around this, Clayton and Bradbury's solution is to put the Lightning-Rod Salesman into the electric chair, not as Electrico, but simply as torture, so that he might yield the names of the boys which Mr Dark is so desperate to discover. The boys witness these events, creating some sense of jeopardy. However, their presence in the scene is down to chance rather than as a consequence of what has gone before, and so the 1976 screenplay loses much of the story's momentum through this whole sequence.

To 'join the dots' of Clayton's suggested construction of the story, the screenplay now extends Tom Fury's electric chair torture so as to use him to despatch the Dust Witch. The strange attraction to her that Fury had suffered when she was frozen in a block of ice overtakes him, and he rushes at her with a charged lightning rod. This is another action which is causally disconnected from what has gone before, but at least provides a replacement for the 'bullet trick' sequence which Clayton rejected - but by robbing Holloway of the opportunity to kill the Dust Witch, this version of the story also deprives Holloway of much of his heroic status.

Finally, the climax of the screenplay sees Jim stepping onto the carousel – an event we 'know' will happen eventually – but this happens not out of need or desire, but because Dark is enticing him to do it. Jim, therefore, is no longer acting out his hot-bloodedness, his need to reach adulthood ahead of Will, but instead appears weak for being unable to resist Dark.

With Holloway ruled out as hero, and with Jim acting like an automaton, the one character whose arc is permitted to resolve consistently with his earlier needs is Will. By declaring his love for his father in the Mirror Maze, he is able to save him from the Maze's collapse; and by his act of friendship towards Jim, he is able to leap onto the carousel and pull Jim to safety – leaving Mr Dark trapped on the carousel, accelerating rapidly due to a chance lightning strike. Where the novel tends to favour Will's viewpoint by focalising primarily through him, the 1976 screenplay resolves with Will emerging as the central character through his actions.

While the screenplay has some considerable strengths in its first two-thirds, making this a cinematic script rather than a translation of the novel, Clayton's desire to lessen repetition derails the plot. The result is a final act which, like that of *The Dark Carnival* twenty years before, appears hasty and not satisfactorily resolved. Bradbury's own view of the script at this stage, as revealed in a letter to his agent, was that 'It's in good shape [...] the thing

flows, the characters are intact, most of the major scenes are still here. I think it will work on the screen'. However, he acknowledged that 'it's hard to read and see a script you've worked on for so long'.¹²⁶

As so often in the past, though, the project stalled. Paramount withdrew in January 1977, despite some support for the script.¹²⁷ This left Bryna Productions, Bradbury and Clayton still committed to the project, but without the financial backing that would be necessary to proceed. By April 1977, as Bryna began pulling together independent finance, Clayton withdrew. The finance was dependent on Kirk Douglas assuming the role of Halloway, a casting choice that Clayton 'could never believe in': he could not square Douglas's physical ruggedness and dominance with the mild-mannered 'small' man that Halloway needed to be. In addition, Clayton had limited confidence that Bryna's Peter Douglas, a novice producer, would be sufficiently experienced to manage *Something Wicked*, which he described as 'an infinitely more difficult picture to make than it looks on paper'.¹²⁸

5.3 1981 Clayton/Mortimer Screenplay

By the summer of 1980, Walt Disney Productions had developed an interest in *Something Wicked*, and development resumed with Bryna Productions' now more experienced Peter Douglas once again recommending Jack Clayton as director.¹²⁹ The 1976 screenplay was revived, and became the direct basis for the Disney film. However, during the 1981 Writers' Guild of America strike, and without Bradbury's knowledge, Clayton turned to British writer John Mortimer for a 'polish' to the script.¹³⁰

Mortimer, an accomplished dramatist who had previously collaborated on Clayton's *The Innocents* (and best known for *Rumpole of the Bailey*), would later say that he learned more

¹²⁶ Bradbury, Letter to Don Congdon, 16 Dec 1976.

¹²⁷ Bradbury, Letter to Don Congdon, 12 Jan 1977. Stephen Rebello attributes the stalled production to a power-struggle between Paramount chairman Barry Diller and president David Picker. Steven Rebello, 'Something Wicked This Way Comes', *Cinefantastique* vol 13 no 5, June-July 1983, pp 28-49.

¹²⁸ Jack Clayton, Letter to Peter Douglas, 1 April 1977.

¹²⁹ Rebello, p. 32

¹³⁰ 'Tentative Accord Reached in Strike of Screen Writers', *New York Times*, 12 July 1981.

The 1981 screenplay's cover page credits Bradbury alone, but to avoid confusion with other drafts I refer to it as the 1981 Clayton/Mortimer screenplay, reflecting the chief influences on how it differs from earlier drafts.

about screenwriting from Clayton than from anyone else.¹³¹ The result of the Clayton/Mortimer collaboration on *Something Wicked* was the shooting script which served for eventual filming.¹³² While Bradbury interpreted Clayton's turning to Mortimer as a betrayal, associate producer Dan Kolsrud suggests that Clayton would often turn to Mortimer for a script polish because of his own storytelling insecurities.¹³³

This 1981 screenplay – still officially credited solely to Bradbury, despite biographer Sam Weller's report to the contrary¹³⁴ – retains much of the 1976 script, but is slightly expanded (123 pages compared to 113 pages), has some dialogue revisions, and modifies some of the plotting of the earlier draft. While the revision clarifies the story, it also broadens the variety of encounters of townsfolk with the carnival, thus further reducing the repetition which Clayton objected to, and further diluting the significance of the carousel.

New to this version of the script:

- Tom Fury defines the theme of the film in his speech to the assembled townsfolk, when he says 'Storm's a comin' ... to clean your streets and wash away your troubles'.
- The storm is no longer a symbolic accompaniment to the evils of the carnival. Instead, it is something that Mr Dark either wishes to tap into, or something that he fears will destroy the carnival.
- A new character arc for Jim's mother. Now a distinctly lonely character, she seems to be seeking a substitute for her absent husband – until the carnival promises her the chance to meet with him one more time.
- A more distinct arc for Miss Foley, the school teacher. Now established in the school environment in the script's opening scene, she longs to regain her former beauty – until the carnival grants her wish, but simultaneously strikes her blind.

¹³¹ Mortimer, quoted in Neil Sinyard, *Jack Clayton* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), pp.199-200.

¹³² Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, unpublished revised screenplay draft, 24 August 1981. Mortimer is uncredited, indicating his contribution is minor. One contemporary report says his input was merely 'additional dialogue' (Sheridan Morley, 'Brisk Business at the Bar: Interview with John Mortimer', *The Times*, 4 Jan 1982). New scenes in the screenplay were likely created by Clayton and Mortimer in collaboration.

¹³³ Weller, *Chronicles*, p. 308.

¹³⁴ Weller, *Chronicles*, p. 307.

- A specific fate for Mr Tetley, the cigar store owner: in an unconscious throwback to 'The Black Ferris', he rides a Ferris wheel and disappears, re-appearing later as a waxwork exhibit.
- A specific fate for Mr Crosetti, the barber: seduced by the dancing girls of the Temple of Temptation, he is transformed into a bearded lady.
- A more specific background to Mr Halloway's melancholy. No longer a man upset by general mid-life malaise, he is now in stasis because of a specific incident in his past, where he was unable to rescue Will from drowning (he was rescued by Mr Nightshade instead). The screenplay provides no specific resolution of Halloway's stasis other than Will's later declaration of love.

Some elements from the novel and earlier script are excised, the most significant being Halloway's discovery that laughing at the Dust Witch reduces her power. Unfortunately, without Halloway's discovery, his later behaviour at the climax - of singing, dancing and laughing to vanquish the carnival – becomes arbitrary. Equally damaging is that without Halloway's discovery, the killing of the Dust Witch is entirely down to Tom Fury's largely unmotivated actions.

In expanding the ways that the townsfolk can be won over by the carnival, the Clayton/Mortimer revision succeeds in Clayton's stated aim of anchoring the fantasy in the everyday experience of the characters, but does so by diminishing the central characters. Clayton has brought the causal relations of script elements into sharper focus, and thereby built the idea of a central emptiness in the small town which the carnival feeds upon, but has over-simplified Halloway and Will by attributing their problematic relationship to a single event in the past.

Bradbury's view of the script at this time is expressed in a two-page letter to Clayton.¹³⁵ Despite later protestations that Mortimer had 'ruined' the script, Bradbury's letter shows that he approved of it at the time, although he does take exception to revisions to the *Electrico* sequence. Bradbury observes that the dramatic logic of his novel and 'original screenplay'¹³⁶ has the boys responsible for the ageing of Mr Cooger, so that their confrontation with Mr *Electrico* – witnessed by police and medical personnel – operates on two levels: the boys are scared by what they see, but the authorities interpret it as a big joke. Furthermore, the boys' interference motivates Mr Dark to hunt them down in

¹³⁵ Ray Bradbury, Letter to Clayton & Sims, 31 Aug 1981.

¹³⁶ Referring to the 1974 screenplay.

subsequent scenes. The Clayton/Mortimer script, Bradbury points out, omits the Cooger ageing scene, and what remains of the *Electrico* idea is robbed of its causal connections to anything that preceded it and much of what follows. However, Bradbury seems unaware that his own 1976 screenplay takes an almost identical tack in eliminating Cooger's hyper-ageing. It seems likely that Bradbury's objection to the revised *Electrico* scene is really triggered by its diminished dialogue. Where the 1976 screenplay had Mr Dark torturing Tom Fury in order to extract the names of the boys, clearly placing them in jeopardy, the Clayton/Mortimer version now has Dark trying to find out when the storm will arrive. The boys witness this exchange by accident, but it has no personal significance to them.

Bradbury concludes with a statement of his view of how fantasy must operate in relation to a reader/viewer, relying on causal logic to 'prove' the reality. His argument for reinstating Cooger's second carousel ride is clear:

We *see* the machines work, so therefore they must not be fantastic after all [...] The carousel machine kills Cooger (almost), we see it, know it, feel it, so it is *so*. [Emphasis added.]

This places Bradbury fundamentally at odds with Clayton who, right from the start of their work together, had been determined to minimise repetition. His approach, expressed in his phrase 'never come out of the same hole twice,' had led him to numerous creative changes to Bradbury's story, but with Mortimer's dialogue now exposing some of the weaker structures of the Clayton/Mortimer draft, Clayton and Bradbury were in direct opposition.

Something Wicked This Way Comes began filming within a month of Bradbury's critical letter to Clayton. Daily call sheets from the production correlate exactly to the Clayton/Mortimer draft of 24 August 1981, showing that the film was shot exactly as Clayton intended.¹³⁷

By Spring 1982, the film had been assembled into a rough cut, which Bradbury viewed. He told producer Peter Douglas that he 'much loved most of it', and particularly admired the 'spectacular' library scene which he and Clayton had developed back in 1976. Bradbury's chief concern with the rough cut was the *deus ex machina* appearance of lightning, conveniently sending the carousel out of control but without motivation. This would, in his view, 'antagonize the audience into disbelief'. He suggested that the montage was

¹³⁷ Shooting began on 28 Sept 1981, with studio-based scenes involving Will, Jim and Tom Fury. After a month, production moved to the 'Green Town' set. In November, carnival scenes were filmed. Shooting ended on Christmas eve, with the production reassembling in January for pick-up shots.

incorrect, and that dramatic logic would dictate that Halloway (the hero of the scene now, according to the Clayton/Mortimer script revision) should 'give the storm focus, show it where to strike, by his being there and daring to touch the carousel and save Jim'. He then provided shot-by-shot detail of how this logic could be implemented using only existing footage.¹³⁸

Then, on 3rd July 1982, a preview screening was held with an audience of two hundred. The response was disastrous. According to Walt Disney Productions executive Tom Wilhite, audience ratings were 'just average, or below', confirming to Disney management that much of the film 'lacked energy and clarity'. While Clayton argued that they had simply shown the film to the wrong audience, Stephen Rebello points out that the mere rumour of an unsuccessful preview can be disastrous in Hollywood. Disney, as a matter of damage limitation, immediately withdrew the film from their release schedule.¹³⁹

6 'Re-writing' *Something Wicked* in Post-Production

The story of the 'remaking' of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* after the disastrous preview has often been retold.¹⁴⁰ What has never been explored, though, is Bradbury's true role in this remaking. Weller's *The Bradbury Chronicles* makes some attempt at this, but is at odds with surviving documentary evidence. Weller credulously relays Bradbury's claim to have become totally estranged from Clayton, and his extraordinary claim to have effectively become the director of the film during this phase.¹⁴¹ However, evidence beyond Bradbury's testimony indicates that, while his opinion was sought by Disney, his voice was just one of many contributing to the re-shaping of the film. Far from being the director, Bradbury was frequently ignored. Except in the final phase, when Bradbury's and Clayton's

¹³⁸ Ray Bradbury, Letter to Peter Douglas and Jack Clayton, 31 March 1982.

¹³⁹ Rebello, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴⁰ See the following:

Rebello, pp. 28-49;

Brad Munson, 'Something Wicked This Way Comes: Adding the Magic', *Cinefex* no 12, April 1983, pp4-27;

Lofficier & Lofficier;

Sinyard, *Jack Clayton*;

Jim Hill, 'How *Something Wicked* went from being a best seller to the big screen'

http://jimhillmedia.com/editor_in_chief1/b/jim_hill/archive/2010/08/02/how-quot-something-wicked-quot-went-from-being-a-best-seller-to-the-big-screen.aspx [accessed 28 Oct 2016].

¹⁴¹ Lee Goldberg and others 'Ray Bradbury: At Work in the Business of Metaphors', *Starlog* no 110, Sept 1986, p. 23;

Weller, *Chronicles*, p. 309.

dissatisfaction led them to threaten to withdraw their names from the film, both writer and director were just cogs in the Disney machine.

The sequence of events detailed below is the first reconstruction of the film's reworking to have ever been made from archive records, and demonstrates the extent to which a screenplay becomes subsumed into the overall film-making process. Far from the screenplay functioning as a blueprint for a film, it becomes merely one element – and not even a privileged element – of Ian W. Macdonald's 'screen idea'.¹⁴² Invisible and intangible, the screen idea achieves visibility of a sort only through the behaviour of those around it; the negotiation of the screen form of *Something Wicked* through various disputed drafts prior to filming is already suggestive of this. However, in the post-production 'remaking' of *Something Wicked*, even the screenplay became lost or abandoned, as the film's narrative became re-negotiated through memos, discussion and argument between various authorities competing to exert control: Disney Vice-President Tom Wilhite; Disney President Ron Miller; Clayton; Bradbury; and others.

According to Bradbury, Walt Disney Productions called upon him to lead the re-working of the film personally.¹⁴³ In the last years of his life he would go so far as to claim to have edited the final sequence himself, and to have directed the re-shoots.¹⁴⁴ These claims do gain some limited support from actor Shawn Carson (Jim Nightshade) and film editor Barry Gordon. Gordon confirms that Clayton was sidelined by studio politics, while Bradbury had direct input into the re-editing of the film.¹⁴⁵

Bradbury's claim is given some additional credence by documentation from the post-production re-working of the film, particularly in the editorial reconstruction of the final sequence, which entailed shooting new footage. To an extent, revisions to the film under Bradbury's influence amount to a further re-drafting of the film's narrative, albeit constrained by the limitations of existing footage, and represent a form of 're-writing' not seen in any of Bradbury's own projects up until this point.

Immediately after the disastrous preview, Bradbury solicited opinions from two friends who had seen the film, short-story writer Bruce Francis and actor-writer Paul Clemens.

¹⁴² Macdonald, *Poetics*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴³ Bradbury, *Speaks*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, 'Conversations at the Cinematheque', 24 Oct 2009. (https://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=170060524827) and his address to the audience of a screening of *Something Wicked* on 10 Aug 2010.

¹⁴⁵ *Something Wicked* question-and-answer session, Cinefamily Cinema, Los Angeles, 22 October 2011.

Both provided critiques exposing weaknesses that Bradbury's own initial response had not noted.¹⁴⁶ Francis identified the entire end sequence as confusing and unbelievable. He specifically pinpointed the dancing of Halloway and Will, which he felt made the audience 'feel embarrassed'. Bradbury's own opinion evolved between July and November 1982 as he took his friends' views on board, and as he reacted to the ongoing re-editing of the film. In a series of memos, he gradually moved from a position of suggesting minor adjustments to the film's tone, to firmly holding views on how to solve the film's fundamental flaws.

Bradbury's suggestions focused on six areas.

6.1 The trellis

In September 1982, Bradbury wrote a memo offering constructive comments on adding finesse to the latest re-edit of the film, but is harshly critical of the removal of the 'trellis-climbing scene'. This scene - taken directly from the novel, and present in all drafts of the screenplay – ends with Will challenging Mr Halloway to climb the trellis up into Will's room. 'You ain't got the stuff!' Will says provocatively, prompting Halloway to try to prove himself. When Halloway fails this challenge, Will reaches out to save him.¹⁴⁷ Bradbury and Clayton were united in their belief that this scene was critical to the relationship of Will and Halloway.¹⁴⁸ Will's verbal challenge is picked up in one of the climactic scenes, where Halloway turns it back on Will. Halloway's self-perceived failure gives focus to his otherwise vague melancholy. And, in the narrative ideas Bradbury had been putting forward for fixing the film's climax, Halloway could rectify his failure by mirroring Will's actions: Halloway should rescue Will from the Maze, mirroring Will's rescue of *him*.

Yet, in the negotiation of the film's structure, the trellis scene would be removed, added back in, repositioned and finally truncated.¹⁴⁹ It became the focus of such disagreement as

¹⁴⁶ Bruce Francis, Letter to Bradbury, 25 July 1982;

Paul Clemens, Letter to Bradbury, July 1982.

¹⁴⁷ Bradbury, *Something Wicked*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁸ Ray Bradbury and Jack Clayton, Memo to Wilhite, 24 Nov 1982;

Ray Bradbury and Jack Clayton, Memo to Wilhite, 2 Dec 1982;

'Notes for meeting: Ray Bradbury, Jack Clayton, Ron Miller', 21 Jan 1983.

¹⁴⁹ Bradbury's memo of 23 Sept 1982 thanks Wilhite for indicating that the scene would be reinstated, but Wilhite replies by returning the memo with the annotation 'I said I would *consider it* in light of your request' [emphasis added]. Bradbury's memo of 12 Oct 1982 again argues the logic of how the trellis scene fits into the overall narrative.

to be at the core of Bradbury's and Clayton's later threats to withdraw their names from the film. The release print of the film retains a version of the scene, but it is *Wilhite's* preferred version: Will's verbal challenge is removed, Halloway's failure is removed, Will's rescue of Halloway is removed; leaving the climactic scenes with no function of reflecting back onto this earlier character moment.¹⁵⁰

6.2 The balloon

Clayton had deliberately removed the Dust Witch's balloon flight from the screenplay, replacing it with a compromise scene involving a mechanical hand. This proved unusable after shooting, potentially leaving a gap in the narrative. Bradbury's sense was that something would be needed to fill this gap, and his solution in several memos is to revert as far as possible to his originally scripted scene in his 1976 screenplay.

His most refined suggestion – plausible, visual, frightening, and suitably indicative of the Dust Witch's precision in marking the house – is the insertion of new footage in between existing shots of the boys: swirling leaves at the window, leaving a mysterious handprint on the glass.¹⁵¹ The boys look out to the sky, and we see the distant balloon travelling away. The handprint is a lasting, indexical sign of the Dust Witch's presence, a substitute for the failed mechanical-hand effect, and a scaled-down equivalent of the 'snail-track' used to mark the house in the novel and in Bradbury's screenplay drafts. These suggestions were ignored for the final cut of the film, where instead Clayton's alternative suggestion of a mass spider attack (is it real, or is it a dream?) was taken up in a sequence designed by Lee Dyer, and directed by Clayton.

¹⁵⁰ Wilhite's opposition to the trellis scene was clear but misguided: 'If the father has enough strength and bravery and spirit to climb the trellis, why finish with the picture? His problem is taken care of.' Quoted in Rebello, p. 49.

¹⁵¹ Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 15 Aug 1982.

6.3 The storm

Bradbury's memos repeatedly call for greater use of Autumnal atmosphere throughout the film, through the use of leaves, clouds and weather.¹⁵² These suggestions were adopted in the re-shooting and re-editing – new scenes were filmed in Vermont in the Autumn (using stand-ins), and the introductory shots of Tom Fury were augmented by a matte painting of golden-leaved trees. The most dramatic effects for the approaching storm were achieved with cloud effects made in a giant water tank. However, Lee Dyer's comments make it clear that the aim was for the storm to become a rising oppositional force, building on the existing weak dialogue in the Mortimer script where Mr Dark tortures Tom Fury, not just atmosphere as Bradbury requested. Dyer put his scheme into effect by inserting brooding clouds into the earlier Tom Fury arrival scene– ironically creating images that visually suggest the descriptions found in Bradbury's novel, albeit with a purpose now more narrative than atmospheric.¹⁵³

6.4 The mirror maze

In his first post-preview memo, Bradbury argues for montage alterations to restore logic to the mirror maze sequence. He seeks to eliminate the *deus ex machina* of the lightning strike, downplay the significance of Tom Fury in the scene, and return some agency to Mr Halloway:

HALLOWAY must be the first one to destroy a mirror, crack the glass. I have never been happy with the Lightning Rod Salesman being galvanized, and rushing to destroy the mirrors. It's not his job, it's the father's.¹⁵⁴

What is interesting here is that Bradbury is arguing both creatively and pragmatically. Now that the film has been shot, he no longer insists on a return to his own story construction (in which Will breaks the glass to rescue Halloway), but seeks to clarify and resolve the narrative that Clayton and Mortimer had set into motion with their script revision.

¹⁵² Principal photography of the film had made use of leaves on the ground in Green Town, and cinematographer Stephen Burum used gauze draped over the outdoor set to create a sunless autumnal sky. Burum discusses this in the commentary track on the Laserdisc release. *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, dir. by Jack Clayton (1983; Image Entertainment, 1996) [on Laserdisc].

¹⁵³ Dyer, quoted in Munson, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ Ray Bradbury, 'Suggestions based on viewing SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES', 18 June 1982.

In addition to his critique of the dramatic logic of the Mirror Maze sequence, Bradbury argues against Clayton's practical method of showing Halloway's ageing in the Maze. Bradbury's original concept in the novel and in his screenplay had been for receding multiple images of Halloway getting increasingly older, but Clayton had attempted this on set by having a series of extras representing actor Jason Robards' reflections. Unhappy with the results, Bradbury suggests an alternative in the post-production manipulation of Robards' own face: 'the old man we see in agony isn't Halloway. It has to be Jason's face, to scare him about his own death'.¹⁵⁵ This suggestion would actually be taken on board in the re-filming, and Robards' ageing face stands in the release version of the film.

6.5 Song and dance

Bradbury's initial reaction to the preview screening makes no mention of the singing and dancing in the climactic sequence, suggesting that he saw no serious problems with it. It was not until five weeks later that, for the first time, he acknowledged that the dancing scene was 'as we all know, still not right' – but confessed that he didn't know the solution:

It needs to be recut. An easy thing to say, but how to do it? I'm not an editor, and don't pretend to be one.¹⁵⁶

This disingenuous statement contrasts with Bradbury's hyperbolic claims in later years to have 'edited' the film himself. He suggests the singing and dancing be reduced, and that emphasis should be placed on the conflict between Halloway wanting to sing and dance, and Will who reluctantly joins in, bewildered by his father's actions. One month later, he would plead with Wilhite, 'there must be cuts of them singing and dancing [...] There MUST be some way of editing this. We mustn't give up [just] because the problem is huge'.¹⁵⁷ In the final release version of the film, all singing would be completely removed, and Halloway alone would dance, minimally. The surviving shots succeed in suggesting Halloway's unique insight into how to defeat the carnival, but make him sound angry.

¹⁵⁵ Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 17 Sept 1982.

¹⁵⁶ Bradbury, to Wilhite, 15 Aug 1982.

¹⁵⁷ Bradbury, to Wilhite, 17 Sept 1982.

6.6 Voice-over

Bradbury's evolving idea of how the film could be reshaped included the use of voice-over narration as a method of scene-setting and filling in information missing from the existing footage. In general, as have seen, Bradbury as screenwriter eschewed this technique. In his memos on the re-making of the film, he states precisely why this is, echoing McKee's insistence that film operates as 'an absolute present tense'.¹⁵⁸

Remember: all films occur in the Present Tense.

Narration is always Past Tense.

[So, with narration,] we remind the viewer that what he is seeing is already over, in some other year. Such narration spoils the fun.¹⁵⁹

His proposed narration remains minimal, consisting of a few paragraphs for the beginning of the film which function much as the paratextual introduction of the novel functions.¹⁶⁰ The final 'battle' for control of *Something Wicked* would take place over the voice-over narration, discussed below.

6.7 Re-shoots and battle for control

By the end of October 1982, Walt Disney Productions drew up a tentative shooting schedule which concretised the accumulation of new concepts for the re-shoot.¹⁶¹ The plan drew indiscriminately from all sources: Bradbury, Clayton, Dyer and others were tapped for ideas, and Wilhite's judgement determined which were chosen. Despite Bradbury's hyperbolic claims many years later, his own ideas were not treated with any privilege. Table 5 summarises the sequences/shots to be filmed, and indicates the origin of the idea for each one.

¹⁵⁸ McKee, p. 395.

¹⁵⁹ Ray Bradbury, 'Something Wicked narration revision', 3 Dec 1982, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Ray Bradbury, 'SOMETHING WICKED narrative', Bradbury, 19 Oct 1982. Revised to include an optional section which could be removed as appropriate to the editing of the film, and to add a closing narration of a single paragraph, 21 Oct 1982. Revised further 3 Dec 1982.

¹⁶¹ 'Tentative shooting schedule to be finalised on completion of storyboard meetings', 25 Oct 1982.

Scenes To Be Re-Shot	Source Of The Idea
Mirror maze sequence – complete re-shoot.	Using Bradbury’s idea of ageing Jason Robards, and Robards breaking through the glass. Using ideas from elsewhere (perhaps Lee Dyer) for presenting an explanation of the purpose of the mirrors, with new dialogue polished by Bradbury. Using ideas from elsewhere (perhaps Clayton or Wilhite) for re-staging Tom Fury’s despatch of the Dust Witch.
Destruction of the carnival, using miniatures.	Using Lee Dyer’s ideas.
Close-up of Mr Dark’s hands (a stand-in) to be coupled with additional off-screen voice recording for Mr Dark (Jonathan Pryce returning for voice work only).	Using ideas from elsewhere (perhaps Wilhite), with new dialogue polished by Bradbury.
Spider sequence, replacing the Dust Witch house visit.	Using Clayton’s idea, as developed by Lee Dyer.
Cloud tank effects shots to create illusion of storm.	Consistent with Bradbury’s suggestion, but following a scheme devised by Lee Dyer.
Will swimming/drowning, and Halloway pulling him from the water.	Using ideas from elsewhere.

‘Ideas from elsewhere’ indicates there is no direct evidence of where the idea originated.

Table 5: Re-shoots, showing the source of each idea

Ongoing revisions to the structure of the film prompted Bradbury to plead ‘please put the film back together the way it was 6 or 8 weeks ago. Rearranging scenes or cutting lines won’t solve our problems’. ¹⁶² However, it is evident that Wilhite was not communicating decisions to Bradbury or Clayton at this point, leading both screenwriter and director into a state of heightened concern that time was running out, and prompting Bradbury to plead,

¹⁶² Jack Clayton and Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 8 Dec 1982.

‘we must, all of us, be in intense communication on the film. [...] We all want the same thing [...] If we can communicate at a constant level, day by day, we can have it’.¹⁶³

As the extent of re-editing ran out of control, Clayton and Bradbury began jointly authoring memos, a direct contradiction of Bradbury’s later claims that he and Clayton were no longer speaking. In one memo, Clayton urges ‘I am the last person to be against experimenting in the cutting stages of a film [...But] truly, Tom, this doesn’t [work]’.¹⁶⁴

Finally, one day into re-shoots, Clayton and Bradbury found themselves so far removed from involvement in the film that they issued a list of eight requests, all of them re-statements of earlier ones, but this time ending their memo with an ominous threat:

[...] unless at least the vital elements listed above are restored to the film we will both have seriously to consider whether we wish our names to be associated with the film of SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES should it be issued in its present form.¹⁶⁵

The failure of communication between writer, director and Vice-President came to a head in January 1983, with Wilhite taking Bradbury to task over his ‘constantly complaining’: ‘I’m a bit bored with hearing endless criticisms. [...] Remember, please, that our taste and judgment are behind a considerable investment to make this picture better and more exciting’.¹⁶⁶

Bradbury’s concern peaked with the sudden appearance of new voice-over narration, written by John Culhane. Bradbury and Clayton opposed Wilhite over the narration well into January 1983, going so far as to present a side by side comparison of Bradbury’s poetic narration (written in the style of his novel), and Culhane’s over-descriptive and grammatically poor version.¹⁶⁷ Bradbury was led to an ultimatum: either the film would be released with Bradbury narration, or without Bradbury’s name on it. On this point, Bradbury won: his narration is used throughout the finished film.

Just as the re-shooting drew ideas from all over, not just from Bradbury, so too the final editing of the climactic sequence didn’t all go the way hoped for by Bradbury or Clayton.

¹⁶³ On 28th Nov 1982, a month after the tentative shooting schedule is issued and three days before re-shoots are to begin, Bradbury is still unclear whether there is an intention to film material of Jason Robards ageing, and again argues for the logic of this. Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 28 Nov 1982.

¹⁶⁴ Jack Clayton and Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 24 Nov 1982.

¹⁶⁵ Jack Clayton and Ray Bradbury, Memo to Wilhite, 2 Dec 1982.

¹⁶⁶ Tom Wilhite, Memo to Bradbury, 12 Jan 1983.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Something Wicked This Way Comes narration’, 17 Dec 1982.

Once again, they teamed up to present a united front to Walt Disney Productions, preparing a preferred editing continuity for the final sequence which would incorporate the newly-shot footage.¹⁶⁸ It was followed only approximately. Pointedly, the shots of singing which Bradbury and Clayton wanted to include were all omitted in the release print of the film.

The release print is clearly a composite, but ultimately reflects Tom Wilhite's post-production choices more than anyone else's. Despite the explicit branding – formally *Ray Bradbury's Something Wicked This Way Comes* – and the implied possessive credit of 'A Jack Clayton Film', the end result is far from representing the notion of the screenwork held by either Bradbury or Clayton, but is the inevitably negotiated aggregate of ideas from the team of people who worked on a 'screen idea'.

6.8 Reviews of the film

Critical response to the film has been mixed. The positive reviews appreciate the film's attempt to capture the style of Bradbury's novel. Roger Ebert finds it 'a horror movie with elegance' of 'an altogether different kind', attributing much of this to Bradbury's screenwriting.¹⁶⁹ Philip French finds Clayton to be Bradbury's 'perfect collaborator', presenting 'an unsentimental children's view of the adult world' with a 'readiness [...] to confront evil'. He admires the juxtaposition of the 'Norman Rockwell' town with the 'dangerously alluring, Europeanised Poe-like world' of the carnival, perhaps picking up that both the director and the film's designer (Richard MacDonald) were British. He is also one of the few to note the essential Englishness of the performance of Jonathan Pryce, the British actor playing Mr Dark.¹⁷⁰

The most substantial contemporary review of the film comes from science-fiction writer Alan Dean Foster, who praises the film's power of suggestion, but finds that it 'hedges its bets' by unnecessarily adopting literal methods as in the tarantula sequence suggested by Clayton. He reports feeling 'detached from' the story, attributes the film's failings to its

¹⁶⁸ Jack Clayton and Ray Bradbury, 'Something Wicked: Reel 12: Suggested new carousel continuity', 16 Dec 1982.

¹⁶⁹ Roger Ebert, 'Something Wicked This Way Comes', 29 April 1983
<<http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/something-wicked-this-way-comes-1983>> [accessed 28 Oct 2016]

¹⁷⁰ Philip French, 'Victims of Justice', *Observer*, 2 Oct 1983, p. 32.

fidelity to the novel, and criticises the ‘too precious’ dialogue.¹⁷¹ Film scholar David Sterritt identifies a ‘translation’ problem of converting the tone of a fantasy novel to the screen, but is surprised that in the film ‘forms, colors, shades of light and dark flow with rhythms as insinuating as Bradbury’s prose; almost every scene has some surprise for the eyes or ears, if not for the mind’. At the same time, he finds the climax ‘botched’, and the dialogue florid, resulting in a ‘limited achievement’.¹⁷²

Horror novelist and critic Kim Newman, writing in 1988, finds the film ‘a flat and unmagical rendering of promising material’. He identifies one strong scene – the library confrontation between Mr Dark and Mr Halloway – but otherwise finds the transformation scenes literal and moralising, likening them to Heinrich Hoffman’s *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845), stories in which children suffer for behaving badly.¹⁷³

7 Conclusions

From Ray Bradbury’s bibliography, it would appear that he wrote a novel called *Something Wicked This Way Comes* in 1962, and adapted it for screen in 1983, but this surface reality conceals an extensive period of creative development and re-development that stretches back at least as far as his carnival fragments of 1944. While we see cinematic elements throughout Bradbury’s literary output, the *Something Wicked* cluster of works most clearly provides evidence of a cinematic work - the treatment for *The Dark Carnival* – feeding directly into the creation of a novel. At the same time, we see the literary development of the novel feeding directly back into the first screenplays based on the novel. Like Crosetti’s barber pole, though, we may ask ‘Where does it *come* from? Where does it *go*?’ – since the endless cycle of re-writing and re-adaptation in Bradbury’s body of work makes it impossible to truly call one work an adaptation of another.

Since *Something Wicked* was the first and only time that a major Bradbury work made it to the screen with a script by Bradbury, it makes for a unique case study. His close

¹⁷¹ Alan Dean Foster, Review of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Starlog*, No. 76, Nov 1983, pp. 71-3.

¹⁷² David Sterritt, Review of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 May 1983.

¹⁷³ Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies: a Critical History of the Horror Film, 1968-1988* (London: Bloomsbury, 1988), p. 60. The Newman-edited *The BFI Companion to Horror* (Cassell, 1996) is more positive: the film has ‘much to savour’ (p. 46).

involvement with the director allows his screenwriting efforts to be realised, but leads his sense of cinematic logic to be challenged. The necessarily collaborative processes of filmmaking result in a 'battle' among creative contributors, as we witness a director, other writers, special effects artists and studio vice-presidents contributing to the screen work, supporting Macdonald's notion that what focuses a production is not the screenplay, but the more nebulous 'screen idea'. Ironically, the finished film has an ending as rushed and incoherent as that of Bradbury's original screen treatment *The Dark Carnival*; the cinematic logic developed in the novel becomes lost in the collaboration.

There remains a grain of truth in Bradbury's undoubtedly hyperbolic claims to have edited or directed *Something Wicked* during its post-production. His proposed solutions to the film's storytelling problems continued through *Something Wicked's* most contentious phases of production, and the evidence shows him to have been a perceptive, constructive 'script doctor', capable of identifying solutions consistent with already-shot footage, and thus showing a grasp of filmmaking possibilities going beyond what we might expect from a novelist.

Discussion and Conclusions

'I look upon ideas as great big bulldogs that bite me, grab me,
hold on and won't let go'.¹

Ray Bradbury, 1976.

Chapters one to four above have shown Ray Bradbury's screenwriting to be enmeshed with his prose works, a microcosm of Robert Stam's 'ongoing whirl' of 'texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin'.² Conventional models of adaptation suggesting clear separation between source and target texts are challenged by Bradbury's self-adapting, where locating any sensible dividing line is almost impossible. Even where boundaries start out clear, as when he adapts Melville for the screen – a potentially conventional, binary, unidirectional adaptation of novel to film – the 'life of fiction' takes over, and what results is more of a cloud of related works. Is *Leviathan '99* an adaptation of Melville's *Moby Dick*, or of Bradbury's screenplay? And is the *Leviathan* novella an adaptation of the *Leviathan* radio play, or is the radio play a preliminary draft of the novella? And what to make of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, with its endless reflection of short story in film treatment, film treatment in novel, and novel in film, suggesting Kamillah Elliott's 'looking-glass figuration'?³ These sometimes overwhelmingly complex repetitive or cyclical practices in Bradbury's adaptive work need distilling into patterns that allow meaningful conclusions in three areas: new insights gained into Bradbury's works; new understanding about the value and role of archive documents; and what these insights and understandings show about adaptation and adaptation theories.

In the four main chapters above, we have seen clear confirmation that Bradbury's prose fiction is cinematic, and verification of Bradbury's own claim of being a 'hybrid' writer. Bradbury the showman, ever eager to dazzle an interviewer, is very conscious of this aspect of his writing, declaring, 'I'm the most cinematic writer around [...] my short stories can be shot right off the page. If necessary, I wouldn't do the [script], I would hand the directors

¹ Ray Bradbury, spoken introduction to *Fahrenheit 451*, read by the author (Listening Library LP451, 1976) [on LP].

² Stam, p. 66.

³ Elliott, *Rethinking*, p. 229.

the short stories and say, “Mark it with a red pencil”.⁴ Supporting evidence of the showman’s claim is apparent: his novels and short stories have a pictorial quality that clearly resonates with ideas of ‘cinematic fiction’, with careful control of the ‘camera eye’ and a clean, direct prose to create dramatic clarity. His use of short paragraphs creates a powerful montage effect, one of several attributes that lead his prose works to resemble screenplays. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Bradbury’s cinematic fiction comes through certain vivid individual scenes, which work effectively in both novel and screenplay, and where Chatman’s ‘narrative pressure’ and McKee’s ‘absolute present tense in constant vivid movement’ are clearly demonstrated, such as the *Fahrenheit* scene showing the martyrdom of the old woman, or the library scene in *Something Wicked*. The cinematic strength of these scenes is perhaps why François Truffaut carefully recreates Bradbury’s strongest set-pieces from the novel of *Fahrenheit* (but formulates his own variant narrative structure for the film as a whole), and why Jack Clayton, too, with *Something Wicked* is happy to build on the set-pieces of the carnival parade and the library confrontation (while rejecting Bradbury’s driving cinematic logic for the overall structure of the film). This being the case, it is likely that a study of Bradbury’s short fiction in adaptation would be fruitful: is the brief, condensed and controlled action of the short story more directly adaptable to screen?

For all the strengths of such individual scenes, the thesis has shown the extent and importance of revision to Bradbury’s writing. Indeed, the aforementioned set pieces show extensive honing with each revision, whether within the development of the novel, or during the phases of adaptive screenwriting. In the case of Bradbury’s early novels – the ones written before his experience of working on *Moby Dick* – we have seen a clear relationship between fragmentary origins and revised, finished works: *The Martian Chronicles* is structured as a patchwork, owing to its origin as a revision of a set of short stories with no plot or character connections between them; *Fahrenheit 451*, more carefully developed into something resembling a novel, also owes its origins to ideas from a whole range of precursor works, but what unifies *Fahrenheit* is a thoroughly cinematic approach to its revisions of story structure and character development. Following the *Moby Dick* experience, though, we have seen a curious reversal. *The Dark Carnival*, begun shortly after *Moby Dick*, is a screen treatment grown out of precursor fragments, the earliest substantial example of Bradbury’s *cross-media* revision of his own works. Only later, with *The Dark Carnival* falling by the wayside and becoming a ‘lost film’, did Bradbury turn the

⁴ Warren, ‘At Work’, p. 31.

story into a novel.⁵ Not surprisingly, while *Something Wicked This Way Comes* retains the cinematic trappings of the precursor treatment and very effectively develops its cinematic logic, it develops a whole new 'literary' layer which perhaps becomes an obstacle to it being easily re-adapted for screen.

From Bradbury's various cross-media revisions, we are able to infer the mode(s) of adaptation that he follows. Considering Wagner's three possible modes, perhaps the simplest model to reflect a variation of adaptive 'distance' between source and target texts, we have seen that Bradbury operates at different times according to more than one mode. His claim that the prose text is already a script leads him to follow Peckinpah's advice ('rip the pages out of the book...') as he creates something close to Wagner's 'transposition' in the remarkably literal 1974 *Something Wicked* adaptation. The result is a script doomed to meet a dead end, a screenplay best seen as a technical exercise, a test of the Peckinpah hypothesis, and unfortunately *disproving* its validity. Both before and after this screenplay, Bradbury's position was more sensible:

The thing is *not* to read the story when you do the adaptation; this gives you the intellectual leeway to do things that improve the story. And then you finish the adaptation and go back and read the original [...] to see if anything's missing.⁶

Bradbury's other closest approach to 'transposition' comes with the 1997 *Martian Chronicles* script, which stays nearer to the structure of the original book than any of Bradbury's other *Chronicles* adaptations.

Wagner's second mode, 'commentary', in allowing the adapter to step back from the source text and re-conceptualise the work, permits a move from simple revision of a narrative to a re-visioning. Re-vision, as defined by Adrienne Rich, is an act of 'seeing with fresh eyes' and of 'entering an old text from a new critical direction.'⁷ This is precisely what Bradbury does in his 1997 *Fahrenheit 451* script, which (like his stage play) comments not just on the novel, but on Truffaut's film. We also see 'commentary' exploited in the 1976 *Something Wicked* script and the 1963-65 *Martian Chronicles* script, in both instances adopting the majority of the key incidents of the books but with alterations tailored for the

⁵ It should be noted that a number of earlier, shorter works also crossed media, such as 'And So Died Riabouchinska' (1947/1953) and 'The Meadow' (1947/1953), which both manifested first as radio drama treatments before becoming short stories. See Eller and Touponce, *Life*, p. 471.

⁶ Warren, 'At Work', p. 30.

⁷ Rich, p. 18.

shorter, dramatically unified expectations of Hollywood feature films. Finally, we rarely see Bradbury adopt Wagner's 'analogy', although it is arguable that the 1961 *Martian Chronicles* script ventures into this territory, since it invents its own narrative structure, so that what it borrows from the novel is mainly characters and incident. Note, however, that whatever his mode or model of adaptive work, Bradbury contradicts the binary assumption of much adaptation theory (i.e. that novel is adapted to film), including Wagner's. In the case of the *Martian Chronicles* there is clear evidence that each successive screenplay is informed not just by the novel, but by the previous screenplays. Similarly, the 1997 *Fahrenheit 451* screenplay is clearly an adaptation of the novel *and* of Bradbury's stage play, which in turn adapts elements of Truffaut's 1966 film.

Our final new insight into Bradbury concerns his relation to directors, and the conflict between the standard collaborative model of film-making and the romantic view of the author as individual creator. We see this to an extent with *Moby Dick*, where director John Huston claimed a screenwriting credit, but an even more direct case is *Something Wicked*, where for all of the contractual formalities indicated by possessive credits, which might suggest authorship or artistic control (*Ray Bradbury's Something Wicked This Way Comes*; 'a Jack Clayton film'), the production history documented in this thesis demonstrates the true author of a film to be at best a collective, and at worst a corporation. Romantic notions of screenwriter-as-author are proven invalid, and instead we see the screenwriter as just one voice in a crowd trying to exert control. *Something Wicked* escapes the fate of being a 'lost film' – but the price for this is a film which has, in its most powerful scenes, distinct echoes of the novel (and the decades old screen treatment written for Gene Kelly), but little of the careful cinematic logic that allows the novel to 'prove' that fantastic events happen. However, the romantic notion of the author can be 'saved' by putting the script into print, which Bradbury did in the case of *Moby Dick* and the earliest screen version from the *Something Wicked* cluster, *The Dark Carnival*, thus overcoming traditional arguments against the validity of screenplays as literature.⁸

⁸ Ted Nannicelli points out, many critics have argued variously that the screenplay is not an independent work (unlike a theatre play script, it is tied to a single film production), or that it becomes somehow complete only through the making of the film, or that it is somehow absorbed by the film so that cannot be used again, or that the script's very existence at the borderline between literature and film – its intermediality – limits its entitlement to be considered autonomous. See Nannicelli, pp. 127–36.

At this point it is worth considering the range and extent of Bradbury's adaptations when seen as revisionary practices. At one extreme, his revisions can be minor, as when he streamlines his prose style between versions of the short story 'The Wind', or even when he undertakes the Peckinpah-influenced adaptation of *Something Wicked*. At the other extreme, his re-visiting of *Fahrenheit 451* for the screen nearly fifty years after the novel was published cannot help but be a self-conscious re-conceptualising of the novel, engaging in complex play with that earlier text. As Robert Philmus has pointed out, re-visioning's 'broader reach' inevitably entails a 'degree and/or scope of critical awareness', since it is founded on 'rewriting as a process of reconceiving the already-written.'⁹ Furthermore, Philmus adds, re-vision has a dialogical character – that is, the new work engages in a dialogue with the former work – and 'imparts to dialogue its sense of intertextual discovery'.⁹

This range of revisionary practice is problematic for Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, one of the most widely cited works on adaptation. Hutcheon attempts to distinguish between adaptation and not-adaptation specifically by excluding certain types of fluid texts, namely those where the 'fluidity [is] determined by (a) the production process [...] and (b) those created by reception.'¹⁰ The former restriction is intended to eliminate the everyday revisionary processes that occur in (for example) the development of a novel, and the latter to eliminate censored or bowdlerised versions of texts. With this exclusion in place, we can imagine that Bradbury's minor revisions might be discounted as adaptations, whereas his re-visions (where the fluidity is not due to the 'production process') might yet be counted.

However, drawing a dividing line between revision and re-vision is not straightforward, since they exist along a continuum. John Bryant's general definition of a fluid text is 'any written work that exists in multiple material versions due to revisions (authorial, editorial, cultural) upon which we may construct an interpretation'.¹¹ We are forced us to accept that 'textual stability' is a 'fantasy', and to expand our notion of texts to include the 'dynamics of revision', which some scholars are 'inclined to resist'.¹² In Bryant's usual context of debate, textual editing, revisions typically manifest as variations between different editions

⁹ Robert Philmus, *Visions and Re-visions: (Re)Constructing Science Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005), p. 295.

¹⁰ Hutcheon, p. 170.

¹¹ John Bryant, 'Witness and Access: The Uses of the Fluid Text', *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*, 2.1 (2007), 16–42; p. 17.

¹² Bryant, 'Witness', p. 17; p. 18.

of a text, but can revisions legitimately be considered more broadly, to include the ongoing or cyclical revisitations typical of Bradbury? It seems so: Bryant argues for fluid text analysis to avoid any assumption of a text as a 'given, singularised inscription', and instead to consider the 'evolutionary "spaces" between historically sequenced inscriptions'.¹³ He suggests that the successive documents to be analysed are 'like a whale breaching from time to time at the surface of a dark sea that at all other times conceals the twists and turns of its submarine navigations' (an intentional *Moby Dick* metaphor from this Melville scholar).¹⁴ Now, it would be difficult to claim that, say, the novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and Bradbury's 1973 screenplay adaptation of that novel are as directly related as two variant editions of a novel (such as the US and UK first editions of *Moby Dick*), and this is why I have tended to treat them as part of the same 'cluster of works' rather than as variant editions of a singular work. But Bryant's conception builds on a model (due to G.Thomas Tanselle) where a distinction is made between three ideas:

- a 'work' - essentially the book inside a writer's head;
- a 'text' - the notional projected wording of the work;
- a 'document' - the tangible, physical instantiation of the 'text'.¹⁵

Using this model, we could argue that the *Something Wicked* cluster of works, encompassing all of Bradbury's presentations of it over many years, constitutes a single 'work'.

The self-adapter is admittedly a slightly rare special case, but apart from Bradbury many other examples of self-adaptation can be found in literature-to-film adaptation alone.¹⁶ The self-adapter, after all, isn't a 'new' consciousness giving commentary on a prior text, but the same consciousness as that which constructed the earlier text. In engaging with their earlier text, the self-adapter must according to Philmus realise 'that one's past Self is (also) an Other.'¹⁷ For the self-adapter, adaptation, revision and re-vision can amount to the same thing. It is surprising that Hutcheon's theory tends to squeeze out the self-adapter, and equally surprising that other theorists of adaptation have remained silent about the existence or significance of the self-adapter. As we have seen with Bradbury specifically, as

¹³ Bryant, 'Witness', p. 19.

¹⁴ Bryant, *Fluid Text*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Bryant, *Fluid Text*, p. 31-2. See also G. Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

¹⁶ Some examples of self-adaptive author-screenwriters: William Goldman, Richard Matheson, Joan Didion, Cormac McCarthy, Michael Crichton, Stephen King.

¹⁷ Philmus, p. 299.

well as direct revision we observe a wider self-intertextuality (e.g. 'The Messiah' and 'The Lost City of Mars' emerging as separate works from the *Martian Chronicles* screenplay). And, as we saw in the case of Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* screenplay works, we can see the evolution through the adaptations/revisions, of an author's personal grand narrative or, at least, common thematic concerns that extend beyond a single instance of adaptation

In summary, this thesis has shown that at the centre of Ray Bradbury's authorship sits a process of tireless revision which effortlessly crosses media boundaries. This previously unseen facet of his work has been established largely through the study of the archival record, a record of essentially fluid texts which expose a gap in the explanatory powers of current theories of adaptation.

'It's miraculous that any film is finished [...] it's totally impossible, this incredible art form'.¹⁸

- Ray Bradbury, 1986

¹⁸ Goldberg, p. 23.

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