![UiA University of Agder]

Worlds Ablaze

The insidious traumata of the future anterior in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006)

ERIK VASLAND

SUPERVISOR
Dina Abazovic

University of Agder, 2021
Faculty of Humanities and Education
Department of Foreign Languages and Translation

Abstract

This thesis examines the novels *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and *The Road* (2006), two future-set dystopian narratives that extrapolate on their contemporary and ongoing traumas. This paper explores the novels through the lens of trauma studies, testing whether the concepts of insidious trauma and the future anterior can be used in conjunction. To answer this question, I used the method of close reading, intertwined with a dialogue between the literature and the theory. Therefore, by expanding on the concept of insidious trauma, it addresses key aspects of the novels' settings, including the oppressing government in *Fahrenheit 451*, the destroyed American space in *The Road*, as well as their shared imagery of fire. My discussions demonstrate that the novels' settings are inherently traumatic, and that they project an anticipatory fear of future victimization – which serves as an allegory of our own future. Moreover, the imagery of fire functions as a didactical tool, exposing our vulnerability to the future. The results suggest that the dystopian imagination voices concern not only of past trauma, but also about the traumas of the future – meaning that the anticipation of traumatization becomes insidious.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor, Dina Abazovic, without whom this thesis would never be possible. Her open-mindedness, eagerness, and vast knowledge in the field of trauma studies has allowed me to use my curiosity and creativity to explore the field in my own way. Always happy to provide criticism and impromptu coffee breaks, either virtually or out and about, having her as my supervisor has helped me grow, both as an academic, and as an individual.

I would also like to give special thanks to my girlfriend and partner in crime, Kathrine Valvik, for her unyielding support and love through the course of this process. All the evenings spent reflecting on my ideas have shaped this thesis greatly.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family, my mother, Anne; my father, Harald; and my sister, Lene; who have always supported my choices, listened to my woes and excitement, and picked me up off the ground when life has been too hard to handle alone.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

In his 2020 article "Post-Apocalyptic Fiction and the Future Anterior", Jouni Teittinen writes that "the genre of post-apocalyptic fiction has become one of the foremost ways, through its inflection of our present by way of future-as-disaster …, to think and feel through the experience of threatening, even traumatic future" (349). Drawing on Teittinen's observations of the genre, this thesis analyzes two dystopian novels, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) within the theoretical framework of trauma studies. Through its "principally … allegorical form" (Luckhurst, *Future Shock* 159), post-apocalyptic fiction, or dystopian fiction in general, investigates the role and future of human beings following natural or unnatural disasters impacting our civilizations. The analyses are done through the method of close reading paired with a dialogue between literature and theory. With keen interest in the novels' shared imagery of fire, the aim of the thesis is to explore the narratives through trauma theory. The goal is to shed light on whether the concept insidious trauma can be applied to literature that is not dealing with its conventional subjects. Is dystopian fiction, with its future-as-disaster scenarios, an expression of an innate fear of future traumatization based around events in the past? If so, can this be explained by insidious trauma?

Through the discussions, I advance the notion that trauma not only reflects backwards to a specific point of traumatization, for example in cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but that traumatic wounds can also be caused by events that are yet to happen. For this, I believe insidious trauma, a term which is further explained in the theory section, should be applied. To clarify, I do not believe that *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* are foreshadowing events that are guaranteed to happen if the premises of the narratives occur in real life. I am, however, suggesting that the fear of a certain outcome, a worst-case scenario if you will, can create traumatic wounds that extends backwards in time to the point of writing a work of fiction (or an article expressing concern about the future for that matter). For as Lucy Bond and Stef Craps write in the introduction to *Trauma: The New Critical Idiom* (2020), "[t]he past is alive in the present, and its legacies continue to resonate in complex and controversial ways" (2). They explain that "American history [is] a melting pot of traumas, some past, some present, and *some still unfolding*" (2, my emphasis). Considering that some traumas are still unfolding, as Bond & Craps suggest, their consequences are outright unknowable, which leaves room for interpretation, be they literary or some other form of media.

On one hand, Ray Bradbury's dystopian narrative *Fahrenheit 451* presents a future-set, anti-intellectual America where books have been banned by an authoritarian regime and the national television shows is the only allowed form of entertainment. The novel follows Guy Montag, a fireman whose whole life initially revolves around his one single identity as a fire officer. His work, juxtaposed with what one would expect from a fireman, is to burn books, thus enforcing the state's outlandish laws, keeping the population from accessing the illegal books. After meeting Clarisse McClellan, however, a 17-year-old girl who has not been conditioned to believe anything at face value, but rather reflects on the life in this eschewed America, Montag realizes that he has not spent a single day questioning his life and the dire effects his work has on people. Disillusioned by the new perspectives, Montag realizes that his work does more damage than good. After fleeing the city in a perilous chase, he joins a group of free men whose lives are dedicated to reading and remembering entire volumes of books.

On the other hand, McCarthy's *The Road*, presents a post-apocalyptic and desolate American landscape. Next to all life is extinguished by an unnamed event, and an equally unnamed father and his son must traverse the crumbling country, fighting for their safety and survival. Their journey is anything but safe, for shortly after the cataclysm, the world quickly deteriorated, becoming a cold, ashen, and unforgiving landscape where resources are sparse. Some people therefore made drastic choices, and instead of surviving on the few scraps of food available to them from the time before the apocalypse, they instead made the more sinister dietary choice of eating other people. Because of this, the father and his son are constantly on edge, searching for anything that may be a threat to their lives. Torn between safety and danger, they know that their lives depend on their vigilance, while simultaneously being vulnerable to the elements. Near the novel's ending, finally reaching the southern shores of the US, the prolonged exposure to ash and the cold has damaged the man's lungs beyond repair. Before his life sees its untimely end, however, they encounter a small family of three, a mother, father, their daughter. As the *deus ex machina* it is, the boy is saved while the father is left on the beach.

Located in the near future, both novels extrapolate on the sentiments of their respective times. Whereas *Fahrenheit 451* was released in the aftermath of the Second World War, a time when the world was recovering from a massive collective trauma and a surge of technological development occurred, Bradbury's vision of the future reflects an authoritarian America where technology is used to control the public's conduct. In contrast, *The Road*,

which was published over 50 years later, is influenced by doomsday prophecies and the expected adverse effects of climate change as well as the emotional aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Written in the perspective of the future anterior, the novels explore the world of tomorrow and their horrific settings.

Theoretical framework

As mentioned above, the analyses will be rooted in trauma theory. Greek in origin, the word trauma was used as a descriptor for a wound inflicted on the body. But since the late 1800s its meaning has changed to mean a wound to the "tissues of the mind – that results in injury or some other disturbance" (Erikson 184). As Kai Erikson explains, "[t]he classic symptoms of trauma range from feelings of restlessness and agitation at one end of the emotional scale to feelings of numbness and bleakness at the other" (183-184). Trauma in this sense is therefore a psychic response to a violent event, usually in the form of violence to the body, e.g., war, domestic abuse, or other accidents, but also in the form of psychological distress. From its conception, the field of trauma studies has expanded greatly, and "we have found new ways to categorize, represent and exploit distressing experiences" (Bond & Craps 3). While this thesis will discuss several concepts of trauma which will be unpacked as they are addressed in the analysis chapters, it is important to look at the main concept that inspired these readings: insidious trauma.

Originally coined by Maria P. P. Root, and further developed by Laura Brown, the concept of insidious trauma emerged as a reaction to the treatment of female trauma within the US court system. In Brown's article "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma" (1991), a paper which addresses the shortcomings in the diagnostic process of PTSD – she objects to the notion that traumas must be events "outside the range of human experience" (qtd in Brown 120) to be considered traumatic. Brown states that "[p]ublic events, visible to all, rarely themselves harbingers of stigma for their victims, things that can and do happen to men, all of these constitute trauma in the official lexicon" (121). "Human experience," therefore, often implies the experiences of male humans, "or at the very least an experience common to both women and men" (121). Thus, the narrow definition of trauma excluded the traumata of female experiences, including incest, rape, and domestic violence. Since these traumata are relatively common occurrences and therefore, per definition, not

outside the range human experience, they were not acknowledged by the courts as events causing PTSD.

Although the concept of insidious trauma was coined to describe a discrepancy in the way professionals have disregarded the experiences of female trauma, I believe its use can be extended and applied to the analysis of dystopian fiction. Essentially, insidious trauma "refers to the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being *at the given moment*, but which do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 128, my emphasis). It can therefore be claimed that insidious trauma entails an anticipation of future trauma, which dystopian fiction also seems to propose. For as Teittinen explains, "[t]he fall of the Twin Towers" produced "an increased desire to see the future through the anticipatory mode of the future anterior" (352). The dystopian mode therefore allows one to foresee the unforeseeable, to experience *a* future in the safety of one's own time, and to work through one's own experiences with literature as a proxy. The future anterior functions as the vehicle, the spyglass into a potentially traumatic future.

Furthermore, there are two important aspects of insidious trauma that are central to the analyses. Firstly, Brown advocates that the wing of psychiatry dealing with trauma should shed light on the "secret experiences … in the interpersonal realm" (122). Secondly, she writes that "[f]eminist analysis also tasks us to understand how the constant presence and threat of trauma … has shaped our society, a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event," and later explains that those "who must constantly anticipate … [victimization] encounter insidious traumata" (122, 128). This means that insidious traumata are experiences occurring in secrecy, outside the public spheres. It also suggests that even the anticipation of victimization at the hands of someone or some external event is traumatic. Although this thesis will not be a strictly feminist reading of the novels, I believe Root and Brown's concept is highly relevant in the context of dystopian fiction. In both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*, although they are two completely different novels, the characters experience these effects. As the analyses will demonstrate, the characters are unable to vocalize their experiences, either because they do not realize that they, in fact, are traumatized, or because acknowledging their experience will prove fatal.

This thesis is comprised of three main chapters. In chapter 2, I examine *Fahrenheit 451*'s authoritarian setting, exploring how Bradbury's world has become an anti-intellectual society where people's lives are deprived of meaning and sovereign identities due to the

government's ban on books. Chapter 3, on the other hand, discusses *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic landscape and how the harsh environment described in the book affects the characters. The fourth chapter contains a discussion of the novels' common imagery of fire. Here, I propose that the burning of books in *Fahrenheit 451* as well as the scorched landscapes in *The Road* suggests that the notion of the future itself is traumatic, even insidious. Lastly, the conclusion will examine the key findings of this thesis, as well as offer suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Oppression and fear in *Fahrenheit 451*

Fahrenheit 451 is a novel that portrays a future version of the US, where a totalitarian government has been given the control to rule over its people. This creates an existence which, in multiple aspects, is infused with the traumatic fear of victimization. As the renowned philosopher Hannah Arendt writes, "[u]nder totalitarian conditions, fear probably is more widespread than ever before," and although the natural fear response is present under a totalitarian regime, "… fear has lost its particular usefulness when actions guided by it can no longer help to avoid the dangers man fears" (467). Under a totalitarian regime fear therefore becomes internalized, and even naturalized in the subject. Another important aspect of *Fahrenheit 451* is its ability to put into life what Thomas Rath identifies as the "tension between satisfaction and its opposite which recurs throughout fifties dystopias" (Seed 226). In other words, the tension between satisfaction and discontent is a fine line that, if not handled correctly, may produce an existence that is inherently traumatic. In this chapter, I will examine the novel's account of the historical development, as well as the psychological consequences of the society in which *Fahrenheit 451* is set.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Bradbury was a popular pulp writer, and at the time of *Fahrenheit 451*'s release, many of his stories were already being adapted into plays and television shows (Eller 277). Although the novel was not released until 1953, *Fahrenheit 451* was first conceptualized in a short story published in 1950 during the aftermath of the Second World War (Sisario 201). The novel plays out in a time in the future where many of the freedoms we today take for granted, i.e., freedom of expression, thought, movement and so on, are either expunged or at the very least highly regulated by a totalitarian government. As the novel's protagonist Guy Montag remarks, their world functions like "a marionette show" (19) in which free will is just an illusion. As the discussions below demonstrates, this makes the society a breeding ground for trauma.

It is crucial to note the novel's setting in time, because, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the novel may have predictive capabilities. Since the dystopian novel is set in the future, its genre allows for speculations on the trajectory of the contemporary society. Quoting the American journalist Alvin Toffler's book *Future Shock* (1970), Luckhurst, in his article bearing the same name, points out that the ongoing technological development and urban

growth in the post-war years could be detrimental to the future of humanity, and that humans were "doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown" (qtd in Luckhurst 157). Essentially, Toffler suggests that, if the technological progress is handled incorrectly, humans may struggle to adapt to the new technologies, the growing cities, and the new societies this subsequently creates. What would happen if the technological and societal growth were left to develop, uncritically and uncontrolled?

The analyses will to a large degree draw on the term Toffler used to describe the 'massive adaptational breakdown' mentioned above – namely 'future shock'. Future shock, Luckhurst explains, relates to the trauma of the future, i.e., how trauma changes throughout time based on the political and historical background of a given time (157). Citing Toffler yet again, Luckhurst continues to present the symptoms of future shock, describing them as a wide specter that "… range all the way from anxiety, hostility to helpful authority and seemingly senseless violence, physical illness, depression and apathy" (157). *Fahrenheit 451*, as it will be established in the following sections, demonstrates these aspects of future shock through its speculations about the future both through the characters and how they act within their society and how the society has adapted to accommodate new technology. Contained within the term, it is also possible to identify other mental and physical afflictions that are common psychological responses to trauma. Therefore, this chapter will examine *Fahrenheit 451* through the lens of future shock. By the end of the analysis, I will be pairing it to insidious trauma as stipulated in the theory section in the introduction.

Furthermore, the second instrumental term, collective trauma, is borrowed from Kai Erikson's 1995 article "Notes on Trauma and Community". In the article, Erikson explores the impact shared trauma has on a community. Explaining the concept, while simultaneously further expanding on what it entails, he writes that collective trauma at its core is "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (187). While Erikson's examples mainly focus on traumas caused by natural disasters, it is a relevant observation in this context. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the sense of communality is so badly impaired that inhabitants such as Mildred and her friends will rather spend their days consuming nonsensical broadcasting than interacting with other human beings.

The chapter is comprised of three sections. In the following section, I examine how the totalitarian society in the novel came to be, and ultimately demonstrate that the collective trauma is caused by the people choosing a life of conformity over a life of freedom. The

section thereafter will contain an analysis of what the loss of the freedoms mentioned earlier in this introduction means for the characters and how it shapes their lives. Lastly, I will discuss Montag's development through the novel's narrative, looking closely at what inspired him to his ultimate decision to ostracize himself from society, and join the scholars who live peacefully outside society itself. (how does all of this link back to the future shock and collective trauma?)

2.1: The historical significance of a totalitarian dystopia

Set around 500 years in the future, *Fahrenheit 451* presents a distorted version of the United States of America. In Bradbury's vision, books have been banned, limiting the inhabitant's sources for opposing views. The government has taken on, or rather, it has been given, a totalitarian role, controlling almost every single facet of its willing inhabitant's lives. In one analysis of the novel, Hassan Abootelabi observes that "*Fahrenheit 451* creates a dark, futuristic world that does not want a well-educated and well-informed population capable of critical thinking" (10). The setting is thus best described as an anti-intellectual society where the public opinion is formed by the media created by the government to secure the people's conformity. To enforce the permanent ban, the firemen's roles have been reversed from putting fires out to setting the books on fire. If one takes the novel's historical circumstances into consideration, it is no surprise that this type of censorship has been present in the author's mind.

Therefore, I deem it important to place the novel's theme of book burnings into a historical context that is riddled with a notion that literature can be dangerous to its readers. By establishing that book burning is remotely a new phenomenon, one reveals major insights into what Bradbury's novel tries to accomplish. Throughout history, book burnings have been used to control the masses. In his 2006 article "On Book Burnings and Book Burners: Reflections on the Power (and Powerlessness) of Ideas," Hans J. Hillerbrand explains that book burning has been a tool to silence conflicting views, especially those which oppose the status quo, since at least the early stages of Christendom, when books (and sometimes their authors) supporting and denouncing Christianity were burned for heresy (595-596). During the sixteenth century, Pope Pius IV "introduced the *Index prohibitorum librorum*," a list of books that "guided Catholic reading and censorship" (Hillerbrand 598) well into modern

times, reminiscent of the "typed lists of a million forbidden books" (Bradbury 47) in *Fahrenheit 451*. Not only does this level of censorship in early Christianity resonate with the censorship in the novel, but it serves as an example of history repeating itself, just 500 years in the future.

Therefore, Hillerbrand correctly identifies a crucial motive fueling book burnings throughout the millennia. Book burners actively express the dominant culture's hegemony of truth to suppress opinions that diverge from the accepted. During the renaissance and the enlightenment periods, books of scientific inquiry were burned for opposing God, and in May of 1933, the Nazi executed book burnings "at more than 50 universities" to regain the nation's former glory after the First World War (Hillerbrand 601, 607). Whereas book burning has typically been a tool to silence certain voices that disagree with a grand narrative, Bradbury takes it one step further. In the following conversation, Montag's superior, Beatty, admits that literature was banned because "[n]one of these books agree with each other" (52). Instead of banning and burning books that disagree with the grand narrative, the government in *Fahrenheit 451* has banned *all* books regardless of their content – merely because they disagree between themselves. "Book burning," Hillerbrand continues, "is the epitome of censorship; it is the end of discourse, the end also of the exchange of ideas. It is the deathblow to the free mind" (607). Unable to see the significance of literature, it has been disregarded just like anti-Christian literature was disregarded and destroyed in early Christendom. Bradbury's novel, I believe, serves as a warning to us in the future. If specific forms of media are being censored on the grounds of ideological sensibilities, as is evident in *Fahrenheit 451*, there can be no productive discourse to move the society forwards. The novel demonstrates, therefore, that the lack of critical discourse has resulted in a stagnant society that forever strives for materialistic goals rather than intellectual inquiry and social changes.

In a conversation between Montag and Beaty following the protagonist's shock of setting fire to a woman for keeping a library, a scene which will be further addressed in the discussion chapter, Beatty reveals important historical clues about how the novel's political environment is produced through a seemingly natural process, as opposed to a violent process. "The fact is," the fire chief says, "we didn't get along well until photography came into its own. Then – motion pictures in the early twentieth century. Radio. Television. Things began to have *mass"* (71). In other words, as media gained a mass of its own, people gravitated together in a mutual fascination over the same media. Thus, as technology evolved, making information and entertainment readily available, the media gained a materialistic and

symbolic value; the people became consumers. "… [I]n the twentieth century," Beatty explains, "speed up your camera. Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests. Tabloids. Everything boils down to the gag, the snap ending" (72). Beatty's own words aptly describe the consequences: "The mind drinks less and less" (75). As all media is shortened to easily digestible chunks of content, meaning and nuance is consequently lost.[1]

Being fully aware of the truth about the structural and cultural changes prompted by technological development, Beatty reveals how the notion of intellectuality could deteriorate. About 500 years before the novel's onset, the political landscape is described much like today's waves of liberalism. Beatty explains that "[t]he people in this book, this play, this TV serial are not meant to represent any actual painters, cartographers, mechanics anywhere" (75), meaning that a representation diversity can, and in *Fahrenheit 451* it certainly did, create more issues than they resolve. "The bigger the market," he says, "… the less you handle controversy" (75-76). Their ideology therefore dictates that the representation of differences becomes the source of controversy; that the only way to secure equality is to remove representation of all. The eradication of independent thinking and the dilution of the rich American culture, the proverbial melting pot, became "dishwater" in the eyes of the critics (76). The people, wanting to avoid "step[ping] on anyone's toes" (75), led to a deletion of historical artifacts telling another truth than what is within the range of political correctness.

As technology advanced even further, the need for constant input became massive, which resulted in news and entertainment being compressed to bite-sized chunks of information. Simultaneously, the population grew at a high rate, and in the process of the massive adaptation that soon transpired, "[f]ilms and radios, magazines" became more and more popular, while "books levelled down to a sort of paste pudding form" (72). This ultimately introduces Toffler's 'massive adaptational breakdown' mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. With the constant degradation of meaningful content, literature, news, and other entertainment is cut down to the bare minimum of information, slowly morphing into meaningless blob of content emulating meaning, but retaining no significant intellectual value. Although the media industry grew, its content slowly devolved from

---

[1] I invite readers of this paper to consider for just a moment the eerie parallels that may be drawn between the novel and twenty-first century media consumption. The novel's themes resonate with current technological development, adding a predictive, if not prophetic, dimension, warning us of the dangers of uncritical adaptation to new media paradigms.

meaningful to meaningless. Since the changes to media consumption happened so quickly, the society struggled to adapt.

Furthermore, as the nature of media changed, the people wished for a more equal and inclusive society with better representation for marginalized groups and fair depictions of them.[2] The social and political structures followed suit, but instead of securing inclusivity in a productive manner, the radical choice of excluding all discourse of equality through censorship is put in place. "It didn't come from the Government down," Beatty concludes, "[t]here was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure did the trick, thank God" (76). It was the people who, through their power as consumers, ultimately censored themselves, and followingly plunged themselves into an anti-intellectual society devoid of critical thought and reflection. Since books are products of intellectual thought that the government is unable to control and censor more than they already were, the easiest solution to the 'problem' is to make them illegal.

But the solution backfires, and the oppression affects people's overall wellbeing, both physically and mentally. It can therefore be firmly stated that through this process of self-correction, the characters in *Fahrenheit 451* are willingly submitting themselves to a plethora of possible traumatic experiences. The novel, perhaps unintentionally, demonstrates that the constant pressure of the trauma and oppressions leads to other traumas that manifests in the novel's characters. For as Abootelabi points out, "the submissive and conformist members of society have internalized the punishment associated with possessing books" (12). In other words, they are fully aware that if they are caught keeping books, they run the risk of severe disciplinary sanctions which function more like a warning to others than a chance for the individual to correct their behavior. The oppression portrayed in the novel is instrumental to understand its plot, and most characters' actions are dictated by their fear of being accused of and punished for nonconformity. It can therefore be argued that the novel functions as an example, or rather, a warning of how trauma may become internalized by the people. While the society itself seems to be stable outwardly, it takes a huge toll on the individual.

In the next section, I will examine individual characters to discern how they are affected by the totalitarian regime that was initially launched to protect the people from

---

[2] This is, as far as I see it, another section that can be deemed as a prediction of the changes in social values in the twenty-first century, especially considering the political landscape that fights for more inclusion, e.g., the LGBT+ movement and anti-racism movements such as Black Lives Matters, prompting careful consideration that inclusion should be handled with care and not by dismissing previous thought. Rather, one should use old justification of classism, racism, and sexism as examples of how *not* to act.

differing views in a hope to irradicate social differences. In *Fahrenheit 451*, this results in a society that is numb and even hostile to the very concept of independent thinking.

2.2: Mildred: structural trauma and techno-induced apathy

As mentioned above, the political structure and culture in Bradbury's novel are constant sources for trauma that never really seizes to encapsulate the effects of oppression. This section takes a closer analysis of the effects this social environment has on the character's psyche. For this, the three most central concepts of trauma studies are cultural trauma, structural trauma, and the collective trauma that accumulates in the city. As Erikson explains, "trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. It draws one away from the center of group space while at the same time drawing one back" (186). In *Fahrenheit 451*, this is manifested through the behaviors of both Montag and his wife, Mildred. But how are they different, and what can be learned about trauma through a thorough reading of these two characters? In this section, I examine this from Mildred's point of view.

Most characters in the novel live in a constant state of creature comforts, meaning that their lives for the most part are lived through their material possessions. Since it is illegal to possess any books that are not state-approved, inhabitants are no longer allowed nor willing to expand their minds with differing and opposing ideas. They are representations of what Brown dubs "the willing victims:" those who "never question the social structures that perpetuate [their] victimization" (127). This is a vastly important aspect of the novel, because according to Arendt, who wrote extensively about totalitarianism in the aftermath of the Second World War, "[t]he ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience), and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist" (474). In *Fahrenheit 451*, the manipulation of history discussed in the former section has produced a society where the 'reality of experience' and 'the standards of thought' have become distorted by political propaganda and deleted through banning and burning of books. However, some characters such as Faber, the former English professor, who is fully aware of this manipulation, exhibit a state of *radical acceptance*, a term that will be defined and further explored in the next chapter through the analysis of *The Road*. In this

section, however, the attention will be put on Mildred, Montag's wife, who is firmly indoctrinated to believe everything professed by the government.

As discussed earlier, the consequences of having books in one's possession have been internalized by the people. They are thus required to seek other channels for information and entertainment. Their leisurely, cultural, and even 'intellectual' inputs are provided through the state controlled "wall-to-wall circuit" (30) television shows. The shows provide an artificial sense of belonging through their participation, as demonstrated through the following lines of dialogue between Montag and his wife: "They write the script with one missing part" Mildred explains. But alas, this participation is fully scripted, and does not allow for critical discourse. Because, as she continues: "when it comes time for the missing lines, they all look at me out of the three walls and I say the lines" (30). This is excellently demonstrated when she, quite enthusiastically, tells Montag of the details of how the shows are run: when asked "Do you agree with that, Helen?" she is instructed to reply, "I sure do!" (30). Because her participation is already written *for* her, this set of lines are especially intriguing. It veils the shows' true function as propaganda. They are made for one purpose: to keep the population entertained and occupied.

The wall-to-tall circuits therefore functions as an escape from the real world. They allow the user to step into another reality, in which they become fully immersed in something outside themselves. As Erikson notes, "otherwise unconnected persons who share a traumatic experience seek one another out and develop a form of fellowship on the strength of that common tie" (187). In Mildred's case as a user, she is removing herself from the oppression of the government in a faux sense of belonging orchestrated by the oppressor. Her only role in this display of an imitated real play is to reply in simple sentences with no depth or thought-provoking ideas one might expect from a regular play. Instead of breaking down the metaphorical fourth wall, Bradbury highlights the addictive nature these wall-to-tall circuits have –rather, Bradbury's characters strive to further encapsulate themselves with a fourth wall (30). Mildred is thus drawn away from real groups space, i.e., social bonds with her friends and most significantly her husband, subsequently being drawn back by this artificial bond, or "kinship" as Erison puts it (190), provided by the parlor-lounge. Even Montag "had taken to calling them relatives from the very first" (59-60), inviting them into their most private sphere. "No matter when he came in, the walls were always talking to Mildred" the narrator explains (60). She is engulfed with the fantasy of belonging to a group outside herself because other aspects of her life do not offer the stimulus needed.

Mildred's dependency on participating in the parlor-lounge may, in fact, suggest the presence of Dominick LaCapra's concept of structural trauma is at play. He writes that structural trauma denotes the "absence" of a foundation, "be they referential, ideological, theological, or some other structural component" (qtd in Craps & Bond 81). Whereas books and their content certainly are sources of structural, and I would argue intellectual, foundation, the wall-to-wall circuit's contribution is as hollow as it can be. Therefore, when there are no stable foundations in real life, Mildred retreats to the fantasy of belonging in the parlor, because there, she can have some semblance of belonging and kinship which she otherwise cannot achieve.

Moreover, because of the foundational absences, Mildred's symptoms suggest that she is in a state of melancholia. Siegmund Freud describes this as a sad and depressed state of a neglecting and even apathetic view on real world responsibilities to both oneself and others (165). Her responsibilities as a supporting wife and as a helpful friend, which can be claimed in Montag's, is overshadowed by the need of structural belonging. The parlor, however, helps her to feed her needs. Freud continues, explaining that the "loss of an object of love," in this case the intellectual freedom books may provide, leads to a process through which "the ego itself becomes poor and empty" (167). Likewise, as LaCapra suggests, while the "losses … may be narrated," they "cannot be adequately addressed when they are enveloped in an overly generalized discourse of absence" (qtd in Bond & Craps 81). What this means is that the loss of intellectual discourse and even the self, effectively erased by the government's ban on books, creates an environment where a absence forms the society. Mildred's behavior throughout the novel suggests that she is afflicted by a melancholic state of mind that influences her responses to and untamed need for outside stimuli, however meaningless it may be. The wall-to-wall circuits provides her with a structural belonging outside herself that is otherwise not present. She is not her own person anymore; she is a puppet of the state, and her strings are being pulled in a certain ideological direction.

Consequently, it seems like Mildred is apathetic even to the notion of life itself. Her trauma makes her life meaningless, which is continually enforced through the media she consumes. This is strongly implied in the novel's first part when she is first introduced to the reader. Montag comes home late at night after a long day at work to find her sleeping in her bed with her seashell-thimbles – true wireless headphones that continually broadcast similar meaningless content as the parlor-lounge. As he enters the room that is "like coming into the cold marbled room of a mausoleum after the moon had set. Complete darkness, not a hint of

the silver world outside" (19). It is indeed a mausoleum, because what he finds is Mildred, whose "face was like a snow-covered island upon which rain might fall" (21). On the floor, he discovers an emptied bottle of "sleeping-tablets" (22), the full contents of which Mildred has, either intentionally, or accidentally ingested, overdosing on the substances (the truth is never revealed).

The bleakness of this passage sternly underscores the graveness of the ingrained trauma that resides within Mildred, and most importantly within the people of the nation. The first responders to the scene are "handymen" (24), and with a specially built apparatus, they are emptying Mildred of the "liquid melancholia" (25) that resides within. Even her blood is exchanged with someone else's (25). Hostile, even towards helpful authorities as Toffler's concept of future shock predicts (see page 7), Montag asks why the emergency did not send a medical doctor to assist. One of the handymen discloses that they "get these cases nine or ten a night. Got so many, starting a few years ago, we had the special machines built" (24). This suggests that this is a society where the individual psyche is irrelevant if the masses are content. Even as Montag observes the machine, he asks himself "[d]id it drink of the darkness? Did it suck out all the poisons accumulated with the years?" (23). The significance in this passage is revealed only through the inherent trauma of an anti-intellectual world. Mildred has no foundations to rely on, there are no structures that are truly meaningful in her life, and therefore, her life of darkness and poison becomes as insignificant as the lack of nuance suggests.

Mildred's trauma, therefore, leads her to gravitate towards the wall-to-wall circuit in search of some form of structural stability that can be considered a requirement for a functioning human society. It erodes the individual psyche to the point where they are numb to the world itself; where the meaning of life is forever diluted by the easily consumed content with no real meaning. Her reaction to trauma is, however, not the only way the oppression of a totalitarian government may influence a human being to gravitate towards a group belonging. In the following section, I will analyze Montag's disillusionment, and his eventual fall from society into estrangement and salvation.

2.3: Guy Montag: from agent to agency through disillusionment

Montag is an ordinary fireman working for the unspecified city's fire department. By our standards, however, he is not ordinary because unlike the firemen of today, whose job is to put fires *out*, the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* are instead tasked with setting fires. At the novel's onset, Montag is a compliant member of society, conforming to the ideologies of the government and to the fire brigade. Montag's dedication to the cause of the firemen and the government is thoroughgoing. His loyalty to the government is so deeply rooted in his being that the smell of the kerosene on his clothes "is nothing but perfume" (13). *Fahrenheit 451* describes, as discussed in greater detail in section 2.1, a society where owning books is strictly illegal and having a book in one's possession will lead to incarceration and even death by fire if they are found out. The predisposition to violence acted out by figures of authority, in this case the firemen, leads to a society that is constantly oppressed, not only in thought, but also in what possessions they keep. Thus, the fear of keeping books, as demonstrated throughout the narrative, provides heavily to a prolonged fear of being caught and punished. The fear of being made out as a keeper of books and the subsequent punishment is per definition an effect of insidious trauma, because the natural fear responses are no longer effective.

Before, I noted that the consequences of disobedience are naturalized in the inhabitants. This is further informed by other analyses, for as Abootelabi puts it, "a good citizen is one who does not dare to form his own opinion" (10), a notion that is reinforced multiple times. Montag's loyalty to the cause has been naturalized to the point where he never truly questions the motives of the burnings. Furthermore, he never considers the psychological effects the fires have on their victims. Montag, as opposed to other characters in the novel, is an agent of the oppressive system, acting for the government to control the people. This is not unusual, because "protagonists of dystopias are usually defined in relation to organizational structures" (Seed 226). Montag's entire being is defined by his role as a fireman, or as Beatty puts it, "a custodian of peace of mind" (77). In fact, his role as a fireman is his entire identity. Furthermore, not only do the firemen keep the nation free from books, but they also function as the "official censors, judges, and executors" (77). Montag, of course, takes great pride in his role, as the novel's opening lines suggest: "It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*" (9

Bradbury's emphasis). By being a fireman, Montag functions as a lens through which the reader critically can identify the issues of structural and cultural oppression.

Having established that Montag is an agent of the oppression, I believe it is now important to return to the concept of insidious trauma. Because, as I explained in the introduction to this thesis, insidious trauma in its most fundamental meaning denotes an anticipation of a traumatic event (see page 4). Similarly, a wound to the fabric of community leaves a fear for, and anticipation of, future traumatization. Erikson explains:

> Traumatized people often come to feel that they have lost an important measure of control over the circumstances of their own life and are thus very vulnerable. … But they also come to feel that they have lost a natural immunity to misfortune and that something awful is almost *bound* to happen. (194)

Despite being an oppressor, Montag is not immune to its traumatic effects. This is expertly demonstrated through his interactions with the mechanical hound – a device designed to hunt and even kill people who break the law. He is, quite unknowingly, affected by the insidious traumata of his workplace's own design. In the initial exposition of the hound, Montag is intrigued by its appearance and function. As he leans down, touching its "muzzle" (36), the hound growls, looking at Montag "with green-blue neon light flickering in its suddenly activated eye-bulbs" (37). Hearing its growl that sounding like "… a turning of cogs that seemed rusty and ancient with suspicion," and the "silver needle extended upon the air … pull back, extend, pull back" (37), Montag, clearly frightened by the beast, exits the scene quickly. The hound's growl and aggressions towards Montag represent an ominous foreshadowing of future event. This establishes that Montag's own internalized fear and anticipation of traumatization, i.e., insidious trauma.

By making Montag the protagonist, his work as a fireman is significant exactly because he is enforcing the continued oppression of the people. Indeed, by being a representative of the government, he is followingly a symbol of the oppressor. As a fireman, therefore, Montag's work allows the reader to follow his development as a character, while simultaneously introducing important and nuanced facets of the society in which he operates. In the cultural awareness of the people, firemen are but abstractions, a faceless extension of the law, which is demonstrated through his conversation with Clarisse McClellan in the novel's opening: "'And you must be' – she raised her eyes from his professional symbols – 'the fireman'" (12). Having never met before, she is still able to identify Montag as a fireman.

While the definite article identifying Montag as "the fireman" certainly suggests that Clarisse is aware that there is a fireman living in her neighborhood, it also indicates that she recognizes Montag as a symbol of the government – his smell and appearance giving it away immediately. As a fireman, therefore, he is dehumanized and made into a symbol of the government's oppression, a symbol which is ingrained and naturalized in Montag's personality.

However, through his interactions with Clarisse, a 17-year-old girl who has not let herself be influenced by the oppressive nature of the culture, he gets a glimpse into an alternative way of thinking. She explains that most people are "afraid of firemen" (14), but through their conversations she realizes that Montag is "… just a man, after all" (14). Unlike others, she sees through the veil and acknowledge his humanity. Throughout their conversations, Clarisse's continuous questioning about his happiness and general awareness of his surroundings allows Montag to expand his horizon. Clarisse can therefore be classified as a catalyst-figure, which Seed defines as a character "whose role is to function as a productive irritant in the protagonist's consciousness" (233). By breaking down the social barriers, humanizing Montag, and effectively demystifying the figure of the firemen directly in front of Montag, she acts as the catalyst for Montag's own maturation as an independent thinker, marking his first steps towards disillusionment.

Clarisse's enlightening worldview can therefore be regarded as a first movement, impacting greatly on Montag's future development as an independent thinker. She is indeed the catalyst, sparking within Montag a desire to form his own thoughts. This is reflected in another conversation between him and Beatty. Montag admits that he "… tried to imagine … just how it would feel. I mean to have fireman burn *our* houses and *our* books" (46). This strongly enforces Clarisse's influence on his newfound empathy with the people whose books he burns. During the following event, the fire brigade is tasked with taking care of a woman who, as it turns out, has a whole library in her home. Montag, being already well on his way to independent thought, witnesses that his "hand closed like a mouth, crushed the book with wild devotion," and mere seconds later his hand "plunged the book back under his arm" (51). Despite not being the first instance of disobedience, it certainly is the most momentous for Montag's character development. Furthermore, Montag's insistence to save the woman is easily glossed over by Beatty because "these fanatics always try suicide" (53), indicating that keeping books makes one inferior to the law-abiding citizens. The juxtaposition of these two

acts, however, demonstrates that Montag is torn between his old habits and his growing understanding of his actions.

This demonstrates that Montag is experiencing the tension between satisfaction and discontent mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. In his life as a fireman, he is satisfied with playing a role as the extended arm of the oppressor, but as he digests the new insights gained in his interactions with Clarisse, Montag is filled with discontent with himself and his work. During Montag's escape from the ignited building, he "felt the hidden book pound like a heart against his chest" (53), signifying that his newfound understanding of knowledge's power is taking hold in his psyche. This incident, which is perhaps a common occurrence in Bradbury's world, makes a traumatic impact on Montag. Furthermore, the trauma of Montag's disillusionment breaks the dam, so to say, releasing all the pent-up impressions collected over years of being a fireman. This could yield different results, but in comparison with his wife who continually bury herself in distractions, Montag's disillusionment leads him to ostracize himself from the society, leaving every person and severing every connection he once had in the city. Escaping the mechanical hound is not an easy feat, but he dives into a river, symbolically cleansing himself as if he is baptized in the name of freedom. Although he is not cleansed from sin, as it were, the contrast between the river and his former occupation symbolizes his salvation. He is thrown away from the center, his wife, and his work, and eventually forms a new center in the forest with the scholars. Unhindered by the government, which does not see them as a threat to the status quo, the escape allows Montag to form a new foundation based in literature, memorizing texts for the future.

Conclusion

As demonstrated through this chapter, *Fahrenheit 451* is a novel that thematizes the issues of oppression, government control, and fear seen in the first half of the twentieth century. Written in the aftermath of the Second World War, a time in which the tension between the US and the Soviet Union was growing at a fast pace and totalitarian regimes were not uncommon, it attempts to have a peek into the future. As a product of its time, the novel therefore reflects the social and political tension of the 1950s and theorizes on the future consequences of the unrestrained technological development during this period. However, it must be mentioned that the novel is rooted in history through its evocation of past means of

censorship. The novel's central imagery, book burning and censorship, is by no measure a thing of the past, even in Bradbury's time. Indeed, as Hillerbrand established, the measure of censorship was as recently as 20 years prior to the novel's release used to silence the voices critical to or in conflict with the Nazi agenda. It is therefore a highly relevant novel, not only to Bradbury and his contemporaries, but also for us in the twenty-first century. In fact, Bradbury's novel portrays political and societal development that is taking place right now.

In this chapter, I have analyzed the characters of this novel through the lens of trauma studies to learn more about the consequences of the unyielding social control imposed on the people. As the new technology has been naturalized into everyday life, so has the structural trauma in those who embrace the new media. The gallery of characters Bradbury has put to life in the world of *Fahrenheit 451* allows critics to examine the many-faceted cityscape in which the story plays out, all of whom are seen and reflected upon through the eyes of the novel's protagonist, Guy Montag. In terms of trauma, this provides a rich environment with multiple perspectives through which one can distinguish between various levels of integration into the totalitarian government's rule. For example, Mildred has fully accepted her reality and is unwilling to even conceptualize any other way of living. Her lack of a structural belonging, however, erodes her individuality, and the wall-to-wall circuit enhances her experience of absence, leading to a state of melancholia. On the other hand, characters such as Clarisse McClellan, who is even seen as a threat to the government, quietly hold a more liberal view. In contrast with Mildred's unquestioning assimilation, Clarisse is a reflective and lightly critical character.

All of these are the result of the insidious traumata of which the characters are victims. The oppression of the government and the tyrannical treatment of opposing sentiments in works of literature that scares the people so much that it contributes to a sustained sense of terror. They are fearing either being framed or caught keeping books in their homes or elsewhere. Furthermore, as a keeper of books himself, Montag becomes the lens through which we see both the insidious effects on the inhabitants. His affiliation to the firemen demonstrates the oppression from his point of view, while simultaneously exploring the brutal lengths to which the governing bodies are willing to go to keep the country free of literature. Montag effectively bridges the gap between the oppressor and its subjects, exposing the intricate society and the insidious traumata it produces, building an understanding for both sides of the argument, while at the same time demonizing censorship, i.e., burning of burning lives and knowledge to ashes.

Chapter 3: Desolation and despair in *The Road*.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* provides a dystopian setting where a totalitarian/authoritarian government imposes a harsh censorship and an immense degree of social control. McCarthy's *The Road*, on the other hand, portrays a world where all governmental control has been eradicated by an unforeseen and unnamed cataclysm that has destroyed the American landscape, effectively erasing all positive and productive social structures that were previously found. I therefore ask, how does the desolate landscape and the sustained pressure of trauma affect the characters? Does the trauma inhibit them in any way? Carmen Laguarta Bueno points out that the novel's focus lies not on the disaster itself, but rather that "the emphasis is laid instead on the protagonists' struggle to survive in a post-apocalyptic world where violence is ubiquitous" (72). In other words, the possibility of experiencing further traumatization after the original event, the apocalypse itself, is ever-present. It can therefore be claimed that the protagonists are struggling to survive in a world where trauma is lurking around each corner. The purpose of this chapter is, then, to argue that the novel's dystopian setting itself is a continuous source of trauma – that their surroundings are, to some degree, insidious.

Because of the environmental disaster and the ecological extinction presented in the novel, which will be examined in greater detail in the next section, some academics have argued that *The Road* is an ecocritical novel. According to these scholars, McCarthy highlights a future where environmental change has caused a mass extinction on Earth. For instance, it has been proposed that *The Road* can be interpreted as a cautionary tale of an approaching environmental threat (Stark 71). It has therefore been regarded as a "part of the emerging sub-genre of dystopian literature called climate fiction" (Stark 71). The landscape "… offers a [world] blasted not by natural violence but by human violence" (Edwards 55), which is indicative of the thematic undertones of man-made climate change. Furthermore, the novel has also been read in connection to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. "To read this post-apocalyptic dystopian narrative as an allegory of 9/11" Richard Crownshaw writes, "implies the traumatic" (772). McCarthy's novel, then, seems to address two contemporary issues at once, both of which, I think, entail the traumatic. While it certainly calls for a discussion for human violence towards nature, it also deals with the emotional aftermath of 9/11, just differently than other writers such as Don DeLillo and his 2007 novel *Falling Man*. Since the reception and scholarly interpretation of the novel covers a

wide array of analyses, I believe that *The Road*'s narrative has a seemingly universal quality as a trauma narrative. Thus, I argue that this post-apocalyptic dystopian narrative implies a broader, more insidious, experience of trauma set in the future anterior.

The analysis in this chapter will revolve around three aspects of the novel that are integral to the discussion of insidious trauma in the future anterior. Section 3.1 will address key aspects of the environment, the "deathscape" (Edwards 56) in which the narrative takes place to establish that the characters are in a constant fight for their survival. In section 3.2, the focus will narrow in on the character to look at the psychological processes they undergo to accept the world for what it has become. Section 3.3 will feature an examination of how the trauma impacts the character's language. By examining these sides of the novel, I aim to highlight the way in which the novel portrays the emotions present during the aftermath of 9/11 and the looming climate crisis to create a world of tomorrow which is fueled by feelings of desolation, despair, and the anticipation of a threatening future.

3.1: The significance of a "scorched landscape" in terms of trauma

The post-apocalyptic setting in *The Road* presents an utterly ruined American landscape where almost all life except a small number of human beings is left to struggle for survival. After an unnamed, possibly global cataclysmic event, the novel details a world plunged into darkness. The narrative follows the father and his son's journey through America as they head south in search of warmth (2). Set in an American landscape that, as described by the narrator as "Barren, silent, godless" (2), the father and his son traverse the "cauterized terrain" (13), defying the treacherous world that is increasingly dangerous. With the repurposed shopping cart, in which they haul what they need, be it what little food they manage to find, blankets, a tarpaulin, a lamp and so on, they wander along the long roads connecting America together. At the end of the road, having been foreshadowed through multiple intense coughing fits (10, 56, 288), environment claims his life and the boy must go on by himself. However, he is not alone in this, as at the end, they come across a family of three – a mother, father, and their daughter. In an act of trust blended with caution, the boy joins them, leaving the body of his dead father behind, whose quest to keep the boy – bearer of flames of goodness – alive.

From the onset of the novel, McCarthy makes it clear that the setting is significant, and is therefore given a high amount of attention across the span of narrative. In the first few

pages alone, McCarthy provides an expertly crafted exposition of the landscape, describing the harsh atmosphere of the world. Since the downfall, the world has become "dark beyond darkness, and" as time progressed, "the days more gray each one than what had gone before" (1). The ever-changing, ever-decaying land, as observed by the narrator, presents itself "[l]ike the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world" (1). Waking from a dream, the man witnesses the "first grey light," and as he gazes across the horizon to the south, the direction in which him and his son soon will head (2), he characterizes the world as "[b]arren, silent, godless" (2). The world's collapse, however, was a slow event, and it soon became a wasteland where the likelihood of encountering other animals and human beings became increasingly low.

After the cataclysm, the world therefore grows increasingly empty – empty of people, animals, and resources. However, as demonstrated through a flashback to a time shortly following the cataclysm, "the roads were peopled with refugees shrouded up in their clothing" (28). To keep ash and dust to enter their lungs, they wore "masks and goggles" (28)[3] to protect themselves from the environment. A detrimental side-effect of the apocalypse and the necessity of protective gear, I think, is that it anonymizes the people; that their identities are not only hidden from view, but that they are effectively lost and forgotten amidst the chaos of the road. "The frailty of everything," the narrator determines, is "revealed at last" (28). A frailty not only of the world and nature, but also of the very notion of being human. Furthermore, the narrator observes "[p]eople sitting on the sidewalk in the dawn half immolate and smoking in their clothes. Like failed sectarian suicides" (32-33). Like the diminishing glaucomic visibility that is most likely caused by a combination of a thick sheet of ashen clouds blocking the sun and the buildup of ash in the air, life as we know it quickly vanished. "Once in those early years," the narrator continues, "[the man had] wakened in a barren wood and lay listening to flocks of migratory birds overhead in the bitter dark. … He never heard them again" (54-55). The world's collapse is represented as a long process of deterioration that, over the years, eroded the world and its ecology. Most significantly, however, it eroded the fabric of humanity.

Although the descriptions are written in a rich and beautiful prose, the highly macabre details of the utterly changed world skimps over the calamity. The details of the event itself

---

[3] This imagery is reminiscent of the cityscapes during the current global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Query: Although wearing a facemask demonstrably decreases the risk of contracting the virus, do they remove or at the very least hide our identity and individuality?

are quite underwhelming and even mundane. It is merely depicted as "[a] long shear of light and then a series of low concussions" (54). Instead of immersing the reader in the event, the focus quickly shifts to the man "dropp[ing] to one knee and raised the lever to stop the tub and then turned on both taps as far as they would go" (54). His survival instinct, which becomes integral to his and his son's later survival, compels him to fill the bathtub with water for them to consume. Because the novel does not reveal clear details on the event, speculations around the cause have yielded varied interpretations. According to Stark, events such as "… divine intervention, a meteor colliding with the Earth, nuclear winter, and" as mentioned earlier, "climate change" have all been proposed (72), yet no clear answer has been given by the author. This is important to note, because lack of a specific cause makes the novel open for multiple interpretations of what could have caused the initial trauma.

The cause of the apocalypse is, as explained above, thus reduced to just a few visual cues that allows interpretation across a broad specter of possible causes. By omitting the details, McCarthy exhibits a profound awareness of human psychological response in the face of trauma. As reiterated by Cathy Caruth in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Dori Laub explains that traumatic experiences are influenced by an "inability to fully witness the event as it occurs" (7). The cataclysm's primus motor is overshadowed by the man's calculative reaction the extreme event. For as Caruth continues, if one were to absorb every detail of the event, it would happen "at the cost of witnessing oneself" (7). McCarthy's character therefore seems to forget, or at the very least disregard, the details of the event because he, above all else, prioritizes the survival of himself and his pregnant wife. I therefore believe that lack of an answer for what happened is significant because his focus is not on the traumatic event itself. Rather, he is fixated on protecting what he holds the most sacred – the lives of him and especially his loved ones. Its ambiguous description allows the reader to interpret its meaning for themselves, while simultaneously establishing the narrow focus the novel really has.

Furthermore, as an effect of the apocalypse, it should not be understated that the lack of food is a crucial factor in the characters' lives. In fact, a large chunk of the plot pertains the search for sustenance (and, of course, safety), which is directly expressed when the man and the boy search through an "old … smokehouse", where they find a piece of dried meat (16). "Mostly he worried about their shoes," the narrator claims. "That and food" he continues; "Always food" (16). Moreover, the descriptions of the meat as the man cuts through it reveals the sheer joy and relief discovering food gives them: "[h]e cut into it with his knife. Deep red

and salty meat inside. Rich and good" and "[t]hey fried it that night over their fire, thick slices of it, and put the slices to simmer with a tin of beans" (16). After consuming the food, the man wakes up to hear something sounding like "bulldrums" (16) in the distance. However, because of the satisfaction of the meal, his concern about this noise is swept away when the wind changes; "there was just silence" (16). The vivid details in McCarthy's language underscore the significance of this discovery. The emphasis laid on the richness, the flavor, even the color of the food, and the toned down, yet ecstatic, joy the characters express upon finding the meat demonstrate the sheer desperation – the hunger – they experience. Despite the economic use of words, it thoroughly allows the reader to be sucked into the moment, experiencing what the characters are experiencing. This section effectively communicates their hunger, but also their bliss upon finding the rich and conserved meat, possibly a remnant of the time before the cataclysm.

For the two characters, it is possible to live off the few scattered resources that are left. However, since the sun has been covered by a sheet of ash, and the ecology has effectively been destroyed and made barren, other survivors have taken a more sinister choice to sustain themselves. Marauders and highwaymen have become the biggest threats to the main characters' safety because they, unlike the father and the son, have resorted cannibalism. On their search for food and other goods that helps their survival, the pair find an old orchard where an old house remains. Peering down into house's the cellar, using a lighter as his only source for light, the man discovers an unsettling scene; people chained to the walls and the floors. They are kept there for one thing – to become some other, more malevolent, survivor's dinner. Realizing that he cannot help them because of the looming threat of being discovered, he quickly and carefully climbs back up to leave. As they are running away from the house, escaping the open landscape, the cannibals who occupy the house chase them.

Regardless of what the streaks of light were, it is the characters who are in focus in the novel, and their will – and ability – to survive which is highlighted. What is important, is that a major traumatic event has occurred. For the two survivors, the world has become a treacherous and sinister space where dangers always lurk around the next corner, whether it is hunger, thirst, the weather, or cannibals. Because of outside factors such as these, our heroes are in constant danger of losing their lives, either at the hands of others or the environment.

The continual outside pressure leaves them with little to no time to process much else than just survive. While the discussions above have mainly targeted the world and the dangers they encounter, the next part of this chapter will focus on analyzing the characters to learn

more about their motivations, and how (and why) they have adapted to the situation. Here, I will examine the book through the lens of trauma studies, hoping to learn more about what traumas the characters meet on their perilous journey. The goal is therefore to unlock key aspects of what the novel communicates in terms of trauma, which later will be used to further examine the novel's allegorical function. Before that can take place, though, there is a lot to unpack. This is not a novel that is solely about the world, but about the characters themselves and their experiences in this treacherous environment. Their survival pivots on the father's ability to keep his son safe, which, in the end, is the reason for his own death. What, then, is his motivation to keep on going, defying the terrifying environment, and taking the road southward? This will be addressed in the next section.

3.2: Working through in a post-apocalyptic space

Trauma may take many shapes and sizes, and there are multiple ways one can work through the traumas. In *The Road*, the environment is a crucial factor to consider if one is to understand how the world impacts the characters and their ability to process the psychological consequences of the radically changed world. The purpose of this section is to analyze the novel's multiple representations of trauma and how the characters inevitably deal with the trauma they encounter in the world. The goal here is to elaborate on the intrinsic trauma of the environment, and how it affects the main characters' behavior. In contrast with *Fahrenheit 451*, where the trauma originates from a political system oppressing its inhabitants and their communities, *The Road* removes the notion of community entirely. Being left alone to cope with an abundance of past and present trauma, while simultaneously being exposed to the harsh conditions of the post-apocalyptic narrative, it seems that their ability to work through their trauma is hindered. Here, I will demonstrate that their entire existence is dependent upon their ability to stay calm, focused, and barely nourished. But if their trauma cannot be properly accessed and dealt with, how do they keep the emotions at arm's length? What are their, or rather the father's motivations to keep going?

While the environment prohibits them from accessing the emotions that are usually associated with trauma of this magnitude, McCarthy's characters display an impressive amount of endurance, courage, and bravery. Simultaneously, however, they must be cautious and vigilant of their surroundings. In fact, their lives depend on a conjunction of these characteristics. Traversing the derelict world is immensely dangerous, yet the man continues to exhibit the profound survival instinct introduced above. However, the most important

reason for keep going is the father's paternal instincts. He is unable to even consider the possibility of letting his child die. "But he knew that if he were a good father still might well be as she [the mother] had said," the narrator explains, "[t]hat the boy was all that stood between him and death" (29). It is his father instincts that keeps them going; keeps them moving through the desolate landscape where danger dominates. Their survival is utterly reliant on the father's sanity. Because if he is not able to think clearly in dangerous situations, both him and the son will either die, either by the hand of the environment or by other people – two equally horrific outcomes.

It is therefore important to examine the man's resolve to keep on going. One way to approach this subject is through the concept of radical acceptance. Karyn Hall explains that radical acceptance "is about accepting life on life's terms and not resisting what you cannot or choose not to change" (par. 1). By accepting their reality for what it is, the characters are therefore able to conquer their fears more easily. Hall encourages that acceptance should be practiced in instances where the problem at hand cannot be solved nor when one's attitude towards an issue cannot be changed, and she elaborates, claiming that "resisting reality delays healing and adds suffering to the pain" (Hall par. 13). By accepting the reality for what it is, it helps the father to keep his son alive. While *The Road* explores some aspects that are important when one is practicing radical acceptance, i.e., that the man accepts the world's fate, and assumes his task to protect his son, equipping him with an arsenal of survival skills, the man simultaneously neglects an important function of radical acceptance. "Acceptance," Hall continues, "means that you can begin to heal" (par. 13), indicating that radical acceptance may, and even should, be used as a tool to begin a process of working through. Instead of working through his trauma, however, the man ploughs southbound, suppressing his memories for the sake of his son's survival.

Thus, a part of the man's acceptance of the status quo is, unlike Hall's concept of radical acceptance, to repress the memories of the past. For clarity, repression, as W. H. R. Rivers defines it, is an "… active or voluntary process by which it is attempted to remove some part of the mental content out of the field of attention with the aim to make it inaccessible to memory and creating a state of suppression" (2). In this process, the man becomes obsessed by an *idée fixe*, "leading to a process of dissociation through which the subject attempts split the traumatic memory from everyday consciousness in order to divest it of its psychological power" (Bond & Craps 145). Focusing primarily on what may be ahead, the man keeps his son safe by actively forgetting his past.

Although dissociation is normally thought as a reaction to immense trauma, it is the memories of the pre-apocalyptic time that needs to be repressed; it is the notion of the 'before' that is traumatic. As the narration reveals, "… the right dreams of a man in peril were dreams of peril and all else was the call of languor and death" (17). Repression, therefore, becomes an important survival tool. For as Amanda Wicks observes, "… memories serve only to keep him from his primary task: protecting his son" (37). By not acknowledging his past and present trauma through dissociation, his focus and instinct to protect is sharpened. By combining the effects of radical acceptance and repression, the man makes it possible for him to do what he must; and in the aftermath a catastrophic event, working through would inhibit his mission to keep the boy alive. Whereas it seems like the man's determination to live for the sake of his son's survival is strong, others do not display the same strength.

The novel's characters, especially the man's wife, represents to high degree some of the important aspects of how trauma can truly thrive in a dystopian post-apocalyptic world. She acts as a counterpart to the man's disregarding approach to trauma. In contrast with her husband, she is not able to accept reality – neither to dissociate nor to adapt to the situation they now find themselves in. Because of her fear "that they might be raped or attacked by other survivors who have seen in cannibalism the only possibility to survive" (73), Laguerta-Bueno writes, she decides to end her life. Returning the definition of insidious trauma, as I explained in the theory section, one of the most common uses for the concept deals with the fear and anticipation of bodily harm, i.e., rape and other violence. During their argument, when the mother first voices her wish to leave the world behind, the man says "[w]e're survivors" (57). Looking back at him, illuminated only by a small lamp, her retort to this is strikingly calculated: "I didnt bring myself into this. I was brought" (57). Her reply strongly implies that she does not consider herself a survivor of the event, but rather as the catastrophe's unwilling victim. The continual pressure of traumatization has therefore put her in the position of further victimization, and the traumas of the apocalypse have affected her so much that she could not even bear the thought of being alive in a world so seriously damaged.

However, her decision may also be seen in another light. Philip A. Snyder writes in his 2008 article "Hospitality in Cormac McCarthy's "The Road"" that she took her life "… to relieve her husband and especially her son of their responsibility toward her." (77). He continues to explain that her choice is made because she anticipates that "her best future as annihilation," and instead of "waiting for whatever will come," she walks into the darkness to be her own undoing (77). Her choice can therefore be read not only as an action prompted by

the massive traumas she has had to endure, but also as a choice made of love for the man and their son. This strongly indicates that she sees herself as a burden to the father, a burden that, if removed, would help the survivors to alleviate the burden which she considers herself. As a result, her suicide leaves the man alone with the boy, to protect him and to raise him in a world where all is lost and where Death continually breathes on their necks. But the implication of her suicide is that the man's focus is now solely on him, and most importantly his son – his idée fixe.

Now, whereas Hall argues that radical acceptance entails a process of healing where one addresses memories and work through the trauma actively, the circumstances under which the father lives deny him the possibility of reflecting on the past. If the man were to fully accept the world to start a healing process, it would ultimately inhibit his ability to take care of and protect his son. For as Rivers explains, "[i]t is not repression in itself which is harmful, but repression under conditions in which it fails to adapt the individual to his environment" (2). The memories must therefore lay dormant in the back of his mind if he is to succeed in his mission. In this way, the father's acceptance and repression are useful tools because they allow him to adapt to the needs of the post-apocalyptic world. In the next section, I will discuss perhaps the most important aspect of how their trauma has affected them – namely their language.

3.3. The secrecy of trauma and the unspeakable in *The Road*

From a linguistic perspective, *The Road* is a highly fascinating piece of literature. This is not only conditioned by its historical context and the dystopian setting, but also because the novel's structural and grammatical qualities are helpful to underscore the desolation and emptiness of the novel's. In his article "Contractions in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*" (2010), Lindsey Banco explains that the linguistic restraints of the prose "helps McCarthy's thematizations of absence and lack, of moral and existential nihilism" (276). Following the calamity, everything that is a product of American culture is wiped clean off the Earth's surface, resulting in a space devoid of cultural or ideological meaning. In this section, I will demonstrate what ways their language has become impaired, yet not devoid of meaning. The next paragraphs will therefore explore the language and symbolism found in the novel, linking it to the concepts of trauma that were discussed earlier. In focus here, is the language

in the dialogues between the main characters. Furthermore, I believe that their linguistic impairments are an expression of how their trauma can be deemed insidious.

First, it is crucial to address the notion of insidious trauma because I intend to use it in a vastly different framework than its original context as well as how it is expressed in *Fahrenheit 451*. Throughout her article, Brown emphasizes that insidious trauma is a set of common, yet secret traumata, that, for the most part, happens to a large portion of the female population (122). These are traumas that are pushed aside by "the dominant culture" (122), are not discussed because they by definition are not "outside the range of human experience" (119). They were not talked about, nor were they even acknowledged as by mainstream psychotherapy. In the previous section, I found that the main characters in *The Road* were accepting their faiths in the post-apocalyptic scenario, and as a tool to overcome the trauma they continually face, they repress their memories and dissociate themselves from their past. Since their memories have been made secret even to the main characters, they simultaneously become unspeakable.

Considering the novel's historical context, the concept of the unspeakable is no doubt in effect throughout McCarthy's dialogues. In his book *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (2011), published 10 years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, M. J. T. Mitchell writes that one aspect of the unspeakable is "a tactic that is usually accompanied by a rather comprehensive inventory of all the things one will not talk about" (57). As demonstrated above, the novel's protagonists, especially the man, are under the influence of the unspeakable, mainly in the way the man deals with his past. The almost extreme (or violent) descriptions of this transformed world contrast highly with the rather restrained dialogues between the child and the man. In an analysis of the author's language, Wicks highlights that the contrasts between the descriptions and dialogues "indicat[es] in its starkness the difficulty with language often seen after a traumatic experience" (141). The drastic distinction between the descriptive language in the paragraphs and the unmarked dialogues that are limited to the bare minimum for any type of communication. Whereas the novel's descriptive language provides the reader with a rich and detailed prose that is truly integral for immersion, the vivid details of the utterly alien landscape places the impact of the original event within the grasp of the reader, and from the monochrome color palette to the social dynamics between the man and the boy, the language is fueled by trauma. The trauma is, however, expressed differently, and the dialogues reveal far more about the characters than what is visible at first glance.

Despite the continued claim within academia that *The Road* expresses a worldview that is heavily influenced of moral and existential nihilism, Banco argues that the novelist's story and the way punctuation has been employed provide the evidence for the contrary (276). Furthermore, the sentences' matter-of-factly qualities, their shortness and the syntactic simplicity employed in the novel's sparse dialogues contain more information about the characters. This is not an uncommon assessment of their language, for as Wicks argues, "language as explanation and/or narrative has no place in the space of The Road, because meaning-making structures (which also include memory and dreams) are no longer privileged forms of working through trauma" (143). Because of this, it can be claimed that their language lacks the potential for being helpful in the face of the various traumata they encounter.

However, their language has not yet completely deteriorated. While traumas have attained the unspeakable for the sake of survival, their dialogues are not as meaningless as Wicks asserts. The contractions have, according to Banco, symbolic value through its negations (contractions without apostrophes) and emphasis of agency (contractions with apostrophes). The following dialogue includes not only several examples of the relationship between negations and agency, but it also serves as a fine transition to the next chapter. Here, they talk about their constant hunger and the ethical dilemma of cannibalism:

> We wouldnt ever eat anybody, would we?
> No. Of course not.
> Even if we were starving?
> We're starving now.
> You said we werent.
> I said we werent dying. I didnt say we werent starving.
> But we wouldnt.
> No. We wouldnt.
> No matter what.
> No. No matter what.
> Because we're the good guys.
> Yes.
> And we're carrying the fire.
> And we're carrying the fire. Yes.
> Okay. (McCarthy 136)

Instead of working through their traumatic experience in the dark, musty cellar where people were kept as a resource, they ponder over their own agency and morality amidst the harsh reality surrounding them. Their language is revealing of this fact, for as Banco continues, "[u]nlike, say, "didnt" or "cant," contractions like "I'm" and "we're" contain a pronoun and emphasize a human agent … The apostrophe highlights the "I," the "you," and the "we" in sentences containing such contractions" (277-78); highlights the subject. The apostrophes therefore underscore the significance of the individual, and in this dialogue, their responsibilities as human beings. Through Banco's linguistic analysis, the characters attain a new potential of analysis. Although they are seemingly incapable of working through their traumas, they can at least be the people they aspire to be. The novel's chorus resonate well with this. They are the "good guys," they are …carrying the fire," they are subjects of their own making, simultaneously responsible for their actions against others. When nothing else matters, their morality and subjectivity do – signified through fire as a symbol of goodness amidst the evil of the landscape.

Conclusion

McCarthy's *The Road* presents a landscape that is destroyed by an unknown force that changed the world. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the world, which is now a mere ghost of what it was prior to the apocalypse, is cold and barren. The few resources available are scattered and hard to find – people even more so. The human beings who survive in this godforsaken, post-apocalyptic America have taken to cannibalism to sustain their need for food. In contrast, however, the man and the son are convincingly aware of their moral codes, refusing to take another person's life unless absolutely necessary. Using their metaphorical "fire inside" to guide them, they display a heightened sense of awareness of their surroundings and of their own subjectivity. The continual pressure and source of trauma has shaped the main characters so much that their lives hang in the balance over a double-edged sword.

Although the narrative is set in the future, it certainly reflects the emotions following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as asserted in the chapter introduction. As Mitchell explains, the unspeakability of massive traumas, in this case an apocalyptic event, limits the traumatized language. Furthermore, the meaning-making processes of language inhibits them to speak about their experiences. However, as demonstrated through the analysis of the character's dialogues, McCarthy's linguistic choices indicate that, although the world is gone, their

individuality is not. The choices the characters make, as well as the emphasis of the subject in contracted pronouns suggests a high degree of concern for human beings as a sovereign entity. This is masterfully expressed through the conversations occurring just before the mother's choice of suicide, and when the father and the son discuss their own morality.

Therefore, suppressing their trauma rather than working through them gives the pair a chance to focus on what is ahead of them. But the constant fear of being the victimized at the hands of others or the environment's sparse resources, are indicative of insidious traumata. They are aware that other people are a danger, and as such, they avoid them at all costs. The anticipation of further victimization and their hyper-vigilance does not allow them to address the emotions they have. Thus, locked in a continual turmoil of trauma that never seems to end, the man and the boy must tuck their emotions away. Inhibited by the environment, therefore, their experiences can never be worked through, and the traumata never seizes.

Chapter 4: Fire as an omen of uncertain doom

In the two previous chapters, I have analyzed the settings and the characters of both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road*, examining the varied ways these novels present trauma through their respective narratives. I have also suggested the possibility that these novels were written in response to the past and ongoing events in their contemporary societal and environmental change, reflecting a fear regarding the trajectory of humanity and human history. For as Luckhurst argues, "an SF future is … one that is meant to extrapolate consistently from the tendencies within its current empirical environment" (159). This suggests that novels of this style typically reflect on their time's prevailing concerns as well as an anticipation of radical change. While the narratives in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* as well as their *mise en scène* are vastly different and portray contrasting revelations about the possible futures in the context of the future anterior, they are still rooted in their own time.

Furthermore, their common imagery of fire provides equally important symbolic opportunities in the novels' underlying thematic meanings. This chapter will discuss this imagery in relation to insidious trauma and the implications of the future anterior in relation to trauma theory. I believe that the traumas discussed in the previous chapters, the genre of dystopian fiction, and the novels' seemingly natural perspective of 'what will have been' indicates an uncertain and even pessimistic perspective of what the future may hold. What this ultimately means, is that fire serves an allegorical function – an aspect that is revealed through a close reading and comparison of how fire is represented in the novels. Thus, the following section will be dedicated to a literary analysis of fire through the two concepts named above. In the last section, I argue that the dystopian future itself is bound up in a similarly imposed anticipatory distress.

4.1: The duality of fire: torn between safety and danger

In literary analysis, the term 'imagery' "covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience" (Habib & Cuddon 354). Thus, the significance of using fire to symbolize a traumatic vision of the future allows the authors to voice a concern about their respective impending fates. In his article "Fire in the Mind: Changing Understandings of Fire in Western Civilization" (2016), environmental historian Stephen J. Pyne examines the portrayal of fire in the cultural consciousness as well as its role in the technological development throughout recorded history

in the West, a cultural heritage both Bradbury and McCarthy share. He explains that "[f]ire was the ultimate didactical tool, capable equally of deconstructing the text of the world into its constituent parts and of fusing them into a new synthesis" (1). Drawing on Pyne's observations, I contend that the symbol of fire functions as a didactical tool used to deconstruct and reshape the respective social and ecological environments of today into the doomed worlds of tomorrow.

According to Pyne's paper, fire has undergone a change in the way it has been portrayed since the philosophers of antiquity to the time of industry and science; from a philosophical concept to a rational aspect of an industrious society. Recently, he claims, "fire is returning to prominence as a phenomenon, a problem, a principle, and into what may evolve into a creation story of our time" (6). What this means, is that fire, which has been associated with industrial prowess and scientific progress, is now regaining its status as a conceptual symbol – a carrier of thought and ideas. Pyne ultimately suggests that the looming climate crisis needs "a narrative of the Anthropocene [and] will require a self-reflexive style that will seem alien to those who only see the topic as fit for science or political activism" (7). This means that the discussion of *our* is best suited for the fictional realm of literature.[4] Whereas *The Road* successfully creates a self-reflexive narrative addressing the topic of climate change and post 9/11 trauma,[5] *Fahrenheit 451* examines the future through technological development as well as involving other imagery strongly reminiscent of the authoritarian governments during World War II.

Reading the novels, one is transported to two worlds utterly dominated by fire, for better and for worse. Fire is, in the context of these two novels, the vehicle of trauma. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the protagonist's work is to set fires to uphold the censorship of a government which is afraid of a intellectually capable people. Following, fire acts like an omnipresent entity that, if one were caught having books in one's possession, seeps out from the woodworks to rid the world of the books. In *The Road* on the other hand, as discussed in chapter 3, the world suddenly fell in a flash of fire (see page 24). Everything living except a few human beings and a handful of animals survived the harrowing cataclysm that would forever change the world. And harrowing is the right word, especially for the survivors who

---

[4] He suggests a post-modern and post-humanist approach and points out the unreliability of us (humanity) as a narrator.

[5] See Cormac McCarthy's exclusive interview with Oprah Winfrey, where they discuss *The Road* and McCarthy's concern for climate change as well as the influence 9/11 had on the novel (Muhammed 00:03:38-00:04:28, 00:06:47-00:07:15).

must pour all their time and resources to survive the harsh environment. In each of the books, the symbolism of fire suggests a tension between the notions of hope and doom. But because they were written over 50 years apart, the deconstructions and subsequent synthesis provide vastly different narratives.

From the opening of *Fahrenheit 451*, one is quickly absorbed into a fiery image as Montag burns the illegal books. Montag's narration of the scene elegantly demonstrates his obsession with his work, saying that "[i]t was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*" (9, Bradbury's emphasis). By emphasizing the word "change," the author alludes to the transformative, if not destructive, capabilities of fire, a theme that will be important in the analysis of fire in *The Road*. The passage also reveals key aspects of Montag's mentality before the novel begins. In the 2016 essay "Human in the Aftermath of Mass Trauma and Violence? Towards the Horizon of an Ethics of Care," Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, based on the observations made by Arendt, writes that "thoughtless conformity is a problem that has been observed repeatedly in systematic crimes against humanity" (44). This relates back to what Pyne wrote about fire's previous use as a didactical tool. In *Fahrenheit 451*, and as it has been through history (see pages 8-9), burning the books does not only erase them from the historical records – erase them from the collective consciousness of the people – but it also foreshadows Montag's future disillusionment.

Montag displays a great deal of enjoyment from setting books on fire, of enforcing the nation's law, which is reflected through the grandiose language in the following sentences. In Montag's words, the hose from which the kerosene flows as a "great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world" (9). To me, this immediately comes across as strange – mainly because pythons are non-venomous snakes, that, rather than using venom to kill, constrict, strangle, and suffocate their prey. While the wording appears strange, I argue that this is an intentional choice. First, it is the source of fire, and followingly the source of suffering in its function of destruction. Secondly, the python-like hose constricts the people's knowledge and freedom – effectively suffocating their minds into an anti-intellectual mush.[6] This, juxtaposed with the simile of being the "amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning … the tatters and charcoal ruins of history" (9) unironically sets the tone of the powerful ideological symbolism of the novel. Montag's language therefore

---

[6] It may also be an indication of Montag's own lack of knowledge of the natural world following the destruction of books, but I believe it holds a greater significance.

suggests an indoctrination into a regime's ideological viewpoint, that, for the sake of clarity, contributes to a society built on violence and oppression.

Not only does the opening suggest that the act of burning books has been naturalized by the protagonist, but I propose that the imagery's function is to teach the dangers of total thoughtless conformity and anti-intellectuality. According to Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, thoughtless conformity renders a human "unable to engage reflectively about their actions," and in times of oppression and ideological conflict, those afflicted by thoughtless conformity "contributes to cruelty and unspeakable forms of violence against others" (44). At this point in the novel, he is unable to critically review his own actions, to see that his work does more harm than good. However, after meeting Clarisse, he is inspired to think outside what is expected of him. What she really does, is to inspire Montag to critically examine his role as a fireman, to witness his own violence in a different light.

Montag's disillusionment is reflected through the descriptive language, as seen in the scene discussed above, where a woman sacrifices her life for her beliefs (see pages 18-19). Holding a common matchstick in her hand, ready to set the kerosene ablaze, Montag observes that "the fumes of kerosene bloomed up about her" (53), and exiting the building, Montag describes that "… the path of kerosene lay like the track of some evil snail" (54). Also in this section, the language is filled with contrasts, creating a scene that is dipped in both horror and revelation. On one hand, the blooming kerosene fumes creates a beautiful image of the woman's resolve and determination to keep her values to the bitter end. On the other, the path of kerosene, the "evil snail," is juxtaposed with the blossoming fumes, which I interpret as an Eden-image. It is torn between the kerosene, symbolizing the work of the firemen as the evil snake in the shape of a slowly moving snail, and the woman's embodiment of knowledge as the proverbial forbidden fruit. Montag, it seems, realizes that the terror he bestows on other people leaves them traumatized, but as I will explain below, the trauma is oftentimes hidden from the public. The new synthesis, the new Montag as it were, is a man who finally understands the consequences of his actions.

Contrasting Montag, I think that Mildred's experiences represent how the insidious trauma is present in Bradbury's world. As Brown writes, "[t]he private, insidious traumata to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events in which dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetuated" (122). This is important, not only because the term insidious trauma stems from a feminist perspective of trauma, but also because Mildred is part of a marginalized group upon which the dominant

culture acts: the regular citizen. Although she, too, is marked by the same conformist thoughtlessness as her husband (see page 12 about willing victims), her involvement describes a very different reality than Montag's. Her obvious neglect of the outside world, her addiction to the wall-to-wall circuits, and the suicide attempt suggests an expression of how her mental state is affected by the suppression of knowledge and the anti-intellectual nature of the technology. Although she never articulates the emotional tolls not having an authentic identity nor bodily sovereignty has, her actions speak for themselves. Her trauma is secret, even to herself.

In order to truly appreciate the imagery's arguably inherent traumatic disposition in the texts, it is important to acknowledge the duality that occurs when fire is simultaneously both comforting and dangerous. In *Fahrenheit 451*, this is expertly expressed through the ideological motivations of banning all books. As I mentioned in chapter 2, the political landscape in the novel's past, people were struggling with the representation of the differences of people, ranging from their cultural and ethnic belonging to their work, social lives, and their knowledge (see page 11). Here, both fire and technology suppress the very nature of individuality and alleviate the pressure of negative emotions caused by conflicting opinions. While the motivations originally may have been good, it created instead a herd of people whose identities have become bland and controlled through thorough censorship. Consequently, personal growth stumped for the sake of emotional safety and epistemological restriction. Similarly, *The Road*'s narrative also portrays a world in which identity has lost its function, and where names have even lost their purpose. The novel's apocalypse is different, and the cause is much harder to identify (see page 21-22). Moreover, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, the way in which fire is implemented into the narrative creates a landscape where survival and death are a double-edged sword, more so than in the former.

While fire is integral for the two main character's survival, it is simultaneously a source of stress and anxiety. Since the ash and soot has blocked the sun, causing the weather to be unpredictable at best, and flames are their only source of heat, they rely on the fire to keep warm and to heat their meager meals. What makes this analysis so interesting is the juxtaposition of the resources available to the characters between the novels. In *Fahrenheit 451*, electricity is an abundant resource that, as far as the novel allows the reader to know, is available to every citizen. None of the characters in Bradbury's text seem to express concerns of being hungry, cold, or insecure because of a lack of basic resources – the text reveals a quite different story. In *The Road*, however, all infrastructure is either destroyed or

discontinued, and the only other source for energy outside of the body itself is fire and the much rarer presence of food. Thus, the characters rely on fire to survive.

However, fire simultaneously poses a detrimental threat to their livelihoods, and it is important to stress that this is a concurrent attribute of the fire in *The Road*. After the man wakes up from the grotesque dream and the dimmed light from the sun reveals enough details in the landscape, the man pulls out his binoculars, "[l]ooking for anything of color. Any movement. Any trace of standings smoke" (3); any sign of human activity. Herein lies the duality of threat and safety, because if the man can observe traces of other people at long distances, others will also be able to spot the protagonists, thus making our heroes just as vulnerable to outside threats. Later, after discovering fresh tracks in the snow close to where they had set camp, he understands that humans had very recently "passed in the dark going south", and that "they'd passed within fifty feet of the fire and had not even slowed to look" (108) (see p. 110 for a similarly stressful situation). Through sheer luck alone, their fire had not given away their position. However, the man demonstrates a deep fear of being exposed because of the vulnerability caused by the light and smoke. It is therefore important for them and their safety that they limit their use of fires because it reveals their location to people with more sinister motives (which leaves them vulnerable to the elements). This dual function therefore suggests a tension between life and death represented in fire, because it leaves them utterly defenseless.

The implication of the dualistic attributes is therefore that the characters in *The Road* can never truly be safe, either with or without the presence fire. The characters are subjected to both environmental and human violence that poses different yet concurrent threats to their wellbeing. In her article, Brown underscores the importance that "feminist analysis … tasks us to understand how the *constant presence and threat of trauma* in the lives of" marginalized groups "has shaped our society, a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event" (122, my emphasis). Although Brown's article is concerned with the hidden traumas experienced by oppressed people and their experience of trauma in the real world, her points about a sustained state of traumatization are also relevant for McCarthy's novel. As the boy and his father's trek southbound is dangerous, and death breathes down their necks, the most raw and untainted example of how the uninterrupted pressure of trauma affects the lives of humans resulted in the novel's most heart-breaking scene – namely the mother's decision to end her life.

Throughout the novel, analepsis is employed as a reference to the time before and shortly after the apocalyptic event, creating a link between then and now. In a flashback, presumably a few years following the downfall (as evidenced by the boy's ability to speak), the woman takes her own life. The pressure of constantly being on guard for any kind of danger has exhausted her, and she sees no other solution to the problem. "Sooner or later" she says "they [cannibals/marauders] will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant." (58). Unlike Mildred in *Fahrenheit 451*, who cannot even remember her overdose (28), the mother is fully conscious of her choice, which is reflected in her language: "I've taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot. // Death is not a lover. // Oh yes he is" (58). Her language implies that she, no matter the circumstance, senses Death creeping around every corner. Ever since the apocalyptic event, her life has hinged between survival and death. So long as she stays alive, her life is at the risk of being taken by others. By choosing to greet Death, however, she regains her agency and bodily sovereignty.

Now, I believe that the novels do yield great information about the worlds they are set when they are examined through the concept of insidious trauma. As demonstrated above, the trauma of the characters is 'not outside the range of human experience' if it is considered within their respective contexts, i.e., dystopian literature. Rather, the trauma experienced by the characters seems to be universal. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the lack of intellectual input through books and their unquestioning belief in the government's rule has not been without psychological consequences, neither for the enforcers nor the subjects of the laws. Here, the melancholia of being without an identity (and even personality) is equal across the board. Likewise, the father and the son, and perhaps also the marauders and cannibals who, under the circumstances, have seen the need to do harm onto others for their own survival, are subject to the same loss of identity. Their common imagery of fire, I argue, underscores potential the dangers of the future. Simultaneously, however, I would like to propose that it reflects our innate fear of the future as disaster, as an omen of uncertain doom.

4.2: What is the future, if not traumatic?

The future is a fleeting concept, created only through uncertainty in the now. With the threat of big wars,[7] the ongoing Sars-Cov19 pandemic, and the climate crisis, it seems that an apocalypse is closer now than ever. The reflections on what may come is therefore firmly based in the current social, political, and ecological climate, which is constantly changing and evolving. In this, the last section before the conclusion, I deem it important to look at the future through the eyes of trauma studies. Contrary to the traditional sense of trauma, which bases itself around events of the past, post-apocalyptic and dystopian fiction revolve heavily around the future. New terms, such as E. Ann Kaplan's "pre-traumatic stress disorder" (qtd in Teittinen 353) are created to confront dystopian fiction in terms of trauma studies. So, since the futures augured by Bradbury and McCarthy reflect an anticipation of coming trauma in their narratives, I ask these questions: is the notion of future inherently traumatic, and can it be explained through insidious trauma? Teittinen suggests that this may be the case:

> In the current material, political and cultural predicament, it seems that the narrative genre of post-apocalyptic fiction has become one of the foremost ways, through its inflection of our present by way of future-as-disaster … to think and feel through the experience of threatening and even traumatic future. (349)

Furthermore, in Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan's introduction to *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (2013), "Dystopia and Histories," they point out that

> … the dystopian imagination has served as a prophetic vehicle, the canary in a cage, for writers with an ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued turn our contemporary world into the iron cages portrayed in the realm of utopia's underside. (2)

Teittinen, Baccolini and Moylan's contributions to the discussion are important. Not only do they show that there are already movements within academia discussing the topic of dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction within the trauma paradigm, but it also signals that trauma studies are evolving from a discussion of past trauma to an inclusion of traumas of the present *and* the future. Through the future anterior, Teittinen insinuates that one can discuss the topics that are

---

[7] E.g., the constant tension between the US and Russia even after the Cold War, North-Korea's threats of nuclear attacks on the West, and the similar threats of nuclear war between the US and Iran in January 2020.

relevant today through a narrative of trauma placed in the future. Likewise, the former pair of scholars underscore that the dystopian imagination functions as a testing ground for the author's perceived threatening futures. It also inspires an academic precedence to examine works of fictions to discuss the current motion that may (or may not) influence the future of humanity and the Earth if left unchecked.

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of insidious trauma was developed as a response to the neglect of female trauma within the US justice system; that because domestic violence, incest, and work-related injuries (both psychic and physical) were common, they were 'not outside the range of human experience' (see pages 3-4). Now, I do not wish to undermine Brown's important work in categorizing and exposing the social, cultural, and even structural biases against female traumata. Instead, I wish to contribute to her ideas, expanding its use to the discussions about future trauma. Earlier, I mentioned that Brown draws attention to how insidious traumata are an expressed and perpetuated by the dominant culture (see page 37). Examining Mildred's life and how her behavior is controlled by the government and their media, her trauma is tucked aside in favor of an exterior expression of comfort and joy. She is not equipped with the tools to recognize and work through the trauma that festers her being. Even in *The Road*, where there is no clear dominant culture except, arguably, one promoting survival at any cost, the characters are too focused on their surroundings that they live their lives superficially. They, like Mildred, are unable to acknowledge their traumas.

While the traumas expressed and perpetuated in the novels are placed in a fictional framework, they do simultaneously reflect the threatening, unknowable aspect of the future outside of the literature. As Teittinen remarks, "[t]he wound is already there, or here, we just do not quite sense its cultural and existential implications in their full weight" (Teittinen 356). The wound of future trauma, e.g., war, terror, or climate change, already hangs in the air, ready to happen. While insidious trauma implies an "anticipatory terror of being reinjured" (Brown 225), especially in cases of repetitive sexual abuse and other violent and sexual events, I argue that this also apply to the trajectory of humanity as seen in dystopian narratives. For as Brown continues: "… when we admit to the imminence of trauma in our lives, when we see it as something more likely to happen than not, we lose our cloak of invulnerability" (129). Investigating the future through the dystopian imagination unveils a world of pain and suffering based around the work's contemporary environment, be it political, ecological, or something else entirely. We become vulnerable to the potential futures

and the results of what may happen in the tense of the future anterior. Additionally, they can bring to light the issues at hand, thus creating the possibility of avoiding the outcomes, or similar events, of our current perceived future.

Therefore, I would like to close this chapter by suggesting that we are vulnerable to the future; that the future is inherently terrifying because it is unknowable; that it may present itself as a repetition of past trauma, such as how *Fahrenheit 451* revives the trauma of world war II, as well as the prospects of destruction as discussed in *The Road*. I argue that these aspects of the novels function as allegories, not only that the works meant to work through previous traumatic, but also as allegories for our fear of what the future may hold – an anticipatory terror that coincides with insidious trauma. Since the fate of the world is unknowable, even unperceivable, the outcomes of today's ongoing traumas may look like the worlds created through the dystopian imagination. But as Pyne writes, "[t]he cycles of fire informed even time, as history beat to the rhythms of world-ending and world-renewing Great Fires" (4). Through *Fahrenheit 451*'s symbol of the Phoenix, as well as *The Road*'s metaphysical "fire inside," there is implied a sense renewal and continuation of humanity. The novels signal hope. But most importantly, they signal to the reader to be weary of how the world develops; to be vigilant of crisis. Furthermore, it allows us to work through the traumas of the future. For if we cannot keep politics or the climate in check, the results may become detrimental. If we work through it sooner, rather than later, we are better equipped to handle the situations when or if they should happen. However, in the anticipation of these world-changing events, we are suspended between danger and safety, which, I would claim, is insidious.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the two dystopian narratives, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and McCarthy's *The Road*, through the lens of trauma theory, examining the novels' allegorical form in conjunction with the concept of insidious trauma. The mode of dystopian science fiction allows the author to interpret the continually unfolding traumas of their times, estranged from their own realities. Based on the analyses of the works' settings, characters, and imagery of fire, it can be concluded that the novels do, to a certain degree, reflect a fear and even anticipation of a future-as-disaster scenario that coincides with Brown's observations about insidious trauma. The results also indicate that the temporal aspect of the future anterior works well as a ground for discussion of the world's prospects. In the following paragraphs, I will address the key findings from each chapter as well as offer suggestions for further research.

Firstly, *Fahrenheit 451* thematizes the issues of oppression, government control, and fear seen in the post-war era. Struggling to adapt to new societal controversies and technological advancements, the experience of future shock prompts the people to accept an authoritarian government to keep them content. Its plot is constructed around the contention that books, with their wide range of sentiments, portrayal of fictional characters, and varying degree of realism, will only lead to existential suffering. However, the intention of easing the lives of its inhabitants has caused far more damage than good. The consequences of eliminating books, a source of intellectual discourse, impacts not only the inhabitants' abilities for critical thought, but it also leaves the mind sedentary and unexploited. By *erasing* the conflicting information contained within books and exchanging them with the meaningless quasi-entertainment, broadcast across multiple platforms, the government created far more existential dread.

This is masterfully illustrated through Mildred, whose life revolves almost solely around the interactive television broadcasts. The lack of a true structural belonging leads her into a life of perpetual trauma, manifested through what can only be described as melancholia. Her overdose, and the common occurrence of overdoses in general (see page 15), must be considered as a manifestation of apathy which is expressed in cases of melancholic despair. Thus, since technology made books obsolete, it made the world outside a thing of the past, too. Instead of remedying the people's existential dread, it was effectively enhanced. This strongly indicates that she is affected by insidious traumata caused by an unsuccessful

adaptation to the new society, i.e., future shock. Unable to vocalize, or even realize, that her life is driven forwards by trauma is, in fact, so well hidden, that she is unable to witness her own victimhood. In contrast with Mildred, whose victimhood controls every aspect of her life, Montag acts as an agent of the oppressor – the judge, jury, *and* executioner. However, during his radical transformation from an unquestioning and dedicated agent of the government to a disillusioned individual colored by having caused so much trauma, he realizes how his actions as a fireman cause far more damage than he initially believed. Montag, who has been an insidious presence in the lives of many inhabitants, becomes himself afflicted by the pain and suffering, as demonstrated through his interaction with the mechanical hound, and later his escape from society. Since he is more aware of the consequences of his actions, he sees the world from a whole new perspective – through the eyes of his victims.

Secondly, whereas *Fahrenheit 451* expertly takes into consideration the sociopolitical tendencies during the post-war 1950s, as well as discussing the technological advances made during the same timeframe, *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic and barren landscape of suffering erases the world we know from existence. Left behind in a godforsaken landscape, the relentless tension between security and endurance puts a continuous strain on the characters, influencing every aspect of their lives. Considering the novel's historical context, i.e., the uncertainty caused by climate change, as well as the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, the novel demonstrates a high degree of empathy not limited to those left behind after the Twin Towers fell, but also towards the human race's future. However, although the novel is a reactionary work of fiction written shortly after a massive traumatic event, it also takes into consideration the contemporary conversations about the changing climate. Through the novel's attention to the future-as-disaster scenario and its temporal placement in the future anterior aspect suggests, indeed, an underlying fear of a future event that radiates backwards in time.

Moreover, the anticipation of future traumata, exemplified both through the father's continual avoidance of dangerous situations, and the mother's reasoning shortly before her suicide, demonstrates that the influx of new traumatic wounds is never-ending. Even more so, the anticipation of future trauma, which forces the duo to always be vigilant, creates an immense tension originating from past trauma. Because of the sparsity of resources, the vulnerability of exposure from lighting a fire, and the constant threat of being discovered, they are constantly balancing between safety and danger. Unable to escape from the situation, the constant outside pressure fuels a persisting feeling of terror, and amidst the chaos of the

new world, the loss of oneself is a seemingly natural consequence. The insidious traumata shape their entire existence, from the way they live their lives to how they process their emotions. The father's dissociation from his past, including the happy memories in scenes of analepsis, exposes the graveness of their circumstances. To survive and to keep his son safe, he cannot access the emotions he should be feeling. If he does, it would mean the end for the pair.

Lastly, the novels' placement in the perspective of what-will-have-been indicates that the notion of the future itself may create a wound that extends backwards in time. However, by grounding the narratives in the aftermath of events that has not occurred, the authors preemptively prepare for the threats of future trauma. The concept of fire has, as demonstrated in chapter 4, regained its former function as a didactical tool. The imagery, which is shared between the novels, seems to express a deep-seeded tension between safety and danger – both within the respective narratives, but also with regards to what is to come outside. In the novels, it serves as the vehicle of trauma, the driving force of the traumata, and the central imagery of these future-as-disaster scenarios. Although the novels may be seen as allegories that serves as a tool to work through, or at the very least illustrate and even emulate the trauma of the past, I believe they also provide the reader with the means of working through our future traumas. Since both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* were written in the aftermath of massive collective traumas, i.e., the second world war and 9/11 respectively, the perspective of the future anterior surely implies a preparation of future wounds formed by previous wounds. As the literary wing of trauma studies evolves, I believe that it should take into consideration how the traumas of the future may influence us, even before they even occur. As a result, the novels, by way of their fiery symbols, suggest that we are defenseless against the future.

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address other parts of the novels, creating a more nuanced approach to the subject. These may include character analyses of those not mentioned in this thesis, including characters such as Faber and Granger in *Fahrenheit 451*, and the cannibals in *The Road*. Furthermore, due to the limitations of this thesis, some theoretical approaches have been omitted. I highly suggest that future research of this topic should include Rob Nixon's concept of *slow violence*, pertaining for the most part to slow events such as climate change, but which can also be included in a discussion of *Fahzrenheit 451*'s slow political development. Including this conceptual approach to trauma studies will, in my opinion, enrich the studies of the future anterior. I also

think that other dystopian novels should be analyzed to see whether this is a trend within the genre. Expanding the horizons of trauma theory, looking at dystopian fiction as allegories for the anticipation of future traumata, allows the field of trauma studies to evolve.

To close this thesis, I would like to propose the notion that the novels provide a prophetic view of the future as seen in relation to the technological development in the 1950s, and the currently ongoing climate change. Considering the findings in this thesis, I have argued that *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Road* suggest an anticipatory fear of the future as well as future traumatization, written as extrapolations of their contemporary issues. Although the consequences of climate change are still unfolding, the societal developments, as they are revealed by Beatty, closely resembles today's technological and societal changes. As I am writing this thesis, I use my true wireless headphones – my *seashell thimbles* - listening to music, separating myself from the noises of the outside world; during my breaks, I watch short video clips, be they educational or entertaining in nature, through well-known platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. Moreover, the discussion of diverse representation of peoples is still ongoing, and the world is still attempting to adapt to the massive changes in how we communicate with the world outside. Bradbury's version of the future does, up to this point in time, play out as he envisioned, which makes the novel an important contribution to speculative science fiction. Additionally, if one considers the imagery of fire as a didactical tool, meant to deconstruct, synthesize as well as teach us something, the teachings in these novels should be seen as a warning to us all. If we are not careful, we may very soon be facing our own massive adaptational breakdown or, in the worst-case scenario, a landscape utterly ruined by climate change.

Cited Works:

Abootalebi, Hassan. "The Omnipresence of Television and the Ascendancy of
Surveillance/Sousveillance in Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451." *Kata (Surabaya)*, vol.
19, no. 1, 2017, pp. 8–14.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harvest/HJB, 1973.

Baccolini, Raffaella, and Tom Moylan. "Dystopia and Histories." *Dark Horizons: Science
Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*. Routledge, 2003, pp. 1-12.

Banco, Lindsey. "Contractions in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*." *The Explicator*, vol. 68,
no. 4, 2010, 276-279.

Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451. Harper-Collins, London, 2008. Print.

Brown, Laura S. "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma."
American Imago, vol. 48, no. 1, 1991, pp. 119–133. JSTOR,
www.jstor.org/stable/26304034

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995, pp. 3–12.

Crownshaw, Richard.. "Deterritorializing the 'Homeland' in American Studies and American
Fiction after 9/11." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2011, pp. 757–776. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/41427298. Accessed 20. Nov. 2020.

Cuddon, J. A., and M. A. R. Habib. *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory.*
Penguin, 2015. Print.

Eller, Jonathan R. "Various Wines." *Ray Bradbury Unbound*. University of Illinois Press, 2014, pp
81-88.

Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community." Trauma: Exploitation in Memory, edited
by Cathy Caruth, The Johns Hopkins UP, 1995, pp. 183-199.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *General Psychological Theory.* Edited by
Philip Rieff. New York: Collier, 1963.

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. "What Does It Mean to Be Human in the Aftermath of Mass Trauma
and Violence? Toward the Horizon of an Ethics of Care." *Journal of the Society of*

Christian Ethics, vol. 36, no. 2, 2016, pp. 43–61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44504837.
Accessed 14 Apr. 2021.

Hall, Karyn. "Radical Acceptance." *Psychology Today*. July 8, 2012.
www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201207/radical-acceptance

Hillerbrand, Hans J. "On Book Burnings and Book Burners: Reflections on the Power (And
Powerlessness) of Ideas." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 74, no. 3,
2006, pp. 593–614. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4094001. Accessed 1. Feb. 2021.

Laguarta Bueno, Carmen. "Trauma and Existentialism in Cormac McCarthy's The Road
(2006)." *Nordic Journal of English Studies*. Vol. 18, no. 1, 2019, pp. 72-94.

Luckhurst, Roger. "Future Shock: Science Fiction and the Trauma Paradigm." The Future of
Trauma: Contemporary Cultural and Literal Criticism, edited by Gert Buelens, Sam
Durrand and Robert Eaglestone, Routledge, 2014 pp. 157-167.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. Picador, London, 2009. Print.

Mitchell, W. J. T. "The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable.". *The War of Images, 9/11 to the
Present*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, pp. 155-184.

Nixon, Rob. Introduction. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Harvard UP,
2011, pp. 1-44.

Pyne, Stephen J. "Fire in the Mind: Changing Understandings of Fire in Western
Civilization." *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, vol. 371, no. 1696, 2016,
pp. 1–8., www.jstor.org/stable/24768799. Accessed 5. Mar. 2021.

Seed, David. "The Flight from the Good Life: 'Fahrenheit 451' in the Context of Postwar
American Dystopias." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1994, pp. 225–
240. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40464168. Accessed 1 Feb. 2021.

Sisario, Peter. "A Study of the Allusions in Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451." *The English Journal*,
vol. 59, no. 2, 1970, pp. 201-212. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/811827.

Stark, Hannah. "'All These Things He Saw and Did Not See': Witnessing the End of the
World in Cormac McCarthy's "The Road"." *Critical Survey*, Vol. 25, no. 2, 2014, pp.
71-84.

Teittinen, Jouni. "Post-Apocalyptic Fiction and the Future Anterior." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*. Ed. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja. Routledge, 2020, pp. 349-359.

Wicks, Amanda. ""No Other Tale to Tell"." *Critical Trauma Studies. Understanding Violence, Conflict, and Memory in Everyday Life.* Edited by Monica J. Casper, and Eric H.R. Wertheimer. Critical Trauma Studies. NYU Press, 2016, pp. 135-156.

Winfrey, Oprah. "Cormac McCarthy Interview on the Oprah Winfrey Show." *Youtube*, uploaded by Farooq Muhammad, 9. Jun, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3kpzuk1Y8I&ab_channel=MohammadFarooq. Accessed 17. Jan., 2021.