Universidad de Chile
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Departamento de Lingüística

Landscape and Technology in the Construction of Character Identity in Ray Bradbury's Science Fiction

Catalina Bonati

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Profesor Guía: Andrés Ferrada Aguilar

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1.1 Introduction

Science fiction is a thriving genre of intermingling fact and fiction with roots that have been traced back to Plato's *Republic* and Lucian's *A True Story*. Several literary works before the second half of the 19th century have been pointed out and categorized as early works of science fiction, such as Cyrano de Bergerac's *Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon* and Thomas More's *Utopia,* but the genre did not really reach its peak until the rise of the pulp magazine at the beginning of the 20th century. American pulp fiction of the early 1900s, as loyal chronological successor of the Victorian penny dreadfuls, was characterized for its bizarre material and general low-quality storytelling. Science fiction found its nook in the eager, voracious audience of these squalid pulp magazines, and influenced by the "recent" works of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne from the late 19th century, an ambitious new wave of science fiction began to develop. It began to display features that would become focal in its characterization, such as the significant involvement of new and evolving technologies with social science (to later become the cyberpunk subgenre), the apocalyptic self-provoked end of life on Earth (the Dying Earth subgenre), and spatial warfare involving aliens, complex technology, interplanetary journeys, and romance, which would later come to be called space opera, perhaps the most distinguishing subgenre of science fiction. It seemed to be the usual assumption that this genre was not much more than an outlandish array of incredible technologies and flimsy adventure plots, usually taking place in a dystopian Earth or in space. It is undeniable that scientific progress, future social structures, spatial journeys as well as the exploration of seemingly plausible futures regarding human expansion are important elements present in the bulk of pulp science literature of the 50s, yet the immensity of the scope of science fiction prevents the pointing out of an omnipresent key element other than a futuristic setting. No doubt, the confusion that the disparate worlds which are embarked upon in science fiction generate by holding no common factor, aided the infamous reputation of the pulps in downplaying the creative strength of many of the emerging science fiction writers.

It is of the later half of the pulp fiction era from which Ray Bradbury, one of the most prominent fiction writers, emerged. Recurrent subject matters in Bradbury's science fiction often drifted far from the mainstream pulp themes of scientific prowess, exploration, and flailing

human society. He constructed an outstanding literary reputation through differing widely and markedly from the sci-fi majority by bringing human nature and human relationships as the undisputed central theme to his narratives. The technology and futuristic setting became nothing but backdrops, nothing but mere details in the telling of stories which are primarily narratives of human nature fluttering against the walls of whichever scenery Bradbury has deemed worthy, be that of ordinary America or the cosmos.

1.2 Object of Study

Natural scenery in the stories of Bradbury occupy a leading a role. Human nature is deemed to be inextricable from its natural surroundings. Landscape is an element which holds the exceptional power of making humans question the constituency of their own nature, and it leads to overwhelming feelings of familiarity, estrangement, or both in Bradburian characters. The exposure to spatial exploration induces exposure to natural landscape that is not natural to humans and their interaction with it results in a shifting of identity and a displacement of the human self. In other words, the exploration of humanity is depicted through physical and mental exploration of other worlds and is intricately entwined with the urban and natural scenery that is encountered.

In the future worlds of science fiction, scientific advancement and technologization are important aspects that characterize human society almost as much as humans themselves. Bradbury incorporates the strong elements of technology by placing them in a backdrop where they hold little importance or relevance to a story, which remains always focused on the frailty of human nature itself. The harmonized confluence of technology and nature constitute the fabric over which human nature is assembled and disassembled. The organic and the natural are always kept in sight in Bradbury's science fiction.

1.3 Corpus

The stories which will be used to expand this object of study are *The City* (1950), *Marionettes, Inc.* (1949), *The Long Rain* (1950), all taken from the *The Illustrated Man* (1951) collection, *The Murderer* (1953), *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed* (1949), both taken from *Twice 22: The Golden Apples of the Sun/ A Medicine for Melancholy* (1966) omnibus compilation, and *Changeling* (1949) taken from *Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales* (2003).

These short stories have been chosen because they each present very well different aspects of the technology-nature confluence, such as unforgiving "unnatural" nature, self-determined technology threatening the meaning of "human" through the landscape, and the intricate relationship between the natural landscape of Earth and human nature itself. Other stories will be referred to as well but not expanded on.

1.4 Critical Proposal

The critical proposal presented here is that for Ray Bradbury, natural landscape is as important and significant to humans as their advanced technological setting, which is always a previously existing feature of the landscape present solely for the development and unraveling of human nature. Bradbury never loses sight of the organic and the natural as elements which adhere human stability together. It is established as the basis over which human nature constructs itself, and it is this essentiality which makes Bradbury so different and outstanding among his contemporary science fiction writers. He addresses the future in a way that never departs from the importance of nature and familiarity to human nature. Bradbury is adamant in his strong portrayal of human identity as frail and dependent on its surroundings in order to truly be human.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Landscape in literature is usually connected to landscape in art and aestheticism, and at times it is strongly linked to idealization. Through postmodern approach, it usually compared and placed next to economic and material aspects which make up contemporary society. Such approaches to landscape are quite insightful in the reading of urban and natural landscape in science fiction, particularly the varied and meaningful landscape of Ray Bradbury. The following texts and authors will be used in the analysis of the corpus.

2.2 Approaches to Landscape

Historian and philosopher Jean Marc Besse's fifth essay, “Entre géographie et paysage, la phénoménologie”*,* from his collection of essays *Voir la terre* offers an interesting view on landscape: landscape is a go-between that allows nature to exist as a world in the human being’s eyes (149). In this sense landscape is an aperture to sensibility but does not reveal hidden meanings necessarily. Landscape carries an inherent meaning because it is the link between humans and the Earth, and the Earth is the very base for human existence. There is no humanity without the Earth (167). Besse cites Erwin Straus, who places an emphasis on the existence of the horizon, which signifies an absence of totality and an openness of landscape. The openness means that landscape is inserted within a larger picture but can be only be perceived as local, as in immediate visible surroundings. Landscape exists as an interaction of "here" and "there", as a coexistence of the visible and the hidden. The perception of space, according to Straus, is a pre-cultural perception that relates largely to interaction rather than distance. Landscape is above all an experience conducted through the proximity of things. Besse questions the workings of the landscape that is perceived and rejects the idea of centrality. Rather, landscape is a large, tangled, panoramic ensemble which loses an important extension if an objective center is established. Besse addresses an important approach to landscape which encompasses more dimensions than what can be physically perceived and this coincides greatly with an important part of Bradbury's fiction. For Bradbury, landscape also consists of a mental plane through which characters are aware of themselves. It is not just a setting, but the sculptor of inner meanings which play with a

character's identity. The main most important idea of Besse that is markedly present in Bradbury's science fiction is that of the Earth as the basis for human existence. As will be discussed, the lack of Earth and its familiarity provokes an immediate distortion of "humanness". The lack of Earth signifies a lack of all the previously accepted meanings which “fluctuate” through the world, expliciting a fundamental change in human nature.

The Machine in the Garden (1964) by Leo Marx, a historian dedicated to American studies, evaluates the correspondence between green, rural, "pastoral" America and the arrival of industry and development of cities, resulting in the emergence of a transformed society. Marx marks two different kinds of pastoralism. One is popular and diffused into the sentimental longing for a more "natural" environment and makes itself known whenever people turn away from hard social and technological realities. The other pastoralism is more imaginative and invokes literature, media, and advertising, because American society is more likely to buy what could be related to rustic setting and a "rural happiness". He states that "the soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness" (6). Marx cites Ortega y Gasset and Freud as providing accurate outlooks on the yearning for "unspoiled landscape" as the search for freedom from the external world. Marx articulates very precisely and through the works of great American writers, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Robert Beverly, and Herman Melville, the dissonance between nature and machine. This dissonance is made interesting by Marx's assertion of the machine only being an emblem of fragmented and industrial life once it is contrasted with tranquil landscape. It seems that nature and peace is only sought after being confronted with some social power, such as political power or exaggerated urbanity.

Marx's theories on the progressive arrival of machinery in the 1800s and the coexistence of industrialized cities with the marked persistence of rural landscapes provides great insight into Ray Bradbury's own private conceptions of where human nature truly lies. Bradbury relates human well being to a state of rural and natural scenery, and the shifting of this very scenery that is subtly otherworldly found through space exploration causes despair and shifting of identity, much like Marx's transformation of society. The presence of nature and familiarity builds up

identity in Bradbury's characters. The presence of technology and industrialized society provokes a certain dissonance in the very core of some characters, and their opposition is highly affiliated to a fight for a pastoral ideal. Though Marx addresses the subjectivity bound to the landscape rather than addressing the landscape itself, he provides a finer line of analysis of the way a character may channel a landscape through their overall attitudes and train of thought, and how a landscape, both urban and natural, may easily provoke the passing of one state of being to another. Marx's landscapes may be found in the mental landscapes provided by Bradbury.

The chapter "Seduced by the Text: Theories of the Gaze" from *Cultural Studies and Critical Theory* (2000) by Patrick Fuery and Nick Mansfield, addressed mostly through philosophy, film, and cultural studies, deals with the idea that "the gaze is bound up with formations and operations of subjectivity" (71), bestowing upon it a fundamental structuring of the way the subject relates to the cultural order around them and in the same way, how the subject relates to themselves. The gaze is a two-way structure which besides coming from the subject, it also shapes and contorts them through what is being gazed upon. The body is a fundamental part in the construction of subjectivity. Fuery and Mansfield mostly reference cinema, but it may certainly be applied to literature as well.

Though not an approach to landscape in itself, the concept of the gaze as structuring of the subject is relevant in the stories of Bradbury addressed in the corpus. Through this chapter, the projection of the self through the gaze unto what is being gazed upon is sought in order to confirm the self of presence. Through this movement of presence, the study of machinery and the organic through the eyes of the space travelers and planetary settlers is a particular projection of Earth society itself, marking very little as novel or original in these new worlds. Characters project what they have already seen onto the new scenery despite acknowledging bizarreness and a strangeness which they are thoroughly uncomfortable with, but despite this sensation of dealing with simultaneously similar and unfamiliar circumstances, ends up changing the very nature of characters. Characters are built up through that which they perceive as well as bestowing transformative attributes to the landscape which should by all means be completely new.

"The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) by Georg Simmel is an essay which speaks of the effects of urban life and structured society onto the individual mind dealt with from a

sociological and philosophical perspective. The individual has problems maintaining a sense of uniqueness or individuality when inserted into an advanced society which is inherent to the metropolis and urban life. The metropolitan life provokes the "highest degree of nervous energy", which seems to be its main achievement. Simmel analyzes in detail the inner workings of metropolitan life but he takes one further step and disentangles the influence of metropolitan society onto the individual mind and personal freedom. "Freedom" is a key element in the concept of "individuality". It is this idea, that of guarded individualities making up fragile interpersonal relationships which constitute society which is of importance in the analysis of certain types of science fiction of Ray Bradbury. In *The Murderer*, antipathic interpersonal relationships within an organized and structured high-strung metropolitan society are at odds with the worldview of the main character, who has not "progressed" along with society into the future world of exaggerated technology. Though Simmel addresses the mental features which spring up from high-strung urbanity rather than a contemplation of landscape itself, his depiction of the mental life which arises from a metropolis is relevant to the portrayal of different mental landscapes of characters subjugated to a hostile environment. This expresses the interaction between physical landscapes of different sorts and mental landscapes experienced by the character.

2.3 Related Concepts

The following concepts will be constantly referred to in the analysis of the corpus, so a clear background for these main ideas is provided.

Landscape is referred to by Jean-Marc Besse as a relationship of proximity between things. He does not differentiate between natural landscape and urban landscape. Landscape is the articulation of nature as a single entity that exists only through contemplation; therefore, landscape is existent only through the presence of a beholder and otherwise there is only nature. In this way landscape is the link between humans and the planet Earth itself. Although it may only be perceived locally, the presence of a horizon signifies the unity of all spaces. The subject interacts with it through proximity rather than distance. Besse depends on the physical presence

of a contemplator which is then subjected to a perception of meanings, understood through imposition. This approach differs from the others that have been addressed because Besse refers to spaces as how they are perceived locally but how a certain presence signifies unity. These very spaces paint within humans their own portrait of themselves as inserted in the world. Besse effectively integrates the subject to its surroundings, whereas other authors mention refer only to mental significations without regarding a physical body.

Alain Roger, who is a philosopher dedicated mostly to aesthetics, in the first chapter of *Court traté du paysage* (1967) refers to landscape mainly as the result of the interpretation of art forms. Art has the power of making individuals look deeply into themselves, and he hypothesizes that this power is neither natural or unnatural, but mostly cultural. Landscape is an aspect of places, a gaze, a distance, which is adapted through the lens of everyday life. Landscape is therefore above all, a cultural perception. Through Roger's outlook on how landscape is truly only powerful because it's been articulated previously through art, it's possible to discern how there is a mental barrier between humans and their physical surroundings. Roger's proposal is relevant in the sense that he emphasizes the importance of the collective cultural pre-articulation of landscape. The individuality of such perceptions is lost, and in Bradbury's science fiction, the influence of the landscape on the individual is the central interest. Solely Roger's approach may underline the process by which previous articulations quickly narrow down to individual impressions. The use of the word landscape in this study will refer to the scenery either urban or natural which is contemplated by a subject. No cultural filters are attached to what is perceived in the land, but rather through the nature of the characters themselves.

Urban landscape is separated into fragments by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in the "Trafic/Déclic" chapter of *La ville au loin* (2011), and the unity of a city is but symbolic. A city is a way of capturing landscape, because it holds the essence of places which are set into movement, which is the reason for its being called urban landscape. Nancy also believes that the term urban landscape is rather contradictory because "landscape" involves a sort of totality which the "urbanity" or "urbanicity" of a city lacks. A city is an ensemble of coexistences which is neither organic or synthetic itself.

Historian Thomas Bender in *Toward an Urban Vision* (1975) investigates the social issues which held the historical moral and social values during the time of industrialization and urbanization of Lowell, Massachusetts in the mid 1800s. Bender examines the initial impact of urbanization on rural landscape. "Urban constituency" held a need for space and natural greenery and this had to be confronted against the growing risk of "overcivilization". He refers to the gradual accommodation to Marx's "middle landscape", an accorded, healthy landscape between cityscape and landscape which made itself present with the implementation of parks, playgrounds, cemeteries, as well as suburban neighbourhoods, among others. The urban middle landscape was inventive in ways of "civilizing" nature. Cities struggle to create a harmonious relationship between urban environment and humans by creating a "middle state", instead of juxtaposing them.

For the purpose of this study, "urban landscape" will refer not only to a conglomeration of business centres and homes used by a large number of people who permanently inhabit the area, which accounts generally for the definition of a city, but mostly the social mentality of "the highest degree of nervous energy" accounted by Simmel which accompanies urban life. It is inherently related to the presence of technology in the daily life of characters. It may also represent a mental state of mind once it is contrasted to a mental landscape representing the pastoral ideal. Mental landscapes which inhabit characters also comprise the expression of urban and natural scenery.

Technology is approached in a historical manner by Leo Marx in “Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept” (2010). He refers to it as "innovation in the mechanical arts", or a branch of learning associated with the mechanic arts. Marx awards technology as a historical marker or "chronological signpost, of subtle, virtually unmarked, yet ultimately far-reaching changes in culture and society" (563). It is closely bound up with the idea of progress. At times during history there has been blurriness in the distinction between mechanical and technological means and political ends. For Marx, technology itself regards only machinery and the mechanic arts and is innovation. Technology also comes hand in hand with utility.

In Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) technology is related to industrialism. An interesting view on the function of technology postulated by Marx is that technology is used to

connect the country to the city through the use of cars and railroads, for instance. The machine makes possible an entrance to the "modernized garden": the country itself made to suffer changes of planning and modernization. The fate of the countryside was to become increasingly more urbanized. The core analysis of Marx is that the machine is *in* the garden; technology intrudes upon the pastoral country. A parallel can be drawn between Marx and the idea of technology progressively intruding upon the idea of a human, resulting in typical science fiction elements, such as the android. As technology infringes and encompasses the pastoral ideal, intruding upon a landscape permanently, it similarly does so to humans themselves. In the stories of Bradbury, technology carries no political distinctions (for the most part). Rather, its significance comes from being a characteristic element present in the scenery that serves only to play with the traditional meaning of "human".

In science fiction, the term "human" or "human nature" holds a vastly ambiguous quality. The study of human behavior inserted into a finely elaborate scientific and mechanic environment is fortunately the field of study of the posthuman theory and postmodern theories, to a lesser extent. Edward King and Joanna Page in *Posthumanism and the Graphic Novel in Latin America* (2017) describe the posthumanist perspective as "draw[ing] on a history of human-technological-animal entanglements to interrogate the ways in which agency and the production of knowledge have always been the emergent product of a distributed network of human and non-human agents" (4). The typical figure of the fear-fueled man-machine competition for superiority of knowledge is that of the human and non-human hybrid, such as a robot, an alien, a plant or an animal (Smelik 2016). Examples of these are endless, particularly in film (*Terminator, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Fly)* yet the prevalent nightmarish figure of progress for posthuman critical theory and society at large is the robotic human. Posthumanism, cyberpunk, and an extensive amount of "soft" and "hard" science fiction alike find in their midst the "cyborg", "humanoid", "androids", even "superhuman". Isaac Asimov referred to his androids as the "humanoid robot" and "organic android". Ray Bradbury used a more unsettling term: the "marionette", implying that they can be controlled while the opposite usually happens. Ridley Scott went for a more direct approach in *Blade Runner* and called them "replicants", labelling them bluntly as human duplicates (a term absent in the original story). The

90s anime *Ghost in the Shell* proposes a more complex idea, that of the synthetic humanoid body as a mere shell, while the original yet enhanced human mind to occupy the synthetic shell is no longer a human, but a ghost. The android is typically a perfect fusion of flesh and metal, and the dystopian tinge that at times seems to accompany it, is likely a product of real emergent technology and the fear that comes from the feeling of displacement of humans as the utmost source of intelligence. N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) refers to this very idea but attributes the fear to the word posthuman: "The terror is relatively easy to understand. The word "post" with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of "the human" may be numbered [...] Humans can either go gently into that good night, joining the dinosaurs as a species that once ruled the earth but is now obsolete, or hang on for a while longer by becoming machines themselves " (298). The status of the human goes beyond the physical representation; for some, it lies in the mind. The fear that pervades the idea of superior humanoid robots has pushed the boundaries of the human self into a protected nook; now, instead of a whole encompassing a human, it lies in the mind, abstracted and harder to defy. But not even there is the idea of "humanity" and "human nature" safe. Hayles exemplifies the Turing test and the Moravec test, made to test the capacity of humans to discern between another human and a machine. "[...] the Turing test was designed to show that machines can perform the thinking previously considered to be an exclusive capacity of the human mind, [and] the Moravec test was designed to show that machines can become the repository of human consciousness- that machines can, for all practical purposes, become human beings" (xii). Thinking, and intelligence, are attributes of both human and machine, and Moravec's idea that human consciousness can be directly downloaded to a machine both defies and complements the idea of human-self preservation. Human emotion and self-identification may pass into possession of science.

Ray Bradbury's ideas of the android do not generally turn in the direction of such sombreness. Excitingly few tales turn in the direction of human identity defied by abstracted nature of the humanoid robot (though a couple are addressed in the present corpus). Instead, he usually chooses to focus on another aspect of the posthuman identity crisis that has not been commonly explored: aliens. When a human confronts an alien being, they see a creature that is

reproduced almost in their exact likeness. In their coexistence, the boundaries of humanity and distinctions between asserted species become fantastically blurred. This is not to say that the hazy man/machine boundary is less important than that of the alien/human separation, for they both go through an equal process of transition by being exposed to unfamiliar landscape, be it natural or urban, physical or mental.

A concept less directly related is that of the fantasy element which can be traced in Bradbury's fiction. Tzvetan Todorov was a Bulgarian philosopher and literary theorist, and among other works, he wrote *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), which gave a definition to the fantasy genre. The main element of the fantastic is the component of uncertainty and hesitation in both characters in the reader (although there are exceptions), in which they must decide whether an event which has taken place follows the main character's own reality or is in fact a dream or an illusion. He refers to the element of hesitation as the "heart of the fantastic". This is caused through reactions to actions through a syntactic aspect which implies the existence of formal units which refer to proper "character appreciation", and this habitually forms the plot of a story, as well as a semantic aspect achieved through theme (20). Truth is purely a relation between words which respond to an internal cohesion and this is the only requisite for validity, and this is an important strategy in the use of narration. Todorov emphasizes the importance of a character narrator, because through this game of truth in word relations, hesitation and uncertainty is constant.

The use of Todorov's discourse in approaching fantasy is useful up to a point in the analysis of science fiction. Ray Bradbury himself would constantly express a sense of misrepresentation at being labeled as a science fiction writer, since he would not usually stick to logical, scientific explanations for actions or to a technology-related theme over which science fiction may usually center, but rather discussed what he considered to be "impossibilities". These impossibilities were to him the representation of fantasy. Hesitation is very much present in Bradbury's stories for both character and reader, but not through the presentation of supernatural elements or the use character narrators in the stories analyzed in the present study[1]. Hesitation is

[1] For Todorov, Bradbury's stories would have approximated the uncanny rather than remain within the fantasy genre, through a keeping in line with the "reality" presented, but generating strong feelings of uncertainty when confronted with the character's surroundings.

projected strongly onto the reader through the characters themselves although they are not the narrators, even in instances in which the characters themselves are not overly uncertain. Bradbury achieves the ambiguous atmosphere through Todorov's semantic aspect of theme and syntactic aspect of character formulation. Admittedly, these are few implications which reciprocate between Todorov's fantasy and Bradbury's science fiction.

2.4 Literary Approach

Two distinct literary approaches will be used in the analysis of the corpus. One is the reader-response literary approach and the other is the deconstructive literary criticism.

One of the main exponents of the reader-response literary approach is Stanley Fish, exposed in *Is There a Text in This Class?* (1980). Fish bases interpretations of texts through syntactic composition into which meaning is attributed upon being heard (528). The plurality of meanings which a sentence may assume is withheld by a "normative meaning", which discriminates between meanings which may be attributed though the determinate situation of the sentence. Distinctions are made in which one meaning is deemed to be more "normal" or appropriate than another. Mistaken identification may naturally occur and the reader or hearer must revise the initial attributed meaning. If the reader is yet incapable of producing intelligibility from the sentence, new categories or expansion of old data must come from the outside (530). There is no normative form of constructed meaning of anything that is said or written, and "interpretation becomes a matter of individual and private construings none of which is subject to challenge or correction" (531). No interpretation is better or more valid than the other. The multiple interpretations that may be attributed to a single piece of text comes from the structure of social norms in which language is perceived, which are structures which change when one situation gives way to another. The truths of a text are context-specific and individually construed over communal agreements.

In “La mort de l’auteur” (1967), Roland Barthes elaborates the reader-response approach by rejecting the idea of meaning attributed to authorial intent. The text itself is not an originality, but a conjecture of citations that are pre-existent. The author is in this way more of a scriptor

than a writer, because "the author is never anything more than the man who writes" (4). The figure of the author is diminished into absence and this transforms the modern text. Time, for instance, becomes simultaneous for the text and the author (scriptor) because the scriptor does not precede or transcend in his writing (4). The text ceases to be explained through the presence of the author and it now holds no underlying ground or "secret meaning", yet the reader understands every word in its "duplicity". All meaning of the text is inscribed upon the reader, thus its texture and unity lie not in the text itself but in its destination. "He [the reader] is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which a text is constituted [...] The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author" (6).

The reader-response theory is relevant for this particular field of study because reader's perceptions in the current relations between technology and humans, as well as the present regard for natural landscape, may influence the interpretation of interactions presented by Bradbury. The man-machine-landscape relation is a compact and closely interconnected interaction which depends largely on the context set up by Bradbury. The reader, who presently is inserted farther into the future than Bradbury's stories of science fiction are set, will undoubtedly add significance to these relationships by ingraining modern sensibilities within the story and through knowledge of the current state of technology and its displacement or incorporation of naturality and "humankind".

One of the most influential branches of postmodernism is deconstruction. The deconstructive approach contrived by Jacques Derrida provides insight into the hidden meanings within the layers of knowledge constructing a text. In *Of Grammatology* (1967), text are posed as things to be probed. Ian Balfour in "The Gift of Example: Derrida and the Origins of the Eighteenth Century" (2007) says of the examination of Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages" (1781), which takes up a central point of the text, "[...] he [Derrida] is able to weave and unweave strands of Rousseau's text to reveal stories and structures of Western thought complicit in or folded into a vast network of problematic and characteristic thinking about language, consciousness, and much more." (468). Derrida insists on a close reading of texts, in such that attention is not only paid to the content, but to what is "performed by the text". Through this close reading, Derrida differentiates between the written and the writing, which

reveals historicity out of necessity. Reading a text means to interpret it as a historical event- although a text may have been produced in a specific epoch, it is not limited by its production context because it symbolizes a totality. Derrida's main interest lies in deconstructing given cultural paradigms in order to reveal the underlying "historico-metaphysical" form which pieces culture and society together through examining the relation between text and meaning. The various branches of discipline that influence Derrida, such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, prompt the disassembling of traditional thought by suggesting that binary opposites do not truly contradict each other and are in fact complementary in the richness of their semantics. Words carry significance through being contrasted with other words, so its meaning is never present within itself but in its traditional opposing sign. Traditional dichotomies are deconstructed through the assumption that their arbitrariness hinders the recognition of historicity. This concept is the most relevant in relation to the science fiction stories discussed in the present study. Through a confrontation of what it is that composes a human and how it differentiates them from machines and other external natures, Bradbury himself follows a deconstructive narrative line through which he establishes the end of such senseless boundaries, though in a seemingly neutral space over which no historicity precedes (that of outer space). The close examination of the human identity is performed over what seems to be at first an unfamiliar landscape that affords a reinterpretation of the interaction between subject and surroundings.

Paul de Man is another noted deconstructionist. His deconstruction is strongly influenced by Heidegger and Kant, and focuses on the process of analyzing meta-language when reading. De Man asserts that that words and meanings themselves complicate the understanding of a text. De Man also questions the traditional oppositions as overcome by Derrida. In *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (1979) he plays with the compliance of structuralism and literary theory within a text, in that literature may be approached logically only through the undermining of rhetoric, which constitutes the concealed meanings behind a text. For de Man, reading should account for all possible meanings behind a text. The form of a text only hinders the content, though the content may also find outside meaning in a referent. He called this the resistance to theory, which may in itself also be considered as a theory. The multiple interpretations and stream of variable meanings within a text that ideally

runs free of form and metric leads to a more profound understanding of the influences of natural landscape on the stories of Bradbury. In some cases, contradictions and a wide array of meanings may be found lurking behind the discontinued and unarticulated storyline which only contribute to the richness of significations. In this sense, landscape and characters continue to interact hidden from the sight of a structured text and gain yet more prominence through standalone content. De Man's approach to deconstruction offers vivid deeper insight into the literary worlds of science fiction.

3.1 The City

The science fiction genre often addresses the battle for superiority between humans and artificial intelligence, yet Bradbury's interest lies in the extent of the scope of self-awareness of intelligent beings. More specifically, he centers on the recognition of identity of humans themselves and how their spectrum of awareness reaches blurred and confusing boundaries by overlapping with the self-awareness of androids, drawing no clear distinctions between them, as well as playing with the reader's relatability to entities that are decidedly non-human. The question of whether one must be human in order to carry a detectable component of "humaneness" somewhat underlies a part of Bradbury's approach to self-determined technology. The counterpart to this question, whether the self-awareness of technology displaces humanity of their original identity and instead "dehumanizes" them by disassembling parts of their nature, is however also present. Human nature is questioned through the parallelism drawn between human will and technological autonomy.

In *The City* (1950), a vacant city on an ancient and seemingly uninhabited planet awaits the arrival of a human spaceship crew. At its eventual landing, the city awakens and tunes its senses to the stomping of the humans on its surface. The city resembles a modern city from Earth yet it creates a sense of unease amongst the crew. This unease is well founded, for the city lays traps for each individual member and dissects them underground, hidden from sight of the others. The human crew is instead stuffed with machinery that allows them to function as androids or human replicas which use original human body but are instead an extension of the

city itself, and who will be used to return to Earth to carry out a thousand year old revenge against humankind who had long ago wiped out an entire civilization with disease.

In this story, the overlapping of not only identity but of physical body encompasses both characters and landscape. As appointed in *Of Grammatology,* one of the central premises of deconstruction is the decomposition of theoretical opposites. Derrida argues the importance of disassembling given constructs which are preexisting in Western culture, and in such an approach, the deconstruction of traditionally accepted binary oppositions. He refers to Saussure's theory of the sign and its separation of writing to the interiority of the system as the main cause of outlining oppositions so severely. This conception of language holds "[...] a relationship that can no longer be thought within the simple difference and the uncompromising exteriority of "image" and "reality", of "outside" and "inside", of "appearance" and "essence," with the entire system of oppositions which necessarily flows from it" (33). Bradbury encompasses quite globally the disarticulation of traditional oppositions, such as the man/machine opposition. Through the denial of such distinctions, the machine is likewise joined to the urban landscape and the natural/synthetic opposition. Landscape, through junction with machines, is also attributed to humans. Throughout the contemplation of the relationship between technology and humans, the "human" concept is forcefully deconstructed into a reevaluation of identity.

The arrival of humans on the awaiting city firstly sets off a series of bodily senses which, though characteristic of living, breathing animals, is attributed to city itself.

> “Jones, get your gun out. Don't be a fool!"
> "The city's dead; why worry?"
> "You can't tell."
> Now, at the barking talk, the Ears awoke. After centuries of listening to winds that blew small and faint, of hearing leaves strip from trees and grass and grow softly in the time of melting snows, now the Ears oiled themselves in a self-lubrication, drew taut, great drums upon which the heartbeat of the invaders might pummel and thud delicately as the tremor of a gnat's wing. The Ears listened and the Nose siphoned up great chambers of odor. (163-164)

Several images have been drawn to the city which links it straightaway to having a live beat and pulse. It is first of all asserted by Jones that the city is dead, immediately implying that the opposite could be true and may very well be a live creature. Jones' words indeed have the effect of inducing the city out of its unconscious state and is now "awakened", or resuscitated through having been "dead". The word "heartbeat" is also employed in the passage, and although it is not directly related to the space itself, a parallel has been drawn to a live creature. The first description of the city in the story is of the planet's twenty thousand year old gravitational arc through space, the waning of its rivers, an ancient wind, and the passing of its seasons ("from ice to fire and back to ice"). The disturbance of the rocket ship is a sudden jolt to its placid state. Through the act of waking the city is attributed with possessing states of consciousness and unconsciousness. In the city's consciousness, through mechanic structures the acts of human features are performed, concurring in vivid perception which does not appear mechanical. A listening device which serve as the city's Ears is not particularly shocking, but the mention of memories which possess a certain romantic air disqualify the city from being just a big machine.

The overall appearance of the city is of a normal but abandoned city, and nevertheless it creates unease amongst part of the crew. It's abnormality is apparent only to the wary trespasser.

> "Now the cloudy eyes of the city moved out of fog and mist.
> "Captain, the windows!"
> "What?"
> "Those house windows, there! I saw them move!"
> "I didn't see it."
> "They shifted. They changed color. From dark to light."
> "They look like ordinary square windows to me."
> Blurred objects focused. In the mechanical ravines of the city oiled shafts plunged, balance wheels dipped over into green oil pools. The window frames flexed. The windows gleamed." (165)

It seems unnatural for an empty city to be attributed with movement, and no doubt the refusal to perceive animation stems from the denial of being subject to a situation the crew might not understand. Sigmund Freud in his 1919 essay “The Uncanny” quotes Ernst Jentsch’s 1906 essay “On The Psychology of the Uncanny” in stating that the uncertain state of living or animation is one of the principal originators of the feeling of uncanny (220). In the same essay, he concludes that the desire for intellectual mastery of one's environment is quite strong as it signifies a defense against "hostile forces", but Freud disbands this and connects the feeling of uncanniness rather to the phenomenon of “the double” (234). “[...] it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own” (234). This feeling of uncertainty is marked very subtly in at first in *The City* and not through an exact replica of the humans, but through the space of the city itself. The same premise is underlined by Todorov through hesitation and ambiguity projected onto the reader through the syntactic ordering of descriptions, through which the windows are the subject performing actions, such as the flexing of muscles as though alive, rather than through content which has not yet been fully presented.

The need to ignore the strangeness pervading the city comes from either a strong need of the crew to maintain a steady hand and dismiss the feeling of uncanny, or from a genuine lack of intuition. Nevertheless, only Smith, the sensible astronaut, decides to observe the small and alarming changes. He only knows that the city seems to change in small ways, such as the lightening of its windows, and that it is foreboding to him in a subliminal manner. As Fuery and Mansfield offer, the gaze of the subject not only shapes what is being observed, but also constructs the subject itself. In this case, the crew’s nervous perception of the city is bound up with notions of strangeness in the sense that it is a foreign body- the crew has, after all, been travelling for quite some time, “billions of miles from Earth”, and they’ve now been newly inserted into a landscape which is only distantly familiar to them. Smith states that feels as if he had seen that place before and it felt way too familiar; notwithstanding the relation which is drawn to humanity’s forgotten twenty thousand-year-old previous interaction with that very planet, Smith is projecting what he knows of cities back on Earth onto this new entity, which is in essence quite different from an inert, inorganic Earth city. He is firmly intent on holding

himself to the idea that this city is like all others he already knows, and through this flimsy affirmation confirm to himself that he is still in fact himself. Smith is intuitive, however, and he perceives that there is something fundamentally wrong in this assertion, contrary to the rest of the crew. His gaze upon his surroundings holds the image of a normal city, but finding it fundamentally rejected by the city itself, this gaze is transformed unto Smith and his search for familiarity and confirmation that he is who he believes himself to be is demolished. In Smith, it creates a sense or urgency lacking in the others. As soon as the crew stepped off the spaceship and entered a street Smith issued the unconscious forewarning of "I think we should go back to the rocket, Captain" (164). He however does not know that the city uses sensorial features equivalent to those of a mammal that watches, weighs, smells, and hears their every move, but he senses something very atypical in their surroundings. The rest of the crew projects their own particular knowledge of Earth unto their surroundings, and this marks the city as being superficially unoriginal or “non alien like”, or a very shallow sort of replica. The complexity of the life-form of the city, and perhaps the notion of technological consciousness is fully confirmed only onto the reader.

The city senses discern differences in stimuli very precisely. As the men leave the ship it recognizes the smell of creatinine, sugar, lactic acid, products of a diary diet. It recognizes the tobacco odor and the scent of green soap. "Even their eyeballs had a delicate odor" (165). When Smith voices his distrust of the place, the city releases a smell of chlorophyll to fool them into believing green flourishing meadows are nearby.

> "Smell that, Smith? Ahh. Green grass. Ever smell anything better? By God, I just like to stand here and smell it."
> Invisible chlorophyll blew among the standing men.
> "Ahh!"
> The footsteps continued.
> "Nothing wrong with that, eh, Smith? Come on!"
> The Ear and Nose relaxed a billionth of a fraction. The countermove had succeeded. The pawns were proceeding forward. (164-165)

Though it seems plausible that maybe a device could be programmed to analyze speech in English and react accordingly, such as drafting a smell of nature to the weary space explorers, it appears to be more of an individual judgment. The city possesses a certain wisdom regarding human sensibilities, such as a nostalgic regard of open, green, natural spaces, and a certain parallel is drawn between the city's own memories of its previous state of sleep (memories of drifting leaves and the scurrying of streams to their eventual dissolution) and the human craving for contact with natural landscape. It appears that the city understands the concept proposed by Marx in *The Machine in the Garden* in that the "soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness" (6). Conceivably, the city also knows of the peace brought by nature after being met with prolonged exposure to not only technology but absence of a global society and all things otherwise familiar. In a way, the city finely references Marx's pastoral ideal by luring men in with the illusion of a natural scenery as a very brief escape from their repressive conditions. Not only is this ideal created for the invaders by releasing the well-remembered smell of chlorophyll, but is extended onto the city itself by the opening lines of the story. The city applies this feeling to itself and the humans. A familiar element of "humaneness" is hence discerned through the city's relationship to natural scenery.

At the recognition of humans, a sense of excitement seems to pervade the city, and as the crew plods forward, it "relaxes a billionth of a fraction" and its distance from ordinary machinery is pushed further. However, the city's human likeness is familiar only to a certain extent. The machinery under the streets and its cold calculations are omnipresent behind the city's awareness. Bradbury seems to have wanted to draw a certain line as to where the city was involved in the extension of relatability on the reader's behalf. It is not yet known by the reader that the city is a program left for twenty thousand years by an extinct civilization in order to wipe out the human race, but its mechanisms of perception are made clear. Though it uses careful calculations it seems to carry out its own judgments, which is where its boundaries between machine and autonomous being is obscured. Its intuitions are justified by the presence of previous programming.

> For the streets were like tongues, and where the men passed, the taste of their heels ebbed down through stone pores to be calculated on litmus. This chemical totality, so subtly collected, was appended to the now increasing sums waiting the final calculation among the whirling wheels and whispering spokes. (166)

The machinery behind the city's intuitive yet mechanical processing is not to be forgotten. At every move made by the humans, the city calculates in an automated process. However strongly the city seems to harbor a human sensibility, it is not to be forgotten that it is controlled by a mechanic brain. A certain important similarity has been established between city and humans in terms of their relation to landscape, but the degree of such similarity is limited through the emphasis on its automatic nature. The similitude has been settled though its extent has been marked. In “Trafic/Déclic”, Jean Luc Nancy proposes that a city is an ensemble of coexistences which is mechanic and analytical, but neither organic or synthetic itself (78). Here, the city is found to channel a sensibility to nature while retaining a sense of “the machine”. A clearer observation in boundaries regarding the composition of the city has been presented through its mechanical components, but this only furthers the notion of complexity through not being “organic or synthetic itself”. The novel approach to this city system seems to question whether being “alive” is attributable only to organic forms and not to intelligence itself void of a natural body, and is inclined towards the latter, quite different from the general cultural idea. The city has an intention and employs its procedures through judgement that appears ambiguously individual and acts like a entity of its own through its own intelligence and intentionality.

Finally alarmed enough, Smith begins to flee back to the rocket. The captain chases after him and runs into a trap in the street where he is swallowed underneath the ground. Hidden from sight, he is dissected, probed, observed, and reconstructed synthetically. When he is placed back onto the street, he is now a robotic human holding only a recognizable human shell; his old skin. He guns down Smith and announces to the others that he is the city itself and they shall return to Earth immediately to carry out the awaited-for revenge, the bombs of disease culture. The rest of the crew are also pulled into the underground and soon arise, also pre-programmed robots. Smith is resurrected also in synthetic form by the city.

"Hung by his feet, a razor drawn across his throat, another down his chest, his carcass instantly emptied of its entrails, exposed upon a table under the street, in a hidden cell, the captain died" (166). The captain's death is quite abrupt. When his body is dissected, it is taken apart with control and precision much like a machine is opened and examined. Once the captain has "died" upon the table he becomes nothing more than a lifeless apparatus.

> Smith shouted, and below in this curious room blood flowed into capsules, was shaken, spun, shoved on smear slides under further microscopes, counts made, temperatures taken, heart cut in seventeen sections, liver and kidneys expertly halved. Brain was drilled and scooped from bone socket, nerves pulled forth like the dead wires of a switchboard, muscles plucked for elasticity, while in the electric subterrene of the city the Mind at last totaled out its grandest total and all of the machinery ground to a monstrous and momentary halt. (166)

His body is plucked and pulled "like the dead wires of a switchboard". Like the city itself, the human seems to be made of discernible parts and pieces which serve some purpose or another. With these parts he feels, tastes, smells, hears, and sees just as the city does, and upon the detection of separate parts and pieces, like the city, the human's "humaneness" is questioned, albeit briefly. The captain has been labeled as dead, at least momentarily, and his likeness to a complex device marks a stronger parallel between him and the city. Now that he is nothing but a shell, the city's living attributes only increase.

The captain's death is the final step in a series of calculations in order to evaluate if the city has indeed captured the correct target specimens, and now that the calculations are complete for the first time the city's Mind is mentioned as a concrete entity. The humanlike component, or at least the organic living creature-like component, which was discernible in the nature of the city, is now avowed by the direct presence of a Mind, the unifying element. The city is unequivocally more than a mere machine; it possesses a functioning mind which perceives, senses, evaluates, and remembers. The death of the captain is a necessary step towards the final conclusion in the city's judgment of the humans, and the first reference to the Mind which

evaluates happens in the very instance in which the captain is said to be dead and dissected like a broken gadget. At the moment in which the human is dead and related to a machine, the city has become much closer to the human persona. The power of this revenge instrument is such that it "dehumanizes" the human, first rather metaphorically and later quite literally. The Mind goes so far as to stand still and remember its purpose and the past of its builders once it recognizes that humans are indeed humans. The fantasy element proposed by Todorov is dismissed in this passage, for the final touch, the assertion of the Mind, abandons al hesitation the reader may have regarding the nature of the city.

The recreation of the crew as machines is not termed in any words such as android, robot, cyborg, marionette, or other. The captain claims himself to be the city itself, and it is assumed that the crew undergoes the same process and are also an extension of the city.

> [...] organs of copper, brass, silver, aluminum, rubber and silk; spiders spun gold web which was stung into the skin; a heart was attached, and into the skull case was fitted a platinum brain which hummed and fluttered small sparks of blue fire, and the wires led down through the body to the arms and legs. (167)

There's a contrast between the description of the body's dissection and its padding. Now, outfitted with elements of the city, it's portrayed as being stuffed with silk and spider-spun gold web and its brain flutters like a butterfly with sparks of fire. The new heart is inserted in between these rather romantic sketches and placed quite far from the previous human heart, which had been coldly dissected into seventeen sections. An opposition is set through imagery between what is machine and human. The dissection of the organic human clearly marks the human as an instrument coldly made up of separate parts whereas the recreated version seems splendid and warm in comparison.

In their physical interior, humans were outfitted with elements similar to the underground workings of the city itself and are now in possession of mechanical hearts and brains. When they wake, however, all that has changed in them is their purpose (except for Smith, who is now alive. It could also be possible that he never died). The humans still remember their names and respond

to them, and the same chain of command ensues. Smith's anxiety is gone, understandably because he has become one with what he feared. They have no qualms about their new state of being nor feel any remorse about the bombs of disease they mean to drop on Earth, evidently because they have "ceased to be human" by traditional standards. These newly created humans, or city-humans, only state their intentions of disaster to each other and leave for Earth. Very little interaction is set between them and the reader, and the impression produced is that they remain similar to their old selves but with new intentions. Through Smith's subordinance to the captain a change in their nature is also distinguished but has very little time for play because the humans leave and disappear from the story. Instead, when the rocket leaves, the narration stays with the city, whose senses relax and seem to slowly fade as if very suddenly ageing. "Slowly, pleasurably, the city enjoyed the luxury of dying" (169). Now that the humans have become mechanical, but most importantly, now that their nature has been discerned to have changed and their loyalty to their species is nonexistent, the sense of familiarity and relatability has remained with the city. The city, alive, is now dying after a twenty thousand year wait. Its purpose has been accomplished and now that there's nothing left for it to do, it dies, pleasurably. The city has usurped human nature, has taken it from its invaders as well as the reader's sympathy, and transformed it onto itself. Its liveness was established, its Mind and its way of thinking was exposed as well as its memories. The opportunity is taken to mention the word “dying”, while “living” has only been implicit throughout the story. Its purpose in its long life was achieved and now, it dies, leaving the humans crew with a brand purpose which, in view of the reader, eliminates them from pertaining to the human race. Instead the city has taken their place as the sympathetic champion of hard endurances with a blissful mortal well-earned reward.

Bradbury has not only questioned the human identity through technological autonomy and superiority, but it has blurred its boundaries through the physical bodily sensations of a human and its "unique" mental attributes. A city has become a relatable human-like character and humans have ceased to be themselves. A sense of "humaneness" has been found encompassing not just humans, but machines, and not only a complex machine but an entire landscape. Through the human-like perceptions of the city, through varying degrees, humans have been stripped of their own nature. In addition, the city has an intention and employs its

procedures through judgement that appears individual and acts like a entity of its own through its own intelligence and intentionality, fundamentally confusing the limits of what the meaning of “alive” is through opposing artifice and nature.

Humans have become mechanical like the city, and although very little time is allowed for the reader to grasp the new nature of the mechanical humans, but it would not be absurd to believe if the story had continued and followed the mechanical humans back to Earth, they too would eventually get their hold back on certain sensibilities and their nature would not feel to have been completely lost. Being extensions of the city themselves, it could even be assumed that their "humanity" is still buried deep within them. The deconstruction of humanity in *The City* leads to various paths, and some of them assumed through a hypothetical continued storyline. In this sense, the unarticulated possible storyline is followed through the utter disregard for rhetoric. The content finds meaning outside the form of the text and gains perhaps richer meaning through the possible contradiction that may be found within the text itself; that of the city-human regaining its “humanness”.

The city in the story gains similitude to a living animal, but it is not this attribute which begins displacing humans. As the city becomes more and more in possession of human sensibility, the humans themselves are only lost once they have been killed and dissected. And yet, as the crew leaves towards the end, it seems likely that Bradbury has contradicted all meaning he has placed in the deconstruction of humans and machines. They have not become mere automata; through being an extension of the city and the city itself possessing a human sensibility, it is only a matter of time before they regain themselves and to all effect "humanity" is never lost. Bradbury has dealt with this issue by choosing instead to remain with the city and cutting the story short before reaching this conclusion. There is no clear separation between human/machine.

The urban landscape of *The City* lends sufficient space for the exploration of the abstractness of identifying "humanness" through the integrated confluence of landscape and technology and nature-artificiality. The unclear human/machine boundary is not addressed solely through landscape, but also through the presentation of the figure of the humanoid robot.

The humanoid robot, android, cyborg, or "marionette" is a symbol representative of the two faces of the advancement of technology in science fiction. It is commonly a sign of hazard, presented as a usurper of the human figure through superior intelligence and more precise physical movements and unequivocal winner of the race for man/machine race for power and knowledge. Composed of flesh and metal, or at times pure metal, the android is the symbol of perfect fusion of organic and synthetic and presents the best of both humans and machines. The main idea is that androids assume the same degree of intelligence of the human race which is enhanced through its technological components, thus easily displacing its makers (assuming that these are humans) as the prevailing source of intelligence. Androids are feared superhumans in the dystopian sense as a hazard to the survival of the human race. On the other hand, androids are also shown as inevitable happenstance of the advancement of technology and are presented as servile domestic attendants. In Isaac Asimov's *Robot Series* which is quite representative of hard science fiction, for instance, the Three Laws of Robotics are inherent to every positronic robot's brain to ensure that it never turns against its creators. Androids maintain a caste of servitude, and the departure from this condition is socially frowned upon, as in *The Bicentennial Man.* The Three Laws of Robotics deal with the hypothetical of superior beings rebelling against humans. The idea that a differently composed form of the human being is helpful rather than inherently destructive is present as well in science fiction.

This organic/synthetic enhancement of the human race, regarded with caution in all scenarios, always presents to some degree a level of identity extortion, setting off superficially from its physical form. Androids are not a big part of Ray Bradbury's science fiction, nevertheless they exist in order to prevail the idea that human identity is in reality quite fragile. In *Marionettes, Inc.* and *Changeling,* the normal human protagonist, unremarkable by most standards, is fooled into believing to impressive extremes that they are speaking to a person which they have known a very long time when they are in fact speaking to mere duplicates. Both stories result in cheerless attitude towards the uniqueness of human personality. The self-awareness of humans, and in turn the awareness of beings that are non-human, is unclear and indistinct. Androids, or marionettes, represent an urban ideal of power and commerce. They come alive only in stories which revolve around a city, to confront the passive, rural state of

mind presented in main characters, whom are usually unsettled to varying degrees by the synthetic nature of their surroundings.

In *Marionettes, Inc.*, Braling is quite dramatically replaced by his own replica, called a "marionette" (of Marionette, Inc., No Strings Attached). His acquisition of a marionette came from the lifelong desire to visit Rio but having a wife who disliked him and would not let him go. After a month of what seems to be a test run, Braling's marionette, or Braling Two, has fallen in love with Braling's wife and entertains the desire to go to Rio himself, leaving Braling locked up in a box in the basement and seducing Braling's wife, who believes Braling Two to be the original Braling. What is disturbing about the idea of a marionette (no strings attached) is that they present no indication at all that they are fabricated, other than a slight mechanical ticking once someone presses their ear against the marionette's chest, akin to a heartbeat. They do not have the necessities a machine would be imagined to have. Marionettes may eat, sleep, perspire, and "-everything, natural as natural is" (158).

> "Marionettes are made to move, not lie still. How would you like to lie in a box most of the time?"
> "Well-"
> "You wouldn't like it at all. I keep running. There's no way to shut me off. I'm perfectly alive and I have feelings." (161)

From Braling Two's "naturality" stems the claim of "I'm perfectly alive and I have feelings". By eating, sleeping, walking, and being inserted into a household with an established position, that of playing the husband, and being unable to turn off, like an actual human, Braling Two is certainly qualified to be in nature a human personality with human feelings. Other than all the main characters except Braling's wife knowing that Braling Two was fabricated and bought, there is no indication that Braling Two is in fact a fake human. When Braling is shut up in Braling Two's box and Braling Two takes off with his ticket to Rio and his wife, there is nothing to make the reader believe that in fact Braling Two is less authentically human than Braling himself. Braling original may be the creation and Braling Two the real possessor of the

Braling life. The prevailing difference between humans and their marionette replicas is slight, and is only assumed when Smith finally detects that the overly passionate behavior in his own wife, since the month before, has dramatically increased because his wife is not his wife, but her marionette. It took Smith a month to detect it, and it never entered his suspicions until he witnessed Braling Two's impressive physical accuracy, and bent over to listen to a slight ticking in his wife's chest. Smith's wish to have his own marionette was rooted in the need to get away from his smothering wife. In fact his smothering wife was not the wife he had in mind at all, and had Smith in fact managed to have his own replica before the ending of the story, his family would have been left with two marionettes pretending to be other people while the two real people were away living their lives as they really wanted it to. It was stated by Smith that he was surprised that his wife had married him at all and not some other man named Bud. It's implied that this could be the whereabouts of his human wife, whereas Smith would have liked to have rested from his wife's exhausting attentions. From Smith's situation an interesting notion arises: marionettes as a chance to split the human experience into separate parts. In *Marionettes, Inc.*, the dominant idea of the marionette is that it affords a chance for vacations while maintaining to the public eye all household responsibilities. For Braling, this ends in the imminence of a death through asphyxiation or dehydration in a locked up box in the basement while the marionette utterly usurps Braling's life, and for Smith it will probably end in the creation of his own marionette who will probably carry the addition of loving his wife, as well as paying its own debt, while Smith slips away somewhere peaceful.

In *Changeling,* Marionettes Incorporated once more makes its appearance. Martha awaits the arrival of her lover in her apartment, and once Leonard Hill makes his appearance Martha is set off by the suspicion that he is not the real Leonard that has been troubling her for eight months. She discovers it first because she finds that his kiss is not the same. This night she is quite sure that she's right, and proceeds to feed Leonard poison, spray him with bullets, then smash his head in with a hammer. She obtains from him the confession that he is one of six marionettes of the real Leonard Hill, who is at home reading a book of essays by Montaigne and drinking hot chocolate milk. In this story, much grislier than *Marionettes, Inc.*, Martha knows perfectly well that who she is dealing with is, if not a human, certainly not Leonard Hill.

> There it was. The difference. The little change. There was no way to tell anyone, or even describe it. It would be like trying to describe a rainbow to a blind man. But there was a subtle chemical difference to his kiss. It was no longer the kiss of Mr. Leonard Hill. It approximated the kiss of Leonard Hill but was sufficiently different to set a subconscious wheel rolling in her. What would an analysis of the faint moisture on his lips reveal? Some bacterial lack? And as for the lips themselves, were or were they not harder, or softer, than before? Some small difference. (535)

The component which sets off Martha is only a small detail, which was so vague even to her that it took her eight months to completely discern the truth in her suspicions. Like *Marionettes, Inc.*, only a very small detail in the marionette's overall physical appearance enlightens the lover of their state of unoriginality. The lover suspects that they are not who they knew, but only arrive at the conclusion that they must be a machine through a weak previous interaction with the very idea. Smith had just witnessed his friend's marionette and its astounding appearance; before that he did not know of their existence. Martha had only heard rumors of the existence of marionettes. For Martha, they were myths heard through the grapevine and nevertheless they were enough to alarm her to the point of murder. The distinction between one being and another, such as a human and an android, or an original and a replica, is so diffuse and hard to grasp even by the characters themselves that at the smallest provocation they are exalted to horrific measures (in Martha's case rather than Smith's). In both stories the suspecting individual is the lover, only who vaguely detects something strange about this old character. Bradbury emphasizes the ambiguity in human-human recognition by pairing the android with a human with whom they share the closest of human relations, that of the lover. The elusiveness of the marionette's "real" identity is present even to the one most familiar. The marionette is a profoundly shocking figure to the lover character, and in *Marionettes, Inc.* the depth of its obscured identity is evident through Braling Two's ambitions. He has completely absorbed in full the identity of his original, so much that he even acquires Braling's childhood dreams. Braling Two is in a way a bettered version of Braling himself by reviving the forgotten love for his wife

and compromising it with his dream of visiting Rio, something Braling himself was unable to do. The marionette is not only a recreation of the human but a bettered version too. In Smith's case, this distinction is unclear. Smith himself would pursue a peaceful future (hypothetically) while his marionette would continue married life to a mechanic wife, presumably joyfully (also hypothetical). By pursuing the fantasies of the original, the marionette works as its extension and for this it is not any less "human". The appearance of the marionette marks a crossroad in the life of the human in which they are allowed to pursue not one path but two (or six). The marionette is accepted into this position for possessing both the mental and physical traits of the original, though it is made clear that through intuition and keenness differences are distinguished. In Braling's case, his own demise (though eventual and hypothetical) as in Leonard Hill's marionette's case, does not mean death, only the end of one his selves. Freud quotes Otto Rank in stating that the "'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego" and a denial of the power of death and a preservation against extinction, although eventually it would present a reverse function as a "harbinger of death" (235). Freud's evolution of the double concept and its contradictory state is affirmed by Bradbury's proposal of the idea of continuation of a human through a duplicate machine yet at the same time physically threatened by its appearance.

The concept of identity as tied to a physical body is severed; instead, an identity is effortlessly assumed through a different vessel. This is also demonstrated by the landscape of the city (in *The City*). The physical container of the identity is unimportant. The distinction between human and machine is undone, and the frailty of the "human identity" is epitomized through the apparent effortlessness for one identity to encompass one or several bodies. The self-awareness of humans is worn thin when confronted with their replica. There is no exact human/marionette distinction.

Marionettes are what stretch the boundaries of the human self in a way that is tangible and plays with the reader's own sentiments of self-protection. They are one aspect of the technological facet of the future worlds which haunt the life and death of the human race, but they are not the only aspect of technology addressed by Bradbury to put the human survival instinct on edge. In *The Murderer* (1953), Bradbury addresses the social phenomenon of an

overly-dependant-on-technology lifestyle and links such behavior to insanity and essentially detached from some fundamental component. Technology is used to criticize human behavior as a social experience which has become more and more distant from a kind of essence Bradbury believes humans to inherently possess.

Brock, introduced as a patient in a psychiatric ward, is a self-proclaimed "murderer". His murders include the telephone, his wrist radio, the car transmitter, the house (the house features a whole range of helpfulness like the house family of *Fahrenheit 451*), among other "crimes". He relates his story to the belated psychiatrist, who remains dumbfounded by Brock's violence against machines.

The way the story is introduced, the psychiatrist moving through the offices to a clash of classical music coming from the radios of many different offices; "Stravinsky mating with Bach, Haydn unsuccessfully repulsing Rachmaninoff, Schubert slain by Duke Ellington" (73), marks quite distinctively the chaos Brock refers to when he speaks of the influence of machines on the life of everyone around him. When the doctor steps into the interview chamber where Brock is waiting, where Brock has already destroyed the radio, he feels a sensation of wrongness when confronted by silence, which he doesn't recognize right away. Brock establishes the impersonality he feels inherent to technology, though he relates it only to telephones.

> [...] If it felt like it, it let your personality go through its wires. If it didn't want to, it just drained your personality away until what slipped through at the other end was some cold fish of a voice, all steel, copper, plastic, no warmth, no reality . (75)

Like the general feeling of marionettes, Brock senses his identity drained by a machine which provides a sense of metallic unreality. The convenience of the telephone is also unsettling for Brock because its very presence requires calls to be made, which is the distinct cause for the noise depicted at the beginning of the story. The very convenience of technology is becoming inconvenient for Brock; he feels his nature and the human nature of society around him to become rapidly drained away.

> [...] What is there about such 'conveniences' that makes them so temptingly convenient? The average man thinks, Here I am, time on my hands, and there on my wrist is a wrist telephone, so why not just buzz old Joe up, eh? 'Hello, hello!' I love my friends, my wife, humanity, very much, but when one minute my wife calls to say, 'Where are you now, dear?' and a friend calls and says, 'Got the best off-color joke to tell you. Seems there was a guy-' And a stranger calls and cries out, 'This is the Find-Fax Poll. What gum are you chewing at this very instant?' Well!" (75-76)

Georg Simmel's point on the rapidity of metropolitan life in comparison to the country life in *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) is very much present in Brock's speech. "The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life" (1). In this case, the sovereign powers of society and the external culture and technique of life have become one, which is the dominant command of "convenient" machines over every aspect of modern lifestyle, one which Brock has much trouble adapting to and keeping his own personality afloat amidst the overwhelming mental and physical dependence on technology. For standing out so prominently against the established way of life he has been sentenced to a psychiatric clinic and deemed insane. Brock himself hasn't helped much in its contradiction, anyway. It's hard to believe that proclaiming himself a "murderer" will help his outcast circumstance, but he's making a point of the ridiculous life machines have established for themselves and the easy acceptance and encouragement humans make of this. Brock is also somewhat of a throwback to wanting, perhaps, a less frenzied lifestyle. From what he relates and has been witnessed by the reader through the doctor, life happens immediately. The modern metropolitan life depicted by Brock provokes "the highest degree of nervous energy" (Simmel 5), and Brock's need for silence is parallel to the need for freedom from such a chaotic life. Marx's attributions of the "garden", or unspoiled country landscape, is sought after as a pastoral ideal which is only searched for once being confronted with a governing power. The governing power is an exaggerated dependence on an industrialized, therefore chaotic life which is corruptive of "humanhood". Brock struggles

against what Thomas Bender refers to as the spiritual struggles of "overcivilization", in which man struggles for a need of space and greenery following its divorce from nature in an urbanized, artificial, and corrupt world (8) in *Towards an Urban Vision.* Brock is the rebel symbol of the pastoral ideal in the system of machines.

Brock feels "mauled and massaged and pounded" (76) by the machine voices following him around so he spoons French chocolate ice cream into the car radio transmitter. The silence that follows is "a big bolt of the nicest, softest flannel ever made. Silence. A whole hour of it. I just sat in my car, smiling, feeling of that flannel with my ears. I felt drunk with Freedom!" (77). Brock represents something beyond the idea of a pastoral ideal. He makes contact with something that seems essential to him, which is the clear separation between one thing and another. Bradbury has made clear how easily appropriated the human identity is by anything at all: cities, marionettes, telephones. Brock is fighting for the retention of his own identity in the sea of information and jarring imposition of technological interaction, as well as the identity of those around him. In his murdering of the television (the televisor) he seems to hate it because of what it does to the people in it, not particularly because of any relation to himself. "I went in and shot the televisor, that insidious beast, that Medusa, which freezes a billion people to stone every night, staring fixedly [...]" (79). Machines have achieved their own consciousness and in their death they scream agonizingly (such as the stove screaming "I'm shorted!"). A sense of cold-blooded murder is in fact accomplished. The machines in the house are very much self-aware, as aware as Brock is of their gradual identity absorption. The intelligence and convenience is questioned by Brock because it makes technology seem alive and this is the identity absorption which enrages him and frightens him to an extent. It is the same intelligence which questions the opposition of artifice to nature in order to fundamentally approach the cultural conception of what being alive means. The aliveness of technologies presented through Brock's narrative produces no uncertainty in himself that they are in fact alive and aware, and for this he is their "murderer". Unlike in *The City*, which directly questions whether "aliveness" may be attributed to syntheticness and is inclined to affirm it, here it is never questioned but taken for granted[2].

[2]There is consequently less uncertainty in terms of content put forward by Todorov, signifying that this story is less inclined towards fantasy than others and sticks a bit more to traditional science fiction.

The Murderer deals with technology in a generalized sense. Brock is a heroic-like stance representing the pastoral ideal and the self-preservation of the human identity. He stands alone in the fight for the retention of human individuality. Unlike *The City, Marionettes, Inc.,* and *Changeling,* there is a space provided in which a human may fight back for themselves. There is no chance for this to happen in *The City*, since humans have no idea of the real life of the city until it is too late and they have already become part of it. Unlike the other previously addressed stories, *The Murderer* is optimistic in its view of the human identity. To Brock, technology does not assume any humanlike character, although it does seem to possess a life of its own. Technology does succeed in displacing humans (the society presented in general) of their own identity through a sort of absorption, though it does not itself assume it. This is accomplished in all the addressed stories and through various methods; through proclaiming the very same human sensibility, directly, such as usurping an entire life, and indirectly through absorption. Only in *The Murderer* did a human remain distinctly separate from the prevailing technological entity. Technology indeed assumes a component of humanity in the eyes of Bradbury, one which is hard to dispute as it is hard to distinguish its boundaries clearly. It is always self-aware although to different extents. Technology is not just futuristic machinery, but may also encompass an entire landscape. The notion of humanity is questioned and posed as frail through a relationship established with advancing science, yet this relationship is given by yet not limited to technology. The figure of the human is projected also onto landscapes, as has been evidenced, but also onto other beings which are products of such a landscape. The androids of *The City* are an example of this, but a vast proportion of the instruments which Bradbury uses to disassemble humans are aliens. Aliens are also recipients of the projection of the human identity, and through the given relation to the natural scenery the human identity is dismantled and better understood. Like in *The City,* from which the mechanical yet live city produces mechanical humanlike beings, humans also change when their natural landscape changes.

4.1 Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed

Jean Marc Besse speaks of landscape as a channel which allows nature to exist to the eyes of a beholding human and as therefore a link between humans and the land they stand on,

which is the Earth. Landscape invokes the participation of the contemplator rather than distance and proximity rather than elevation. Besse cites Eric Dardel who believes that geographic space is not a subjective construction built by humans, but is a form which animates the mental life of the contemplative subject through imposition. Geographic space is the reunion of "elemental data" which reveal the presence of meanings that "fluctuate" through the world. Geographic spaces carry no inherent meaning, but once in contact with a certain space, meanings "make sense". Therefore elemental significances arise from the encounter between humans and Earth. Earth is the base of human experience and there is no humanity without the Earth. The Earth is a place of movement and fluctuation, a place of aperture to experience of senses.

Besse has established that the Earth is the place in which the mental life of humanity has constructed itself. Without the Earth, the very base of human existence, human life would cease to be the human life as it is known. Bradbury is emphatic of the importance of the Earth and its nature as the basis of human life as well, and he attributes civilizations directly to the natural scenery they pertain to. For Bradbury, human nature is so intertwined with its natural landscape that the altering of natural scenery entails utter loss of humanity. Landscape is indeed the very basis for human existence. Human nature does not go on without the Earth. Bradbury means this quite literally in contrast to Besse, who referred to the connection between landscape and the mental life of humans.

In *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed* (1949) a human colony arrives on Mars and builds its own village. Harry Bittering is the only human who is unsettled by the landscape and its subtle effects on his family and the population which apparently only he gives importance to. Effects are both physical and linguistic. An atomic war erupts on Earth and all rocket ships are destroyed, leaving the colony isolated. Harry Bittering tries to construct his own rocket ship. After five years, when the war is over, a rescue mission arrives on Mars once again only to find that the human settlement is a ghost town and the only population to be found are Martians living in some distant hills.

Martian landscape is so different to Harry Bittering that he perceives it as a danger the very moment he and his family step off their rocket. The scenery assaults his physical senses.

> The wind blew as if to flake away their identities. At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, as marrow comes from a white bone. He felt submerged in a chemical that could dissolve his intellect and burn away his past. (311)

From the very beginning Bradbury establishes the eventual effect of the Martian landscape, to "flake away their identities". Harry has a sensual premonition of what's to come. Perhaps from such a cold assault on his senses Harry is put more on guard than the rest of the colony. In line with Besse's premises, Harry Bittering keenly feels the absence of the Earth as the wiping out of a fundamental ground over which his mental life has always been constructed. Even having barely witnessed the surrounding landscape, Bittering already knows that some essential component is about to be lost. Martian air is compared to a chemical through its sense of unnaturalness and therefore artifice to the human beholder.

The hold on Earth is not completely lost yet because Harry relies heavily on the connection between Mars and Earth made through the rocket ships. He realizes that for him Earth was not completely lost until the eruption of the atomic war and all rocket ships are lost. Feeling then the utter loss of the connection, he sets out to build his very own rocket ship, and in so doing regain a part of himself which he feels is so vital.

> In the following days, Bittering wandered often through the garden to stand alone in his fear. As long as the rockets had spun a silver web across space, he had been able to accept Mars. For he had always told himself: Tomorrow, if I want, I can buy a ticket and go back to Earth. [...] Earth people left to the strangeness of Mars, the cinnamon dusts and wine airs, to be baked like gingerbread shapes in Martian summers, put into harvested storage by Martian winters. What would happen to him, the others? This was the moment Mars had waited for. Now it would eat them. (314)

Through the loss of Earth the menacing outlandishness of Mars makes itself pressing. The mental barrier creating distance between Bittering and Mars is shattered and interaction is imminent. Through interaction, the land becomes real and far more concrete than the existence of

Earth, and this is when Martian landscape truly rises and imposes itself on the Earthen mind. As Straus is quoted by Besse, landscape is above all else the relation between the proximity of things. The sense of loss of Earth suffered through the proximity of Mars is not only felt by Bittering but by his children as well. The physical and linguistic changes begin to make their appearance after the connection to Earth is wholly severed and the imposition of Mars on the mental life of humans is unobstructed. Almost immediately, the Martian wind changes its quality of artifice and assumes a quality of more familiar naturalness (although still outlandish), from being a chemical to being "cinnamon dusts and wine airs".

The scenery is in a way similar to the Sonoran desert where Bradbury spent a small part of his childhood in Tucson, Arizona, but dotted with bizarre imagery. The familiar picture of a desert is presented with ruins of old vacant Martian cities "lying like children's delicate bones", and hills that were "worn with a crushing pressure of years". The atmosphere created by Bradbury is that of another world superimposed over one already known, and this happens through the loss of Earth felt by Bittering and the way landscape is presented, through a play of newness and old.

The physical changes are at first quite apparent until later they aren't. Changes in other live things brought by humans, such as plants and animals are obvious to them, but changes in themselves are unperceived.

> " [...] Onions but not onions, carrots but not carrots. Taste: the same but different. Smell: not like it used to be. [...] Cora, what's happening? What is it? We've got to get away from this." He ran across the garden. Each tree felt his touch. "The roses. The roses. They're turning green!"
>
> And they stood looking at the green roses.
>
> And two days later Dan came running. "Come see the cow. I was milking her and I saw it. Come on!"
>
> They stood in the shed and looked at their one cow.
>
> It was growing a third horn. (316)

The changes which occur over the newcomers are directly physical rather than mental at first. In a short amount of time, they escalate from being subtle, such as the taste of Earth vegetables being a bit strange, to being directly invasive. The Jentschian sense of the uncanny is present as Earthen bodies go awry and strange in the new world. The sense of the old and traditional carries new and unusual elements which are confronted with mistrust and unease (Jentsch 3). Jentsch's notion of the uncanny is a bt more present than Freud's double, for although Bittering seems to sense what is to come, the usurping of identity of the cow and the carrots does not strictly affect himself. The situation presented in this passage does not cause a questioning of human identity. The unease is based rather on an unwillingness to accept the visible changes that are overcoming the Earth life forms based on the premise that if it is not from Earth, then it is harmful and not natural. Unsurprisingly, Bittering is reluctant to let his identity flake away in the Martian airs.

The main idea that Bradbury is presenting is the physical need for familiarity, because identity does not seem to truly rely on oneself. In truth, identity is rather undependable as a stable feature and it appears to be independent of the person itself. Instead, it seems to rely on what surrounds and is perceived by the subject rather than any interior mental composition. Bittering is distressed by the changes surrounding him and his family, but remains rather calm when the old Martian names for places spring from his tongue of their own accord. He begins constructing his own rocket ship to go back to Earth, or he believes, but what the rocket represents is somewhat more abstract. He cannot construct a working rocket which will travel the distance between Mars and Earth, but the building of the rocket is what is most important. Bittering takes the broken links between himself and his home planet into his own hands and constructs a new one in order to hold on to himself. The existence of a rocket, or its "flimsy frame", however useless it could be is important as Bittering discovers that his identity is not his own but dependent on his circumstances. The construction of his own rocket is his own link to himself by way of nostalgia for the Earth. Bittering knows that it doesn't matter that he feels like a human from Earth; what is more relevant is that his surroundings have ceased to be Earth and so he will cease to be himself, not matter how he may fight against it. In this story, identity is not a controllable feature but another changing aspect of the population at hand much like the cow's

growing of the third horn. By announcing that "the wind blew as if to flake away their identities", the knowledge that there will certainly be an eventual loss pervades Bittering and the story itself.

There's a contrast between the significance of physical differences and linguistic differences. When Bittering finds that his eyes have changed color, he wrecks the mirror. He is distraught that no one seems to remember their original eye color and golden eyes seem familiar and unsurprising. When his son Dan urges his parents to allow him to adopt a new name which he feels identified with more- Linnl- Bittering feels it to be only natural and offers no resistance, in the same way in which he is unopposed to being Utha, the Martian word for father (apparently, since no one actually speaks Martian). The appearance of Martian words is close to or directly related to the Bittering family's first outing onto the Martian natural landscape. Drifting through a large canal under a sky submerged in sunlight, Dan and Harry suddenly discuss the Martian name which pops into Dan's mind. The acceptance of such new words are related to the naturality of the scenery around them. Suddenly, Mars stops aggressively imposing itself and begins to flow through them. In *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), Bradbury places a small intermission between stories which briefly refers to the changing context of Mars titled *2004-2005: The Naming of Names,* which was in fact the original title for *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed.* In this short narration, Martian names are directly associated to the natural features of the planet, such as "water and air and hills" (136), the names of snows and seas. Earth names are portrayed as superimposed over these original, peaceful names that are artificial to the area. Names become Nathaniel York Town, Hinkston Creek, Spender Hill, and later Iron Town, Steel Town, Electric City. *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed* conveys the same attitude in the sense that was is from Earth is unnatural to the area, and therefore mean and metallic. Mars is the new source of nature, the new basis over which life grows and from which a new mental life stems. To Mars and the Martian mentality arising within humans as newborn Martians, what is from Earth is artificial. Mars is a new landscape, utterly free of big industries, technological advancements, scientific development and a restless society. Marx's reference of the pastoral ideal as an space of freedom is present in the new scenery and the mental life which springs up from a new earth is a link to nature itself. Bittering and Dan accept the appearance of linguistic

changes because it springs from a newfound relation to nature and the earth they stand on. It's a much more subconscious, subjective change not directly influenced by the subject itself, and as it feels natural it is not so antagonistically questioned. Physical changes, on the other hand, are explicit and external to the subject, as well as completely spontaneous, apparently. They are easy to confront and to point out as exterior to the inner self and therefore "unhuman" and "unEarthly". Bittering is after all trying to regain his former link to the Earth which is to him an object worthy of recovery and from where familiar things come, but subconsciously both he and his son have already begun to remodel their identity.

Shortly after the rediscovery of the Martian names for places, the Bittering family along with the rest of the settlement decide to spend the summer in the Pillan Mountains, formerly the Rockefeller Range, and the narrative makes a five year leap. The atomic war is over and a rocket lands near the former human settlement. Not a single soul is found there and instead, a Martian village is in the hills. They don't know English but learn it fast. They are tall, dark, and golden-eyed, completely unlike a human in physical aspect. It's quite clear that they are the original human settlement, but Bradbury makes it explicit through a certain conversation previously carried out between Bittering and his wife Cora as they locked up their home and drove into the mountains.

> Mr. Bittering gazed at the Earth settlement far away in the low valley. "Such odd, ridiculous houses the Earth people built."
> "They didn't know any better," his wife mused. "Such ugly people. I'm glad they've gone."
> They both looked at each other, startled by all they had just finished saying. They laughed. (325)

Their human identity has indeed been completely flaked away in an entirely unintentional and subconscious manner. It was never dependent on them, but always on their surroundings and the ground they stood on. Quite simply, the ground is Mars and so they are Martians. The "significances which fluctuate throughout the world" for Besse are evidently not the same on

Earth as on Mars. Martian landscape imposes a different experience on the contemplator and "structured thoughts of the world" arise from that space. Besse quotes Merleau-Ponty in that "sensation flows through me though I am not its author". The experience of the world means that human existence is always submitted to an emotion which conditions all senses, and this is perfectly applicable to the changes occurring to Bittering and his family. Humans have not only changed in their experiences and feelings, but have established themselves so that they channel the new landscape through themselves through the use of words. Bradbury's play of perceptions challenges the idea of human identity as stable. Through a leap of only five years, humans have undergone a complete physical change as well (a submission Besse certainly did not have in mind). Human identity is so completely fragile that humans have morphed into another species within a drastically short period of time through being subjected to a new land. Bittering, like Brock, realizes how easy it is to lose oneself amidst a confusing environment and refuses to become a shadow of his former self. Unlike Brock, who carries the dream of a peaceful ideal with a will of iron, Bittering has much weaker resolve and must eventually surrender himself. Granted, Bittering is subjected to a complete change of lifestyle and a whole new mental life, as has been discussed, and this is far beyond his power to control. Brock fights for the wellbeing of humanity but his greatest enemy is society and progress, and not himself.

Bradbury's views upon the state of humans as strong, and pertaining to a stable sense of self-awareness are cynical at best. For him, landscape works as the secret possessor of the human identity of which humans are not aware, adding to the quality of instability and frailty. Only a desolate landscape is needed to make humans scrape wildly at their mental uncertainties. In *The Long Rain* (1950) humans survive on Venus only through the existence of Sun Domes, which grant artificial sunlight and shelter from the inexhaustible rains which fall eternally and electrical storms that rage like demonic monsters. At the arrival of a crew on the planet they find that the nearest Sun Dome has been obliterated by Venusians which rise up from the sea from time to time to destroy humans and must therefore wander for miles through devastating rainfall in search for refuge. They struggle with their emotions and of them all, only one maintains composure and does not wind up entirely dead.

Much like Mars, Venus physically changes humans though that is not an important detail of the story. Instead of becoming dark and golden-eyed the crew and specifically the lieutenant, who had "once been brown and now the rain had washed it pale, and the rain had washed the color from his eyes and they were white, as was his teeth, as was his hair" (53), are now white and devoid of any other color, except "perhaps a little green with fungus". Also like Mars, Venus presents unfamiliar and unnatural scenery to them, despite one of them having lived there for ten years. Humans on Venus have not become Venusians because the landscape is much more dangerous and dismal. Normal habitation on such a planet of fierce unending rain, man-slaughtering storms and a single small continent surrounded by one sea that covers the entire globe is quite impossible for survival so humans have been forced to construct their own habitats with their own essentials, such as sunlight and camembert cheese. They have mingled the least they could with the Venus landscape and have therefore experienced no shift of identity. The real Venusians are briefly depicted as dark and vicious and living in the sea, in intermittent conflict with their invaders.

Being subjected to a landscape to which they are very much unaccustomed strains their capacity for adjustment, which is of course a real effect of such a situation. But they're taken to such measures that they commit suicide in order to escape their hapless circumstance in a very short amount of time. Familiar circumstances are necessary to human preservation otherwise their very nature is shaken. As the crew finds the first Sun Dome barren they trudge onwards through the dark and the rain, having already lost one of their members to the electrical storm described as an all-encompassing monster. They try to rest and calm themselves before following their journey through the forest but find it quite impossible.

> There were things that crawled on his skin. Things grew upon him in layers. Drops fell and touched other drops and they became streams that trickled over his body, and while these moved down his flesh, the small growths of the forest took root in his clothing. He felt the ivy cling and make a second garment over him; he felt the small flowers bud and open and petal away, and still the rain pattered on his body and on his head. In the luminous night- for the vegetation glowed in the darkness- he could see the other two

> men outlined, like logs that had fallen and taken upon themselves velvet coverings of grass and flowers. The rain hit his face. He covered his face with his hands. The rain hit his neck. He turned over on his stomach in the mud, on the rubbery plants, and the rain hit his back and hit his legs. Suddenly he leaped up and began to brush the water from himself. A thousand hands were touching him and he no longer wanted to be touched. He no longer could stand being touched. He floundered and struck something else and knew that it was Simmons, standing up in the rain, sneezing moisture, coughing and choking. And then Pickard was up, shouting, running about.
>
> "Wait a minute, Pickard!"
>
> "Stop it, stop it!" Pickard screamed. He fired off his gun six times at the night sky. (61)

Bradbury has never lost sight of the natural and the organic as elements which adhere human nature together. Human endurance is tested through these strange and extreme conditions which cause mental turbulence. In this story, Bradbury seems to be making a separate point in that humans, although they try to dominate their surroundings by building habitats, are never adverse to the conditions of nature. The imposition of artificiality and its consequent destruction is expressed as a treading of humans where they do not belong. This idea of humans as synthetic and metallic imposing themselves over nature is presented also in *The Naming of Names.* Here, as in *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed,* humans do not overcome their position and eventually lose themselves and their orientation. The lieutenant is the sole exception to that rule. After everyone else have killed themselves of their own accord (except for one man struck by the lightning storm) and he heads towards a new Sun Dome that he spies in the distance, he says "another five minutes and then I'll walk into the sea and keep walking. We weren't made for this; no Earthman was or ever will be able to take it [...]" (64). Presumably, no Earthman's strength is a match for such hideous circumstances. This is true, because the unfamiliarity means unnaturalness and humans cannot cope with being inducted into a state of unnatural. In Mars, humans turn into Martians and in Venus humans kill themselves. Whatever context is not Earth implies the ceasing of humankind. The lieutenant, being an exception to this, has only just barely made it through whatever extraordinary will he possesses. His situation is akin to that of

Bittering. Bittering was the only member of the settlement who realized the inevitable condition they would all endure and because of this he resisted much longer in his connection to his home planet. In other words, he was human the longest. The lieutenant is the only member of the crew who believes that the Sun Dome and the rest of the Venus citizens is in fact existent and nearby. He believes in the existence of the Earth and its version of familiarity close to him. By losing their hold on themselves, the crew loses perspective and their identity. They give in and they commit suicide, effectually losing their humanity although in an entirely different way. Unlike Bittering, the lieutenant may succeed in maintaining his humanity through staying within the human habitats on Venus. It is clear, however, that Earth people do not belong there and their imposition on the Venusians may be regarded as only temporary.

In *The Long Rain* Bradbury lets the reader glimpse a slightly more political standing. The conflict between humans and Venusians is a reflection of a European- Native American standoff, the foreign Sun Domes as a colonial village with haggard defences. Ray Bradbury claimed to be disgusted by snobbishness and socio cultural ignorance. In *Zen in the Art of Writing* (1994) he claimed to write stories out of pure indignation in which he satirized this sort of behavior. He exemplifies *Sun and Shadow* (1953) in which a photographer poses a half-starved model in front real starving Puerto Ricans for their quaintness. In this story, a man continually drops his pants in the background in protest. In *The Long Rain,* Bradbury's view on colonialism emphasizes human expansion as mistaken and quite rightly misplaced by depicting dramatic conditions and excessive mental and physical hardship. He mentions the lack of financial support on behalf of Congress. Not only is Bradbury underlining the sheer weakness of human nature and how it is nothing without a familiar context, but he is also questioning the very presence of humans imposing themselves on grounds they have no right to tread upon. Through both stories, the land seems to react differently to the invaders. In Mars, the landscape absorbs these new being and makes them its own, while in Venus they are utterly repulsed. These contradictory outcomes are not genuinely at odds with each other; in both cases, the land has confronted and dealt with its invaders. Mars has accomplished this in a much more permanent way. Whatever settlers occur in the future will wind up in the same way (through following the same storyline, because this

argument may be disputed upon reading *The Martian Chronicles*). Venus is however still fighting.

The human characters of this story come from a presumably advanced Earth in which technology has made a leap forward, cities are all-consuming entities, and society is quite scared and confused (in one case, because of the impending atomic war). It's credible that these humans are only now, through newfound contact with unknown lands, regaining a lost connection to nature. On the new planets, humans have tried to dominate nature but have instead failed and been dominated by it. As Marx proposes, humans may be searching for the lost link to peace and nature after confronting and fleeing from a supposed social or urban power back on Earth. Nonetheless, the state of "foreigners in a foreign land" is stoutly maintained throughout their space exploration. As has been established, they are the metallic, unnatural invaders of a harmonized, self-sufficient natural space. This natural space which stands on its own balance, never touched by meddling hands, is a rural landscape which dominates the urban ideal and the sense of artifice which humans have brought along with them. Despite the context of scientific advancement and spatial exploration, technology and urbanity are still inferior to the pervading natural forces. Still, in the smallest sense, the dimension of the "artifice" is present in the Sun Domes and the humans themselves. Though both of these things are for the most part sure to be dead or not functioning, the survival of the lieutenant defies, though temporarily, the absolute superiority of the natural by placing artificiality as a willful contestant against the dominant landscape. Though briefly, and almost as an afterthought, "foreignness" as a representative of artifice and urbanity is placed alongside what Bradbury deems to be the pure virgin background, which is nature.

As can be discerned in these stories, landscape presents a vivid consciousness and what seems to be a will of its own. This consciousness comes alive through playing with the contemplator's perception. Through a new ground humans rediscover an integral part of the self, though this causes a certain shape shifting in themselves. The main characters' gaze onto the landscape is a two-way relation through which familiarity is searched for, built, but abandoned (or out of reach), whereas the land seizes this perception and shapes it onto the subject itself by projecting its "hidden meanings" onto their mental life. This illustrates the human being as a

blank canvas over which meanings related to landscape are sketched on, and as itself being essentially a sponge of nature, although not entirely devoid of preconceived meanings (those related to the Earth).

5.1 Conclusion

In the science fiction of Ray Bradbury, natural landscape is important as the constructor of the “human identity” which is directly related to the Earth itself. Its loss entails a loss of previously existent meanings which make up the mental life as it is known, and constructs an entirely new mental landscape through interaction with new surroundings. This new-sprung inner landscape results in the physical shapeshifting from one being to another; into a Martian or into a machine. The counterpart to this relation, of a human maintaining a hold on themselves while confronting a superior force (natural or technological) is also established, but through a false encounter with the environment and the strengthening of the connection to Earth through belief, in the lieutenant’s case. In Brock’s case, he keeps his identity strong through his representation and belief of a pastoral ideal. The urbanity or, the “machine” as established by Marx, does not intrude in Brock’s inner mental life through his drastic efforts in sustaining his individuality amidst an “overcivilized” future society. Landscape is depicted as both the constructor and the true possessor of the identity it "bestows" on humans. It also presents the questioning of what the meaning of "alive" is through addressing the artifice-natural confluence encountered through characters. It shapes and contorts inner meanings within characters, and in this sense, the influence of landscape can be extended as the sculptor of culture over a malleable essence found in characters.

Bradbury’s assertions that the natural prevails over the technological and is present in all human scenarios encountered in his science fiction, marks him as entirely original in his writing of the pulps. As has been addressed, he never departs from the importance of the natural or pastoral and its familiarity as the base constructor of the human. Despite providing a futuristic setting of space exploration and self-aware technology, there are no true matching forces which equal that which is primal in the identity of humans. The confusion in boundaries regarding awareness and identity is explored through the loss of familiarity and established as

fundamentally dependent on surroundings and not on humans themselves. Such ideas may be explored in a variety of other short stories not addressed in the corpus, such as *A Blade of Grass* (1949), *The Man* (1948), *February 1999: Ylla* [3] (1950), *June 2001: -and the Moon Be Still as Bright*[4] (1950), *April 2026: The Long Years*[5] (1948), *The Visitor* (1948), or *The Veldt* (1950). Stronger emphasis on the instability of even familiarity may be found in Bradbury's unscienced fiction as well, such as *The Meadow* (1947) and *Colonel Stonesteel's Genuine Home-made Truly Egyptian Mummy* (1981).

The analysis presented here is strongly influenced by Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man's deconstruction which adds a dimension of confrontation of the traditional binary opposition, which is essential to understanding Bradbury's view on the process of construction of the human mental life. By finding contradictions in the subjective, interpretive plane of the story, a cause-effect analysis of the plotline is avoided, which would otherwise constrict the variation and freedom of interpretation and endanger the richness of the metaphorical dimension. Through deconstruction, the rejection of a cause-effect analysis of the story is adamant, thus permitting a broader grasp on the significations the story is constructed on and subsequent interpretation. The science fiction stories of Ray Bradbury, and his fiction in general, revolve around human nature and behavior in relation to their context. Bradbury's notions of humankind are better understood and dissected not through a linear following of the story, but through the pointing out of concepts which may seem initially different but in truth seep into each other, such as the previously discussed man/machine confluence and nature/artifice construct, which are better understood inserted onto the surrounding landscape. The use of deconstruction also disregards any separation between fictions; the "science" implicit in science fiction does not hinder the fundamental sense of "humanity" which is present in fictive texts in order to draw in the reader. The reader-based perception of the unraveling of human nature as an essentiality of the text, despite the additive of an otherworldly scenario, can only draw parallels to the sense of realism confronted in other literary fictions.

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[3] Originally titled *I'll Not Ask for Wine,* published in Maclean's in 1950.

[4] Published originally ahead of *The Martian Chronicles* as *And the Moon Be Still as Bright* in Thrilling Wonder Stories in 1948.

[5] Published ahead of *The Martian Chronicles* as *The Long Years* in Maclean's, 1948.

Deconstruction encompasses a wide variation of premises which haven't been broached in this paper, such as the concept of "différance", in which the content of words only derive their meaning through contrast to other words of the same language, and so meanings are never fully complete. Although de Man's readings of content existing without the form of a text is briefly addressed at times through an assumed hypothetical storyline, it could be applied much more profusely than has been accomplished.

There is some implication of concepts which have surfaced throughout the development of analysis but have not been sufficiently addressed in the present paper. Bradbury's use of fantasy and fantastic elements in his stories labelled as "sci-fi" perhaps stem first and foremost from his own personal definition of the genre. For Ray Bradbury, science fiction was the art of the possible, the "history of ideas, and they are always ideas that work themselves out and become real and happen in the world" (72)[6]. He defined James Bond as pertaining to a frivolous, romantic category of "fantastic science fiction". Fantasy is the "art of the impossible", which "breaks all the laws of physics". Bradbury agreed with his critics in saying that he relied too much on fantasy and not enough on the science implicit in science fiction. He described his fluctuations between genres very accurately in a 1980 interview with Barbara Newcomb, saying that "what was once magic becomes science and my stories are really descriptions of that changing state, sometimes moving back and forth between past and present" (66). The use of "magic" as a state of ambivalence between the known and the unknown fits perfectly with Todorov's definition of the fantastic as ingrained to the presence of hesitation. Hesitance is achieved through uncertainty between settling for a natural explanation or a supernatural explanation for events that happen. Through lack of scientific explanation, Bradbury's resource in exploring themes set in space, other planets, or Earth itself in either the past or present relies on elements of ambiguity. Although the notions of mystery and ambiguity are not so very greatly applicable to the stories which have been studied, the frequent themes of Bradbury revolve around how far the limits of knowledge may be pushed although not through scientific pursuit. For example, Bradbury liked exploring the change suffered in spirituality when the settings for religion and such things have expanded and developed[7]. He also commonly tips his hat to other

[6] *Conversations With Ray Bradbury* by Steven Louis Aggelis (2003)
[7] *The Fire Balloons* (1951), *A Little Journey* (1951), *The Machineries of Joy* (1962), to name a few.

inspirations in literature to have influenced him, which are usually figures of fantasy and horror. He gives Hemingway a courteous nod in *The Kilimanjaro Device* (1965), but the most recurrent writer subject is Edgar Allan Poe and other gothic figures[8]. Bradbury's stories are not connected to a far-fetched world of great scientific advancements (mostly), but intrinsically entwined with the human life in all its facets. This is explored through human nature itself in all the contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties it presents.

The present study of Bradbury through its approach to landscape and its close relation to the human identity, would be an asset in a similar study of the modern worlds of science fiction. Although his stories dispute boundaries of genre, his works are commonly regarded as literary pillars set up in the golden age of science fiction. His use of landscape in the exploration of characters and the depiction of humankind itself as weak and frail against the adversities of nature is a refreshing reversion amidst the technology-obsessed sci-fi literature. *Ringworld* by Larry Niven is a good example of such prototypical technocrat adventure story pervasive of late 20th century science fiction. The study of Bradbury's influence through his emphasis on landscape in the construction of the science fiction (or fantasy) genre would provide very interesting insight into the deep relationship that is candidly given through "artifice" and "nature", and how this affects the evolution of the conception of human nature, as well as the gradual shifting of what "nature" appears to mean as society progresses in time. The connection of Bradbury's views on landscape is not restricted to current science fiction, but also to his contemporary writers who placed a slightly similar emphasis on their creative worlds. The worlds of Frank Herbert, like those of Bradbury, do not focus on prevailing technology, although much more so, and a very important facet of the *Dune* (1965) world relies heavily on the extreme, oppressive, and quite beautiful desert landscape (and its monsters), such as the mental faculties of the inhabitants of the planet Arrakis. Through the study of landscape in science fiction, a wider exploration of its connection the human character and its basis as the

[8] *The Exiles* (1949) speaks of figures such as Algernon Blackwood, Ambrose Bierce, A.E. Coppard, Arthur Machen, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, and even Shakespeare as living metaphysical lives together as fugitives on another planet because of a *Fahrenheit 451*-like world on Earth. *August 2005: Usher II,* or originally *Carnival of Madness* (1950), is a throwback to the original house of Usher of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* existing on Mars as a trap for the Dismantlers, who are apparently the Martian form of firemen from *Fahrenheit.*

constructor of mental life as it is commonly known can be pursued. A furthering of the analysis of the science fiction genre in academic studies is greatly encouraged.

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