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„Nightmares of the Future
Three Short Stories by Ray Bradbury and their Potential for the EFL Classroom"

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"I don't try to describe the future. I try to prevent it."
– *Ray Bradbury*

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List of Abbreviations

BMBWF	Österreichisches Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
et al.	et alii (and others)
i.e.	id est (that is)
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
qtd.	quoted
RIS	Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes
SF	Science Fiction
YAL	Young Adult Literature

1. Introduction

Ray Bradbury is widely recognized as one of the central science fiction writers of the 20th century. His work played a seminal role in elevating the status of the science fiction genre by bringing it to the attention of mainstream literary critics as well as an audience far beyond its typical readership (Mogen 15-17). When the author died in June 2012, former US President Barack Obama issued a statement in which he emphasized the mind-expanding impact Bradbury's writing had had on millions of readers from their youth onwards, while at the same time, he pointed towards the enduring inspiration his work was to provide for generations to come (Matt Compton, "President Obama on Ray Bradbury"). Indeed, even in the German-speaking world, works such as *Fahrenheit 451* are considered modern classics that continue to be read and discussed in today's EFL classrooms (see Thaler 8). In addition to writing novels, Bradbury also produced a substantial number of short stories, many of which examine the social and psychological effects of technological advancement and might therefore constitute relevant reading material for a generation growing up in the highly technologized world of today. However, unlike *Fahrenheit 451*, these narratives have received only limited critical attention so far. Therefore, this thesis seeks to add to the critical work on Bradbury's short prose by examining three selected stories in close detail. In addition, each of these stories shall be explored in terms of its suitability for the modern language classroom.

To meet these objectives, the first three chapters shall provide a thorough theoretical foundation for the subsequent analysis:

At first, a detailed examination of the short story will be provided. Starting at the roots of both the short story and short story criticism with the writings of Edgar Allen Poe, this chapter will present and compare a variety of different approaches to defining this complex genre. In a second subchapter, more recent approaches by critics such as Suzanne Hunter Brown, Austin Wright, or Renate Brosch will be explored. The examination of these perspectives will shed light on the specific demands this genre places on its readers.

The second chapter will proceed in a similar manner with an examination of science fiction, a genre that primarily developed through magazine publication and therefore came to be associated with the format of the short story from its early days onwards.

This chapter will first trace the development of the genre and highlight its complexity by exploring the views presented by science fiction authors, magazine editors and academic critics. In a second subchapter, the focus will be placed on the critical work of Darko Suvin and David Malmgren. As both scholars have explored the genre from a reader-centered perspective, their considerations are of central importance for determining in how far students might profit from reading science fiction stories in the classroom.

The third chapter focuses on the EFL classroom and the specific needs of adolescent learners. After elaborating the general benefits of using literature in the language classroom, this chapter will outline pivotal factors to consider when selecting a specific text for adolescent L2 learners. For this purpose, the recommendations provided by experts on young adult literature and foreign language teaching will be considered. By exploring factors such as length, linguistic and structural complexity, as well as relevant themes and characters, the outline provides a solid base for determining the classroom potential of Bradbury's stories.

After the theoretical framework has been established, a brief overview on Bradbury's career and his reputation as a science fiction writer will be provided. The subsequent chapters are then dedicated to the examination of the following three short stories: *The Veldt* (1950), *The Pedestrian* (1951), and *A Sound of Thunder* (1952). Following a brief introduction and plot summary, each story is examined for its central themes, stylistic peculiarities, as well as its structure and narrative technique. Subsequently, the texts will be examined in terms of their suitability for adolescent language learners. Based on the selection criteria identified in chapter 3., the classroom potential of each story will be explored. Finally, readers will also receive practical ideas for incorporating the respective stories into a teaching setting.

2. Short Story
2.1. Debate about a Definition

Stories, Susan Lohafer argues, have always played a vital role in the lives of human beings. Yet, for a long time, as a type of narrative, we have "taken them for granted" ("Introduction I", 3) and consequently, little scholarly attention was devoted to them ("Introduction I", *3*). For want of academic interest, the first critical commentaries on the short story were provided by its writers (Patea 2), and it was only in the 1960s that the short story became the subject of scholarly criticism (Patea 3). From the very beginning, critics were primarily concerned with giving a satisfactory account on the nature of the short story. However, all efforts notwithstanding, no consensus has been reached on this matter, and, to this day, the question of definition continues to remain at the heart of short story theory (Lohafer, "Introduction II", 57).

This lack of agreement on the matter of definition is also reflected in the debate concerning the short story's development. While some scholars stress its mythic origins (May, "Short Story", 1), others highlight the modernist tradition of the 20th century as crucial for the beginning of the short story (Bowen 256). The most widely held assumption, however, seems to be that the beginning of the short story as a genre can be traced back to the early 19th century (see e.g. Brosch 34; Rohrberger 140; Patea 16).

With regard to these beginnings, Edgar Allen Poe is often recognized as a pivotal figure for two reasons: first of all, Poe, together with Nathaniel Hawthorne, is acclaimed as one of the first writers to have initiated the beginning of the short story in America (May, "Short Story", 7). While Washington Irving laid the foundation for this development by modeling his stories after German folktales and adding weight to the subjective experience of the narrator (Feddersen xvii), Poe and Hawthorne further developed this "romantic impulse" (May, "Short Story", 7) and added compression as well as stronger focus on the individual psyche of the central characters (Feddersen xvii). Moreover, Poe is not only one of the earliest practitioners of the short story, but he has also been called "a pioneer of short story theory" (Basseler 3). In his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, Poe introduced his theory of the short story which, he argues, has a peculiar effect on the reader (Brosch 35). Poe's argument revolves around "a certain unique or single effect" (61), skillfully and purposefully brought about by the author. This "preconceived effect" (Poe 61) that the short story is to have on the mind of the

reader must stand at the center of the writing process and every word of a story must be chosen in such a way that it contributes to this final effect (Poe 61). The question of how to achieve excitement within the reader is, for Poe, largely related to the factor of unity, which arises out of the brevity of form: only a text which can be finished "in one sitting" (61) can grant an uninterrupted and undisturbed reader experience and thus release on the reader "the immense force derivable from totality" (61). Following the motto, *in medio tutissimus ibis*, Poe stresses the short story's superiority over the longer novel and even the poem, which due to its extreme brevity, lacks the potential to gradually build up such a preconceived effect (Poe 60-61; italics in the original).

Following Poe's standpoint, Brander Matthews elaborated more extensively on this initial characterization of the short story. While Poe still referred to the narratives he was describing as "tales" (60), Matthews already uses the term "Short-story" (Matthews 73) to refer to a distinct literary form that is "something other and something more than a mere story which is short" (Matthews 73). Similar to Poe, he considers unity as the defining characteristic which accounts for the fundamental differences between novel and short story and he elaborates on this focus in his essay:

> A Short-story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation. […]. The Short-story is the single effect, complete and self-contained, while the Novel is of necessity broken into a series of episodes. Thus, the Short-story has, what the Novel cannot have, the effect of 'totality', as Poe called it, the unity of impression. (Matthews 73)

In addition to his focus on unity, Matthews also insists on the significance of plot, which he considers of greater relevance to the quality of a story than aspects such as form and style (76). "What you have to tell", he claims, "is of greater importance than how you tell it" (Matthews 76). This central focus on plot also marks the difference between the short story and the sketch, which is also characterized by brevity, but has no need for action (Matthews 77).

Another critic influenced by Poe as well as Matthews is Russian formalist B.M. Éyxenbaum (Basseler 45). Éyxenbaum not only follows Poe's and Matthew's line of thought in arguing that the novel and short story are marked by essential differences, but he also shares their view on the importance of plot (Éyxenbaum 81). In a short story, he argues, it is precisely at the end of the narrative that this plot unfolds its greatest impact:

> The short story […] gravitates expressly toward maximal unexpectedness of a finale concentrating around itself all that has preceded. In the novel, there must be a descent of some kind after the culmination point, whereas it is most natural for a story to come to a peak and stay there. The novel is a long walk through various localities with a peaceful return trip assumed; the short story - a climb up a mountain the aim of which is a view from high. (Éyxenbaum 82)

Together with the brevity of form, this finale awaiting the reader at the end of the narrative marks the central difference between novel and short story (Éyxenbaum 81). In attributing such great importance to the ending, Éyxenbaum also explicitly establishes a connection to Poe's argument of the final effect to which the whole story must lead up to (84-85).

While Poe's concept of the short story dominated in the first half of the 19th century, realism became the central mode of writing towards the latter half of the century (May, "Short Story", 8). In particular, Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* marked an important step away from "the mythical, archetypal or obsessed figures of Poe and Hawthorne, towards a new, more realistic portrayal of characters and events" (Feddersen xx). While May argues that, even as it moved toward realism, the short story retained some of its romantic quality ("Short Story", 11), he nevertheless sees the continuous shift from the earlier exploration of spirituality and transcendence to a focus on "the stuff of the everyday physical world" ("Short Story", 10) as detrimental to the development of the short story ("Short Story", 11). This standpoint becomes clearer when examining May's own understanding of the short story as "a romantic form" ("Short Story", 11) which, in its essence, is not meant to be concerned with outer experience:

> [W]hereas the novel is primarily a social and public form, the short story is mythic and spiritual. While the novel is primarily structured on a conceptual and philosophic framework, the short story is intuitive and lyrical. The novel exists to reaffirm the world of 'everyday' reality; the short story exists to 'defamiliarize' the everyday. Storytelling does not spring from one's confrontation with the everyday world, but rather from one's encounter with the sacred […] or with the absurd […]. (May, "The Nature of Knowledge", 133)

According to May, the remaining connection to its primal mythic origins and the artistic demands such as intensity and an elliptical style which are placed on the short story writer due to the limited length of the text, turn the short story into a medium to explore not outer realities, but rather those mysterious feelings and perceptions which emerge

outside this familiar realm ("Why Short Stories are Essential", 17-18) in a character's "essential aloneness" ("The Nature of Knowledge", 137).

A conceptualization of the short story that appears similar to that of May was provided by Mary Rohrberger. Locating the origins of the short story in the romantic tradition and the corresponding metaphysical mindset of the time, she too, argues that the short story is not meant to be concerned with "the ordinary world of appearances" (Rohrberger, "Hawthorne", 141). Rather, it presents a medium through which the very nature of reality can be examined ("Hawthorne", 141). This reality, however, never appears on the surface and is always hidden. It is therefore the very point of the genre to make use of symbols which point towards the deeper levels of meaning that lie beneath a seemingly simple narrative ("Hawthorne", 141). For Rohrberger, the presence of symbolic structures thus becomes the defining characteristic of the short story, and she categorizes all texts deviating from this proposed definition as "simple narratives" ("Hawthorne", 141). In light of this view of the short story as a genre dominated by symbolic substructures, Rohrberger also considers the active engagement of readers, who, in order to explore the depths of the text, have to become "cocreators, active participants in the revelation of meaning" (Éyxenbaum "Shadow and Act", 43).

In addition to the positions outlined so far, some critics are more particularly concerned with the modern short story, which significantly differed from earlier types of stories. Suzanne Ferguson even speaks of an entirely new genre that emerged at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (219). Arguing that the substantial developments should be seen as connected to the literary movement of impressionism which not only affected the short story but also the novel, she lists the most salient developments that could be seen as characteristic of this time period: Ferguson especially stresses the preferred use of a limited point of view with a focus on inner experience, the loss of traditional, chronologically developed storylines at the expense of elliptical and metaphorical plots, the emergence of epiphany as a replacement of the classic turning point, a foregrounding of theme over action, as well as a very dense, highly poetic language, often characterized by rhythmic patterns and different stylistic figures such as simile or metaphor (Ferguson 219-226). Thematically, these new kinds of stories reflected a shift in philosophical thought regarding former, established notions of knowledge and reality, which became uncertain and increasingly tied to the

experience of the individual (220). For this reason, the use of a limited point of view became a preferred narrative method to engage with an individual's search for identity, as well as his or her experience of isolation and alienation (220).

The experience of alienation described with regard to the modern short story was also considered as central by critic and author Frank O'Connor, who argues that the novel and short story are two "distinct literary forms" (29) which differ primarily in ideological terms: in contrast to the novel, he argues, the short story does not allow for the reader's identification with a story character and it provides no concept of a civilized society to which a character "can attach himself and regard as normal" (O'Connor 26). What the short story is meant to be concerned with instead, are "submerged population groups" (O'Connor 29), characters which appear at the margins of society, inherently aware of their own isolation and loneliness. Given this central concern with themes of alienation and isolation, it is not surprising that O'Connor detects in the short story a specific potential to express the modern view of life (18). In addition, O'Connor points towards the artistic value of the short story by stressing the specific demands placed on its writer, who, unlike the novelist, cannot unfold a detailed and extensive character and plot development. Instead, "a whole lifetime must be crowded into a few minutes" (O'Connor 31), which demands a particularly careful selection of words from the author.

A different line of argumentation which started with the critical work of Mary Louise Pratt in the 1980s and influenced other critics such as Norman Friedman or Austin Wright, marks a shift away from the view that genres could be treated as essences (Winther 140-142). Instead of talking about absolutes, these critics opt to speak of tendencies (see Pratt 93; Friedman 16; Wright, "Defining the Short Story", 50). Such tendencies, according to Friedman, cannot be established deductively in an *a priori* manner, but must be based on inductive reasoning, by sampling and comparing a large number of stories and looking for common traits within them (16-17). Friedman furthermore stresses the need to refrain from developing definitions based on one single criterion. Instead, he argues in favor of "a scheme of further possible subdivisions to be applied in various combinations so as to do justice to the variety of potentialities involved" (17-18). Concerning the difference between short story and novel, the only definite, distinguishing feature he detects between the two is one of degree and not kind, as it is solely related to the brevity of the former (Friedman 18).

His view thus drastically differs from previously presented approaches taken by critics such as May or Rohrberger, who, he argues, falsely "assume that the short story has a characteristic subject matter which in turn calls forth a characteristic structure" (19) and vice versa.

Like Friedman, Wright also favors an inductive approach when he argues for establishing tendencies on the base of a systematic examination of different texts ("Defining the Short Story", 48-49). He contends that the best way to approach a definition of the short story is not to think of it as a category but as "a cluster of characteristics" ("Defining the Short Story", 48), which, instead of the binary distinctions of a categorical approach, allow for a discussion of in how far a text "partakes of the short story" ("Defining the Short Story", 48) as well as specifications of different subgenres. The established characteristics should never be considered as absolutes, but they should refer to those textual traits which readers might generally expect to find in a story and which can be realized in different stories to different degrees ("Defining the Short Story", 50).

Having presented and compared these manifold positions towards the short story, what has, above all, become visible is the inherent complexity of this literary genre and consequently, the difficulty of reaching a final, universally accepted definition of it. In light of this difficulty, a number of critics have decided to approach the short story from a new angle of examination (Basseler 55). These scholars turned their attention away from the textual features to the level of reader response and cognitive theory in order to make out the peculiar way in which short stories might be read, experienced or processed by their readers (Basseler 55). As these reader-centered examinations are also of fundamental importance for the following examination of Bradbury's short stories and their classroom potential, some of the most relevant positions will be outlined in the following section.

2.2. Reader Experience

Whereas the previous subchapter was concerned with more general considerations regarding the definition of the short story, this section will draw attention to the distinct reading experience that various critics have attributed to the short story. This special reading experience has already been hinted at by one of the short story's first critics, Edgar Allen Poe, who strongly argued that a unique effect on the reader arises out of

the short story's brevity and the resulting unity of form. In reviewing more recent arguments on this matter, it seems that for most critics, brevity continues to remain the most relevant factor responsible for the short story's distinctive reader experience.

One important consequence of brevity consists in the short story's potential for stimulating a close reading of the text. This argument has, for example, been set forth by Suzanne Hunter Brown, who draws on discourse analysis to formulate her own position. Brown particularly refers to the work of Teun A. Van Dijk to suggest that the limited storage capacity of our short-term memory affects the way we process a literary text: in order to follow and remember the main plot sequences of a narrative, readers are required to organize and reduce the large quantity of complex details by forming more general meaning units, so-called "macro-propositions" (Brown 217). This focus on the plot of a text at the expense of specific details is also called "global processing" (Brown 226) as opposed to "local processing" (Brown 226), which denotes a reading focused on the individual words of a text (Brown 226-227). Whether a text is processed on a global or local level depends on its length as well as on the absence or presence of narrative features (Brown 227). Regarding the short story, Brown detects a unique potential for enabling both global as well as local processing (227). Whereas readers of the longer novel cannot engage with the verbatim content of the text, but instead, must focus on global meaning in order to make out the most important episodes of a narrative, short stories also possess those narrative features necessary for global processing, but their brevity additionally promotes an in depth reading that allows readers to devote their attention to individual words and phrases of the text (Brown 227).

Another critic concerned with the short story in terms of its peculiar reader experience is Susan Lohafer. In her critical work, Lohafer particularly highlights the importance of storytelling to human cognition: "storying", she argues, "is a way of processing experience in the interests of human wellbeing. The sense of storyness, whether derived from neurological patterns, perceptual gestalts, or cultural models is a cognitive integer and that accounts for the primacy of the short story as a narrative form" (Lohafer, "Storyness", 70). Departing from the hypothesis that all human beings are equipped with an innate ability for "storyness" ("Storyness", 3), Lohafer sets focus on further examining readers' sense of storyness, which, she argues "is tied more directly to closure than any set of story components" ("Storyness", 58). Much of

Lohafer's critical work is thus concerned with different reading experiments focused on determining so-called "preclosure points" ("Storyness", 4) of a story, that is, a specific, individually determined point in the text at which different readers think the narrative could end ("Storyness", 3). The important role that the ending plays for the process of short story reading is also stressed in an earlier publication, although with a different focus: in her 1983 study, *Coming to Terms with the Short Story*, Lohafer identifies the short story as the "most end-conscious of literary forms" ("Coming to Terms", 50), and argues that brevity of form and therefore the constant nearness of the end also require for heightened attention to each sentence of a story ("Coming to Terms", 50). As pointed out by Lohafer, the constant proximity of the end "does impart a […] practical urgency, a quite necessary efficiency, to each sentence that takes up time, that both delays and brings closer the terminal point" ("Coming to Terms", 50). As shown by this quote, it is also at the sentence level that Lohafer detects the tendency of the short story towards "anti-closure" ("Coming to Terms", 50), that is, to resist and delay the readers' striving towards an experience of closure. Significant for this experience are the increased levels of density and intensity that Lohafer locates on the sentence level of the short story, which account for the reader's constant striving towards a fuller rendering of the fictional world ("Coming to Terms", 50).

This tendency to hinder immediate reader satisfaction is not only stressed by Lohafer, but is also seen as central to the short story's reading experience by other critics. Austin Wright, for example, who examined the short story from a "phenomenological point of view" (Winther 143), explores the unique reading experience of the short story through his concept of "recalcitrance" (Wright, "Recalcitrance", 115). In very general terms, this notion refers to "the resistance of the shaped materials" ("Recalcitrance", 115) as opposed to "the force of a shaping form" ("Recalcitrance", 115). An important aspect is that Wright conceptualizes 'form' not as a fixed structure to be detected or uncovered by readers through careful contemplation or detailed textual analysis, but rather as a process that keeps readers in active search for "future discovery" ("Recalcitrance", 117). It is, according to Wright, this experience of resistance that when encountered in a work of fiction encourages active reader involvement ("Recalcitrance", 117). While he argues that recalcitrance as such is not exclusive the short story, Wright identifies two specific types of recalcitrance, "inner recalcitrance" ("Recalcitrance", 121) and "final recalcitrance" ("Recalcitrance", 121), which he sees as unique to short fiction since both are connected to the factor of brevity. For Wright,

inner recalcitrance once again arises out of the prominence of detail that emerges from the factor of textual constraint. In a short text, the reader's attention is naturally more likely to be caught by single aspects located on the level of language, which, in turn, causes "recalcitrance in the act of attention" ("Recalcitrance", 120). As pointed out by Wright himself, this form of recalcitrance describes the same mechanism that Lohafer already identified on the level of syntax ("Recalcitrance", 121). Final recalcitrance, on the other hand, revolves around the reader's experience of ending ("Recalcitrance", 121). Whereas longer works of fiction tend to show a reduction of resistance towards reader comprehension at the end, in short stories, recalcitrance is likely to increase at this point of the story, due to what Wright calls "the premature placing of the end" ("Recalcitrance", 121). In consequence, Wright argues, the reader is likely to be left with a feeling of dissatisfaction regarding a full comprehension of the narrative and is thus required to actively reflect on the text and reconsider its details even after the reading process is finished ("Recalcitrance", 121).

A final position which shall be mentioned in this subchapter is that of Renate Brosch, who equally stresses the short story's potential for active reader engagement:

> Kurzgeschichten entfalten sich im Spannungsfeld von textueller Beschränkung und rezeptiver Ergänzung. Sie erzählen stark selektierten Stoff in einer narrativen Komprimierung, die auf engem Raum große Wirkungsintensität erreichen kann. Ihre Wirkungsmacht beruht auf verschiedenen Strategien, die Leserinnen zu einer weitgehenden kognitiven Beteiligung herausfordern. (Brosch 25)

More specifically, Brosch suggests that as a result of brevity, two mental processes are fostered within the reader: first of all, she argues that the short story, more than any other literary genre, promotes visualization processes within the reader which produce a concretization of what is experienced in the text. These visualizations are then processed into a limited number of configurations, that is, a few very intense images that emerge out of the readers interpretation of and emotional response to the text. Due to their strong affective character, these images play an important role for the short story's lasting effect on the reader (Brosch 19-20). Besides "visualization" and "configuration", another mental activity that is encouraged by the short story is called "projection" (Brosch 20). Brosch argues that, because of its brevity, reading a short story most often includes a confrontation with various indeterminacies which present a challenge to reader comprehension. In order to come to terms with this lack of

concrete information, she argues, readers must supplement the information provided in the text by drawing on familiar, extratextual reference frames (Brosch 21). These external frames then dominate the reading until they are contradicted by a sufficient point of specification in the story (Brosch 21). Thus, when reading a short story, readers are constantly called upon to become active and to connect the story's content with their own empirical reality.

To conclude, the above considerations strongly suggest that brevity is the most relevant factor in bringing about the reading experience characteristic of the short story. The limited length of the short story, it has been argued, not only provides a unified reading experience and promotes closer attention to detail, but also results in indeterminacies that require active reader participation. As readers strive towards a coherent understanding of the narrative, they need to draw on their own experience and knowledge and actively engage with the text.

3. Science Fiction
3.1. History and Early Definitions

When examining the development of SF, a striking parallel to the short story can be detected. Similar to the short story, the genre has, for a long time, suffered from a lack of scholarly attention and only became subject to serious academic criticism in the 1960s (Csicsery-Ronay 50-51). Even today, there still exists what Roberts calls "a larger critical unease about SF as a genre" (Roberts, "Science Fiction", 14). This unease, he argues, stems from the widely-held view that SF, in contrast to 'serious literature', is marked by features such as thematic repetitiveness, a lack of in-depth characterization or an overly simplistic writing style ("Science Fiction", 14). At the same time, the numerous attempts that have been made to define the genre quickly reveal that SF is characterized by anything but simplicity. As Carl Freedman points out:

> It is symptomatic of the complexity of science fiction as a generic category that critical discussion of it tends to devote considerable attention to the problem of definition – much more so than is the case with such superficially analogous genres as mystery fiction or romance, and perhaps even more than with such larger categories as epic or the novel itself. No definitional consensus exists. (13)

As in the case of the short story, definitional controversies make it difficult to agree on the beginnings of SF as a genre. As Roberts points out "[t]he identification of a point

of origin for science fiction is as fiercely contested as defining the form" ("Science Fiction", 47.) Depending on how SF is defined, its origins can be traced back to anywhere between antiquity and the early 20th century (Wolfe 40). Most often, however, critics locate its beginnings in the 19th century, either with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or the writings of Jules Verne and H G Wells, who have been called "The Father[s] of Science Fiction" (Roberts, "Science Fiction", 48). Especially Wells' "scientific romances" can be considered of central influence for the emergence of SF as an independent genre (Booker and Thomas 7). As explained by Wells himself, in these early forms of SF the primary focus was not set on new inventions as such. Rather, scientific novelties were introduced to intensify a story's emotional impact on the reader through evoking "natural reactions of wonder, fear, or perplexity" (13). The central role that both Wells and Verne played for the development of the genre became particularly evident in the early 20th century, when their stories appeared in the first SF "pulp magazines" (Roberts, "Science Fiction", 67). These cheap magazines were printed on wood-pulp paper that was quick to discolor and they were mainly aimed at the niche-audiences of genres such as detective fiction, western, romance and later also SF (Roberts 67).

 A central figure in these early magazine days of SF was Hugo Gernsback, who was not only the editor and founder of *Amazing Stories*, one of the first SF formats to enjoy commercial success (Roberts, "Science Fiction", 67), but also one of the genre's first theorizers (Csicsery-Ronay 47). Gernsback coined the term "scientifiction" (11) and subsequently explained that what he meant to describe with it was "the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story — a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (Gernsback 11). Concerning this quote, it is particularly interesting to observe that Gernsback also recognized the central influence that Poe had on the development of SF. In fact, Gernsback even claimed that "it was he who originated the romance, cleverly weaving into and around the story, a scientific thread" (11). Furthermore, in an attempt to promote *Amazing's* stories, Gernsback gave a clear outline of his idea of a good SF story:

> Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading- they are also always instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain- and they supply it in a very palatable form. For the best of these modern writers of scientifiction have the knack of imparting knowledge, and even

inspiration, without once making us aware that we are being taught. (Gernsback 12)

Thus, for Gernsback, SF was not only to be considered as a mere form of entertainment, but also as a genre with an inherently didactic purpose.

Although being the first, Gernsback did not remain the only magazine editor to engage in the definitional debate. Another highly influential voice was John Campbell, editor of the successful *Astounding Stories* magazine. He played a seminal role both in the institutional recognition of SF as a literary genre and of its authors as professional writers (Csicsery-Ronay 47). Above all, Campbell "conceived of SF as a social practice" (Csicsery-Ronay 48). In order for a story to be published in his magazine, he requested that authors set primary focus on the possibilities opened up by scientific inventions as well as the social consequences of their use (Csicsery-Ronay 48). However, Campbell did not insist on the literary value of the narratives as he was primarily interested in scientific plausibility and social relevance (James 23). This view is not surprising, given that Campbell's ideal readership consisted mainly of those scientists and engineers who would, one day, be able to bring about the changes described in these stories (James 23).

Campbell's magazine was highly successful among readers of the genre and dominated the market until after World War II, thus claiming its success for a time period lasting from the 1930s till the 1950s, which has come to be called the "Golden Age of Science Fiction" (Booker and Thomas 7). Among the Golden Age writers, the most frequently cited are Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, A.E. Van Vogt and Lester del Rey (see e.g. Booker and Thomas 7; Higgins and Duncan 128; Roberts 75). It is interesting to note that Ray Bradbury is only rarely mentioned in such listings (e.g. Bloom 78-93), even though he was one of the few writers of the time to achieve popularity beyond the SF community (Csicsery-Ronay 48). The reason for this lack of mention could lie in the discrepancy between the scientific enthusiasm of the time, and the "cavalier attitude towards scientific fact and scientific method" (Wolfe 44) that characterized the work of Bradbury. In fact, this rather relaxed approach towards scientific accuracy has not only affected Bradbury's standing as a Golden Age author, but has continuously prompted critics to debate his role as a SF writer altogether (Mogen 19).

In the early 1950s, the appearance of two new publications, *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, not only challenged *Astounding*'s dominant market position, but, as Latham explains, also "its very vision of the genre" (80). Especially *Galaxy* was one of the first magazines to enjoy international success and as such, it played an important role in "spreading SF about the globe" (Ashely 68). In contrast to the "hard-sf aesthetic" (Latham 81) that prevailed in Campbell's magazine, Galaxy's editor, Horace Gold, wanted his authors to draw on the "soft sciences rather than the hard" (Ashley 68)[1] in order to reflect on the developments that had occurred in the years following World War II. In light of the postwar climate dominated by Cold War Ideology and science being centered in the hands of the security state (Csicsery-Ronay 48), scientific progress was no longer viewed in a purely positive light, but also came to be associated with "weaponry, the militarization and expansion of police powers, and enforced consumption" (Csicsery-Ronay 49). During this time, *Galaxy* was known as *the* magazine, which captured and satirically commented on these developments through its presentation of dystopian, futuristic scenarios (Latham 86). Gradually, the technological developments of the time also started to be perceived as a threat among the general population, and SF as a genre that was able to address these concerns gained more and more mainstream potential (Latham 85).

This potential finally found a fuller realization in the 1960s with what theorists have labeled as "The New Wave" (Roberts 80; Latham 80). Thematically, New Wave writers such as Samuel Delany, Philip K. Dick or J.G.Ballard, followed the impetus set in the 1950s, as they too, turned away from math and physics to the soft sciences of psychology and sociology, not only to express critical concern with technological developments of the time, but also to promote anti-nationalist ideas and to celebrate the ideal of a cultural revolution (Higgins and Duncan 129). Most prominently, however, it was the new, experimental style with which these issues were explored that stood out as characteristic of the "New Wave" writings. As Roberts explains, "[w]hat the New Wave did was to take a genre that had been, in its popular mode, more concerned with

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[1] According to Booker and Thomas, the term "soft sciences" refers to the social sciences as opposed to the natural or "hard sciences". Correspondingly, there is a distinction between "soft sf", in which the primary focus is set on the social and psychological implications of technological change and "hard sf", with stronger emphasis on scientific accuracy (330).

content and ideas than form, style, or aesthetics, and reconsider it under the logic of the latter three terms" (Roberts, "History", 231).

While the publication of the first SF novels as well as the success of early cinematic productions such as *Star Trek* and later *Star Wars* are largely responsible for the genre finally gaining mainstream success (Roberts, "Science Fiction", 83-84), the scholarly recognition that SF started to receive by the end of the 1960s can be attributed to the innovative conjunction of "sophisticated social critique with adventurous stylistic experimentation" (Csicsery-Ronay 50). It was also in the late 1960s that Darko Suvin, who was to become one of the most influential theorists of SF, first proposed his ideas on the genre (Wolfe 45). As Suvin's theoretical approach towards SF is of critical importance for highlighting the genre's mind-expanding potential, the following subchapter will provide more insight into his ideas on the genre.

3.2. Science Fiction and the Reader

In the previous section, important historical aspects as well as the complexity of defining SF have been outlined. This subchapter will now be concerned with the particular reader experience offered by this genre.

As mentioned above, one of the first and most influential theoretical models of SF was developed by Darko Suvin. Suvin describes SF as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (7-8). In short, for Suvin, SF is "the literature of cognitive estrangement" (4). While Suvin identifies the factor of estrangement as crucial for distinguishing the genre of SF from realistic forms of literature (Suvin 8), he argues that estrangement is also characteristic of other non-realist genres such as myth, the pastoral or folktale, and, above all, fantasy (Suvin 7-10). The second characteristic, cognition, is, however, exclusive to SF (Suvin 8): in contrast to the "metaphysical and supernatural estrangement" (Suvin 66) found in other fictional genres, Suvin claims that the estranged world presented in SF needs to be based on logical possibilities (66). This does, however, not mean that the idea presented in a SF story needs to be tried and tested through scientific experiment or observation, but for Suvin, the decisive factor is for an idea to lie within the realm of "thinkable possibility"

(66) and to be based on premises which are not considered "internally contradictory" (66) at the time of the author's writing.

The crucial factor for bringing about the cognitive estrangement characteristic of SF is the presence of a so-called "novum" (Suvin 63). Suvin borrows this term from Ernst Bloch to describe the "totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (64). With "totalizing", he means that the presence of the new element is strong enough to account for the fictional emergence of a crucially different universe (64). This universe is then viewed in terms of its deviation from the empirical reality of the author and reader and as such, exists in what Suvin calls "a feedback oscillation" (71) between the familiar and the unknown world: while the reader's knowledge about empirical reality is used to make sense of events happening in the unfamiliar realm dominated by the novum, this experience of an alternative universe enables a new, fresh perspective on the real world (71).

Another important critic who is concerned with the specific reader experience offered by the genre and who builds on Suvin's theory of SF as the "literature of cognitive estrangement" (Malmgren 11), is David Malmgren. Malmgren suggests that two important mental operations are fostered within the reader when confronted with SF literature: at the very base of SF's thought provoking potential, Malmgren argues, lies the genre's tendency to prompt readers to perform the mental operation of "concretization" (Malmgren 24), that is, to engage them in the process of imaginative world building. While he argues that this mental operation is encouraged by all narrative text types, SF, which is dominated by the presence of the novum, requires from readers to mentally build a world inherently different to their own and entirely based on the "clues which the author has encoded in the text" (Malmgren 24). Malmgren develops this argument with reference to Marc Angenot's concept of "the absent paradigm" (Malmgren 24-25; Angenot 128), which proposes that SF and the discourse it provides not only requires from readers to focus on the unfolding plot line of the narrative, but also calls for a "conjectural reading" (Angenot 129). As Angenot explains:

> While the realistic novel should lead the reader to believe in the events it narrates, the SF novel must also have him believe what it does not and can not show: the complex universe within which such events are supposed to take place. The reader of a realistic novel proceeds from the general [...] to the particular [...]. The SF reader follows the reverse path: he induces from the

> particular some imagined, general rules that prolong the author's fantasies and
> confer on them plausibility. The reader engages in a conjectural reconstruction
> which 'materializes' the fictional universe. (Angenot 134)

In other words, readers who are confronted with a SF text must focus on the signs given in order to construct an entire cognitive system by filling in "the paradigms both suggested in and yet absent from the textual message" (Angenot 134). At the same time, in this engagement with thought experiments, readers are not only called upon to practice their imaginative ability, but they must also engage in a second mental operation, namely "interpretation" (Malmgren 27): in order to mentally construct the new world on the basis of a novum, it must be brought into connection with the familiar world (Malmgren 27). In consequence, readers are forced to build "models of correspondence between the two worlds" (Malmgren 27) and are thus inclined to gain a new and potentially progressive understanding of their own empirical reality. Thus, like Suvin, Malmgren also stresses the important feedback loop that exists between the estranged and the familiar world as crucial for the reading experience of SF.

In addition, Malmgren elaborates more extensively on the different kinds of nova characteristic of the genre, by suggesting a model of four different systems into which the novum can be inserted (16). The first of these listed systems is "the system of actants" (Malmgren 17), which can be transformed through introducing "an alien entity" (Malmgren 17) into a world that is usually governed by human protagonists only. This encounter with alterity consequently has the potential to raise critical questions of basic human identity and can incite critical reflection on issues of "Self and Other" (Malmgren 17). Besides the system of actants, the novum can also be introduced into a social order and thereby foster a critical perspective on issues of "Self and Society" (Malmgren 17), as most prominently shown in the presentation of an alternative utopian or dystopian society. A novum can also be introduced into the system of topography. On a most basic level, this can be achieved through the introduction of a new technological invention or discovery, or an entirely different or alien environment in which the story takes places, thus opening up questions of man's relations to machine as well as the environment (Malmgren 19). Finally, Malmgren suggests that the novum can also serve to transform at least one generally accepted natural law or scientific fact, which then, results in "science fantasy" (20), a hybrid text type that was already identified by Suvin (68). However, in contrast to Suvin, who strongly argues against the cognitive value of mingling these two separate genres (68), Malmgren

detects a potential in science fantasy for raising questions about "the nature of reality itself [as well as] the discourses in which we inscribe reality" (21).

While Malmgren as well as Suvin seem to otherwise define a relatively clear-cut border between the two genres, more recently, theorists have opted for a conceptualization of SF that is more inclusive of spiritual and fantastic elements (Langer 109). These more recent views follow, as Langer points out, an earlier proposed argument by SF author Ursula Le Guin, who has opted for a less rigid definition of SF (108). Le Guin argues that the genres of fantasy and SF should not be viewed as two completely separate categories, but rather as existing "on one spectrum […] along which one thing shades into another" (Le Guin qtd. in Langer 109). As such, Le Guin's view is crucially different from Suvin's conceptualization of the genre. Yet, despite their differences, the two approaches also coincide at one central point: as Langer points out, both Le Guin and Suvin, and in fact most SF critics, share a very basic understanding of SF as a genre that confronts readers with a world that is different from, yet also similar to the reality we know, and thus has the capacity to enable new, potentially progressive perspectives on this reality (108). As will be shown later, this potential is highly relevant for arguing in favor of SF as a form of literature worth being explored in a classroom setting.

4. Literature in the EFL Classroom
4.1. Why Teach Literature?

In the previous chapters, emphasis was set on outlining important aspects related to the definition and reading experience of the short story as well as the genre of SF. However, as the ultimate goal of this thesis is to analyze the selected short stories with a specific focus towards the possibilities they offer for student readers, it is also important to devote closer attention to the role of literature in the context of the foreign language classroom. A first step in this direction will be made by presenting the most central benefits that literary texts can offer for second language learners.

Most important for the context of foreign language learning are the opportunities that literary texts open up for improving students' language skills.

In addition to promoting reading competence, literature can serve as a tool for encouraging the acquisition of new linguistic structures and vocabulary. In this context,

Pachler and Allford point out that literary texts enable a confrontation with contextualized and authentic language as well as an opportunity for students to explore different linguistic styles and registers, sometimes within just one piece of writing (231). McKay also stresses this potential for language development and particularly points towards the opportunity of encountering language not only in a linguistic, but also in a social context, which is vital for developing an awareness of which forms are used in what situations (530). Especially for the acquisition of new lexical items, providing a meaningful context is crucial. As Hedge explains, most students will not profit from learning isolated lists of words as they neither represent a linguistic nor a psychological reality. In order to enable the acquisition and retention of a word, students need to engage in an active and, most importantly, a meaningful exploration, for which the context provides crucial support (120). This standpoint is furthermore reflected in the Austrian curriculum for foreign language teaching, where the importance of enabling an active, contextualized acquisition of new vocabulary is explicitly mentioned (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 57, 129). Ultimately, the experience of new vocabulary and linguistic structures in contextualized form can also significantly improve students' ability to write texts in the target language. As stressed by Collie and Slater, in the confrontation with a work of literature "students gain familiarity with many features of the written language – the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas – which broaden and enrich their own writing skills" (7).

Another benefit are the possibilities literary texts offer for promoting meaningful interaction among language learners. This aspect deserves particular attention because of the strong emphasis that is set on the development of communicative competence as an overarching teaching goal in the Austrian curriculum for foreign language teaching (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 56; 127). Literature has a particular potential for stimulating communicative activities in the target language. Pachler and Allford point out that literary texts can function as a potent stimulus for students to respond personally to a text and consequently, to engage in a discussion about their own attitudes towards a specific piece of literature (236). Lazar also stresses this potential for promoting student discussion and group activities, which she sees as connected to the various levels of meaning that can be explored within just one literary text (17). Thaler makes a similar observation by pointing towards "interpretational openness" (24): literary texts, he argues, are usually characterized by

a certain degree of ambiguity, which allows for a multitude of diverse student interpretations. The different approaches that are likely to arise with regard to one single literary text, in turn, provide a useful "opinion gap" (24) which can be exploited to engage students in meaningful interaction with each other.

Finally, it is central to mention that literature cannot only be considered a valuable tool for improving language skills, but it can also add to students' personal and intellectual development. Thaler indicates that through the confrontation with literary texts, students can explore new horizons, experience positive as well as negative role models, or encounter different views of life. They may also be confronted with new questions or find answers to issues that are of personal relevance to them (24). This mind-expanding potential is also stressed by Pachler and Allford, who point towards the development of imaginative and creative abilities as well as the personal profit students can gain for their own lives in learning from the experiences of a story character (235). Tomlinson and Brown also strongly emphasize the potential of literature to add to the personal growth of a young person: literature, they argue, enables a shift of perspective, which invites students to critically reflect on their own way of life, their values and the world they live in (9). As they are drawn into a world that is in some way different from their own, they might also be encouraged to consider "alternative pathways for understanding the past or imagining the future" (Tomlinson and Brown 9). Finally, the authors also stress literature's potential for developing an understanding of different people and worldviews. "Living someone else life through a story", they argue, "can encourage a sense of social justice and a greater capacity to empathize with others" (Tomlinson and Brown 9). Thus, as shown by these considerations, literature has the potential to engage readers in various forms of personal and critical reflection, and as such, it can fulfil an important function in adding to the curriculum defined goal of fostering an independent, critical standpoint among student learners (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 15).

4.2. Selecting Literature for the Classroom

As demonstrated above, the use of literature in the classroom holds much potential for fostering students' language competence as well as for promoting individual growth. However, in order to be able to fully exploit the above-mentioned potential, teachers need to engage in a careful process of text selection. As Thaler points out, "[t]he

students' motivation and the efficiency of the learning process depend to a large extent on the right choice of literature" (18). Therefore, this subchapter will present important points of consideration to keep in mind when selecting texts for classroom use. With a specific focus towards secondary education, the following discussion will present general criteria for selecting texts for second language learners, while additionally taking into the account the specific needs and interests of an adolescent readership.

4.2.1. Length

When it comes to choosing a suitable work of literature for the classroom, the question of length plays a central role (see e.g. Pachler and Allford 237; Lazar 55; Bibby 23). As with many other aspects discussed in this section, this factor requires a careful consideration of the particular context in which a literary text is to be read.

A very basic concern with regard to length is the amount of time available for teaching literature in a specific school context. Lazar argues that in the process of selecting a literary text for classroom use, teachers need to consider important aspects such as the frequency at which a class is taught, the length of individual sessions as well as the flexibility of the syllabus (49). Ultimately, these elements will have an impact on the time that can be devoted to the discussion of a specific piece of literature, and they should therefore also be considered when it comes to deciding on the length of the text (Lazar 55). In particular with regard to the Austrian school system, the importance of considering time constraints in choosing literary texts seems to have gained new relevance in recent years. With the introduction of the standardized Matura, it appears that teachers need to attach primary importance on teaching the competences that will be tested in their school-leaving exams and in particular, on adequately preparing students for the specific kinds of tasks that they will be confronted with. In light of these restraints, it seems that there is a greater need for texts which allow for a more flexible integration of literature into the language classroom.

Another central aspect to consider in terms of textual length are the specific needs of L2 learners. In this context, Bibby points out that teachers need to differentiate between literary works chosen for reading in the students' L1, and texts that are to be read in the foreign language classroom (23). While students might be able to tackle a greater number of longer texts when reading in their L1, teachers must keep in mind that reading in a foreign language already requires from learners to come to terms with a

range of unknown words and new syntactic structures. This challenge will be significantly increased with greater textual length (Bibby 23). However, Bibby also points out that longer texts may still be read in the foreign language classroom, but they need to be dealt with "in a necessarily *scaffolded* and slower manner" (23; italics in the original).

 Additionally, the factor of length also holds central importance for fostering and sustaining student motivation as texts which are experienced as overwhelmingly long can easily cause frustration among leaners and, in consequence, diminish their enthusiasm for future reading (Collie and Slater 11). This factor of motivation could also be one of the reasons why limited textual length has been mentioned as characteristic of literature specifically geared towards an adolescent readership. Herz and Gallo, for example, indicate that novels written for teenagers rarely exceed a length of 200 pages (11), while Nilsen et al. mention the limited attention span of adolescent readers that most authors have in mind when writing for this age group. (30). However, while this might be true for the majority of works geared towards teenage readers, there are also numerous young adult novels which deviate from this suggested length (Herz and Gallo 10). A good and well-known example is *Harry Potter*, a series of books which so strongly appealed to millions of children and teenagers, that they successfully mastered to read these texts ranging from 600 to 900 pages in length. The success of the *Harry Potter* books very well demonstrates the central weight that personal interest holds for students' ability to come to terms with a specific literary text. As pointed out by Collie and Slater, personal relevance is one, if not *the* central factor which motivates young people to read and students are most often capable of overcoming various textual difficulties if presented with a text that they consider worth exploring (8). For this reason, the aspect of thematic appropriateness will be discussed in more detail in a separate subsection of this chapter.

To sum up, on a very general level, factors such as existing time constraints and potential language difficulties encountered by L2 learners point towards a preference for using shorter works in a classroom setting. However, it is equally important to stress at this point that any final decision regarding the length of a text needs to include a careful consideration of the unique setting in which a piece of literature is to be read. For, if a teacher feels that students are highly interested in a specific literary wok and

if time permits, it might be well worth to engage with a lengthier novel in a classroom context.

4.2.2. Textual Complexity

Besides the issue of length, another essential point that teachers need to take into account when selecting literature for the language classroom is the aspect of textual difficulty. As pointed out by McKay, this factor holds central importance for the teaching context as the benefits that literature offers for L2 learners can quickly be diminished if the texts chosen are too difficult to tackle for student readers (531).

One essential aspect to consider in the selection process is the level of linguistic difficulty, a factor that is often discussed in terms of a text's lexical and syntactic complexity. Concerning the former, it is worth pointing out that finding an appropriate level of difficulty for student learners does not automatically include the requirement that students must be familiar with every lexical item encountered in the text. The key, it seems, lies in finding a text that presents a moderate challenge to student readers. As pointed out by Lima, a text used in the language classroom should present an opportunity for students to encounter new vocabulary (111). However, at the same time, these unfamiliar words should not dominate to the extent that students are no longer able to infer their meaning from context (Lima 111). This point is also stressed by Lazar, who argues that, when working on a piece of literature in class, students should be given sufficient opportunity to expand their range of vocabulary without being forced to constantly consult a dictionary (91). Similar, Bibby highlights the goal of familiarizing learners with "rich and creative language "(22), while at the same time, he stresses the need to avoid feelings of discouragement among learners. Achieving this goal can, however, become particularly difficult when using authentic texts in a classroom context, as these tend to contain a higher number of low frequency words that students might not be familiar with (Bibby 22). Bibby detects a similar problem with regard to syntactic complexity, especially as it relates to the factor of sentence length. L2 learners, he argues, might be overwhelmed when confronted with literary texts that feature a high number of complex, hypotactic sentence constructions (22). Tomlinson and Brown express a similar concern regarding authentic texts, which are often filled with "arcane expressions and convoluted syntax" (10).

One option frequently mentioned in the context of controlling the level of linguistic difficulty is the use of so-called "graded readers", that is, simplified versions of specific literary texts (see e.g. McKay 531; Bibby 22; Collie and Salter 14). However, while using these types of texts might seem an attractive solution at first sight, they also bear severe disadvantages: McKay, for example, points towards the danger of a dilution of information through simplification, while she additionally mentions a potential reduction of cohesion through amendments on the level of syntax (531). Similarly, Collie and Slater argue that, while graded readers present an acceptable choice for learners at very low proficiency levels, too much of the literary potential is lost in these shortened versions. Instead, they express a preference for using authentic texts which are relatively short and feature language that is fairly simple and straightforward (14).

The confrontation with manageable language also holds relevance when taking into account the age of the readers. This point has been highlighted by various theorists: McKay indicates that texts geared towards an adolescent readership tend to be "stylistically less complex" (532). Similarly, Kullmann stresses that the vocabulary as well as syntactic structures featured in YAL are often adapted to fit the developing language competence of younger readers (58). He argues that while occasionally low-frequency verbs may occur in these texts, it is mostly basic English vocabulary that dominates (Kullmann 52). The use of common, everyday words in YAL is also stressed by other theorists such as Tomlinson and Brown (10) or Herz and Gallo, who point towards "vocabulary manageable by readers of average ability" (10). However, Herz and Gallo also mention that among other classical literary elements, YAL can still feature allusions and metaphorical language or even structural complexities such as flashbacks, but these are "used less frequently and at less sophisticated levels to match the experiential levels of readers" (11). Furthermore, Kullmann explains that it is also on the level of syntax that YAL tends to correspond to the language competence of younger readers by featuring shorter sentences and mostly avoiding complex sentence constructions (53).

In addition to reduced difficulty on the level of language, novels geared towards an adolescent audience often stand out in terms of plot complexity. As such, Herz and Gallo refer to the typical plot of a young adult novel as relatively "uncomplicated, but never simplistic" (10), while Tomlinson and Brown indicate that "the most usual structures found in young adult novels are chronological plots, which cover a particular

period of time and relate the events in order within the time period" (18). With a special focus on the novel, they differentiate between two kinds of chronological plots which they see as characteristic of YAL, namely "progressive plots" (Tomlinson and Brown 26) and "episodic plots" (Tomlinson and Brown 27). While progressive plots usually follow the traditional structure of beginning, rising tension, climax, and a satisfactory resolution at the end (26), episodic plots characteristically consist of a number of separate, yet interconnected stories. The authors further argue that this form of plot with its self-contained narratives can be considered as particularly suitable for less experienced readers (27). As they also detect a growing trend among writers to experiment with new, more complex, plot structures (27), Tomlinson and Brown hint at potential problems that may arise when using such texts in the classroom. Coping with flashbacks, they argue for instance, requires advanced reading skills and can present a significant challenge to less experienced readers (28).

This argument also holds particular importance for the context of foreign language learning, as suggested by empirical evidence: in a study which examined the effects of story structure on story comprehension and memorization among L2 learners of varying proficiency levels, a linear structure was found to have a positive effect on participants' recollection capacities for the story (Riley 425), while the opposite effect could be observed for stories featuring flashbacks or even more severe structural deviations (Riley 426). Intermediate level learners in particular profited from a linear story structure (Riley 425). The explanation offered for the strong impact that story structure had on the performance of this particular learner group was connected to the moderate difficulty of the texts with which the students were presented: for the comprehension of such fairly difficult texts, Riley argues, structure can present an important aid to compensate for comprehension problems encountered on the level of language (425). While he suggests that for very simple texts, such a support might not be needed, learners most likely will not be able to rely on structure when reading very difficult texts, simply "because they won't have access to it" (425). In light of these findings, Riley concludes that a structure characterized by linearity may have significant advantages for a classroom context, in particular when working with intermediate learners (426). Structural complexities such as flashbacks, on the other hand, might represent significant hurdles for language learners and therefore require more extensive preparation and specific teacher guidance (Riley 426).

4.2.3. Characters and Narrative Technique

In the previous sections, it has been demonstrated that the factors of length along with textual complexity both have central influence on how well students can come to terms with a text. In motivating students to read, however, what matters most is that the literature bears relevance to their lives. In fact, several scholars have stressed that student interest can be considered the most relevant factor for students' willingness to engage with a text (see e.g. Tomlinson and Brown 12; Bushman and Haas 3; Collie and Salter 8). In the context of student engagement, character portrayal in connection with narrative technique plays a salient role. Therefore, the following section will be devoted to examining these aspects with a particular focus on an adolescent readership.

A central factor in promoting young people's interest in a story is for them to feel a connection with the main character of the narrative. As pointed out by Bushman and Haas, "one of the most significant qualities that draws young adults to reading is the existence of characters with whom they can relate and situations with which they are familiar" (49). The presence of relatable characters in YAL is also stressed by Herz and Gallo (10) as well as Kullmann, for whom young protagonists present an "essential feature" (30) of literature written for children and young adults. These protagonists are typically presented as complex characters whose positive as well as negative character traits are introduced and developed as the story unfolds (Tomlinson and Brown 29). Such well-developed characters are of crucial importance for drawing readers into the story and engaging them with the conflicts described (Tomlinson and Brown 33). Moreover, it has been pointed out that in YAL, adolescent protagonists are usually also responsible for a resolution of conflict (Nilsen et al. 28) and, in responding to the significant events in their lives, they themselves undergo substantial changes and developments (Tomlinson and Brown 29). Thus, when students read about such teenage characters who face similar problems and concerns, they can relate to them and profit for their own coming-of age.

Of critical importance for the reader`s identification with a fictional character is the narrative perspective of a story. In YAL, this identification is usually fostered through portraying the world through the eyes of an adolescent protagonist (Nilsen et al. 20). This can be achieved in different ways: a popular option among YAL authors is to use

a first-person narrative perspective (Bushman and Haas 37; Nilsen et al. 26). However, while it has been stressed that this technique promotes a particularly personal connection between reader and character (Bushman and Haas 37), this method also has the limitation of providing insight into the thoughts and feelings of only one character. Therefore, some authors approach the problem by shifting between different first-person narrators, so that the story is told from different viewpoints and the reader is given insight into the inner feelings and motivations of a variety of characters (Bushman and Haas 37). Besides the first-person narrative perspective, another option is to use an omniscient point of view (Bushman and Haas 37; Nilsen et al. 26). Typically, an omniscient narrator will not be a character in the story. Nevertheless, this external narrator can give insight into the protagonists' minds and, as Nilsen et al. point out, if applied well, this technique can almost achieve the same kind of immediacy as a first-person narrator (26). Finally, Kullmann also confirms that the narrative perspective employed in both children's and young adult literature usually gives the reader a detailed insight into the mind of the central protagonists (55). Kullmann particularly mentions the frequent use of a third-person limited point of view, meaning that the story is told by an external narrator who conveys the events of the fictional world through the perspective of a single character (55).

Judging from the information provided above, it seems that one of the most central criteria for establishing a connection between story character and reader is their similarity in terms of age. And indeed, there is no doubt that the presence of a teenage protagonist presents a highly potent way of fostering an adolescents' emotional engagement with a novel or story. Yet, it is questionable whether this teenage character can really be considered a vital prerequisite for arousing a young person's interest in a literary text. An attempt to further explore this question can be made by reviewing Nilsen and Donelson`s *Honor`s List* of books that they consider particularly valuable for young adult readers. They themselves notice that most works covered in this list feature teenagers as their main characters, a fact for which they find a very simple explanation: primarily, Nilsen et al. argue, "[t]eenagers like to read about other teenagers" (27). However, despite the clear dominance of books featuring young adult protagonists, the authors also point towards a number of novels in which adults occupy this role (Nilsen et al. 27-28). There is, it seems, more than just one way in which the characters of a novel can be relevant to a young reader. This is also hinted at by

Tomlinson and Brown, who point out that there are a variety of ways in which characters can connect with adolescent readers, for example "as a friend, a role model, or a temporary parent" (28). Additionally, Bushman and Haas suggest that besides the pleasure of taking over the perspective of character with whom they can identify, young readers also enjoy reading about "unique people and situations – characters, settings, and story lines that are different from them and their lives but with which they can still make some connections" (49). Thus, it seems that while most theorists agree that teenage characters constitute the typical protagonists of YAL, an adolescent audience can still enjoy following the experiences of characters who are different from themselves. While they will most likely not be able to connect as closely with an adult character who does not share their typical age-related problems and ways of thinking, reading a story in which a grown-up individual takes the main role might nevertheless present a unique chance for them to imagine their own future self and engage in a reflective process on what kind of person they would like to become.

4.2.4. Thematic Concerns

Besides the presentation of characters, it is also the content of a literary text that needs to be considered in the process of text selection. As pointed out by McKay, when selecting literature for the classroom, it is imperative that the themes addressed are of personal relevance to student readers (532). This aspect is also highlighted by Bushman and Haas, who emphasize the long-term goal of turning adolescents into "lifelong readers" (3). However, in order for this goal to be achieved, young individuals need to be become "cognitively and emotionally involved in what they read" (3) and this, they argue, can only happen if they are presented with literature that addresses their particular struggles and concerns. This argument, in turn, raises the question of what exactly constitutes those specific challenges that students face on their way to adulthood.

Generally, it seems that the most important hurdle faced by adolescent individuals is the struggle of finding their own identity. As Kaplan points out, most teenage readers are keenly interested in reading literary texts which can help them find an answer to the eternal question of "who am I and who am I supposed to be?" (20). The central importance of this question for the lives of young adults has also been recognized by Bushman and Haas (8) as well as Campbell, who identifies the struggle of finding one's own identity as a recurrent, overarching theme in most literary works written for an

adolescent audience (qtd. in Nilsen et al. 4). However, as by itself, this task of developing an identity still provides little orientation in terms of specific themes that could be of interest to young adults, it is vital to gain a deeper, more detailed insight into the challenges that students face in the process of growing up.

In this context, Nilsen et al. (35-36) as well as Bushman and Haas (8-14) refer to the field of developmental psychology and in particular, to the seminal work of Robert Havighurst, who compiled a list of so-called "developmental tasks" (Havighurst 43) which individuals face as they undergo the phase of adolescence. These tasks are the following:

>   1. Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes.
>   2. Achieving a masculine or feminine social role.
>   3. Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively.
>   4. Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults.
>   5. Preparing for marriage and family life.
>   6. Preparing for an economic career.
>   7. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior – developing an ideology.
>   8. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior. (Havighurst 45-77)

The above-mentioned points are summarized by Havighurst himself under the central goal of developing one's identity (44). However, it must be noted that even a cursory glance into Havighurst's elaborations on the specific developmental tasks reveals that many of his assumptions are highly problematic when viewed from a contemporary perspective[2]. Yet, it seems that, despite its flaws, this model can still provide a rough overview of the most central challenges faced by young individuals on their way to adulthood. As such, it can provide a pillar of orientation in the process of deciding on suitable literary themes for this age group. This is also recognized by Nilsen et al., who point out that most works written with a specific focus on teenage readers thematically reflect at least one of the challenges outlined by Havighurst (36). According to Hipple, the most frequently recurring themes of YAL revolve around first sexual encounters, teenage loneliness as well as the topic of building and managing friendships or problems revolving around matters of family. In addition, Hipple refers to the themes

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[2] This relates, in particular, to the strong gender bias inherent to many of his arguments: Havighurst, for example, argues that "a boy has to accept the idea of becoming a man and a girl has to accept the idea of becoming a woman" (49) or that "[w]omen become definitely the weaker sex, in terms of physical strength" (49).

of mental illness and death, particularly in the context of suicide and teenagers coming to terms with loss. Finally, it is also the topic of teenage drinking and drug abuse that he considers typical of writings geared towards an adolescent audience (2-12).

However, while there are a number of topics that will always be relevant to teenage readers as they go hand in hand with the insecurities and struggles experienced during the phase of adolescence, it is equally important to recognize that the themes addressed in YAL are also subject to constant change. Proceeding from the assumption that "[y]oung adult literature changes as quickly as teens do themselves" (20), Kaplan outlines some of the most salient developments recognizable within the genre in the past decades. Among other changes, he detects an increased tendency towards a more open and sometimes even brutal portrayal of teenage problems and a respective broadening of themes to include issues such as self-mutilation and sexual violence (Kaplan 21). Another significant development can be seen in the rise of novels featuring a more open and positive portrayal of homosexuality (Kaplan 24-25). In the context of literature reacting to contemporary changes it is also crucial to mention the growing importance and increased appearance of multicultural literature. With the growing diversification of society, literary texts which have the capacity to help young people develop an appreciation of cultural and racial diversity are gaining more and more relevance (Kaplan 22-23).

A final point which deserves to be stressed in the context of selecting appropriate literature for student readers is the growing need to foster a sense of social responsibility among them. As becomes obvious from Havighurst's model, acquiring this sense of responsibility towards one's family, friends and the larger community has, fairly early, been recognized as a central step in the development of young individuals. Yet, in light of the significant technological, political and environmental developments that characterize contemporary life, it seems more important than ever that young people come to recognize the responsibility that they hold for shaping the future of our planet. The pressing need to foster a socially responsible mindset among young adults on a local as well as global level is stressed by Steven Wolk; literature, he argues, can be seen as a powerful tool for doing exactly that (662). In his essay, he outlines various topics that he considers of exceptional importance in this respect. Particularly worth mentioning is the need to foster students' consciousness for environmental concerns or to critically engage them with the topic of violence and war (Wolk 669). Of equal

relevance is the aspect of educating young adults about power relations and making them sensitive to the ways in which power might be abused (Wolk 668). In this context of helping young adults develop social responsibility, Wolk also encourages students' engagement with events of the past as well as with the future (668). With regard to the latter, he points towards the importance of offering opportunities for speculating on and envisioning possible future developments of our current society, for example through the confrontation with dystopian narratives (668). These literary texts, he argues, "offer unique opportunities to teach [socially conscious] habits of mind" (668) as, despite their future setting, they have the potential to provide critical commentary on the present.

As shown by these considerations, it is fairly difficult to provide a list of definite themes that will always and in any context be of interest to young adults. What can, however, be deduced from the comments reviewed above is that literature, in order to appeal to adolescent readers, needs to meet their interests and reflect the challenges that they face as they strive to find their own roles, values and beliefs. While there certainly are a number of timeless themes that will, in one way or another, always be of interest to young adult readers, it is also important to recognize that, as times are changing, there is a growing need for teachers to confront students with literature which can help them find their own role in today's increasingly complex world.

5. Ray Bradbury – Life and Critical Reception

Now that the theoretical background has been elaborated, this chapter shall lead into the analytical chapters of this thesis by providing a brief examination of Ray Bradbury's literary career and the controversial position he occupies as an SF writer.

Born in 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois, Bradbury first started writing during his high school years in Los Angeles, where he first penned poetry, articles, and short stories (Reid 2). Bradbury's love for his midwestern hometown and the city of Los Angeles were to have a lasting influence on his writing. Waukegan would reappear in several of his works under the name "Green Town" (Reid 1). LA, which he described as "the city riding the wave of the future" (Badbury qtd. in Seed 2), provided profound inspiration for his literary work and, being the world's movie capital, also influenced his style. This style has often been described as "cinematic" (Seed 4; McGiveron xxii) in that it "punctuates scenes with exquisite little set pieces of visual beauty and dramatic power" (McGiveron xxiii). In LA, Bradbury also first met professional SF writers such as Robert Heinlein, Henry Kuttner or Leigh Brackett through the fan community of the "Los Angeles Science Fiction League" (Mogen 6-7). Many of these established SF authors significantly contributed to Bradbury's development as a writer by offering advice and providing extensive criticism of his literary work (Seed 5-6). In 1942, Bradbury sold his first story *to Weird Tales (*Mogen 9), a pulp magazine which mainly featured stories from the genres of adventure, horror, and fantasy (Reid 15). Many of the stories published in *Weird Tales* were later republished in 1947 as part of his first short story collection *Dark Carnival* (Reid 15).

Bradbury's first years of writing for the pulp magazines were an important period of experimentation in which he developed his own, distinctive literary voice (Rollyson 49). Of central importance for this development was not only a prolific writing routine, but also a stylistic exploration of different writers, including short story masters like Hemingway, Hawthorne, and Poe (Mogen 31-32). Regarding Bradbury's own style, Mogen sees the author's particular strength in his "flair for striking metaphor and vivid detail, for evoking mood and atmosphere which reviewers invariably described as 'poetic'" (35). The most drastic realization of Bradbury's talent for poetic expression, he claims, can be detected in what Bradbury himself defined as the "art of the aside" (Mogen 44). This term refers to passages of rich, metaphorical description or, as

phrased by Mogen, "the lyrical cadenza of description which musically expresses the central themes of the narrative" (44). In addition to his affinity for poetic language, Bradbury was also fascinated by the 'clean style' he had encountered, above all, in the works of Hemingway (Mogen 38). As a result, Bradbury's poetic passages are often embedded in a contrasting context in which he shows a very clear, concise, and sometimes even simple use of language (Mogen 38). This unique combination of highly poetic language and a very straightforward mode of expression was also identified by other critics as the central characteristic of Bradbury's style. Gilbert Highet, for example, writes of "a curious mixture of poetry and colloquialism" (vii), while Robert O. Bowne speaks of "clean colloquial rhythms and rich metaphor" (qtd. in Mengeling 885).

By the late 1940s, Bradbury's popularity with mainstream critics facilitated the publication of his work in the higher paying mass market magazines such as *Collier's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *The New Yorke*r, and *Harper's Magazine* (Rollyson 46). Moreover, Bradbury profited from the founding of the internationally successful *Galaxy* magazine in the 1950s, for which he became one of the main contributors (Ashley 68).

Several of Bradbury's best-known works were published between the late 1940s and the mid-1950s (McGiveron 2). His major breakthrough as a writer occurred with the publication of his novels *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950 and *Fahrenheit 451* in 1953, both of which received high acclaim from critics outside the field of SF. These positive reviews helped launch a "new stage in Bradbury's career" (Mogen 10). *The Martian Chronicles* was particularly hailed by mainstream critics for its "poetic prose" (Mogen 16), which was perceived as highly unusual for SF writing. The book itself concerns the first human expeditions to Mars, the conflict between settlers and indigenous Martians, and the building of permanent human settlements as a way to escape nuclear war on Earth (Reid 20). However, rather than being written in the form of a single narrative, *The Martian Chronicles* consists of 26 short stories which had originally been published individually, but were revised and interlinked through the insertion of bridge chapters for the purpose of publishing them as a novel, not a short story collection. (Reid 15; Rollyson 50)

Although Bradbury was also skilled at writing traditional novels, numerous critics have noticed that, throughout his career, the short story remained his preferred format (Seed

2; Mogen 11; Rollyson 44). In fact, Bradbury has been called a master of "concise narrative" (Seed 3), fascinated with the short story and its ability to "control information and therefore suspense" (Seed 2). Among his best-known collections are *The Illustrated Man* (1951), *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953), *The October Country* (1955), *A Medicine for Melancholy* (1959), and *I Sing the Body Electric* (1969). Most collections contain a mixture of realistic narrative, SF, horror, and fantasy stories (Reid 15-17).

Besides writing short stories and novels, Bradbury also had a successful career as a scriptwriter in the 1950s (Mogen 11; Rollyson 51). In the 1960s, he created several theater adaptions of his own works (Mogen 12). In his late career, Bradbury not only entered the genre of detective fiction with his novel *Death is a Lonely Business* (Reid 22), but he was also increasingly engaged with writing and publishing his own poetry (Mogen 12). Although Bradbury had written poetry since high school, his first collection of poems was only published in 1973 (Mogen 12). Bradbury waited with this publication until the more advanced years of his career because he wanted to add experience to his verse in order for it to sound "accomplished and stylistically refined" (Rollyson 53).

As shown in these considerations, throughout his career, Bradbury not only excelled as an author of horror and fantasy as well as detective, realistic, and SF, but he also managed to build a reputation in the film and theater industries. Yet, when reviewing the various books and articles written on Bradbury's career, it appears that his SF stories are what he is best known for. In fact, Bradbury is often introduced as "the world's premier SF writer" (Rollyson 44) or as the writer whose immense success enabled "a breakthrough for the entire science-fiction field" (Mogen 18). Ironically, at the same time, Bradbury's standing as a writer of SF is also highly contested, and there seems to be a still ongoing debate over "whether he is a science fiction writer at all" (Mogen 15).

This controversial position is rooted in the diverse receptions of Bradbury's work by different groups of readers and critics. While Bradbury has often been praised by mainstream reviewers, his work has not been received as favorably by devoted SF fans and critics (Mogen 19). This lack of enthusiasm for Bradbury's writing relates to a specific understanding of the genre that is widely spread within the SF community. Many SF writers, critics, and readers still strongly adhere to Campbell's idea of SF as

a genre inherently meant to explore possibilities that are based on current scientific knowledge (Reid 10; Mogen 19). Bradbury's SF works, however, rarely pay attention to scientific accuracy. Scientific novelties are often introduced without further regard for their plausibility (Laino 92; McGiveron xvi). Bradbury`s *Martian Chronicles* once again exemplifies this disregard for scientific truth. Although these chronicles achieved enormous mainstream success, they were heavily criticized from within the community for their unrealistic presentation of the planet Mars as having "a breathable atmosphere, water, and canals" (Rollyson 50). Even the most renowned critic of the genre, Darko Suvin, has attacked Bradbury for this perceived lack of scientific accuracy by placing him in the tradition of "Science-Fantasy", which, in Suvin's eyes, constitutes a "pathological" and "misshapen subgenre of SF" (68).

During his lifetime, Bradbury always defended his loose adherence to scientific reality by stressing that his focus was "on social, cultural, and intellectual issues, not scientific verisimilitude" (Rollyson 44). According to Seed, Bradbury's focus can be regarded as the result of "his conviction of extending the genre into new areas" (37) by transgressing the borders to other genres, above all, Fantasy. Bradbury did not want to place emphasis on the machines themselves, but on the psychological and social consequences of innovation affecting us humans. Thus, instead of Campbell's definition of SF, Bradbury's idea of the genre was more in line with Le Guin`s understanding of SF as existing on one spectrum and occasionally merging with the genre of Fantasy (see chapter 3.2.). Finally, the attention Bradbury drew to the "consequences of technological innovations rather than describing those devices themselves" (Seed 24) also accounts for the success he experienced as an author writing for *Galaxy*, as his approach to the genre is an excellent example of the kind of "soft SF" that was favored by the magazine's editor Horace Gold (see chapter 3.1.).

Besides criticism of the lack of scientific accuracy, Bradbury also experienced hostility from within the SF community for another reason. Due to his refusal to engage in a purely positive portrayal of technological progress, with certain stories even showing dystopian characteristics, he was repeatedly accused of working against the visionary spirit of SF. In fact, his work has often been understood as an "attack on science and technology" (Mogen 20) and therefore as a sign of his lack of respect for the genre.

While some of his stories might truly leave this impression at first glance, during his lifetime, Bradbury reiterated that his writing was not directed against technological innovations in general, but should primarily serve to warn readers against using them irresponsibly (Mogen 22). As aforementioned, many of his best-known works were written around the 1950s, a time not only characterized by the appearance of numerous technological innovations, but also by the rise of consumerism and an unstable political postwar climate which instilled into many Americans the fear of a potential nuclear war. An additional cause for paranoia was the harsh anti-communist course of then-senator Joseph McCarthy and his "crusade against 'unamerican activities'" (Bussing-López 103-104). Bradbury, who saw much reason for concern in these and other developments of his time, continuously sought to equip his readers with the critical eye he deemed necessary to prevent a possible dystopian future (Mogen 104).

While, within the SF community, Bradbury's reputation remains controversial to this day, the value and accessibility of his writing have shown, above all, in the fact that he is one of the few SF writers to have reached an audience beyond the genre's usual readership (Mogen 10). Additionally, Bradbury's writings are often selected as classroom reading material. This relates not only to his short stories, which have been included in various text collections compiled for classroom purposes since the 1960s (Mogen 25), but, above all, to his novel *Fahrenheit 451*, which is still among the most popular literary works read in classroom settings (Thaler 100).

The following analysis shall provide a more detailed exploration of Bradbury's literary work and its classroom potential, with a particular focus on his favorite literary format, the short story. To this end, three SF short stories written by Bradbury were chosen. Each story will be examined for its thematic, structural, and stylistic characteristics. Also, each of these stories will be examined for its suitability for the classroom. To meet this pursuit, the theoretical considerations outlined in chapters one to three will be considered.

6. The Veldt
6.1. Introduction and Summary

Bradbury's short story *The Veldt* was first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* under the title "The World the Children Made" (Seed 16). In 1951, it appeared under

its current name as one of 18 short stories published in the author's collection *The Illustrated Man* (Reid 37).

Besides *The Veldt*, 15 other stories featured in *The Illustrated Man* were originally published as single works in various magazines (Reid 37). Yet, the stories presented in this collection are still thematically connected. Although the narratives are not bridged with text passages, as was the case in *The Martian Chronicles*, they are united through a frame narrative which provides "a common origin" (Seed 15) to all of them. Consisting of a prologue and epilogue, this framing narrative revolves around the encounter of a first-person narrator with a man whose body is fully covered with tattoos. These tattoos, the man claims, provide insight into the future (Reid 38). Sequentially, the illustrations on his body turn into tales, each of which provides a specific impression of the negative future caused by man's misuse of technology. After all stories have been told, Bradbury once again returns to the narrator's encounter with the Illustrated Man, whose only bare body part now turns into an image depicting the narrator's murder committed by the tattooed man. This prophecy incites the narrator to flee, an action through which he ultimately manages to avoid this fate (Reid 38). Hence, this final scene serves as an indication of how the stories presented are to be understood; rather than prophecies of the future, the stories are to be grasped as a call for action to be careful about our ways of handling technology in order to avoid the unpleasant prospects outlined in them (Reid 39).

The Veldt is the first story of *The Illustrated Man* and centers around the life of George and Lydia Hadley, who live in their 'Happylife Home' together with their children Peter and Wendy[3]. The Hadleys' house is equipped with several technical features to fulfill various tasks for its inhabitants. Not only are the family's meals prepared and the house cleaning tasks accomplished, but the home also performs such duties as dressing the family members. Additionally, this futuristic home features a special children's nursery, a virtual reality room controlled by the thoughts of its users and designed to project all kinds of sceneries on its walls. While, in the past, Peter and Wendy used to play with

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[3] Through giving the children these specific names, Bradbury clearly seeks to allude to the famous protagonists of J.M. Barrie's novel *Peter Pan*. This has also been noticed by a number of scholars (see e.g. Bloom 47; Anderson 52) who have explored the relationship between the two narratives from a variety of different viewpoints.

this nursery by creating the fantasy worlds of Aladdin, Alice in Wonderland, or Oz, the children have recently begun to fantasize about the scenery of an African veldt, filled with predatory lions and circling vultures. George and Lydia grow increasingly concerned about this all-too-realistic projection. This concern is reinforced not only by the sound of screams coming from this nursery, but also by the parents' realization that they no longer have full control over their machines. When David McClean, a psychologist, arrives to analyze the situation, he urges the family to shut down the house. To calm their desperate children, George and Lydia allow them one final return to the nursery. Soon, the children start calling for their parents. Once they enter the nursery, the children lock them in, and the lions approach the parents. When Mr. McClean returns to the house, he finds Peter and Wendy picnicking by themselves in the middle of the nursery.

6.2. Thematic Concerns
6.2.1. A Culture of Illusions

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, *The Illustrated Man* is a collection of stories meant to warn readers against the adverse effects of a life created around an uncritical use of technological innovations. In this regard, *The Veldt* is clearly no exception, as the story poignantly outlines the horrendous consequences paid by the Hadley family for their overreliance on technology. However, more than just giving an impression of these consequences, Bradbury shows how the Hadleys' irresponsible behavior is related to them having adopted the mindset of a consumer society in which people are encouraged to believe that purchasing innovative technological goods ultimately leads to happiness. Thus, before later sections focus on the consequences of the parents' behavior, this first subchapter serves to provide a closer insight into the beliefs and attitudes of the two parents entangled in a consumer culture which Bradbury clearly reveals to be a culture of illusions.

In this respect, the first few lines are pivotal in that they introduce the reader to a consumer culture proclaiming the vision of happiness as a purchasable product, while simultaneously exposing this idea as an illusion. The story opens inside the Hadleys' 'Happylife Home', the name immediately identifying the house as a consumer good, a branded product, apparently sold with the promise of bringing carefree days into the life of every family. Yet, in this opening paragraph, the house is also immediately labeled a place of unhappiness. While standing inside the kitchen, Lydia appears to be

anything but satisfied as she is voicing her concern about a change of scenery in the children's nursery, which the family has purchased as an extra add-on to their fully automated home. Thus, even before the reader is given any detailed information on the family situation, this initial scene establishes an atmosphere of discontent inside this home that is supposed to provide nothing but happiness and comfort. As such, this opening paragraph serves the important function of creating awareness that the consumer culture the family lives in is really one of illusion.

Bradbury sharpens the picture of the family's consumerist mindset through the character of George. While Lydia already detects certain flaws in their vision of a perfect life, George still remains oblivious to the potential dangers lurking within their lifestyle. He is introduced as a consumer who is still caught in the illusion that happiness and even good parenthood are indeed purchasable goods. An indication of this thinking is shown in the way he proudly reflects on the high price he has paid for their house, which "had cost them thirty thousand dollars" (Bradbury, "The Veldt", 239), and the even higher price he has paid for the nursery. To George, this room, which "had cost half again as much as the rest of the house" ("The Veldt", 240), is the ultimate proof of his parental love. It is his way of showing that "nothing`s too good for [his] children" ("The Veldt", 240) and therefore an expression of his belief that being a good parent is fundamentally based on the amount of money one is willing to spend on one's children.

The nature of the 'Happylife Home' gives a clearer indication of what it suggested in this world as a path to a happy and fulfilling life. This understanding of happiness is inherently connected to the vision that automated machines can not only accomplish human tasks more efficiently, but will also free people from most of their responsibilities, thus leaving them to enjoy their time with more pleasurable activities. George, for example, reminds his wife Lydia of their main reason for buying the house, namely "so we wouldn't have to do anything" ("The Veldt", 242). Their 'Happylife Home' is the embodiment of this idea, as even childcare is effectively handled by the house and the nursery, which is proudly described by the father as a "miracle of efficiency" ("The Veldt", 241). Here too, one can clearly distinguish the Hadleys' belief that, even in parenting, what truly counts is for duties to be fulfilled effectively. This, however, is a view that involves a complete disregard for their children's need for love and affection.

Moreover, it is the alleged harmlessness of these technological goods that seems to be propagated in this consumer society, as indicated in the following passage:

> George Hadley was filled with admiration for the mechanical genius who had conceived this room. […]. Every home should have one. Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their clinical accuracy, they startled you, gave you a twinge, but most of the time what fun for everyone, not only your own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick jaunt to a foreign land, a quick change of scenery. Well, here it was! ("The Veldt", 241)

These lines most drastically reveal the extent to which George Hadley has been influenced by the advertisement landscape of his time. This is exhibited in the way his excitement about the nursery is put into words, his phrasing closely resembling the language that could have been used for advertising the futuristic room. Furthermore, George's reflections represent a specific mindset communicated to people in these advertisements, one that he has absorbed. It is a mindset which views technology, and in this case the nursery, not only as a source of happiness, but also as a tool for entertainment that is harmless and to be used by everyone for personal amusement. However, this nursery was certainly not invented for entertainment purposes. As the psychologist explains, "One of the original uses of these nurseries was so that we could study the patterns left on the walls by the child's mind […] and help the child" ("The Veldt", 249). As illustrated by this quote, the nursery was initially intended as a clinical instrument. However, in this society, even such instruments are sold to consumers as harmless gadgets of fun in order to boost sales. Ultimately, just as the advertisements fail to show the potential risks of the nursery's use, George downplays any instinctive feelings about the dangers lurking within this machine by repeating to himself the advertising slogan "what fun for everyone" ("The Veldt", 241).

To conclude, the Hadleys, and George Hadley in particular, have based their lives on the beliefs spread in a consumer culture. This culture propagates technology as a safe and efficient way to perfect life. In how far the Hadleys' beliefs should be considered illusions shall be explored in more detail in the next two subchapters.

6.2.2. George and Lydia Hadley – The Consequences of Passivity

The previous section has identified the Hadleys as a family led by the vision that putting one's life in the hands of machines will lead to a carefree and fulfilling existence. However, instead of creating the expected satisfaction, the Hadleys' technology-bound lifestyle is accompanied by a series of adverse consequences that affect the family

members and the relationships between them. In order to gain a detailed insight into these consequences, one must more closely examine the specific ways in which each generation is affected by the technological environment. Therefore, this section will first focus on George and Lydia and the effects they experience from a life based on passivity before concentrating on their children Peter and Wendy.

A critical consequence that George and Lydia encounter from their daily reliance on the automated house is the experience of a loss of meaning, inner emptiness, and a lack of self-efficiency. Lydia is the first to express such a sense of dissatisfaction regarding the family's life inside the 'Happylife Home'. This home, she feels, has replaced her in all areas of life and is thus slowly eroding her sense of purpose. "Maybe I don't have enough to do. Maybe I have time to think too much" ("The Veldt", 242), she contemplates, longing for the days when she felt needed not only by her husband, but most of all by her children. Having been stripped of her maternal duties by the house and nursery, Lydia feels "unnecessary" ("The Veldt", 242) and disconnected from Peter and Wendy. Most importantly, she starts to question her competence as a human mother in comparison to a technological house: "The house is wife and mother now and nursemaid. Can I compete with an African veldt? Can I give a bath and scrub the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic scrub bath can?" ("The Veldt", 242).

Furthermore, Lydia also detects signs of this same uneasiness in her husband, who is "smok[ing] a little more every morning and drink[ing] a little more every afternoon and need[s] a little more sedative every night" ("The Veldt", 242). As stated above, George initially remains oblivious to the house having any detrimental effects on their lives. Only gradually does he see that instead of the promised fulfillment, an existence steered by automated processes has turned the family members into passive beings, dependent on mechanical tools and governed by emptiness. While he previously praised this house for taking care of the family's every need, he slowly comes to find himself in a state that he considers closer to death than life ("The Veldt", 251). At last, he communicates his desire to escape from this passive and ultimately meaningless existence when he explains that "instead of being handled and massaged [he and his family] are going to live" ("The Veldt", 251). Thus, what George and Lydia had imagined as the best form of living has resulted in a feeling of uselessness and emptiness that

leaves them longing for the "carefree, one-for-all existence" ("The Veldt", 247) which they clearly were not able to find within the walls of the 'Happylife Home'.

Besides losing their sense of purpose, George and Lydia's constant reliance on their house has also heavily affected their relationship with Peter and Wendy. Having lived in their hassle-free environment for so long, the parents have no idea how to interact with their children, let alone how to resolve a conflict with them. An important indication for this inability to communicate is once again given in the first scene, in which Lydia is expressing her concern about the appearance of the worrying nursery landscape. Strikingly, Lydia's initial reaction to this problem is not to seek a conversation with her children, possibly asking them about their reasons for projecting such violent thoughts on the nursery walls. Instead, she decides to avoid the confrontation by asking her husband to examine the nursery and telling him to "call a psychologist to look at it" ("The Veldt", 239). Furthermore, the parents' fear of communicating with their children is shown even more clearly in the father's reaction to the idea of temporarily locking the nursery. George, who is visibly hesitant to close this room, explains his unwillingness to do so by reminding Lydia "how difficult Peter is about that" ("The Veldt", 242) and recalling "the tantrum he threw" ("The Veldt", 242) last time his father locked the nursery, thus making clear that his reluctance really stems from the fear of having yet another confrontation with his son. When at last George can no longer avoid confronting Peter with the idea of turning the house and nursery off, his son, desperately attached to his nursery, naturally reacts with extreme anger and desperation. However, after a few fruitless attempts to convince him of the positive aspects of this idea, his father is once again unable to cope with the situation and abruptly ends the conversation by telling him to "go play in Africa" ("The Veldt", 248). As these examples illustrate, the Hadleys' lifestyle has resulted not only in a state of emptiness, but has also fundamentally contributed to a breakdown of communication between parents and children.

Another central consequence which accompanies the parents' passive life is their loss of control over their children and their technological surroundings. Having trusted in the safety and benefits of their 'Happylife Home', George and Lydia have exchanged their autonomy for automated processes taking care of their every need. As a result, the house has become the main caretaker not only for Peter and Wendy, but also for their parents. As Gronert-Ellerhoff observes, both George and Lydia appear

"infantilized" (131), which is most visibly shown when they, like children, are comforted and rocked to sleep by their automated beds. This infantilization contributes to the escalation of the situation in that it significantly affects the children's attitude towards their parents. Besides the emotional impact these children experience from a life based on machinery, Peter and Wendy no longer look up to George and Lydia as authorities. This is, for example, conveyed in the way the children openly and secretly disobey the parental restrictions on entering the nursery ("The Veldt", 245, 247) or in the threats they express towards them ("The Veldt", 248). Peter and Wendy do not respect George and Lydia as parents simply because they have never behaved as such. Instead, parents and children have learnt to rely on machines, which have taken on a parental role for both generations.

Moreover, this loss of control over their children is accompanied by George and Lydia's growing insight that they are also no longer the masters of their technological surroundings. This is precisely revealed when George tries to set the nursery landscape back to more appropriate, childlike fantasies, only to find out that the room no longer responds to his commands:

> "The fool room's out of order," he said. "It won't respond."
> "Or —"
> "Or what?"
> "Or it can't respond," said Lydia, "because the children have thought about Africa and lions and killing so many days that the room's in a rut."
> "Could be."
> "Or Peter's set it to remain that way." ("The Veldt", 244)

This passage, though never revealing who exactly is in control of the room, shows the reader quite clearly who is not. The parents, besides knowing very little about their own children, also have no profound understanding of the technology which they have trusted blindly and have relied on for everyday living. In consequence of the realization that they are no longer fully in charge of their machines, this nursery, which the parents previously praised for its ability to produce such a highly realistic simulation of reality, is increasingly viewed in terms of its potentially destructive power. This shows, for example, in the parents' inability to sleep at night when they notice their children have broken into the nursery: "[..] and although their beds tried very hard, the two adults couldn't be rocked to sleep for another hour. A smell of cats was in the night air" ("The Veldt", 247).

However, George and Lydia are not only anxious about their children's assumed ability to control the nursery, but it is also the potential will of the nursery itself which starts to concern them. This can be seen when George and Lydia finally toy with the thought of turning the room off for the sake of saving their family. George seems hesitant to make the decision and, in this context, indicates his fear of a potential revenge coming from the nursery:

> "I don't imagine the room will like being turned off," said the father.
> "Nothing ever likes to die — even a room."
> "I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?" ("The Veldt", 250).

Although George and Lydia are by no means certain that their technological helpers are indeed equipped with an autonomous will, they at least seem to consider this an option. This mindset, which further adds to their perceived loss of control over the situation, could once again be seen as connected to the parents' infantilized state. Having occupied this passive and childish role for so long, their technological surroundings, which have assumed all of their human duties, appear to them as increasingly powerful and even as living entities. Whether or not these fears are justified, is, however, never revealed to the readers, who are thus left with the eerie feeling that the house might indeed have turned against its owners; perhaps even in complicity with Peter and Wendy. As will be analyzed in chapter 6.3., this remaining ambiguity is also closely related to the way the house is personified throughout the story.

Finally, it is George and Lydia's last interaction with Peter and Wendy which hints at the most fatal consequence of their own passivity. This last interaction shows that even though George and Lydia have finally acknowledged that their lifestyle has caused them to fail in acting as responsible parents for their children, they are still unable to give up their acquired habits. With regard to George, this can be seen when he informs his children about his decision to shut off the house and nursery. Both Peter and Wendy fall into tantrums, a reaction which their father is once again unwilling to deal with. "All right-- all right, if they'll just shut up" ("The Veldt", 251), are the words that George uses when giving in to his wife's plea to grant the children one final return to their nursery. Thus, he once again shows not only his inability to communicate with Peter and Wendy, but also his refusal to invest any effort in arguing with them. His wife, who is supposed to watch Peter and Wendy during their final return to the futuristic room, equally shows that she has become too accustomed to the nursery

doing the parents' job. "I wanted to dress too" ("The Veldt", 251), are the words that she uses as an excuse for leaving Peter and Wendy all alone in the nursery. Thus, the parents' behavior in this final confrontation with their children shows they are still unable to leave behind the comforts provided by their home and act like responsible parents. Through this failure to resist the behavioral tendencies they have developed while living inside their 'Happylife Home', George and Lydia ultimately seal their own fate.

6.2.3. The Children – Humanity in its Technological Mutation

While the previous subchapter was focused on the Hadley parents, this section shall explore in more detail the effects that a technology-bound lifestyle has on their children. These effects are much more severe for Peter and Wendy, who have, from early on in their lives, been brought up to fully rely on technology. Consequently, their identities are fundamentally shaped by growing up in these technological surroundings.

Peter and Wendy, the story indicates, are shaped to exist in a state of passivity, completely dependent on technological devices. This loss of autonomy was already addressed with regard to their parents. However, it has also been demonstrated that George and Lydia are able to look back to more active times and can thus recognize the detrimental effects of their current lifestyle. Contrary to their parents, Peter and Wendy only know the reality of the 'Happylife Home' in which they have never been given the chance to develop any independent behavior. Therefore, the thought of an active lifestyle seems unimaginable to these children[4]. This is precisely revealed through Peter's desperate reaction to hearing that the house might be turned off soon: "Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the shoe tier do it? And brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?" ("The Veldt", 247). The children are frantic and clearly cannot understand their parents' intentions, as their surroundings, in which even creativity is taken over by a so-called "picture painter"

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[4]As mentioned before, through the names of the Hadley children, Bradbury seeks to establish a connection between his story and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. One of the novel's major themes concerns the rejection of adult responsibilities. As becomes visible here, this theme recurs in a much more serious form in Bradbury's story as, due to their specific upbringing, the Hadley children are not only unwilling, but also unable to take on any active responsibilities. There also numerous other parallels between the two stories, especially regarding the children's apparent intention to use the nursery as a gateway to a life without parental restrictions.

("The Veldt", 247), have programmed them to long for passivity. Peter and Wendy experience a need to receive constant stimulation and remain in a state where all they must do is "look and listen and smell" ("The Veldt", 248). Ultimately, the children represent a new generation which embodies what Herbert Marcuse has described as "the unfreedom of man" and the "technological impossibility of being autonomous" (qtd. in Laino 98).

Moreover, a life dominated by technological devices has also changed Peter and Wendy on an emotional level. As George and Lydia have purchased their 'Happylife Home' based on their desire to be freed from responsibility, they have left their children completely in the hands of machines. While, on the surface, these machines might seem to have succeeded in assuming George and Lydia's parental role, they have not managed to satisfy their children's need for parental love and affection. Peter and Wendy, born and bred on machines, have been deprived of the chance to build meaningful relationships with human beings, especially their parents. Consequently, they appear emotionally detached from them. This distance is shown even in minor details such as Peter's avoidance of eye contact when talking to George ("The Veldt", 247) or when he distantly addresses him as "father" ("The Veldt", 245, 247). The more amiable versions of "daddy" and "mommy" are only used by the children when they are trying to play off George and Lydia's parental instincts ("The Veldt", 251). The emotional detachment is even more drastically revealed when Peter openly expresses his hatred towards his father by telling him "I wish you were dead" ("The Veldt", 251). This statement is relevant for showing the distanced relationship, especially when compared to the children's absolute desperation about the approaching deactivation of the house and in particular Peter's exclamation towards the house to not "let Father kill everything" ("The Veldt", 251). Hence, while the children grant no authority to their own parents and even express death wishes towards them, they fiercely defend their machinery, their "everything" ("The Veldt", 251), with all their power. As shown in these examples, the Hadley family experiences what Mogen describes as the bitter "consequences of substituting technological marvels for basic human needs" (99).

Although it could be argued that statements such as "I wish you were dead" can occasionally come from children and are not always a reason for serious concern, Peter and Wendy's violent fantasies expose the true weight that these remarks carry for signifying the distorted relationship between them and their parents. The story

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indicates that there is a connection between the appearance of the African veldt and the parents gradually taking technical devices from their children or restricting their use of the nursery. At one point, George, for example, explains that he has "taken a few machines from the house and threatened them, a month ago, with closing up the nursery" ("The Veldt", 249), while in a different passage, he reflects on how "for the past month, he had heard lions roaring" ("The Veldt", 244). Thus, the text implies that the change of landscape is to be understood in the context of the children facing the possibility of having their machines taken from them. To this outlook, Peter and Wendy react vehemently: the African veldt, Bradbury makes clear, is a symbol of pure hatred. This hatred is most drastically expressed through the children's constant reimagining of their parents' "death in the awful jaws of a lion" ("The Veldt", 243). Moreover, it is the unbearable heat of the veldt which significantly adds to this impression. As David McClean notices, "One can feel [the hatred] coming out of the sky. Feel that sun" ("The Veldt", 249). The intensity and brutality of these fantasies, which are reinforced through the sound of screams coming from the nursery, reveal not only the extent of the children's rage towards George and Lydia, but also show that Peter and Wendy are more than willing to choose their machines over their parents. Thus, this veldt fantasy once again reveals the fatal consequences of parental deprivation. The children, having never experienced any emotional closeness to George and Lydia, do not consider them essential parts of their lives. Instead, Peter and Wendy have become fully attached to machines, which, as correctly observed by the psychologist, have become "far more important in their lives than their real parents" ("The Veldt", 249).

Finally, the story's last scene once again reveals the extent to which the children's development has been affected. Although it remains unclear whether George and Lydia are, in fact, devoured by the lions of their children's fantasies, the story indicates that Peter and Wendy definitely show no regret for locking their parents inside their nursery. With a peacefulness that seems almost eerie, these innocent looking children, with their "cheeks like peppermint candy, eyes like bright blue agate marbles" ("The Veldt", 244), are sitting inside their nursery, smiling, and "eating a little picnic" ("The Veldt", 252). Thus, the story not only highlights the strong contrast between the children's outer appearance and their inner killing instincts, but it also conveys the degree to which a lack of human contact has caused them to become what Bloom describes as "amoral and conscience-free" (47).

To conclude, while the question of whether the parents are, in the end, physically overpowered by their machines remains in the realm of ambiguity, the story's main focus is a different one. The true danger of these devices, Bradbury makes clear, lies in the way they affect us humans. Using the example of the Hadleys, the author gives an impression of how an extensive and uncritical use of technology can cause a breakdown of family ties, lead to a loss of meaning and self-efficiency, and, as shown through the example of Peter and Wendy, can ultimately change who we are. The children's exposure to a technological environment in combination with parental deprivation caused them to change on a fundamental level. On the outside, they still come across as 'normal', innocent children. However, on the inside, these children more closely resemble the animals of their fantasies. In fact, one could even speculate that the dry landscape of this African veldt fantasy is really a mirror of human nature that has never been given a chance to prosper. Likewise, these children have been deprived of their chance to develop autonomy, creativity, or feelings of emotional closeness toward other humans. As such, they serve as a representative example of what Laino has defined as "humanity evolving in its technological mutation" (97).

6.3. Language and Style

Now that Bradbury's short story has been analyzed for its themes, this subchapter shall focus on the text's stylistic characteristics. In this regard, it can be argued that *The Veldt* functions as a perfect example of Bradbury's unique combination of poetic and colloquial language.

In the story, Bradbury's colloquialisms predominantly appear in the many dialogues which comprise roughly half of the story. In these dialogues, the reader experiences George and Lydia interacting either with each other, their children, or the psychologist in an informal manner. Correspondingly, their utterances mainly consist of short sentences and contain high-frequency, everyday words, often in contracted form to further underline this informal setting.

Between these passages of colloquial interaction, Bradbury inserts the descriptions of the African veldt. The language employed to convey the atmosphere of this landscape contrasts with the informal style used for presenting the exchange among the protagonists. In these lines and passages, Bradbury applies numerous literary devices such as repetition and figurative language to intensify the realistic experience of the

veldtland and the atmosphere of danger and hatred that emanates from the children's psyche. Additionally, Bradbury draws the reader into this experience by appealing to all five senses. As will be shown in the following passages, the author also combines various of these techniques to further intensify their effect.

As explained above, an important characteristic of the nursery landscape is the extreme heat emanating from it, which is symbolic for the hatred and murderous instincts experienced by the children towards their parents. Thus, by intensifying the perception of the heat, Bradbury also enables the reader to experience Peter and Wendy's feelings toward their parents more intensively. An important technique employed to attain this objective is repetition. The heat of the veldt is constantly reinforced in its adjectival form "hot" to refer to the "hot African veldt" ("The Veldt", 243), "yellow hot Africa" ("The Veldt", 243), "the hot paw" ("The Veldt", 243), "the hot grass" ("The Veldt", 246), or "hot yellow sun" ("The Veldt", 240). As shown in these examples, the word "hot" is also sometimes presented in connection with another adjective, "yellow", which, being the color of the hot sun as well as the color of the deadly lion's fur, also comes to be associated with hatred and danger.

Moreover, the connection between the hot climate and the children's murderous intentions is also established through figurative language. This is exemplified in Bradbury's use of metaphor when he refers to the landscape as a "bake oven with murder in the heat" ("The Veldt", 243). In another scene, he achieves the same effect through simile, likening the perception of the heat to the feeling of being touched by "a hot paw" ("The Veldt", 243). This comparison of the unbearable heat to a painful encounter with the paws of a lion not only creates an intense atmosphere of danger, but additionally foreshadows the death of the parents.

In his portrayal of the African landscape, Bradbury also heavily appeals to different senses. For example: he repeatedly reinforces the peculiar, deadly odor of the veldt, for instance, by highlighting the "hot straw smell of lion grass" ("The Veldt", 240). In other cases, he returns to simile when the "the smell of dust" is likened to "a red paprika in the hot air" ("The Veldt", 240). Once again, this image effectively helps the reader take in the hostile and murderous atmosphere by evoking the feeling of the painful experience of inhaling hot powder.

In the story, the passage which most heavily appeals to all senses is the following one:

> And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away, so real, so feverishly and startlingly real that you could feel the prickling fur on your hand, and your mouth was stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of their heated pelts, and the yellow of them was in your eyes like the yellow of an exquisite French tapestry, the yellows of lions and summer grass, and the sound of the matted lion lungs exhaling on the silent noontide, and the smell of meat from the panting, dripping mouths. ("The Veldt", 241)

In this sentence, the perceived reality of the landscape and its deadly atmosphere are reinforced by drawing on the senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. The description primarily appeals to the reader's eyes through repetition of the word "yellow", which is associated with the deadly heat and the predators living in it. Moreover, Bradbury also combines different sensory experiences when he describes the feeling of having one's "mouth […] stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of [the lions'] heated pelts" ("The Veldt", 241). Here, Bradbury not only increases the intensity of the experience by appealing to the senses of taste and smell, but this phrase also encourages a strong reaction within the reader through the choice of words; "stuff" and "dusty" both reinforce the impossibility of breathing. Therefore, the reader is prompted to associate this phrase with the experience of suffocating, which serves as another device to foreshadow the death of the parents. Finally, Bradbury's use of the second person pronoun "you" directly encourages readers to take part in the experience.

Moreover, the quoted passage also serves to demonstrate Bradbury's strategic use of sentence structure. This example shows how the length of the sentence, in this case combined with anaphoric use of "and", helps convey the overwhelming atmosphere of the African veldt. However, such long sentences rather form an exception. Predominantly, Bradbury draws on the juxtaposition of numerous short or very short sentences to create tension throughout the story. The following passage demonstrates this technique: "That sun. He could feel it on his neck, still, like a hot paw. And the lions. And the smell of blood" ("The Veldt", 243). The sentence also illustrates how Bradbury employs anaphora to intensify the reader's perception. In fact, throughout the entire narrative, this juxtaposition of multiple single-clause sentences combined with repetition is an extensively employed technique for creating a tense atmosphere.

Furthermore, it is Bradbury's description of the 'Happylife Home' which deserves closer inspection. As has to some extent already been explored above, Bradbury strategically infuses George's reflections on the house with advertising jargon to reveal the degree to which the family is trapped in a consumer culture. This impression is primarily

achieved through the use of typical promotional slogans such as "what fun for everyone" ("The Veldt", 241) or by George's appraisal of the house as "a miracle of efficiency" (241). The effect is further intensified through second-person address, for example, when George propagates the house as an indispensable product "not only for your own son and daughter, but for yourself" (241).

Another noteworthy linguistic feature concerning the house is Bradbury's use of neologisms, through which he introduces the reader to specific devices found in the 'Happylife Home'. He mentions that the children and parents use "odorphonics" ("The Veldt", 240), which allow them to experience the smell of their fantasy worlds. Another neologism is the "air closet" ("The Veldt", 245), a kind of tunnel through which the children are taken to their "slumber rooms" (245). An essential aspect about these neologisms is that the devices they refer to are never explicitly introduced as exotic tools or novelties, but their existence and use are presented as completely natural to the children and their parents. By infusing the story with such neologisms, Bradbury provides readers with numerous stimuli to create a more detailed picture of the 'Happylife Home' in their imagination.

A final, particularly important literary technique used to describe the Hadley home is personification. Throughout the narrative, the home is described as having human attributes. Bradbury describes how the house "clothed and fed and rocked [its owners] to sleep" ("The Veldt", 239), while in another scene the reader experiences the "stove busy humming to itself" (239). Moreover, these technological entities are also equipped with intentions, as can be seen in the way the Hadleys' "beds tried very hard" ("The Veldt", 247) to rock the concerned parents to sleep. Finally, the house is also described as capable of experiencing emotions, as indicated through George's contemplation on how "the house will not like being turned off" ("The Veldt", 250). The personification of the house is also supported by metaphor and simile: "The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery" ("The Veldt", 251). In personifying this house, Bradbury intensifies the story's effect, as the liveliness of the house stands in direct contrast to the passivity of the humans living in it. Furthermore, this technique increases the uncanny nature of the story and leaves room for various interpretations. While it could simply reflect the perspective of the Hadleys, who view this house, their active caretaker, as human, it could also point toward the house having developed a will of its own.

6.4. Structure and Narrative Technique

In terms of the story's structure, *The Veldt* consists of a single plot which shows a linear structure in that the events are presented in chronological order.

The story`s first scene and even the first sentence, "George, I wish you'd look at the nursery" ("The Veldt", 239), places the reader in the middle of conflict and, as such, can be identified as a *medias in res* beginning. This kind of beginning can be seen as connected to the previously mentioned "nearness of the end" that is inherent to the short story's brief format (see chapters 2.1. and 2.2.). As explained by Klarer, due to its reduced length, "the slow and gradual build-up of suspense […] must be accelerated in the short story" (14) and one option to achieve this is "to commence close to the climax" (14).

Furthermore, the story is divided into six scenes, visibly separated from each other through an inserted asterisk between each scene. To jump from one scene to the next, Bradbury uses ellipses. This technique strongly affects the relationship between discourse time and story time in that a reading of about 30 minutes covers a period of approximately two days in the story. Furthermore, James Anderson has observed that "the short quick scenes connected by ellipses resemble scenes from a film where the camera cuts from one scene to the next "(28) and thus, bring to light Bradbury's "cinematic sense" (28). Finally, Anderson has also pointed out that Bradbury's use of ellipses creates a particularly fast-paced plot, as the narrative is brought to its climax "without needles digression or description" (29).

Moreover, *The Veldt* also contains non-linear elements in the form of foreshadowing. Bradbury uses physical objects like Lydia`s "bloody scarf" ("The Veldt", 250) or George's wallet, which is found by the parents having "blood smears on both sides" ("The Veldt", 246), to hint at their coming deaths. Another foreshadowing device is the reappearance of vultures in the veldt landscape. These vultures not only signify George's and Lydia's deaths, but in the final scene, they are also "flicker[ing] over Mr. McClean's hot face" ("The Veldt", 253), thus giving reason to speculate that he will meet the same fate as the parents. Finally, it is the screams heard by George and Lydia that most drastically prefigure their upcoming deaths. These screams are introduced from the first time the parents enter the nursery and reappear throughout

the story in growing intensity from a "faraway scream" ("The Veldt", 243) to "two people screaming from downstairs" ("The Veldt", 247) to screams that sound "familiar" (247). As such, these screams not only foreshadow the implied outcome of the story, but they also guide the reader toward the climax when the parents, locked inside the nursery, suddenly realize "why those screams had sounded familiar" ("The Veldt", 252).

While this climax constitutes a moment of epiphany for the parents, no such clarity occurs for the reader. Even though the story clearly seeks to imply that the parents are devoured by these lions of their children's fantasies, whether this is really the case is left to the judgment of each reader.

The key to understanding how Bradbury manages to keep this death in the realm of ambiguity lies in a close look at the story`s narrative technique. The story is told from a third-person limited point of view, with George, the family father, functioning as the main focalizer for most of the narrative. Although a significant part of the story consists of dialogue, the passages between these dialogues show that the narrator reveals this world by using George's perspective. Hence, the reader experiences not only George`s initial excitement about the nursery, the way he is "filled with admiration" ("The Veldt", 241) for this room, but also his growing concern which, for instance, shows in his inability to sleep: "In the middle of the night he was still awake and he knew his wife was awake" ("The Veldt", 246). Through portraying the events by using George's perspective, the reader can observe how the story's fatal end is connected to the parents' initially very naïve view of technology. Moreover, in narrating the story using the perspective of a parent, Bradbury increases ambiguity, as the children's feelings and plans are never explicitly revealed to the reader.

Until the climax, all the events are filtered through George`s perspective. However, at the story's peak, when the parents realize they are about to be attacked, the narrative jumps to the next scene, which marks a change of narrative focus. In this final scene, the reader takes on the perspective of the psychologist, who finds the two children sitting inside their nursery by themselves. Through this shift of perspective, Bradbury manages to end the story not with the parents' deaths, but with a scene which reaffirms the impression that the parents are indeed 'gone for good' and that their children are responsible for this disappearance. Yet, at the same time, Bradbury never gives his

readers the certainty that this is really the case, thus inciting further reflection on the story well after the reader has finished reading.

6.5. The Story's Classroom Potential
6.5.1. Themes and Characters

When it comes to assessing the classroom potential of a literary work, the central question to be asked is whether the themes addressed are of relevance to the lives of adolescent readers.

In order to answer this question regarding the *The Veldt*, it is once again worth taking a closer look at Bradbury's particular understanding of SF shown in this story. Bradbury's story is clearly not compatible with the Campbellian understanding of the term. Lacking all the necessary scientific explanations and even showing tendencies of a fantasy story, this narrative confirms that, for Bradbury, human psychology constitutes a clear priority over scientific accuracy. This aspect holds crucial importance for a discussion of the story's classroom potential: while scientific knowledge can quickly become outdated due to constant new discoveries and insights in the various sciences, the concerns Bradbury expresses about the psychological effects of a progressing technologization seem to gain rather than lose in relevance. As pointed out by Laino, Bradbury addresses those "cultural and anthropological issues, that with the passing of time, are becoming a key priority" (99). Moreover, the scholar demonstrates this claim with specific reference to *The Veldt*, which, he argues,

> displays what could happen to a generation of children heavily exposed to forms of comfort and entertainment that are more and more pervasive and connected with their basic needs. The fantastic playground represented by the nursery seems the ghostly version of the online gaming, the virtual reality, and life and communication of the social networks era. (Laino 101)

In this quote, Laino raises awareness for a crucial issue affecting today's young generation. Like Peter and Wendy, more and more young people are growing up predominantly spending their leisure time on technological devices. Whether it be smartphones, social networks, or the increasingly realistic cyber world of computer games, technology has become a constant and indispensable companion for many of today's young adults. However, while this increased presence of technology does offer a number of benefits, it also comes with significant negative side-effects. Studies have not only demonstrated the highly addictive potential of smartphones and other mobile

technologies (e.g. Salehan and Negahban 2632-2639), but researchers have also explored "a negative and lasting impact on users' ability to think, remember, pay attention, and regulate emotion" (Wilmer et al. 605).

While parents certainly are responsible for monitoring their children's use of such devices, it is also of crucial importance that young people themselves come to critically reflect on their own consumption behavior and its potential long-term effects. The story of the Hadleys, and in particular their children's development, serves as an excellent opportunity for encouraging adolescents to actively engage in such a critical reflection. When reading this text, students can profit from SF' unique potential to confront readers with a world that is different from their own reality, but similar enough for them to detect a connection between the story world and their own environment, thus inciting a new, potentially more critical perspective on the latter (see chapter 3.2.).

Besides the children's development, *The Veldt* also shows current relevance in that it touches upon the theme of passivity and the loss of autonomy through technology. This topic is highly significant for modern societies as human beings are increasingly relying on technology not only for entertainment purposes, but also for everyday living. A classroom activity concerning this topic could comprise the students seeking parallels between the Hadley's lifestyle and their own. To this end, they could reflect on a typical day in their lives and record how often and in what situations they usually rely on technological devices. At this point, a connection could also be established with the topic of consumerism and the role advertisements play in manipulating our perceptions of what we need and what we don't need.

Moreover, it is intergenerational matters and family issues in general that can be discussed in the context of the story. As mentioned in the analysis, the Hadley parents have grown up in a less technology-driven environment and thus, in contrast to their children, are able to look back at a different kind of life. The diverging experiences between the Hadleys and their children can be transferred almost one-to-one to any modern parent-teenager relationship. In fact, today's children and young adults are often referred to as so-called "digital natives" who grow up with the daily use of the Internet, computers and smartphones, while older generations, so-called "digital immigrants", were only introduced to such tools in their later lives (see i.e. Günther 42-59). Given this parallel between the story world and the current real-world context, *The*

Veldt constitutes an excellent starting point for various activities related to intergenerational matters. In this context, teachers could set the task of students interviewing their parents. This interview could include general questions related to their mothers' and fathers' own youth as well questions concerning their personal hopes and fears regarding the increasing technologization of society.

Finally, the story draws attention to another issue that is of central importance in the context of family matters nowadays. This aspect relates to the role technology plays in the decline of family communication. The breakdown of interpersonal communication due to technology is not only considered in the story, but currently affects many families around the world. Whether it be during dinner time or other formerly shared family activities, it is not uncommon that children and parents are more engaged with their smartphones or tablets than with one another. Therefore, an analysis of the Hadley's situation in combination with current newspaper articles or even pictures could be an effective tool for addressing this concern.

Even though the concerns addressed above might not necessarily correspond to the topics which have been outlined in chapter 4.2.4. as characteristic for YAL, the issues touched upon are nevertheless of crucial relevance for the lives of today's adolescents. While this might not have been the case for a teenager growing up in the 1950s, the story definitely holds significance for the young generation of the 21st century. As previously mentioned, the themes that will be of relevance and interest to young readers can never be established once and for all, but are always dependent on the context of their time (see chapter 4.2.4.). Given the paramount role that technology plays in our modern society, students' in-depth exploration of the above-mentioned themes seems more than justified. In fact, as the presence of technology in our society will most likely grow rather than decline in the future, it seems to be an almost indispensable step in the development of a young person's identity to critically contemplate the questions above. This factor is also recognized in the Austrian curriculum, which stresses the need to promote students' critical engagement with the growing technologization of society (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 9, 11).

It is the story's characters that further make *The Veldt* differ from a typical piece of YAL, in which teenagers usually constitute the main protagonists. In this story, there is no main protagonist around whom the story revolves, nor are the children introduced

in such a way that the reader could easily identify with them. Rather, Peter and Wendy are presented from their father's viewpoint, which results in a one-sided, even uncanny representation of these younger characters. However, it should be noted that Bradbury manages to address his respective themes so poignantly because the focus is not set on only one family member, but on the faulty relations between all of them. Furthermore, the children's rather eerie appearance adds to the story's tension, which also helps to promote reader interest. Finally, while the presence of a teenage character is undoubtedly a beneficial factor for promoting students' interest in a piece of writing, this very presence may perhaps hold more relevance for longer narratives, where teenagers follow a character's journey over a more extensive period of time.

6.5.2. Language and Length

As outlined in chapter 4.2.1., when choosing a text for classroom purposes, the factor of length matters for several reasons: on the one hand, length plays an important role in terms of a text's possible integration into a specific classroom setting, while on the other hand, it co-determines how challenging the text is perceived by student readers, thus influencing their motivation for further reading.

The Veldt can be described as a short story of medium length, with the exact number of pages varying due to different formatting styles of different editions. In the "Everyman's" edition consulted for this thesis, the text covers a total of 14 pages. It is, of course, difficult to determine the exact reading time students will take to finish the story, as this factor will depend on the individual learner's language proficiency and reading experience. However, since the text features numerous short dialogues that accelerate the reading process, even more inexperienced readers should be able to complete the story within an hour. Hence, the text could either be set as a single homework task, or, if time permits, it could be read during a 50-minute class. In fact, because the text features so many dialogues, *The Veldt* would ideally suit a lively in-class reading in which different students could read out the lines of different characters.

Regarding the factor of language, Bradbury's story offers several advantages for classroom use. While still confronting students with authentic language, the text is well manageable in terms of linguistic difficulty. On the one hand, this relates to the factor of sentence structure: as addressed in chapter 4.2.2., many authentic, non-simplified texts will prove problematic for classroom use, owing to their frequently complicated

syntax. Yet, as has been shown above, *The Veldt* features mostly short sentences and only a few more complex syntactic constructions. This reduces comprehension challenges for L2 learners. The vocabulary, on the other hand, also proves to be relatively accessible. As illustrated in the above analysis, the dialogues mostly consist of basic vocabulary, which will be known to most students. At the same time, the text contains numerous more sophisticated words such as "subside" ("The Veldt", 243), "persecute" ("The Veldt", 250), "contemplate" ("The Veldt", 250), or "reluctant" ("The Veldt", 242). Additionally, it is also the word "veldt'" itself, whose meaning will need to be discussed with the students. This could, perhaps, be done in the form of a pre-reading activity where students are shown a picture of an African veldt and are asked to share with their classmates what they associate with this picture. All in all, *The Veldt* presents readers with a balance of basic and advanced vocabulary, which is regarded as a desirable characteristic of a text chosen for the language classroom (see chapter 4.2.2.). Working on *The Veldt* in a classroom setting could thus provide an excellent opportunity for students to explore new vocabulary in a meaningful context. This opportunity is further facilitated by the short story's limited length, which allows for a more in-depth exploration of individual words (see chapter 2.2.).

Besides promoting vocabulary acquisition, the short story's capacity to direct readers' attention to single words enables a detailed exploration of Bradbury's poetic language. The above analysis has shown that Bradbury's literary style definitely merits closer investigation, in particular as regards the description of the veldt landscape. As outlined in chapter 4.2.2., this confrontation with "rich and creative language" is an important requirement to be met by a text chosen for classroom purposes. For students, the opportunity to explore the more poetic passages of the text constitutes a chance to familiarize themselves with a variety of different literary and rhetorical devices, which not only benefits their own writing, but additionally aids the development of more advanced skills of literary analysis.

6.5.3. Structure and Narrative Technique

Regarding its structure, *The Veldt* is highly accessible to student readers. The above analysis has demonstrated that Bradbury's story shows a chronological development of events. As pointed out in chapter 4.2.2., such a linear structure is a definite advantage for the language classroom since it facilitates textual comprehension for second language learners. The technique of foreshadowing employed throughout the

story represents no disruption to the students' reading flow, but instead, additionally prepares them for the outcome of the story.

While the story structure is relatively easy to follow, the narrative technique employed creates ambiguities which require students' active participation. Since the story is narrated from the limited perspective of an adult character, the only insight the reader receives into the minds of Peter and Wendy are the projections on their nursery walls. Their concrete feelings, plans and motivations are never given explicit expression. Furthermore, through the final change of perspective and the abrupt ending of the story, Bradbury avoids a satisfying resolution and leaves the reader with a number of unanswered questions: what exactly happened to the parents? Did the children really intend to kill George and Lydia or has the nursery developed a life of its own? What will happen to David McClean? As mentioned in chapter 2.2., this confrontation with ambiguity, particularly towards the end, can be seen as characteristic of the short story's reading experience and goes hand in hand with an active involvement of the reader, who is challenged to fill the existent gaps. However, when using the story in the classroom, teachers must also keep in mind that the students might not immediately appreciate this interpretational openness at the end. As Bushman and Haas point out, many young adults rather prefer the exact opposite of such an ambiguous outcome, namely "a neatly tied up ending [...] with closure that provides all the answers, so the student is burdened with no more thinking" (50). At the same time, they also mention that writers of YAL usually seek to stir their young audience emotionally and incite further reflection on the text, which can be best achieved through such an ambiguous ending (Bushman and Haas 50). When using Bradbury's story in a classroom context, it might therefore be useful to explicitly address this textual aspect in front of the class and invite the learners to share with their classmates how they experienced the story outcome: how did they feel after reading the text? What effect did this ending have on them? Why might the author have wanted them to feel this way? This discussion would not only help the students approach the story at hand, but it might also encourage them to generally develop greater appreciation for such thought-provoking story outcomes.

Furthermore, this existence of indeterminacies opens up various opportunities for writing and speaking activities. On the one hand, the text's ambiguity presents a powerful way of fostering an exchange of student opinions regarding these

indeterminacies, thus providing a context for practicing communicative competence (see chapter 4.1.). On the other hand, the indeterminacies inherent to the text can also be exploited to engage students in creative writing activities. Thus, students could be asked to create a diary entry of either Peter or Wendy, where they elaborate on the children's feelings and their perception of the situation. An alternative task could consist of the students writing their own endings to the story and explaining some of the questions that are left unanswered by the author.

Considering all these aspects, it can be argued that *The Veldt* constitutes an excellent choice for a classroom setting. As regards the age recommendations for a possible student readership, it seems that, although the story is in general very accessible, detecting its themes and reflecting on their relevance in the context of the students' own lives will require a certain degree of maturity. Moreover, students will need a certain level of language proficiency to deal with some of the more advanced vocabulary and to be able to understand the function and effect of the various literary techniques applied. It is primarily for these reasons that *The Veldt* may be considered an appropriate choice for students who have at least reached the upper secondary level in the Austrian school system.

7. The Pedestrian

7.1. Introduction and Summary

The Pedestrian was initially published in the slick magazine *The Reporter* in August 1951 (Eller 239). Shortly after this first publication, Bradbury further extended his short story into the novella *The Fireman*, which constituted the basis for his novel *Fahrenheit 451* (Seed 84-87).

Set in an unnamed, futuristic town in the year 2053, *The Pedestrian* revolves around the evening walk of a man named Leonard Mead. During his walk, Mead closely observes his surroundings, and the reader learns not only about his love for nature, but also about his alienation from society. Mead is the only person to take a walk at night, as the rest of the town's citizens remain in their homes, mesmerized by their television screens. Shortly before reaching his home, Mead is stopped by the police, interrogated about his unusual behavior, and finally arrested.

Bradbury's inspiration for this story came directly from his own experience as a pedestrian. In various interviews, the author mentioned repeated personal encounters with police forces during his evening walks, and he often expressed his indignation about being deemed suspicious for such an innocent activity:

> When was the last time you were stopped by the police in your neighborhood because you like to walk, and perhaps think, at night? It happened to me just often enough that, irritated, I wrote "The Pedestrian", a story of a time, fifty years from now, when a man is arrested and taken off for clinical study because he insists on looking at untelevised reality, and breathing un-air-conditioned air. (Bradbury qtd. in Mogen 97)

Apart from these personal experiences, Bradbury was also influenced by the sociopolitical context of the 1950s. As was briefly mentioned in chapter 5, in the U.S. the years following World War II were marked by rigid anticommunist politics, above all those of senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy played a significant role in spreading a climate of fear and paranoia about communists having infiltrated the government and other areas such as the educational sector or the artistic community (Storrs 2, 9). The senator, whose name is often mentioned in connection with the so-called "Second Red Scare", exploited this tense atmosphere to legitimize espionage activities and personal hearings. In these interrogations, interviewees were asked to provide information about their own political views and to report potential communist sympathizers. Any

suspicious behavior or remarks could lead to a person's incarceration, confiscation of passport, or denial of employment (Storrs 2). In the entertainment sector, refusals to provide the relevant information often resulted in the respective actors being blacklisted by the Hollywood industry (Storrs 9). In 1950, a booklet called "Red Channels" was released, featuring more than one hundred names of writers, producers, and actors that were officially classified as communists by the state (Storrs 9). It was this very political climate of fear and suspicion that provided another important source of inspiration for *The Pedestrian* and later *Fahrenheit 451* (Seed 84-87; Bogár 172).

Finally, when examining the historical context of the story, one must also mention another significant development of the time. As Beaumont points out, the story of *The Pedestrian* is a product of the 1950s and, as such, it stems from a time when America first witnessed the "rise of the automobile" (73) and, above all, "the rise of television" (73). Between 1946 and 1951, a mere four years, the number of households owning a TV rose from 6000 in 1946 to 12 million in 1951 (Stephens, "The History of Television"). Bradbury was gravely concerned by this growing popularity of the TV and with it, the rise of mass culture. As Rollyson explains, it was Bradbury's view of this culture as having the "tendency to eschew complexity of thought and to embrace the simple sentiments of pressure groups" (51) that, in light of the complex political situation of the time, gave rise to his concern.

Having outlined the historical context and the significant events that influenced Bradbury's story, the following section will focus on the text itself, starting with an analysis of its central themes.

7.2. Thematic Concerns
7.2.1. A World of Phantoms and Robots

The story of *The Pedestrian* warns of the dehumanizing effects that could follow from an irresponsible consumption of technological novelties. In *The Veldt*, Bradbury already touched upon this theme by showing how the Hadley children's attachment to machines strips them of important human qualities, such as the ability to experience love and empathy towards other human beings. In this story, the author addresses the theme of dehumanization from a different viewpoint and with a different focus; through the alienated perspective of Leonard Mead, Bradbury portrays a sterile, technology-

driven society in which the citizens' dehumanized state is mainly given expression through their mental and physical inactivity.

In the story, the theme of dehumanization is established in the context of this society's extensive media consumption. During his evening walk, Mead passes several houses and glimpses into their living rooms. However, instead of lively human beings, he can only detect shadowy figures, staring at their viewing screens while waiting to be entertained: "'What is it now?', he asked the houses, noticing his wrist watch. 'Eight thirty P.M? Time for a dozen assorted murders? A quiz? A comedian falling off the stage?'" (Bradbury, "The Pedestrian", 601). In this quote, one can distinguish Bradbury's above-mentioned skepticism towards television and the mass media. Simple entertainment shows which have captivated masses of people and seem to have put them into a state of paralysis. This impression is established through Mead's perception of these people not as humans, but as "gray phantoms" ("The Pedestrian", 600), who appear to him "like the dead" ("The Pedestrian", 602). The very phrasing highlights not only the passivity prevailing inside these houses, but also the loss of individuality. As Seed points out, "Every house and every inhabitant has become as interchangeable as the TV channels and the programs themselves" (85). Moreover, it is also the perceived numbness of these people that occupies Mead; "the gray or multicolored lights", he notices, are "touching [people's] faces, but never really touching them" ("The Pedestrian", 602). Thus, what Bradbury creates through these impressions is the image of a society full of homogenous people who have lost their ability to experience intense emotion and who have given up their autonomous and potentially critical mindsets.

This paralyzed condition of society is reinforced through the absence of humans from the evening streets. The town's emptiness is repeatedly accentuated throughout the narrative, starting with the story's initial sentence. As stated in this first line, Leonard Mead finds himself alone in the silence of an empty town at 8 o'clock in the evening ("The Pedestrian", 600). This is a time at which normally one would not expect the streets to be this deserted. Within the same sentence, the "buckling concrete walk" ("The Pedestrian", 600) that is already lightly overgrown with grass implies that Mead is not only alone tonight, but that the city sidewalks have long been left empty. This impression is soon confirmed by Mead's subsequent reflections, which reveal that "in ten years of walking by night or day, he had never met another person walking, not

once in all that time" ("The Pedestrian", 601). This constant reinforcement of the town's deserted condition plays an important role in the story. Since the impression is established through the perspective of the only pedestrian, Leonard Mead, it functions as a signifier for the isolated position he occupies in this futuristic town. Moreover, Baker points out that the emptiness of the town also speaks for the general condition of the citizens (495). More precisely, the absence of other people from the streets reinforces the impression of a passive society that no longer experiences the need for physical movement or curiosity for the 'real' world outside.

Furthermore, in 2053, the majority of people not only live isolated from the outside world, but they also seem to be isolated from each other. This is once again reflected in Mead's perception of the city's nocturnal atmosphere, and more specifically, in the perceived lack of any sound. In this story, it is not only the streets that appear silent, but it is also the individual houses that manifest themselves as "gray and silent" buildings ("The Pedestrian", 603). Although it is a relatively vague indicator, this appearance of the houses seems to allude to the lack of interpersonal communication between the people inside them. The impression is solidified when Mead even interrupts his walk, hoping to have heard human voices coming from these houses: "Was that a murmur of laughter from within a moon-white house? He hesitated, but went on when nothing more happened" ("The Pedestrian", 601). The mere fact that Mead reacts so sensitively to any potential sound coming from these buildings indicates his desire to detect some liveliness inside them. Yet, as the quote shows, he searches in vain. In this futuristic society, the silence not only prevails on the empty streets, but also inside people's living rooms.

Moreover, this society's dehumanized state is also revealed through Mead's contemplations on the appearance of the town streets during daytime:

> "During the day, it was a thunderous surge of cars, the gas stations open, a great insect rustling and a ceaseless jockeying for position as the scarab-beetles, a faint incense puttering from their exhausts, skimmed homeward to the far directions" ("The Pedestrian", 601).

As the passage illustrates, the nightly emptiness of the streets stands in stark contrast to their overcrowded appearance during the day. Yet, instead of softening the image of a dehumanized society, the quote further reinforces this very impression. More precisely, it sketches a town that is not filled with human beings but crowded with cars.

By describing these cars as a mass of swarming beetles, Bradbury effectively conveys to the reader the atmosphere of restlessness and haste that prevails on these town streets during the day. By using metonymy, that is, by drawing the readers' attention to the cars without specifically mentioning the people driving them, the author additionally encourages his readers to contemplate whether these vehicles are even operated by humans. This thought seems particularly justified in light of the fact that Mead's only encounter on the nightly street is exactly such a driverless vehicle, which acts as both a police car and officer at the same time ("The Pedestrian", 603). As Mead notices when he is forced to enter it, "there was no one in the front seat, no one in the car at all" ("The Pedestrian", 603). As this quote shows, in this futuristic town, automatized machines, which are completely incapable of any reflective judgment, are authorized to perform human jobs and even decide over a person's future. Hence, it is also realistic that such robotic machines drive around independently during the day and possibly perform tasks for their owners, who can thus stay home and watch television. Finally, it is central to note that even if the cars mentioned in the quoted extract were operated by humans, this would not necessarily alleviate the impression of passivity that prevails among the town's inhabitants. Rather, it would reinforce the image of a passive mass of people who never leave the sterility of their cars and who are unable to consciously experience the world outside as they are always in a hurry to get from one place to the next.

In summary, it can be argued that the impression of a dehumanized society is created not only through the peculiar description of the town's citizens, but also through the way Bradbury alludes to the extensive presence of robotic machines in this futuristic town.

7.2.2. Individuality, Non-Conformity, and Nature – Mead's Walk

The previous section has demonstrated that the society described in this story is one that seems to exist in a state of paralysis. This particular image is established through the perspective of Leonard Mead, whose reflections simultaneously reveal the resentment he feels towards the passivity, numbness, and lack of individuality that prevails around him. Apart from these thoughts of resentment, it is also the act of walking itself that positions Mead in stark contrast to the rest of the town's inhabitants. The following section shall examine in more detail the significance of this walk in terms of what it reveals about Mead as a character.

Primarily, the act of walking discloses Mead's independent mind and his capability to take self-determined action. As the following quote shows, Mead is not only the last person to walk the deserted streets, but he also knows that his action does not correspond to socially accepted norms of behavior:

> Mr. Leonard Mead would pause, cock his head, listen, look and march on, his feet making no noise on the lumpy walk. For long ago he had wisely changed to sneakers when strolling at night, because the dogs in intermittent squads would parallel his journey with barkings if he wore hard heels, and lights might click on and faces appear and an entire street be startled by the passing of a lone figure, himself, in the early November evening. ("The Pedestrian", 600)

As the extract illustrates, Mead is fully aware that if he were to be seen by anyone, his behavior would be considered abnormal. Though he is most likely not conscious of the consequences that could and ultimately will follow from his action, he at least seems to know that his walk is associated with certain dangers. Still, as he openly explains to the police, Mead has been breaking this societal rule "every night, for years" ("The Pedestrian", 603) and continues to do so in the present. Hence, in his decision to walk, he is presented as an individual that is not afraid to resist the dominant norms of behavior.

Furthermore, Mead's evening walk also reveals him as an individual who still experiences human needs. After all, the text indicates that wandering through the nightly town is precisely what "Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do" ("The Pedestrian", 600). This desire for movement and for contact with the 'real' world distinguishes him from the other inhabitants of this city. As previously shown, Mead is trapped in a world where leaving one's house is an action solely performed via one's car and is normally linked to an external purpose. His walk, however, is of a different nature. As Beaumont points out, for Mead the action "is not instrumental" (80), but it constitutes "an end in itself" (80). Later in the story, this is even confirmed by Mead himself when he informs the police car about his desire "for air, and to see, and just to walk" ("The Pedestrian", 603). These are needs which otherwise no longer seem to exist in a society that has learned to be satisfied with artificially produced air and for whom 'seeing' means watching TV.

As for his experience of the outside world, Mead's focus on very specific aspects of his surroundings shows that he is alienated from the sterility of this town. Mead cannot

identify with an environment that, just like the inside of the police car, appears to him as "too clean and hard and metallic" ("The Pedestrian", 603). As he is walking through the city, he thus shows an inherent need to turn his attention away from the sterility of the town and towards the natural world lying beyond it. For example: he notices the feeling of "the frosty air" ("The Pedestrian", 600) inside his lungs, and he enjoys stepping over those "grassy seams" (600) that are growing out of the sidewalk beneath his feet. Also, he appreciates a rare source of natural light as he is walking down "moonlit avenues" (600) while making his way towards "the hidden sea" (600). For Mead, clinging to these last bits of nature seems to present a possibility to escape to a more authentic reality.

Finally, it is also the specific way in which Mead responds to these natural surroundings that merits a closer examination. A good example is the following passage:

> There was a good crystal frost in the air, it cut the nose and made the lungs blaze like a Christmas tree. You could feel the cold light going on and off, all the branches filled with invisible snow. He listened to the faint push of his soft shoes, through autumn leaves with satisfaction and whistled a cold, quiet whistle between his teeth, occasionally picking up a leaf as he passed, examining its skeletal pattern in the infrequent lamplights as he went on, smelling its rusty smell. ("The Pedestrian", 600-601)

The quote neatly portrays the detailed manner in which Mead absorbs each aspect of the nocturnal atmosphere through his breathing, his ears, his nose, and even through touching the autumn leaf. In these lines, Mead is revealed as an individual that is fully present in the moment with every part of his body. Hence, he emerges as the exact opposite of numb.

However, more than just providing information about Mead, the passage also emphasizes the significance of nature for us human beings. These natural surroundings seem to stimulate Mead's senses and make him feel alive. To some extent, this very depiction of Mead's interaction with nature is reminiscent of a thought expressed by Henry David Thoreau in the 19th century. In his essay *Walking*, Thoreau describes man as a "part and parcel of Nature" (3) and he propagates the act of wandering in nature, where, he claims, one can find time to reflect, where one can "return to [one's] senses" (10), and not least, where one can experience "absolute freedom" (3). Though Mead is clearly not wandering in the kind of untouched nature

that Thoreau described in his essay, Bradbury nevertheless seems to share this idea that we are a part of nature and that we need nature to feel whole and to prosper.

7.2.3. Totalitarianism

The above sections have examined the paralyzed condition of Bradbury's futuristic society and they have also shown that Mead differs in thought and action from the passive figures around him. Both aspects are relevant for this last part of the analysis, which focuses on Mead's encounter with the police. Through the conversation between Mead and the car, Bradbury reveals that the passive behavior of the masses is occasioned by a totalitarian regime in which conformism is expected and personal freedoms are no longer permitted.

The first hint in this direction is already given when Mead first notices the police car. As indicated by his astonishment at spotting this "rare, incredible thing" ("The Pedestrian", 602), personal encounters with police forces are by no means common occurrences in 2053. However, Mead not only expresses his surprise at discovering the lone car, but his reflections also allude to the circumstances responsible for such rare sightings:

> [I]n a city of three million, there was only one police car left, wasn't that correct? Ever since a year ago, 2052, the election year, the force had been cut down from three cars to one. Crime was ebbing; there was no need now for the police, save for this one lone car wandering and wandering the empty streets. ("The Pedestrian", 602)

Like Mead himself, the police car is a relic of former times, and as the quote suggests, recent political events are responsible for this fact. Although Mead's reflections never reveal the exact measures taken by the government to bring about this new situation, one can infer from the story context that the diminished necessity for police forces must, in some way, be associated with the behavior of the town's inhabitants. As was outlined in chapter 7.2.1., while walking through the nocturnal city, Mead did not notice any autonomous individuals, but passive people who appeared to be glued to their TVs. Hence, when considering these previous observations in the context of the quote cited above, the impression arises that the reduced need for external control through police forces might be due to the fact that the state is employing different, more effective means of control. More precisely, it seems as if the government uses the

medium of the TV as a tool for psychological control in order to generate conformity among the town's inhabitants.

The impression of a totalitarian regime is increasingly confirmed when Mead is suddenly caught in a police interrogation. "What are you doing out?" ("The Pedestrian", 602), he is asked by the police car. The question alone is significant in what it reveals about the political situation of this town, in which leaving one's house by foot is an action that apparently requires extensive justification. Moreover, Mead is not only asked to explain the nature of his nightly stroll, but he is also confronted with various personal questions that are not the least related to his walk. With his hands in the air, he has to inform the police about his address, his household equipment, his profession, and even his marital status ("The Pedestrian", 602-603). The mere fact that this kind of information is even relevant to the authorities shows that in this society, former personal matters have been turned into matters of state. In fact, these questions give the impression that the sole purpose of the interrogation lies in determining whether Mead is to be classified as a conforming or non-conforming citizen.

During the interrogation, Mead proves that he is unable to answer the questions of the police car satisfactorily. It is not only his unmarried status, but also the information that he is a writer by profession that provokes a negative reaction from his counterpart. The latter answer is immediately rejected by the car as "no profession" ("The Pedestrian", 602), which does not even seem to surprise Mead. As his reflections disclose, he is well aware that "[m]agazines and books didn't sell anymore" ("The Pedestrian", 602) and he even admits to himself that he actually "hadn't written in years" ("The Pedestrian", 602). Together with the police's rejection of his answer, Mead's reflections thus point towards a government-supported decline in writing and reading. This is a topic that Bradbury explored in several of his works, above all in his novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Moreover, during his lifetime, Bradbury also publicly spoke in favor of reading and writing, and he continuously stressed their importance for independent thinking (Bogár 164). Books, he was convinced, are particularly important for any society not only because they preserve the knowledge of the past (Bogár 164), but also because they have the capacity to stimulate the imagination and teach people to "read between the lines" (LeManager 72). Although *Fahrenheit 451* constitutes by far the most extensive exploration of the topic of reading in the context of totalitarianism, this story also

provides important hints that the government has no interest in citizens that read and write and are thus able to think for themselves.

Furthermore, it is also the justification Mead provides for being outside that is not well received by the police car. The following extract provides a solid impression of the scenario:

> "What are you doing out?"
> "Walking," said Leonard Mead.
> "Walking!"
> "Just walking," he said simply, but his face felt cold.
> "Walking just walking, walking?
> "Yes, sir?"
> "Walking where, for what?"
> "Walking for air, walking to see"
> […]
> "Just walking, Mr Mead?"
> "Yes."
> "But you haven't explained for what purpose."
> "I explained; for air, and to see, and just to
> walk."
> ("The Pedestrian", 601-602)

The very way this conversation is going back and forth between Mead and the car indicates that the reason he provided, his walking for the sake of walking, is not considered sufficient in the eyes of authorities, or, to formulate it more aptly, the police car has not been programmed to accept Mead's response as a valid answer. Hence, instead of putting an end to the interrogation, his repeated statement makes him even more suspicious. Consequently, Mead is now asked to explain whether his home is equipped with an air-conditioner and most importantly, whether he has "a viewing screen to see with" ("The Pedestrian", 601). This phrase is particularly significant as it shows how the government seeks to equate society's understanding of 'seeing' with watching TV, thus classifying any other impressions as unnecessary. Mead, of course, fails to answer this latter question satisfactorily with a 'yes' and is immediately informed about this failure through the subsequent silence, which "in itself was an accusation" ("The Pedestrian", 602). When he finally states that he has been enjoying nature and the outside world not only tonight, but "every night for years" ("The Pedestrian", 603), Mead provides the decisive piece of evidence that he is to be classified as a threat that needs to be removed immediately. Thus, without further hesitation or any right to a trial, Mead is taken straight to receive his treatment at the "The Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies" ("The Pedestrian", 603).

Thus, Mead's journey finally ends with him being arrested; not necessarily for the act of walking itself, but for what this walk reveals about him. Through his walk and through the information he provides to the police, Mead presents himself as deviating from a prescribed norm. The main fault of this deviation, it seems, consists in the preservation of his autonomous mind and behavior. In the interrogation, Mead has openly confessed that he does not own a viewing screen and thus, he has demonstrated his refusal to consume those technologies used by the government for manipulation. Mead, who has kept his mind clear, is thus fully aware of the societal decay around him. Also, he is the last one to experience a need for receiving other inputs than those coming from a screen. His walk, it has been shown, is no more than an expression of a natural desire for movement and for encountering something authentic and real among all the artificiality that surrounds him. This, however, is exactly what makes it problematic in this society. As Beaumont points out, to Mead, walking outside functions as the fulfilment of a human need for which there can be no tolerance in a society where people are supposed to long for nothing else but TV shows (80).

To conclude, in *The Pedestrian*, Bradbury once again puts the spotlight on the social and psychological implications connected to the growing technologization of society. While the story of *The Veldt* has explored these implications in the context of a single family, this narrative offers a broader perspective. In *The Pedestrian*, Bradbury shows that extensive technological progress has led to a decay of nature and to a state in which machines are the ones deciding human fates. Worst of all, in 2053, people are no longer capable of questioning any of these developments, as their own uncritical consumption behavior has turned them into docile marionettes of a totalitarian government. Through the fate of Leonard Mead, the narrative finally illustrates the horrid consequences faced by those who do manage to escape manipulation. In the story, Mead's autonomous behavior is ultimately classified as a "[r]egressive" ("The Pedestrian", 603) action for which he must face whatever punishment is considered appropriate by those in power.

7.3. Language and Style

In chapter 5, it was mentioned that a balanced use of colloquialisms and poetic language is widely considered the main characteristic of Bradbury's literary style. Such a balance could already be detected in *The Veldt*, and much the same can be observed with regard to *The Pedestrian.* However, the two narratives significantly differ in how this balance is achieved. Whereas in *The Veldt* Bradbury presents readers with some colloquial and some more poetic passages, in *The Pedestrian*, Bradbury reveals Mead's reflections by using an overall colloquial tone and embellishes these reflections with poetic language.

Another general observation regarding the story's language concerns the importance of linguistic details. The narrative is very dense in that almost every word conveys relevant information about the fictional world and its characters. In this sense, *The Pedestrian* seems like a perfect illustration of Poe's idea that in a short story "[e]very word *tells* and there is *not* a word which does not tell" (Poe 64; italics in the original). Adjectives are a good example in this respect. They are important for the entire narrative and in particular for creating the gloomy atmosphere of the nocturnal city. For instance, it is a "misty evening" ("The Pedestrian", 600) when Mr. Mead, a "lone figure" ("The Pedestrian", 600), is walking past "dark windows" ("The Pedestrian", 600) in the "infrequent lamplights" ("The Pedestrian", 601). Moreover, Bradbury also uses participial modifiers which function as adjectives. This can, for example, be observed when he mentions "the buckling concrete walk" ("The Pedestrian", 600) or when he describes Mead's journey towards the "hidden sea" ("The Pedestrian", 600).

Furthermore, Bradbury once again draws on repetition to achieve an intense effect. The most striking example is the word "walking", which is repeated 10 times during Mead's interrogation ("The Pedestrian", 602-603). As shown in the extract quoted in chapter 7.2.3., the word is constantly thrown back and forth between Mead and the car. While Mead's answer seems completely natural to him, it is immediately de-normalized through the car's constant repetition of the word in the form of an exclamation or a question. Another example of repetition can be detected in the following quote, which describes Mead's first impressions upon entering the prison cell inside the car: "It smelled of riveted steel. It smelled of harsh antiseptic; it smelled too clean and hard and metallic" ("The Pedestrian", 603). Here, Bradbury once again highlights Mead's sensual experience of his surroundings, a technique he uses during

the rest of the narrative to convey Mead's appreciation of nature. However, in this quote, the repetition of the word "smell" signals the exact opposite; it intensifies Mead's despair over the realization that he is now trapped in an environment where he will find none of the invigorating stimuli he encountered outside. A final noteworthy case of repetition is provided in the story's very last sentence, when "[t]he car move[s] down the empty river-bed streets and off away, leaving the empty streets with the empty side-walks, and no sound and no motion all the rest of the chill November night" ("The Pedestrian", 603). In this last sentence, Bradbury's trifold repetition of the word "empty" provides his readers with a strong and final reminder that even the last pedestrian has now been removed from the streets.

Moreover, Bradbury also underlines the town's emptiness through the use of imagery. Through similes and metaphors, he connects the deserted appearance of the city streets to images of dry nature; the streets are compared to "streams in a dry season" ("The Pedestrian", 601) or "dry riverbeds" ("The Pedestrian", 601), and the city as a whole is likened to a "wintry, windless Arizona desert" ("The Pedestrian", 601). These images not only lead the reader to a more intense experience of the city atmosphere, but they could also point towards the decay of nature in this sterile, futuristic town. In this use of nature imagery, one can also detect a parallel to *The Veldt*. As shown in chapter 6.2.3., Bradbury uses the image of a dry, barren landscape to present the Hadley children's distorted psyche. More precisely, it has been argued that this veldt could be read as a symbol for human nature which, through the impact of technology, has never been given the chance to prosper. Hence, this kind of nature imagery seems to be a motif repeatedly employed by the author to illustrate the destructive impact of technology on humans as well as their environment.

In the narrative, figurative language is also employed for conveying this society's dehumanized state. On the one hand, this is achieved through death-related imagery. The houses appear as "tombs" ("The Pedestrian", 602), the residential area is compared to a "graveyard" ("The Pedestrian", 600), and the citizens are described as "the dead" ("The Pedestrian", 602) or as "gray phantoms" ("The Pedestrian", 600). On the other hand, the image of the insect is also central for conveying a dehumanized society. As illustrated above, Mead perceives the happenings during daytime as an "insect rustling" ("The Pedestrian", 601) and the cars as "scarab-beetles" ("The Pedestrian", 601) (see chapter 7.2.1.). Even the light coming from the television is

described as "firefly light" ("The Pedestrian", 600). Furthermore, it is also Mead himself who is drawn to the light of the police car like "a night moth" ("The Pedestrian", 601) and subsequently examined "like a museum specimen" ("The Pedestrian", 602). This last comparison of Mead to an animal exhibited in a museum is particularly significant in that it highlights the strange position Mead occupies in this society. As somebody who still enjoys such activities as taking a walk outside, he represents an almost extinct species that seems to have no place in contemporary society.

Apart from this insect imagery, there are a few other examples of figurative language which are central to Mead's characterization. For instance, Bradbury uses a simile to describe the satisfaction experienced by Mead upon inhaling the crystal frost, which "made the lungs blaze like a Christmas tree inside; you could feel the cold light going on and off, all the branches filled with invisible snow" ("The Pedestrian", 600). This simile neatly demonstrates Mead's conscious experience of his environment as well as his enduring ability to use his imagination. In combination with the second person pronoun "you", it also invites readers to imagine this feeling themselves. In another part of the story, Mead is described as walking through the nightly town "with only his shadow moving like the shadow of a hawk" ("The Pedestrian", 601). This simile is significant in that it establishes a connection between the character of Mead and a wild bird commonly associated with notions of freedom, strength, and independence.

Furthermore, Bradbury also characterizes his main and only protagonist through the peculiar description of objects associated with him. This relates in particular to the description of Leonard Mead's home:

> They passed one house on one street a moment later, one house in an entire city of houses that were dark, but this one particular house had all of its electric lights brightly lit, every window a loud yellow illumination, square and warm in the cool darkness. "That's my house", said Leonard Mead. ("The Pedestrian", 604)

As shown in this quote, through the warm light emanating from it, Mead's house is presented in direct opposition to the cold and dark buildings around it. However, more than providing a mere description of his house, the quote also alludes to Mead as a person who stands out from the rest of society. He has preserved his individuality and his humanity in a world full of phantoms. Through the example, one can also notice the importance of adjectives in this narrative; Mead's house is

not only brightly lit, but the illumination is also described as "loud" and thus as contrasting with the aforementioned silence associated with the other houses. Moreover, the adjective "yellow" classifies the light emanating from Mead's house as warm and inviting and therefore as different from the "fierce white cone of light" ("The Pedestrian", 601) of the police car, which is associated with sterility and danger.

For the description of the robotic police car, Bradbury draws on the technique of personification. The car speaks with a "metallic whisper" ("The Pedestrian", 602) or "phonograph voice" ("The Pedestrian", 602). Furthermore, it has a "radio throat" ("The Pedestrian", 603) and "electric eyes" ("The Pedestrian", 603). Also, it is described as showing signs of hesitation. Yet, this hesitation is immediately identified as an automatized process as "information, somewhere, was dropping card by punch-slotted card" ("The Pedestrian", 603). As can be noted from the examples, Bradbury equips the car with human body parts, but, at the same time, he also makes sure to highlight its artificial, non-human core. Through this very description, he adds another dimension to the topic of dehumanization; the streets of this town are no longer inhabited by people, but by robots which, despite showing basic human features and even doing human jobs, are nevertheless machines that function via automated processes and are unable to comprehend human feelings.

Finally, Bradbury also experiments with sentence structure to increase the story's effect. This can be seen in the very first paragraph, when he describes the beginning of Mead's nightly journey:

> To enter out into that silence that was the city at eight o'clock of a misty evening in November, to put your feet upon that buckling concrete walk, to step over grassy seams and make your way, hands in pockets, through the silences, that was what Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do. ("The Pedestrian", 600)

Instead of an S-V-O sentence structure, the story begins with a number of infinitive constructions which help introduce Mead's walk as an action of which he not only enjoys every part, but also as something that is out of the ordinary. Moreover, the extract quoted above serves as a good example for the average length of the sentences which represent Mead's reflections. In the portrayal of Mead's thoughts, such long, run-on sentences appear extensively, which adds to the impression that, in contrast to the rest, he is still capable of engaging in more complex ways of thinking.

Quite the opposite can be observed in the conversation between Mead and the car, where the utterances are extremely truncated and sometimes only consist of a single word. This highlights not only the deterioration of oral communication in this society, but it also sheds light on the power dynamics between Mead and the car. More precisely, the very way in which the questions about Mead's personal life as well as his evening walk are fired at him by the police car indicates that this is not a conversation between equal communication partners. On the contrary, Mead is trapped in a police interrogation in which he, as the suspect, is expected to provide brief, fact-based answers without being given the chance to explain himself at length.

7.4. Structure and Narrative Technique

The Pedestrian shows a linear structure in that the story events are narrated in chronological order. At the beginning of his narrative, Bradbury briefly introduces the reader to the story's setting, namely a city at 8 o'clock in late autumn ("The Pedestrian", 600), and he provides detailed information about Mead's habit of walking and the precautions he normally takes during those walks. Only then does Bradbury reveal what happened "on this particular evening" (600). The story then portrays Mead's impressions and thoughts during the evening walk and his encounter with the police car. Mead's interrogation by the car marks a rise in tension that finally results in the story's climax, his arrest, which is followed by a final impression of the now fully empty streets.

Regarding the story's narrative technique, a parallel to the *The Veldt* can be detected. This parallel consists in a shift of narrative perspective after the climax, which can be observed in both stories. In *The Pedestrian*, this leads to the following narrative situation: except for the last sentence, which is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, the story is narrated from a third-person limited point of view, with Leonard Mead functioning as the focalizer.

This narrative technique accounts for the fact that there are some informational gaps in this story which need to be filled in by the reader. Since Mead's personal reflections are intended for no one else but himself, they naturally do not center on recounting detailed information about this society, but they revolve around the personal feelings and thoughts that come up during his walk. Although these contemplations do give a reasonable impression of the social and political situation of this futuristic town, they

by no means provide readers with a complete picture. The example that best illustrates this is perhaps Mead's first impression of the police car, which immediately brings to his mind "the election year" ("The Pedestrian", 602) and the decrease in police forces connected to it. While Mead most likely knows a lot more about what exactly happened since this election, this information is not relevant to him at this moment and it is therefore not revealed to the readers.

At the end of his story, Bradbury neither provides his readers with a positive outcome of events nor with all the answers to the questions raised in the narrative. This was also the case at the end of *The Veldt*, where Bradbury kept secret whether the Hadley parents had really been killed by their own children. Even though no such drastic ambiguities persist after this story, there is still one central question that causes significant irritation. This question essentially revolves around the treatment that Mead is to receive at his final destination, the "Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies" ("The Pedestrian", 603). As the story does not explain what exactly this term really stands for, the reader is left to further speculate on the kind of future awaiting Mead at the end of his journey.

7.5. The Story's Classroom Potential
7.5.1. Themes and Characters

For the exploration of *The Pedestrian's* classroom potential, it is once again vital to examine the thematic relevance this story holds for today's young adults. As mentioned in chapter 3.2.4., a text chosen for classroom purposes should present students with topics that are interesting to them and that can help them develop their own values and find their role in society.

Before examining this text's classroom potential with regard to the specific topics addressed, a brief look shall be devoted to *The Pedestrian* as an SF story. Just like *The Veldt*, this narrative demonstrates that Bradbury's interest lies in the exploration of the psychological and social implications of technological progress. In *The Pedestrian,* the main novum is the specific sociopolitical order of the futuristic town described. According to David Malmgren, this kind of novum is often at play in dystopian or utopian narratives to promote a critical reflection on issues of "Self and Society" (see chapter 2.1.1.). As mentioned above, Bradbury sought to encourage such a reflection among his readers to make them sensitive to the threats he perceived

as imminent in the years following World War II. However, despite being grounded in the political context of its time, this story also seems to address societal concerns that are regaining relevance at this very moment.

Therefore, a parallel can be detected between the society presented in this story and our modern society. As shown in the analysis, Bradbury's narrative sketches a town full of inhabitants who are keenly addicted to the stimulation coming from their TVs and no longer engage in independent thinking or interpersonal communication. If not in front of their TVs, these people are caught in busy daytime routines that leave no room for reflection or attention to their surroundings. While this might have been an exaggerated representation of the prevailing state of the 1950s, it seems like a rather accurate depiction of the condition of our modern society. The only significant difference lies in the technological medium of choice; while Bradbury's story is concerned with the TV, nowadays, it is the smartphone which has our constant attention.

Even the zombie metaphor employed in the narrative has snuck into our modern vocabulary in the form of the word 'smombie', a portmanteau of 'zombie' and 'smartphone', which was voted Germany's "Youth Word of the Year" in 2015 (Butler, "Smombie as Hippest German Word"). Strikingly, when viewing current articles and blog posts discussing this term in the context of our modern smartphone addiction, one can sometimes even find a direct reference to Ray Bradbury and stories like *The Pedestrian* and *Fahrenheit 451* (e.g. ElShorbagy, "Smombies: The New Walking Dead"). Moreover, it is also the specific societal developments addressed in these articles that are often reminiscent of Bradbury's story. Frequently addressed concerns relate, for example, to the decline of interpersonal communication or the loss of creative thinking and personal reflection due to our constant need for stimulation (e.g. Gross, "Have Smartphones Killed Boredom"). In a society that is always occupied with phones and tablets, there is neither room for this kind of thinking, nor are people any longer capable of it. As Gross states, instead of enjoying their time offline, many people have become so used to receiving input from their phones that they become anxious and depressed once they are left without their devices ("Have Smartphones Killed Boredom"). Articles like these constitute great resources for the classroom to help students see the connection between the story and their own world and to spark lively discussion. Alternatively, teachers could also try to let their students discover these

connections themselves, for example by asking them to draw a profile of the 'typical' citizen of 2053 and compare it to that of a 'typical' citizen in 2020.

Furthermore, this story provides inspiration for various explorative homework tasks. An idea would be to engage students in an observation of their immediate surroundings. While taking a walk on the streets or simply on their way home from school, they could be asked to pay close attention to what is happening around them and afterwards, write down their observations. For this task, it seems useful to equip the students with a few guiding questions to give them some idea of what they could focus on. For example: what sensations do they notice on themselves? How do the people around them appear? Is there anything about their environment that stands out to them (e.g. a beautiful house, a tree etc.)? If they are taking a familiar route, do they notice anything new that they have overlooked so far? Alternatively, students could also conduct a 24-hour self-experiment. During this time, they should use their phone only for making calls that are absolutely necessary, but not for instant messaging, social media, or any other kind of internet research. Afterwards, they should reflect on the thoughts and feelings that have come up and write a short report. Activities like these can present a refreshing alternative to a common homework task and provide students with new impressions and perspectives to discuss with their classmates.

Finally, the topic of responsible media consumption also merits discussion in terms of the story's political implications. In *The Pedestrian*, readers are presented with a totalitarian regime which apparently uses the media for thought manipulation. In this regard, Mogen points out that the dynamics described in Bradbury's story are not exclusively relevant for the context of the 1950s, but rather, the author describes "patterns that can recur in all societies" (107). Especially today, his warnings seem to gain new significance. In countries like China or North Korea, heavy censorship practice and constant surveillance have reached a stage that seems like a frightening realization of Bradbury's dystopian vision. However, it is also in the western world that one can observe increased attacks on the free press and efforts of political leaders to discredit critical journalists. In this context, it must also be noted that the internet and in particular social media platforms are increasingly exploited to disseminate so-called "fake news", that is, alleged truths which lack any fact-based foundation and which are meant to discredit political opponents. This "verbal warfare against facts" (173), Bogár argues, is becoming a popular political strategy in many parts of the world: "We can

see it at work in the United States under Donald Trump, in Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in Hungary under Viktor Orbán, and in Russia under Vladimir Putin, to name a few" (Bogár 173). Hence, more than ever, these current times require people that are capable of thinking critically and that know the importance of informing themselves about the reliability of their sources and the validity of the information they are drawing from the internet. Especially for today's young adults, who grow up with the internet as their main and often only source of information, acquiring this critical mindset is imperative. Through the story, teachers can sensitize their students for this topic, perhaps even in the form of an interdisciplinary instruction with the subject of "History and Political Education". Moreover, this story would also be suitable for cross-curricular teaching with the subject "Basic Digital Education", which has already been implemented in some schools as an extra course aimed at promoting the students' digital, media, and political competences. In other schools, this digital education is still integrated into other subjects (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 244).

Besides the themes addressed, the question of character representation should also be considered in the process of selecting a text for classroom use. As argued in chapter 4.3., in order to enable their readers' identification with a fictional character, authors of YAL often choose teenagers as their main protagonists. However, it has also been mentioned that the presence of a teenage character is not the only way to arouse a young person's interest in a story. Students can also enjoy reading about unique adult protagonists that can perhaps function as role models and encourage students to imagine their own future selves. Such a reflection can be fostered through the character of Leonard Mead, who, through his inner strength and independence, emerges as an inspirational figure for the reader. An additional advantage is that Bradbury reveals a lot about Mead's inner life, but not about his outer appearance and age. This means that students are given a lot of freedom to create their own, very personal image of this character.

To conclude, *The Pedestrian* is another narrative which defies being labeled a typical piece of YAL, as it neither revolves around a teenage character nor around the themes characteristically associated with the genre. Nevertheless, reading the story can contribute significantly to a young person's identity development. As outlined in chapter 3.2.4., the developmental of adolescence not only entails steps like learning to accept one's own body or engaging in one's first romantic relationships, but it also includes

the development of a personal ideology and a socially conscious mindset. Regarding these latter two tasks, the story can provide significant opportunities for personal growth. In addition, scholars of YAL currently stress the importance of literature that can encourage independent thinking among young adults and help them develop awareness of the responsibility they hold for the future of our planet (see chapter 3.2.4.). These are also defined teaching goals in the Austrian curriculum (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 9,11,15), which additionally highlights the promotion of critical and independent thought in the context of democracy education:

> Der Unterricht hat aktiv zu einer den Menschenrechten verpflichteten Demokratie beizutragen, Urteils- und Kritikfähigkeit sowie Entscheidungs- und Handlungskompetenzen sind zu fördern, sie sind für die Stabilität pluralistischer und demokratischer Gesellschaften entscheidend. (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 11)

Finally, the curriculum also stresses the importance of media education with a particular focus on new information and communication technologies (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 9).

As the above considerations have shown, the story offers extensive opportunity for meeting these curriculum-defined goals and for inviting students to engage with issues that are relevant for the future of our society.

7.5.2. Language and Length

In terms of the story's classroom potential, a significant advantage lies in its length. Depending on the format of the edition consulted, *The Pedestrian* covers between 2 and 4 pages. Hence, on average, the story should be manageable within a maximum reading time of 15 to 20 minutes. This factor not only has motivational benefits for less experienced readers, but also offers practical advantages for the text's implementation into a classroom setting. The criterion of flexible integration plays an increasingly important role in the process of text selection, as tight schedules and standardized teaching goals leave less room to discuss literature in the language classroom (see chapter 4.2.1.). If there is very little time available, this story could be read and discussed within just one session, given that the focus is set on a specific thematic aspect. Hence, the story could be used as a short literary excursion on a topic currently discussed in the classroom context. In case of a broader time frame, the above

analysis has also shown that the story is worthy of an extended discussion over 2 or 3 sessions.

Regarding its language, the text can be described as moderately difficult. The average sentence structure is not too complex, but the sentences are nevertheless quite long, so that students might have to read a bit more slowly or re-read certain passages. In terms of its vocabulary, the story shows a relatively well-balanced ratio of complex and basic words. However, in comparison with *The Veldt*, there is a slightly higher occurrence of more advanced vocabulary. Examples include adjectives such as "buckling" ("The Pedestrian", 600) or "intermittent" ("The Pedestrian", 600), but also verbs such as "stride off" ("The Pedestrian", 600) and "stumble" ("The Pedestrian", 601) or even compounds like "cloverleaf intersection" ("The Pedestrian", 601). Depending on factors such as time and the group's average language proficiency, the teacher could either discuss the respective words in advance or distribute an extra vocabulary sheet to be consulted during reading. Also, the text's brevity would allow for multiple readings. Hence, in a first reading, students could form groups and use their dictionaries to engage in independent vocabulary exploration, while a second reading could focus on interpretation. In any case, it seems important to ensure that students are sufficiently familiarized with most of the vocabulary featured in the story before they start their analysis. As previously stated, it is often through minor linguistic details that Bradbury conveys the dynamics of this futuristic world, and students can only recognize the significance of these details if they know their meaning.

In general, the story seems to suit a slow, in-depth reading, which is facilitated by textual brevity (see also chapter 2.2.). Furthermore, it is also the poetic nature of the narrative which makes this text interesting for detailed exploration. In this regard, chapter 3.2. has highlighted the importance of familiarizing student readers with different modes of creative expression. At the same time, there is a need to confront them with accessible, less complex examples of the various literary figures. The text fulfills both requirements. It contains numerous examples of figurative language which, for the most part, are very transparent in that the reader can easily grasp what they are supposed to convey about this world and its characters.

All in all, this text seems particularly suitable for practicing the skills required for detailed literary analysis. Through the help of a well-structured worksheet, the learners

could even be led to a relatively independent exploration of the text, which can prepare them for reading and analyzing more challenging literary works in the future.

7.5.3. Structure and Narrative Technique

As shown above, *The Pedestrian* follows a linear structure, which makes the text particularly applicable for the language classroom. In chapter 4.2.2., a chronological plot that guides the students' through the text was identified as especially beneficial if the narrative is moderately challenging in terms of its vocabulary, as is the case with this story.

With regard to the story's ending, it has been mentioned that Bradbury leaves it up to his readers to contemplate the kind of treatment Mead will receive at the "Psychiatric Center for Research on Regressive Tendencies" ("The Pedestrian", 603). As stated in chapter 6.5.3., this residual uncertainty at the end is a feature that students might not immediately appreciate about the text. For this reason, it once again seems useful to address Bradbury's specific design of the ending and discuss the function it fulfills in this story. If students can understand why the author designed certain parts of the story the way he did, they might be more motivated to follow Bradbury's invitation for further reflection and perhaps even appreciate the challenge that they are given.

Moreover, teachers could encourage students to fill in the missing information in the form of a creative writing activity. In this case, a story continuance task seems to be a good choice for two reasons. First of all, the narrative technique employed gives students a detailed insight into the inner life of the main protagonist. Hence, they get to know him and the values he represents quite well, which makes it easier to imagine how he will react in the situations lying ahead of him. Moreover, it has been mentioned that the story can be used to familiarize learners with a number of different literary techniques. Through a story continuance task, students could experiment with these techniques encountered during the analysis and make their first attempts to implement them into their own writing.

Regarding the age of the learner group, *The Pedestrian* appears to be a suitable read for students from the first year of upper secondary school. However, it should be kept in mind that even though the text is very short, it does contain some more advanced vocabulary. Hence, with some learner groups, it might be better to discuss the story

only in 6th or even 7th grade in order to avoid frustration among the students and to give them the opportunity to profit optimally from working with the text. This also seems to apply if the story is to be discussed in terms of its political implications, which might perhaps be a bit too challenging for 5th graders.

8. A Sound of Thunder
8.1. Introduction and Summary

A Sound of Thunder is a short story about time travel that was first published in 1952 in *Collier's Weekly* magazine (Seed 31). The narrative would later appear in Bradbury's short story anthology *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (Reid 15), and it also served as an inspiration for the film "A Sound of Thunder", which was released in 2005 (WarnerBros, "Movies: A Sound of Thunder").

Set in 2055, the story centers on the character Eckels, who purchases an expensive journey to the past in order to hunt *Tyrannosaurus rex*. While waiting for his departure, Eckels and an agent of 'Time Safari' casually discuss the recent presidential election, in which democratic candidate "Keith" defeated his fascist competitor "Deutscher" (Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder", 282). Led by their guides Travis and Lesperance, Eckels and his two fellow hunters enter the time machine. Upon arrival, the men are reminded to only shoot animals that are marked with red color, as these are the ones that would have died naturally in the near future. Moreover, the men are told to stay on a special "anti-gravity" path ("A Sound of Thunder", 284) which was specifically designed for these hunting trips. All of these are safety precautions to reduce the risk of leaving an impact on the environment and thereby unintentionally changing the future. Even though Eckels is initially enthusiastic about shooting the dinosaur, as the creature approaches he hurries back to the time machine and accidently stumbles off the marked path. When the group returns to 2055, Eckels is informed that "Deutscher" has won the election. Shocked by this revelation, he examines the mud from his boots and notices a dead butterfly. The story abruptly ends with Travis raising his gun and a sudden "sound of thunder" ("A Sound of Thunder", 293).

8.2. Thematic Concerns
8.2.1. Technology and the Question of Responsibility in a Consumer Culture

In this time travel story, Bradbury once again explores the topic of technological advancement in the context of a consumer culture. More precisely, the story depicts a dangerous misuse of technology which has its roots in the consumerist and profit-oriented mentality that guides the protagonists' behavior and motivates them to take irresponsible decisions.

The advertisement inserted right at the beginning of the story serves the central function of introducing the reader to this consumer culture of 2055. This advertisement reads as follows:

TIME SAFARI, INC.

SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST.

YOU NAME THE ANIMAL.

WE TAKE YOU THERE.

YOU SHOOT IT. ("A Sound of Thunder", 281)

The quoted words provide important information about the story's futuristic setting. First and foremost, they introduce the reader to a world in which time traveling – once a vision of a distant future – has finally been made possible through scientific progress. Moreover, the advertisement also hints at what to expect from this story and its protagonists by revealing the purpose for which the new scientific invention is exploited. As the sign indicates, in 2055, time machines are operated by private companies that are determined to design their portfolios in accordance with whatever can generate the most profit. For 'Time Safari', the most lucrative business model does not consist in selling educational trips, but rather in providing consumers with the ultimate adrenaline kick. In offering this exotic hunting experience, the agency obviously tries to attract a wealthy group of buyers that seek new, exotic sensations and is willing to pay an immense price for this thrill.

In view of the company's profit-oriented mindset, it is also worthwhile examining the sales strategies employed by 'Time Safari' when interacting with their potential customer. Although Eckels is fascinated by the advertisement from the beginning, he does show a slight concern for his safety. This reservation is quickly eliminated by the company's sales agent. However, contrary to what one would expect, the man does not try to soothe Eckels' worries, but instead reaffirms his concerns. 'Time Safari', he argues, cannot accept responsibility for anything or anyone, while additionally identifying the adventure as unsuitable for any coward "who'll panic at first shot" ("A Sound of Thunder", 282). This "biggest game in all Time" ("A Sound of Thunder", 282) is supposed to provide only "*real* hunter[s]" ("A Sound of Thunder", 282; original emphasis) with the greatest thrill of their lives. By using superlatives, the salesman clearly tries to excite his potential customer, while his provocative remarks are meant

to further manipulate Eckels into believing that if he ever wants to be viewed as a brave man or professional hunter, he must spend his money and take the trip at his own risk. Through passages like these, Bradbury conveys a clearly negative image of 'Time Safari' as a company that is determined to sell inherently dangerous adventures while simultaneously trying to absolve itself of any liability for its customers' safety.

Through the character of Eckels, Bradbury also introduces the kind of consumer who falls for the company's promotional strategies. As soon as he sets his eyes on the advertisement, he is immediately drawn to it. This fascination is indicated in the following quote: "A warm phlegm gathered in Eckel's throat; he swallowed and pushed it down. The muscles around his mouth formed a smile as he put his hand slowly out upon the air, and in that hand waved a check for ten thousand dollars at the man behind the desk" ("A Sound of Thunder", 281)[5]. In this quote, Eckels is not presented as a man who is taking a rational decision, but rather as someone who seems to lose control of himself as he is overwhelmed by the desire to be part of the advertised journey, regardless of cost. Besides this need to consume, Eckels also seems to have a longing for increasingly extreme experiences, as indicated by the way he boasts about the fact that he has hunted everything from wild boar and buffalo to animals like tigers and elephants ("A Sound of Thunder", 287). However, compared to this opportunity, those other hunts suddenly seem completely meaningless to him. "This is *it*" ("A Sound of Thunder", 287; original emphasis), Eckels asserts to himself. An opportunity like this "makes Africa seem like Illinois" ("A Sound of Thunder", 283). These quotes show Eckels as a character that is unable to experience lasting sati

action with what he already has. To him, any product or experience loses its value as soon as something more novel or extravagant becomes available. Finally, it is also remarkable that Eckels' only real concern about the trip is related to his own well-being and, more precisely to one central question: "Does this safari guarantee I come back alive?" ("A Sound of Thunder", 281).

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[5] Regarding the price of this trip, it should be kept in mind that USD 10 000 was considered an enormous amount of money in the early 1950s, when Bradbury wrote this story. Considering the US inflation rate since 1952, these USD 10 000 would amount to about USD 100 000 US dollars in 2020 (see "US Inflation Calculator").

The representatives of 'Time Safari' share this selfishness to such a degree that they are not only willing to endanger the lives of their customers, but they are also ready to risk more extensive damage. While the exact nature of these consequences will be examined in a later section of this analysis, the point to note here is that the tour operators are fully aware that their undertakings constitute a wrongful interference with nature. "We don't belong here in the Past" ("A Sound of Thunder, 284), Travis makes unmistakably clear while speculating about the possible long-term risks of destruction. Yet, a few minutes after he has given this unambiguous statement, the safari guides and their customers cheerfully leave the time machine in order to do what Travis has just identified as wrong. Moreover, apart from the representatives of 'Time Safari', there are also important government officials who seem to be aware of the enormous risks of time travel. "The government doesn't like us here" ("A Sound of Thunder", 284), Travis explains before mentioning the bribe paid by the company to keep the business running nevertheless. "We have to pay big graft to keep our franchise" ("A Sound of Thunder", 284), he states and thus demonstrates that the employees of 'Time Safari' are not the only ones solely guided by self-interest. Although the company is ultimately responsible for initiating the misuse of the new invention, Bradbury makes clear that the blame is just as much on those influential people who are willing to permit what they deem inherently dangerous for the prospect of their own financial gain.

Finally, the story demonstrates that profit interests remain dominant even when the safari guides are informed about Eckels' accident. Although both Travis and Lesperance seem to realize the gravity of the event, their primary concern is not related to the possible impact this incident might have on everyone's future; instead, it is the future of their own business that worries them the most. In this regard, Travis' first reaction is especially illustrative. As soon as he learns about the accident, he immediately determines that Eckels must not return to the future and plainly justifies this decision by emphasizing the possible damage that this incident might cause to their business: "That ruins us! We'll forfeit! Thousands of dollars of insurance! We guarantee no one leaves the Path. [...]. I'll have to report to the government. They might revoke our license to travel!" ("A Sound of Thunder", 290). In using these words, Travis not only emphasizes that his sole focus remains the profit of the company, but he also implies via context that Eckels must be killed to conceal this incident and protect the business. While he can be temporarily held back by his assistant, the story's ending suggests that once the travelers return to 2055 and Travis realizes the actual

consequences of the incident, his hesitation quickly dissipates as he immediately draws out his rifle. The very way in which Travis handles the situation thus strongly reinforces the depiction of a prevailing irresponsible attitude among the representatives of 'Time Safari'. Not only are these representatives unwilling to at least accept partial responsibility for an accident that would never have happened had they not offered these risky adventures, but the story's final scene also suggests that they are prepared to put monetary gain over human life.

8.2.2. Nature, Technology, and The Self-Image of Man

Besides offering a strong critique of the mindset prevailing in the consumer culture of 2055, the story also closely focuses on the complex relationship between man, his technology and the natural world. While this topic has already been touched upon in the previous section, the following paragraphs will more particularly investigate the characters' specific understanding of man's position in nature in an age of advanced technology. At the same time, the section will also show how Bradbury conveys to his readers that the characters' views on this matter are not only unjustified, but also fully inaccurate.

For this purpose, it once again seems worthwhile examining the promotional strategies employed by 'Time Safari'. As the following quote shows, the company's advertisement for the time machine is clearly meant to emphasize the authority that man has gained over nature:

> Out of chars and ashes, out of dust and coals, like golden salamanders, the old years, the green years, might leap; roses sweeten the air, white hair turn Irish-black, wrinkles vanish; all, everything fly back to seed, flee death, rush down to their beginnings, suns rise in western skies and set in glorious easts, moons eat themselves opposite to the custom, all and everything cupping one in another like Chinese boxes, rabbits into hats, all and everything returning to the fresh death, the seed death, the green death, to the time before the beginning. A touch of a hand might do it, the merest touch of a hand. ("A Sound of Thunder", 282)

As can be noted from the very way the quoted passage is phrased, the advertisement seeks to introduce the time machine as the kind of technological advancement that finally gives humans the ability to exercise control over nature. Technology, it suggests, has given humanity the power to reverse the course of time. Youth can be regained and mortality defeated at the touch of a button. This view of man having attained god-

like powers through technology is also strongly conveyed by the first words of this passage, which almost sound as if they allude to the creation of a universe. However, despite praising the immense power of human technology, this quote also contains a subtle implication that the perspective propagated by the company is quite inaccurate. Through the trifold repetition of the word "death" at the end of the passage as well as the repeated notice that "the merest touch of a hand" can cause such significant changes, the reader is given a hint that the company's undertakings are likely to end in chaos and destruction.

While the reader is thus made aware at an early point in the story that the company's image of man as the "ruler" of nature is not justified, it is nevertheless a view that Eckels seems to have adopted. His attitude towards nature can be distinguished by the phrasing he uses to express his excitement about the upcoming adventure. To Eckels, the trip is primarily about "[s]hooting [his] dinosaur" ("A Sound of Thunder", 282), while in other instances, he sometimes also speaks about the hunting group killing "[their] *Tyrannosaurus*" ("A Sound of Thunder", 282; italics in the original). In speaking of the animal as his own, Eckels demonstrates a feeling of human superiority over other species. In fact, his words seem to suggest that the natural world belongs to humans, who therefore have the right to exploit it and its non-human inhabitants in any way that pleases them. However, through the way in which Bradbury portrays Eckels' encounter with the animal, the author also makes unmistakably clear that his protagonist has greatly misjudged his position. At the sight of the animal, Eckels' arrogant and pompous demeanor quickly turns into panic, followed by numbness. Overwhelmed by the impressive size of the creature, he suddenly has no doubt about the animal's superiority. "It can't be killed" ("A Sound of Thunder", 288), Eckels says to himself before expressing his central insight: "I've met my match and admit it. This is too much for me to get hold of" ("A Sound of Thunder", 288). This sudden change in his attitude – caused by the mere sight of the dinosaur – leaves a strong impression on the reader. Together with the powerful and vivid description of the dinosaur (see chapter 8.3.), Eckels' reaction serves as a strong reminder of the power of nature; a power for whose disregard man could pay a high price.

In addition to Eckels' despair, the company's propagated image is also relativized by Travis himself. Once the travelers are on their way, he openly admits that he and his colleagues know next to nothing about the system in which they are intervening.

Hence, it is also impossible for them to tell whether and to what extent their trip might have an impact on the future: "Who knows? Who really can say he knows? We don't know. We're guessing" ("A Sound of Thunder", 285). This lack of knowledge is expressed in a more desperate tone when Travis learns about Eckels' accident. Besides the aforementioned threat towards his customer, Travis can only react to this incident by restating his previous admission: "We don't know anything! It's all a damn mystery!" ("A Sound of Thunder", 290). By repeating such phrases throughout the narrative, Travis makes clear that, contrary to the impression left by their advertisement, the company owners and their employees can neither understand nor control nature. Moreover, their obvious lack of insight also raises questions about the effectiveness of their security measures. Given that they know so little about the system with which they are interfering, it is also impossible for them to tell whether their paint bombs and metal paths constitute sufficient precautions or if they are not harmful themselves.

Hence, rather than suggesting human authority over nature, Bradbury's implications convey the exact opposite. Above all, they remind readers of the importance of showing respect for nature, a force that is much more complex and powerful than humans can ever begin to understand. As this idea of the complexity and unpredictability of nature is central to this story, it will be examined in further detail in the next section of this analysis.

8.2.3. Nature and the Idea of Interconnectivity

This final part of the analysis shall continue to focus on the topic of nature and more precisely, on the image of nature that Bradbury presents to his readers. In order to encourage more well-considered and responsible behavior among them, the author tries to convey the idea that our present actions – even if they are small and seemingly unimportant – can have massive consequences in the long run. For this purpose, Bradbury presents nature as a system that is not only inherently complex, but also composed of interconnected parts.

In the story, the most explicit exploration of this idea of interconnectivity is provided in the form of a thought experiment presented by Travis, who tries to illustrate the importance of staying on the marked path. In leaving the path, he argues, the customers might step on a plant or animal such as a mouse. Killing this mouse would,

however, also prevent the birth of its future offspring, which, in turn, could lead to enormously far-reaching consequences. As Travis explains:

> For want of ten mice, a fox dies. For want of ten foxes a lion starves. For want of a lion, all manner of insects, vultures, infinite billions of life forms are thrown into chaos and destruction. Eventually it all boils down to this: fifty-nine million years later, a cave man, one of a dozen on the *entire world*, goes hunting wild boar or saber-tooth tiger for food. But you, friend, have *stepped* on all the tigers in that region. By stepping on one single mouse. So the cave man starves. [...]. From his loins would have sprung ten sons. From *their* loins one hundred sons, and thus onward to a civilization. Destroy this one man, and you destroy a race, a people, an entire history of life. ("A Sound of Thunder", 284-285; original emphasis)

This quote provides a good demonstration of the idea that dominates in this story. Nature, Bradbury makes clear, not only follows its own unpredictable laws, but it is also a system in which each detail is interconnected. In other words, if one perceives the environment as being in a certain order, this is the case only because all of its parts interact with each other in a specific way. If only one part is removed or altered, this might lead to drastic chain reactions whose final consequences are impossible to estimate. With this argument, Bradbury also strengthens the idea of a strong connection between past, present, and future and therefore the importance of being especially cautious about decisions that we take in the here and now.

Regarding this argument, one should also note the scientific attention that this idea would receive in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the first researchers to promote this thought was mathematician and meteorologist Edward N. Lorenz (Hillborn 425-426). More precisely, Lorenz was experimenting with different ways of predicting the weather when he noticed that minor alterations of single variables in his computer model could cause significant changes in weather development (Hillborn 425-426; Lorenz 134). When he finally presented his insights at the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1972, Lorenz used the example of a butterfly to make his thought more accessible to his audience. In accordance with the title of his talk "Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas?", he argued that the smallest perturbation in a system could lead to decisive changes in that very same system (Hillborn 425-426).

This information is central for the context of this analysis in so far as Bradbury – who wrote his story about 20 years prior to Lorenz' presentation – uses the same insect to

convey the same idea. In *A Sound of Thunder*, it is implied that the death of one single butterfly, accidentally killed by Eckels during the hunting trip, causes the dramatic alteration of the future ("A Sound of Thunder", 292). Although upon his return to 2055, Eckels first perceives only very small, almost imperceptible changes in the room atmosphere, his observations soon culminate in the revelation that the future to which the travelers have returned is one in which democracy has been replaced by totalitarianism. The name of the winning candidate "Deutscher", who is referred to as an "iron man" by one of the company representatives ("A Sound of Thunder", 293), is particularly important in this respect. Since the narrative was written in the postwar period, this name could be read as an allusion to the real-world context of World War II and more precisely, the persona of Adolf Hitler. Responsible for this new political situation, so the story implies, is only the "very beautiful and very dead" butterfly ("A Sound of Thunder", 292) that Eckels notices when examining the mud on his shoe. Through this very outcome, Bradbury manages to reinforce the idea of a delicate, interconnected ecosystem, while at the same time, he once again inserts into his narrative a warning about the threat of totalitarianism, which he saw as imminent during the 1950s (see chapters 5. and 7.1.). Although this warning is not made as explicit in this story as in *The Pedestrian*, it is nevertheless remarkable that Bradbury's narratives repeatedly bring to the readers' minds the importance of taking reflective and critical decisions to prevent such political developments from recurring in the future.

Finally, this outcome also underlines the importance of Bradbury's message by demonstrating that once certain changes are made, they cannot be undone. As soon as Eckels learns about the consequences of the incident, he places all his hopes in the time machine to provide a solution to the problem. While examining the dead butterfly on his shoe, he can thus only think of one question: "[C]an't we take it *back*, can't we *make* it alive again? Can't we start over?" ("A Sound of Thunder", 293; original emphasis). However, contrary to Eckels' hopes, Bradbury clarifies that even in a futuristic world of highly advanced technology, this is not an option. The argument he provides to account for this impossibility is presented at an earlier part of the story by Travis. A time machine, Travis explains, can take a person back to any point in the past. However, since time traveling does not allow for the paradox of meeting oneself in the past or future, the traveler can never return to a specific point that he has already visited. Hence, it is also impossible for the hunters and their guides to undo the damage they have caused.

With this message, Bradbury's once again reminds his readers that although humans have created powerful and impressive technologies, this power is limited. Scientific progress has opened up a wide range of possibilities for us to intervene in nature, but from a current perspective, we can neither predict nor reverse the long-term consequences of this intervention. For this reason, we must be extremely careful about how and for what purposes we use the new machineries. However, Bradbury also makes clear that such responsible action is only possible if humans do not merely focus on satisfying their own immediate interests but are also willing to act in accordance with what is believed to benefit the planet and other humans in the long term.

8.3. Language and Style

Regarding its language, this story is very similar to *The Veldt* in that more than half of the text comprises direct, informal interaction among the protagonists. Rather than simply driving forward the plot, these dialogues – which frequently contain idiomatic language and even expletives – are essential in showing the characters' personalities and bringing to light their questionable attitudes.

Between the numerous dialogues, Bradbury provides vivid and poetic descriptions of the time machine, the jungle, and the dinosaur. In these passages, sensory details and figurative language once again play a central role in that they add depth to the story and prepare the reader for the tragic ending.

An example of such a poetic description can be found at the very beginning of the narrative when Bradbury describes Eckels' first impression of the advertising sign, which "seemed to quaver under a film of sliding warm water" ("A Sound of Thunder", 281). In this very first sentence, the use of the water metaphor is central as it foreshadows the story's outcome by portraying reality as something that is not permanent, but rather fluid and unstable. Another example of foreshadowing can be detected in the presentation of the time machine, which is described as producing very peculiar sounds: "There was a sound like a gigantic bonfire burning all of Time, all the years and all the parchment calendars, all the hours piled high and set aflame" ("A Sound of Thunder", 281-282). In comparing the sound of the invention to the irreversible process of burning, the simile highlights not only the machine's immense power, but also its enormous potential for destruction.

Furthermore, poetic language plays a central role in the jungle's description. An illustrative example is the way Bradbury presents the travelers' first impression of the ancient wilderness: "The jungle was high and the jungle was broad and the jungle was the entire world forever and forever. Sounds like music and sounds like flying tents filled the sky, and those were pterodactyls soaring with cavernous gray wings, gigantic bats of delirium and night fever" ("A Sound of Thunder", 286). In this passage, Bradbury employs polysyndetic coordination to convey the overwhelming atmosphere of the jungle, an impression which is further reinforced through the hyperbole of describing the jungle as the "entire world forever and forever". The similes contained in the quote convey beauty, but also intimidation. While the musical sounds suggest an atmosphere of serenity and harmony, the comparison of the pterodactyls' "cavernous gray wings" to "flying tents" conveys their immense size and physical power. Finally, the description of the animals' appearance as one of "delirium and night fever" underlines the dream-like nature of the adventure and references the physical reaction of shivering, increased heartbeat, and overall anxiety that one might experience upon seeing them.

In order to create an impressive entrance of the dinosaur, Bradbury ends his description of the jungle by drawing his readers' attention back to the specific sounds that the travelers experience while standing in this ancient wilderness.

> The jungle was wide and full of twitterings, rustlings, murmurs, and sighs.
> Suddenly it all ceased, as if someone had shut a door.
> Silence.
> A sound of thunder.
> Out of the mist, one hundred yards away, came *Tyrannosaurus rex.*
> ("A Sound of Thunder", 287; italics in the original)

The sudden silence that follows these sounds of liveliness prepares the reader for the appearance of something enormously powerful and frightening. By starting a new line for the presentation of each impression and separating each of them with a period, Bradbury additionally increases the tension as he decelerates the reading process and encourages the reader to feel the silence before it is broken. The author uses this juxtaposition of numerous short impressions extensively throughout the narrative. Another illustrative example is the following quote, which describes Eckels' first impressions upon his return to the future: "The room was there as they had left it. But not the same as they had left it. The same man sat behind the same desk. But the same man did not quite sit behind the same desk" ("A Sound of Thunder", 291). These

short, juxtaposed, parallel constructions effectively build up tension by conveying that there is something more to come while simultaneously delaying the point at which this "something" is revealed.

After the powerful introduction of the dinosaur, Bradbury abruptly stops the plot to give a lengthy, detailed, and poetic presentation of the animal. The following quote provides an extract of this description, which, in its full length, covers almost an entire page and has therefore been referred to by some critics as the story's "visual climax" (e.g. Seed 33):

> It came on great oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered thirty feet above half of the trees, a great evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws close to its oily reptilian chest. Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a ton of meat, ivory, and steel mesh. And from the great breathing cage of the upper body those two delicate arms dangled out front, arms with hands which might pick up and examine men like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head itself, a ton of sculptured stone, lifted easily upon the sky. Its mouth gaped, exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. […]. It ran with a gliding ballet step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons. It moved into a sunlit area warily, its beautifully reptilian hands feeling the air. ("A Sound of Thunder", 287)

In this passage, the gradual shift in visual focus from the animal's legs to its head gives an impression of the cinematic style that has been described as characteristic of Bradbury's writing (see chapter 5). In fact, this description strongly resembles the cinematic technique of a low-angled tilt shot in which the camera is positioned below the subject to present it as intimidating and physically superior to the viewer (Kawin 211). Furthermore, the passage is filled with numerous similes and metaphors which reinforce this physical superiority. Most importantly, the presentation of the dinosaur as a god-like figure as well as the description of its teeth as daggers and its skin as the armor of a warrior create an impression of invulnerability that is additionally reinforced through the reference to the materials of steel and stone. However, despite stressing the terror emanating from this animal, Bradbury also highlights the beauty of the dinosaur by drawing the reader's attention to its "ballet step" and its "beautifully reptilian hands". By juxtaposing these contrary impressions, the quote seems to make an argument for nature as something that is unique and beautiful, but also as a force that can quickly turn into a serious threat if one does not show respect for it.

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While the passage quoted above clearly provides the most detailed demonstration of the animal's immense strength, the reader is continuously reminded of this power throughout the story. Most noteworthy in this respect is the word "roar", which alludes to the sound characteristically associated with the dinosaur and which reappears in phrases such as "The Time Machine roared" ("A Sound of Thunder", 283) or "Time can make a big roar or a little rustle in History" ("A Sound of Thunder", 285). By using the same word in different contexts, Bradbury repeatedly draws his readers' attention to the animal's power and the important role that it plays for the story's outcome. When looking at these quotes, one can also note that Bradbury has capitalized the words "machine", "time", and "history". He does this continuously throughout the story – also when using terms such as "past", "future", or "path" – and thereby underlines the uniqueness of all these concepts as well as their central importance in the narrative. The word "time" deserves special attention in this context, as it is not only capitalized but also frequently personified throughout the narrative: through phrases such as "Time steps aside" ("A Sound of Thunder", 286) or "Time doesn't permit" (286), Bradbury conveys the idea that time is something that follows its own laws and over which man does not have full control.

Finally, attention shall be drawn to the "sound of thunder", which constitutes the story's central metaphor. This metaphor can be viewed from two different perspectives. As a recurring phrase in the story, the "sound of thunder" marks the arrival of the dinosaur, while also implying the shot fired by Travis' rifle at the end of the story. Hence, in both instances, the phrase signals a drastic event that is beyond the control of the people affected by it. However, since the "sound of thunder" also forms the story's title, it should additionally be examined in terms of its broader relevance to the narrative as a whole. For this purpose, it is central to acknowledge that the second appearance of the phrase is to be seen as a result of the first "sound of thunder". To be more precise, if Eckels had not had the frightening encounter with the animal, he would not have changed the future through his accident and consequently, he would not have become the target of Travis' rifle shot. Hence, there is a connection between the two phrases, whereby one can be seen as a prerequisite for the occurrence of the other. With this mind, the phrase could also be interpreted as a metaphor which underlines the story's message that the actions that we take in the here and now can have massive repercussions in the future.

8.4. Structure and Narrative Technique

Besides serving as the story's central metaphor, the "sound of thunder" also fulfills a structuring function by marking the beginning, climax, and end of this linear narrative.

In the context of this structural analysis, special attention shall be devoted to the narrative's ending, where "the sound of thunder" seems to imply the shot of Travis' gun. This final appearance of the phrase is worth mentioning in so far as it was not contained in the version initially published in *Collier's Weekly* (Seed 34). Although it was part of the ending that Bradbury originally intended for his story, the magazine's editors demanded that the narrative was to end with Travis merely shaking his head when asked about the possibility of undoing the damage that the group has caused (Seed 34). As Seed states, this adaptive measure led to a complete loss of suspense at the end of the narrative, which clearly was not in the author's interest (34). Hence, in all subsequent publications, Bradbury rearranged the scene so that the "sound of thunder" is the final impression provided to the readers. Through this ending, Bradbury manages to imply a specific outcome while simultaneously calling the reader to further reflect on the story and ponder why this shot is fired at Eckels or whether the sound might perhaps allude to a completely different event.

With regard to the narrative technique, it can be observed that the fictional world is mostly conveyed to the reader from a third person limited point of view, with Eckels functioning as the main focalizer. However, in certain parts of the story, his perspective alternates with that of an omniscient external narrator, who mainly appears to give the narrative more coherence by informing the reader about the events that take place in Eckels' absence (e.g. the killing of the dinosaur). This voice, so it seems, also reappears at the story's final moment, where the narrative implies a shift from Eckel's perspective to that of the omniscient narrator, who informs the reader about the sudden "sound of thunder". However, in view of the ending's interpretational openness, there is also a possibility that this last impression might actually still be conveyed from Eckels' viewpoint.

A final aspect to be discussed in this section concerns the story's narrative pace. In general, Bradbury presents his audience with a relatively faced-paced plot as the dialogues quickly take the reader from one scene to the next. However, in certain parts of the story, Bradbury abruptly stops the action to insert longer descriptions or

explanations. The most prominent example is the detailed portrayal of the dinosaur, as partially quoted in chapter 8.3. Bradbury often spoke about this passage in interviews, calling it an ideal example of "the art of the aside", a technique in which the narrator pauses the plot to present passages of detailed, poetic description that underline the story's overall theme (Mogen 38). Indeed, even though the lengthy presentation of the dinosaur significantly decelerates the plot, it is central for adding depth and coherence to the story. As Mogen points out, "Since the plot centers on an experienced big-game hunter panicking at the crucial moment and violating the rules of his time travel safari, the story's coherence depends upon vividly evoking the impact of a firsthand encounter with the king of carnivores, *Tyrannosaurs rex*" (39). As shown in chapter 8.3., this is exactly what Bradbury achieves through his detailed exploration of each of the animal's body parts, which very well indicates that the dinosaur's physical power significantly exceeds that of the observer.

8.5. The Story's Classroom Potential
8.5.1.   Themes and Characters

This final chapter shall explore the narrative's suitability for adolescent language learners, starting with an examination of the text's thematic relevance for the modern classroom context.

Before going into detail about the exact topics addressed, it should be mentioned that this story constitutes yet another example underlining Bradbury's interest in human psychology rather than scientific accuracy. There are no precise explanations of the time machine's operating principle or the mechanisms of time traveling. Only with regard to the company's safety measures are a few rather inconclusive explanations presented to the reader. A good example is the argument provided to explain why the hunters can travel to the past and shoot dinosaurs when even the death of one butterfly can change history. According to Travis, this is possible because the safari guides followed different animals during another time traveling trip and marked the dinosaurs that were about to die. This explanation not only seems unconvincing, but also incites further questions. For example: how can the safari guides observe the animals so closely if they are not allowed to leave their marked path? What about the environmental impact of the chemical paint used to mark the animal? Finally, how can the guides be certain that the dinosaur will fall in the same manner when it is killed by a rifle as it would have fallen if it had died naturally? Given that even the death of a

butterfly can cause so much damage, a different falling direction might lead to equal or even more serious consequences. As such inconsistent explanations repeatedly appear throughout this story, it seems necessary to address them in the classroom and perhaps introduce the learners to Bradbury's philosophy on science fiction. After the students have been familiarized with the author's view of the genre, the teacher could stimulate a discussion on whether these inconclusive explanations are due to the Bradbury's relaxed approach towards scientific accuracy and strict logic or whether they may have been deliberately inserted to convey a certain image of 'Time Safari'.

In terms of its thematic focus, the story shows central relevance for the current classroom context in that it reminds readers of the decisive impact that their current decisions can have in the long run. As mentioned in chapter 4.2.4., encouraging such a responsible mindset among young adults is especially important in light of the massive technological, political and environmental developments that characterize the world of today. In particular with regard to environmental aspects, this story provides numerous opportunities to encourage critical reflection among the students and engage them in one of the most pressing issues of our time. Climate change, water scarcity, environmental pollution and the loss of biodiversity are just some of the current problems that highlight the urgent necessity to radically rethink our behavior and become aware of the responsibility that we bear for the future of this planet (see e.g. United Nations, "General Assembly: Transforming our World", 5). The need to sensitize especially young people to these concerns is also repeatedly emphasized in the Austrian curriculum (BMBWF, "Verordnung über die Lehrpläne", 9, 11-12) as well as by experts of YAL, who have mentioned an increased demand for literature that can help young adults to become more environmentally aware (see chapter 4.2.4.).

This story is useful for launching various activities aimed at promoting such environmental consciousness among the learners. On a basic level, the teacher could stimulate a discussion on the story's general message and its possible relevance for the current context. Furthermore, the learners could be encouraged to ponder what they define as responsible behavior and to what extent they believe that an individual's actions can influence larger societal or environmental developments in positive or negative terms.

After this first exchange of opinions, the teacher could focus on one specific topic that he or she wishes to discuss in greater detail with the student group. For example, an interesting and currently relevant issue is the global concern about climate change. Using the story as a starting point, the teacher could introduce the students to a few technical terms and perhaps read recent texts related to the topic. A possible strategy to encourage a lively debate could involve dividing the students into small groups and providing them with different articles, each taking a specific position on the issue. As a next step, the individual groups should take notes on the arguments provided in their article, and subsequently split up to discuss these arguments with the members of other groups. Finally, the focus could turn to the different options that individuals can pursue to reduce the human impact on global warming. If there is sufficient time and student interest, the students could become more involved with this topic by conducting their own research and preparing mini-presentations on projects that they find particularly inspiring or appealing.

As Bradbury's story also entails a strong critique of consumerism, a close examination of the characters and their attitudes could encourage students to reflect critically on their own responsibilities as consumers. For the teacher, sensitizing the learners to this matter will also require providing them with more specific knowledge on how our individual buying decisions influence the future of the planet and the lives of people around the world. This could once again be achieved by reading recent articles or interviews or possibly watching a documentary in class.

Moreover, the story could also be examined in the form of an interdisciplinary instruction with the subject of biology. As argued in the above analysis, Bradbury's story reminds readers that although humans have gained considerable power through scientific progress, we must be very careful about how we use this power since we can never calculate the long-term effects of intervening in nature. In the setting of a biology class, students could learn in more detail about some of these innovative procedures. The process of genetic engineering, would, for example, constitute an interesting topic for such a setting, as it is currently discussed in terms of its future application for treating, curing, or even preventing human diseases (see e.g. Kaufman et al. 1542). In the English class, the teacher could use the story to encourage a discussion about the advantages and risks connected to this application. Such cross-curricular instruction could be especially rewarding for students who have chosen a school branch with a

stronger focus on natural sciences and who might later embark on careers in science or medicine.

Finally, the idea of time traveling also offers an interesting opportunity to engage the learners with different thought experiments. One such activity could, for example, involve asking the students to imagine that they had the chance to travel backward in time and reflect on the following questions: where would they be interested to go and why? Who would they like to meet? What questions would they ask this person? Alternatively, the students could also imagine traveling 10 or 15 years into the future to envision what their own personal and professional lives might look like. This final task would be particularly suitable for encouraging students in higher grades to reflect on the possible life choices that they want to take after the end of their school career.

Regarding the question of character representation, it can be noted that Bradbury's story neither features any teenage characters nor does it attempt to evoke sympathy for the protagonists. Hence, in this respect, the short story clearly deviates from a typical piece of YAL (see chapter 4.2.3.). Nevertheless, this fact seems to present only a minor drawback for the story's use in a classroom setting, as Bradbury's portrayal of his characters as consumption- and profit-oriented gives a strongly exaggerated, but nevertheless quite accurate impression of a mentality that seems to be on the rise in today's world. An examination of the protagonists and their character traits might therefore still be beneficial for encouraging students' active reflection on these tendencies as well as on their own attitudes.

8.5.2. Language and Length

As outlined in chapters 4.2.1. and 4.2.2., textual complexity and length are important aspects to consider when choosing literature for the classroom, as they influence how difficult a text is perceived by the learners. Regarding both of these factors, it can be argued that *A Sound of Thunder* presents an increased challenge when compared with the other two narratives examined in this thesis.

Although the narrative is still significantly shorter than any novel, less experienced readers might nevertheless find it difficult to master this text of about 16 pages in one sitting. In addition, the challenge is further increased by the story's lexical demands. In chapter 4.2.2., it was mentioned that texts chosen for student groups should provide

them with a balance of basic and advanced words so they can expand their vocabulary range by inferring meaning from context without feeling overwhelmed. Although this balance is generally still evident in the analyzed story, the text nevertheless contains a considerable amount of sophisticated and sometimes exotic vocabulary, which indicates a need for additional teacher support. This support could be provided by preparing an extra list with the most relevant vocabulary explanations and setting the story as a homework task. Reading the text at home would allow students to go through the story at their own pace and re-read certain passages if necessary, while the extra vocabulary list reduces comprehension challenges and possible student frustration. In order to encourage a more active exploration of new terms, the teacher could additionally set the task of each student choosing ten new words from the text and working on these in an extra vocabulary log.

Given the narrative's length and density, it would most likely also be too time consuming and frustrating for the learners to study each stylistic peculiarity of the text in detail. Therefore, the teacher could pre-select one or two interesting passages or a particular stylistic technique employed by the author, and examine them together with the student group. Bradbury's poetic description of the dinosaur as well as the way he strategically plays with different auditory impressions to increase the narrative's effect would certainly constitute interesting choices for such a detailed exploration.

Finally, the story's title also warrants discussion in a classroom context. An initial step of this discussion could take the form of a pre-reading activity in which the students describe what they know about and associate with the word "thunder". In this context, the students could also play a guessing game in which they reflect on the title's relevance to the story plot. This pre-reading activity would not only be beneficial for arousing their interest in the story, but it would also help them in their later interpretation of the "sound of thunder" as a metaphor in the text.

8.5.3. Structure and Narrative Technique

Given the challenges of length and language, the narrative's linear structure provides an important pillar of support to help the students follow the overall plot of the story.

For a closer examination of this structure, the teacher could encourage the students to draw a visual outline of it. After using the trifold appearance of the "sound of thunder"

as an orientation to mark the beginning, climax, and end, the class could explore this plot sequence in further detail and perhaps start to reflect on the connection between the plot events and the title's metaphorical meaning.

Finally, the end of the narrative provides numerous opportunities for speaking activities and creative writing tasks. As Bradbury implies but never makes explicit that the final "sound of thunder" is meant to signal Eckels' murder, this open ending could be used to incite a student discussion in which the learners can share potential alternative interpretations of the story's final scene. Even if they decide to stick to the most logical interpretation, the question of why this crime was committed still provides ample room for discussion: what was Travis' motivation for shooting his customer? Did he commit the crime in the heat of the moment or was it a calculated murder? Of course, this open ending can also be used to start various creative writing activities. Besides a story continuance task, the teacher could also ask the students to imagine that they are a character in the story and have decided to leave the company building upon hearing the "sound of thunder". Their task is to describe the kind of world they encounter once they have walked out the door.

Regarding the age of the learners, the text's increased linguistic challenges make this narrative suitable for students who have at least reached the 6th grade of the upper secondary level in the Austrian school system. As demonstrated above, with sufficient teacher support, students in these higher grades can significantly benefit from engaging with the narrative's language as well as the topics addressed.

9. Conclusion

In demonstrating the classroom potential of all three short stories examined, this thesis has shown that a literary work does not necessarily have to meet the typical definition of YAL to be considered suitable for teenage learners. Although Bradbury never wrote specifically for an adolescent audience, the examination of the three texts has identified various characteristics regarding the content, style and structural organization of his works, all of which underscore the potential his writing bears for promoting the language skills and personal development of adolescent learners. In terms of language, his mix of colloquial and poetic expression can be considered as largely accessible to student readers, while it also offers an opportunity for linguistic improvement as well as valuable practice for reading more advanced literature in the future. Furthermore, the thesis has demonstrated that the author tends to favor linear plots that support student comprehension and encourage creativity as well as deep reflection through their open-ended nature. Based on the findings of the thematic analysis, Bradbury's writings can be classified as so-called soft science fiction, as the focus in all three narratives is not set on scientific aspects, but rather on the social and psychological implications of technological advancement. Even though the stories examined differ in terms of the exact topics they address, they are united in that they all illuminate Bradbury's conviction that humans can only benefit from technology if they become aware of the associated risks. More precisely, the stories remind readers that if these risks are ignored, technology might indeed become a serious threat for the individual, the family unit, larger communities, or even the whole planet. With this focus, Bradbury's stories – despite being written almost 70 years ago – remain relevant for modern readers. Today, we live in a world in which the widespread use of advanced technologies provides us with numerous benefits, but also confronts us with new questions, problems, and risks. Since most of today's adolescents grow up as "digital natives" and therefore consider technology a natural and usually indispensable part of their lives, critically engaging with these advantages and risks constitutes an essential part of their identity development. This is also reflected in the design of the Austrian curriculum as well as the greater demand for literature that can engage adolescents with questions related to currently relevant topics such as technological advancement, power dynamics or environmental concerns. This thesis has illustrated that Bradbury's short stories provide an excellent way to integrate this kind of literature into a classroom setting. The stories' detailed analysis and the numerous task ideas outlined in the

previous sections have demonstrated that his narratives can be used to foster all four language skills and encourage students to reflect critically on those issues that are central for their current and, above all, their future lives. The stories precisely achieve this through providing what Bradbury was convinced every good science fiction story should supply, namely "the imagination whereby to judge, suggest alternatives, and provide seedbeds for future improvements" (Bradbury qtd. in Mogen 104).

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11. Apendix

11.1. English Abstract

This thesis examines Ray Bradbury's short stories *The Veldt*, *The Pedestrian*, and *A Sound of Thunder* for their stylistic, thematic, and structural characteristics as well as for their suitability for the modern EFL classroom. The theoretical framework comprises a thorough examination of the genres of science fiction and the short story, including an investigation of their specific reading experience. A third chapter elaborates on the role of literature in the language classroom and examines various criteria such as thematic relevance, character representation, textual difficulty, and length, to be taken into account when selecting literary texts for adolescent learners. The analysis demonstrates that the individual texts share several common features. The three stories are characterized by a combination of poetic and everyday language as well as a linear, open-ended plot. Moreover, the narratives share a thematic focus in that they explore the minor and major consequences of an irresponsible use of technology, whereby they seek to stimulate critical reflection among their readers. The thesis also demonstrates that Bradbury's stories bear significant potential for today's classroom settings. Not only do they offer an opportunity for a flexible integration of literature into the classroom, but they can also be used to promote a more critical and socially conscious mindset as well as an in-depth reflection on the technological, political, and environmental developments of our time. All of these are defined teaching objectives in the current version of the Austrian curriculum. The stories also offer a manageable level of linguistic difficulty for upper secondary students and a potential for promoting further language development through vocabulary, speaking, and creative writing activities. Finally, the thesis includes task suggestions for teachers interested in using these stories in their classrooms.

11.2. German Abstract

Diese Arbeit untersucht Ray Bradburys Kurzgeschichten *The Veldt*, *The Pedestrian* und *A Sound of Thunder* auf ihre stilistischen, thematischen und strukturellen Besonderheiten sowie auf ihre Eignung für den modernen Sprachunterricht. Die theoretische Basis besteht aus einer gründlichen Untersuchung der Genres Science-Fiction und Kurzgeschichte, einschließlich einer Auseinandersetzung mit deren spezifischer Leseerfahrung. Das dritte Kapitel legt den Schwerpunkt auf die Rolle der Literatur im Sprachunterricht und untersucht verschiedene Kriterien wie thematische Relevanz, Charakterdarstellung, Länge und sprachliche Komplexität des Textes, die bei der Auswahl geeigneter Literatur für SchülerInnen berücksichtigt werden müssen. Die Analyse der Geschichten zeigt, dass die einzelnen Texte zentrale Gemeinsamkeiten aufweisen. So zeichnen sich alle drei Geschichten durch eine Kombination aus poetischer und alltäglicher Sprache sowie durch eine lineare und am Ende offene Handlungsstruktur aus. Die Geschichten haben insofern einen gemeinsamen thematischen Schwerpunkt, als sie die klein- und großräumigen Folgen eines unverantwortlichen Umgangs mit der Technik aufzeigen, wodurch sie den Leser zu einer kritischen Reflexion des eigenen Verhaltens anregen wollen. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Arbeit, dass Bradburys Geschichten für den heutigen Unterrichtskontext zahlreiche Vorteile bieten. Sie sind nicht nur flexibel in den Unterricht integrierbar, sondern sie können auch dazu beitragen, eine kritische und sozial verantwortliche Denkweise und eine gründliche Reflexion der technologischen, politischen und ökologischen Entwicklungen unserer Zeit zu fördern. Als solche können sie einen wertvollen Beitrag zur Erreichung der im aktuellen österreichischen Lehrplan definierten Unterrichtsziele leisten. Die Analyse zeigt außerdem einen überschaubaren sprachlichen Schwierigkeitsgrad für SchülerInnen der oberen Sekundarstufe sowie ein Potenzial zur weiteren Förderung der Sprachentwicklung durch Vokabelübungen, mündliche Diskussionen und kreative Schreibaufgaben. Die Arbeit enthält schließlich auch explizite Aufgabenvorschläge für LehrerInnen, die daran interessiert sind, die untersuchten Geschichten im Unterricht zu verwenden.