

## Contextualising Autobiographical Fantasy In Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to explore how Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* builds its symbolic architecture, which primarily depends on the usage of myth, and tries to expose the autobiographical fantasy. This fantasy novel is autobiographical and takes place in childhood. It unravels the enigma of life and death. He highlights the awful aspect of these happenings. The protagonist, Douglas Spaulding, imagines a contemporary human being who becomes suddenly and exhilaratingly aware of the magical and wonderful world around him. Beginning on the first day of summer and ending on the last, when Douglas realises that everyone must die eventually and becomes extremely concerned about his own death, it is also a meditation on morality, memory, nostalgia, and childhood. A portion of the novel consists of vivid, colourful fantasies told in exquisite poetry. It can be challenging at times to solve the enigma. Bradbury consistently explores temporal relationships, mental telepathy, and the idea that humankind may not have fully developed.

**Keywords:** Autobiography, Mystery, Death, Childhood, Fantasy, Life

### Contextualising Autobiographical Fantasy in Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*

Ray Bradbury is a gifted and inventive storyteller who is most recognised for his science fiction and fantasy works. He has a sizable fanbase among science fiction readers, but there is also a sizable minority who cannot stand his work at all. They accuse him of showing no regard for the genre, of not even trying to make his scientific double-talk credible, and, worst of all, of harbouring mistrust and fear for science. His vivid and incisive imagery never stops illuminating well-known spaces with unexpected phrases.

In *Dandelion Wine*, Bradbury recalls his early years in Waukegan, Illinois, along with the wonderful joys and romance of youth. The horrible side of these incidents lends a mysterious touch to the tale. There is a strong sense of fantasy in the novel. It displays the blend of the child and the father. Readers mature so wonderfully and quickly. The cynical adult in the narrative ignores the youngster's amazing sense of clarity about many things, and the child is not hesitant to express deep emotion. Douglas Spaulding is a creative, fantastical, and contemplative person. His contemplation produces mystery, and his inventiveness produces fantasy. He made fun of himself as a 12-year-old most of the time in the story, but occasionally he would get serious and musing about matters of life and death. Compared to his age, he also enjoys discussing more significant and enigmatic subjects. Douglas's younger brother Tom Spaulding frequently questions him, and Douglas responds in a very enigmatic manner. He lacks the maturity of Douglas and never gets the gravity of Douglas's enigmatic views on life. Douglas is overcome by his imagination.

In Greentown, Illinois, during the summer of 1928, Douglas developed a life awareness that led to his seriousness. Throughout the novel, he describes his typical early-summer activities, such as gathering fox grapes, making wine, buying new trainers and relaxing on the porch swing. Douglas makes the decision to record everything that happened this summer on a tablet. The boys participate in excursions in their town over the entire summer. Grandpa Spaulding teaches him a lesson about the importance of gardening and lawn care as he confronts the terrifying ravine. According to Leo Aufmann's Happiness Machine, spending time with family is more significant. He learns from Mrs. Bentley that those who are older were never youthful. The Time Machine is introduced by Charlie Woodman.

Douglas' awareness of life's mysteries is a result of his sense of morals. When he finds out about Miss Fern and Miss Roberta's accident in their green machine, he gets upset. The buses had taken the place of Mr Tridden's tram. After his phone is taken away, Colonel Freeleigh passes away. Bill Forrester first falls in love with Mrs. Helen, who passes away quite quickly. Lavinia Nebbs kills the enigmatic and unknown lonely one. Even though Douglas's grandma is certain she will not truly pass away, she too passes away. Bradbury masterfully contrasts this chapter in Douglas' life with a mystical, philosophical tone.

Douglas's experience prevents him from accepting that he would eventually pass away, and this belief provides him the willpower to save himself from the Tarot Witch. Mr. Jonas's bottle of air saves a sick Douglas during the height of summer. At end of the novel, summer finally comes to an end, but Douglas has grown much wiser and more self-aware than before. He has a difficult metamorphosis into a new person with a fresh outlook on life. He grows more astute and inventive, more prudent in protecting life and its joys.

Bradbury's preferred theme of magic generates fantasy, appearing on nearly every page of the novel. Douglas begins his performance with a conjuring trick. He has a wide perspective of the town when he stays the night at his grandparents'

house. He “magically” awakens the town from the cupola of the attic bedroom in his grandparents’ house. He carries out a complex sequence of deeds in time with the town’s residents waking up and the sky becoming lighter. He performs this in a way that seems magical. He also compares street light to a candle on a piece of dark cake. These real-life occurrences are gathered by Bradbury with a dash of fiction. When Douglas, his brother, and his father went to harvest fox grapes, they pretended that it was simply another day, but Douglas felt something strange was there. He sensed that day was unlike any other. He believes that while some days were noteworthy and drastically different from others, some days were just like any other. Because there is silence in the wood, he also senses the presence of some strangers and the damp, cloudless air.

The ravine that cuts through the lush town like a scar tangibly represents the primordial fear of death. It displays Douglas’ enigmatic grasp of how the natural world functions. The ravine was, in fact, the site where you came to look at two things of life, the ways of man and the ways of the natural world, according to Bradbury (17). Bradbury also addresses global overpopulation and paints a vivid picture of the future. The enigma of man taking over the land and the land reclaiming it year after year is what he muses over (17). When Douglas gives Tom a tablet that serves as a recorder of his summer, the contents are typical of a young child. Tom recommends that he record another significant occasion, which is the two siblings’ favourite activity - sitting up on the porch swing for a late-night chat. The atmosphere of fantasy blended with reality is abruptly altered by the author. Such sitting porches personify the voices of the elderly. Douglas enjoys a comfortable, carefree, and comforting sitting summertime. “Voices chanted, drifted, in moonlit clouds of cigarette smoke while the moths, like late apple blossoms come alive, tapped faintly about the far street lights and the voices moved on into the coming years” (32). Bradbury explores the piece of architecture while describing the front porch where all family members gathered for long-night conversation. The author creates a fantasy of the future using the voices of adults. The front porch transforms into a temple, and he sees darkness enveloping the town like black water. He compared the attic to a time machine.

Another illustration of the author’s inventiveness and Douglas’s charm as a child is “The Happiness Machine.” It was a crafty device that transports the user on a multi-media journey through many of the world’s most breathtaking sights. The phrase “The Wheels of his Happiness Machine spun whirling golden light spokes along the ceiling of his head” (35), however, also conveys the emptiness of such made-up devices. The mystery of the night and death is created by the author in the story of Ravine. Tom’s mother goes to the ravine with him at night when he runs out to get ice cream by 9:30 p.m. and Douglas has not returned home. He feels safest when he holds his mother’s hand. However, when he notices his mother’s hand shaking with anxiety, his sense of security is put in jeopardy. He understands that she is a human being too, capable of being afraid of dying. This startling realisation that elderly individuals can experience anxiety and agitation as well scared him and made him conscious of the darkness in the actual world.

Tom’s mother reveals to him his fundamental truth about death and his basic fear of dying while they are walking across a ravine. The earth was full of lonely, dark places, as the author explains. And Tom ponders a great deal about philosophy in general. He believes that “life was a horror lived in them at night, when an ogre called Death threatened them on all sides with sanity, marriage, children, and happiness” (43). Tom realises that death is a universal truth. Douglas came back, and Tom calmed down just before he felt overpowered.

In a fiction, machines play a significant role since they are both tangible and magical. Colonel Freeleigh, who Douglas and Tom refer to as “a time machine,” is a success, while “The Happiness Machine” is a disaster. Another illustration of a fantasy or imaginative contraption is “The Green Machine.” When Miss Fern and Miss Roberta, two elderly women, drove this vehicle throughout town. A salesperson lends them the green Machine, which they use as a quiet, convenient mode of transportation. The first few days spent on the Machine were unreal. However, the incident involving Mr. Quarterman caused them to consider the machine. Although they both regret their accident, they eventually found out that Mister Quarterman was still alive. The novel “The Green Machine” is a work of fiction that exists only in the reader’s imagination.

The reader is left with more uncertainty in the next chapter, “The Lonely One.” The Lonely One is a terrifying and enigmatic individual who has suffocated multiple women in the vicinity. The women stroll through the warm night, gradually evoking a sense of imminent death. Their nightmares grow more unsettling, and everything from walkie-talkies to friend get-togethers becomes jitterier. The genuine person in the author’s life is similar to the Lonely One persona. The Lonely One was eerie and enigmatic; his ominous presence gives rise to an enigmatic fear of dying. The entire town loved to talk about him since he scared everyone, yet he only made one appearance in the novel, when Bradbury was six or seven years old. Although he was a cat burglar, the Lonely One in the novel represented terror and danger, making people afraid to even hear about him. The novel unveils the terrible interaction of life and death, disclosing the Douglas experience of growing up, but also creating mystery with a nostalgic aura akin to a lightning strike. The author depicts death as a terrible force in the “Lonely One” figure. The only thing on everyone’s mind one evening when Lavinia Nebb and her female companions go into town for a movie is “The Lonely One.” The mystery and terror that surround Lavinia as she makes her way home through the pitch-black valley by herself are effectively evoked by her description of the area: “It smelled like a greenhouse, of secret vapours and ancient, washed shale and quicksands” (159). And there was always the humming black dynamo, where fire files moved over the air and sparkled like enormous electricity.

Grandma's want to live and her fear of dying are two examples of how human anxiety is manifested. Even if everyone could see their enigmatic future, they refused to pass away. Doug's grandmother believes that her time is running out, having lived for a very long time. She never wants to pass away or is not dead in his eyes, even if she knows she is dying. In her final stages of life, she remembers both her early years and her entire life, starting when she was a little newborn. She views life as a dream, from which she was awakened after ninety years of existence. Despite knowing she is about to die; she still wants to live. Douglas wrote about his summer experience since he was demoralised by the recent losses and deaths. This exposes the awful aspect of this summer. Douglas like the summer, but it's also a terrible time of year, which implies that unpleasant things happen in life. In his summer experience, Douglas writes that we cannot rely on things since, in his opinion, when machines break down, they end up in a garage like the happiness machine and the trolley in the novel; they also end up like tennis shoes, which are unique items that you can wear and use during your life, not in the hereafter. In addition, Douglas has a strong suspicion of the individuals in his life who are fleeting.

Douglas believes that all our loved ones will eventually pass away or disappear. Someone will be killed, and our friends will perish. His greatest epiphany comes towards the end when he considers that if machines are destroyed, what assurance do humans have that they will not die too? Even though his grandmother says he will always be around, he is shocked to learn that she dies one day, which makes him wonder about his own life and the possibility that he may also pass away. But this exposes Douglas' enigmatic preoccupation with life and death. Douglas and Tom went to see the mechanical tarot witch at a penny arcade. Tom wonders why he wanted to see her so much, but Douglas told him not to ask too many questions. Instead, he began to consider his own mortality and wrote the last words on his nickel tablet, "SOMEDAY, I DOUGLAS SPAULDING MUST DIE" (190). The Tarot Witch predicted Douglas's life's typical outcome, but Tom's card is blank. Douglas believes that Tom's inexplicable fortune transcends existence itself. He claims there is French massage on the reverse of the card; this will be invisible ink. Here, the mystery surrounding Tom's life is solved.

The summer of 1928 will always be remembered for its green apple trees, freshly mowed lawns, new trainers, dandelions turned into wine, family and friend hunting and of course, Grandma's delectable cooking. For the developing lads, it is equally the magical and magnificent summer as well as the summer of sadness, illness, and despair. It is believed that Spaulding's sensitivity and inventiveness are the reason why Green Town looks to be permeated with magic and fantasy. Spaulding's imagination is what creates the magic of the street vehicle, the front porch, and the tarot witch. The episode of The Lonely One and the ravine transport us to Spaulding's enigmatic inner monologue. He is likewise infatuated with Green Town's magical ingredients and inhales life and death like Ned Jonas's magic bottle.

Bradbury takes great pleasure in building an innovative electrical home that can prepare meals on its own. He retells the children's fairytale, adding the perspective of a fully realised adult. Through Grandma, he gives an unbridled glimpse into his boyhood while including the detached perspective and enigmatic, philosophical equilibrium of a fully grown adult. She calms Tom by telling him that everyone must go one day when she realises that her life is about to end and accepts it with happiness.

Bradbury's cosmic theory, which holds that human immortality is guaranteed by subsequent generations among the stars, is made clear by her statement that "never a family member died. I have a very long lifespan. How a whole township of my descendants will be biting bitter apples in the gumwood shade a millennium from now" (183). Bradbury aims to persuade readers that even when technology and machines lessen human labour, they cannot replace a person's relationship with the natural world. Even though science is quite advanced, none of us understands the mystery of science. Bill is informed by Grandma that having a good-sized lawn does not make up for the loss of the basic pleasure of mowing the lawn. He also concludes that getting rid of dandelion "weeds" is valuable.

Bill thinks that the innovation of grass with the same length saves time, but Grandpa gladly supports their traditional way because it allowed him to have a direct connection with nature, and nothing beats a tangible invention. The story of Leo Auffmann further develops this machine-related topic. He always believes that this happy machine will make all of his problems go away, but it always turns around and disappoints him. He overlooked the significance of love in a person's life when building machinery. In the final chapter, Leo learns that our cherished family and our relationships with each other are the real sources of happiness. It suggests that daily living is the greatest representation of human affection. daily contentment and his beloved. Ironically, the author imagines a futuristic world in which people are forgetting their loved ones while reaching outside for happiness. People are real-time machines that can be transported to other places and times via communication just like any other technology. The author wants to imply that machines are just for amusement and that humans are all we need.

Douglas enjoys the beauty of everything around him in the summer of 1928, and the dandelion wine is a symbol of this beauty. Douglas is eager and prepared for the wonderful summertime. Not to look good, but to sprint with the wind and bound through the world, he needs new trainers. In the novel, a pair of trainers also possesses a mystical touch. This summer, Douglas makes the very different decision to record the events in writing. He records every ritual and observance that takes place every summer, along with his thoughts and feelings about them. Douglas aligns with the magic from the first day of the summer. Douglas's imagination is rife with fantasy as he wakes up late at night and goes back to sleep. The wonder of life is removed when he acknowledges his own existence. A portion of its realisation was their journey through the forest. When Douglas interacts with Tom in the wood, he may grasp the magic of life. Amazingly, Douglas

finds that the summer of 1928 is the right time to comprehend how his existence relates to other significant aspects of life. According to his understanding, the mystery of life for all humans is death.

The machines of novel are likewise a type of life cycle fantasy. By the time the novel ends, Douglas has experienced both humans and machines that cease to function, and he has drawn conclusions about life. Douglas discovers that nothing endures forever when the green machine disappears and the tram breaks down. Douglas astutely discovers that human emotions cannot be replaced by technology. After being created and use, machines are eventually superseded by other things. If we increase the machine's running time by a significant amount, the life cycle is almost fully described. Since machines do not last forever, they join the realm of life's enchantment.

Bradbury warns us about and imagines the internet. His focus was mostly on the negative aspects of technology, particularly its detrimental impact on interpersonal relationships. Our relationship with our smartphones may horrify his happiness machine. Even though the novel is about childhood enchantment and fantasy, the author included a mystery touch of philosophical ideas about how human happiness depends on how much we accept the imperfect as a part of our existence that we cannot alter. People often complain about what they lack, but from his experience with RELISH, life's joys are what drive him to continue living. It is also a mystery that unexpected and ecstatic pleasures can balance out painful experiences in a person's life. The mystery of the conflict between life and death is also explored in the novel. There is an enigmatic conflict between the joy of life and the inevitable acceptance of death. If one is constantly reminded of death, it is impossible to enjoy life.

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