



# The language of power and the power of language. Analysis of propaganda's narrative in *Fahrenheit 451*

Lorena Forni<sup>1</sup> 

Received: 25 October 2022 / Accepted: 9 May 2023  
© The Author(s) 2023

## Abstract

Ray Bradbury's book is a narrative, in a dystopian context, of how the language of power manages to be pervasive, to infiltrate reality, in people's experiences, in the consciousness of an entire society, so as to powerfully transform the meanings of commonly used words, as well as the normative qualifications of acts and professions. A reflection will be proposed on some "semantic spies" present in *Fahrenheit 451*, to highlight the centrality of some uses of language, aimed at influencing not only the behaviour of the members but also at modifying some institutions, manipulating rules and procedures, for the benefit of those who social control operates by administering power. The proposed intervention will deal with the specific function of propaganda language. Finally, a reflection on the power of the word will be proposed, as a tool capable of fully understanding the present and allowing all individuals to lay the foundations for new social, legal and political realities for the future.

**Keywords** Power · Language · Law and Literature · Social control · Propaganda

## A short introduction to the topic and a quick look at the methods used in this analysis

Ray Bradbury's book *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury 1953) is the dystopian narrative of a reality, in which there is a specific language, the language of those in power, which is employed through a particular mode: propaganda. This manipulative use of the language of power conditions people's lives, to the point of transforming the consciousness of an entire society. This is possible because the meanings of words, even and especially of the most common words, are radically transformed and, together with them, the normative qualifications of actions and professions are also changed.

---

✉ Lorena Forni  
lorena.forni@unimib.it

<sup>1</sup> School of Law, University of Milano – Bicocca, Piazza Dell'Ateneo Nuovo 1, 20126 Milano, Italy

Those who play a role in protecting the population, the *firemen* (Bradbury 1953, pp. 12–14), for example, are called in different ways, that is, they are called “Happiness Boys” (Bradbury 1953, p. 81). They do not put out fires: on the contrary, they set fires to burn dangerous and forbidden objects, books. The protagonist, Guy Montag, at the beginning of the story, feels a “special joy” (Bradbury 1953, p. 9) in seeing them *devoured*, not because they were read avidly, but because they were blackened and burned by the fire. Reading, in fact, is a forbidden action, just as it is illegal to own books (Bradbury 1953, p. 14).

This paper is a reflection on the importance that narrative can have, since it can also be discussed in different contexts, such as the theoretical-legal one. In particular, the dystopian narrative that will be examined is useful in reflecting on the language used by institutions that want to manipulate the whole life of citizens, on the prescriptive function of the language of those in power, and on the political use of a language capable of great distortions: propaganda.

In fact, immersing himself in the book, there is a certain uneasiness: the reader feels the difficulty of keeping our reality separate from the imaginary context represented in the literary work. A sign of this difficulty is the fact that the reader is prompted to ask himself some questions: how was such a paradigmatic shift possible in the use of words, their meanings, their function of qualifying “lawful” and “unlawful” actions? On the basis of what elements has the language of those in power been able to influence reality so much?

To answer these questions, a critical reflection will be proposed, in line with the philosophical and legal contributions of the current of critical thought of “Law and Literature” (Levinson 1982; West 1988; Posner 1986, 2009; Brooks 2002). Some passages of the book will be examined, focusing on some of the “semantic spies” (Bayer and Struckmeier 2017) found in *Fahrenheit 451*, to highlight the centrality of certain uses of language. Propaganda, understood as a specific way of using prescriptive language, has the particular function of influencing not only people’s behaviour, but also of changing the relationship between citizens and institutions, manipulating rules and procedures, for the benefit of those who want strong social control.

We will therefore discuss the specific function of the “language of power” (Di Donato 2011, pp. 41–59; Mittica 2011) that is told, namely *propaganda* (Lasswell 2019). Its peculiarities and characteristics will be examined. We will analyse its incisiveness in the sphere, not only linguistic (Bach 2006), of the recipients (Fatelli 2019, pp. 7–51). This will be done starting from a few passages of the text *Fahrenheit 451*, in order to reveal, through the plot of the story, how powerful the language of literature and narrative is (Stanley 2020), in revealing the rhetorical-persuasive function of propaganda (Piazza 2020, pp. VII–XLV).

Therefore, the paper will be structured as follows: after defining what is meant by “propaganda” and after clarifying the peculiarities of the manipulative language of propaganda, two different types of propaganda discourse will be examined: supporting propaganda and undermining propaganda. Examples will be made with direct quotations from Bradbury’s text. In the following, the typical narrative elements of propaganda speeches will be described and examined, starting with some excerpts from *Fahrenheit 451*. Attention will be paid, in particular,

to the so-called “at-issue content” and “not at-issue content” and to some *ideological and fallacious beliefs* present in the narrative.

Finally, some references to Bradbury’s text will be analyzed to argue in favor of the power of critical and free language, which even in a deteriorated political-social context, such as that of *Fahrenheit 451*, is the tool to give life to new and re-founded social contexts, no longer oppressed by the oppressive language of those who hold power.

## **Reading a literary text starting from the analysis of language: dystopia and propaganda**

The philosophical-juridical analysis of the language with which imaginary realities are told, moreover, has known a growing interest (Faralli et al. 2009). A good reason to consider the ethical-legal analysis of a literary text is the conviction that literature contributes significantly to the formation of the ethical and social consciousness of those who work in the legal world (Mittica 2011).

Conversely, every normative reality can be understood and better analysed based on literary contributions.

In this context, the analysis of a dystopian narrative will allow us to reflect on the power of the word, not only in the literary sphere, as a tool capable of comprehending the present in depth.

We know that narrative is a fundamental component of everyday life, as it regards different aspects (social, cultural, economic, political field etc.) (Obreja 2022). We also know that dystopian narrative is considered a particular literary language. Through the analysis of a specific book, which is characterized by dystopian narrative as *Fahrenheit 451*, we have the opportunity to achieve different abilities and results.

The philosophical and juridical analysis of the language used to tell imaginary and dystopian realities will allow us to reflect on the power of the word, not only in the literary sphere, as a tool capable of comprehending the present. After all, the function of propaganda is often used, without the audience being aware of what it is and how it works, even in commercial advertising, in political speeches and even in the communication of contexts where there is a war going on. Moving away from our reality, to go inside a dystopian narrative, we can bring greater awareness in the citizens about different aspects.

On the one hand, the close relationship between language and power is highlighted. A critical reflection on language makes it clear that, even if apparently “sound good”, the rules governing society cannot be reduced to slogans, oversimplified or passed over as other banal messages. In fact, the complexity of social reality cannot be reduced by reducing words.

On the other hand, the analysis of a narrative text makes it clear that, in the event of a situation of danger, language is one of the key tools for rethinking the legal and political construction of a society torn apart and in crisis. The awareness of the importance of languages, mainly verbal ones, which can have evocative, descriptive, as well as prescriptive functions, makes human beings particularly creative and

free to devise new theoretical-legal models. In doing so, the foundations can be laid for new political realities. It is the conscious use of language that frees people from forms of oppression and abuse of power, and helps them to build another, and better, future.

## Propaganda: what it is, what it is for and how it is used

The word “propaganda” refers primarily to a particular prescriptive language (Pietroni 2022), with a specific function of manipulation (Minelli 2020; Pecoriello 2022). This is the purpose assumed by some narratives (Vulli 2017, pp. 227–237), such as some speeches, constructed and proposed in the context of war (Montanari 2004, pp. 8–9), for example. The characteristic of this type of language is the targeted use of fake news, of fake stories, characteristic even more highlighted by the articulated distortion made of the reality provided in the narratives (Brunner 1991, pp.1–21, Di Donato 2011; Mittica 2011).

“Propaganda” (Capozzi 2014; Stanley 2015, 2020; McKinnon 2018,), in a first and generic sense, is a discourse that conveys news generally devoid of any foundation, spread artfully and for particular purposes, not openly declared. The function of such news would be to accentuate facts or situations represented in such a way as to favour (the position, the image, the credibility of) the sender of the communication, without any criticism. In a second, more precise redefinition, it denotes, more specifically, a set of misleading actions in the broad sense (Montanari 2004), which tend to influence public opinion. It is a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate knowledge and direct behaviour in order to elicit a response that favours the intentions of those who implement it (Piazza 2020; Stanley 2020). For its realization (Potts 2005, 2007; Viesel 2017; McCready 2019), communication techniques need to be adopted that require specific professional skills; moreover, access to various types of communication media, such as (today) mass media but also social media must be available. It is also characterised by a degree of concealment and manipulation, selectivity of the facts of reality. Messages can involve different degrees of coercion or threat, can leverage fear or appeal to positive aspirations (Piazza 2020). Reflecting on the possibility of evoking, with different degrees, fears or rewards, we can distinguish between two different types of propaganda: *supporting propaganda* and *undermining propaganda* (Stanley 2020, pp. 125–222).

In the first case (*supporting propaganda*), we refer to an action or a series of actions proposed to the recipients with the intent of convincing them—in a non-rational way—to carry out / not carry out certain actions or to have / not have certain opinions or beliefs, for example by relying on pleasant emotions, aroused in the audience to pursue a specific, positive, satisfying goal. Generally, we use a language inspired by values loaded with positive values, or by good ideals promoted by a certain purpose.

On the contrary, a message is typical of second kind of propaganda (*undermining propaganda*) when it is always proposed with the intention of operating a persuasion (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 2001), but this operation is carried out by conveying values or ideals that we want to disqualify, that we want to compromise (Piazza

2020, pp. VIII–IX). This modality is considered particularly insidious: it does not persuade itself by promoting a certain purpose or a certain value. Persuasion is accomplished by showing what it wants to oppose, despise, demonize. It is mostly carried out by hitting certain subjects directly, if they carry out certain behaviours that are deemed not to be approved. Indirectly, however, a wider audience is also affected: much importance is given to the blame and disapproval associated with sanctioned conduct, precisely to highlight the values to be deprecated. *Undermining propaganda* can be perpetrated with increasing levels of disapproval, up to actual censorship (Pintore 2021). It is often induced by arousing feelings of fear, evoking danger, or threatening serious repercussions in the personal sphere of the interlocutors. This happens if the recipient and / or the audience are resistant to rejecting certain values or ideals, which a certain authority wants no longer to be considered either positive or approachable (Piazza 2020).

Through *undermining propaganda*, one is literally deceived, because the recipients of the message conveyed are led to believe that they are promoting an end that they are contributing to compromise, or because they are so strongly conditioned that they believe they are living in a society that pursues values, or positive purposes, when these values are systematically trampled and disqualified (Piazza 2020).

## The language of power: the *Fahrenheit 451*'s propaganda

A typical feature of propaganda language, present in both *supporting* and *undermining propaganda*, is that it seems reasonable and commonly accepted (Borsellino 2018) by most of the people to whom it is addressed. Associated with this is the constant use of linguistic expressions that are stereotypes and prejudices, which serve to describe minorities as groups full of defects and problems (Bradbury 1953, p. 78). Minorities are groups of subjects that need to be controlled and conditioned, since they are made up of indolent, subversive individuals. Such derogatory and manipulative qualifications erode empathy (Stanley 2020, p. 159) towards minority groups, excluding their point of view from narrative and comparison (Piazza 2020, pp. X–XI), which implicitly, in surreptitious ways (Stanley 2020, pp. 175–201), is often associated with unpleasant, reprehensible actions or situations.

The elements described above can be found in the text of *Fahrenheit 451*. The language of propaganda is aimed at promoting goals or values considered relevant and reasonable, considered acceptable in a certain socio-legal and political context. The well-being of the society represented in the book, in fact, seems to be achieved precisely by the homologation of points of view, by the abandonment of critical thought, by the acceptance of the renunciation of reading (and therefore of writing) books. To describe reading as a dangerous action, to be forbidden, seems understandable and, all in all, a balanced choice, just as it seems sensible to consider books as illegal objects, unnecessary provocations, capable of generating only disobedience and disorder.

In fact, manipulation works in a subtle and dangerous way, to the point that certain ends or values are those set by the majority, promoted through procedures and decisions taken democratically, while in practice institutions and rules are bent to

achieve subtle ends, with the precise aim of systematically targeting a minority (lovers of books and reading). If you are “caught in flagrante delicto” because you keep books at home, you are not punished according to transparent procedures, with proportionate penalties at the end of a trial, for example. On the contrary, the penalty is immediately established and imposed by those in power at that time (the firemen’s team leader or the barracks captain). The owners of books, sometimes, are burned alive inside their homes, along with the forbidden objects—books—which they culpably wanted to keep.

*Supporting propaganda*, apart from rational arguments, exalts certain values, such as the foundation of an autonomous and independent nation, the American one. In Bradbury’s narrative, the literary expedient of fire and *burning* (the books) alludes to what the language of propaganda generates: the verb *to burn* is the powerful semantic spy that allows the foundation of a new reality. A new social organization, in fact, was achieved by *burning* all ties with the first Homeland, England. Fire is the symbol that exalts the value of liberation from the oppression of culture, which through millions of texts generates only confusion and disagreement. *Firemen* are the men to have as an example, to promote the ideal of security, along with the value of obedience to those in power and, in general, the value of blind loyalty to the Nation, etc., presented as positive ideals, deserving to be achieved through certain specific actions (not owning books, not reading, whistleblowing about one’s neighbors if one suspects they have texts at home (Bradbury 1953, p. 50), alerting the authorities, who will intervene to burn books, etc.). Despite these ideals and these values of safety and well-being, the reality described makes the reader understand that we live in a very different, “upside down” world.

We live in a constant deception, because history has been rewritten precisely by those in power, security is imposed on the citizens, at the price of the approval of all associated with the values of those in charge; decisions are taken and orders are given, all of which are aimed at sabotaging the declared aims or values, to the point of making them impracticable or, paradoxically, bringing about a reversal of reality. The typical condition of every dystopian context has been determined (Lucci and Tirino 2019), in which the values initially advocated have turned into their opposite.

On the other hand, *undermining propaganda* in *Fahrenheit 451* considers education and culture, acquired over time, devalued and not worthy of study. The only good values of education are conveyed by visual content, established by those in power, and are immediate, rapid, shown on television screens and handed down only with fast narratives, mostly oral.

Once, books appealed to a few people, here, there, everywhere. They could afford to be different. The world was roomy. But then the world got full of eyes and elbows and mouths. Double, triple, quadruple population. Films and radios, magazines, books levelled down to a sort of paste pudding norm [...]. Classics cut to fit fifteen-minute radio shows, then cut again to fill a two-minute book column, winding up at last as a ten- or twelve-line dictionary resume. I exaggerate, of course. The dictionaries were for reference. But many were those whose sole knowledge of Hamlet (you know the title certainly, Montag; it is probably only a faint rumour of a title to you, Mrs. Montag) whose sole

knowledge, as I say, of Hamlet was a one-page digest in a book that claimed: ‘now at least you can read all the classics; keep up with your neighbours’. Do you see? Out of the nursery into the college and back to the nursery; there’s your intellectual pattern for the past five centuries or more (Bradbury 1953, p. 72).

The values of free knowledge and pluralism of ideas have been debased and denigrated. They are considered regrettable, as they are generally adopted by those who are a potential enemy of order and security: intellectuals. Another powerful semantic spy concerns precisely the use of the term “intellectual”, which is considered a derogatory, denigrating term. “Intellectuals” are bad citizens, bad people.

The word “intellectual”, of course, became the swear word it deserved to be (Bradbury 1953, p.76).

We understand, therefore, why owning one or more books is a deplorable, wrongful, illegal act, which moreover has assumed the meaning of a particularly subversive act, not only at the cultural level. This is a narrative structure present in many dystopian narratives, as is also present in George Orwell’s famous novel: *1984*. (Orwell 2021).

## The specificity of propaganda language

In the most recent studies of propaganda language (Murray 2014), two typical elements have been identified, the combination of which is particularly effective. These are expressions of language defined as “at-issue content” (main theme) and “not at-issue content” (secondary element) (Piazza 2020, pp. XXIX; Murray 2014).

The so-called “at-issue contents” are phrases of complete meaning, which convey as plausible, possible, reasonable, a certain topic, theme, subject, event etc., which to some extent can be checked or controlled, or is generally considered uncontroversial.

The so-called “not at-issue contents”, instead, are always sentences, expressions of complete meaning that seem to have a marginal role. They are often perceived as negligible clarifications, placed against the background of the discourse of “at-issue content”, whose specific function, however, is to highlight the “main issue” (Piazza 2020), precisely, to which they are linked. They have the effect of concealing that, with their use, one casts a shadow of discredit or, conversely, one wants to exalt the main theme (at-issue content).

The “not at-issue contents” are therefore apparently irrelevant; in substance, however, they highlight, without explicitly stating it, an aspect, a profile, an element proper to what is to be accepted, uncontroversial, preferable or, what is to be described as objectionable, to be rejected, not accepted, blameworthy etc.

Because of its specific function, the “not at-issue content” is also called *evidence element* (Murray 2014): it accompanies the first content, with the aim of highlighting the reasons that the speaker shares. It also has the function of insinuating, of alluding to certain values or undervalues—to be found in common feelings, or in tradition, in “nature”, or in commonly accepted beliefs, etc. (Forni 2021), apparently

without introducing any relevant elements; in fact, they are aimed at reinforcing the (dis)value attributed to at-issue content with (indirect) argumentative modes (which remain in the background, and which are) non-rational. This specific use of language is not exclusive to propaganda. In fact, we sometimes use the construction of the discourse that will be analysed in ordinary language (Cepollaro and Torrenco 2018), but it is typical of political language (Diesen 2022; Kiliçaslan 2022) and the language of advertising slogans (Cole 2022, p. 4).

However, the most effective uses of the language of manipulation are related to propaganda.

Let us give an example relating to a use outside the communicative context of propaganda. In the sentence: “I was told that yesterday Maria danced all night”, the at-issue content is conveyed by: “Yesterday Maria danced all night.” It is, in fact, a plausible content which is not problematic in itself. The content of the communication, in fact, can be verified or falsified, asking for feedback about Mary’s conduct from some other subject present at the same event. “I was told that”, on the other hand, it is a statement that is exempt from a form of verification or control, at least of a direct kind.

However, it is used to reinforce the at-issue element: Maria, last night, danced. Whether it is acceptable conduct or not, the sentence “I was told...” does not make it clear who has reported, whether they are reliable in reporting a set of information or items. This expression is regarded as marginal, essentially irrelevant. Its function, however, is to qualify the grafted content, which is added to the common ground of communication, evaluated, as a whole, in a certain way (depending on the case, it may be a praiseworthy or reprehensible assessment). “I was told that...”, therefore, it is a statement that has a sort of indirect control over the conduct that is being carried out in order to assess it as acceptable, or as disapproved.

Another example could be the following: “Everyone knows that sunsets are inspiring.” That the sunsets are a source of inspiration is an at-issue content (it is a statement that can be qualified in various ways, such as appropriate, reasonable, uncontroversial etc.). *Everyone knows that*, on the contrary, it is a not at-issue content: it refers to a word (“all”) denoting a universal generalization (Forni 2021, p. 37), to which we attribute the (positive) value of *knowledge*, of *confirmation*, because presupposed as good, in relation to the at-issue content. The phrase “everyone knows” is not particularly relevant, it is an element of the discourse with a marginal function, so much so that, in itself, this profile would be removed from the discussion and considered with little attention. “Everyone knows that”, however, is related to what we can represent in sunsets: it alludes, in the specific context proposed, to certain elements, which are no longer only proposed as natural phenomena, but are qualified in a positive, praiseworthy way, so much so that in the message sunsets become “source of inspiration.”

On the basis of these clarifications, we can now understand how the language of propaganda—and of *undermining propaganda* in particular—is structured by a sequence of “at-issue meanings” with other “not at-issue meanings”, i.e. by a specific construction, using contents of the first and second types, according to a precise scheme. We use a language capable of conveying a reasonable “at-issue content”, grafted or supported by a “not at-issue content”, which could be absent



from the discourse, but which is instead disguised in such a way as to cover its true characteristic: the “not at-issue contents” of [*underminig*] propaganda are, specifically, mostly expressions of discredit, or manifestations of prejudices. We can find disparaging, irrational phrases or assessments added to the discursive universe of the meanings in question, which presuppose and imply that these are matters commonly accepted, or considered harmless, and as such merit little attention and not subject to debate. For these reasons, the “not a-issue content” is considered obvious, if not irrelevant, and in any case not worthy of further study.

The language of *underminig propaganda*, especially in *Fahrenheit 451*, mixing “at-issue meanings” with “not at-issue meanings”, generates some confusion or distortion, which generally insinuates disguised elements of blame. The language of propaganda does not use overtly denigrating expressions, or an overtly racist, offensive or discriminatory language; instead, it uses apparently neutral expressions, which act as keywords, capable of opening up a universe of unconscious, underlying, unspoken meanings. A sort of linguistic and communicative short-circuit is generated because, formally, the expressions used are not offensive; however, they are linked to certain meanings or issues (“at-issue contents”), which insinuate a message of contempt, of censure regarding the object of the communication.

The important thing for you to remember, Montag, is we're the *Happiness Boys*, the *Dixie Duo*, you and I and the others. We stand against the small tide of those who want to make everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought. We have our fingers in the dyke. Hold steady. Don't let the torrent of melancholy and drear philosophy drown our world. We depend on you. I don't think you realize how important you are, to our happy world as it stands now [...] Well, Montag, take my word for it, I've had to read a few *in my time*, to know what I was about, and the books say nothing! Nothing you can teach or believe. They're about non-existent people, figments of imagination, if they're fiction. And if they're non-fiction, it's worse, one professor calling another an idiot, one philosopher screaming down another's gullet. All of them running about, putting out the stars and extinguishing the sun. You come away lost (Bradbury 1953, p. 81).

The expression *in my time*—“not at-issue content”—seems to indicate a remote time, a distant condition, now outdated, which is irrelevant to the discussion of the present moment. In fact, Captain Beatty, who embodies all the values of propaganda, when he says “in my time”, he uses the phrase as another powerful semantic spy: he recalls that, long ago, it was mistakenly believed that books were useful or could bring prosperity to the community. By using the expression *in my time*, Beatty wants to point out the difference between the present, where fire, destroying books, keeps everyone safe (by stemming the tide of book readers and generating insecurity and unhappiness), and the past, where such security has not always been guaranteed. Though seemingly harmless, words that refer to another time have the effect of emphasizing the values promoted and protected in the present. In fact, Beatty is peremptory in proposing a precise at-issue content: firemen are to be considered in a praiseworthy way, so much to be called *Happiness Boys*, because they destroy what

produces deception and confusion. Books say nothing, teach nothing, and do not allow individuals to achieve anything good.

In addition to the famous passage just mentioned, we can find that, in other parts of *Fahrenheit 451*, the succession of “at-issue arguments” with other “not-at-issue” arguments is present in the text and is used, sometimes, in an innovative way by Bradbury, to make it a particular narrative technique. The articulation of the story, in certain passages, in fact, sounds directly like an example of propaganda; indirectly, however, it can also be read as a ferocious critique of society itself told in the book.

In *Part One*, for example, Montag asks Clarisse, the girl who with her questions and her strange actions tickles the doubt and opens his mind, why she is never at school and why he always finds her around. Clarisse responds thus:

I'm anti-social, *they say*. I don't mix. It's so strange. I'm very social indeed. It all depends on what you mean by social, doesn't it? *Social* to me means talking about things like this. [...] Being with people is nice. But I don't think it's social to get a bunch of people together and then not let them talk, do you? An hour of TV class, an hour of basketball or baseball or running, another hour of transcription history or painting pictures, and more sports, but do you know, we never ask questions, or at least most don't; they just run the answers at you, *bing, bing, bing*, and us sitting there for four more hours of film-teacher. That's not social to me at all. It's a lot of funnels and a lot of water poured down the spout and out the bottom, and them telling us it's wine when it's not. They run us so ragged by the end of the day we can't do anything but go to bed or head for a Fun Park to bully people around [...] (Bradbury 1953, pp. 41–42).

The “at-issue content,” *to be anti-social*, is in fact a consideration reasonably attributable by medical or pedagogical experts to the girl's conduct, that is, they are plausible assessments of those who have known, examined, analysed Clarisse. The phrase «*I'm anti-social, they say. I don't mix. It's so strange*» (Bradbury 2008, p. 41) is a strong semantic spy that makes us understand immediately what happens to those who do not conform, to those who do not align. Then, however, the author “plays” with the linguistic components of the propaganda discourse, because Clarisse's phrase grafts the “non-at-issue content” into the discourse: “they say”: Bradbury, using Clarisse's words, instills the idea, on the basis of a topic that is not the subject of discussion or negotiation, that “to be anti-social” is a questionable, or at least hasty, unprofessional presumption, not up to the subject to be studied; in short, such a judgment has nothing to do with the nature of Clarity, but it serves to justify the irrational way in which one reaches certain conclusions and certain “classifications” of certain subjects, not exactly aligned with the proposed model of “good citizen”. It is precisely the same Clarisse, that is to say the same subject affected by reproach, who uses this mode of argument against those who have used it to denigrate her. Within the society described in the book, moreover, a certain significance of social education and scholastic socialization is promoted, which exalts the immediacy of results, the visibility of physical prowess and deplores the calmness, reasoning and fatigue of reflection. Clarisse does not fail to mock and ridicule, in various passages of the story, the idea of culture proper to the “regime.” We can almost think of it as a counter-propaganda narrative device. In this way, in fact, a

young girl, described in the world of discourse as “abnormal”, is told that the concept of education, of formation, of education itself, which is highlighted in the text, is absurd, contradictory, and ideological (Kelsen 2012, pp. 129–130).

Finally, in the discourse of *undermining propaganda*, at a certain point it may be noted that the use of particularly distorting terms and expressions produces some unforeseeable consequences in the language of those affected by the stigma inherent in propaganda are associated (Piazza 2020), because they consider it, at least *prima facie*, an acceptable method as it is usually used in a certain context, to discuss precisely the condition of disadvantage and/or discrimination that this language has helped to accentuate and which they would like to overcome.

For example, at the end of Clarisse’s story, the distorting effect is produced by the aforementioned linguistic short-circuit, in the sense that it is Clarisse who says about herself:

I guess I’m everything they say I am, all right. I haven’t any friends. That’s supposed to prove I’m *abnormal* (Bradbury 1953, p. 42).

## **Beyond blame and praise. Propaganda as a persuasive and effective tool to influence individuals and institutions**

Why is propaganda so effective? Nowadays, we hear about this in connection with the current conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine (Forni 2022). We hear about “Russian propaganda” or “Ukrainian propaganda news.” (Kiliçaslan 2022).

After all, propaganda was particularly important during the war, and particularly during the World War I and World War II.

Propaganda speeches, real or literary, have to do with the censorship and praise promoted (or not) towards certain behaviours, proposed as “models of positive or negative action” by certain authorities. These elements are also found in the analysis of any discourse with prescriptive function, such as moral discourse, for example. This is partly true, in the sense that they have to do with positive or reprehensible evaluations of specific behaviours, considered important for the political, military, social, family, moral, etc. fields. In general, these values are received by most individuals as shared and commonly accepted values. In the language of propaganda, exalted or depreciated values are a distorted expression, as they are manipulated and based on misleading, lying, irrational elements, even if they are deliberately promoted as expressions of a common feeling.

Propaganda, especially in times of crisis, such as war, quickly takes root in society. However, this evidence does not explain why it is effective. In short, its spread does not in itself make it effective. There are indeed other and different reasons why the non-rational language of propaganda is particularly functional for certain purposes (Lasswell 2019).

One of these reasons is the fact that the *prescriptive function* (Austin 1962, 1988) of the propaganda language makes it possible to entrench, strengthen and spread a series of *ideological and fallacious beliefs* (Stanley 2020, p. 203 ss.). This

expression refers to certain topics rooted in a subject or group of individuals, based on psychological and emotional elements, which are disguised by cultural, political or social opinions. These reasons, based on stereotypes, prejudices and unreasonable beliefs, have the specificity of being impervious to the evidence, even if the evidence is contrary to what is believed.

Indeed, any false ideological belief does not allow us to understand that the values to which we aspire are, in fact, the same values which we want to compromise. What is promoted (schooling, education, sociality, etc.) by *undermining propaganda* is achieved by striking at one or more individuals (Clarisse, for example), to persuade a wider class of individuals, to protect certain values and devalues, damaging or prejudicing certain choices or actions.

The content conveyed and proposed is irrationally distorted: that is, one wants to root a particular belief, on non-rational bases, precisely because it serves propaganda purposes.

A first example is found in the *Part One*, when Montag publicly says that he is happy and he is in love with his wife, even if he has the perception of being quite the opposite, that is, he is unhappy and not is more in love. When he returns home, in fact, after a shift of work, and goes to the bedroom, we read that:

It was like coming into the cold marbled room of a mausoleum after the moon had set. Complete darkness, not a hint of the silver world outside. [...] He felt his smile slide away, melt, fold over, and down on itself like a tallow skin, like the stuff of a fantastic candle burning too long and now collapsing and now blown out. Darkness. He was not happy. He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back (Bradbury 1953, pp. 19–20).

Nevertheless, the protagonist clings to his own fallacious ideological belief. He has a stale, dead affair with his wife, but replies to the girl who asks him if he is in love:

I am very much in love! [...] I am! (Bradbury 1953, p. 33).

His role requires him, in accordance with the values advocated by propaganda, to always be in a good mood, satisfied, calm and to have a (apparently) rewarding relationship. Despite evidence to the contrary, he insists on his conviction.

A second example is the episode in which Montag doesn't show up for a shift because he says he's sick. He is tormented by doubts about the morality and legitimacy of his profession, an uneasiness exacerbated by curiosity to read the books he secretly hid. Montag, in front of Captain Beatty who visits him at home, and then arguing with his wife Mildred, says he is "almost certain" to return to work the next shift. Despite the evidence of his aversion to the activity of burning books, and although he reads them avidly, during his convalescence, he does not completely rationally elaborate the refusal for his own profession and for the mission entrusted to the firefighters, who in his unconscious remain *Happiness Boys*.

Another example of a propaganda message rooted in *fallacious ideological beliefs* can be found in the dialogue Montag's wife, Mildred, has with some of her "friends" after dinner in the living room. The belief in question is that "war is quick, rapid, immediate" but, above all, it is the certainty, the profound conviction that "in war nobody dies." After introducing the question with a narrative constructed according to the "at issue content" scheme, followed by a "not a-issue content" of this tenor:

It's always someone else's husband dies, they say (Bradbury 1953, p.123),

the debate is all about the propaganda content of a false belief.

I've never known any dead man killed in a war. Killed jumping off buildings, yes, like Gloria's husband last week, but from wars? No! (Bradbury 1953, p. 123).

This propaganda language creates a mystification of reality and, in general, the deviation of the events that take place in real life and their distorted representation/narration. These elements make individual experiences and social disputes fertile environments in which to insinuate, root and cultivate forms of *undermining propaganda* and *fallacious ideological beliefs*.

## **Why (don't) we notice the thin line separating our reality from the reality of dystopian narrative**

Both in narrative fiction and in reality, manipulative and deceptive language is used by, or concerns, institutions and individuals who have the power to institute, process and introduce norms, to affect, condition, and transform the lives of citizens.

When you feel yourself slipping from the reality of the present into a dystopian representation, you feel like you're crossing a thin line. The confusion we sometimes feel is due to the fact that, not always consciously, a projective defence mechanism is triggered. Through the reading of a dystopian narrative, we close sophisticated manipulations and deceptions within a fictitious narrative context, because it is too difficult or painful to rationally admit that, even in our daily lives, there are languages that have the precise function of falsely altering facts. It is also sometimes too difficult to understand the fact that we are often users and recipients of these manipulative languages.

To recognise and stop using propaganda expressions means to be very rational; it also means to understand that we are prejudiced and that we are basically tolerant of those who have negative values, beliefs which can endanger social peace. Recognizing our propaganda is a challenging act: it puts all of us in a position to be more attentive to how we use words. It asks us, in short, to be better citizens (Moody-Adams 2017).

Whether the propaganda narrative concerns the present (Forni 2022), or whether it is linked to a narrative context, there is a common thread between the two areas considered: that is, distorting the perception of reality. This linguistic, political and institutional operation is carried out with the aim of distracting both individuals and

large masses of people from problems or issues (political, legal, social) that concern them and which, on the contrary, are removed from public debate.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, what is being disguised, distorted, in the face of the alleged increase in “internal” security problems, such as saving people from books, for example, is the war that is breaking out. It is not specified against whom the entry into war is imminent, against which nations, and for what reasons. Political and legal decisions are not highlighted, and only in the background, in a society marked by propaganda as the prevailing language, the question of an imminent war clash remains. From time to time, phrases such as the following appear in the narrative among various dialogues of the protagonists:

A radio hummed somewhere “War may be declared any hour” (Bradbury 1953, p. 45).

Or:

The bombers crossed the sky and crossed the sky over the house, gasping, murmuring, whistling like an immense, invisible fan, circling in emptiness. “Jesus God”, said Montag. “Every hour so many damn things in the sky! How in hell did those bombers get up there every single second of our lives! Why doesn’t someone want to talk about it? We’ve started and won two atomic wars since 1960!”[...] (Bradbury 1953, p. 96).

At some point, and unexpectedly, in the construction of the narrative, we realize that, on the radio, the announcement is made: “War has been declared” (Bradbury 1953, p.162) as if it were a trifle.

Another element which is constantly being undermined and turned into a trivial and irrelevant aspect is the debate on specific content of political importance.

Quite frankly, there are no longer any political issues for ordinary citizens to discuss and/or have to deal with. The language of propaganda brings out only superficial and trivial elements, such as the height, build, hair and names of the candidates in the political elections. Millie’s friends, in fact, when they discuss politics among themselves, admit that they voted for this or that presidential candidate because he’s a handsome man, and he has a good name; because he’s tall, dresses up and speaks appropriately.

What possessed the Outs to run him? You just don’t go running a little short man like that against a tall man. Besides -he mumbled. Half the time I couldn’t hear a word he said. And the words I did hear I didn’t understand! Fat, too, and didn’t dress to hide it. No wonder the landslide was for Winston Noble. Even their names helped. Compare Winston Noble to Hubert Hoag for ten seconds and you can almost figure the results (Bradbury 1953, p. 126).

Finally, the language of propaganda leads us to believe that culture and critical thinking dissenting from that expressed by those in power is the social problem to be remedied questions on different subjects.

This situation has generated so much fear and terror that it has left those who wanted to oppose unprepared, because in the face of the violence—not only

linguistic—of the current propaganda, acts of resistance become actions that not everyone is or feels capable of doing, because not everyone is or feels capable of doing heroic acts. Prof. Faber, for example, when he meets Montag for the second time, who joins him in his home with one of the few remaining copies of the Old and New Testaments, admits:

Mr. Montag, you are looking at a coward. I saw the way things were going, a long time back. I said nothing. I'm one of the innocents who could have spoken up and out when no one would listen to the 'guilty', but I did not speak and thus became guilty myself. And when finally they set the structure to burn the books, using the firemen, I grunted a few times and subsided, for there were no others grunting or yelling with me, by then. Now, it's too late. (Bradbury 1953, pp. 106–107).

### **The power of language: a bridge to the future**

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the language of law (legislation, decrees, judgments, norms, ordinances, etc.) is completely absent from the life of the average citizen, but also from the life of those who are on the front lines, to make legal—political choices effective. The language of law is obscured and unavailable to citizens, so much so that no one claims to have or to be able to enjoy certain subjective rights. Normative language in general, and legal language in particular, is a language known, written and spoken only in very small circles of those in power. The practical consequences of legal choices are known and understandable, most of the time, only through other languages, such as the non-verbal, corporeal and gestural language of the *Happiness Boys*, who burn books and set fire, proud and even a little arrogant, the homes of those who have texts to read.

The whole story of *Fahrenheit 451* is a continuous narrative of propaganda which, in addition to the direct purpose of conveying functional values and under-values to those in power, with deceptive and manipulative contents, also has an indirect function: that is, it also aims to give importance to the superfluous, to what is ephemeral, commercial, or in any case capable of stunning. Individuals and turn off their critical—reflective abilities.

The languages projected throughout the day on the walls of the living rooms of the houses offer only entertainment content, oriented to divert attention from the relevant issues of society and to focus the public on sentimental storylines of scripts or on singing or theatrical performances that are constantly being offered. Although this state of continuous bombardment of the media produces psychological and physical discomfort for individuals, the harmful consequences of exposure to this kind of language are not critically examined, because what matters, what must always be at the centre of all communication, are youth, health, physical strength and speed in solving problems. The society that burns books lives dangerously, in a whirlpool present, and compensates for this alienation with narcotics and sleeping pills.

When the intake of these psychotropic substances is excessive, the intervention of teams of doctors and paramedics is planned to “detoxify” those who have missed the doses for good sleep.

You take drugs to sleep, you become addicted to adrenaline going at crazy speed in cars for pleasure, to distract yourself from the heaviness of everyday life. All gratification is sought only in physical prowess, in the exaltation of speed, in the radicality of bodily sensations. The pleasure that comes from handling, smelling, contemplating a book is no longer allowed. This form of gratification, both physical and intellectual, which is obtained by interacting with thought-provoking elements, which can be carefully evaluated, and which remain in time, is not so much a transgressive form as it is a real illicit conduct.

Languages, with their various functions, descriptive, prescriptive, expressive, once mainly conveyed by printed books, are reduced to propaganda, which mostly promotes slogans, through television or radio channels. What is communicated is a short, superficial, trivial, if not distorted and unstructured oral content.

The language of the institutions, that is to say of those in power, when it is addressed to the citizenry, is a language which employs almost exclusively propaganda. He also uses fire as an effective symbol of this language. The fire that burns what is illegal, that destroys the sources of discord, confusion and insecurity, at least until, with a paradigm shift, a growing number of people understand that instruments and symbols, however, powerful, can have different functions, if used in different ways, in new languages.

When Montag joins the group of “resistance”, he understands, for example, that the sign “fire” no longer denotes only the connotation of the Happiness Boys: it serves not only to burn books, it serves to warm people and is a symbol of a personal, cultural and collective rebirth. The “dissidents” gather around the fire, and there (re) discover the pleasure of storytelling, without fear of being stigmatized as deviants or public enemies; (re) live the sharing of cultural traditions that have not yet been lost; they are aware that solidarity and respect for differences, rather than homologation and the individual around the fire they consume and share meals and organise themselves to give life to signs and sounds that bring new meanings.

Although it is a difficult and clandestine resistance, those who adhere to it understand the importance of memory and its language. It becomes a disruptive tool. Learning books by heart is, therefore, a strongly anti-propagandistic and revolutionary action: recourse is made to memory, a typical element of oral tradition, considered the most important tool of the dominant culture within the society described in the text, and it is used as a weapon against that society, to undermine its values and its absurd rules.

From depreciated objects, considered vehicles of devaluation and causes of infinite trouble, books are transformed, not so much because they are burned, but because their contents are able to find new supports. Although Mildred has repeatedly pointed out that “Books aren’t people” (Bradbury 1953, p. 95) can change nature and become one.

Books and people integrate, not only to preserve a heritage of knowledge and not to forget, not to dissolve knowledge, but also to support ideas and values, and in



particular the values of freedom, solidarity and knowledge. As old Professor Faber remembers:

Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us (Bradbury 1953, p. 108).

The languages of books become the languages of those engaged in a difficult struggle, in resisting the current regime.

Every individual who has memorized the contents of a book becomes that book. Whoever memorizes a certain content, expressed in a certain language, becomes that language. In doing so, it exerts a power that goes far beyond the content conveyed by a particular language. It gives life to a new form of performativity, it embodies performativity itself, it becomes, at the moment in which it is uttered, the physical representation of the words that have been saved. Printed paper is no longer indispensable to secure a cultural and value imaginary, a set of contents worthy of being preserved and handed down. The support of human memory is sufficient, as the result of an act of courageous disobedience and rediscovered freedom.

The language of power has underestimated the power of language.

## Conclusions

This paper showed how institutions in the society represented in *Fahrenheit 451* have been shrinking to the point of being crushed on a single Organ/Power, the Executive. However, nobody knows who promulgates laws and sets rules, who gives orders and prescribes to apply summary sentences and (disproportionate) sanctions. All these actions are decided without transparent and defined procedures, without proportionality criteria, without audit or control measures. The peculiarity of this society is that everything, every action/execution, must be done in a special way: in favour of the camera. There is a kind of overlap between what is decided and its representation or script. It is difficult to distinguish what is an act, a legal-political decision, from its portrayal in the media. A legal fulfilment, a legal decision, is often indistinguishable from a television programme. Power has become a sort of new media Leviathan, an absolute dystopian, irrational, highly destructive and self-destructive sovereign. We consider, for example, the fact that, without any notice or communication given to the citizenry, and as a sign of total opacity in the handling of sensitive political and military issues, at some point, nuclear bombs are dropped on the city. The detonations turn everything off: the media, their propaganda language, the *Happiness Boys*. The language of Power, exalting physical and military force, implodes on itself and turns into devastation and silence.

The language of propaganda, once understood, was put aside. If you recognize it, you can manage it. Once the resistance people understood that propaganda is the poison that makes their lives and society sick, they found an antidote: to pass on other languages.

The languages of poetry and literature, but also of law, science, philosophy, and religion have endured, handed down in the memory of those who assimilated them. They have represented a pool of knowledge to build a new ethical–political model of peaceful coexistence.

Languages secured by individual and collective memory become the basis on which to build new languages (including normative ones) and new prescriptions.

Despite having to deal with the consequences of an atomic war, and despite the serious consequences of decades of more pervasive propaganda, a small group of people saved words, thoughts and languages because they saved them from the abuse of power.

They have protected freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of expression, because they have regarded these freedoms and rights as the highest values to be protected at all costs.

Disobedience did not create chaos; on the contrary, it gave life to words and to the freedom to express oneself. Based on these values, considered indispensable, a group of individuals laid the foundations (Kelsen 2012;) for new organized social forms (Bobbio 2012, pp. 106–147).

With their choices, their words and their new language, the members of a stigmatized minority have made it possible to choose to found and give lasting obedience to renewed institutions. A small group of individuals has made a genuine non-violent revolution, laying the foundations for new and better paradigms of political, legal and social organization.

Unlike Orwell in novel *1984*, for instance, Bradbury does not imagine the collapse of society and the complete ruin of individuals; instead, he gives the reader the hope of a rebirth. As fire burns and purifies, so does the fall of the firemen's society, through those who have rebelled against propaganda, renews values and freedoms, to shape a new, peaceful, better society.

Propaganda builds consensus on the basis of persuasive discourse and relies precisely on narratives: it is a language that makes us understand how important narratives are, in the legal, political and social context.

The dystopian narrative is therefore a useful tool for reflecting, understanding and discussing issues of legal and philosophical interest. *Fahrenheit 451*, in short, is a text that can be studied and analysed for the contributions of Law and Literature, but it is a book that goes well beyond the literary field.

To conclude, then, *Fahrenheit 451* is a narrative fiction, of course, but its analysis highlights a model of resilience, to imagine and start building better socio-political institutions and organizations, not only in a dystopian world, but also, just in case, in the our own world.

**Acknowledgements** Not applicable.

**Author contributions** The whole paper refers to the indicated Author.

**Funding** Open access funding provided by Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca within the CRUI-CARE Agreement. Not applicable.

**Data availability** Data will be available upon request.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that she does not have any conflicts of interest or competing interests with what is stated in this article.

**Research involving human and animal rights** This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by the author.

**Ethical approval** Not applicable.

**Informed consent** Not applicable.

**Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

## References

- Austin JL (1962) How to do things with words. Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Austin JL (1988) Come fare cose con le parole, Italian edition (ed) Penco C, Sbisà M. Marietti, Genova
- Bach K (2006) Christopher Potts. The logic of conventional implicatures (Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics 7). Oxford University Press, 2005: xii 246. *J Linguist* 42(2):490–495. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226706304094>
- Bayer J, Struckmeier V (eds) (2017) Discourse particles formal approaches for their syntax and semantics. Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin
- Bobbio N (2012) Studi per una teoria generale del diritto (ed) Greco T. Giappichelli, Torino
- Borsellino P (2018) Bioetica tra “moralì” e diritto. Cortina, Milano
- Bradbury R (1953) Fahrenheit 451. HarperVoyager, New York, p 2008
- Bradbury R (2008), Fahrenheit 451. Simon and Schuster, New York
- Brooks P (2002) Narrativity of the law. *Law and Literature* 1:1–10
- Brunner J (1991) The narrative construction of reality. *Crit Inq* 18:1–21
- Capozzi MR (2014) I linguaggi della persuasione: propaganda e pubblicità. *Gentes* 1:99–106
- Cepollaro B, Torrenzo G (2018) The worst and the best of propaganda. *Disputatio* 51:289–303. <https://doi.org/10.2478/disp-2018-0006>
- Cole R (2022) Encyclopaedia of propaganda. Routledge, London
- Di Donato F (2011) Diritto, cultura, letteratura: una proposta di analisi narrativa. In: Mittica MP (ed) Diritto e narrazioni. Temi di diritto, letteratura ed altre arti, Ledizioni, Milano, pp 41–59
- Diesen G (2022) Theorising propaganda and obscuring its meaning. *Russophobia*. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1468-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1468-3_2)
- Faralli C, Carpi D, Belvisi F (2009) Diritto e letteratura in Italia. Stato dell'arte e riflessioni sul metodo. *Materiali per una storia della cultura giuridica* 1:274
- Fatelli G (2019) Il dovere della persuasione. In: Lasswell HD, La propaganda, Armando Editore, Roma, pp 7–51
- Forni L (2021) Il diritto e i suoi strumenti. Un percorso di teoria generale. Giappichelli, Torino
- Forni L (2022) *Ragionando su pandemia e guerra: significati, discorsi, prospettive*. *Notizie Di Politeia* 146:119–123
- Kelsen H (2012) Lineamenti di dottrina pura del diritto. Einaudi, Torino

- Kiliçaslan E (2022) The use of ideological language in the context of political communication in the internet journalism media (the case of Ukraine crisis news). *Afro Eurasian Studies* 2:153–165. <https://doi.org/10.33722/afes.1095890>
- Lasswell HD (2019) *La propaganda*. Italian Edition ed. by Fatelli G, Armando Editore, Roma
- Levinson S (1982) Law as literature. *Tex L Rev* 3:373–404
- Lucci A, Tirino M (2019) *Filosofia e fantascienza. Spazi, tempi e mondi altri*. Philosophy Kitchen Rivista Di Filosofia Contemporanea 10:7–10
- McCready E (2019) The semantics and pragmatics of honorification. Register and social meaning. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp 39–41
- McKinnon R (2018) The epistemology of propaganda. *Philos Phenomenol Res*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12429>
- Minelli S (2020) Mito, utopia e propaganda Linguaggio di verità o tecniche di manipolazione? *Thomas Project* 3:32–47
- Mittica MP (2011) (ed) *Diritto e narrazioni. Temi di diritto, letteratura ed altre arti*. Ledizioni, Milano.
- Montanari F (2004) *Linguaggi della guerra*. Meltemi, Roma
- Moody-Adams MM (2017) Moral progress and human agency. *Ethical Theory Moral Pract* 1:153–168
- Murray SE (2014) Varieties of update. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 7:1–53
- Obreja DM (2022) Narrative communication regarding the Covid-19 vaccine: a thematic analysis of comments on Romanian official Facebook page “RO Vaccinare.” *SN Soc Sci* 2:119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00427-3>
- Orwell G (2021) 1984. Feltrinelli, Milano
- Pecoriello D (2022) L’influenza sociale e la persuasione come fattori determinanti nella pubblicità e nella propaganda. *Piesse* 1:1–20
- Perelman C, Olbrechts-Tyteca L (2001) *Trattato sull’argomentazione. La nuova retorica*. Einaudi, Torino
- Piazza T (2020) Propaganda, linguaggio e conoscenza. In: Stanley J *La propaganda. Cos’è e come funziona*, Mondadori Università, Milano, pp VII–XLV
- Pietroni N (2022) Il consenso politico. Modelli, funzioni, aspetti cognitivi ed emotivi. Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli (Cz)
- Pintore A (2021) *Tra parole d’odio e odio per le parole. Metamorfosi della censura*. Ed. Mucchi, Modena
- Posner R (1986) Law and literature: a relation reargued. *Virginia Law Review* 72:1351–1392
- Posner R (2009) *Law and literature*. Harvard University Press, Harvard
- Potts C (2005) *The logic of conventional implicatures (Oxford studies in theoretical linguistics 7)*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Potts C (2007) Conventional implicatures: a distinguished class of meanings. In: Reiss C, Ramchand G (eds) *The Oxford handbook of linguistics interfaces*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp 475–502
- Stanley J (2015) *How propaganda works*. Princeton University Press, Princeton
- Stanley J (2020) *La propaganda. Cos’è e come funziona*. Mondadori Università, Milano
- Valli U (2017) La svolta narrativa della semiotica. *Narrazione e realtà* 25:227–237
- Viesel Y (2017) Discourse particles “embedded”: German ja in adjectival phrases. In: Bayer J, Struckmeier V (eds) *Discourse particles. Formal approaches for their syntax and semantics*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin, pp 173–202
- West R (1988) Communities, texts, and law: reflections on the law and literature movement. *Yale J Law Human* 1:129–156