

## Abstract

The BA thesis aims to analyse the treatment of dystopian features in two science fiction novels written in the 1950s. The two novels that are subject to analysis are *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, and *The Space Merchants* by Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth. This thesis analyses different features of dystopia and how these features manifest themselves in the science fiction novels mentioned above. The thesis includes a theoretical part and an analytical part. The theoretical part focuses on the definition of science fiction and the historical development of the genre with particular emphasis on its picture in the 1950s as the two novels subject to analysis were published in this period. This part further takes a closer look at the relationship among utopia, dystopia and science fiction in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the particular features that define dystopia. The first chapter of the analytical part opens with a definition of science fiction as a genre and its place within the literary canon. It discusses the term of cognitive estrangement introduced by Darko Suvin to define science fiction.

The first chapter mainly focuses on the development of science fiction and its form throughout the magazine era in the 1940s and 1950s and the transformation from pulp magazines to a recognized literary genre. The literature used in this chapter mostly consists of Darko Suvin's book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint's *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* and *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. The chapter discusses the development of science fiction from early science fiction in ancient Greece to the decline of science fiction magazines at the end of the 1950s. It expounds the changes the science fiction genre underwent and discusses the problem with narrative strategies that science fiction faced. The rest of the chapter also takes a look at the speculative fiction of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the gothic novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the science fiction novels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second chapter discusses the topic of dystopia and utopia and their close-knit relationship with science fiction. The critical literature used in this chapter consists mainly of Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Similarly to the first chapter, the second chapter likewise focuses on the historical background and the influences that instigated the expansion of dystopia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter takes a closer look at the specific features of dystopia that characterize the genre in the 1950s such as the oppressive form of government regimes, the loss of freedom and control over the population and the pivotal moment of rebellion against the regime.

The analytical part consists of an analysis of the particular dystopian features discussed in the second chapter that can be found in the two science fiction novels. The analysis investigates how the dystopian features fit into the 1950s picture of science fiction and dystopian literature. The critical literature to support the arguments consists of Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* and David Seed's essays and book *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. It focuses on the comparison of the governmental systems, the means of control over the population, as well as the place of the protagonists within the system and how they eventually break out of it. Throughout the course of both novels, their opinions are challenged and finally climax into rebellion. It briefly analyses the role of a catalyst figure as a means to the revolt against the system as well as the reckless consumerism that is prevalent in both novels and the use of media and TV content overconsumption as a means of control.

**Key words:** consumerism, advertising, media, 1950s American literature, Sci Fi literature, Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, Frederik Pohl, Cyril M. Kornbluth, *The Space Merchants*