Abstract

An automobile is one of the most important phenomenons of modern technology. Since its origins, it has profoundly shaped our physical, economic, politic, social, cultural and media habitat. The objective of this Master thesis is to analyze the evolution of the role of the car in the popculture from the 60s onwards and its dimensions, with a primary focus on Anglosaxon culture, with excursions to Asia and continental Europe, primarily Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic. The core foundation of the thesis lies in the analysis of the popcultural genres, selected films, TV series, computer games and comic books. The main purpose of the thesis is to reflect upon the identity and conceptual shifts of car, going from a mere transport machine through a vehicle of product placement towards the concept of the icon, a narrative hero of popculture. The hypothesis to verify is that the car has become an essential part of the popculture itself, reflected in many various dimensions: car as a toy, car as a friend, car as a status symbol, car as a narrative extension of the hero and finally, car as a hero and subject.

The thesis is divided into five separate chapters, all including case studies. Following an introduction summarizing cultural, economic and historic factors of the car industry, the first chapter describes the evolution of the automobile advertisement and its links to popculture. The second chapter analyzes the role of the car in selected films and reflects upon the conceptual shift from car as a product placement to icon and narrative element. The third chapter deals with cars in TV culture. The fourth chapter is devoted to cars in computer games and the fifth chapter deals with cars in comic books. The final summary recaps the main findings of the thesis.