

Postmodern Discourse and Film Genre

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Termi postmoderni esiintyy jatkuvasti elokuvaa ja genreä käsittelevässä kirjallisuudessa, mutta sille ei ole tarjottu kiinteää merkitystä, joka edustaisi genren määritelmän vaativaa yhtenevää tulkintamallia, vaan se esiintyy pirstaleisena tyylikäsitteenä. Toisaalta juuri tulkinnan epävakaus ja moninaisuus ovat osa postmodernia diskurssia. Tämä tutkielma pyrkii kartoittamaan diskurssin ja genren välistä yhteyttä elokuvagenren tulkinnassa, jota aiemmassa tutkimuksessa ei ole hyödynnetty diskurssianalyysin näkökulmasta. Tutkielma vertailee postmodernin elokuvatyylin määritelmiä (Monaco 2009; Kayhan 2014; Krstić 2016; Bignell 2020) ja pyrkii vastaamaan kysymykseen kuinka postmoderni diskurssi muokkaa genren tulkintaa elokuvassa. Tutkimus pohjautuu sosiosemiotiseen tutkimusmalliin (Ridell 2006; Tseng 2017), joka yhdistää elokuvagenreen liittyviä näkökantoja (Neale 2000; Altman 2002) multimodaalisen kommunikaatioteorian viitekehyksessä (Kress 2010).</p> <p>Tutkimuksen kohteena on Alejandro González Iñárritun ohjaama elokuva <i>Birdman</i> (2014) sekä elokuvan markkinointimateriaalina toimivat traileri ja juliste. Aiemmissa tutkimuksissa Altman (2002) ja Neale (2000) ovat ehdottaneet, että Hollywood elokuvien tulkintamallit ovat kytköksissä niitä ympäröiviin teksteihin kuten julisteisiin, trailereihin sekä julkiseen keskusteluun, jotka tässä tutkimuksessa yhdistyvät elokuvan narratiivin analyysiin. Multimodaalinen diskurssianalyysi tarkastelee tekstien rakennetta ja siihen kytkeytyvää tyyliä eri medioiden kontekstissa. Tutkimus osoittaa, että <i>Birdman</i> (2014) elokuvan tekstuaalinen rakenne sisältää useita postmoderneja diskursseja, jotka muokkaavat genren tulkintaa, ja esittää, että tyyli on kytköksissä kulttuurikohtaisiin semioottisiin resursseihin, mikä muokkaa genren toimintaa myös tekstin siirtyessä uusiin esityskonteksteihin. Tulokset heijastavat laajempaa genreen liittyvää keskustelua, joka koskee genren tulkinnan ohjautuvuutta ja merkityksen pysyvyyttä.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

My research into the postmodern topic initiated with a notion that film genres might not be stable forms or easy to define from a single point of view. Monaco (2009) considers postmodern cinema a cluster of stylistic categories, which generated around 1980's, developing distinct features for the era breaking away from modern cinema. There is a commercial Hollywood sequel, which reiterates the film rhetoric structures for easy profit such as action movies and other special effect spectacles for digestible entertainment purposes. Contrastively, the era has produced individualized products that are aware of the conventions of the production values, and comment on them. Both forms share the cultural frame with further generic features pervading cinema and other media. According to Friedberg (1993), cinema itself is a postmodern medium and approaches postmodern film from an ideological point of view, connecting both sides of modern and postmodern into a dualist argument of the nature of contemporary cinema as a fragmented formation without distinctive temporal identity.

When I was preparing for the study, I had discussions with a director friend and asked his opinion on the subject: what would be the best film to describe the postmodern style? The answer was Pawlikowski's *Cold War* (2018). I had seen the movie a couple years earlier at the time when I was introducing myself to the current topic, considering the film a European auteur film according to a modernist principle. The second view, after the discussion, changed my interpretation. With the knowledge I had gathered on the subject; now, I considered it a postmodern film, with its genre applications. The incident had two implications. First, I had changed my view about the filmic text as a representative and ideological composition. Second, I developed new resources for interpreting film genres. In a broader picture, this coincided with the inception of the study.

In genre studies, it is indicated that genre never really is stable from a historical perspective. Pettersson (2006) notes that genres have been historically approached from multiple points of view and a singular and stable definition is difficult to produce, referring to postmodern literature. The problem of definition is similar with cinema. The postmodern genre is associated with multiple features, and the definitions may be evaluated from different theoretical points of view. In the context of Hollywood cinema, there are definitive discrepancies with genre theoreticians such as Altman (2002), who approaches genre from an ontological point of view and describes postmodern genre as a bricolage relating to generic ambiguity but does not elaborate the concept in detail, and Neale (2000), on the other hand, whose epistemic approach describes several features associated to

postmodern film genre, acknowledging the concept but remaining critical to a definition of a category. The postmodern in cinema can be seen as several styles that may not be present at the same time, but which form an ambiguous genre mixture (Kayhan 2014).

Bignell (2020) and Kayhan (2014) have studied postmodern style in cinema, but to my knowledge, there is no research with discourse analytical methods that could illustrate the postmodern style regarding genre analysis on a general level. However, it is common for the previous studies (Neale 2000; Altman 2002) that discourses produce knowledge of genres. In this research, the aim is to study the relation with postmodern discourse and film genre in a specific film. If genres are not stable constructions, what is the relation between discourse and genre in the knowledge production of filmic texts? The study examines discursive practices related to postmodern ideology and seeks to find out how such configurations can shape the interpretation of a film genre.

The present analysis applies social semiotic methodology and considers possibilities of genre regarding film discourse and implications for different audiences, which could in turn clarify the concept of postmodern style in cinema. The social semiotic multimodal theory regards all texts unitary compositions, designed by a maker for ideal audiences, and the genre of a text directs the interpretation of the composite meaning (Kress 2010: 147-148). Since most of the background literature on cinema discusses American commercial film, and while the *Cold War* (2018) would be an equally interesting target, the present study targets a Hollywood production, *Birdman* (2014), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, which also provides a better ground for English based multimodal discourse analysis.

The approach supplements earlier research on film genres by allocating a transfer of cohesive elements from the film to supporting marketing material that is considered essential tool for genre representation (Altman 2002; Neale 2000; Kernan 2004). In a multimodal discourse analysis on film trailers, Oja (2019) argues that *Birdman* (2014) and the trailer of the film do not produce a similar genre, but the results are based only on the trailer without analysing the genre formation process in the filmic text. The present study fills the gap with a detailed analysis on the filmic text, and a poster, in addition to the trailer to produce a contrasting discursive point of view, allocating the parallel cohesive structures, suggesting that the genre can be realized alternatively by the postmodern discursive practices in the texts.

The structure of the study is constructed to gradually form an interpretative model for the selected texts. Chapter 2 of the study discusses different ideological points of view on modern and postmodern concepts and the relation to cinema, allocating the discursive practices. Chapter 3 introduces genre

theory, emphasising film genre formation and interpretation. Chapter 4 discusses the social semiotic methodology and relevance of the data for the analysis. The analysis of the filmic text *Birdman* (2014) and the byproducts in the fifth chapter will be followed by discussion on findings and conclusion in the sixth chapter of the study. The results of the study illustrate how the postmodern discursive practices configure genre interpretation and function in the selected texts.

2. POSTMODERN DISCOURSE

2.1 Ideology and aesthetics

The development of postmodern as a concept is regarded as a response to modern ideology, which it enfolds. With both concepts there are various definitions, which share qualities but can also differ from each other, depending whether the emphasis is on temporality or the field of study. In general, the postmodern is seen as a response to the modern as a totalizing system of meaning that dispersed during 20th century geopolitical movements and competing ideologies, creating a cultural and aesthetic change.

Bauman (1996) describes the modern as an age of reason, driven by doctrines of enlightenment. When the system of grand narratives collapsed, philosophical thinking halted in ambiguity, evading a fixed meaning of modernism, reflecting aesthetic cultural expression as contemplation of doubt. The postmodern responds to modern by dialogue and tolerance of different ideologies, and the plurality of the views is a source for ambivalence and ambiguity. On the other hand, the ambivalence translates to criticality towards representation and progress, which is subject of parody and play (Bauman 1996: 22-23).

Lyotard's (2006) definition of the postmodern also revolves around reason derived from enlightenment. Modern is seen as continuous periodical progression seeking to fix the meaning of a prodigious state. In art, postmodern contemplation is associated with nostalgia for sublime meaning, which was removed from modern art in painting and further implicated by subjective doubt of the meaning related to mundane objects that were granted the high art status. Lyotard's (2006) conclusion reflects Bauman's (1996) ideology, mundane objects are conceptualized for contemplation in the context of commercial mass-culture, which can adapt to the fragmented subjectivity associated to freedom of choice.

Modern too can be seen in a plural form. Adorno (2006) describes it as a system of becoming and exclusive meaning. In art, modern is regarded as an antithesis of its own epoch that supersedes the generic forms in fashion, and the new image becomes a total system of meaning. Every modern is negation of the cultural degeneration of the epoch and nostalgia for the real of the sublime, which is beyond imagination of experiencing subject's mental image. In this way, modern is in constant dialectical progression of its own image of utopia.

In this regard, modern states something which cannot be permanent, and every modern would be deemed to demise. Therefore, if art refers to reality as a sublime concept, it can never achieve realism or it would signify the end of the modern, which refers to Bloom (1975), who argues that style of a modern author is a misprision of the sublime in the previous author's style. Since the formation of the concept is a subjective effort, Lyotard (2006) suggests that the postmodern object is enchanted by ambiguity, and the modality applies to commercial utilities as well as to elitist avantgarde. The object becomes an unnatural fetish, a misprision of the code in the iconic form. Since the concept remains in process, it cannot fix its meaning to a single point and seeks for rules for the definition.

2.2 Ideology and realism

The question of absence of real in the postmodern is closely linked to the emergence of visual culture and mechanical reproduction, particularly in cinema. As Barthes (1978: 44-45; 49) puts it, the recorded image is subject to ideology and arrangement. The depiction of an object is subject to a point of view and the real is replaced by representation and ideology.

Benjamin (2006) stresses the ideological possibilities of films. In contrast to painting, which spatially and ideologically limits the audience from masses, tactile cinema provides a similar artistic experience with architecture, immersing its experiencing subject. As a mass object, cinema diminishes the distance between audiences, and it can be consumed without contemplation. As a result, the affective shock of sublime art is replaced by sensory pleasure.

Baudrillard (1983) argues that the real does not apply in a contemporary society which is visually mediated. The mass-objects are based on models and the original has no significance; it exists only as an abstraction. Every object of mass production would be a copy. The ambivalence of authenticity of the object reflects the behaviour of experiencing subjects. Therefore, multiplex cinema would provide an optimal tool for transmitting the stereotyped world in a new lighting, angle, and fragmentary sequences, which is immediately tested by the audience response. If representation is the origin of real, it is also the source of imitation. The argument is of metaphysical nature. It is a response to the same narrative of sublime, which was the target of the modern subject.

Jameson (1991) suggests that postmodernism derives from logic of consumerism. The utopistic high art is subsumed with popular culture, and the depth of the former form is replaced by multiplicity of choices. The historical moderns are seen as a series of textual brakes in the postmodern, and the

fragmented condition of multiplicity represents the new real, which produces the sublime experience through ambiguity in dispersion of styles. Since the knowledge and representations of the postmodern may vary, it should be approached as a relative concept that requires production of its contextual history in the course of analysis (Bignell 2020: 7).

2.3 Cinema

In film and media studies, there are also differences in how postmodernity is defined, although generally it is associated to the emerged consumerism, popular culture, and configurations of reality by the visual media. Friedberg (1993) sees cinema as an inherently postmodern medium that creates the break from modern by its visual mobility. Bignell (2020) sees the breaks without a strict temporal identity but with a similar thematic ideology that influences the film form, which would define a postmodern film. Monaco (2009) associates the break from modern to developments of Hollywood and narrative styles in postmodern films.

Sperb (2013: 11-13) attaches the postmodern to American media culture and consumerism, producing a set of cinematic styles that rhetorically illustrate the underlying cultural ideologies. On the other hand, the postmodern can also be seen as a non-Western response to the same cultural hegemony of multinational consumerism as a stylistic device in world cinema (Krstić 2016). The consumer ideology is considered prevailing and divisive in the stylistic configuration, and the break from the modern can be seen from various points of view. The representation of cultural plurality in visual culture signifies a postmodern symptom of crisis of the modern (Kayhan 2014: 43). The postmodern style or styles represent scepticism of realism in visual culture, which is partly derived from the criticism of modernist ideology of cinematic realism (Krstić 2016), which is responded by ambiguity and pluralism (Sperb 2013; Kayhan 2014: 37)

2.3.1 Postmodern medium

Friedberg (1993:9) considers modernity from an industrial point of view in contrast to reason, marked by the technological development that shaped consumerism (Friedberg1993: 13; 15). The construction of reality by the modern subject revolved around mobilized behaviour and socialized vision, reflecting the self-image in the consumer culture. Friedberg (1993) suggests that changes in

visual culture transformed the modern subject into postmodern by virtualized gaze incepted by film technologies whereas the commercial mobility of the subject could be simulated, producing variable temporal identities. In Friedberg's (1993) view, postmodernity is a discontinuous cultural change that can be associated to cinematic styles such as repetition, nostalgia, and parody, which are time constituents, but there is not a postmodern film as such that could reflect the rupture from the modern as a distinct temporal concept in cinema.

Bignell (2020) on the other hand problematizes the unity of theoretical framework related to postmodernism in cinema as a medium and suggests that while it has the power of spectacle, which is inherent for the medium, films constitute the historical brakes between modern and postmodern in formal and thematic sense, using specific films as an example in which the rupture is present such as *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1993) and *Seven* (1995). The films produce the historical breaks by referring to previous texts as intertextual allusions and contesting their historicity. The modern in postmodern cinema is seen as a past tradition, derived from high art that has contained the status of the modern, but which has lost its critical value in the present (Bignell 2020: 96-97). The reference to the past operates then as an interpretative cue that enables discursive production in the text, which subsequently divides the possibilities of textual interpretations into separate discourses available for multiple identities. The postmodern diffuses the modern in postmodern and high art to commercial, which produces the critical discourse of the past in a popular form. The postmodern in cinema represents itself as a destabilised narrative, time, and space, which the spectacle makes visible (Bignell 2020: 108).

2.3.2 Narrative styles

Monaco (2009) allocates the ideological shift of cinema in a defined time frame of studio developments in 1980's Hollywood, which changed consumption of films, manifesting in a cluster of styles that could be called postmodern, defined by a break from the modern. Much of the emphasis relies on how narratives are experienced in postmodern cinema, partly deriving from cinema's loss of representational hegemony in visual culture or faced challenge of it.

Monaco (2009) argues that a major shift in films was due to changing media environments and competition, especially from the direction of television, which could transmit the same narratives as traditional cinema. As a response, the studios started producing multisensory experiences through special effects spectacle with lesser emphasis on the narrative structure (Monaco 2009: 394; 397). In

the action-adventure genre, movies resemble amusement park rides, and the immersive experience of the narrative is also extended into actual theme parks built around the films. The immersive notion could be complemented with commercialization in toys and other byproducts such as video games, extending the film representations to everyday reality experience of the narrative and the stereotypical activity. The multisensory experience distorts realism by immersing the experiencing subject into the trademarked narrative world as an active participant rather than alienated spectator.

Popularity succeeds in production methods by recycling and repetition. The same experience can be delivered in a form of a sequel, keeping the profit system alive. Similarly, popular narrative formats are easy to transfer from television to movies (Monaco 2009: 393). Now, online services have further amplified the process of shifting platforms, including reversing the development from films to series shows. There are also video games, toys, and comics translated to films or from films. Monaco (2009) notes the altered role of cinema in the media field with new media democratizing the visual culture. The realism fades further with the multimedia digital environment of ubiquitous screens. Recycling is not of course a new invention; the scripts and formats have been subject to it as long as there have been movies (Friedberg 1993). The change is in the consumption and fragmentation of the narratives.

According to Monaco (2009), the break from the modern is seen in the emphasis or de-emphasis of the narrative in postmodern cinema. While action films and superhero movies may suspend the narrative structure, the development of the new Hollywood borrowed methods from art cinema, which is more concerned with formal experiments. The form is considered as important as an individual subject. Bordwell (2009: 187) notes that Hollywood cinema relies historically on generic narrative forms, which support effortless consumption, and new devices experiment with the form.

The discussion on narrative styles contrasts commercial and art cinema. Commercial cinema is considered generic by the narrative construction, targeting an emotional impact; while art films experiment with form and concentrate on psychology, indicating a more realistic and intellectual approach (Bordwell 2009). The formalist notion could apply to auteur films suggested by Friedberg (1993: 163), but also to some contemporary postmodern Hollywood films addressed by Monaco (2009), whether these film types are similar in their respective traditions. Modern cinema can be further separated from art films by contrasting ambiguity of the narrative form. Both styles refer to similar intellectual configurations, but modern cinema refers to fixed meaning (Bordwell 2009: 157). Essentially, a postmodern style can be considered a hybrid of the commercial and intellectual forms (Jameson 1991; Monaco 2009; Bignell 2020).

For example, formal experiments in metafiction share a similar paradigm of a decentralized subject with emphasis equally in the story (Monaco 2009: 424-425). The film plays with aspects of reality, mixing real life characters with fictional events, and telling stories about stories as much as about the characters themselves, as in *Adaptation* (2002). The postmodern form does not necessarily exclude a modern narrative but enfolds it as a partial rhetoric device. The postmodern narrative is confronted with a different attitude that challenges the modern subjectivity and realism (Monaco 2009: 423; 425).

2.3.3 Postmodern thematic and genre

Contrastively, the postmodern can be seen as a history related to emergence of visual culture present in cinema. The history configures the style as a self-reflection to the commodified media culture that transformed the Hollywood film form, causing the break in the contemporary films presenting the past, historicizing the modern at the same time (Sperb 2013). The ranging effects would be present in the film form as well as in the thematic. Friedberg (1993) also mentions the influence of television and media developments to contemporary thought but designates other art forms which have established the signification of the rupture, excluded from cinema. Friedberg (1993: 160; 171-173) discusses the postmodern rupture in painting and architecture. In painting, Andy Warhol's imagery was inspired by visual culture and cinema. Architecture by Charles Jencks, on the other hand, is labelled by its historical consciousness, mixing and presenting concurrently styles from the modern and premodern eras of architecture with double coding in a bricolage form. However, the argument of mixing of temporal elements or double coding by bricolage can be understood in different ways against the postmodern thematic and dispersing media reality.

Bricolage in films is approached differently by Altman (2002: 171-172), identifying generic hybridity as inherent to Hollywood film, but pointing out a generic bricolage as a postmodern condition with an addition of pastiche and intertextuality. The postmodern form is seen as a plural genre, appealing to multiple ideal audiences with different distinctive styles. However, Altman (2002) associates the concept of plurality mainly to film marketing and suggests that the change is in the cultural values rather than in an explicit transgression or rupture in the generic form. The notion refers to postmodern ambiguity but seems incomplete without clear examples outside the marketing context.

Krstić (2016: 142-143) sees bricolage as a thematic device, a technique reflecting the consumer ideology rather than an explicit aesthetic form. In an argument that cinema has lost its modality as a realist device, the postmodern includes contrasting genre mixture but strives for undermine cinematic

realism to point out a critique towards the commodity culture. (Krstić 2016: 145; 152). In addition to mixing genres, the postmodern mixes mediums, diverging from so called pure cinema by applying methods from other art forms such as theatre and painting. On the other hand, in the sense of rupture or break, the modern is mixed with premodern on a thematic level, for example, applying neorealism, which is regarded as a modern style striving for authentic realism, to premodern, which precedes the modern age of reason, by adding fantasy elements, combining the two opposing styles into magical realism (Krstić 2016: 153). The bricolage is a way to alienate from strict sense of realism but still maintaining a critical element of the realist object. Similarly, Ricciardelli (2010) discusses the realist approach in documentary films to which the postmodern style responds by ambiguity and critical stance to visual culture, questioning the metanarratives in the style of representation, which is self-reflective and reclusive to objectivity of the medium.

Kayhan (2014: 41) adds to the same discussion that contemporary texts do not represent clear concepts or themes, but rather mixtures of genres and art forms. The unity of a traditional form is rejected and replaced. Kayhan (2014) argues that a classical tragedy does not exist anymore, but it is transformed by other forms into new ones such as tragicomedies. The argument suggests that the postmodern techniques alter the purity of a genre, and instead of forming a postmodern genre, they configure the existing ones. The genre development can be seen in the construction of fictional characters and formal relations in the narratives. The postmodern cultural values are in the essence of the genre dispersion, departing from the modern (Kayhan 2014: 43-44).

The discussion shows that Friedberg's (1993) notion about designation of a rupture may be approached from various points of view and therefore appear problematic as a generic device. However, there are salient discourses that pervade the general discussion on postmodernism in cinema such as self-reflexivity, intertextuality, intermediality, parody, play, and ambiguity. The problem resembles Pettersson's (2006) view on postmodern literature that all attributes may not be possible to assign to all the texts at the same time to form a cohesive genre. To me, it seems feasible to follow Kayhan (2014) and Bignell (2020), and instead of allocating a postmodern genre, concentrate on how postmodern discourses can alter the existing definitions of genres, and how it configures interpretation of texts, which leads to question how genres function in general.

3. GENRE

3.1 Approaching genre

Historically, the concept of genre reflects the same discussion as postmodernity as both concepts derive from strains of modern ideology. In the romantic modern period, during which the nomination of genre developed as a term associated text forms, genre was a literary device, a response to the classical definition of poetics of generic categories (Lyytikäinen 2006: 171). In a classical Aristotelian sense, genres were to maintain the canonized literary establishment by excluding all other, lesser, forms of language, and generic categories were stable forms and exclusive for dissimilar products (Lyytikäinen 2006: 168-169). Romantic modernism shifted the classification of rule-based categories to individualism, hybridity, syncretism, and transgression of style whereas a single text or text-type could enfold all generic categories (Lyytikäinen 2006). Later, genre attached to a formalist idea of new texts shaping the generic form of literature and keeping it in progress. During the 20th century, by the development of structuralism and linguistic theories, genre slowly surpassed other forms of communication, and it is associated with the concept of text class in addition to the category, which now includes movies and various other text products (Ridell 2006).

Derrida (2000) notes that the transgressive definition of the modern genre is a paradoxical concept, since every time, when the literary norm is transgressed, the formation is a generic transformation. Therefore, the literary genre is not a stable construction, but a variation of itself, which problematizes the very genericity. A transgressive process results in diachrony, a repetitive line of textual products which imitate each other without being direct replications, and therefore, the products could not form an identical genre or a category, or the definition would be at least problematic as in the case of irony, which deviates itself from the original genre (Derrida 2000: 230-231). The ends of the same continuum can function differently from each other. In other words, the texts of the same genre would not be identical in the sense of the generic superstructure such as literature, which enfolds the division. In other words, genres signify belonging to a specific group and mark separation between the groups.

The controversy relating to the dualist nature of genre and breaking the norm emphasize contextuality of the definition. For example, in linguistic terms, speech acts of an order or a question could be difficult to distinguish from each other without a proper context in which the utterance takes place. The same rule applies also to literary texts on a broader scale. Bakhtin (1986: 62) attaches stratification to genre definition and its interpretation, building up the context. A text which has an iconic form of a food recipe is possible to interpret differently, depending on whether it appears in a

cooking book or in a poem collection. Texts appear in a generic context, which directs the meaning production. The texts are a part of a generic construction with stylistic variations, which allocates the texts and utterances to the right context, producing a satisfying meaning.

Bakhtin (1986: 64-65) also points out institutions that are attached to text types and direct generic interpretation of texts. Style is analogous to form, which is directed by a contextual system. A sender and a receiver of a message have a contract inside the contextual system, directing meaning production. According to Bakhtin (1986: 98), every historical period has its own stylistic identity, but the style is subordinate to a communicative situation producing the utterance, because the utterance would be motivated to a limited sphere of receivers. Therefore, the generic institution would be a motivated historical entity, which is a definition that can be attached to literary genres as well, especially, if the norm is motivated by transgression.

Swales (1990: 58) sees genres with functions and communicative goals, and a task of a genre is as important as the form in the definition. Genres are rhetoric events, which produce and maintain discourse communities. The definition of genre can also vary depending on the field of study (Swales 1990: 33-34). The internal competence of a discourse community imposes prototypical generic systems, which enable direction of the communication. Bhatia (1993: 13-14) adds that genres are constructed from rhetorical moves, and changes in the move structure separates genres from other genres and sub-genres. The genre is bound by rules that perform purpose to a specific community and context. The most competent rhetors shape the definition of the prototype (Bhatia 1993: 39-40).

Transgressing the norms is a part of generic activity of discourse communities, relating to style and ideology. If the text is altered too much, the function may also change. Bhatia (1993: 218) gives an example of law texts targeted for audiences of varying legal competence. While the linguistic register of the texts may appear ostensibly similar, a transformed and simplified rhetoric structure can alter the judicial authority of a text, and the text forfeits its legal application in an operative situation requiring mandatory rules. A simplified law text can help a layman to understand the purpose of the law text, but the text is deprived of the original technical function. At the same time, the style margins participants from the prototypical communication. The simplified form forms a sub-genre of law texts. The style and ideology derive from rhetorical arrangement of the text, comprising of moves in the structure that conform the prototypical function.

Frow (2015) notes that genres are generally embedded into other genres and makes a division between simple and complex genres. Simple genres, such as riddle, retains a fairly fixed rhetoric move structure even when the cultural context shifts or if the genre contains other genres. Contrastively,

complex genres such as novels are formations constructed solely from other genres. When a simple genre appears in a complex genre, it relinquishes or transforms its original function (2015: 49-50): a riddle in a play becomes part of the plot structure as in *Macbeth* (2006), in which, even while the move structure of the simple genre remains intact, the instrumental value changes. In the play, instead of forming a riddle, the function also closes the storyline as the answer to the riddle concludes a prophecy in the story. Complex genres imitate primary genres, forming intertextual connections, which invoke discursive processes related to other texts (Frow 2015: 52). Therefore, genres are generally hybrids that refer to other texts, utterances, and genres. Contemporary literary texts, especially postmodern ones, challenge readers because they recycle genres and require knowledge of the past traditions that are recontextualized (Lyytikäinen 2006: 183).

Recycling and embedding present genres as social forms, assigning new functions, which connects to the concept of discourse. Kress (2010: 110-114) notes that discourse represents and produce knowledge about the world, comprised of different modes such text and image, and discourses form ideologies serving a social purpose. Genres mediate the social purposes by addressing the contextual functions, and genres as events regulate semiotic appearance of the discursive processes, in other words, the modes. Therefore, a change in a genre implies a change in the social relations (ibid.). Genres regulate discourse and discourse shape genres (Kress 2010: 116; Frow 2015: 10; 12). Thus, genres can be defined from multiple perspectives, depending on the social group. If genre represents performative function, it can be instable because the way how things get done can change historically and culturally (Belcher 2023).

3.2 Genre and film

Studying film genres, similar historical differences, alienating points of view and similarities between texts and theories appear. Ridell (2006) goes through the history of genre theory and points out the 20th century's structuralist-semiotic points of view, which argue over classification without coming to a definitive conclusion. Partly, the problem revolves around a functional value of a genre, which is connected to senders and receivers in a communicative situation.

While the importance of communicative events is recognized, the meaning of a text can change contextually. For example, there can be an ideological gap between interpretation of a European film and an American film, and whether they are interpretable in the sphere of the same theory. One viable way to approach the questions of theoretical frames can be achieved by comparing analytical models

of Altman (2002) and Neale (2000). Both value the textual meaning and the stylistic form, but the relation of genre to the discursive practices are oppositional, Altman (2002) arguing on behalf of an ontological approach while Neale (2000) promotes an epistemic model. Ridell (2006) suggests that the two approaches should not be considered exclusive but rather complimentary.

In Altman's (2002) view, genre in Hollywood films has a classificatory commercial function. Genre is a product emerging principally from interaction of the production machine, namely the studios, and the critical media such as film reviews. Genres are constantly shaping and transforming historical entities, which appear and dissolve because of the interaction, forming boundaries between genres throughout their cycles, enabling generic classification. A genre appears when reviewers appropriate distinctive values or properties, which appeal to the audience. The Hollywood machine applies the properties for subsequent products, which transform the generic qualities in the production cycle, finally, subsiding popularity of the original dominant, which dissolves into a sub-category, and a new genre takes place in the cycle. As a result, films would appear as evolutionary products in the genre history of cinema. The dominant form is a genre hybrid in progress, much in the way of modernist idea of genre.

The point of view suggests that the naming is a receiver's responsibility, and the reproduction of the concept is a producer's task, which reflects the formalist thought of transgression in generic formation. Altman (2002: 42-44) considers the function of a genre either ideological or ritual maintained by the commercial production. The genre entity would be interpretable from a point of view of the content that attaches to the stylistic form. Genres essentially form discourse communities through coded communication (Altman 2002: 192). Although, since genres form communities, even if the motivation is commercial, Altman (2002: 231) notes that there is a social purpose for genres.

In contrast, Neale (2000) considers genres as interpretative social processes, existing in public discourse, opposed to historical entities. Genres would neither limit to filmic texts; in contrast, generic formation is an interactive discursive practice comprising different text types. Interpretation of a film text would be contingent to comparison of texts, and genres operate in this context as an intertextual communication model that directs the interpretation. There can be a dominant code, but it may be difficult to define, because the semantic-syntactic properties are constantly in play, and interpretations vary in the public discourse, depending which particulars are emphasized as prototypical values such as iconography or ideological content of the film (Neale 2000: 205-207).

For example, it could be difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion of the dominant code of a genre such as western solely either by use of cowboy costumes or a thematic concept of occupation of the

frontier, and if the cowboy would be singing, the picture could be defined as a musical rather than a western. The sonar could surpass visual in the generic hierarchy of codes, but there would be no ideological restraint for the singing cowboy to occupy the frontier. Although, as a prototype, western is less likely to include musical performances. Both genres could be approached with a concept of verisimilitude, which is the reference value to real world, or more precisely, what is believed to be true (Neale 2000: 27-28). Musical includes unexpected singing, which is less likely to occur in real world, but westerns deal with American mythology that generally has, at least, a modest referential value to experienced reality.

In the interpretative context, Neale (2012) discusses systems of knowledge or resources, which can be attached to a particular genre or text type. The systems are connected to the social environment and cultural context surrounding the communicative situation (Neale 2000: 16-17). Neale (2000: 144-145) notes that genres can be defined and redefined. Noir genre was produced by European film critics by reference to literature and adapted later in Hollywood as a genre concept after the cycle was in progress. The definition can also vary between Hollywood institutions and separating genres may not always be an easy task. Both Altman (2002) and Neale (2000: 45; 225-226) point out that genres are generally hybrids, combinations of several genre types, and pure genres rarely exist. Genres can be applied also to individual actors, who operate as signifiers of generic activity in the discourse.

Neale (2000) and Altman (2002) both consider genre as a communication tool, which can be eventually classified. Altman's (2002) definition is based on a syntactic-semantic model that stresses dynamics between the form and the content, which is inherent to all genres, and when the balance of dynamics is disrupted, the genre transforms identity. However, Altman (2002) does not describe how the elements are specifically analysed. Neale (2000), on the other hand, derives the genre definition from multiple sources, applying description of film critics and general discourse, reflecting the definitions to marketing materials and to the representation of the filmic text, which refers to the public discourse, revealing the genre.

One way to approach genre could be a dynamic model comprising of different discursive levels, by combining the models of Altman (2002) and Neale (2000) with a multidimensional model, which has been the approach to film genre by Tseng (2017) within a social semiotic framework. I will apply similar model to construct the genre from lower levels of discourse to the cohesion in the superstructure of the narrative discourse. Multimodal social semiotic theory (Kress 2010) suggests that genres derive from framing of the discourses, which means the cohesive forms in the selected texts, producing meaningful coherence that I will reflect with the postmodern discourse. The point is to show that the dominant genre can be a subjective effort bound by the knowledge of the interpreter

and aesthetic coding of the text with its style, which are finally attached to the function of the communication.

4. SOCIAL SEMIOTIC APPROACH ON THE FILM *BIRDMAN*

4.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to produce an interpretative model for genres in the context of the postmodern style, which can assert a motivated meaning for the movie and the marketing material. In addition, the study seeks to portray discursive practices when genres form audiences and perform designed tasks at a general level. The analysis extends to fragmentation of media functionality, connecting the texts to different audiences, who may be margined by the style and ideology. The theoretical model of the multimodal discourse analysis is targeting the motivated meaning of the film production, which is contrasted to the previous findings by Oja (2019), evaluating the performance of the texts and the effects of the postmodern style.

The present analysis seeks to consider the relation of film genre and the postmodern discourse by answering the following questions through examination of the movie, the trailer, and a poster.

1. How do postmodern discursive practices in the texts shape the interpretation of the film genre?
2. What is the relation between the generic form, performance, and audience regarding the movie *Birdman* (2014)?

The questions relate to the film narrative and the surrounding texts, which include the trailer and the poster but also other intertextual references configuring interpretation of the selected texts in the analysis and the genre. The themes in the film are reflected against the background discussion of the postmodern thematic, connecting to the traditions influencing a generic and motivated inference of the texts, which can be derived from intertextual sources across different media. The analytical layer targets a multimodal interpretation of the texts. The meanings are constructed through framing of modes with contrasting cultural traditions to the discursive practices in the texts, which extends, finally, to the narrative representation in the film. The multimodal discourse analysis targets the *Birdman* (2014) texts in the respective contexts, allocating the formal and semantic task, which subsequently forms the target audience for a text.

4.2 Birdman

I selected the movie *Birdman* (2014) for the analysis because it is a popular Hollywood film, which, to my mind, discusses postmodern themes of ambiguity and genre. I consider the commercial success, the Hollywood context, and the rich texture of the film elemental in the data selection process, extending to the marketing material as well. *Birdman* (2014) is directed and produced by Alejandro González Iñárritu, who is also a co-screenwriter with Nicolás Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris jr., and Armando Bo, which suggest that the director has substantial control over the production and artistic motivation in the textual production.

An existing study on the film and the trailer (Oja 2019) arguing the ambiguity in the products influenced the selection of the data. I noticed that my own interpretation of the trailer and the film was different from the previous analysis on the texts, which coincides with the general description of genres and postmodern discourse. The present analysis will compare the previous points of view in the analysis of the marketing material and the film narrative interpretation to illustrate the textual and generic functionality against the postmodern style and ideology.

4.2.1 The film narrative description

The events in the film are set on Broadway, in New York. The main character Riggan Thompson, played by Michael Keaton, is a former action movie star, who is directing and performing a play, an adaptation of Raymond Carver's (2009) minimalist short story *What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. Thompson is seeking critical acclaim while he is struggling with the play, shadowed by his past in a critically disapproved but popular Hollywood role as Birdman. The personal stress is amplified by his daughter, Sam (Emma Stone), who works on the set with him but does not appear to appreciate theatre or his persona. While the protagonist is a former Birdman actor, he appears to have superpowers of his own, but which are undisclosed to his peers. The movie plays with the collision of the two worlds, Broadway and Hollywood: authenticity and special effect spectacle.

In the narrative, Thompson tries to save the play by hiring a critically acclaimed but troubled stage actor, Mike Shiner (Edward Norton), for a supporting role. Shiner causes creative and social conflicts in the set by altering the play and making closer contact with Sam. The staged drama of the play is mixed with staged drama of the film, with additions of elements of a special effect spectacle. The

distress activates the protagonist's special powers, and it remains unclear whether he has the abilities of Birdman or is he imagining the powers as a mental disorder caused by the stressful events. The movie combines elements of contrasting genres of an art film and a Hollywood film, and in the end, it is difficult to point out how the narrative should be interpreted, leaving the genre designation in an ambiguous state. The end of the film suggests that Thompson has jumped out of a window, but when Sam looks out of the same window after him, she looks up in the sky, and a smile appears on her face. The object of Sam's gaze is not disclosed, and the spectator does not see if Birdman can fly, and whether the film has a comic or tragic ending.

4.2.2 Previous and present research

In the previous research on the film, Oja (2019) has pointed out ambiguity of the genre in the context of the movie marketing by arguing that the film production system exploits genre conventions by creating illusory effects in the byproducts, which may not conform to the actual film text. The study suggests that the *Birdman* trailer (2014) deliberately confuses an action film and satirical drama in the marketing. The point of view derives from a formalist discipline, partly backed by Altman's (2002) approach on genres as cyclical categories of dominant codes, suggesting an exclusive genre formation in the filmic text, reflecting negatively on the trailer. As a result, the trailer would cause a cognitive impairment in the textual framing by priming visuality as a dominant code.

A contrasting point of view supported with the social semiotic model (Kress 2010) on the selected texts, suggests that there may be an alternative way to interpret the trailer, and the film, regarding the set of knowledge against the film discourse is positioned, which leads to discussion on postmodernity in the film and the compositional relation of the byproducts with the film. Oja (2019) does not analyse the film in connection with the trailer, which to me seems essential when arguing the correlation between the texts. In addition to the filmic text, I also include a poster to provide more depth to the comparative analysis and to show the products as a composite text sharing similar meanings and genre configurations.

Kernan (2004: 10; 13) notes that a main function of a trailer is to transfer the code of the film into a code of promotional rhetoric as a form of a sample, operating as generic cues. Although trailers are persuasive texts, they are considered artistic products, which communicate expectations of the film by multimodal coding (Hoffmann 2021). According to Oja (2019), the commercial function in the trailer is impaired by over intellectual or stylistic organization, which tricks the spectator. On the

other hand, Altman (2002: 163-166) suggests that genres are applied as marketing devices, and contemporary film marketing material, including posters, commonly evades a clear genre description. Instead of a totality of a genre, the marketing material tends to suggest multiple genres for the film to attract different audiences, which should ideally conform the movie.

The present research applies a social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis, considering the trailer and poster with the film text as supporting elements and illustrating possible interpretations for genres against the existing cultural traditions, which reflects interpretation for film genres in general. The text or texts may have different meanings and perform varied tasks, depending on the target audience and the set of knowledge of the interpreter of the text. The findings of the study discuss the configurations of postmodern style in the textual products, and the possible implications for the general film discourse.

4.3 Data and ethical concerns

The present analysis consists of a poster, and a trailer, in addition to the filmic text. In gathering and representing the data, I had to consider copyright issues and the social dimension of the selected texts. I wanted to find products that would allocate myself as the target audience.

The study includes a poster (Fox Searchlight Pictures 2015) from a copyrights free source, which also enables visual representation in the thesis. The poster is designated for Finnish audiences, which marks the international status of the film and assigns me as the target audience. The filmic text selected for the analysis is from a Finnish DVD publication (Fox Paramount 2015), and it will be referred to by verbal narration only to avoid any copyright infringement. The trailer (Mark Woollen 2014) is an international version available in the YouTube channel of the film's production company Searchlight Pictures. A hyperlink for the trailer is provided in the end of this section, which will provide an overlook for the data, since I will not include samples from the trailer. The same trailer serves also as data for the previous research on the film (Oja 2019).

The filmic text is from a DVD publication (Fox Paramount 2015). The DVD consist of the film *Birdman* (2014) and a short making of documentary (Fox Searchlight 2014). The language of the film is English. My data will be framed to the movie in the DVD, although the documentary provides insight to the motivation of the filmic text. In the documentary, the director Iñárritu mentions that the film is about ego, and the film was written for Michael Keaton as the lead actor, which I will consider

in the analysis of the filmic text. In the documentary, one of the actors, Zack Galifianakis, also states that film is a comedy, and the back cover of the DVD also states that film is a comedy. I find this interesting, since in the data gathering process, I initially watched the film from a streaming service (Disney 2023). Disney, who also owns the production company for *Birdman* (2014), assigns the film to a category of drama, which I will consider in the final discussion.

The length of the actual movie in the DVD is one hour and fifty-four minutes. As Kress (2010:152) notes, there can be diverse ways to define a filmic text, for example, whether to include ending credits. In the data analysis, I will leave out the opening credits as well as the ending credits and restrict the filmic text to a visual narrative including the characters and their actions, which I consider producing a complete meaning, which is a requirement for a text (Kress 2010: 148). There are meaningful textual elements in the opening credits that I will exclude from the analysis, but which I will discuss briefly in the discussion and conclusion section in the analytical context, including a hidden image and a written quotation from Raymond Carver in the beginning of the film, which I think are meaningful regarding the interpretation of the film, but not crucial or altering the conclusion of the analysis, enabling me to narrow the extensive scope of the analysis. I will consider the actions of the characters and their relations to the narrative world to produce a cohesive meaning for the text that is a composition of the filmed elements with the attached sound.

The poster (Fox Searchlight Pictures 2015) in the analysis is a version that has been subject to Finnish marketing. There are alternative versions of the film poster with different image, but the target market of the images is not clear to me, and the present poster was, to my mind, the most suitable by the content since it has rich texture. In the data gathering process, I was going through copyright free sources for material and found the image from a Finnish Wikipedia site for the film. The same image is in the cover of the DVD from the research data as well, although in slightly modified framing. The Finnish poster version also includes added verbal elements not in the original English poster version.

The original image for the poster is created by BLT Communications (2014), and it can be accessed through their website. I have provided a link in the bibliography. The company has also designed props and textual content for the film, which implies that the designs are made in affiliation with the director of the film. The poster is labelled as a teaser poster by the designer, and such models generally do not reveal too much about the film and are issued before the movie is displayed in theatres to incite interest for the film's release. The Finnish version (Fox Searchlight Pictures 2015) contains a Finnish release date of the film in Finnish wording and critical acclaims from different film festivals.

By the Finnish poster date, the film had released in America, and the trailers had been publicly issued in YouTube. The production company has probably added information to the poster since in the Wikipedia site the poster is credited to Fox Searchlight Pictures (2015). The teaser poster has been applied in Finnish marketing while there has been already detailed information available about the film, which implies that the poster is nonetheless considered representative for the film even if it is originally intended as a teaser poster. The Finnish texted image is originally used by a Finnish movie theatre company, who has uploaded it to the Wikipedia's site. The Finnish verbal text in the poster is excluded from the analysis, since I do not consider it to modify the narrative representation of the text or the genre, which are in the target of the analysis. The critical acclaims, however, I consider meaningful in the context of the study since they modify the content of the poster and the attitude for the viewer. I will provide the Finnish copyright free version of the image as a sample later in the analysis in the section 5.1 as a supporting element in the reading process.

The trailer (Woollen 2014) in the analysis is an international publication by the production company of the film and it is the same trailer analysed by Oja (2019) in the previous research. The trailer is in English and available in Searchlight Pictures' website and YouTube site. The YouTube site also provides a link to another *Birdman* trailer labelled as an American version, but I find the international one more suitable for the analysis, because it provides eligible data in the social context of a targeted audience, and the present findings can be contrasted to previous ones.

The trailer of the present study is labelled as a standard theatrical trailer, duration of two minutes and fifty-five seconds (Hoffmann 2021). According to Kernan (2004), contemporary trailers are constructed around representation of causal elements illustrating the narrative event relations or by illustrating the narrative world. As for the present trailer, a news article with an interview with the creators states it to be artistically motivated, and the trailer campaign is designed in affiliation with the director of the movie (Kachka 2014). The interview with the designer of the *Birdman* trailer (2014) and the co-workers note that the idea of the trailer is to illustrate the essence of the film in an abstract form, and it is less concerned with story depiction. It is more concerned with the narrative world, with irony as a central idea, suggesting the designer's motivation in relation to the filmic text, which correlates with the documentary (Fox Searchlight 2014). There is a hyperlink below for the trailer, which leads to film production company's YouTube site. One major question in the data collection was that I wanted to apply public data with easy access, since my ability to provide samples in my analysis is limited.

Table 1. Data for the analysis.

Data	Title	Author
Poster	Birdman poster. Finnish version.	Fox Searchlight Pictures. (credited creator). (2015).
Trailer	Birdman trailer. International version.	Woollen, M. (designer). (2014).
Film	<i>Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)</i> .	Iñárritu, A. (director). (2014).

Link to the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJfLoE6hanc> (derived 27.10.2022)

4.4 Social semiotic methodology in genre analysis

The social semiotic methodology is based on a communication model, similarly with Neale (2000) and Altman (2002), but considers both of the approaches in the application. The communication model constructs around the text designer, who is the sender of a message, and receiver roles in the meaning production. The message or a text forms an audience, but the interpretation of the textual cohesion in the discourse and the genre to which the text belongs is bound by a subjective knowledge system of the interpreter of the message.

The textual systems in the model are interpretative, productional, and textual, activating according to a user and the context. Texts and genres are seen as institutional practices, producing cohesion in a society (Kress 2010). Depending on the cultural group the participants of communication belong, texts either ideologically exclude or produce communities. Hodge and Kress (1988: 79) with Kress (2010:173) connect communication to style, which can exclude participants from the community. The designer of a textual product is confined by the cultural rules of that genre in the given discourse community in the process of meaning making.

A text reflects the semiotic work input, and the semiotic system contains possible interpretations for the receiver (Kress 2010: 138-139). The textual system disconnects from the ideological position of the designer and receiver, or at least it is impossible to appropriate infinitely (Hodge & Kress 1988).

A text and its style perform a designed contextual task, implying that altering the context influences the interpretation. A different user can apply the same text in a new context and the knowledge system of the receiver is shaped by the received information (Kress 2010).

A social semiotic methodology provides an analytical model for interpreting texts and genres in the form of multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006; Kress 2010). Multimodal social semiotic theories by Kress (2010) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 10) regard textual interpretation as a cognitive process that is possible to examine in a cultural context and the reading patterns are culturally conditioned. For example, Western reading patterns may deviate from other regional systems by priming its configurations such as reading from left to right and moving from up to below (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 4-5).

The model derives from systematic linguistics, providing a contextual classification for multimodal codes based on cognitive processes (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Different modes operate as semiotic affordances in the meaning production. A text can be, for example, a combination of sound, image, and writing, which produce composite meanings. Framing of the texts, and the cohesive ties, produce genres (Kress 2010: 148-149). When the text is transferred to a new context, the resemiotisation applies new affordances in meaning making. In this regard, Kress (2010: 130) discusses about semiotic translation when a text is resemiotised in a new mode or media such as film to trailer or trailer to poster. The information is shaped according to its purpose and audience.

In my own method, I will need to consider the approach for different media since the cohesion in the texts do not share similar narrative formation, and the poster and the trailer rely on abstraction, which subsequently effects on the reading patterns and interpretation. Kress (2010: 170-172) notes that visual grammar's (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) layout reading of image is altered in complex contexts, which, to my mind, can be paralleled to cohesion in longer multimodal texts such as films and trailers. Tseng and Bateman (2012) indicate that multimodal cohesion in filmic text does not always follow linear reading, but the images are connected by accumulation, repetition, and variation. Visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) does not discuss cinematic narratives but rather only moving images; however, in my view, it is possible to attach the approach to Bordwell's (2009) concept of cognitive inference, which is compatible with social semiotics.

Bordwell's (2009) theoretical framework has been applied and implemented in previous multimodal discourse studies regarding film narrative and genres. Regarding narrative discourse, Bateman and Schmidt (2011) argue that it can be analysed as any genre, but a completely objective account is difficult to produce since there is an extensive number of variables. Bateman and Schmidt (2011: 4-

5; 23-24) suggest that well justified observer model, for example, based on Bordwell's (2009) cognitive model, especially if complemented with semiotic analytical tools, would be sufficient for analytical purposes, since movie narratives are generally designed to produce a unified meaning. I will apply the cognitive model (Bordwell 2009) with more detailed multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006; Kress 2010).

The narrative interpretation can be seen in a similar way as a cognitive process particular to different cultural backgrounds as with a still image. The cognitive approach is based on interpretative traditions and schemata exemplified in regional variants in films, which is not confined only to film but derives the model from other media as well, approaching the tradition as a continuous historical process. The cognitive approach also marks the qualitative nature of the study since I am applying my own knowledge system and understanding of existing traditions to the movie in the analysis. Tseng and Bateman (2012) note that Bordwell's (2009) method has empirical constraints, which the multimodal discourse analysis seeks to resolve with the analytical appropriation derived from linguistics.

According to Bordwell (2009), there is a naturalized way of reading Hollywood filmic narratives, which have relatively fixed narrative discourse organization. Similarly, Hoffmann (2021) has pointed out stable structures in American film trailers, which appear to share multimodal cohesive practices regardless of a genre. The methods enable to analyse the style and ideology in the sphere of multimodal discourse analysis, allocating the genre of the texts in broader cohesive formations. Ideology of the organization should remain intact in the abstracted form when the filmic text is resemiotised in the context of the poster and the trailer, which in this case is the postmodern aesthetics, indicating what kind of spectator is imagined by the genre formation shaped by the discourse.

The combination of existing theories from similar premises of social semiotics with film narrative and genre studies have been applied by Tseng (2013; 2017), analysing semantic cues on different dimension of discourse; Tseng and Bateman (2012), studying elements of narrative discourse in relation to cohesion in a film; and Tan, Wignell, and O'Halloran, (2016), targeting style and intertextual cues in genre formation in semiotic transformation between novel, theatre and film, who note that meaning production differentiates by the media, which organize the multimodal content from their own respective material constraints.

4.5 Method

The structure of the analysis is designed to gradually produce knowledge of the film genre by a motivated reading order in an actual real-life setting, starting from the marketing material. The poster is generally intended as a public object in physical surroundings, usually located in the vicinity of a movie theatre, where the succeeding trailers are displayed. Alternatively, posters and trailers are accessible in social media marketing. Functionally, the poster is designated to attract an audience as well as to persuade them to see the film. The poster is analysed according to multimodal discourse analysis by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), a visual grammar designed for visual materials and especially for generic reading of still images in a Western cultural context.

The modal affordances in visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) are realized through three different metafunctions. Ideational metafunction relates to logical aspect of the representation, the causal relations in the image expressing ideas of the world. Interpersonal metafunction expresses how the representation relates socially to the spectator, indicating an attitude towards the depicted world. Textual metafunction realizes how the textual meanings are connected on a material level. The metafunctions are further connected to the concept of modality, which expresses the aspect of belief and occurrence in reference to real world and the world of the image; in other words, what can be believed to be true based on the arrangement of the image.

The analysis targets the salience of elements in the overall composition, representative and social dimensions of the applied modes, and textual meanings. The analysis targets to realize the postmodern discourse in the thematic, salient signifiers, and existing traditions, such as intertextual cues. The analysis of the prevalent discourses is reflected in the movie in the research. I will consider the genre functionality of the poster in the context of aesthetic attraction and commercial persuasion.

The poster analysis is followed by the trailer, applying multimodal methods in connection with previous research on the trailer. According to a corpus study with multimodal discourse analysis by Hoffman (2021) on structure of contemporary American film trailers, the trailers apply generic opening shots, semantic content, and temporal structure, which allocates the genre function of the trailer. Since the trailer contains more than two hundred shots in a disparate order, I will narrow down the analysis to salient elements that have a generic value as suggested by Hoffman (2021). I will target the cognitive processes related to disruption of the narrative world, and how it is connected to the semantic cues producing cohesion. The analysis targets the opening images, lexical elements, and sound, within the structural context, and how the particulars are framed, forming cohesion in the text.

I will contrast the findings with Oja (2019), who suggests that the *Birdman* (2014) trailer depicts a deviating genre from the actual film to show subjectivity associated to the genre analysis. The functionality of the genre and the medium are both considered in the analysis, according to the contingency of the postmodern style in the text and the representative context.

The analysis on the filmic text applies multimodal discourse analysis with the cognitive inference of filmic texts. The goal is to allocate the affordances that produce cohesion in the filmic text, and subsequently lead up to genre interpretation from the multimodal formations. The cohesive elements form a narrative discourse (Bordwell 2009). The analysis allocates the genres in the discourse.

The multimodal discourse analysis is divided into three parts: characters, the narrative structure, and the narrative world, from which the meaning of the story can be inferred (Bordwell 2009). Characters in movies are considered stereotypical in the setting of events, which enables to make sense of the narrative; the character depiction relies on learned schemata of stereotypical narrative action, which constructs the cognitive inference of a film (Bordwell 2009: 112-113). I will derive the character schemata from a detailed analysis on motivational formation, which enables correlative analysis on higher dimensions of discourse such as narrative meaning that I will connect to stylistic choices, framing genres.

Bordwell (2009: 138) considers the style and montage subordinate to the narrative representation, supporting thematic construction, expressing ideas of the world, and forming the compositional paradigm of the film. While Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) discuss relation between framing of consecutive images, I will also consider editing of moving images in accordance with Eisenstein (1977), who discusses relation between composite shots, in order to form a micro level discourse, which can be attached to the higher level analysis, implicating the realm of verisimilitude in the narrative world. The editing connects to framing and cohesion of the narrative composition.

The multimodal discourse analysis targets modern and postmodern discourses framed in the narrative structure and in the representation. In contemporary commercial Hollywood films, a generic narrative structure includes goal orientation, narrative construction of three or four acts derived from Aristotle's poetics, with low and high points of the generic form (Bordwell 2009: 103-106). It should be acknowledged that designating the narrative structure by Bordwell's method (2009), which he notes to be based on his own observation, is not empirically objective in the sense proposed by Tseng and Bateman (2012), but I consider it to be sufficient in the context of the present study, since it realizes cohesive connections in the narrative structure on a general level, pointing out how different aspects of narrative such as completed action as rhetorical moves effect on a generic comprehension of the

filmic text. The narrative approach also enables forming a cohesive model that allows me to refer to the narrative events without presenting visual samples from the film to which I do not have a legal access.

The method gradually constructs an analytical model that enables allocation of the discourses through framing of the multimodal elements that shape the interpretation of genres. The poster with visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) produces an analytical model for a single image or a shot. The same process provides an analytical frame for the trailer and the filmic text to which I will include sound as a multimodal affordance. Cohesion in films, as well as in trailers, can be constructed from disparate images that do not necessarily follow linear progression (Tseng & Bateman 2012). The discourses form from repetition, variation, and accumulation of cohesive ties, which finally enables allocation of genre performance at the level of narrative discourse in the film.

The discourses that are under observation include application of ambiguity, inference of totality of meaning, and presence of meta-elements in the narrative, especially in connection to realism, all of which have been discussed in connection to the postmodern film discourse. The postmodern configurations are analysed against the cognitive formulation of Hollywood cinema regarding style and ideology, which margins the audiences, through which I consider it to be possible to allocate relations between the form or style and a functionality of a text, illustrating genres in operation. The goal is to illustrate discursive practices that may reshape audiences and to show the generic paradigms that may direct the interpretations of the filmic text and the byproducts within the postmodern style.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Poster

The present analysis considers the salience of genre references in the multimodal discourse analysis in accordance with visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), allocating the reading pattern, importance of information, and meaning of the overall composition. The analysis describes the particles in the poster and the semiotic relations according to the metafunctions, realizing the modal affordances in the meaning construction. The analysis illustrates the relation between the representation and style, regarding genre formation.

5.1.1 Arrangement and representation

The poster (Figure 1) depicts a man in a casual suit superimposed with textual features. The man has a bird costumed character on his head, and they are framed against a green background. Below them is a gallery of characters on the bottom of the image depicted in facial shots with simplified colours of black, green, and sepia. The most salient feature in the image is the character in a casual suit, who can be identified as Michael Keaton. The bolded text *Birdman* is highlighted along with complementary texts that describe the alternative title of the film or (*Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*), the actors, and the name of the director. The image depicts the man in the casual suit in a significantly larger portion, marking high information value, which for me signifies the importance of the role of the character's identity, deviating from a stereotypical depiction of a superhero character in a costume.

The arrangement of the salient elements suggests an unusual approach to a stereotypical action movie theme whereas the man in a casual outfit is emphasized. The representational composition shows the suited man inactive, while the costumed figure reaches its arms to the head of the man as an actor, forming actor-goal relation between the characters (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 59). The suited man is reacting to this gesture. He is a reactor in the image, the goal of the action, and reciprocally the costumed figure is a phenomenon causing the reaction of the direct gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 67-68). These relations indicate narrative roles in the representation, which should reflect the narrative representation in the filmic texts. The costumed character's arms stretch, forming a vector

to the head of the suited man, framing them into a single meaningful unit. The framing of the main image is analytical (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The characters are immovable and subjected to viewers inspection.



Figure 1. Birdman poster. CC.3.0. Fox Searchlight Pictures.

(Translation from Finnish to English: *Elokuvateattereissa – In theatres*)

The man in the casual suit is shot from waist up, signifying an interactive relation to the spectator (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 124-125), suggesting the story is experienced through him. The man is looking seriously at the external viewer from a frontal position, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 117-118) describe as a demanding image in their theoretical framework. The direct gaze of the participant demands attention of the external participant to a certain object or theme. In this case, the demand by the serious look suggests attention to the superhero figure on the suited man's head. The gaze of the costumed figure is obscure without a direct goal or relation to the viewer, suggesting a

social distance to the viewer as an offer to contemplation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 119-120). The costumed figure is depicted from a long social distance, but the framing cuts off the full figure, implying reduced active role (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 124-125). The costumed character is implied to have lesser affinity to the spectator. The wings are literally cut, and the importance of the action role is toned down, leaving the implied superpower for the character only partially represented and obscure. The ideational and social dimensions are illustrated by a following chart.

Table 2. Ideational and interpersonal metafunctions in the main image.

Character	Metafunction	Process	Goal/Phenomenon	Meaning
Suited man	Ideational	Reactive	Costumed figure	Reacting to the costumed figure.
	Interpersonal	Demand	Viewer	Demanding viewer' attention to the process.
Costumed figure	Ideational	Active	Suited man	Active relation towards the suited figure.
	Interpersonal	Offer	Object of viewer's contemplation	Suggesting a conflicting relation with the main character.

The salient textual features in the middle of the image are framed in a box shape attaching the frame into a singular meaningful unit around the film title. Michael Keaton is identified first, suggesting the identity of the highlighted *Birdman*. Keaton is followed by other actors and the director as well as a supplement for the title *or (Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*, which are framed differently from the body text of the actors list. The unusual theme of the image is reflected against the textual features. The director's typography is framed to the configuration of the original and stereotypical theme, which for me suggests artistic approach to the film. Similarly framed textual properties share the same referential value (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 177). A generic reading in non-linear composition follows the salience of the particulars (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 205). For me, the suited man is the most salient feature, which I follow to the *Birdman* title suggesting a superhero theme configured by the figure on the head. My reading pattern moves to the close shots of characters below, who look

dramatic, deviating from a generic superhero movie poster. I read last the smaller verbal features that reveal the actors' identities, the alternative title of the film, and the director, suggesting an unusual approach to the superhero theme and double coding of the image with dramatic qualities.

The supporting actors are identified visually at the bottom of the image. Michael Keaton is depicted again in the centre of the arrangement in another costume, suggesting an alternative role in the movie. The characters are separated by frames in similarly shaped boxes suggesting discrepant sequences in the movie. The characters of Naomi Watts and Emma Stone are next to the main character, both looking straight to the viewer, identifying with the spectator and demanding attention, suggesting the story is partly experienced through their characters. The character of Andrea Riseborough is depicted almost in a similar relation, but in a slightly oblique angle, looking ambiguously through the spectator. In contrast, the supporting men are distanced from the spectator. Edward Norton's character is in an oblique angle, and the gaze of Zack Galifianakis' character is obscured, showing half of his face. Keaton's demand in the small image directs to the comical disguise of the main actor. Amy Ryan's character is depicted looking away from the spectator, which suggests less dramatic involvement in the film.

The overall arrangement of the characters and the representation suggest different genres: serious drama, superhero movie, and comedy. The composition in the gallery draws attention to the central figures, the women and the main character, and the different roles of Michael Keaton, who is implied to cause worry, but who is also in the main image worried himself by the Birdman figure. He is implied to be in three roles, comical, superhero, and dramatic, and the latter two are framed in causal relation.

5.1.2 Colour and style

The multimodal framing of the poster deviates from stereotypical superhero films. Michael Keaton is famous for his role as *Batman* (1989; 1992), but the posters of the *Batman* films are expressing dissimilar generic content from the *Birdman* poster (2015), which does not make an explicit reference to an action spectacle. Historically, action film advertising has applied the style of an added sense of spectacle, by a painted style over photographs, common in 1980's action film posters with a fantastic element portraying the magic of cinema with high saturation of oil colour, which contemporary advertising can achieve digitally. The *Birdman* poster (2015) does not depict light and shadow, or a visual world common to contemporary superhero films.

The colours are toned down, low saturation, and limited hues of green, red, blue, and yellow. The colours of the main image refer to a digitally painted or rendered style of animation as opposed to photography. The *Birdman* poster (2015) transforms the photographic element and the sense of fantasy with the plain digital colours. The style of the poster resembles silk screen images by Andy Warhol, who depicted famous persons in multi-coloured portraits (Danto 2009). The painted style evokes nostalgia uncommon to movies, but popular in painting, especially in postmodern Pop art in relation to Expressionism (Bassie 2008: 51) as an individual and psychological concept. The style is maintained in the smaller images, but the colours are reduced. The characters are depicted as less complicated in terms of colour, ranging from green and black to sepia. The green background frames the side characters to the background of the main character. Sepia is a colour of old photographs, which to me signify nostalgia and the passing of time, which can be also associated to old halftone photographic images.

The sepia in the poster attaches to the colour theme of Warhol, who also depicted fading of time in his painting of celebrities (Danto 2009: 40-41; Friedberg 1993); however, the expressionist theme is framed to the main character, suggesting personal complexity, which extends to the character in the superhero costume framed by the same colour theme as a singular meaningful unit. The poster produces several references with the stylistic choice. First, the style refers to the main character as a popular figure, which was common to Warhol's subjects, who were often movie stars. Second, the style refers to Michael Keaton as Batman, who is now represented in an unusual context regarding the *Batman* posters or the contemporary style for superhero movies. The style also refers to the genre of the film, producing a psychological concept with digital expressionism that connects the two figures. Audiences may attach to different levels of interpretations. and to myself the reference is to postmodern nostalgia for the real, the discourse in cinema about the loss of content replaced by spectacle, configuring the superhero genre in the poster. Below is a chart according to material affordances (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

Table 3. Material affordances in the poster and implied meanings.

Material affordance	Referential function	Discourse
Digital rendering	Expressive	Low modality, not realistic representation. Special effects.
Subdued synthetic colouring	Expressive	A psychological theme. Pop art and contemporary painting.
Halftone sepia colour	Conceptual	Nostalgia. Old photography.

5.1.3 Themes and genre

The thematic of the poster refer to multiple genres as well as to other forms of art, connecting past to present. The presence of time and duality attach to the textual elements. The arrangement of the list of star actors resembles typography of modernist poetry with a rhythmic patterning of uneven empty spaces. The modern theme is paralleled to the superimposed postmodern figure of the lead character framing the themes to a composite meaning. The film title's supplement *or (Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* is represented in captions, which suggest a possible, but questionable, alternative, and the style also refers to French literary theory, a source for postmodern philosophy, which commonly applies such captions in writing. The generic reading of the poster is complemented with specific knowledge, attaching to a deviating theme by the linguistic register of *unexpected virtue of ignorance* with a style of wording that would not be common for popular action films but perhaps more so in art films. Both the text style and the title suggest generic variation in the film.

The persuasive function is ambiguous, which corresponds to the contemporary marketing style suggested by Altman (2002). However, the generic reading also suggests that the movie is an unusual depiction of a superhero movie. The vertical composition supports the interpretation. Commonly persuasion in advertising images applies a division of image into ideal and real sections, whereas the ideal is on the top and the real information is read afterwards on the bottom as an understatement (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 186). The poster shows the action figure on the top as the ideal and the drama characters as the real on the bottom, and the arrangement is mediated by the central character, suggesting both fantasy and realism.

The postmodern and specific reading margins the audiences with the style, coercing and producing an interpretative model for the movie, without a clear genre. The image is supplemented with critical accomplishments placed in the central horizontal line of the image that directs the reading of the film as something other than a stereotypical comic book adaptation. Altman (2002: 144) notes that the director brand is a common marketing trait for Hollywood productions. To me, the de-emphasized salience of the director suggests that the film is an unusual Iñárritu film, it is not generic in the sense of authorship. Aesthetically, the poster provides cultural depth, and the representation is both directional as well as instrumental in terms of visual pleasure with the composition and style. The poster performs functions of commercial and artistic effects, suggesting critical reading and postmodern thematic for the film text. The former Batman is represented in a new tone and light, with comical undertones.

5.2 Trailer

The trailer in the analysis is a worldwide theatrical trailer with duration of two minutes and fifty-two seconds [02:52], an international publication derived from the YouTube site of the production company, accessed in the data section 4.3. The analysis targets the generic features of the trailer in connection with multimodal affordances. Hoffmann (2021) points out that the theatrical trailer can be complex and require good cognitive skills, therefore, the analysis targets salient elements to provide the crucial information about the movie, including analysis on representation and stylistic elements.

5.2.1 Opening shot and disruption of the narrative world

A movie trailer represents the narrative in an abstract form, producing a generic overlay of the film, which commonly includes a generic opening shot, environment of the narrative world, goal orientation, and dialogue, addressing what the movie is about (Hoffmann 2021). In the *Birdman* trailer, the opening shot depicts a man hovering in a lotus position, dressed in shabby underwear, inside a small modest room. The opening shot is followed by sequences inside theatre surroundings, and the action is mainly conducted by dialogue, which continues to the halfway of the trailer at which point the trailer depicts a mood change in fantasy sequences. The fantasy includes action scenes of a few shots, which are followed by more scenes of realistic dialogue, continuing until the end of the trailer. The trailer represents two contrasting views of the narrative world, realistic and fantastical.

The opening shot suggests a film narrative of fantasy elements, but during the length of the trailer the fantasy or action sequences take far less space of the narration than the sequences involving dialogue. In the *Birdman* trailer's (2014) opening shot, the protagonist is situated inside a small and modest room in a building. The man is shot from a close long distance with back turned to the spectator. The shot shows the surroundings, but then zooms to the man, emphasizing his appearance but also the ability to hover. The man is meditating position, implying seeking for inner peace. The particulars construct the identity of the character and relation to the setting. He is turned away from the spectator, indicating disconnection from the world of the spectator (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 138). A superimposed voice-over states the world is not in correct order and "smells like balls", indicating that there is a contradiction with the character and the world. The unidentified voice states "we don't belong here", indicating that it would be the protagonist's inner voice since there is no other person

seen in the room. The man is framed in a comical setting of a superhero, who is instead of a caped costume in his shabby underwear [00:00-00:10].

The following sequences identify the man as Michael Keaton, who plays the protagonist as an actor who has a difficult relationship with his former superhero role in movies [00:10-01:02]. Most of the sequences relate to his identity as a former Birdman actor in films and a new serious role in a play he is currently creating. The goal in the narration is the establishment and success of the play and career, which is disrupted by the inner voice that comments on the main character's actions throughout the trailer.

The costumed Birdman character of the poster is not actually shown in the trailer, but he is implied to be the narrator. The voice is low, which creates an intertextual reference to *Batman* (1989; 1992) films in which a costumed Batman character speaks in similar low voice. The low narrating voice does most of the talking in the trailer. Most of the visual narration revolves around the casual character, implying the Birdman character is directing the action of the casual character. The casual character is represented in shabby clothes throughout the trailer, framing his comical relation to a superhero identity that is contradicted by the appearance, but his dialogue is limited. During the length of the trailer the man is first represented as a superhero figure, but in the end of the trailer, he is represented as a normal man who strolls across the streets in his underwear. The disruption of the narrative world does not promise a superhero activity in the traditional sense of the genre.

5.2.2 The semantic landscape

The semantic landscape consists of dialogue, sound, and special effects. The dialogue is a salient feature, and the content revolves around discussion on cinema, realism, and art in general, with an addition of dramatic elements. Most of the talking is conducted by the monologic voice-over who seems to contradict the protagonist's action in the theatre world. The dramatic qualities are complemented with the protagonist's troubled role as a father, who does not "matter anymore", as the daughter, played by Emma Stone, says [01:02-01:11].

Most of the lexicon in the trailer refers to art and entertainment, which is a cohesive device that can be associated to the visual variation. One of the salient characters, played by Edward Norton, first discusses the theatre production with the protagonist and his artistic ambitions [00:25] and then physically fights him in his underwear [00:51]. In the final part of the trailer, Norton's supporting

character discuss with a critic who labels the protagonist as a "Hollywood clown", and Norton's character gives respect to the protagonist, "he is risking everything on the stage" [02:21]. The dialogue does not involve references to superhero narrative world, but only references to superhero and theatre acting in a drama dialogue. The protagonist is framed in a comical action scene and struggling in the narrative world.

There is generic variation in the sequences, which extends to music as well. The first half of the trailer employs a dramatic pop song played over close-up shots, signifying dramatic elements. At the middle point of the trailer, the mood changes to fantastic with special effects and the music is switched to classical orchestrated cinema music, and the external low voice suggests a "comeback" [01:34]. The special effects briefly explode the narrative world, transferring it to fantastic sequences, but immediately the sequences halt on the rooftop, the sound reverses, and the discussion turns to cinema. Another external voice of a woman shouts, "is this real or are you making a film?" and the protagonist responds that it is "a film" [01:54]. The framing of the elements suggests that the superhero activity is in a realm of cinema rather than in a narrative world of superheroes.

The last part of the trailer's dialogue discusses a making of process, referring to the events in the play and its success, adding elements of metafiction to the narrative. Although, it is unclear does the *comeback* refer to making films or a superhero event. The special effects in the trailer take a salient role, but the rhetorical use does not correlate with the goal of the dialogue, but expresses something else, which is unidentified, but framed with the stage acting and "risking everything on stage".

The special effects do not refer to a stereotypical unfolding of the narrative world involving superheroes. Rather, the semantic landscape constructs an ambiguous world, mixing realism with fantastical scenes and the sound of the trailer supports a similar narrative representation. In addition to the pop song and the classical theme, the music starts with and shifts in the end to improvised jazz drumming, suggesting an additional theme. There are mixed elements directing the viewer, but the music also provides cues for interpretation. The pop song is a cover from Nina Simone's song *Baby, Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood*, which marks a parodical approach to the superhero actor in the underwear and genre dispersion which might confuse the viewer. The song may operate as a diegetic device, since it sings "sometimes I get a little mad" while the protagonist is trashing a dressing room, underlining dramatic genre formation. On the other hand, the song ends on the title verse in a special effects sequence [01:39] and could ironically suggest that the spectator should not misunderstand the spectacle, which is framed with the woman shouting and questioning the visual representation.

At the turning point of the trailer, before the scene explodes, the director's name appears on the screen over a fantastical scene illuminated by blue misty light [01:24]. The director is highlighted while the actors are mentioned briefly in the end without pointing out anyone specific. The emphasis of the director could be read as a reference to the artistic element of the film. The rhetoric strategy differs from the poster, which has a reversed emphasis, but framing of the director has similarities since moves in both marketing texts frame the artistic side of the film. The title is produced at the end [02:23] as a closing of the trailer with the dualistic genre signification, which the ambiguous form of the trailer supports.

5.2.3 Framing representation

In the progression of the trailer, the protagonist gains success, but the state of the character remains ambiguous. The narrative world remains in the same comical appearing realm, which can be illustrated with the salient narrative points of middle and the end of the trailer text, which are emphasized in the representation by a mood change, special effects, and repetition, which are framed in the editing. The opening shot is cut with the producer logos [00:12], the middle part begins after the director's credit [01:24], and the ending is cut with a title text for the film [02:20].

The first image shows the man in a peaceful position, disrupted by the questioning external voice "what are we doing here?", which manifests in the turning point as the voice of the Birdman alter ego, soon disrupted by the shouting woman signifying the meta-discourse [01:46-01:48]. In the last narrative image [02:43], the protagonist is still wearing the same underwear, but he is approached by a voice of a fan "you rock!", establishing a narrative change in terms of verbal content, which refers to the alternative title of the film. In the ending, the running protagonist in underwear is repeated, stressing its significance. The condemning external voice is replaced by fandom, and the man descends from the hovering world of fantasy to the solid ground of realism, but the man itself stays in the sphere of comical.

The salient narrative points in the trailer refer to comedy as continuing cohesive frame (Table 4). The comparison with the structural events indicates a change in the character that is connected to the self-conscious discursive element in the middle point, questioning the initial superhero theme that is completely reversed in the final shot. The approach to the superhero genre appears parodical in terms of narrative structural elements. The framing of the narrative elements also suggests further ambiguity in the modal realm of the narrative world.

Table 4. Salient narrative points and genre references.

Narrative point	Event	Genre implication
Beginning Indoor setting	Man in a shabby underwear, hovering in the air in a lotus position, the external voice condemns, "the place smells like balls".	Superhero fantasy Comedy
Middle On the roof	Explosion and fantastic giant bird on a roof. The image is reversed with a sound effect back to realistic. The woman questions the representation.	Superhero fantasy Comedy
Ending Outdoor setting in a street	The protagonist is running outside in the underwear.	Comedy

The genres are similar with ones represented in the poster: drama, comedy, and superhero film, with addition of fantasy. It is difficult to point out which genre is the most salient or dominant. The salience of the action scene, which is placed in the middle of the trailer, could establish a point of reference as Oja (2019) suggests. On the other hand, the overall structure deviates from generic action trailers. There is no real combating of danger, but a parodical approach to generic traits of an action film. A common trait in action films is a body spectacle, showing the character's strength (Neale 2000: 46). In the trailer [00:52-00:54], both lead male characters are seen struggling in their underwear, either wrestling or running outside in long distance shots, and they are not typically muscular characters of action films. The trailer portrays several different genres also in the musical choices. For me, jazz and emotional pop music appear less stereotypical choices for an action film.

The relation between genres appears dynamic, comedy configuring action and drama genres, which affects the modal realm. The verisimilitude between the trailer or cinematic world is in conflicting relation with real world of the spectator. It is not clearly stated if the protagonist is making films or is he really a superhero. The cohesive relation of the salient images correlates with the coded reading

of the first shot according to visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The hovering protagonist is turned away from the spectator, and therefore conflicting the narrative world. He does not identify the world with the external spectator, which would require frontal demand. In the poster, the visual demand is made in the casual suite, stressing drama genre.

Different audiences attach to different signifiers in trailers and films, and the generic variation without a dominant signifier is a symptom of postmodern bricolage (Altman 2002: 169). The generic structure points to postmodern narrative themes of individuality in authorship, metafiction, and ironic approach to the prevalent Hollywood suppressed narrative trend of superhero themes, which are paralleled to the modernist narrative representation of a complex lead character, and the comedy in the trailer is configured by the postmodern discursive practices.

An acute narrative promise in the case of *Birdman* trailer (2014) could be difficult to produce because the film is shot in very long takes, which would not suit short trailers very well. Therefore, it could be difficult to expect an identical reformulation, but an innovative aesthetic approach. The trailer transforms the narrative elements, but for me express similar ontological status with the poster. The meta-elements frame the action genre from an ironic point of view, suggesting similar postmodern nostalgia for the real that is lost in visual culture, signified by the shouting woman who comically labels film makers as "full of shit". For me, the comedy in the trailer is subject to the represented genres of superhero action and drama that derives from the dialogue.

The framing stresses the artistic, and postmodern, elements of the trailer, which is exemplified by the innovative application of the various voice-overs operating as the key signifiers of narrative disruption. The pop song of the trailer does not appear in the film, and it can be understood as another interpretative cue, added for innovative reasons, communicating an ambiguous and fragmented genre of the film, but it also seems to be self-conscious about the possibility for alternative, and perhaps impaired, genre interpretations.

5.3 Filmic text

The analysis on the filmic text commences by allocating the three dimensions of the film narrative, which illustrates the relations with character schemata, the narration, and the narrative world. The narrative analysis provides a schema-based model for the inference of the meaning of the movie. Bordwell (2009:102) divides the narrative into concepts of story and discourse. The story includes

the narration events, and the discourse consists of structural arrangement of the narrative, which forms the ideological construction directing the inference from a desired point of view. In clarification, I will treat the discursive arrangement as a context of the narration in a similar way that discourse is understood in the background discussion as a text in a context.

The arrangement of the structure is connected to the representation of the narrative world and style of the representation (Bordwell 2009:111). The narrative world emphasizes the stereotypical action of the characters and the subsequent inference of the knowledge production. The generic features of the structure are contrasted to individual stylistic choices in the arrangement, constructing the meaning in the filmic text and the narrative representation. I will derive the genre interpretation from the framing of the elements in the paradigmatic representation.

5.3.1 Setting and character schemata, the first act

The first act of the movie introduces the main characters, who are represented by their schemata of stereotypes, influencing the narrative events (Bordwell 2009: 101-102). The film narration revolves around a theatrical production, which confines the characters and the setting. Riggan Thompson is directing and producing an adaptation of Raymond Carver's minimalist short story, and all the characters in the movie are in an affiliation with Thompson either by a professional or personal relation, marking him as the protagonist of the movie. Other important characters are Sam (Emma Stone), who is Thompson's daughter and assistant, Mike Shiner (Edward Norton) who is the supporting male actor, Thompson's girlfriend Laura (Andrea Riseborough) and Shiner's girlfriend Leslie (Naomi Watts), who are both also supporting actors in the play, Riggan's manager Jake (Zack Galifianakis), as well as Riggan's ex-wife Sylvia (Amy Ryan), who frequents the set. They are also the characters from the poster.

In the beginning, the spectator learns that Riggan Thompson is a movie star who wants to become a seriously taken artist in theatre. In the opening scene, Thompson hovers in the air meditating in a lotus position suggesting that in addition to his role as an actor, he is not an ordinary human, and the voice-over of Michael Keaton attaches to the character as his inner voice. The setting soon reveals Riggan's relation to the theatrical production, creating a contrast in the narrative world, a superhero looking character is situated in a realistic setting, which the inner voice, appeared also in the trailer, condemns, "this place smells like balls...we don't belong here", suggesting that the setting is not in

the correct order, and the voice is directing Thompson's action. Riggan is attached to two contrasting schemata, his ambition as an actor and to the unresponsive inner voice, who demands a change.

Riggan's motivation is directed towards himself. He meditates, which suggests striving for inner peace, contradicted by the inner voice. The opening scene is interrupted by a video call by Sam, and the call ends up with a disagreement over a flower purchase for Riggan's dressing room. The flowers signify improvement to the setting, responding to the inner voice. Riggan tells Sam "bring something that smells nice", which Sam reciprocally neglects. The call marks a familial conflict and implies that Sam's motivation in the film targets to her father, but she does not take his father or his profession seriously, creating a stereotypical schema of troubled youth. The opening scene develops from a supernatural hovering to a mundane conversation shifting the superhero genre to realistic drama with comical undertone with Riggan in his shabby underwear as in parodical contradiction to a superhero costume.

The events represent the character schemata as well as parallel genre formation. The contrasts in the character's desires direct Riggan's motivation. Riggan seems immersed in his own ego and career. In the following scene, the actors of the play rehearse, and lamp drops on a supporting male actor's head. When the supporting actor is injured, Riggan and manager Jake have no interest in the hurt man; they are only concerned what effect the incident might have on the play. Riggan says to Jake that he has caused the injury, because the man could not act to his opinion, which implies that he has used a superpower, but Jake disregards the claim by addressing "are you drunk?". The genre applications are in conflict and the superhero realm remains in Riggan's personal knowledge and reality. Riggan also wishes to replace the injured actor with a Hollywood star actor, which implies his own conviction about stage acting, deviating from traditional theatre. Figure two illustrates the genre framing in the first two scenes, according to schematic action.

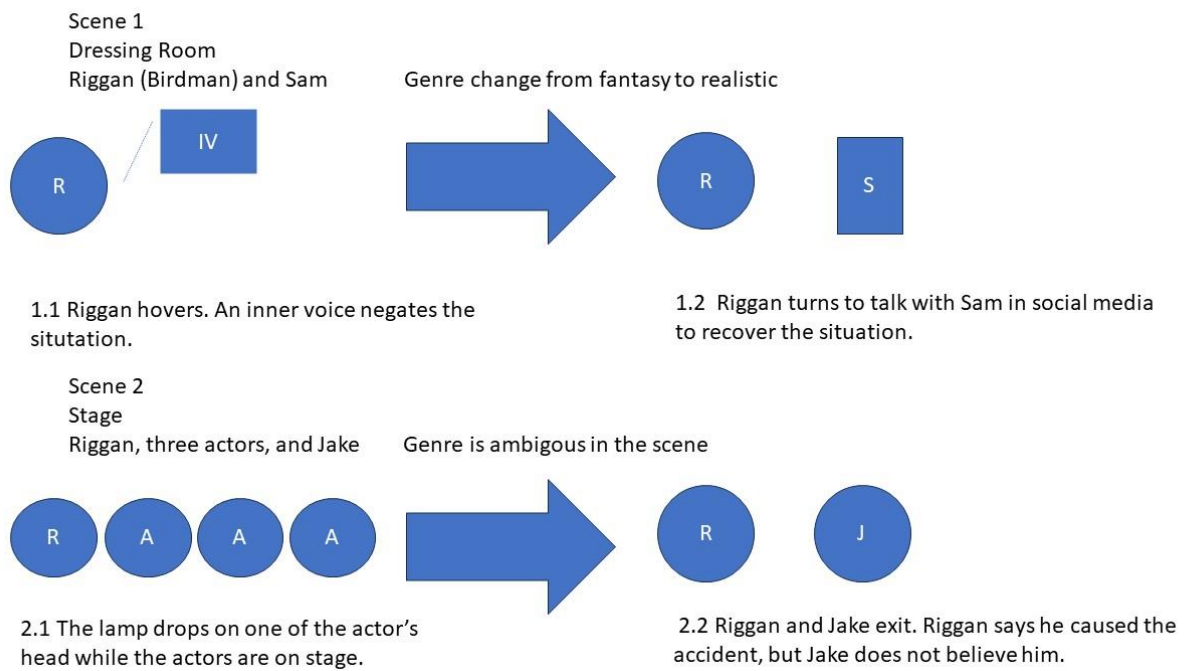


Figure 2. Character motivation and framing of genre in the first two scenes.

After the stage incident, the following scene shows further complication in Riggan's schemata. The inner voice from the first scene appears in conversation with Riggan, not as his own speech but rather as what seems to be another personality. The voice condemns further the setting, and demands return to the Hollywood career that they once had, referring to the Birdman character. The schemata imply a difficult relation with the acting career in two different settings as well complicated causal relation with the superhero identity that is his personal knowledge and reality, directing the narrative and his further actions.

In addition, when the scene progresses, reporters are suspicious of Thompson because of his star persona and his credibility in a Broadway production. The two worlds appear to be in collision in Riggan's mind because he is determined to overwrite his reputation, as the reporters note "washed up super star", through critical success in Broadway. However, both strains of success, critical and popular, are driven by the schemata of ambition and recognition. The vanity of Thompson is amplified by Jake, whose goal is to make the play profitable as they try to hide the injured actor's accident from the press. Jake appears as a half shady stereotypical management character, which is in accordance with the film poster's representation showing only half of Zack Galifianakis' face in a shadow.

The side plot of the movie revolves around the characters Sam and Mike Shiner. Sam is said to recover from a drug habit. Mike is a prominent but also troubled stage actor, who is hired to replace the injured actor in the set and to gain success for the play. Mike appears on the set, and he also has problems with authority, especially artistically, and he starts to take control of the play by suggesting alterations to the script. He is especially concerned about the realism of the play. The theme of realism is central to his character and to the movie, creating contrast to Riggan's superhero schema.

In his first scene with Riggan, Mike corrects the script and comments that Riggan is not minimal enough in the acting. This can be understood that Mike is concerned with authenticity of the minimalist literary style of Carver. In the first preview of the play, Mike is drinking real gin while on stage, departing from the script, and notes that "Carver wrote with his liver", connecting a theme of intoxication to the theme of realism, while suggesting that they should strive for authenticity on the stage, underlining the importance of theatre aesthetics. Mike is also introduced as sexually unreserved by commenting on Sam's rear on their first encounter, which she rejects.

The characters Riggan and Mike are influenced by their girlfriends Laura and Lesley, who act in the play. The women are motivated characters through their desire for love. Leslie is also concerned with her career, which creates a conflict with Mike in their first scene together in a dressing room, because naked Mike is not concerned about Sam's presence, which could negatively influence Riggan, who is the boss. The schema of desire is an aspect of thematic construction of the movie. All the characters have desires, either sexual or ambitions for career. Thompson appears to have a difficult relationship with his daughter, but also with his girlfriend Laura. He is more interested in his play and career than in the women in his life. When Laura says that she might be pregnant, Riggan does not seem to respond to the news, while Laura appears to be excited. Laura, on the other hand, is represented as hypersexual, groping Riggan in the corridor and complimenting Leslie's behind to him.

Laura and Leslie are contrasted to Riggan's ex-wife and Sam's mother Sylvia, who has developed a rational and friendly relation to her ex-husband, addressing her schema as a reasoning voice of platonic love. The women in the film are representing different aspects of love and their motivation is built around the schemata reflecting to male central characters. Sylvia recounts to Riggan, who appears to be more interested in his own dissolving career than his ex-wife's recent life, "do not confuse love with admiration". She also notes Riggan's alcohol consumption and anger management problems, adding schemata to Riggan's character.

The supporting characters are motivated by the goal of Riggan. In general, contemporary Hollywood films are structured around character development and change, which commonly culminates in the

protagonist (Bordwell 2009: 89). The characters in the film construct the development of Riggan Thompson, who operates as a signifier of the narrative change, establishing the meaning in the film. The character arc of the protagonist signifies a personal development in consequence of the narrative events (Bordwell 2009: 118). The meaning in the film is partly inferred from the epistemic change by Riggan's experiences, inflicted by the comprised character schemata.

In connection with the character schemata, another factor influencing the stereotyped action involves a star factor (Bordwell 2009, Neale 2000). The generic context of Michael Keaton suggests affinity to his previous role in *Batman* (1989; 1992) films, attaching to the represented superpowers, which are gradually unfolded in the movie, influencing the character arc. The viewer sees Riggan hovering in the air, suggesting a superpower, but as the narrative progresses, the trait is questioned by the events surrounding the character, and part of the narrative pleasure is derived from the conflict and its knowledge production. When Sylvia exits the dressing room, Riggan is telling the inner voice to "shut up". The *Bruce Wayne* stereotype does not appear to apply to Riggan, who seems to have mental problems instead of superpowers, but it remains a controversial topic during the film, addressed through the side characters. The narrative development is connected to contrasting schemata of superhero ability and realism of struggling ambition.

The cast in the play, along with Sam, Jake, and Sylvia, are the characters that recur throughout the movie, but another significant player in the film is the play itself. In addition to character-based schemata, narratives develop by action-based schemata (Bordwell 2009: 89-90). The action in the movie is confined to the set of the play coupled with the ostensible superpowers, which motivates the characters. The narrative change in the play constructs a major story line in the movie and reflects the themes in the film. The original text of the play *What Do Talk About When We Talk About Love* (2009) is a minimalist style story discussing different constellations of love, ranging from medieval chivalry to romantic love and desire, comprising genealogical themes of the literary representations.

The original Carver story depicts two romantic couples having drinks and talking about love. The play in the film represents the same events but in a transformed adaptation, and the transformation of the play signifies the narrative change in the film. At the same time, the cast have their own discussions of love behind the scenes. The development of the setting and the characters are attached to the narrative structure, which is inflicted by the actions of Riggan influenced by Mike's devotion to realism and Birdman who apparently causes changes in the set with the Hollywood demands, at least in Riggan's mind. Riggan desires to add fantasy elements to the originally realistic play before the first preview, which he explains as dream sequences to Jake, who opposes the idea because the change generates financial costs. The schema of the set appears to illustrate multiple dimensions

affecting the inference of the story that unfolds against the character arc of Riggan Thompson. The discourse level of characters in motivated events develop the frame for a genre interpretation, which can be reflected with the narrative discourse and the representation of the narrative world.

5.3.2 The plot structure and narration

The events are constructed around the generic form of Hollywood film described by Bordwell (2009). The movie can be divided into four acts with Aristotelian concepts of dramatic development of high and low points, including generic points of the dramatic twist and climax that appear in the generic time frame set for Hollywood feature films, which imports the goal-oriented character arc of Riggan Thompson. The choices which the characters make, and the causality associated with the schemata, can be assigned to the generic narrative structure. The structure coincides with the film thematic, suggesting a possible interpretation of the events, and subsequently, the conclusion of the story. The generic structure follows the ratio of 1:2:1 (Bordwell 2009: 105). The first act represents the first 30 minutes in the film, which includes the pivotal point near the end of the first act. The following two acts comprise the next hour. The last act is commonly shorter, including the climax of the film, supplemented by an epilogue.

The first act establishes the main characters in the setting and the generic point of no return. Thompson is shown with the superpower of hovering in the first scene, which is interrupted by the call by Sam. He goes to rehearsal, and the lamp falls on the actor's head, and the role is suggested to Mike Shiner. Mike appears in the set and makes a good impression on Riggan, and Mike is hired for the role. Mike meets Sam and comments on her “great ass” after testing the script on stage with Riggan, establishing a relation between the two supporting characters. Laura tells Riggan about her pregnancy, but Riggan does not seem excited, presenting them in a conflict.

The first preview of the play concludes in chaos caused by Shiner’s desire for realism and drinking real gin on the stage, marking the pivotal point of the film. There is no turning back with the choice of actor because Jake says Mike cannot be replaced or they will lose money. The first act concludes with Riggan’s recount with his ex-wife Sylvia, who appears in Riggan’s dressing room after the preview. She addresses Riggan’s ambition with the play and his career, which appear to cause distress in the protagonist's mind at the expense of his emotional life. The first act addresses Riggan’s complex personality, which is unfolding against the inner voice of Birdman and the relation of schemata of other characters in the process of the play.

The following two acts emphasize and develop the thematic concepts introduced in the first act with the rising and falling arc of the protagonist. During the second act, Thompson is creating a connection with Shiner, who seems to be providing success for the play by his personal talent notwithstanding the conflict on stage in the first preview. In a bar scene, Shiner defends Thompson to a powerful theatre critic Tabitha Dickinson, who is determined to give a bad review for the play based solely on Thompson's reputation as a "Hollywood clown". Returning from the bar, Riggan finds Sam in an office in the theatre, where she has been smoking pot. They have a fight during which Sam says to his father he is not relevant anymore and theatre is not relevant in the internet age as it has lost its reach for youth in a similar manner that Riggan has lost his contact with Sam, suggesting further alienation in the family. In the two scenes, Riggan drinks whisky in the bar and smokes Sam's leftover joint, cooling him down. The intoxication is shown parallel to the anger management introduced in the first act by Sylvia and parallel by Mike's drinking and raging on the stage.

The scenes are followed by the second preview of the play, which is a success with the audience, but the preview creates a conflict between Mike and his girlfriend Leslie, again related to sexuality because Mike is having an erection on the stage, which he seeks to use as a realistic tool in the play, and Leslie refuses to cooperate. While the preview is successful, Mike also notes to Riggan that the prop gun Riggan uses to shoot himself in the final scene of the play is not realistic enough, following the ambition for impact on stage. After the erection incident on stage, Leslie and Laura meet in a love scene driven by their neglected desires by their men. In contrast, Mike and Sam meet on the rooftop, relating to each other's alienation from reality by their desires. The second act ends in high point of the narrative, Riggan has regained his composure during the act, referring to his disrupted meditative position in the beginning of the film, and he is in good relations with Mike. Mike and Sam are making friends with each other after the bad start, while Leslie and Laura are drifting away from their men, marking the halfway of the movie.

In the third act, the events turn to a descending trajectory. Mike appears in a magazine interview with a Carver anecdote he has stolen from Riggan in the bar, and they fight physically, setting them off on bad terms. The Birdman voice slanders Thompson for his choices, and Riggan trashes his own dressing room and his gift poster of his last Birdman movie, signifying the disruption of his previous career. Jake lies to Riggan that Martin Scorsese, a famous movie director, is coming to see the play to cool him down and keep the production alive. After the fight, Sam meets Mike again on the rooftop, finding compassion for the fight with her father, leading them into a love scene. During the third preview Riggan notices the renewed relationship with Sam and Mike, he goes for a cigarette in an angry state and locks himself outside in Times Square in his underwear while the play is progressing.

He must walk through a crowd back into the theatre, on the stage, and finish the play half naked. On the way to the stage, he learns that the injured actor is in a wheelchair and has sued the production for the incident, suggesting more stress.

While entering the stage Riggan punches Mike as if part of the script, adding ostensible realism to the play by violence, but at the same time suggests anger management problems. After the preview, Sam tries to console Riggan who seems to be even more immersed in his own problems by not paying proper attention to her words. However, Sam is closing in on his father because the accident in Times Square has become a viral hit in the social media, earning Riggan Sam's respect. While Riggan seems to be personally going downhill, his actions are gaining him also popularity. The third act ends with an encounter with the same critic in the bar who has promised to trash the success of the play, and she renews the promise. Riggan gets drunk and passes out on the street, marking a generic low point in the narrative structure. The third act depicts Riggan's declining mental condition that is coupled with his rising intoxication, which contrastively seems to benefit his goals in life because the play has sold out, at least according to Jake whose credibility is proved to be uncertain.

The fourth act includes the opening night of the play with the climax and the epilogue. The events begin with Riggan waking up in the gutter with a hangover. Birdman appears as a physical manifestation, inducing Riggan to a fantasy sequence. Riggan ascends on a rooftop, encounters a man who thinks it is a suicide attempt and tries to talk him down, but Riggan leaps over and starts to fly over the neighbourhood, finally landing on the front of the theatre. He is followed by a taxi driver seeking for money and shouting, "crazy man". The events are not fully disclosed but suggest that the Birdman fantasy might be in Riggan's own head, which is represented in the most intense form during the movie.

Riggan arrives in the theatre, where the play begins. During the last intermission, in the dressing room, he meets Sylvia, and they discuss his mental health. Riggan says he has attempted suicide once by drowning, but he failed because of a comical incident with jellyfish stopped him, suggesting that he is capable of self-harm but also to comical results, which Sylvia neglects. After Sylvia leaves the room, Riggan takes a gun, which appears real, following Mike's advice for realism. Riggan exits the room by opening the door with mental power, he enters the stage and performs a minimalistic version of the previously represented scene and shoots himself, marking the climax of the narrative structure. In terms of Broadway aesthetics, he is making ostensibly right decisions, striving for realism as proposed by Mike. However, in the case of Riggan it is difficult to say if he is acting on a mad impulse or artistic determination.

The low point and the climax represent Riggan's disconnection from reality, which leads to drastic choices on the stage, connecting the dramatic events around the play to the drama of the adapted play. The setting fulfils the prophecy of the script. In the first rehearsal, the characters in the play state that "in real love people do not kill themselves" and Riggan's confusion of love with admiration apparently leads to the drastic shooting, which contrasts with the event of shooting in the Carver's story, adding a metalevel to the film, discussing desire.

The epilogue takes place in a hospital room, concluding the narrative. Riggan has shot of his nose. It is not exclusively stated if it was an accident or a suicide attempt. Sylvia and Jake are present in the room. Sylvia considers it as a mental health problem, but Jake is happy that the play was a success and profits them. Riggan is silent as if not enjoying the achieved goals for success. Jake leaves the room, and Sam enters. She has created a Twitter page for Riggan, who is gaining a lot of followers. This time, Sam also brings the right flowers for her father, which was the initial point of conflict for them in the first scene of the film. Riggan has reconciled with his closest persons.

When Sam leaves the room to get water for the flowers, Riggan has the final encounter with Birdman, who appears in a toilet mirror of the hospital room. Riggan sees in the mirror his operated nose that looks like the beak of Birdman. Riggan bids farewell while exiting the toilet. Riggan approaches a window in the hospital room, and opens it, admiring birds in the sky with a smile. He rises to the windowsill, and camera turns away from him. Sam enters the room and notices the absence of his father and the open window. First, she looks down from the window as if Riggan would have jumped, but then, she looks up to the sky and starts smiling, and the film ends with a positive tone of Sam's laughter, which suggests that Riggan might not attempted suicide after all.

The narrative structure points out a generic reading of the film, allocating it to the commercial Hollywood genre, with a generic character arc (Table 6 and Figure 3). The structure suggests effortless reading of narrative events attaching to the salient points of the generic structure. The arc, however, suggests conflicting construction of the protagonist, established through actions with Sam and Mike. The development in the narrative portrays the decline of the main character, driven by his ego, while at the same time he is reconciling with Sam, and making the play successful by following the advice of Mike. His acting performance becomes more minimalistic and realistic, which ends up with the use of a real gun. In terms of his fatherhood and success, Riggan has developed a change from the beginning, marking a successful application of the generic narrative form (Bordwell 2009: 118). The change in the story applies also to the side characters, who are in a better situation than in the beginning.

Table 5. Narrative structure and key events.

The key events	The plot point	Act
1. Birdman voice introduced and Riggan argues with Sam.	Beginning	1 Rising action
2. Lamp drops on the supporting actor's head.		
3. Mike is introduced to the play.		
4. The conflict of Riggan and Mike in the first preview and its success.	No turning back	
5. A difficult meeting with critic Tabitha Dickinson.		2 Conflict and high of action
6. Riggan argue with Sam, who dismisses him as a playwright.		
7. Laura turns away from Riggan to Leslie.		
8. The second preview is a success.	Middle point	
9. Mike impresses Sam.		
10. Riggan and Mike fight.		3 Action declines
10. Birdman slanders Riggan as a playwright.		
11. Riggan is publicly humiliated in Time Square but gains following in Twitter and respect of Sam.		
12. Critical acclaim denied by critic Tabitha Dickinson.		
13. Riggan passes out in the gutter.	Low point	
14. A fantasy scene with Birdman, a flight over Times Square.	Climax	4 Climax and closing of the story
15. Riggan shoots himself in the opening of the play.		
16. Riggan reconciles with his closest ones in the hospital. The play is a critical and financial success.	Epilogue	
17. Sam enters Riggan's empty hospital room and sees an open window and smiles.	Ending	

Key events in the character arc of Riggan Thompson

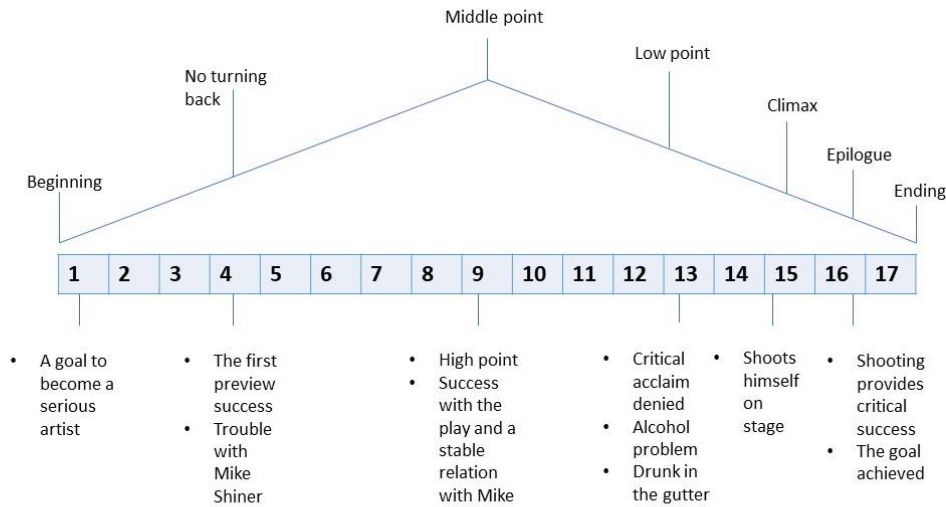


Figure 3. Representation of key events in the character arc of Riggan Thompson

The condition of the critic changes to positive. A paper brought by Jake to the hospital states that the play was a success, with a headline “The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance”, which is also the alternative title of the movie. The review by the previously negative critic states that the play has generated a new style of “super realism” with the bloodshed and created “a new form” of theatre. The notion creates an intertextual reference to Baudrillard (1983), who calls the postmodern reality *hyper real* whereas representation becomes the source of reality. The actual violence in the play has broken the realm of representation, transgressing the Broadway style. The alternative title of the film is connected to a realist reading of the film.

In terms of Riggan’s personal psychology, the situation is more complex because it is not disclosed whether he is hallucinating or not. The narrative development suggests parallel construction with a psychological theme connecting to the modernist narrative genre, and on the other hand, to the art genre with the open ending. The distress and mental image signify the traits of a modernist character (Monaco 2009:423-425). During the story, Riggan is suffering from vanity, drug and alcohol problems, anger management issues, and suicidal tendencies. The modernist narrative theme of a complex character attaches to a caricature of a troubled artist, who is trying to transgress the realism of Broadway and succeeds. The struggling resembles a prototypical modernist author, who is

producing the artistic vision through a shattered ego (Bloom 1975). However, the seriousness of the actions take place in the realm of the play, and the realm of the film has comical tones with the exaggerated characters, who fight in their underwear.

In terms of generic Hollywood movies, the narrative world inflicts an epistemic change in the character's trajectory, which results in self-discovery and a possible change (Bordwell 2009:118). In the case of Thompson, the change implies the becoming of a Birdman, who possibly flies away in the end. The open ending suggests that Riggan's change in the character results in transformation into a Birdman like figure or free from its destructive side by reconciling with his ego or its Birdman manifestation. But what is real is left unsubstantiated, which is in the essence of the postmodern thematic. The conflict of realism in the end of the narrative connects to the postmodern theme in the film, which could explain the final shot in the end. The classical tragic arc of Riggan Thompson is conflicted with the generic self-discovery commonly found in superhero films. From the postmodern point of view, the comedy in the narrative is targeted to the included tragic structure that appear to forfeit its original critical function, but the narrative events do not disclose the realm that confines the causal relations.

5.3.3 The narrative world

Knowledge of the narrative world adjusts the inference of the representation of the narrative by correspondence to a real-world experience (Bordwell 2009: 110-112). In other words, it is the context in which the story and the Thompson's superpowers take place that allows the spectator to make conclusions how the narrative should be inferred, including dialogue, action, and arrangement of the events. The meaning of the movie is constructed around the superhero realm of the protagonist, but it is difficult to allocate exclusively what the realm is. The narrative world questions the relation between fiction and the real-world, which is extended to other forms of representation as well, including the press and the social media in the film. The narrative questions the reality of Thompson, but it also questions other aspects of reality relating to representation, which is exemplified or cued by the construction of the narrative world. The film discusses fiction in fiction, and the aspect of metafiction refers to the decentralized postmodern narrative of Monaco (2009), altering the subject of the film. The layers of fiction can be discussed against the arrangement of the world and postmodern discursive practices.

As the trailer already represents, much of the dialogue revolves around discussion on realism and fiction, which partly affects the construction of the characters and the film's relation to the real-world. Mike Shiner appreciates theatre over movies, which he condemns as "unrealistic trash" (Act 2). Mike and Sam represent a thematic contrast in the narrative world in the spectrum of realism in the realm of representation. The stereotypical schemata of alienation and cynical identity drive both characters. Sam does not seem to take anything in the *real world* seriously, and Mike cannot adapt to the *real world* outside the stage. Sam considers social media as the contemporary reality, which she points out to his father in the office scene (Act 2). Their schemata direct the construction of the narrative cohesion around the goal orientation of the protagonist, but Mike and Sam are also motivated toward each other by their attitudes towards reality, which they discuss in act 3. Mike cannot perform sexually off stage, and that is finally fixed by Sam in the third act, causing the distress of Riggan, whose alienation from reality is expressed in more vocal terms that contribute to the Hollywood realm of the film. In terms of Kayhan (2014: 73), the character discourse represents the postmodern, since they have fragmented identities, and their happiness is achieved in simulations that represents alienation in a reality bound by visual culture.

On the other hand, the complex emotions of stage acting are contrasted to the spectacle of Hollywood film, while both realms borrow elements of each other in the play and in the movie. The parallel worlds represent similar causal narratives of desire by adding elements of fantasy in the rhetoric strategy, and the distorted realism of the filmic text is expressed through means of metafiction. The drama of the play takes place in the realm of Hollywood film, which is, according to Mike and the critic Tabitha Dickinson, less realistic than the realm of Broadway. However, the characters in the film seem to point out that any fiction is fiction, but what is considered stereotypically real can be fiction too. The characters are continually untruthful, which they use as a tool to gain popularity for the play and for themselves. Mike gives a fabricated interview by telling Riggan's experiences as his own and Jake tells lies about Martin Scorsese to Riggan for the play to remain in production. The real in the film's world is fiction too, which questions the realm of representation in total as suggested by Baudrillard (1983). The film world appears to suggest that anything represented should be considered with doubt.

With different types of narratives, Bordwell (2009: 131) talks about suppressive and self-conscious narratives. A suppressive narrative is elliptical, leaving much of the inferential assurance out of explanation as in generic Hollywood action films in which some instances can seem unrealistic by their causality, which is also the condition that Monaco (2009: 398) assigns to postmodern film spectacles. The self-conscious narrative, on the other hand, establishes the inference for the artifice

of the narrative norms by sorting out dimensions of the narrative world. In the case of *Birdman* (2014), there are cues which prompt the interpretation of Thompson's status as a supernatural being or at least provides a frame how modality in the film is constructed. In other words, modality is the realm of believability in the representation, which influences the interpretation of the meaning in the narrative (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 171; 264).

One of the self-conscious narrative cues relates to music in the film. The background music in the film applies improvised jazz drumming. However, the jazz drummer can be seen physically in the scenery, in the street scene in act two, during Riggan and Mike's walk to the bar, and before the climax shooting whereas the drummer plays in the theatre corridor. The music does not stop even though the characters distance themselves from the drummer, as if he would be in both worlds outside and inside the narrative world, suggesting a fabricated realm for the film, referring to the woman who shouts on the roof to Riggan (Act 4), "is this real or a film?". Similar distortions can be noted with the changing set, which does not follow spatial continuity in a realistic sense. In act two, Riggan enters the theatre from a side-door and meets Sam in the office, but when he exits the office, the stage of the theatre is now in place of the same side-door. The set of the film changes in a similar way to a staged play using props. The film continually distorts the boundaries of a staged play, Hollywood film, and realism. The postmodern discursive practices shape the interpretation of the narrative world (Table 6).

Table 6. Application of postmodern discursive practices to the narrative world.

Postmodern discursive practices	Application	Example
Magical realism	Combining realistic and fantastic genres	Psychological problems and visual spectacle
Metafiction	Film about film Self-reflexivity Parallelism	Discussion on cinema throughout the film and reference to a filmic realm in the roof scene. The short story, the play, and the film narrative are paralleled.
Impure cinema	Theatre aesthetics	Changing set of the film
Self-reflective	Informing fictiveness of the representation	The drummer is present in outdoor and indoor scenes, playing the background music

In addition to the transforming cinematic space, the stage of Thompson's play seems to change as well, underlining the affinity in the discursive application between the realms. In the third preview of the play, fantasy reindeers appear to be added to the scene after the initial commencing the production because Laura comments on them as if seen for the first time, "When I imagined myself in Broadway, I never saw a dancing reindeer. Nice touch" (Act 3). Riggan is implied to change the set of the play as it progresses between the previews.

The narrative world connects to the separate roles Thompson portrays, himself as Riggan, Birdman actor, Birdman, stage characters, and Michael Keaton. All the roles display different aspects of realism, directing the inference of the movie narrative. Riggan as himself represents the default realm in the film because the other characters are bound by the same causalities of that world. Others do not see or believe the Birdman character's existence, or at least it is not disclosed comprehensively. After Riggan has had the argument with Sam in the office, he picks a cigarette box and flips it with his mental power, suggesting realness of the superpowers, but when he smokes the joint, he also burns his fingers with it, implying that when he cools down, he loses either his superpower or he loses the mental disorder. The role of the character is affected by the changes in the environment, conflicting psychologically realistic and supernatural realms.

On the other hand, Riggan is having a troubled relationship with the Birdman persona, as well as with the acting role. In act three, he thrashes the dressing room along with the Birdman poster. The Birdman voice is slandering the play, and Riggan responds to the voice "this is just a mental formation", suggesting imaginary personality, but Birdman responds, "I'm you" and "we are brothers". The Birdman voice notes that they should go back the way it was in 1992, which is implied to be the year of the last Birdman movie. The same year is also the date of Michael Keaton's previous comic book film *Batman*. In my own observation, the comment evokes the realm in which Keaton's characters should stereotypically operate, and subsequently, to which direction the present *Birdman* (2014) film should ideally progress.

The distress of Riggan is then partly derived from adjusting his roles into the right realms of representation. In the end of act three, he exits the bar after getting slandered by the critic. On the way, he encounters a crazy looking person who is reciting *Macbeth's* (2006) famous soliloquy, "tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow", by William Shakespeare, and the crazy person addresses Thompson, "is that too much. I was trying to give a range", which are the exact words of the previously injured actor's line in the beginning, as if the crazy man on the street would be applying for the same job. The scene reflects Riggan's mental state of mixing realms of parallel events. and

intertextuality adds to the scene. Macbeth is a delirious stage character, who combats hallucinations, causing the fall from grace with a tragic ending.

Riggan himself represents the fallen archetype. In the morning, after meeting the crazy person, he plunges into the Birdman fantasy, during which Birdman invites Riggan by saying, “you were the original” as a superhero film star, such as Keaton was, and addressing Riggan as “Icarus”, who burned his wings and fell from the sky for his excessive ambitions. The Icarus theme recurs throughout the film, signifying the two contrasting realms of Hollywood spectacle and serious drama. The reporter asks Riggan in the first act’s dressing room scene, “you are washed up comic book star...why are you doing Carver?” and “as Barthes says, epic narratives are nowadays done by soap commercials”, referring to Ronald Barthes’ essay *Change the Object Itself - Mythology today* (1977: 165-169), which suggests that contemporary media has replaced in depth narratives by a system of references. In response, Thompson does not defend his position in the actual play but his character as a mythical figure by replying, “you see, Birdman is like Icarus”, suggesting collision with the two realms, which finally is imported to the play as well. The intertextuality imposes transformation of a classical tragedy that has a referential status as a partial postmodern discursive practice, shifting the frame, which is illustrated in table seven.

Table 7. Intertextual references to history of tragedy and myth.

Intertextual references in the narrative	Type	Presence in the film	Discursive application
Icarus (Ovidius 1935)	A tragic myth in ancient Greece.	Riggan and Birdman refer each other as Icarus.	The references are made to the history of tragedy in an ironical manner, signifying the change in the genre associated to the character arc in the film.
Macbeth (Shakespeare 2006)	A Jacobean tragic play.	A crazy man recites final soliloquy of Macbeth, a delusional tragic character who died in the end.	
What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love (Carver 2009)	A realistic short story, involving a tragedy.	Riggan’s play is constructed around a suicidal shooting incident from the short story.	
Change the Object Itself - Mythology of Today (Barthes 1977)	A philosophical essay on myth and storytelling in present culture.	The reporters refer to Barthes that tragedy has lost its original critical power.	

The progressive stage setting in the play is represented with the fantasy reindeers, which are far from the realism of the original Carver's story, and Riggan says to Jake that he is creating a dream sequence (Act 1). In a montage sequence after the climax shooting (Act 4), there are Spiderman and robots on the stage with heraldic drummers seen also in Time Square during Riggan's walk in the underwear (Act 3), supporting the transgressive attempt of the adaptation, but it is uncertain are these elements spinning in the self-inflicted protagonist head or a part of the play, because the montage sequence also contains of images of birds on a real beach with dead jellyfish, and a fireball traversing the sky, as an implied reference to the Icarus myth.

The dream sequences on the stage appear to intertwine with a dream sequence in the protagonist head in the film, connecting the two realms, combining modernist stage realism with postmodern fantasy of Hollywood, Riggan representing the fall of Birdman, who is after the Hollywood style, which finally, to my opinion, develops the character into actuality. The postmodern reading would suggest that Riggan has become a representation of his own vision of Icarus as Birdman. The vision of Birdman is present in the first image of the filmic text, and it can be connected to the last scene in which Riggan reconciles with the character, extending the realm into actuality if he jumped out of the window, though, the narrative world of representation is questionable by nature.

5.3.4 Style and representation

The thematic world of the movie extends to the arrangement of the editing in the film, which connects to the narrative representation. Most of the film is edited together with long takes without seemingly visible cutting points, but there are two intentionally clear cuts that can be assigned to the thematic construction of the film. The cuts appear in the beginning and in the end of the film. The first shot of the filmic text is a fire ball or a burning object traversing the sky, cutting to the image of Riggan in a lotus position in his dressing room. The next visible cut is seen in the transition to the epilogue as the montage sequence transfers the location of the film from the theatre setting to the hospital room. The images signify a transition in the setting of the film, but they also represent the Icarus theme from the tragic fall to the hospitalized stage of the character, which can be interpreted as a symbolic impact with the ground, the climax of the fall.

Similar conceptualization can be attached to single cuts of the images. The first cut of the film combines two different concepts and settings. The cut of the two parallel images is conceptually dialectic (Eisenstein 1977). The first image is violent by the burning and the second is contrasting by

tranquillity. The editing, however, does not reveal whether the cut is a mental projection of the protagonist or sequential events in the same realm of a superhero fantasy. However, both Eisenstein (1977) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that from two sequential images the first represents given and the second new, as in consequence of events. Symbolically, the image of the burning flight is transferred to a peaceful comic book hero in underwear, signifying a relation between past and present state of the protagonist, who is now in bohemian rags instead of Hollywood.

After Riggan's lotus meditation is disrupted, the realm of the film is in the realm of a play, as in realistic relation to a real-world experience and causality. The realm is indicated by the seemingly continuous long takes. The style of a single take illusion was introduced by Alfred Hitchcock in the film *Rope* (1948), which is also an adaptation of a play. The film follows a realistic portrayal of a staged play by using imitation of a theatrical arrangement in the montage with a closed set and a continuous take (Bordwell 2009: 41-42). Hitchcock's style was confined by the technology of the epoch, and the cuts were hidden in close-ups of actors' backs, enabling cutting without a visible mark, and the cuts were applied because the film reels were too short at the time, and thus, editing without cuts was impossible (Bordwell 2009). *Birdman* (2014) applies similar hidden cuts but makes a reference to the contemporary Hollywood style in the arrangement. Most cuts are invisible, but salient plot points are marked by the changing of the lighting from night into day in the middle of the film and in the start of the final act with application of special effects.

The camera of the contemporary film is not confined by the same restrictions as Hitchcock's, which affects the realm of the movie. Digital editing of the film enables impossible camera movements in connection to the transition points, which are exemplified by moving through objects when the camera enters the theatre building from outside, which takes place after the rooftop scene in the middle and after Riggan's flight scene before the climax of the film. Realistic continuity of the staged style is paralleled with omnipotence of CGI technology, which produces the cohesion.

When Riggan enters the interview in the first act, he throws a vase against a wall, and the close-up of the event transfers the image from the vase to the reporters, who appear in the same room, where they were not present a second earlier, when the action of the throw began. The reporters are absent in the reflection of Riggan's dressing room mirror, but the technology enables the action to appear continuous, distorting the time-space continuum. The imitation of staged props of a setting of a physical play are transformed by film technology, transferring the events to the realm of Hollywood movies. The events are conscious of the fictionality, but it is masked by the seemingly seamless continuity.

The dressing room scene begins with the Birdman voice slandering Riggan, which indicates a reaction for smashing the vase on the wall. The cut enables the action to seem continuous while the setting in the room changes along with the genre. However, the reporters start by asking questions about Riggan’s role as a playwright and a Birdman actor, producing a parodical framing of the scene. The editing combines magical with realistic and questions both forms by the representation with the ironical approach by the reporters as they question Riggan why Birdman actor is directing Carver who has lost its critical affect.

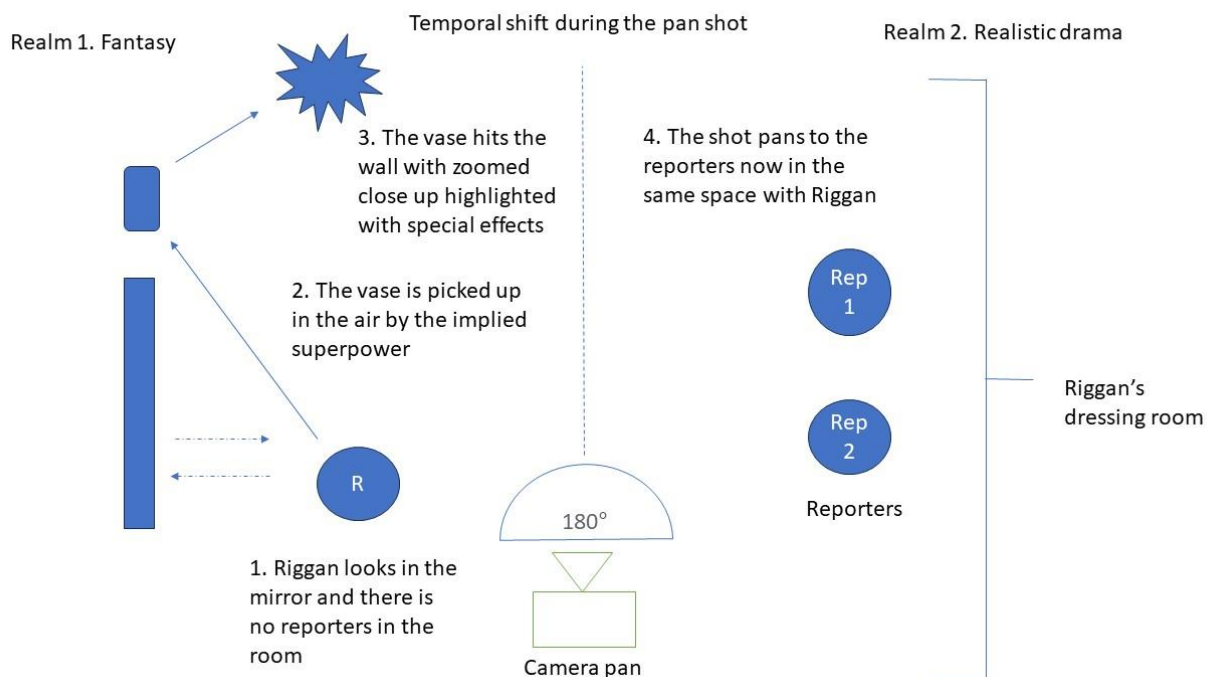


Figure 4. Editing scheme in shot progression at the Riggan’s dressing room scene.

Continuity in *Birdman* (2014) deviates from standard editing of space and time continuum in Hollywood films, because it does not apply cuts to construct the continuity. The schemata of Hollywood narratives apply shot-reverse editing to construct the time and space in a naturally seeming way (Bordwell 2009: 137). The schema of a staged play rejects the Hollywood standard for cinematic naturality and imports the film into the realm of a staged play in the continuum of realism, which is also regarded more valuable by the characters of Mike Shiner and the critic Tabitha Dickinson in the movie, making the film self-conscious of the rhetoric application. The absence of visible cuts creates a cohesive space-time continuum representing a single shot and omnipresent

observer, who is implied to be present in the action, which distorts the standard application of film realism, criticized by the characters. The style of the movie combines two competing realms of representation in terms of impure cinema, which to me turns the critique from the tragic desire towards critique of visual culture and representation.

The stylistic variation associates to intertextuality of the character representation. In the narrative, both Riggan and Mike are seen struggling in their underwear, which also makes a comical reference to their earlier superhero roles in *Batman* (1989; 1992) and *Hulk* (2008). The film also discusses many drama actors who turned into superhero acting, constructing the theme of star actor schema and credibility of Hollywood, including the movie in question. *Birdman* (2014) includes jokes that break the seriousness of the film such as Riggan's comical shrieking in a street, identifying himself as Birdman, a mighty superhero character (Act 4). At the same time, the film applies the style of realistic drama and heightened emotions by extreme close-ups, in addition to special effects, which are embedded in several dramatic sequences of the characters.

The dream montage in the end suggests that the play on the stage follows aesthetics of the film, and the two intertwine with the juxtaposed imagery of the burning object in the sky, and tranquillity of the birds on a beach with dead jellyfish, creating parallel symbolism with the first two shots of the filmic text. In the hospital, Riggan is physically resembling Birdman, the Icarus character. When Sam brings flowers to the hospital, Riggan cannot smell them, but moments after, when Riggan opens the window and watches the birds in the sky, he smells the fresh air as if the parameters of the realm have again shifted, changing Riggan's world into a cinematic realm. The first and the last shot of the movie suggests unity of the realm with the burning figure in the sky in the opening shot, and the movie ends with Sam watching the sky with a smile.

The last sequence in the hospital room suggests that the tragedy of Icarus is combined with a comical tone of a Hollywood fantasy, which extends to interpretation of the genre. The music in the last scene, when Riggan opens the window and looks the sky, turns on with a classical cinema theme that played during Riggan's flight scene over the rooftops, but when Sam enters the room, the music is superimposed with a jazz theme played throughout the movie. The sound combines two contrasting generic elements, which reflects the ambiguous ending of an art film. Bordwell (2009: 152) notes that art films are an antithesis for Hollywood films. *Birdman* (2014) incorporates contrasting narrative styles in the generic plot construction, providing a counterstatement for the prevailing critical atmosphere regarding decentralized narratives and representative media, which is discussed in the film's dialogue. The narrative conclusion evades codification of a singular objective genre formation, and the meta-discourse rejects strict realism of any representation. For me, the question is whether

the irony is observed, and how it configures genres, which are framed against the discursive practices applied by the spectator.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study analysed discursive practices and cohesive features in the filmic text *Birdman* (2014), the *Birdman* poster (2015), and the *Birdman* trailer (2014) based on the film. The multimodal discourse analysis targeted different dimensions of discourse, framing cohesive ties producing genres, which were reflected with the postmodern discourse. The goal of the study was to illustrate the relation between postmodern discourse and film genre by answering the following questions.

1. How do postmodern discursive practices in the texts shape interpretation of the film genre?
2. What is the relation between the generic form, performance, and audience regarding the movie *Birdman* (2014)?

The analysis was based on approach by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Kress (2010), regarding multimodal discourse analysis in a social semiotic theoretical framework that was adjusted to film genre analysis by Neale (2000; 2012) and Altman (2002), with cognitive inference of film narratives (Bordwell 2009) and generic devices in film trailers (Hoffman 2021), forming an observer based model for genre interpretation in the selected texts, supported by previous findings on film discourse, genres, and postmodern discourse. The analysis was sought to provide an analytical insight to postmodern style in cinema and discuss the relation between form and performance of genre on a general level. The analysis shows that the promotional material was semiotically structured around the filmic text, containing similar genre ontology by semiotic transformations within the postmodern style and ideology, performing similar generic functions.

6.1 Postmodern discourse in the analysed texts

Findings of the multimodal discourse analysis on the filmic text shows how the postmodern style configures the interpretation of the film genre, and how it is subsequently resemiotised across the marketing media. The analysis on the filmic text was constructed around representation of characters from their schematic points of view, attached to narrative events, forming cohesive ties, and analysis on the narrative world, which were considered to produce an interpretation of the genre. The study showed that the thematic scaffolding of the filmic text relied on generic ambiguity, which was present in the first images of the film and in the ending. The analysis on the narrative discourse indicated that the character development was also ambiguous, producing a character arc that was coded by terms of

tragic events by the protagonist, but also with achieved narrative goals, creating a contradiction in the genre formation. Analysis on the narrative world and style suggested an ironical approach to the genre of tragedy with an application of postmodern style.

Cohesive ties in the character motivation and causality of events indicated that the protagonist's character development was adjusted to physical, social, and psychological dimensions. The protagonist suffered physical injury in the tragic form, gained social rewards with the action, and the psychological dimension balanced with realism and fantasy without disclosing explicitly the realm of the protagonist's actions with an ambiguous ending. In accordance with Bordwell (2009), the ambiguous ending of an art film invited the spectator to consider the affordances, which I realized within the postmodern discursive practices (Table 8). Evaluating the narrative discourse against the postmodern discourses suggested that the realist reading of the filmic text was configured by the arrangement of the narrative world and framing of cohesive ties.

Table 8. Postmodern discursive practices in the filmic text.

Postmodern discursive practice	Realization
Art film and commercial narrative structure	Double coding in the narrative structure. Decentralized narrative. Ambiguity.
Metafiction	Self-conscious arrangement of the narrative world questioning realism of the representation.
Character discourse	Alienated characters by simulations.
Impure cinema	Application of theatrical style configuring realism in representation.
Intertextuality	Ironical approach to history of tragedy.
Parody	Self-referentiality to superhero genre.
Magical realism	Psychological concepts and special effects spectacle.

The arrangement of the narrative world applied configurations of self-conscious metafiction that illustrated unrealistic paradigms, asserting low modality to the representation. The representation and arrangement configured my own interpretation of the classical formation of Aristotelian tragedy within the commercial Hollywood frame, importing parodical approach that was realized by the semantic cues in the filmic text. The semantic cues and the syntagmatic structuring of the events comprised of ironical application to filmic representation that was made visible by the spectacle

created by the contemporary film technology, altering the psychological themes gradually constructed from the initial setting of the film. The findings support previous research by Kayhan (2014), and the filmic text could be labelled as a postmodern tragedy or tragicomedy, forming a genre hybrid within the contemporary values associated to genres. The tragedy was a part of the narrative structure, and the postmodern discursive application reduced its value as a contemporary form of serious drama. The text did not produce a clear genre but a dynamic genre model whereas the comedy modified the tragic drama, implicating an ironic approach to past genre forms.

In terms of postmodern values, my own interpretation suggests that the film would have a positive ending, cued by the editing and the sonar elements, which referred to a cinematic realm in the narrative world as opposed to realistic verisimilitude in the representation. The analysis showed ambiguity in the specific images and development to higher meaning construction, relating to postmodern ideology of representation. In my own view, the narrative pleasure was derived from ambiguity that was pointed out to be the central theme in the filmic text, dividing the genre.

The configuration of the narrative by the postmodern discourses, however, did not alter the subject of ego, but rather altered the spectator attitude towards the representation, which could be regarded to have a positive or negative resolution, depending on the viewer. In that sense, the analysis coincides with Krstić (2016) who argues that postmodern movies transform the critical stance to the representation by combining fantasy with realism, and Bignell (2020) who adds that intertextuality in the coding can divide audiences. The analysis suggests that postmodern values shape the attitude of the spectator, which affects the genre interpretation from tragedy to comedy.

A similar thematic construction was also transferred to the poster and the trailer, including thematic of irony and criticality towards visual culture and representation, connecting past with present. Altman (2002) and Kernan (2004) point out that contemporary movie marketing seeks to attract multiple audiences through genre representation, which could be detected in the hybrid form of the *Birdman* (2014) marketing material. However, the analysis showed that there were semantic cues stressing points in the representation, suggesting ironic and critical stance for the spectator. In my own view, the genres were embedded in the rhetoric structure by the postmodern discourses.

For example, the poster configured the salient genre of realistic drama by the style of representation, suggesting ironic narrative representation with references to pop-art and the past of visual culture, which could be associated to the past of the represented genre of superhero spectacle, creating a critical stance for the spectator with the framing. The multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) illustrated similar conceptual structures in the poster that were found in the filmic

text, attaching realistic drama to special effects spectacle by implementing modern ideology as a partial rhetoric device in the narrative representation with an ironic attitude. The representation of the main characters was culturally conditioned to produce a genre paradigm for both marketing products that became knowledgeable by the postmodern discourses.

In the trailer, the multimodal framing produced similar cohesive ties suggesting an ironic approach to the representation of the narrative world producing similarly ambiguous genre formation that could be paralleled to the filmic text and the poster. Disruption of the narrative world emphasized development that showed the protagonist in an ironical relation to superhero genre, shown in the visual mode by the parodical representation of lead characters, which was further substantiated by semantic cues in the dialogue, sound, and special effects. The parodical representation of a movie actor with superhero abilities in a Broadway setting produced a critical point of view to the ambiguous film genre. The framing of the sonar elements by voice overs, sound effects, and musical choices framed the genres, and similar application could be detected in the filmic text in the final scene that superimposed musical tracks, combining two musical themes with the ambiguous ending of the film.

In my interpretation based on the analysis, the ideology that pervades all the selected texts is centred on nostalgia for the real. The coding of the comic elements targets the generic elements of superhero action films and realistic drama that have reduced critical value in the contemporary visual culture. However, the style is a combination of contrasting nuances, which may exclude spectators that interpret films from different socio-cultural traditions and prime different semantic cues in the cognitive processes. According to social semiotics, genre is essentially derived from the discursive practices that may not be similarly perceived by all the spectators, who are historical entities in their own interpretative traditions, which classify genres (Kress 2010: 173).

6.2 Contrasting findings

The poster and the trailer were analysed from the marketing perspective as they would be ideally encountered without seeing the film first, but they were also considered as artistic products as noted by Hoffmann (2020) and the trailer designer Woollen (Kachka 2014). According to Oja (2019) the marketing and aesthetic functions were in contradictory relation in the trailer, presenting deceptive dominant genre formation by mixing a superhero action movie to a satirical drama considered as the dominant genre form for the film, which derived from priming of visual cues.

My own analysis on the film suggested that the cohesion of the trailer was in correlation, transforming the semiotic ontology of the film to the marketing material, resemiotising the hybrid genre ontology with postmodern values. However, the correlation was not in the narrative structure, but in presentation of the narrative world. The present findings suggest that the dramatic dialogue relied on comical features in the representation of the narrative world, which is in correlation with the designer's motivation, stressing irony (Kachka 2014). In the trailer, the visual cues appeared only as a partial device that were configured by other semiotic affordances such as dialogue and sound that made the irony recognizable. However, the ironic organization appeared to be self-conscious about alternative interpretations, coinciding with ambiguity of the filmic text that was intended as a comedy by the production crew in the DVD documentary (Searchlight Pictures 2014). To my opinion, the priming of visual cues in the multimodal cohesion did not conform a stereotypical action film, but as noted, socio-cultural norms can vary, which may cause dissonance in a viewer whose knowledge stresses various aspects in the interpretation.

The ironic approach of the trailer with shared semiotic and genre ontology within the texts supports the present results. Based on the semiotic transformations between the media, for me, it seems that alleging the representation deceptive may be true on a subjective level, but it could be the theme of the trailer text as well. The genre of the film is not explicit either, which appeared to be a central rhetoric device in the filmic text, combining the fantastic and realistic elements as composite functions in the meaning production in the narrative discourse. While the contradicting interpretation is possible, it may not be the only one, or the ideal from the producer's point of view. The poster shared similar rhetoric strategy, but the analysis also implied that there can be multiple interpretations depending on the external viewer. The analysis on the composite texts implies that the genre, especially from the point of view of dominant genre argument, can be problematic as the discussion shows, which relates to functionality of genres and the postmodern discourse.

6.3 Genre performance in *Birdman*

The study suggests that the form of the text may perform different functions, depending on the knowledge of the audience and the cognitive processes framing the interpretation. The trailer and the film are motivated with comedy attributes from the production point of view, but as Oja (2019) points out, it may not be the interpretation for all the spectators. Therefore, the text may not be perceived as ideally intended. However, in the case of *Birdman* (2014), it seems that the ideology of the filmic text

considers the possibility of disconnectedness that also expresses the contemporary cultural values of dispersed meanings, especially associated to postmodernism, which produces multiple audiences that infer the meaning by their own preferences, leaving the text open for possible interpretations without totality of meaning.

The postmodern style in the narrative structure combines the commercial and art functions, which may further appeal two different types of audiences, which is indicated by the commercial and critical success of the film, latter included in the poster as well as a salient marketing strategy. To me, it seems that the complex form of the poster, which extends to represented genres, is configured by the added signs of critical acclaim that communicate for commercial audiences that the film requires concentration in the interpretation. The original poster text is recontextualised by the added signs, shaping the audience in the rhetoric process.

Similar conclusion can be derived from the streaming services that have allocated the film to different category than the *Birdman* DVD (2015). Disney streaming service (Disney 2023) labels *Birdman* (2014) as a drama rather than a comedy. Disney corporation also owns Searchlight Pictures, who produced the film, which indicates that there may be differences even in the production how the genre is perceived. For a general audience of the streaming platform, drama genre may be more appealing way to direct the expectations of the film. To me, Disney's application seems practical since the comedy in the film is partly derived from complex concepts of intertextuality and postmodern ideology. The genre function would therefore be contextual rather than strictly ontological and cyclical product.

While the genre function may be perceived as a social product, the analysis also points out to historical construction combining different views on genre by Altman (2002) and Neale (2000). The intertextual references in the filmic text derive from history of tragedy, and the evolution of the form, which *Birdman* (2014) also transforms in the postmodern context. The process influences the genre interpretation with the ironical approach to genre of tragedy, partly playing with generic elements of superhero genre with the ambiguous ending of an art film. At the same time, it produces a genre community in a sense of the ontological point view (Altman 2000: 192). However, the critical community is not necessarily the only group of appeal. The style of a filmic spectacle can also impress commercial audiences, which the film's popularity indicates. The postmodern style can enfold different discourse communities within the same ideology but dispersing the genre in the process. Depending on the spectator, the form activates different systems of knowledge, but the ideology pervades the textual system as a completed and dynamic composition.

6.4 Implications

The result of the study suggests that genre may have different purposes depending on the representative context and the audience. Analysis on *Birdman* (2014) illustrates that genre can be a rhetorical tool for directing narrative expectations on a textual discursive level, which in the filmic text was shown in generic variation. Genre can also communicate the expectations of interpretation of a filmic text as a completed composition, which the cover and the external content in the *Birdman* DVD (2015) describes as comedy, coinciding with the results of the analysis on the trailer as well. When the finished product is recontextualized, for example, by the streaming services who target audiences by their own viewer preferences, the genre may be defined from a new practical point of view, as in the present case, comedy was recontextualized as drama.

The results illustrate practical applications in different contexts with the dynamic model, which shows the cognitive processes in operation that allows the definition. Nonetheless, regardless of the context, genre is a communicative tool that produces knowledge of the textual product and performs a purpose. For film makers, the application is aesthetic, and for streaming services the application is practical, which suggest that contextuality should be considered in genre analysis.

The communicative function can be derived from cohesive ties framing the texts and discourses. The purpose of the study was to illustrate the cohesive mechanisms, which can benefit various user groups. At same time the study illustrates the genre performance in communication when textual products are resemiotised and recontextualized in different media. The discourses in the texts shaped the interpretation of the genre within the style in the arrangement of the composition. The analysis illustrates how style may serve as a prominent rhetorical tool in promotion of films that seek to appeal multiple audiences within the prevalent postmodern paradigm. The analysis on the cohesive ties also adds a discourse analytic point of view to the discussion on postmodern cinema.

6.5 Acknowledgements

The study applied a social semiotic multimodal theory in the genre definition since I considered it as the most convenient way to illustrate the postmodern style in cinema and to respond to the practical problem related to genres asserted in the previous research (Oja 2019). I also considered alternative methods in the analysis. A method based on prototype genre theory (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993) could have illustrated genre functionality in the textual products, and to my mind with interesting results.

However, to my opinion, it would have had to be based on corpuses on each text type or other comparative means. With film genres Neale (2000) provides data for major genres and Hoffmann (2021) for film trailers, but I found the method difficult to adjust to the style analysis, and I consider reproduction of the study with different data more appropriate with the present method because I would not want it to be limited to major genres. In addition, the present method enabled inclusion of the poster, which do not have an established genre corpus to my knowledge.

There were also limitations with the present dynamic analysis model with multimodal discourse analysis. The trailer and the film could have produced more accuracy with images. For example, I did not analyse camera angles in detail and other image related semiotic information that could have enhanced the results, but such data could provide an insight in the further studies. For example, the present analysis excluded the opening images of the movie, which include a quotation by Raymond Carver and a hidden frame between the opening credits. With knowledge of Carver's biography, the quotation could be interpreted in a different context, which relates to representation of the author in the filmic text. Similarly, the hidden frame is meaningful in the context of the narrative, but the context appears incomprehensible without seeing the film first. The thematic cohesion falls outside Bordwell's (2009) cognitive approach, which concentrates on characters, but it could be subjected to further modelling of the method. As noted in the data and methodology section of the study, there is a growing body of work on multimodal methods for film analysis that could be associated to longer narratives and film genres. Based on the present study, style could also provide a complementing field of study for both concepts.

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