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SEMIOTICS OF MAGIC REALISM IN FILM

MAĢISKĀ REĀLISMA SEMIOTIKA FILMĀS

MASTER THESIS

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ANOTĀCIJA

Maģiskais reālisms ir grūti definējams termins, bet viena no tā galvenajām iezīmēm ir dažādu sociālu un psiholoģisku aspektu izpausme. Šī maģistra darba mērķis ir filmu ‘Pusnakts Parīzē’, ‘Pī dzīve’ un ‘Putncilvēks’ semiotiska analīze, balstoties uz Kristiana Meza filmu semiotikas teorijām, tai pašā laikā analizējot arī maģiskā reālisma elementu pielietojumu šajās filmās. Analīze parāda, ka maģiskais reālisms tiek izmantots, lai runātu par tādiem aspektiem, kas maģisko reālismu cieši sasaista ar traumas diskursu. Tomēr nav novērojams, ka režisori izmantotu konkrētu sintagmātiskos tipus, lai uzsvērtu maģiskā reālisma idejas, lai gan redzams, ka ar dažu tipu palīdzību ir iespējams gan salīdzināt, gan satuvināt reālo un nereālo pasauli maģiskā reālisma darbos.

Atslēgvārdi: maģiskais reālisms, filmu semiotika, sintagmātiskā analīze, trauma, sintagmātiskie tipi

ABSTRACT

It is difficult to define the ever-popular concept of magic realism, but it is clear that the mode is used in art to express various issues. The present thesis aims to do a semiotic analysis of ‘Midnight in Paris’, ‘Life of Pi’ and ‘Birdman’, using Christian Metz’s Grand Syntagmatique, exploring the elements of magic realism. The analysis shows that elements of magic realism are used to express social and psychological issues that connect magic realism with the discourse of trauma. However, there is not a unifying pattern of syntagmatique types in films that convey ideas of magic realism. Nevertheless, certain syntagmatic types can help both contrast and bring together the real and the unreal in magic realist works if it is necessary for the benefit of the characters or the audience.

Key words: magic realism, film semiotics, Grand Syntagmatique, trauma, syntagmatique types

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INTRODUCTION

T.S. Eliot once wrote that ‘human kind cannot bear very much reality’. It is such a simple sentence, but manages to convey the incapability that the humankind sometimes exhibits when trying to deal with the crude reality of the everyday world and the many problems that come with it. The statement, therefore, incorporates in itself the necessity for magic realism, seeing it as an escape from reality and a possibility to cope with the trauma of reality.

Even though ‘magic realism’ is most often talked of in the context of Latin-American literature, like so many terms and concepts it has become much wider and spread to other media as well, film being one of such media. It was Fredric Jameson (1986) who wrote that the term ‘magic realism’ and the concept itself ‘retains a strange seductiveness’ (Jameson, 1986: 302), meaning that it has something that cannot be fully explained, but still attracts a lot of attention and thought that has transferred from literature to film. Anne Hegerfeldt corroborates this by writing that ‘magic realism has been an amazingly steadfast both with critics and publishers’ (Hegerfeldt, 2005: 1). Foster adds that magic realism is ‘an international cultural tendency’ (Foster, 2005:267). Therefore, despite the terminological difficulties posed by the wide and often incorrect use of the term that is also discussed in this paper, magic realism is undeniably a part of our modern world.

Moreover, it has spread from literature to other forms of art, such a visual arts, television and cinema. The reasons for its appearance in the cinema are quite simple – cinema has always been appealing to people and it has the capacity to reach a lot of people; therefore, it only makes sense that magic realism found its way into the world of cinema. Besides, when it comes to film, it is often said that films can be considered as temporary escape from the modern world with all its problems, and the characters of magic realist works often try to do something similar, dealing with trauma and the problems that come when dealing with it.

In order to properly explore magic realism in film three modern films have been randomly chosen – ‘Midnight in Paris’ (2011, directed by Woody Allen), ‘Life of Pi’ (2012, directed by Ang Lee), and ‘Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)’ (2014, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu). They all belong to the mode of magic realism; therefore, it can be reasonably expected to find some similarities among the films. Since film semiotics is widely considered to be the language of the film, this is the aspect that has been chosen to be explored in the aforementioned films, focusing specifically on the structuralist approach of film semiotics with montage at its helm.

Therefore, the **goal** of this research paper is to determine the semiotic elements used in the three films that have used the mode of magic realism and determine what is the significance of each element in the context of the film, also turning attention to the elements of magic realism in each film.

The research questions proposed are as follows:

1. What semiotic elements of film are used in the films 'Midnight in Paris', 'Life of Pi' and 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)'?
2. What elements of magic realism appear in the three films and why are they used?
3. Are the ideas of magic realism expressed in the three films with the help of the semiotic elements?

In order to achieve the goal of this paper and answer the research questions, the following **enabling objectives** have been put forward:

1. To explore the history of magic realism, paying attention to its main ideas and concepts throughout its development, including current research on magic realism in film;
2. To investigate the study of film semiotics and determine the main semiotic elements used in films, as well as the reasons for choosing specific elements (ergo, the effect these elements typically have on the viewers);
3. To determine the semiotic elements used in 'Midnight in Paris', 'Life of Pi' and 'Birdman' and their relation to the ideas of magic realism (if any).

The **research methods** are a juxtaposition and analysis of the materials on magic realism and film semiotics that provide the theoretical framework necessary for the qualitative analysis of three films that belong to magic realism. Since the theoretical basis of the paper is rooted in the works of Christian Metz, it is a structural analysis of the films.

The present Thesis is divided into three parts: **Chapter 1** deals with magic realism, briefly describing its development, main ideas and concepts, and its connection with the world of the cinema. **Chapter 2** deals with defining the various semiotic elements in film, and their meaning in the context of films, specifically focusing on Christian Metz's grand syntagmatique and the role of montage. **Chapter 3** deals with the qualitative analysis of the semiotic elements found in the films 'Midnight in Paris', 'Life of Pi' and 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)' and the elements of magic realism in these films.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF MAGIC REALISM

English and Comparative Literature professor Wendy B. Faris (2004:1) once wrote that 'magical realism has become so important as a mode of expression worldwide [..] because it has provided the literary ground for significant cultural work, within its texts, marginal voices, submerged traditions, and emergent literatures have developed and created masterpieces'. This quote reveals the cultural significance of magic realism and the substantial role it plays not only in literature, but also in other spheres of life and art. Therefore, the main aim of this chapter is to analyse the development of magic realism, paying special attention to the concepts and ideas each new advance brought to magic realism by following its historic continuation. The exploration of the term includes discussion of the various definitions of the term that have arisen from the different translations of the term, problems the variation of these definitions pose and the definition used in this work.

It has to be understood that even nowadays the term 'magic realism' is not used unambiguously, and some literary critics and authors, therefore, have decided to distinguish between different variations of the term. Hegerfeldt writes that 'instead of growing more rigorously defined and restricted in application, the term has evaded critical demarcation and today enjoys a usage more diverse than ever' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:12). Jameson even suggests that the terminological difficulties 'might be grounds for abandoning the concept altogether' (Jameson, 1986:302), but as it can be seen, this has not happened. Instead, the term has grown to be used even more wildly.

Thus, one of the aims of this chapter is to establish a working definition for the term, separating it from other possible interpretations and translations. For example, Maggie Ann Bowers in her work 'Magic(al) Realism' clearly distinguishes between 'magic realism', 'magical realism' and 'marvellous realism' as terms that are 'used specifically to discuss their separate critical histories' (Bowers, 2005:3). That is, their meaning is based in the historical background that augmented the appearance of each term. Bowers also notes that the terms 'have become mistakenly interchangeable in critical usage' (ibid.), and this is something that should be avoided at all costs.

Some authors agree to the statement made by Anne Hegerfeldt that 'the historical approach does more to confuse than to illuminate the issue' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:12). However, the constant use of this approach in literary criticism (Bowers, Echevarria, even to some extent Hegerfeldt herself uses it) proves that it is the most plausible approach that allows to develop a comprehensive view of the term and its main ideas and that the chronological issues at least have to be addressed in order to avoid confusion between the different variations of

the term mentioned above. Therefore, to avoid the mistake of mixing up the different 'critical histories' and to establish the definition of the term 'magic realism' that would suit the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to follow the development of the term from its emergence in the 1920s till nowadays when it is applied to many different spheres of life.

Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria, who has extensively researched the Latin American author Alejo Carpentier, one of the representatives of magic realism, mentions three separate emergences of the term 'magic realism' – first in Europe and afterwards two relatively separate occasions in Latin America (Echevarria, 1990). Thus, in this chapter, Echevarria's chronological distinctions are going to be used, though both appearances in Latin America are combined, since they seem to stem from a common foundation. Of course, to these three appearances which Echevarria extensively described in 1990, a more contemporary look at modern magic realism has to be added, especially in the context of Western literature and other media, apart from art and literature that have been the main points of discussion in Echevarria's work.

Echevarria has stated that 'the relationship between the three moments when magical realism appears is not continuous enough for it to be considered a literary or even a critical concept with historical validity' and that it is a rather 'simplified' look at the history of magic realism (Echevarria, 1990:2), and, as it was mentioned before, Hegerfeldt agrees to these statements by claiming that 'critics too often try to construct a continuity between the term's different meanings' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:12). At the same time Echevarria also notes that 'if historical continuity if lacking in the manifestations of magic realism, there is an underlying foundation which can at least account for its sporadic appearance' (Echevarria, 1990:2).

Therefore, the historic discussion of the development of magic realism as we understand it today, in this paper will be augmented by discussing the differences between 'magic realism', 'magical realism' and 'marvellous realism' mentioned in Maggie Ann Bowers' 'Magic(al) Realism' and determining Echavarria's 'underlying foundation' that permeates all appearances of the term, thus creating not only a historic, but an overall comprehensive view of magic realism.

1.1.Origins of Magic Realism

Although the term 'magic realism' is most often related to Latin American literature, which is going to be discussed later in this chapter, it made its first appearance during the avant-garde period in Europe (Echevarria, 1990). More precisely, for the first time the term 'magic realism' appears in the work 'Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme der

neuesten europäischen Malerei' ('After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting'), written by German historian and art critic Franz Roh in 1925 (Bowers, 2005:8). In later translations that circulated throughout Europe the German term 'magischer realismus' was translated to English as 'magical realism' or, sometimes, 'magic realism', so some of the authors who have discussed Roh's work use both terms interchangeably and does not reference the difference in any way (Echevarria, 1990). The work was also translated to Spanish and published in Latin America in 'Revista de Occidente' two years after its appearance in Germany (Simpkins, 1988:141). Bowers, however, suggests that 'magic realism' is a term that is very specific to Roh's ideas, thus it should only be used to relate to 'art forms reaching for a new clarity of reality' as Roh intended it to be used (Bowers, 2005:14).

In contrast to the general ideas of magic realism that prevail nowadays and are constantly in use by publishers, authors and readers alike, Franz Roh uses this term to describe something entirely different – the German art of the Weimar Republic at a specific period of time (Roh, 2005). This means that in its original conception the term had no connection to literature and literary criticism for what it is best known nowadays.

Indeed, in Roh's work, magic realism serves as a term for the reaction of German artists to the prevailing type of painting which at that point of time was expressionism (Simpkins, 1988:141). Some of the painters that are part of this movement are Otto Dix, Georg Schrimpf, and Alexander Kanoldt among others (Hegerfeldt, 2005:13).

Roh's aim with introducing the world with the term 'magic realism' was to describe 'the mystery of life behind the surface of reality' in terms of art (Bowers, 2005:2). This means that Roh's idea was to characterise this new style of painting as a style that, first of all, turns away from the previously prevalent expressionism's abstractions, and, second of all, returns back to a type of realism which at the same time reveals the mystery behind each 'real' everyday object (Roh, 2005:15). Roh writes that 'with the word "magic", as opposed to "mystic", I wish to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpates behind it' (Roh, 2005:16). However, Roh never clearly defines magic realism, and the term remains ambivalent at best. Nevertheless, the main focus of Roh's magic realism was put on real life objects, and any type of abstraction was strongly discouraged.

What Roh means here is that German artists of the Weimar period used familiar everyday objects that were painted in a real manner of depiction, but at the same time tried to 'undermine the familiarity of habitual perception' (Echevarria, 1990:2). Hegerfeldt writes that the main difference between magic realism as seen by Roh and magic realism as seen nowadays lies in the meaning of the word 'magic' because Roh used it to emphasize and draw his readers' attention to 'the sense of newness with which quotidian reality is endowed through painterly emphasis on clarity and clinical

detail' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:13), while modern magic realism tends to focus on the unreal. Therefore, as Echevarria puts it, in the works of German artists of the Weimar period 'reality remains unaltered' (Echevarria, 1990:2). If we take into account T.S.Eliot's quote that 'human kind cannot bear very much reality', then Franz Roh's idea seems to represent exactly the opposite – he thought that with infusing art with too much reality, it becomes something more than just reality.

It might seem difficult or, to be more precise, simply unnecessary to use a term, created to be part of the discourse of art criticism, to describe anything related to literature and literary criticism, but as it has been mentioned before, historical continuity is not a characteristic of the development of magic realism. Besides, Zamora writes that 'Roh's conception of magical realism was intrinsically interartistic' (Zamora, n.d.:23).

According to Simpkins, however, it cannot be a complete coincidence that Latin American authors used the term, since they were most likely familiar with Roh's text that it was disseminated throughout Latin America and some of the magic realist authors might have picked up on it (Simpkins, 1988:141). Nevertheless, Simpkins' ideas in this matter do not seem more than just a simple conjecture without any definite proof. Most critics agree that the use of the term seems to be rather coincidental.

Hegerfeldt writes in relation to Roh's use of the term magic realism that 'one could say that the overlap with today's literary concept is marginal to non-existant' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:13), while Irene Guenther calls the connection 'debatable' (Guenther, 2005:61), leaving room for some discussion on the matter. The marginality and the foundation for the debate most likely lie in the co-existence of the quotidian and the extraordinary which the terms share, but, as it was mentioned before, in Roh's application of the term, the reality does not change and is not altered in any obvious or supernatural manner. Besides, the focus of the magic realist painting is put on the object itself, whose everyday characteristics are purposefully emphasized in a manner that deconstructs the object itself and, to some extent, reality itself. Hegerfeldt even draws attention to the fact that the meaning of Roh's use of the term is very similar to the concept of defamiliarisation, but definitely not to the magic realism we are familiar with today (Hegerfeldt, 2005:13).

One of the critics who turned their attention to the historical context and its implications in the appearance of magic realism that brought around the need for the new turn in painting, is Maggie Ann Bowers. She writes that Roh wrote about German art which was created during 'an era of political violence [..] and extreme economic difficulty due to the destruction of the economy of Germany by the war and the demands for reparation by their victors' (Bowers, 2005:10). Thus, according to Bowers, Roh's magic realism appeared in Germany as a need for mater-of-factness infused with what was left over from the previously dominant

style of Expressionism (Bowers, 2005). All in all, this manner of painting appeared as an outlet for the situation in Germany that helped to cope with the difficult reality.

Of course, the term 'magic realism' nowadays is used in a different sense, and Zamora points out that literary critics 'have largely preferred to ignore the origins of magical realism in the visual arts' (Zamora, n.d.:22). Moreover, Hegerfeldt adds that it is not necessary to try to find any common ground between magic realism in painting and magic realism in writing (Hegerfeldt, 2005:15), since it does not add anything to the discussion of magic realism in literary criticism or, consequently, magic realism of film which in this instance is more closely connected with literary criticism than with painting.

In this sense Dr. Irene Guenther is more categorical and implies that Roh's works have a much stronger influence on the Latin American authors than such critics as Bowers, Hegerfeldt or Echevarria suggest. Guenther draws attention to the fact that in 1927 Roh's works were distributed in Latin America and 'within a year, Magic Realism was being applied to the prose of European authors in the literary circles of Buenos Aires' (Guenther, 2005:61). However, she does not mention any concrete examples, but instead suggests that the large numbers of people who fled The Third Reich and settled in Central or South America might have ameliorated the dissemination of the term in Latin America (Guenther, 2005:61).

Therefore, the historical connection between the first appearance of the term in Europe and its first appearance in Latin America cannot be outright denied, despite the fact that most authors dismiss it without a further thought. Whatever the true role of Roh's magic realism in the appearance of magic realism in Latin America the concept was, of course, appropriated by literary critics and, as Guenther puts it, 'through translation and literary appropriation, transformed' (Guenther, 2005:61). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, Roh's ideas of magic realism are not very relevant and as such cannot contribute to the analysis of magic realism in film, despite the fact that film is a multimedia art with emphasis on the visual.

1.2.Appearance in Latin America

As it has been mentioned before, after Roh created the term in 1925, the concept of magic realism next made its re-appearance in Latina America in the forties in an entirely different context (Echevarria, 1990:2). Some authors also indicated that there were brief appearances of the term in Italy, North America and other territories, but their appearance was so sporadic and, all in all, meaningless that its discussion would be of no relevance to the present paper (Bowers, 2005; Hegerfeldt, 2005), while most critics completely ignore other mentions of the term.

Echevarria claims that Arturo Uslar Pietri and Alejo Carpentier where the two writers who rediscovered the term almost at the same time (Echevarria, 1990:2). As it was mentioned before, the historical continuity of the term 'magic realism' is not unambiguous and can be called circumstantial at best, but Echevarria suggests that Carpentier at least 'remembered Roh's book in creating the oxymoron "marvellous reality" and in some marginal details' (ibid.:2). Besides, Bowers suggests that both Uslar Pietri's and Carpentier's experiences in Paris, where Roh's concepts also circulated, might have had an effect on both writers (Bowers, 2005:13).

Echevarria writes that it was the works of Arturo Uslar Pietri and Alejo Carpentier where for the first time not only the term of magic realism appears (Echevarria, 1990). Moreover, at the time attempts were made to define the term more clearly – a venture that was for the most part ignored in the works of Franz Roh who left it generally unexplained. However, it cannot be said that Uslar Pietri or Carpentier particularly succeeded in defining the term.

First of all, Venezuelan writer and intellectual Uslar Pietri called magic realism 'a poetical divination or a poetical negation of reality' (Uslar Pietri, as cited in Guenther, 2005:61), a phrase that confuses more than explains. Echevarria dismisses Uslar Pietri's contribution to the development of magic realism by claiming that he writes about it 'in an essay that could only be of interest today to scholars concerned with the history of the Venezuelan short story' (Echevarria, 1990:2)., thus indicating that Uslar Pietri has no real contribution to the modern concept of magic realism, especially considering that Uslar Pietri really did not manage to explain the term. Hegerfeldt confirms this by writing that 'Uslar Pietri's "definition" is of as little help as Roh's in defining today's literary concept' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:16). At the very least, it is acknowledged that Uslar Pietri developed a different type of magic realism than Carpentier – one that was closer to Roh and 'emphasized the mystery of human living amongst the reality of life' (Bowers, 2005:14).

Second of all, Alejo Carpentier's works, however, are instrumental to the emergence of the term and its definition as we know it nowadays, even though Carpentier did not define it as such. Both Bowers and Echevarria refer to Carpentier as to the writer who created the term 'lo realismo maravilloso' ('marvellous realism') (Echevarria, 1990; Bowers, 2005). Hegerfeldt summarises Carpentier's ideas by stating that in his view, European authors used the marvellous as a cliché or simply 'a juxtaposition of unlikely objects' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:16), so Carpentier essentially divides 'the European and the Latin American marvellous into fake versus authentic' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:17). The main idea behind this division is that the European artists, whether they be painters or writers, try to conjure magic artificially and,

thus, fail to evoke the marvellous reality (Echevarria, 1990; Hegerfeldt, 2005; Bowers:2005), while for Latin American artists 'reality itself is marvellous, they need only reveal or amplify it' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:17). For Carpentier, the marvellous in 'marvellous reality' is something uniquely Latin American that cannot be reproduced anywhere else (Carpentier, 1990; Simpkins, 1988). Thus he pronounces magic realism to be an entirely Latin American phenomenon that does not reach outside this territory.

According to Bowers, 'marvellous realism refers to a concept representing the mixture of differing world views and approaches to what constitutes reality' (Bowers, 2005:14-15). More importantly, Carpentier's contribution to magic realism was crucial not only to magic realism itself, but to the whole development of Latin American literature, since Alejo Carpentier strongly encouraged writers not to imitate European writers (also the ones who had previously migrated from Europe to Latin America to run from the War). As Hegerfeldt puts it, 'Carpentier became something of a father figure for younger Latin American writers, encouraging them to look to their own continent for inspiration and identity rather than emulating European traditions' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:19).

As it has been discussed previously, Franz Roh's contribution to literary magic realism for the most part has been dismissed by critics, but it has to be mentioned that Hart draws certain parallels between Roh's ideas and Carpentier's views (Hart, 2005). Hart writes that 'some of the tension between surface and innerness [..] finds its way into the prologue Alejo Carpentier wrote for his novel [..] in which he described his experience of the marvellous real in Haiti' (Hart, 2005:1-2). At the same time Hegerfeldt cautions that the term is still more like 'recycling of an eye-catching label' than a legitimate influence from what Roh discussed when he talked about magischer realismus' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:16).

As it can be seen both Uslar Pietri and Carpentier re-discovered the term 'magic realism' at more or less the same time; therefore, in theory, both authors could be considered as relatively distant forefathers of magic realism in Latin America. However, as practice shows, Uslar Pietri's ideas, while they could easily be linked with Roh's in Germany, gave way to Carpentier's concept of magic realism and are, therefore, for the most part forgotten. Carpentier's ideas, thus, is the basis upon which magic realism begun its development in Latin America.

Echevarria claims that the third of appearance of magic realism (the second in Latin America) was more 'academically inspired', as the term appeared in Angel Flores's work 'Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction' (Echevarria, 1990:2). At the same time, though, he writes that 'as a critical concept, the magic realism outlined by Flores has neither the specificity nor the theoretical foundation needed to be convincing or useful' (Echevarria,

1992:2), thus showing that even academic discussion of magic realism still failed to define the term properly. While Hegerfeldt agrees to this statement, she very purposefully adds that 'this paper has acquired a status of seminal importance and is a bibliographical must for every study of magic realism' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:24). Whatever the critics' doubts about Flores' work are, it is clear that he contributed greatly to the development of magic realism, and was the first to name Jorge Luis Borges as a representative of magic realist writing (though Hegerfeldt only calls Borges only a precursor of magic realist writing [Hegerfeldt, 2005:27]). Zamora actually considers that 'Even if Borges did not read Roh, he certainly speculated about the same issues: the counterrealistic potential of the realistic representation' (Zamora, n.d.:27).

Bowers even suggests that it was Flores' essay which brought around the term 'magical realism', though other authors (Hegerfeldt, Faris etc.) does not make such a noteworthy distinction (Bowers, 2005:14). For example, Echevarria does not even address any terminological differences in Flores' work in comparison with Carpentier's writings.

The main difference in Flores' work from the previously discussed works is that he does not make any connection with the previously mentioned appearances of magic realism and draws from an entirely other source to find the roots of this phenomenon (Flores, 1955). Similarly to Carpentier, for Flores magic realism is also a uniquely Latin American issue, but in his opinion its appearance is also rooted in the European history (Flores, 1955). Bowers writes that

> Flores created a new history of influences on the production of Latin American magical realism that could be traced back to the sixteenth century Spanish writer Miguel de Saavedra Cervantes, the turn of the twentieth century Czech-Austrian writer Franz Kafka and also (sharing some influences with Roh) European modernists such as the Italian painter Giorgio (Bowers, 2005:15).

Though Echevarria distinguishes Flores' 'Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction' as the second big appearance of magic realism in Latin America, he is at the same time quite dismissive about Flores' work, though he acknowledges its role in getting more and more people interested in the so far evasive concept of magic realism (Echevarria, 1990). Echevarria is not the only critic who sees flaws in Flores' works, and Hegerfeldt is quick to point out the inconsistencies that are similar in both Carpentier's and Flores' works.

According to Hegerfeldt, both authors try to emphasize in their works the importance of Latin American writers and attempt to subvert the role of coloniser and the colonised, but both fail at this, since they cannot do this from an insider perspective (Hegerfeldt, 2005). Carpentier, as it was mentioned before, argues that in Latin America the extraordinary is quotidian (Carpentier, as quoted in Echevarria, 2005), but Hegerfeldt points out that this

‘extraordinary’ only seems so from the European perspective, if from a Latin American perspective it is merely ordinary as Carpentier claims it to be (Hegerfeldt, 2005.). Similarly, Flores hails magic realism as uniquely Latin American phenomenon, but is quick to find its roots in Europe and, thus, the European tradition’s influence on magic realism cannot be denied (ibid.), though Flores seems to disregard it.

Carpentier’s and Flores’ contributions to literary criticism essentially created a wave of interest in magic realism, so a number of critics took up the concept and endeavoured to research in greater detail, in the process attempting to define the term – something that neither Carpentier, nor Flores managed to do successfully. As Bower writes, ‘With a sense of euphoria and the search for new beginnings for Latin America, there was a cultural wave of creativity and in particular a ‘boom’ of writing that sought to produce modern and specifically Latin American fiction’ (Bowers, 2005:16). Nevertheless, Hegerfeldt adds that even nowadays most definitions of magic realism are based on Flores’ phrase ‘amalgamation of realism and fantasy’ (Flores, 1955:189; Hegerfeldt, 2005:38).

Terminologically speaking, Bowers is very strict about the difference between ‘magic realism’, ‘marvellous reality’ and ‘magical realism’ discussed in this chapter (Bowers, 2005), but it seems that no other authors make such austere borders at least between two of the aforementioned terms. For the most part ‘marvellous reality’ seems to be very specifically related to Latin America and, more precisely, Carpentier and his followers (Echevarria, 1990; Hegerfeldt, 2005). At the same time ‘magic realism’ and ‘magical realism’ are used interchangeably in most authors’ works or they choose one of the terms without a particular explanation. Therefore, in this paper from now on the term ‘magic realism’ is going to be used in reference to what Bowers understands as ‘magical realism’, but other authors simply do not distinguish one from another.

1.3.Globalization of Magic Realism

After successfully conquering the Latin American audiences, magic realism quickly spread throughout the world, providing people with a means to express their dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the world. Anne Hegerfeldt writes that ‘initially considered a purely Latin American phenomenon, magic realism has come to be regarded as a mode available to postcolonial writers in general, providing them with a means to challenge the dominant Western world-view’ (Hegerfeldt, 2005:2), thus emphasizing the postcolonial element of magic realism. Bowers is more dismissive of the Latin American roots of magic realism, claiming that it cannot in any way be territorialised to a specific country (Bowers, 2005). She

writes that there is a ‘misconceived assumption that magic(al) realism is specifically Latin American’ (Bowers, 2005:16). Simply put, many authors nowadays consider that magic realism is not a uniquely Latin American phenomenon and ‘the restriction of the mode to a single continent simply does not make any sense’ (Hegerfeldt, 2005:29).

According to Wendy B. Faris (2004:1), ‘magic realism radically modifies and replenishes the dominant mode of realism in the West, challenging its basis of representation from within’. Although, as it has been discussed before, the term magic realism is most often used in the context of Latin American and other colonial literatures, it cannot be denied that magic realism has infiltrated the Western literature as well.

Anne Hegerfeldt writes that ‘in the hand of First World writers, magic realist techniques are said to turn into a mere literary fireworks that pander to a Western taste for the exotic [..]. In short, magic realism deteriorates into a cliché’ (Hegerfeldt, 2005:2), but here she for the most part tries to represent the general opinion that is often said by literary critics who are of the opinion that magic realism belongs to the postcolonial writers and cultures. At the same time Hegerfeldt also indicates that ‘the claim that magic realism is an exclusively Latin American phenomenon can therefore be invalidated on grounds of structural similarities between all societies, making the mode a global one’ (ibid., 2005:33). She adds that ‘magic realist techniques may profitably be employed by Western writers as well’ (ibid., 2005:35), thus confirming that magic realism has indeed entered Western literature and that it in no way can be considered a purely Latin American phenomenon which cannot be transferred to any other culture, though its roots definitely cannot be denied.

Faris considers that the Western magic realism comes from a combination of various historical influences (Faris, 2004:30). She writes that ‘in terms of literary history, magical realism in the West develops from a combination of realism and surrealism, often with an infusion of pre-Enlightenment or indigenous culture’ (ibid.). More importantly, Faris notes that magic realism actually can be found in the intersection between modernism and postmodernism, since ‘modernism is epistemological, concerned with questions of knowledge, while postmodernism is ontological, concerned with questions of being’ (Faris, 2004:30). Thus, magic realism draws from both modernism and postmodernism, though it is more often connected with the ideas of postmodernism.

Ouyang adds to this discussion his opinion that

> To experts and connoisseurs of contemporary fiction, art and film, the spread of magical realism across continents and cultures, and more significantly across media of expression and genres, may be a welcome sign that marks the opening up of the global literary, artistic and visual landscapes to diversification held together by a common core (Ouyang, 2005:13-14).

Thus, it can be seen that most literary critics do not see magic realism as purely Latin American phenomenon, though they do not deny the roots of it. At the same time, the globalisation of magic realism is not surprising, since magic realism is used to talk about concepts that are global and, to some extent, universal.

In 2002 a correspondent of the journal 'Newsweek' asked a question in one of his articles 'Is Magic Realism Dead?'. The author of the article, Mac Margolis, himself answered the question and unequivocally pronounced that 'magical realism [..] --the literary style that made the mundane seem marvelous and put Latin American fiction on bookshelves everywhere--is dead', since a new generation of Latin American writers had arrived who disregarded the concepts of magic realism (Margolis, 2002). However, it seems that Margolis's statement about the death of magic realism is too sweeping, as it is based purely on the works of Latin American writer Alberto Fuguet who, indeed, has opted to write in a without using magic realism. The works of a single author, nevertheless, seem too little a proof to pronounce the death of magic realism, as Margolis is very quick to do. It was William Kennedy who called out Margolis in the same journal, insinuating that magic realism has never died by quoting Gabriel García Márquez who once said: "If you say the novel is dead, it is not the novel. It is you who are dead." (Kennedy, 2002).

All in all it seems that many literary critics and authors, such as Echevarria, Carpentier and other, are of the opinion that the Western branch of magic realism cheapens the concept in its essence or even is simply not possible because magic realism, in their opinion, is a Latin American concept that simply does not work in any other context the authors try to put it in. However, that is not necessarily the case, since an argument can be made that magic realism has never really been a uniquely and purely Latin American concept and that it should not be geographically contained, though Latin American writers certainly were the ones who brought magic realism to the foreground in the literary world. This has been very well showcased by such authors as Hegerfeldt, Faris, Bowers and others.

Bowers writes that authors 'frequently produce forms of magical realism that combine influences from writers across the globe' (Bowers, 2005:45). Thus, while there might be some differences in the magic realist works by different authors from different countries, it is nevertheless definitely possible to talk about unifying elements of magic realism that can work as guidelines in defining the mode.

1.4.Elements of Magic Realism

While for the most part this chapter has dealt with the origins of magic realism and the terminological debate that surrounds the term due to its complicated and unclear presence in literary criticism, this subchapter is devoted to the characteristics of magic realism and the ideas that brought forward magic realism and the reasons for it.

As Hegerfeldt writes, 'it is a gross oversimplification to understand magic realism (or, for that matter, any other artistic mode) as a natural form of expression deriving directly from an external reality' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:34); therefore, it cannot be expected that the true meaning behind magic realism can easily be explained, though some general ideas definitely can be given. For example, in the case of Franz Roh, it was briefly discussed that his concept of magic realism in relation to German art of the Weimar republic grew out of a very difficult politic and economic period that resulted in the need for a more concrete reality which got fused with the ideas of Expressionism that were at that time circling the society. Even Hegerfeldt admits that 'the emergence of the magic realist mode is certainly connected to the social and historical circumstances of its production' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:34).

However, the current elements and their reasons for appearing are best described by a prominent magic realism researcher Wendy Faris who, as Hegerfeldt puts it, manages to show that 'there exist significant similarities that make it useful to group all magic realist texts together for purposes of literary analysis' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:34).

Faris suggests five primary characteristics that are essential to the mode of magic realism:

> First, the text contains an "irreducible element" of magic; second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; fourth, the narrative merges different realms; and, finally, magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity (Faris, 2004:7).

In order to better understand these five concepts that Faris has put forward and the reason for their essentiality in magic realism, it is necessary to discuss each element in more detail, for the most part according to Faris' point of view, though at the same time taking into account also other authors who have expressed similar ideas that might have been put in other words. Faris herself does not distinguish any specific country that these elements are characteristic to, thus it can be assumed that these elements can apply to magic realism in Latin America, Europe and any other parts of the world.

First, Faris talks about an ‘irreducible element’ of magic that has to appear in the works of magic realism. As she writes, it is ‘something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in Western empirically based discourse’ (Faris, 2004:7). What Faris means is that a work of magic realism has to contain a sort of element that could not be expected to appear in reality, and it does not matter that such an element can disrupt the logical and causal chain of events. What is more, Faris adds that ‘these irreducible elements are well assimilated into the realistic textual environment, rarely causing any comment by narrators or characters, who model such an acceptance for their readers’ (Faris, 2004:8). As Hegerfeldt puts it, ‘magic realism blends elements of the marvellous, the supernatural, hyperbole and fabulation, improbable coincidences and the extraordinary with elements of literary realism’ (Hegerfeldt, 2005:51). So it is an important element of magic realism that the unexplainable elements in the magic realist world are often not acknowledged by the characters themselves.

Thus a question arises what the purpose of the irreducible element and the attitude from the characters towards it is in the world of magic realism. Faris mentions a lot of examples from such well-known novels as ‘Beloved’ by Toni Morrison and ‘Perfume’ by Jean-Baptiste Grenouille and comes up with the conclusion that the irreducible element in the novel and the fact that the characters tend not to acknowledge it ‘highlight central issues in a text’ (Faris, 2004:9) and that it ‘also serves the cause of satire and political commentary’ (Faris, 2004:14). Thus, for each text the irreducible element is different and for each text the irreducible element means something different, and the reason for using irreducible elements has to be assessed for each text separately as no general guidelines can be made in this case. As Faris writes

> ‘In magical realism, reality’s outrageousness is often underscored because ordinary people react to magical events in recognizable and sometimes also in disturbing ways, a circumstance that normalizes the magical event but also defamiliarizes, underlines, or critiques extraordinary aspects of the real’ (Faris, 2004:13).

Simpkins who has extensively explored the strategies used in creating a magic realist text also has expressed a similar opinion vis-à-vis the the irreducible element by stating that ‘magical texts are one way of supplementing not only the failures of the modern text, but also the inadequacies of what is now called the postmodern condition’ (Simpkins, 1988:146).

Second, Faris mentions that another element of magic realist texts is that ‘its descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world’ (Faris, 2014:14). What she means by this is that the realistic description of the phenomenal elements of magic realism works is what makes these works belong to the realist tradition. Simpkins previously had

expressed a similar observation when writing that ‘magic realists use what the Russian formalists called defamiliarization to radically emphasize common elements of reality, elements that are often present but have become virtually invisible because of their familiarity. And through a process of supplemental illusions, these textual strategies seem to produce a more realistic text’ (Simpkins, 1988:145).

It can be said that this is the element that in a sense can be distantly connected to Franz Roh’s ideas, since he saw that it is the real that brings out the magical in the works of Weimar republic paintings. The connection, however, is very distant. It is definitely more beneficial for the purposes of this paper to focus on the level of reality and magic visible in magic realist works.

What is curious about the realistic descriptions of the phenomenal world is that this allows the reality and the magic on the same level, thus making them equally important and equally real. This, therefore, is an important element of the magic realist works and goes hand in hand with the first element (the characters not acknowledging the magical elements that appear in their fictional lives). In a way it reinforces the reasons why magic elements are introduced in the story in the first place. As Simpkin puts it, ‘the textual project of magic realism, then, is displayed through its linguistically bound attempt to increase the capabilities of realistic text’ (Simpkins, 1988:147). Zamora simply states that ‘”magic” in magical realist texts resides in the “real” world of everyday objects, places, and persons’ (Zamora, n.d.:22), so detailed descriptions are an essential part of magic realist texts and, to some extent, it can be transferred to the detailed elements of magic realist film.

Third, Faris writes that the next element of the mode of magic realism involves the readers’ doubts and difficulties to reconcile the magical and the real, thus experiencing something Faris calls ‘unsettling doubts’ (Faris, 2004:17). This means that the readers are struggling to incorporate the magical elements into the real world, so often the readers try to define such magical happenings as dreams or some other logical and ‘real’ part of a regular human life. However, Faris admits that in some cases there is no hesitation on the part of the readers (ibid., 2004:20-21).

Faris does not really explain the significance of this element of magic realism and there are no other users who mention the readers’ role in defining and understanding magic realism. Therefore, this element seems relatively unnecessary in the list of the elements Faris has described, especially since her description of this element includes the readers both having trouble and not having trouble incorporating the magical into the real. However, this means that the magical elements sometimes might appear real, but that does not necessarily mean that they are.

Fourth, in the list of magic realism elements Faris mentions ‘merging realms’ (Faris, 2004:21). In this case Faris does not necessarily reference only the merging of the magical and the real, but rather turns attention to the fact that the characters of any magical realist work are trapped between these two worlds (Faris, 2004). According to Faris, there is a great significance to this phenomenon, since it ‘blurs borders between categories’ (Faris, 2004:23).

Fifth and last element Faris writes about is the disruptions of time, space and identity. The aim of this is to ‘reorient’ (Faris, 2004:25) the reader and deconstruct the reality and the characters, thus bringing forward some more significant issues. This is something that Flores also mentions by stating that in magic realist works ‘time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality’ (Flores, 1955:191).

Faris’ characteristics or techniques of magic realism really bring forward the ideas that magic realist authors try to incorporate in their works and their reasons for using magical elements in fictional works. It is very clear that these reasons – the need to deconstruct the reality, to bear emphasis on something that is more essential the reality itself – can easily be transferred to other media, not only literature; therefore, the next chapter deals with magic realism and it emergence in film.

1.5.Magic Realism and Film

Magic realism in film is as of yet a relatively unexplored field of research, though there have been several authors who had been interested in the topic and nowadays it is getting to be an area that is being explored more and more. As Wendy Faris writes, ‘the presence of magical realist films such as *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Field of Dreams*, *Ironweed*, *Wolf*, *Thinner*, *Like Water for Chocolate* and its spin-offs *Woman on Top* and *Chocolat*, among others, in the cinematic mainstream, further attest to its increasing dispersion throughout all contemporary culture’ (Faris, 2004:29) and, thus, there is a necessity to explore the issues of magic realism in film in more detail. Bowers writes that ‘film is not often considered as magic(al) realist in criticism and neither magic realism nor magical realism are recognized categories of film. However, it is possible to recognize features of both magic realism and magical realism in many films’ (Bowers, 2005:104), so it is clear that it is possible to talk about magic realism as a category of film, though not many authors have decided to do so.

In 1986 Frederic Jameson published an article ‘On Magic Realism in Film’ where he described what he thought to be magic realist cinema. Bowers, who published her book ‘Magic(al) Realism’ almost 20 years later, still calls this ‘the only essay to explore the genre of film as magic realism’ (Bowers, 2005:104). By analysing several films that Jameson

thought belonged to the mode of magic realism Jameson mentions three 'shared features' that, according to him, are at the basis of magic realist film – they are historical films, the colour scheme of each film is very peculiar and there is a very significant focus on violence (Jameson, 1986). Thus, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the three elements and how/if they might relate to the films chosen for the analysis in this paper.

First of all, Jameson's statement that magic realism can be observed in historical films, of course, is not incorrect and historical films, indeed, occasionally have elements of magic realism. However, this label of historical films or 'nostalgia films' as Jameson sometimes calls them seems too specific for a general discussion of magic realism in film. After all, there is nothing that indicates that magic realism cannot be observed in films that do not belong to the genre of historical films.

Second of all, Jameson mentions that the colour scheme of each film is very unusual and that there is a 'peculiar and constitutive function of color' (Jameson, 1986:311). Drawing upon the magic realist texts where colour also often plays a significant role and is frequently emphasized, Jameson gives a similar meaning to colour in film by stating that 'color does not, in these films, function as a homogeneous medium, but rather as some more generalized "libidinal apparatus," which, once set in place, is capable of registering the pulsation of such discontinuous intensities' (Jameson, 1986:314). What Jameson means here is that the role of colour in magic realist films is far more important than simply just a part of the medium. The colour allows the objects to be 'intensified and marked from within' (Jameson, 1986:314).

Third of all, Jameson discusses the focus of violence in the magic realist films. As Jameson himself puts it, 'the dynamic of narrative has somehow been reduced, concentrated, and simplified, by the attention to violence (and, to a lesser degree, sexuality)' (Jameson, 1986:303). Jameson later goes on to call this 'reduction to the body' (Jameson, 1986:319). Jameson explains this turn to violence and sexuality based in the idea that complex ideas must be expressed in the simplest terms possible, and there is something extremely base and fundamental in violence and sex (Jameson, 1986). Thus, Jameson not only turns his attention to the violence in the magic realist films he has decided to explore, but also points out the fact that these films deal with much more than can be seen on the surface level.

Bowers correctly points out that Jameson's discussion of magic realist films has more in common with Franz Roh's ideas of what magic realism is – the same focus on the realism and the object can be observed in Jameson's ideas as it was described in Roh's works (Bowers, 2005:105). Moreover, Jameson's article indeed seems to be written very specifically for the films that he had decided to see as magic realist – several Latin American works. Thus, it seems counterproductive to apply Jameson's concepts to the analysis of films in this paper.

Bowers, on the other hand, when discussing magic realism in film, turns her attention to the adaptations of magic realist narratives to film, and suggests analysing these adaptations to 'consider how the visual elements affect the narrative magical realism' (Bowers, 2005:105). Similarly to Jameson, Bowers also looks at specific examples of film in order to better understand the correlation between magic realism and film, but she specifically looks at the adaptations of magic realist novels, thus trying to understand the strategies used to better convey magic realism to the realm of cinema.

One of the issues that Bowers notices is similar to Jameson's – they both talk about the importance of light and colour in general in magic realist films. While Jameson, as it was discussed before, talks about the intensity of the colour that draws attention to specific objects ('increased objectivity'), Bowers is more focused on the lighting choices of magic realist films. In the films that Bowers looks at, she has notices that the directors choose to draw the viewers' attention to the magical part of the film. As she puts it, 'Despite the increased sense of reality for the viewer as they witness actually enacted events unfold on the screen, the realism of the film is diminished by the director's choice of lighting' (Bowers, 2005:105). Indeed, the colour schemes are used to actually draw away the viewers' attention from the violence in the film (which takes place off-screen) (Bowers, 2005). Despite the differences in the critics' opinions, it is clear that colour and lighting often play an important role in magic realist cinema, thus special attention needs to be paid to this element.

According to Bowers, what makes a magic realist film a magic realist film is 'The magical realism of the film is made clear by the unsurprised acceptance of the magic by the majority of the characters' (Bowers, 2005:109), so this indeed can be seen as one of the elements of magic realist film. Moreover, because it coincides with the irreducible element of magic realism that Faris put forward.

What is more important, however, is that in all the films and both Jameson and Bowers looked at, magic realism is there not just to entertain the readers, but it has a higher values. Bowers writes that 'the magical realist element of the film acts as a means of initiating questions concerning philosophical issues such as the existence of God, the role of fate, and the idea of the self that extend beyond the film's capacity to divert and entertain' (Bowers, 2005:109). Thus, the subject matter of a magic realist film and the techniques each director has chosen to use generally reveal a much broader and more important issues underneath – magic realism is used to convey something very specific, and the aim of analysis of magic realism in film should focus on these underlying issues.

1.6.Defining Magic Realism

As it can be seen from the previous discussion of magic realism, defining this term is a difficult task that still poses a lot of problems to literary critics all around the world. One of the reasons for this is their unwillingness to precisely name what magic realism is. Authors call it a concept, mode, a set of characteristics, literary kind, style, literary current, framework, category or genre, but most often refer to it simply as a term. As Ouyang writes, 'The tri-continental and multi-media labyrinthine genesis of magical realism only adds fuel to the already confusing fanfare of fire for theorists and critics who attempt to make sense of, articulate and contextualize the politics and aesthetics of this alternately named 'mode', 'genre' or 'style' of expression' (Ouyang, 2005:14). Hegerfeldt also notices the critics' inability to define the term, but at the same time adds that magic realism is hardly the only term that faces the problem of definition. She writes that 'magic realism offers critics not much greater conceptual difficulty than do other literary categories. In fact, both its shifts in meaning over time and its frequent and somewhat diverse usage in current criticism are welcome signs that the mode is still vital and productive' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:41).

Sadly, Ouyang only points this issue out, but does not try to clearly define the term, bringing this discussion to a close by stating that

> The migration of story from literature to cinema, for example, has often led to the production of a written text based on the film quite different from the original. In many instances the film version is an improvement on and more popular than the original. Under such circumstances questions of discreteness, definition, category and origin become less important than the workings of a text, be it literary or visual, and the ways in which these relate the text to the world and other texts without necessarily abandoning altogether the familiar articulated categories of knowledge (Ouyang, 2005:20).

While this sort of philosophical look at the term might be enough for a general discussion of the term, it is clear that for a methodical analysis a more concrete understanding of it is necessary. Thus, Hegerfeldt proposes to define the term from the basis of its core representatives (texts that have come to be associated with magic realism more than any other texts) and its characteristics, and comes to the conclusion that magic realism 'is a manner of representing a fictional world that cuts across genre boundaries and may be found in diverse forms of literature, as well as in other arts' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:47). Moreover, the previous discussion of magic realism throughout this chapter shows that the term cannot be contained within a single field, much less a single genre, so it makes sense to define magic realism as a mode, not a genre.

The most important characteristic of a mode in this case is that according to French literary theorist Gerard Genette ‘mode neither includes nor implies theme; theme neither includes nor implies mode’ (Genette, as cited in Hegerfeldt, 2005:48). Therefore, the theme of the work can be secondary to the mode, but it does not mean that it excludes a theme from a mode, meaning that there is no restriction of theme when it comes to a mode. This is supported by elements of magic realism that were explored in Chapter 1.4 – the elements described the ‘how’ of magic realism, not the thematic events that have to be narrated in a magic realist work. At the same time Hegerfeldt does not deny that ‘certain thematic elements undoubtedly prevail in particular modes and may therefore at first glance appear to inhere in them’ (Hegerfedlt, 2005:49), but the appearance of specific themes is not the defining feature magic realism. Thus, it makes sense to define magic realism as a mode.

All in all it can be seen that the development of magic realism has been a long process that in a truly magic realist manner cannot be put into any boundaries and made sense of, since the many uses of the term throughout many genres, fields and ideologies have made it a very wide concept. Nevertheless, it is clear that authors use magic realism to express specific ideas that simply cannot be expressed in a different manner; therefore, it can be expected that films shot in the magic realist mode have some underlying issues that are expressed through the mode of magic realism. Thus, magic realism is never used simply to surprise the audience.

2. FILM SEMIOTICS

Now that the development of magic realism has been explored and it has been made clear that magic realism inevitably has also made its way into the realm of cinema, it is necessary to explore and fully understand the role of film semiotics in the analysis of film, the cinematic procedures that create the film language, and how it could help to explore the mode of magic realism in the films chosen for analysis. In order to better understand film semiotics, however, there is a need to briefly explore semiotics as such, and how it became to be associated with the field of cinema.

The need and wish to explore a language of a community has been with the human kind for a very long time. Even the Bible deals specifically with language when describing the creation of the world and the Babel tower, thus confirming a well-known fact that language itself and its exploration have always played a significant role in the human history.

The beginning of semiotics as we have come to know it nowadays, however, can be easily traced back to the Greek philosophers who introduced 'the western philosophical tradition of speculation concerning language and the relation between words and things' (Stam et al., 2005:1). As one of the examples Plato's dialogue 'Cratylus' can be mentioned, where he talks about the motivation of signs – whether the names are somehow intrinsically connected with the things names or not (Plato, n.d.).

Throughout history many authors have continued to write about issues of semiotic nature, though they might not have named them as such. However, it was the Maerican philosopher and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce and the Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure who are usually named as the main founding fathers of contemporary semiotics (Chandler, 1994, Stam et al, 2005). The science was referred to by Peirce as 'semiotics', while Saussure calls it 'semiology'. Stam et al. state that these two terms are most often used by most of the authors interchangeably, though Peirce's 'semiotics' is the one that in most cases is preferred nowadays (Stam et al., 2005:4), so that is the term used also in this paper.

The definition of the term that Saussure gives when first speaking about the topic and the possible emergence of such science states that 'Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them' (Saussure, 1959:16). Peirce's ideas are scattered throughout the books that were published posthumously (just like Saussure's), but Stam et al. have conveniently put the ones that are especially important to semiotics together, drawing the readers' attention to the ideas that are especially important for the study of film.

First, Peirce has provided a definition of a ‘sign’ as ‘something which stands to somebody for something in some respects or capacity’ (Peirce, as quoted in Stam et al., 2005:5). Second, Peirce talks about semiosis – a process of the production of meaning (ibid.). Third, Peirce discusses the three elements involved in semiosis – the sign, the object (that for which the sign stands) and the interpretant (‘the “mental effect” generated by the relation between sign and object’) (ibid.).

Saussure’s model, on the other hand, does not feature the object. It is a dyadic model (consisting of two signs) that comprises the signifier (‘the form which the sign takes’) and the signified (‘the concept it represents’) (Chandler, 1994). Since Stam et al. have stated that ‘It is Saussure, however, who constitutes the founding figure for European structuralism and semiotics, and thus for much of film semiotics (Stam et al., 2004:6), it is more relevant for this thesis to put more focus on Saussure’s theories and his contribution to the field of semiotics.

Especially important in Saussure are the concepts of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships between signs, and the fact that ‘the identity of any linguistic sign is determined by the sum total of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations into which it enters with other linguistic signs in the same language system’ (Stam et al., 2004:9). After all, both Saussure and Peirce have made it clear with their theories that a sign cannot exist in isolation; therefore, the exploration of its possible relations to other signs and their meanings is of great importance in semiotics. Paradigmatic relations concern substitution, while syntagmatic relations concern the horizontal alignment of a whole (Stam et al., 2004, Chandler, 1994). According to Metz

> signs (or units of relation) are related to other signs syntagmatically or paradigmatically: Syntagmatic relations are those which exist among the actual (or "present") elements of a statement, and paradigmatic (or associative) relations are those which occur among the potential (or "absent") elements of a statement (those elements which might have been but were not actually selected) (Metz, 1983:xiv).

After Saussure and Peirce, semiotics fell in the hands of Russian Formalists (Eikhenbaum, Shklovsky, Tynianov and others) that were especially important for the development of film semiotics. As Stam et al. put it, ‘The Russian Formalists are crucial to any discussion of contemporary filmo-linguistics partly because they were the first to exploit Saussurean formulations in order to explore, with a modicum of rigor, the analogy between language and film’ (Stam et al., 2004:11). They favoured a structuralism approach to the film analysis and were more focused in the syntagmatic organisation of a film.

Throughout the continued history of linguistic and, consequently, semiotics, the field was explored by Russian Formalists, the Bakhtin school, the Prague structuralists, Roman

Jakobson, post-structuralists and many other theoreticians who each contributed to the field in their own manner. According to Stam et al., it shows 'the rise of linguistics as a kind of master discipline for the contemporary era' (Stam et al., 2004:29). The turn to film in semiotics seems to be a logical one. Marcel Danesi wrote that cinema 'has become the art form to which most people today respond most strongly and to which they look for recreation, inspiration, and insight' (Danesi, 2004:88), thus making film an interesting topic of research. Christian Metz expresses a similar opinion by stating that films 'bridge the gap between true art and the general public' (Metz, 1983:5), so the deserve special attention. Besides, all the signs, icons and other elements of visual, auditory and non-verbal semiotics mentioned before in this chapter converge in the world of cinema, thus making it a semiotically complex system. Danesi calls films 'aesthetically powerful' (Danesi, 2004:88), and it is one of the reasons why they are so open to analysis.

Though Russian formalists are often considered the ones who started working with film semiotics, Umberto Eco, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Christian Metz are considered the first full-fledged film semiotics theoreticians who brought forwarded the ideas that are at the foundation of film semiotics (Stam et al., 2004:30). With development of cinema and semiotics in the 20th century, film semiotics developed with it. Danesi notes that 'Semiotically speaking, a film can be defined as a text which, at the level of the signifier, consists of a chain of images that represent real-life activities' (Danesi, 2004:88). Thus, similarly to a novel or a shorty story, film also can be analysed as a specific genre of texts.

Christian Metz, one of the most prominent authors in the field of film semiotics has stated that the aim of film semiotics is 'to study the ordering and the functionings of the main signifying units used in the filmic message' (Metz, 1983:91). Similarly to literary analysis, the semiotic analysis of film can also be applied to different genres, but as Metz states it, semiotic analysis if films prefers 'the study of the narrative film' (Metz, 1983:91), meaning the study of feature films. The reason for this is quite simple – in Metz's opinions the filmic procedures (types of shots, montage, etc.) have arisen from the filmmakers need to tell a story, a narrative, not from any academic analysis, thus narrative films have to be the priority when it comes to semiotic analysis (Metz, 1983). Bazin confirms this by stating that 'the cinema owes virtually nothing to the scientific spirit' (Bazin, 2005:17) and Stam adds that 'film became a discourse [..] by organizing itself as narrative' (Stam et al., 2004:38). Chandler also has noted that 'syntagmatic analysis can be applied not only to verbal texts but also to audio-visual ones' (Chandler, 1994), thus making film a significant part of semiotic analysis.

Metz very specifically refers to film as 'language', and he puts forward five tracks of channels that a film has: moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded

noises, recorded musical sound, and writing (credits, intertitles, written materials in the shot) (Metz, 1983:30). Metz is also the one who introduces the idea of Grand Syntagmatique (sometimes translated from French as 'large syntagmatic category', though this translation is very rarely used; therefore, it is not going to be used in this paper) which is going to be the basis for the linguistically-inspired structural analysis of the films in this paper. Thus, the focus will be on the moving photographic image channel of the film from the point of view of Metz's grand syntagmatique, since 'most narrative films resemble one another in their principal syntagmatic figures' (Stam et al., 2004:38) and the grand syntagmatique provides a coded, logical and structural system for deconstructing a film.

When talking about Metz's ideas of film structure, it is important to understand that Metz uses the term 'syntagma' in order to talk about 'the units of narrative autonomy' (Stam et al., 2004:41). He writes that 'a syntagma is, consequently, a unit of actual relationship' (Metz, 1983:xiv). Therefore, when creating the grand syntagmatique Metz talks about eight syntagmatic types, 'autonomous segments' of film narrative – the autonomous shot, the parallel syntagma, the bracketing syntagma, the descriptive syntagma, the alternating syntagma, the scene, the episodic sequence, and the ordinary sequence (Metz, 1983). Thus it can be seen that the basis of Metz's grand syntagmatique is heavily rooted in the art of montage. As Bateman and Schmidt put it, the Grand Syntagmatique is 'an abstract classification of the meaningful possibilities available to a film-maker when conjoining shots in narrative film' (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012:99). Metz writes that 'Although each image is a free creation, the arrangement of these images into an intelligible sequence—cutting and montage—brings us to the heart of the semiological dimension of film' (Metz, 1983:101).

According to Bateman and Schmidt the Grand Syntagmatique is central to montage as it basically is

> the paradigmatic axis of semiotic representation. Montage was first given central pride of place in film theorising by Pudovkin (1926) and Eisenstein (1963), and has remained a defining aspect of what constitutes film ever since, including both the more 'symbolic' uses of Eisenstein and the narrative constructions of, for example, D.W. Griffith (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012:99).

Thus, it is clear that the Grand Syntagmatique concerns mostly the paradigmatic axis; therefore, it is very important to remember that in the paradigmatic dimension 'meaning is established only through differential systems of contrast' (Stam et al., 2004:100)

Metz's Grand Syntagmatique basically proposes a classification of meaningful possibilities when putting together shots in narrative films. The syntagmatique types of the grand syntagmatique can best be shown in an image.

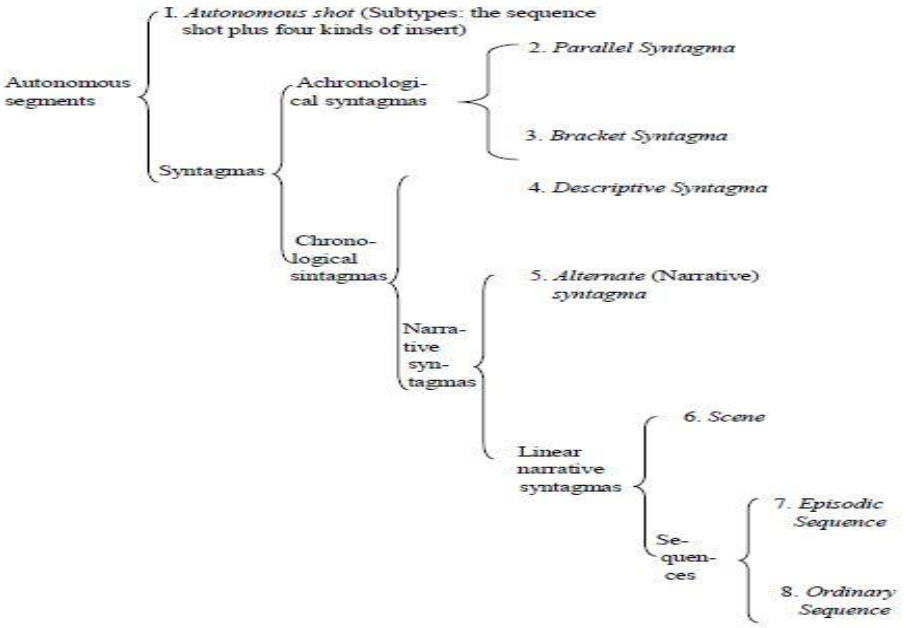

Figure 2.1. ***The Grand Syntagmatique (adapted from Bateman and Schmidt, 2012).***

In order to better understand the grand syntagmatique and to be able to properly analyse a film according to Metz's theory, it is necessary to give more attention to each separate segment that can be seen in the figure above.

The autonomous shot is a syntagma consisting of one shot. Metz writes that 'The autonomous shot is therefore the only instance where a single shot constitutes a primary, and not a secondary, subdivision of the film' (Metz, 1983:124). This means that sometimes a single shot in a film can be autonomous on its own. This specific syntagma has several subtypes, best explained by Stam et al. – the single-shot sequence; non-diegetic insert (a single shot which presents objects exterior to the fictional world of the action); the displaced diegetic insert (real diegetic images that are out of context); the subjective insert (memories, fears, other types of subjective, emotional inserts) and the explanatory insert (shots that clarify events for the spectator).

The parallel syntagma consists of two alternating motifs without clear spatial or temporal relationship. Metz defines it by writing that 'montage brings together and interweaves two or more alternating "motifs," but no precise relationship (whether temporal or spatial) is assigned to them—at least on the level of denotation' (Metz, 1983:125). The basis of this syntagma is binary opposition lies in alternation and symbolicism, thus the concept of binary opposition is often used (for example, a parallel syntagma where shots of the rich and the poor are interwoven. Thus, parallel syntagmas can be very well used to show

oppression, class division and even loneliness (Metz, 1983, Stam et al., 2005, Bateman and Schmidt, 2012).

The bracket sytagma is characterised by brief scenes of a certain order of reality but without temporal order. Metz describes it as ‘a series of very brief scenes representing occurrences that the film gives as typical samples of a same order of reality, without in any way chronologically locating them in relation to each other’ (Metz, 1983:126). Bateman and Schmidt mentions that a classic example of a bracket syntagma would be, for example, several shots of country life, which altogether are thought to represent a typical country life (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012:106). Metz adds that in the case of bracket syntagmas ‘different successive evocations are strung together through optical effects (dissolves, wipes, pan shots, and, less commonly, fades)’ (Metz, 1983:126).

The descriptive syntagma is objects shown successively suggesting spatial coexistence (Metz, 1983:126). With descriptive syntagma, it is important to understand that the coexistence is purely spatial; therefore, no ‘purposeful narrative development’ (Stam et al., 2005:45) should be observed in a descriptive syntagma.

The alternating syntagma implies temporal simultaneity (Metz, 1983:127), though the shots are alternating. Stam et al. mentions that the three characteristics of an alternating syntagma are that they are ‘chronological, consecutive and nonlinear’, and it involves spatial seperations (Stam et al., 2005:46). For example, a syntagma of pursuers and the pursued.

The scene is continuity without breaks, though there may be many shots, and Metz mentions that this is the type of sytagma that mostly reminds a scene in a theatre (Metz, 1983:129). This, it is ‘chronological, consecutive and linear’ (Stam et al., 2005:46). Quite often it is implied that the screen time and the diegetic time completely coincide (ibid.).

The episodic sequence is a symbolic summary of stages in an implied chronological development or as Metz puts it, ‘the sequence strings together a number of very brief scenes, which are usually separated from each other by optical devices (dissolves, etc.) and which succeed each other in chronological order’ (Metz, 1983:130). Stam et al. add that it ‘constitutes a symbolic summary of a stage in a part of a larger development’ (Stam et al., 2005:46).

The ordinary sequence is action treated elliptically so as to eliminate “unimportant” detail, with jumps in time and space masked by continuity editing (Stam et al., 2005:42). Metz writes that ‘the viewer skips the moments that have, to his mind, no direct bearing on the plot’ (Metz, 1983:130).

As it can be seen, Metz’s grand syntagmatique provides an interesting framework for film analysis. However, as Chandler writes, ‘Metz's 'grande syntagmatique' has not proved an

easy system to apply to some films' (Chandler, 1994). Bateman and Schmidt supports this idea by stating that 'when the grande syntagmatique was originally introduced, it raised a considerable furore' (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012:115). Most of the rebuttals of Metz's theory were built on the fact that Metz seemingly seeks a kind of 'Master code' for the deconstruction of film, but at the same time it can be seen that such a system is actually very useful and can be considered as one of the few attempts to truly understand the art of montage. Metz's Grand Sytagmatique, of course, has been taken by many authors who have tried to expand upon the analysis and provide a more detailed classification of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships that appear in the film.

All in all, it is clear that the field of semiotics, even when it was not called as such, has been of interest for the human kind for a very long time. The constant development of the field meant that it was only inevitable that the subfield of film semiotics was discovered. Some of the most notable names in the field include Christian Metz, Umberto Eco, and many others who have worked in the linguistic semiotics foundations, created by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce.

Although there are many theories concerning the semiotic analysis of film, for the purposes of this paper, Christian Metz's theory of the Grand Syntagmatique is more than suitable, since 'the Grand Syntagmatique can serve as an attention-focussing device' (Stam et al., 2005:49) that also helps to look at the issues beyond the montage level of the film. Metz's eight syntagmatique types provide a satisfactory framework for the exploration of films and the additional issues of magic realism. Therefore, the Grand Syntagmatique is applied to the analysis of three magic realism films in the next chapter.

3. ANALYSIS OF MAGIC REALISM FILMS

As it has been shown forward in the previous chapter, the analysis of the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic elements of the film is an exhausting and long process, since the description of each scene and each filmic meaning-making device has to be distinguished and analysed. Thus, this chapter deals with the most complex parts of the films that are deemed to express something significant in terms of meaning in the context of magic realism. As Bateman and Schimdt put it, a shot by shot analysis of a full length feature film would be 'prohibitively time-consuming and, indeed, often unnecessary for useful analysis' (Bateman and Schmidt, 2012:246). Thus, the aim of this chapter is to analyse three magic realism films, Woody Allen's 'Midnight in Paris', Ang Lee's 'Life of Pi' and Alejandro González Iñárritu 'Birdman: Or 'The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance', using Christian Metz's Grand Syntagmatique as the framework and trying to understand within this framework of the syntagmatic types what helps the directors to convey the elements and ideas of magic realism.

The films were chosen randomly from the relatively recently made films that feature magic realism in some form; therefore, their storylines and subject matters are not similar, though they do share some significant undertones that are going to be discussed in the chapter.

3.1.Analysis of 'Midnight in Paris'

The premise of the 2011 film, directed by Woody Allen and starring Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams and Marion Cotillard, is as follows: 'While on a trip to Paris with his fiancée's family, a nostalgic screenwriter finds himself mysteriously going back to the 1920s every day at midnight' (Online 1). The film gained a lot positive criticism from viewers and critics alike, and Woody Allen even won an Oscar in 2012 for writing the Best Original Screenplay (in a true Woody Allen spirit he did not show up at the ceremony to receive the award himself).

The protagonist of 'Midnight in Paris' is an American writer Gil Pender who together with his fiancée Inez and her parents are visiting the capital of France. The other characters in the modern Paris include Inez's parents, and her friends Paul and Carol that they accidentally meet in the town. When Gil travels back in time to the Paris of 1920s, the film boasts such personalities as Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Cole Porter, Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso, and one Woody Allen's original character – Adriana.

Thus, the description of the film already suggests one of the most important themes that appear in it – Gil's inability to deal with the modern world and his wish to live 'back in the

day'. Ergo, he simply wishes to escape reality which is an issue that is often dealt with in the works of magic realism.

The film opens with sixty different and brief shots of various places in Paris (Midnight in Paris, 2011:30" - 3' 45"), evenly spaced throughout 3 minutes and 15 seconds of screen time. The shots are very similar to each other in their technical aspects – they are no more than few seconds long, no panning or zooming is used (they are all still shots), except for one shot where the camera pans up, and the shots are simply changed one to another without using any transitional devices, such as dissolve, fade out, crossfade and others. Content-wise the shots depict scenes from life in Paris. Some are more familiar to the audience, like the Eiffel tower, Champs Elysees or Moulin Rouge, but some seem to be quite random – a woman running across a street, a small alley with no people, a coffee place with an obstructed name, people walking in a park, etc. Interestingly, even though the syntagma at first seems to be randomly arranged from different shots of Paris, there is some consistency in the sense that at one point several shots in a row depict Paris while it rains, but at the very end of the sequence the viewers can see Paris during the night, creating the illusion of a single day passing in the life of a Parisian. The syntagma ends with an iconic shot of the Eiffel tower in all its glory at night – just like it could be seen in a postcard.

According to Metz's classification of the syntagmatic types, this is clearly a bracket syntagma, since it is meant for the viewers to discover Paris as a gorgeous and, in a sense, magical place that remains so despite the circumstances – during the day, the night and even during rain. Of course, in terms of magic realism, the syntagma in the very beginning of the film already helps to establish the ordinariness of the place in the sense that nothing unusual happens in these shots – nothing in the syntagma suggests any deviations from the ordinary and the quotidian.

Besides, while the scenery of Paris is nice enough and the audience probably enjoys seeing such a syntagma for a while, it is also quite lengthy (unusually so) and the constant change of shots becomes rather automatic, until a certain sense of routine appears, lulling the audience in a sense of boredom. When the film is viewed in retrospect, this over-length bracket syntagma of shots of Paris can be seen as a symbolic representation of how the main character, Gil Pender, feels in the modern society – everything is nice enough, but there is no excitement and the few changes that appear are rather insignificant. In a way, Gil feels trapped in the routine – his job as a screenwriter, his home in the USA and even his fiancée Inez who together with her parents represent a very pragmatic and rational type of people that seemingly does not have anything in common with Gil. At one point even Gil himself admits

that the only thing he and Inez have in common is that ‘We both like Indian food. Not all Indian food, but the pita bread. We both like pita bread.’ (54' 12").

For a while after the bracket syntagma, the film consists of an ordinary sequence where the events unfold in a chronological manner, but the ‘dead matter’ is cut out, since it has no direct bearing on the general plot of the film. Woody Allen uses the ordinary sequence to establish certain things about the main characters and their thoughts, though at this point the plot development seemingly stands still and there is no purposeful development of events. However, the audience finds out a lot of information about Gil as a person – he is a writer who wishes to live in Paris in the 1920s; he does not have a lot in common with his fiancée Inez who is a very pragmatic American. There is also certain animosity that can be felt on Gil’s side towards Inez’s pragmatic parents and ‘pseudo-intellectual’ friends that appear in dialogue during the ordinary sequence. After all, in Woody Allen films dialogue plays a large role, often being more important than plot development in general.

Allen’s obsession with lengthy and witty dialogues that can also be observed in many of his other films (‘Annie Hall’, ‘Match Point’, ‘Scoop’, etc.) results in the fact that the ordinary sequences in ‘Midnight in Paris’ are quite often interspersed with scenes – shots where the screen time and the diegetic time almost completely coincide. For the most part such scenes are filled with dialogues, for example, when Gil and Inez visit Versaille (8' 58") or Inez has a conversation with her mother about her marriage to Gil (11' 26").

The ordinary sequences intercut with scenes continue even when Gil arrives in 1920s, though seemingly there are more scenes, for example when Gil arrives at a party and meets Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald (18' 58"). The scenes allow Gil and the film viewers to deal with the fact that he has gone back in time, as well as give everyone a possibility to become more acquainted with the new characters, such as Zelda Fitzgerald, Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and many others. One the one hand, it might have been expected that the types of syntagmas somehow change when Gil changes his location, but on the other hand – the unchanging syntagmas go hand in hand with the ideas of magic realism. Gil’s reactions and the overall dialogues suggest that he has difficulties accepting the fact that he has been thrown back in time – an issue that is not very characteristic to magic realism, as we have discussed it in previous chapters. However, the unchanging syntagmas gives the film an opportunity to stay within reason – Faris wrote that one of the elements of magic realism is that the descriptions detail the strong presence of the phenomenal world, but in Faris’ case she wrote about novels and magic realism in its written form. Allen’s choice of the same syntagmas in the parts of the film that take place in the modern world and the parts that take place in Paris

in the 1920s resonates with this idea of using the same descriptive or filmic elements for real and unreal events.

Besides, in this case both Gil and the viewers' experience unsettling doubts in their effort to reconcile what is going on. The extensive use of scenes in this case help both the viewer and Gil himself come to terms with what is going on and accept it, so that the plot development could move forward.

Moreover, with so many scenes in 'Midnight in Paris', Allen manages to turn a lot of attention to specific characters in the film and their peculiarities. The viewers learn a lot about Allen's versions of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein and many others. These scenes once again help in establishing the equality between the real and unreal events and real and unreal characters and merge different realms.

Allen also sparingly uses the episodic sequence, for example, when Gil takes his fiancée Inez, so she could also travel back in time together with him (31' 27"). However, the car that allows Gil to travel back in time does not appear, so Allen uses an episodic sequence to convey how annoyed with her fiancé Inez is. Allen in this episodic sequence uses an optical device to help with the change from shot to shot – in this case one shot dissolves in the next one. The shots dissolve quite slowly, so as to indicate the slow passing of time and Inez's annoyance with her future husband. Moreover, in one shot Inez and Gil are standing relatively close together, while in the shot that follows Inez is sitting down apart from Gil, apparently bored, while Gil is seen standing and still eager for the car to come, fully believing that it will.

Thus, the use of this episodic sequence is also very symbolic because Inez in this case can be seen as a representative of the whole real world. Throughout the use of the relatively short scenes and this particular episodic sequence it can be seen that there is tension not only between Inez and Gil, but between any other person (Inez's parents, friends) and Gil. Thus, the viewers are made aware of the fact that Gil does not really belong in the real world or, at least at this point, he does not really want to belong in the real world. This is also the reason why there are more lengthy scenes and less ordinary sequences in the Paris of 1920s – this is the place where Gil feels that he belongs; therefore, there is less 'dead matter' for Allen to cut out (as it was mentioned before, the first part of the film that takes place in modern Paris can be characterised by ordinary sequences and relatively short scenes).

Within the framework of Metz's syntagmatique, a type of syntagma was discussed called parallel syntagma. When Metz described it, he envisioned a series of intercut shots that would show the differences between classes, social positions, etc. Allen also uses a type of parallel syntagma, though the term here might have to be used in a rather loose manner, since this parallel syntagma seems to be almost hidden from the viewers. When Gil is in the 1920s

Paris, he has a discussion about art with Gertrud Stein, Adriana (Allen's original character) Pablo Picaso and Ernest Hemingway (35' 52"). A similar situation happens in the modern Paris – Gil has a discussion about art with Inez and her friends Paul and Carol, where he tries to impress the others with his intimate knowledge of a piece of art (44' 33").

The use of parallel syntagma in this case gives the viewers a possibility to compare Gil, who has now got used to being able to visit Paris in the past, and the way he acts both in the present time and the past. It is made very clear that in the modern Paris, despite being engaged and being in his own time, Gil is viewed as a strange peculiarity. Inez's father even says that 'he's got a part missing' (47' 04"). In the Paris of the past, on the other hand, Gil fits in and no one disregards his opinions, but listens to him. The parallel syntagma, thus, gives the opportunity to show this.

Previously it was mentioned that an episodic sequence is used when Gil is in modern Paris, trying to show Inez that he can go back in the past, and, similarly, episodic sequence is used in the scene where they enjoy art together (44' 33"). Once again, Allen dissolves the shots, but this time it is done (once again, slowly) to indicate that it is Gil who is bored and cannot connect emotionally with the people of his own time.

A note has to be taken here that the syntagmas often overlap with each other (Metz does not really mention this in his works, though such authors as Stam et al, Bateman and Schmidt have alluded to it), sometimes making it difficult to distinguish between the syntagmas. Thus, the definitions of the syntagmas and Metz's understanding of them sometimes have to be slightly stretched, though the general idea definitely stays the same, such as it has happened in the case with the parallel syntagma – the description of the syntagma definitely fits with the idea Metz has, though Metz had more in mind two continuous shots, while in 'Midnight in Paris' this parallel syntagma is divided by a couple of scenes. Nevertheless, it can still be seen as a parallel syntagma that serves it purpose of showing a distinction between the two parts of Gil's life and the one he clearly wants to belong to more.

It has to be mentioned that Allen also uses episodic sequences and dissolves shots in the parts of the film that are dedicated to the Paris of the past. Nevertheless, while the episodic sequences in the modern Paris are used by Allen to indicate the slow pace of time and the lack of connection that Gil has with his contemporaries and vice versa, the episodic sequences in Paris of 1920s seem to reveal the exact opposite. For example, there is a sequence with Gil and Adriana where they go exploring Paris during the night (49' 58"), and they talk incessantly throughout the whole sequence, revealing how alike they are and how much they connect with each other, despite them coming from different times. In this case, Allen also dissolves the shots one into the next, but it seems that the point here is different than in the

sequences that appear in modern Paris. In modern Paris the sequences take place in a relatively short space of time, and the dissolving of shots make it seem like the subjective time of the people in the sequence (Inez or Gil) goes much slower. In past Paris, on the other hand, the shots are dissolved into each other to also show the passing of time, but in this case it passes to quickly for Gil and Adriana. In the modern world, the conversationless (or Paul's monologue-filled) passing of time drives the characters apart, but in the past the conversations between Adriana and Gil bring them closer together. Thus, this episodic sequence is symbolic of both Gil's growing infatuation and connection with Adriana and, consequently, Gil's growing attachment of Paris of the 1920s.

Meanwhile the events in the modern world are mostly described in ordinary sequences that consist of relatively short shots, thus it seems that Gil has completely lost his connection with the modern world. Moreover, these ordinary sequences Gil for the most part spends all alone. If previously Gil at least physically was together with his fiancée and her friends, though he felt emotionally distant, now he is also physically alone, thus signalling the utter loss of connection with the modern world that Gil feels. In the modern Paris more and more ordinary sequences and scenes appear where the viewers can see Inez together with her family and there is mention of her spending more time with her friend Paul. Thus, Gil has distanced himself entirely from the modern world and this can be observed in his absence from the syntagmas that Allen uses.

There are also some ordinary sequences with Gil roaming the modern Paris, waiting for midnight when he can get transported back to the past. These ordinary sequences are devoted to Gil trying to find any kind of connection with the Paris of the past that he can manage – he buys the recording of Cole Porter (a singer who he has become familiar with in the past) and finds a book that has been written by Adriana. The ordinary sequence in this case is clearly visible, since it shows Gil trying to pass the time as quickly as possible, wandering around Paris.

When Gil and Adriana manage to travel back even more to Adriana's favourite time, Belle Epoque, there is a moment when they both are dancing where Allen has decided to use an episodic syntagma – several shots are linked together (they are dissolved one into another), where Gil and Adriana are simply dancing together. The shots are very brief and could almost be missed, but for the very important fact that with each shot the camera gets closer and closer to the couple, till nothing but their faces can be seen in the shot. This taken together with the fact that it is an episodic syntagma that has been used here shows that this is the closest Gil and Adriana will ever get – they have now shared a magical and insurmountable experience

that allows them to be on exactly the same wave, something that has never really happened with Gil in the modern Paris and with Adriana in the Paris of 1920s.

Towards the end of the film there is a very long scene during which Gil realises that he has been trying to escape the reality because it did not much up with his expectations. He says that 'I was trying to escape my present the same way you're trying to escape yours – to a golden age' (81' 44"). Nevertheless, Adriana refuses to go back to her own time, claiming that 'it's the present. It's dull' (81' 23"). Another long scene follows where Gil deals with all the problems in his everyday life in modern Paris – he breaks up with Inez and finally accepts everything that he has previously denied about himself, thus finally getting rid of the heavy weight of the past where Gil has been trying to escape to.

These two almost equally long scenes in the past and in the present, in my opinion, signal Gil's return to his own time and his ability to finally deal with the problems that he has inadvertently escaped throughout the whole film. In the second long scenes where Gil confronts Inez about her affair with Paul and dismisses Inez's parents, some real connection is finally made between the characters – they admit their dislike towards each other, which is something that previously has not been openly addressed by any of the characters.

Now that the most important parts of 'Midnight in Paris' in terms of Metz's grand syntagmatique have been discussed, it is possible make a kind of summary of the syntagmatic types used in the film.

Table 3.1. ***Syntagmatic Types in 'Midnight in Paris'***

Syntagmatic type	**Example**	**Possible reason for use**
Autonomous shot	N/A	
Parallel syntagma	Gil discussing art in Paris of the 1920s (35' 52") and Gil discussing art in modern Paris (44' 33").	To show the different attitudes towards Gil and by Gil towards others.
Bracket syntagma	Various shots of Paris (30" - 3' 45").	- to illustrate Paris as a beautiful and magic city - to show the stagnant nature of Gil' current life
Descriptive syntagma	N/A	
Alternating syntagma	N/A	
Scene	- Gil and Inez visit Versaille (8' 58"). - Gil meets Scott and Zelda (18' 58") - Gil is in Gertrud Stein's apartment (35' 30"). - Gil confronts Inez and her parents (84' 45").	- to establish Gil's disconnectedness from the modern world - to allow the viewers and Gil come to terms with going back in time - to show the depth of connection that Gil has with the people in the past

		- to show that Gil has come to terms with living in his own time
Episodic sequence	- Gil and Inez are waiting for the taxi to come and take them to the past (31' 27"). - Gil and Adriana dance and talk (77' 05").	- to show that Gil and the modern world are growing apart - to show that
Ordinary sequence	- Gil and Inez have dinner with Inez's parents (4' 30"); Gil tries to occupy himself while waiting for the night (62' 25")	- to speed along the events in the modern world

Now it is possible to observe that, according to Metz's classification, Allen has used quite a wide range of syntagmatic types. The reason for this goes closely together with the elements of magic realism that have been discussed in previous chapters. By the end of the film Gil realises that he has been trying to escape his own reality and trade it for something that he considered to be a better version of the world.

All in all, it can be seen that the use of syntagmatic types is not random, though it might be subconscious on the part of the director. Simply put, the syntagmatic types help show Gil's lack of connection with the real world and emphasize the connection with the past. Moreover, by the end of the film the roles become reversed when Gil learns to accept the modern world as his own.

The syntagmatic types also help convey the elements and ideas of magic realism. The main reason why the mode of magic realism is used in this work of art, is to express Gil's inability to cope with the modern world, and the use of syntagmas helps convey this. For example, in the beginning when there are scenes both in the modern world and in the past, the equality (in terms of realness) between the two worlds is shown. Similarly, the use of parallel syntagma helps in establishing both worlds on equal terms, but at the same time shows the viewers the different attitudes that Gil has towards the worlds and that the other characters have towards Gil himself.

3.2.Analysis of 'Life of Pi'

The premise of the 2012 film, directed by Ang Lee and starring Suraj Sharma, is as follows: 'A young man who survives a disaster at sea is hurtled into an epic journey of adventure and discovery. While cast away, he forms an unexpected connection with another survivor: a fearsome Bengal tiger' (Online 2). The film won four Academy Awards.

‘Life of Pi’ uses a framing device – the older Pi who lives in French Canada recounts the events of his younger life to a writer who is looking for a new topic for a book. A question might arise what makes this film magic realist, since there are no obvious links to this mode, as the story is presented as absolute truth by the person who is the main character in the film. This only means that the magic realism in ‘Life of Pi’ is brought to a whole new level, where the fantastic elements (the island of meerkats, the visions in the water and others) have been so very incorporated in the real life that even the narrator himself has accepted the elements as real. For him, this is a coping mechanism, a chance to escape the true reality and move on without actually going insane. Ang Lee and the author of the novel this film is based on Yann Martel are so meticulous in their descriptions of the fantastic that the readers of the book and the viewers of the film easily agree to suspend their disbeliefs regarding the events. The question remains what kinds of syntagmatic types are used in the film and whether they somehow help convey this idea.

Similarly to ‘Midnight in Paris’, ‘Life of Pi’ also starts with a bracket syntagma. This bracket syntagma, however, consists of 21 shots of the animal world (Life of Pi, 2012:27" - 4' 00"). Knowing the events of most of the film where the main character, Piscine Molitor Patel or simply Pi Patel, retells a story of how he was adrift in the Pacific Ocean together with a Bengal tiger called Richard Parker, it is clear why this has been the choice of the director – to show the animal world. What is more important, though, is that it is clear that all the animals that are shown are in a zoo (presumably the one owned by Pi’s father). Thus, the syntagma is representative of two things: first, Pi’s happy childhood, which he spent together with a lot of the zoo animals, learning to respect them and learning to love them. Second, it indicates to the viewers that the animal world is going to play a large role in the development of the film.

Moreover, the last shot of the bracket syntagma seems very symbolic. First of all, it indirectly shows a tiger. It is not specified whether the tiger is Richard Parker or some other tiger, but the fact that a tiger is shown last can also signal to the readers the role it is going to have in the film. Second of all, the tiger is not alone in the shot – its reflection in the water appears together with a small bird. This shot seems to be symbolic of the relationship that Richard Parker, the strong and carnivorous tiger, and Pi, the tiny and defenceless human being, are going to presumably develop in the course of the film.

Of course, knowing the true nature of the tiger and the fact that he is actually a human being with whose actions Pi was not able to cope (e.g., himself), thus he created the story of the tiger, the fact that we do not actually see the tiger in the last shot, but just its reflection, also seems kind of symbolic. To borrow an idea from a painting by Rene Magritte, the image of a pipe is not the pipe itself. Similarly, the reflection of a tiger is not the tiger itself.

Thus it can be seen that the bracket syntagma at the beginning of 'Life of Pi' serves several purposes – to show the importance of the animal world in the story, to illustrate the close relationship Pi has with the animal world thanks to his father's zoo and to put in the viewers' subconscious the important role (and, actually, the very existence) of a real tiger.

As it was mentioned before, Ang Lee uses a framing device in the film – Pi's incredible story is as if told by an older Pi himself to an unnamed writer who wants to write a book. This makes it more difficult to identify the syntagmas used in the film, since they overlap quite heavily. When Pi talks with the writer in the beginning about his childhood and the experiences he had as a child, the conversation with the writer could quite easily be called a scene. Even though a scene is supposed to be a continuity without breaks that is chronological, consecutive and linear and Pi's conversation with the writer in the first third of the film is constantly broken by flashbacks, the voiceover that is constantly heard by the viewers and provided by Pi and his conversation partner, makes it continuous, despite the breaks in the image track of the film.

The flashbacks themselves belong to the category of autonomous shots. One of the subcategories of an autonomous shot is the subjective insert, which corresponds exactly with the types of inserts that appear in the beginning of the film. For example, Pi as the narrator of them film reveals how he made the nickname Pi for himself, so that the other boys would not call him Pissing and make fun of the name and the boy himself (7' 39"). It is true that one of the prerequisites of an autonomous shot is that it consists of a single shot, but the syntagma where Pi makes other use his nickname instead of his name consists of several shots, depicting several events that took place during the day when this even happened. However, each of these shots could be taken separately and provide exactly the same information, thus according to Metz's classification they can be seen as subjective inserts.

After 11 minutes, the film starts shifting slightly – the subjective inserts get longer and longer, while the visual track of the scene in the modern day Montreal is shown less and less, even though the voiceover still appears quite often. Thus, step by step the viewers are transported to Pi's childhood and the subjective inserts turn into something else.

On the one hand, the length of each syntagma and the continued temporal unity would suggest that the subjective inserts have turned into scenes that allow us to be become more familiar with Pi and his way of thinking. On the other hand, however, all these scenes are linked together, so they could easily be called an episodic sequence. As it has been mentioned before, an episodic sequence should consist of brief scenes that symbolically all together build together towards something larger and more profound. In this case all the scenes from Pi's childhood build together to show the viewers several things – first, how he becomes who he is

when he is in the boat; second, to emphasize the impossibility of coexisting in close quarters with a tiger.

Previously, all the syntagmas we have discussed does not indicate anything that could even remotely be related to magic realism, so a question arises what makes this film and the novel it has been based on belong to the mode of magic realism. While it has to be admitted that the magic realism is more hidden in this film than in the other two discussed in this paper, the first indication is actually found in the aforementioned scenes where Pi learns about how dangerous a tiger really is (21' 29"). While the scene itself (Pi tries to 'meet' Richard Parker, but his father finds out about this and forces Pi to watch the tiger devour a goat) is in no way related to magic realism, it is important for the further turn of events when Pi is on the boat with the tiger. To a close viewer it is immediately clear that in real life a coexistence of a boy and a tiger boat is far from possible, thus the film can be seen as a magic realist work where the coexistence of a boy and a tiger in a boat is the irreducible element of magic.

After this scene where Richard Parker is introduced both to the viewers and to Pi, the visual track returns to the conversation between the older Pi and the writer only once when the writer proclaims 'I think you've set the stage. So far, we have an Indian boy named after a French swimming pool on a Japanese ship full of animals, heading to Canada' (35' 09"). This indicates that the most important part of the film has started and that all the previous events have only been a build-up before the main part of the story.

Afterwards there follows a long scene where the ship goes down and Pi ends up in a boat with several animals. Now that supposedly Pi is the only human in the film, the voiceover or any other allusion to the fact that the story is told years later to a writer disappears and the viewers are left on the boat together with Pi and his animal companions who soon destroy each other, until only Richard Parker is left. This is the place, therefore, where the viewers might be alerted to the fact that 'Life of Pi' is a magic realist work. However, often there is very little doubt about the reality of the events, since there are only two little things that indicate that something is wrong. First, the fact that the viewers have previously been shown that it is impossible for a human and a tiger to coexist in such small space. Second, during the storm when it is clear that they will have to abandon ship and animals can be seen going around the ship, trying to find sanctuary, Pi asks: 'Who let all the animals out?' (40' 05"), but no one answers him.

Here starts a very long episodic sequence that basically lasts throughout the whole part in the Pacific Ocean, showing how the tiger and Pi learn to live together with each other and cope with the situation they are both thrown into. The episodic sequence that consists of brief

scenes are intercut with longer scenes, depicting some specific even in the development in their relationship.

At 84' 28" there begins a curious subjective insert in the truest sense of this term – it is something between a vision, dream and daydream that Pi sees when during one of the many nights he starts staring in the water at the same time as Richard Parker does. In the insert Pi as if sees everything that happens in the depths of the Ocean, but at the same time he also sees his mother in the formation of the bright jellyfish, the animals that once belonged to his father's zoo, and the shipwreck at the bottom of the Ocean. This subjective insert shows that Pi is not a reliable narrator – wittingly or unwittingly his story differs from the reality. Pi himself states that he 'Words are all I have left to hand on to. Everything mixed up. Fragmented. Can't tell daydreams, night dreams from reality anymore' (86' 06"). Curiously, the fact that both Richard Parker and Pi stare into the ocean at the same time and, supposedly, see the same things foreshadows the revelation that Pi and Richard Parker are the same person.

After the establishment of Pi and Richard Parker's relationship and now that they can live in relative peace together on the boat, Ang Lee uses a number of ordinary sequences to show how both beings pass the day, since the dead matter that has no bearing on the plot development is cut away and the bare skeleton is left that shows the day-to-day routines of the odd couple.

The epitome of their peculiar relationship is when Pi realises that he and Richard Parker are both close to death, and Pi actually touches the tiger and takes his head into his lap. This situation is presented as a scene, which makes sense since it is a heartfelt and emotional moment for Pi. Pi says 'God, thank you for giving me my life. I'm ready now' (94' 01") and the screen fades to black, indicating Pi's submission to what he thinks is expecting him. Of course, the viewers are very well aware of the fact the Pi is not going to die, since in the beginning of the film we saw him as an older man and since the story is narrated by Pi himself (though at this point the narration has completely disappeared, so some viewers might have forgotten about it in the first place). Nevertheless, this fade to black indicates something else entirely – Pi's descent into a kind of state of madness (which he will come out from upon returning to life).

Pi's inability to differentiate real life from supposed reality here takes on a whole new level. Previously the only observation of this was the relatively brief subjective insert and what Pi himself noted in his journal that contained obvious unreal and fantastic elements, such as Pi being able to see the shipwreck from his both or glowing school of jellyfish arranging themselves to make a picture of Pi's late mother in the Ocean. Now Pi's madness is

incorporated in the reality by him finding an island that seemingly consists only of some kind tree-related plants and is inhabited only by enormous numbers of meerkats. The premise, of course, sounds more than ridiculous, bet Ang Lee's attention to detail that has been observed previously in the film and also on this strange island allows the viewers to stretch their belief system just enough to fit such a wonderful island somewhere in the world. This is the strong presence of the phenomenal world that Faris talk about when writing about the elements of magic realism. Even more, in a sense, this close attention to detail also reverberates with Franz Roh's ideas about the magical hiding in the details of the ordinary.

Therefore, the viewers cannot be entirely sure whether what they are seeing is really experienced by Pi or it is just a figment of his imagination, brought on by the many days spent in the ocean with no proper sustenance. Besides, it is a well-known saying that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, so Pi finding a place with water and food immediately after he accepts his destiny and makes peace with himself and Richard Parker dying seems quite plausible. Seemingly, this disregards one of the elements of magic realism, where the readers or the viewers and the characters are supposed to experience unsettling doubts about reconciling the real and the unreal merging together, but by this point any doubts that the viewers have probably have long been reconciled.

In hindsight, of course, it is clear that Pi is simply imagining things or adding them to his story, but nothing in Ang Lee's choice of syntagmas indicates this. Even more, the previous bout of insanity was shown in the form of a short subjective insert, but this time the situation in the island is represented as an episodic sequence – a type of syntagma that was also observed in the real life, thus the lines between the real and the unreal are completely blurred. Here it must be noted that bringing together two realms is one of the elements of magic realism, and using similar types of syntagmas seem to help in this process, and it does not really matter whether the choice by the director and/or cinematographer to use such similar filmic means has been made consciously or unconsciously.

The episodic sequence takes a nightmarish turn when during the night Pi sees dead fish in one of the pools where he was swimming a couple of hours before. Ang Lee reinforces the strangeness of the circumstances by using a displaced diegetic insert – a spatially displaces shot that shows the whole island from afar, giving off a strange and considerably eerie light (100' 24"). The shot stands out from the rest of the sequence (though it could also be considered as part of it) because all the other shots in the film, even though are not point of view shots, are of something that Pi can see for himself (of course, he cannot see his body himself the way viewers can, but he is present when the shot is taken). The shot of the island, on the other hand, while contextually coherent with the rest of the sequence, does not depict

something that Pi could easily see for himself and it is practically the only shot of this kind in the whole film; therefore, the eeriness of the island is doubly enforced on the viewers. Besides, it might throw some viewers who have paid attention to the way the film has been made, might be thrown off the balance by such a shot; therefore, they might turn their attention to the unreality and the fantastic element of the sequences. Similarly as with this contextually displaced shot, something in the story also does not really fit as it should. The feeling, of course, is also reinforced content-wise with the animal world acting weirdly – the meerkats all go into tress to spend the night as soon as the sun goes down, and even Richard Parker, who is previously seen ecstatic about the new-found source of food in the form of meerkats, returns to the much-hated boat where he does not sleep, but simply sits and observes the island.

The episodic sequence ends with Pi finding a fruit in the tree that he is sleeping in in the middle of which there is a human tooth that makes Pi go back to the boat and leave the island after getting some provision from the boat, thus concluding this unreal and quite disturbing experience. Curiously, the moment when Pi finds the tooth, the voiceover from the modern-day Montreal where Pi is having a conversation with the writer returns and the viewers are in a sense brought back to reality by the writer's disbelieving questions 'It was a human tooth?' (101' 05"). The visual track also shows both people sitting in a living room and talking with each other.

The sudden return to the framing device both in the form of the voiceover and the visual track signals the viewers that the film is slowly winding up and coming to an end – the older Pi, who tells the story, is close to finishing it and the viewers are about to have a happy ending they have been waiting for since Pi got stranded on the island. It also serves as a gentle, but needed reminder that Pi survives these experiences and gets to live a long and happy life in a civilised world.

Indeed, the next ordinary sequence that the viewers are presented with depicts Pi returning to civilisation and saying goodbye to Richard Parker who returns to the jungle. Ang Lee has chosen an ordinary sequence here because it is not clear how long Pi lies in the sand, trying to find strength to get up and do something; therefore, it is not clear for the viewers how much time has actually been cut out from the sequence. One, however, is shown clearly – how exhausted Pi is and how close to death he has come in his involuntary travels.

At the end of the film there is a very long scene where two men who have been sent by a Japanese insurance company does not believe the story; therefore, they confront Pi and he reveals the whole truth (108' 33") because, as the men put it, 'We need a simpler story for our report' (109' 49"). Afterwards Pi asks the writer just as he seemingly had asked to the men:

‘I’ve told you two stories about what happened out on the ocean. Neither explains what caused the sinking of the ship and no one can prove which story is true and which is not. In both stories the ship sinks., my family dies and I suffer. [..] So which story do you prefer?’ (116' 22").

The two scenes at the end of the film, one with the saved Pi and the other with the older Pi, and quite long, and the reason for this seems quite simple – the viewers and the writer are given a chance to reconcile the two worlds, something that was not really asked of them during the course of the film.

The film ends with a non-diegetic insert of the tiger and Pi that is deeply symbolic. For a brief moment both can be seen on the screen at the same time, but the tiger simply walks into the jungle, never looking back. Just like Pi chose to forget the worst part of himself that is never going to come back. The choice of the non-diegetic insert here is quite obvious, since this type of an autonomous shot is often used to emphasize some metaphoric issues in a film.

Table 3.2. ***Syntagmatic Types in ‘Life of Pi’.***

Syntagmatic type	**Example**	**Possible reason for use**
Autonomous shot	- displaced diegetic insert with the island (100' 24"). - non-diegetic insert of the tiger and Pi (118' 46").	- to emphasize that something is wrong with the island and, perhaps, with Pi himself - to drive home the point that Pi and the tiger are the same thing, but that the tiger has been left behind forever
Parallel syntagma	N/A	
Bracket syntagma	Shots of animal world in the beginning (10")	To show that animals are going to have an important role in the film
Descriptive syntagma	N/A	
Alternating syntagma	N/A	
Scene	- Pi and Richard Parker trying to establish their territory (61' 39") - The two men confronting Pi about his story (108' 33").	- to show the growing connection between Pi and Richard Parker - to allow the viewers to reconcile the two stories they have just heard
Episodic sequence	Pi and Richard parker learning to coexist in the boat (60' 06")	To show the development of their relationship
Ordinary sequence	- Pi’s childhood (6' 50"). - Pi’s return to civilisation (103' 42").	To skip across the details that have no direct bearing to the plot

As it can be seen the different types of syntagmas in Ang Lee's 'Life of Pi' often coincide with the reasons such syntagmas are usually used for in the films that do not belong to the mode of magic realism. Indeed, in very rare occasions magic realism seems to be an afterthought to the choice of the syntagmas. For example, when there are two long scenes at the end of the film that give the viewers the time and the peace to reconcile the two stories and choose which one they want to believe in.

Seemingly Ang Lee's extremely close attention to every single detail in the film (e.g., the behaviour of the animals), whether it be real or unreal and the final dialogues themselves are what helps the film convey its magic realism to the viewers.

Both the men and the writer choose the story with the Tiger. This whole choice of believing or not believing actually is very reminiscent of the principles of magic realism. As it has been discussed in the previous chapters, magic realism quite often is a way to cope with something that is too difficult to fully comprehend in the real world. Thus, in a truly postmodern manner, the story in a way becomes more important than the truth that might hide behind it. After all, Pi himself says 'If it happened, it happened. Why should it mean anything?' (107' 59").

3.3.Analysis of 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)'

The premise of the 2014 film, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu and starring Michael Keaton, is as follows: 'A washed-up actor, who once played an iconic superhero, battles his ego and attempts to recover his family, his career and himself in the days leading up to the opening of his Broadway play' (Online 3).

The film won six Academy Awards, including for the Best Picture and Best Director, effectively putting it in the cinematic foreground of the whole world. After receiving the Oscars, the film was also occasionally criticised for having received them only because the main topic of the film deals with something that most of the Academy member are very familiar with – being a celebrity in the modern world.

The protagonist of the film is Riggan Thomson (played by Michael Keaton), and during the film we can observe his interactions with his daughter Sam and his fellow actors Lesley Fryman, Mike Shiner and others, as well as his alter ego – the superhero he previously played in three films, called Birdman. This alter ego of his has seeped into his daily life, so Riggan is seen by the audience doing things that are characteristic to his on-screen persona – he flies, moves objects without touching them, etc. When Riggan is alone Birdman's voice can also be heard, talking to Riggan and making him re-evaluate his life that has lead him to this point.

Riggan's alter ego tries to talk Riggan into becoming a global superstar again by doing another Birdman film, even though the actor is already 60. Some have considered this film as a reimagining of William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' with Riggan being the titles character, while Birdman is Lady Macbeth (Online 4). This idea is supported in the film by the fact that at one moment towards the end of the film there is a homeless guy reciting lines from 'Macbeth on the street.

An interesting side-note can be made here about the actor who plays Riggan, Michael Keaton. Michael Keaton himself has played a superhero in several films – he was the popular comic book character Batman in the films 'Batman' (1989) and 'Batman Returns' (1992). Lately, however, his profile has been rather low key with him participating in films that have been critically and financially unsuccessful. Moreover, he had not had a leading role in more than six years before starting to film 'Birdman'. Interestingly, the voice of the Birdman in 'Birdman' is uncannily similar to the voice of Batman in the Batman trilogy made by Christopher Nolan.

These similarities between the main character of the film and the actual real-life actor who plays the film help reinforce the mode of magic realism that Iñárritu has used, since it makes it very easy for the audience to merge the real and the unreal. Besides, these details also bring out the aspect of the phenomenal world. As it has been discussed before, these two elements are characteristic to the mode of magic realism.

During the title sequence when the title 'Birdman' appears on the screen, there is a split second autonomous shot of a washed-up and supposedly dead jellyfish on the beach during a sunset (Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance), 2014:1' 25"). This can be categorised as a non-diegetic insert because there is not any special or temporal connection with the film itself, but there is a metaphorical connection with the main character of the film Riggan who can similarly be called a 'washed-up' actor at the close (or sunset) and possibly his life, depending on each person's subjective interpretation of the ending of the film. At one point in the film a journalist actually asks: 'Are you at all afraid that people will say you're doing this play to battle the impression that you're a washed-up superstar?' (10' 21"), thus the metaphorical connection between the actor and the jellyfish is even more pronounced.

What makes it even more obvious and provides also a literal connection between Riggan and the jellyfish, is the story that Riggan tells to his ex-wife close to the end of the film when he has decided to commit a suicide. He says

> I drove out to Malibu and I just sat on the beach for a while, looking out at the ocean. And I walked straight into the water. I tried to drown myself. I was in up to my chest when I felt the first one. On my back, like somebody was holding a frying pan against

> me. And then my chest, and my legs. The water was full of jellyfish. I fought my way out of the water, and I started rolling around the sand like a maniac... crying. (96' 33")

Thus, the initial shot with the jellyfish reverberates throughout the end of the film when the audience is given an opportunity to make a literal connection between jellyfish and Riggan, allowing them to interpret the shot at the beginning of the film. In a way, Riggan's uncharacteristic calmness before the last scene on the stage and him talking about his first attempt of suicide serves as a warning signal to both his ex-wife and the viewers of the film that something bad is about to happen, since usually Riggan is not known for opening up to his fellow people.

Symbolically speaking, the image of the jellyfish also denotes certain things. According to Ina Woolcott, jellyfish can be seen as a symbol of acceptance and faith (Woolcott, n.d.). One of the main themes of the film is that Riggan cannot accept his fall from zenith and struggles to find a new path that he could follow as successfully as the beginning of his career when he played a superhero called Birdman. Woolcott writes that 'these are the only creatures that rely on movement for the sustenance of their lives – they have almost no ability to move on their own, depending oceans currents and the directions of the wind to move it on the way that it must go' (Woolcott, n.d.). Similarly Riggan is drifting through what is left of his life, without any clear purpose and without truly understanding what he is supposed to do with his life and career now that he does not have to play a famous superhero anymore.

Thus, with a single, split-second long non-diegetic insert that appears so briefly that if a viewer blinks, he or she will miss it Iñárritu manages to establish certain thematic ideas about the direction of the film. Even if the audience does not register the image consciously, the length of it and the overpowering feeling of death that exudes from the image gives a certain impression of what can be expected from the film.

At 1' 37" there follows another non-diegetic insert of a meteorite falling that is abruptly interrupted by a shot of the main character sitting cross-legged on thin air (the first indication that the reality in this film is askew). The meteorite falling through a thick haze of clouds once again reinforces the idea already expressed by the non-diegetic insert of the jellyfish that is about to die – the meteorite is falling and is seemingly about to hit Earth, just as Riggan is metaphorically falling and cannot really stop himself. This idea is emphasized by the fact that the shot is very abruptly interrupted by a shot of Riggan himself who is at that moment literally hanging in the air – just like the meteorite (though at this point Riggan's fall is only metaphorical).

Curiously, the notion of the meteorite falling and of Riggan metaphorically falling from grace comes to mind at the end of the film when Riggan jumps out of the window, but his daughter's, Sam's, gaze indicates that he does not hit the ground as is expected, but he floats in the air just like his superhero self would. Thus, it is even more meaningful that at the beginning of the film we do not see the meteorite hit the Earth – we only see it in the process of falling and, although it seems inevitable that it (and Riggan with it) will hit the ground, the film proves that it is not what happens.

The shot where Riggan is sitting in thin air starts at 1' 53" and lasts till the very end of the film. This sounds unbelievable, but that is the effect that the editing has provided in the film. Up till 9' 17" the camera religiously follows Riggan, and it is indeed clear that there is only a single shot that is spatially and temporarily connected, no dead matter or unimportant details are cut out and, moreover, it really consists of a single shot that is not interrupted at any point.

At 9' 17", though, something changes – while the spatial continuity is preserved to its fullest, the temporal continuity is disrupted because it is made clear to the audience that time has passed while the camera was slowly panning over the view outside the window. This continues throughout the whole film – the spatial continuity always remains at the core, but the temporal continuity is clearly disrupted – day merges into night, characters suddenly appear in a room where they have not been before, etc.

There are some exceptions when the spatial discontinuity is also disrupted, however the seamless editing of the film is not. For examples, when Sam is showing her father a video on her phone, the camera zooms into it, so it takes up the whole screen, but when the camera zooms out, it is revealed the video is simply being shown on a TV screen in a near-by bar where the action continues to take place (80' 10").

The description of the shot according to Metz's classification coincides with the description of an explanatory insert that is often used to zoom in to letters, newsletters, videos, etc. for explanatory purposes. However, Iñárritu uses this as a way to connect two spatially and temporally disconnected places in a way that allows the film to keep its seamless editing and continuity.

When Riggan shoots himself on the stage, the camera pans up and a bright light obscures the view. After that there follows a sequence of autonomous shots – the meteorite falling; a band of drummers playing on a stage (it has to be noted that drumming provides a continuous musical accompaniment to the action on the visual track) with different superheroes (Spiderman, Iron Man) dancing among them; a storm outside of the window that is used as a prop in Riggan's play, light streaming in a dusty room through a small window, a

burning lamp post in a theatre building, and the jellyfish on the beach during a sunset (practically the same shot that can be seen at the beginning of the film, only longer) (101' 11"). Some of these images are repeated several times, and the whole sequence ends with the shot of the washed-up jellyfish on the shore, driving home the fact that just like in the story that Riggan told to his ex-wife, he has just tried to commit suicide.

The abrupt change in comparison with the rest of the film in the syntagmatic type Iñárritu has used here, however, alerts the audience to the fact that something has changed in the course of the film. Of course, the first conclusion that most viewers would come to is that Riggan has been successful in attempting suicide and has, therefore, died, however, since that is not true, the audience is left to assume that Riggan has successfully got rid of the Birdman that has been plaguing him from the very beginning of the film.

On the one hand, sequence of shots can, indeed, be considered as a sequence of eleven separate non-diegetic inserts that together serve the purpose of showing the chaos Riggan's life has become or simply picking up scenes from his life. On the other hand, it can be also seen as a bracket syntagma that represents Riggan's life – the emptiness, the fall, the dancing to the beat of someone else's drums, not your own that ends with the death of something. In the context of the film it seems that the bracket syntagma seems to be a more appropriate classification of the eleven-shot sequence.

The bracket syntagma is followed by another long shot of Riggan in the hospital. However, one of the theories that exist about this film suggests that this shot only takes place in Riggan's imagination prior to his death. The previously mentioned sudden use of the bracket syntagma supports this idea because the bracket syntagma signals break with the reality. Throughout the whole film Iñárritu has created a carefully crafted look of a single shot that allows the audience to immerse themselves in Riggan's reality that is riddled with fantastic elements that make this film belong to the magic realist mode. The bracket syntagma signals a clear break with this reality, as strange as it might have been, thus it is clear that something has changed for good.

As it was mentioned before, it is possible that this break with the reality simply means that Riggan has finally come to the term with who he is (or, to be more precise, with who he is not), but the final shot of the film that takes place in the hospital seems just a little too good to constitute a 'real' reality. For example, one of the plot lines of the film is Riggan's conflict with a theatre critic who promises to destroy his play in her review. However, when the review is read aloud to Riggan in the hospital, it says that

> Thomson has unwittingly given birth to a new form that can only be described as supra-realism. Blood was spilled both literally and metaphorically by artist and audience alike.

> Red blood. The blood that has been sorely missing from the veins of the American theatre... (104' 58")

Similarly, it has been made clear in the film that Riggan has a difficult relationship with his daughter Sam, but the very last shot of the film is of Sam looking admiringly at her father who has just flow out of the window (another indication that there is something wrong with this version of reality). These little instances give the impression that Riggan, indeed, might have succeeded in killing himself.

All in all, it has to be added that the criticism mentioned in the beginning of this subchapter that the film was so well-received in Hollywood just because it allows Academy members to reminisce and feel good about themselves, is probably misplaced. Riggan Thomson's problems do no lie in the fact that he is an actor, but rather in the fact that he is not satisfied with the place his decision have taken him to. The fact that this is observed by the whole world because he is an actor simply makes the problem hyper real and adds to the drama of the story. After all, it definitely cannot be said that Riggan's issues and his way of dealing with them are outside the field of vision for other people. Depressions and suicide are serious issues that Iñárritu has decided to put in the context of Hollywood, but it is my opinion that it does not mean that people outside of Hollywood cannot relate to 'Birdman' in any way.

Now that the whole film has been discussed in terms of the syntagmatic types that have been used in it, it is possible to make a summary of all the types and their use in the film.

Table 3.3. ***Syntagmatic Types in 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)'***

Syntagmatic type	**Example**	**Possible reason for use**
Autonomous shot	- non-diegetic insert of a dead jellyfish (1' 25"); non-diegetic insert of a meteorite falling and burning - practically the whole film can be seen as a series of autonomous shots that has been seamlessly edited, so as to look as a single autonomous shot	- used metaphorically to illustrate Riggan's current situation
Parallel syntagma	N/A	
Bracket syntagma	Various seemingly disconnected autonomous shots connected together immediately after Riggan shoots himself (101' 11")	To represent the chaotic and meaningless life that Riggan has lead
Descriptive syntagma	N/A	
Alternating syntagma	N/A	
Scene	N/A	
Episodic sequence	N/A	
Ordinary sequence	N/A	

As it can be seen, Iñárritu does not really use a wide range of syntagmatic types, but instead he has opted for creating a seamlessly edited film with very clear spatial continuity that makes the audience be on their toes the whole film. However, when Iñárritu does choose to make a switch in the syntagmatic types, it is done with a clear reason – to signify that Riggan's reality has changed forever, even if the question of how exactly it has changed remains open to everyone who is interested in answering it.

Moreover, Iñárritu's constant use of autonomous shots that have been edited together to create a single autonomous shot and his sudden turn to an episodic sequence at the end has a certain shock value, since the audience, being used to the autonomous shot, probably has not expected something as fast-paced. The autonomous shots during the film reinforce the feeling that it is indeed reality, as strange as it may seem, since seamless editing is the one that mostly resembles our lives. The sudden change, however, shocks the audience and throws it back in the world of cinema without giving a chance to really understand what has just happened with Riggan. Thus, Riggan's fate actually remains a mystery.

Of course, it has to be said that the beauty of magic realism lies in the fact that the story is more important than the truth – an idea that can be observed both in 'Birdman' and 'Life of Pi'. It is even written on a small page that Riggan has put on the mirror in his dressing room: 'A thing is a thing. Not what is said of that thing.'

3.4.Discussion of Findings

Now that all three films have been analysed separately, using Christian Metz's model of the Grand Syntagmatique, it is possible to add some ideas that concern all three films on the basis of the analysis done in the previous subchapters. The aim of this discussion of the findings is to find out if the use of various syntagmatic types somehow helps convey the ideas of magic realism and if there are certain similarities between the films and the directors' use of the syntagmatic types.

The analysis of the film show that apart from magic realism as a unifying element for all these films, there is another issues that ties them all together, and that is the main characters' inability to cope with a situation he is on. In 'Midnight in Paris' Gil is not satisfied with his life, but refuses to acknowledge it and do something about it. In 'Life of Pi' Pi is severely scarred by his experience while adrift in the Pacific Ocean, so he comes up with a story that helps him cope with the person he had to become in order to survive. In 'Birdman' Riggan Thomson is a washed-up actor who tries to become as famous and as successful as he once were.

The elements of magic realism put forward by Wendy B. Faris do appear in all three films, although some are more emphasized and some have to be looked for quite carefully. As it was mentioned before, Faris suggest these elements that lie at the basis of magic realism: the works contains an 'irreducible element' of magic; the visual particulars in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; the audience may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; the narrative (in Metz's theory narrative films are also texts) merges different realms; magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity. Faris' main aim was to write about literary theory (not surprising, since the field magic realist film is relatively unexplored), but the elements are just applicable to film as they are to literature, and the fact that these elements indeed appear in the films confirm this fact. Some of these elements are, indeed, more pronounced in the films (such as the irreducible element of magic), while other often have to be looked for very carefully (the unsettling doubts of the audiences), but they are still there.

In the chapter on magic realism the disruption of identity as part of magic realism was discussed in terms of it being one of the elements of magic realism. Nevertheless, the search for one's identity and the problems dealing with who you are rarely acknowledged as part of magic realist discourse, at least not in so many words. For example, for Echevarria magic realism is a purely Latin American mode through which one's identity can be expressed, but the three films analysed prove that magic realism can also work as an expression of the problems of finding one's identity in the modern world and dealing with who you actually are. After all, it cannot be a coincidence that the directors of three magic realist films of the modern times have decided to use the mode of magic realism to better convey these issues on the big screens.

All three films deal with trauma, however big it might be and whatever are the reasons for it, and the human inability to deal with it. Curiously, the process of narrativizing trauma in order to put it behind us, which is what is basically done in all three films, apparently is increasingly appealing to audiences, which also explains the ever growing popularity of magic realism. Magic realism here through all its elements appears as a mediator between the negative side of reality and the positive aspects of it. It might seems exaggerated to call the events in 'Midnight in Paris' traumatic per se, but as Vickroy explains, trauma is something that alters 'people's psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling appreciation of the present' (Vickroy, 2005:11-12). Gil's one particular event that he talks about often is when he some years ago decided not to stay in Paris and write novels, but go back to the

USA, thus starting a chain of events that has lead him to be a miserable human being who lacks the sense of purpose.

The reasons for narrativizing trauma are very well expressed by Laurie Vickroy who wrote that

> first, these works attest to the frequency of trauma and its importance as a multicontextual social issue [..]. Second, trauma narratives raise questions about how we define subjectivity as they explore the limits of the Western myth of the highly individuated subject and our ability to deal with loss and fragmentation in our lives. Third, the dilemmas experiences by characters in such narratives confront us with many of our own fears – of death, of dissolution, of loss, of loss of control – and provide a potential space within which to consider these fears (Vickroy, 2002:2).

It is unexpected how the issues dealt in the three magic realist films, analysed in this paper, coincide with what Laurie Vickroy is writing about trauma and how applicable these social and psychological issues are to the mode of magic realist film. Even though Vickroy does not specifically mention magic realist writing per se, the ideas she express about dealing with trauma in modern times, hold true for magic realist writings. Despite the fact that the traumas in the films are not based on real-life events and are of different magnitude, it still allows the audience to put themselves in the place of the characters and still expose important issues that have to be dealt with in the modern times.

Perhaps, expressing these issues with the help of magic realism is one of the steps that lead to better understanding of trauma in our culture. Using magic realism as the mode of expression seems like a way how to mediate to an even larger extent the trauma that has been experienced. It is often said by people who have experienced or are currently experiencing something traumatic that it seems unreal and hyper real at the same time – a description that is not far from the description of magic realism.

This unity of themes in all three film analysed brings up a question of the definition of magic realism as it has been described in the first chapter. One of the reasons for defining magic realism as a mode was that there is a certain benefit to naming it a mode – a mode is not restricted by specific themes that should appear in it (according to French literary theorist Gerard Genette), while genre works have to correspond to certain themes in order to be classified as part of a specific genre. Considering that ‘Midnight in Paris’, ‘Life of Pi’ and ‘Birdman: Or (The unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)’ do have such underlying questions begs the question whether it actually could be classified as a genre, not just simply a mode.

The answer of this question probably lies in further research of the theoretical background of magic realism and analysis of magic realist works in all the artistic fields that it has made an appearance in. It would also necessitate research on genre theory that would be

beyond the scope of this thesis; therefore, should be done in the framework of some other research.

As for Metz's framework of the Grand Syntagmatique that was used as the guidelines for the analysis, it must be said that there are very few elements that unite all three films. It has to be noted that one of such unifying elements is the fact that none of the films start straight with the action or introduces the characters immediately. The directors have rather preferred easing the audience into the film for various reasons.

In 'Midnight in Paris' and 'Life of Pi' this is done with the help of bracket syntagma, while in 'Birdman' there are two non-diegetic inserts used for this purpose. While the syntagmatic types in use here might differ, content-wise the types are used in order to connect the introduction of the film with the film itself. In 'Midnight in Paris' it allows the readers to get the feel of Paris and creates a certain sense of boredom; in 'Life of Pi' it signals the importance of animals in the story; in 'Birdman' it shows that the main character is experiencing some very troubling times that he cannot cope with.

In a sense all these shots also help to establish the phenomenal world as the main stage of the action. This is especially true for 'Midnight in Paris' and 'Life of Pi' where the bracket syntagmas are lengthier and manage to reflect the ordinariness of the world, whether it be the world of humans or the world of animals.

In 'Life of Pi' and 'Midnight in Paris' these introductory syntagmas also manage to convey some sort of symbolic meaning. In the first case, the audience sees the reflection of the tiger that might indicate that the tiger is not real, while in the second case, the jellyfish represent the main character himself who is about to go into his death.

Actually, the bracket syntagma is the only syntagmatic type that appears in all three films, and its purpose is always very similar. It provides typical samples of a given order of reality that is going to be seen in the film and gives the audience an inclination (at least a symbolic representation) of something related to the film. In 'Birdman' the bracket syntagma is chaotic and seemingly disconnected that it also signals the brake of the reality as the audience has come used to it.

Perhaps it could also be argued that the lack of specific syntagmatic types in magic realist films actually help to merge together the real and unreal events and characters in the film. However, the complete lack of consistency in this case more points of the fact that the use of syntagmatic types might be an expression of each director's individual 'handwriting'.

When it comes to expressing magic realism through syntagmatic types, it seems that it is not really possible – there are no certain syntagmatic types characteristic to magic realist films (of course, further investigation in magic realist film might reveal a different story).

However, the analysis shows that it is definitely possible to use the syntagmatic types so that they would help convey the ideas of magic realism in film. For example, in the case of 'Midnight in Paris' severe temporal discontinuity can be observed that is reflected in how Gil travels through time to the Paris of 1920s. This concept gives plenty of opportunities to use different syntagmatic types in order to better convey Gil disillusionment with his own time and his love for the Paris of the past. In such case Woody Allen's use of parallel syntagma is especially interesting, since it is possible to create contrasting situations in the modern world and the past.

The other two films discussed in this paper do not have such glaring jumps in time, even though 'Life of Pi' is shown to be a story told by an older Pi, but in this case it is just a framing device. Therefore, there is no need for using the parallel syntagma to show a contrast, as there is in 'Midnight in Paris'.

As it can be seen, based on the analysis of these three magic realist films, it can be said that there is not a specific syntagmatic types that the directors have chosen to use in order to better convey the ideas of magic realism in their films. Nevertheless, the choice and use of these syntagmatic types can help in the matter, such as in the case of 'Midnight in Paris' where parallel bracket is used to contrast Gil in the modern world and in the past and the autonomous shots with their seamless editing in 'Birdman' that do not let the audience have the time to doubt the reality of what they are seeing in front of them.

Moreover, it seems quite obvious that Woody Allen's 'Midnight in Paris' is the film that makes most use of the syntagmatic types in the sense that the use of syntagmatic types can be seen as rooted in the necessity to convey ideas of magic realism. For example, the scenes that take place in the Paris of the 1920s are much longer, than the scenes and ordinary sequences in the modern-day Paris. Thus, the connection that Gil shares with the characters of the past is shown to be much closer and more meaningful than the connection he has with his own fiancée in his own time.

The two other directors, however, do not use the syntagmas, and the ideas of magic realism are conveyed differently in their works, such as with the help of eloquent dialogues, great attention to visual details and connections with the real world. In 'Life of Pi' the phenomenal world is conveyed so forcibly and with such a zeal that some audiences might not even notice that they are being duped until the very end of the story, when Pi reveals the other story.

In a way it can be said that magic realism in 'Midnight in Paris' is more obvious, if magic realism can be graded in such a manner, than in 'Life of Pi', where it is almost hidden in order to create a twist ending, and 'Birdman', where some might choose to call the

expressions of magic realism, the main character's schizophrenia. Therefore, Woody Allen has had more opportunities to play with the syntagmatic types and develop a certain system that enforces the ideas of magic realism and helps the audiences come to terms with such glaring deviations from reality

All in all, it definitely cannot be said that there is a specific choice of syntagmatic types that is made by directors who make magic realist films, since the choices do not show a common denominator. Nevertheless, there are certain syntagmatic types, such as parallel syntagma and scenes, that can help when contrasting the real and the unreal if such a contrast is necessary. The elements of magic realism, therefore, are expressed mostly through other means, such as dialogues, emphasis on details, fantastic occurrences, etc.

In conclusion, all three films have a unifying element. They all speak about the struggles of the modern man (curiously, not about the struggles of the modern woman) who has to find a way to cope with the harsh reality, whether it be his own stagnant life, his own murderous nature or the consequences of his own decisions, thus revealing that magic realism goes hand in hand with narrativizing trauma. Magic realism provides an outlet for the expressions of these struggles; therefore, as the world grows stranger with every day, it can be expected that magic realism will continue to strive in all fields of art.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to explore magic realism in film, since it is not a topic that has been widely researched, paying special attention to the structural semiotic analysis of the films with the help of Franz Roh's Grand Syntagmatique. Three research questions were put forwards. First, what semiotic elements are used in the films 'Midnight in Paris', 'Life of Pi' and 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)'. Second, what elements of magic realism appear in the three films and why? Third, are the ideas of magic realism expressed in the three films with the help of semiotic elements? In order to answer these questions it was first necessary to establish the theoretical background – the concept of magic realism and film semiotics.

Magic realism is a concept whose appearance in the world is riddled with questions and conjectures, since the term first appeared in Franz Roh's work 'Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei' ('After expressionism: Magical Realism: Problems of the newest European painting') in 1925. The reason for the questions about the origins of magic realism is that the term was used by different authors to mean very different things. While Franz Roh, for example, thought magic realism is hidden in the everyday object, Echevarria and many others were convinced that it hides only in Latin America.

It is clear, however, that the concept of magic realism has managed to pervade a wide range of fields, though it was first mentioned in connection with painting and is best known in connection with Latin American literature. Even though some authors agree that Latin America is the only place where the true magic realism appears, even more authors, such as Faris, Hegerfeldt, Bowers and others are convinced that it is a global phenomenon that cannot be geographically constricted to a specific place. Moreover, it even cannot be constricted to a single field, which explains magic realism appearing in literature, visual arts, film, photography and others.

This wide use of magic realism and the unclear origins of the term that have resulted in a rather loose definition of the term mean that it is nearly impossible to come upon one conclusive and absolute definition of the concept. For the purposes of this paper, however, it suited best that magic realism is considered as a mode with no clear restrictions of themes, but with certain elements that should be included in the works. Nevertheless, the analysis of the three magic realist films revealed that there are common underlying issues at the heart of each film, thus begging the question whether magic realism could actually be defined as a genre.

The empirical part of the thesis deals with the analysis of three randomly chosen magic realist films – 'Midnight in Paris' (Woody Allen, 2011), 'Life of Pi' (Ang Lee, 2012) and 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014). All three films have been positively viewed by critics and audiences alike. Their subject matters, however, are very different, but despite this all three films deal with protagonists that cannot bear the weight of reality.

When viewed as magic realism pieces, the films, indeed, confirm with the theories expressed in the empirical part. The elements of magic realism are present in the films, and the mode is used to express some underlying issues, not simply to surprise readers by odd occurrences on the screen. One of the elements of magic realism, namely, disturbing the ideas about time, space, identity, seems especially significant in the field of cinema, since all three films deal with it in one way or another. The distortion of the reality in terms of space and time and the distortion of one self seemingly signal the inability of people to cope with their personal traumas, whatever they might be, starting from being bored with one's life and ending with a desperate murder of a fellow human being. To an extent, this is a curious commentary on the popularity of magic realism in the modern culture, and our need to narrativize traumas in order to get rid of them or put them behind us.

Nevertheless, in terms of Metz's syntagmatic types, there is no common denominator that would allow making specific conclusions about the syntagmatic types that are most often used in magic realist films. However, Woody Allen's 'Midnight in Paris' that of all three films contains the most outlandish instances of fantastic events does make use of certain syntagmatic types in order to better convey the ideas of magic realism. Thus, it is possible to use certain syntagmatic types to help illustrate the mode of magic realism, but such use is up to each individual director. Otherwise, magic realism can be expressed through entirely different means.

All in all, it can be said that the popularity of magic realist works that appear nowadays testify about the psychological and social issues pervading the modern society, as well as the need to narrativize these experiences to make sense of them or put them behind. Magic realism film is not an exception to this; therefore, it can be expected that magic realism will continue to be a significant phenomenon with representative in many fields of art.

THESES

1. Magic realism first appeared in Germany in 1925 when it was introduced by Franz Roh to talk about painting. However, the subsequent appearance of magic realism in Latin America interpret the term differently; therefore, historic continuation cannot be considered a key concept in the development in magic realism.
2. Though some writers consider magic realism to be a purely Latin American mode of writing, it is more sensible to view magic realism as a global phenomenon that has found its way in many cultures, fields and genres.
3. There are still difficulties in defining the term 'magic realism' because of its unclear origins and wide range of uses, but for the purposes of this paper magic realism is seen as a mode that cuts across many fields and genres.
4. According to Wendy Faris, there are five elements that appear in magic realist works: an 'irreducible element' of magic; strong presence of the phenomenal world; unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; merging different realms; disturbed ideas about time, space, and identity.
5. Magic realism in film is a relatively unexplored field of research, but the authors that have written about it agree that the reasons for the use of magic realism are never superficial, but signify the existence of underlying issues.
6. There are many theories concerning the semiotic analysis of film, but Christian Metz's theory of the Grand Syntagmatique, consisting of eighth syntagmatic types at the disposal of the director to create meaning in film, is suitable for the analysis in this paper, it serves as an attention-focussing device that also helps to look at the issues beyond the montage level of the film.
7. Christian Metz's Grand Syntagmatique consist of eight syntagmatic types that can be used when creating a film: the autonomous shot, the parallel syntagma, the bracketing syntagma, the descriptive syntagma, the alternating syntagma, the scene, the episodic sequence, and the ordinary sequence.
8. All five elements of magic realism that Wendy Faris explored in terms of magic realism in literature, can also be found in 'Midnight in Paris', 'Life of Pi' and 'Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance', thus proving that they are applicable to magic realism film.
9. Each element of magic realism in all three films is used as a means of expression for an underlying issue, thus proving that the mode of magic realism in the Western world has not lost its significance.

10. A unifying pattern of choosing syntagmatique types in films in order to better convey ideas of magic realism cannot be observed in the three films analysed, thus the mode of magic realism is expressed through different means.

11. There are certain syntagmatic types, such as parallel syntagma and scenes, that can help when contrasting and bringing together the real and the unreal in magic realist works if it is necessary for the benefit of the characters or the audience.

12. All three films analysed are concerned with the issues that nowadays people are unable to deal with the reality, especially when it comes to dealing with trauma. This connects magic realism with the discourse of trauma and representing trauma.

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Films

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2. *Life of Pi*. [Film] Directed by: Ang Lee. USA, Taiwan, UK, Fox 2000 pictures, 2012.
3. *Midnight in Paris*. [Film] Directed by: Woody Allen. Spain, USA, France, Gravier Productions, Mediapro, Pontchartrain Productions, 2011.

DOKUMENTĀRĀ LAPA

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