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Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Theoretic Approach.....	10
1. Concepts of References	10
1.1. Intertextuality.....	11
1.2. Intermediality.....	14
1.3. Self-Referentiality	17
2. Concepts of Metareference.....	20
2.1. The Meta-Phenomenon as a Transmedial Concept	20
2.2. Aspects of Metareference	22
2.3. Forms of Metareference.....	24
2.3.1. Story vs Discourse-Mediated Metareference	26
2.3.2. <i>Fictio</i> vs <i>Fictum</i> Metareference	27
2.3.3. Explicit vs Implicit Metareference	28
2.3.4. Internal vs. External Metareference	30
2.4. Functions of Metareference	30
2.4.1. (Anti-)Illusionist Effects and Aesthetic Function	31
2.4.2. Affirmative Function.....	33
2.4.3. Critical Function.....	34
2.4.4. Communicative Function	34
3. Aspects of Metafilms.....	36
3.1. Metatheatre	36
3.1.1. Forms of Metatheatre	37
3.1.2. Adapting Meta-Theatrical Elements for Film	39
3.2. Metafilms.....	40
Applications to Film Analysis	43
1. References to Film as a System.....	43
1.1. The Film Industry	43
1.2. Actors and Stardom	45
1.3. Aspect of Film-Making	47
2. Genre as Metareference.....	51
3. Medium-Specific Metareferences	56
3.1. Sound.....	56

3.2. Image	64
3.3. Editing	66
4. Narrative Strategies of Metafilms	73
4.1. Story and Discourse (Time).....	73
4.2. Blurring Boundaries	74
5. Filmic Self-References	81
5.1. Metatextual Self-Reference	81
5.2. Intertextual Self-References	84
5.2.1. Allusion and Homage	84
5.2.2. Film in Film	86
6. Intermedial Reference	89
<i>Conclusion</i>	96
<i>References</i>	99
1. Bibliography	99
1.1. Primary Sources.....	99
1.1.1. Films	99
1.1.2. Film scripts	99
1.2. Secondary Sources	100
<i>Appendix I</i>	106
Table of Figures	106
List of mentioned films:.....	106
Index	107
<i>Appendix II</i>	108
Abstract – “Metareferenzen im zeitgenössischen Film”	108
Abstract – “Metareferences in Contemporary Film”	108
Curriculum Vitae	110

Introduction

We are fascinated by films and the stories they tell. They take us on adventures and show us places we have never seen before. Some films even take us behind the screen, they direct the camera at themselves and invite us to take a look at the mechanisms of film and film-making. Cinema brought forth a large number of so-called *metafilms*, films which refer to their own world and medium.

For a long time, hiding narrative strategies was state of the art and self-reflexive cinema the domain of experimental filmmakers and the avant-garde film. Film was committed to uphold the aesthetic and fictional illusion. As a result, most films tried to make the audience forget and hide the mediality and constructedness of the very film they were watching. Postmodernism brought about a change and the audio-visual arts and media became increasingly self-referential and reflexive: “The mediators have turned to representing representations. Instead of narrating, they narrate how and why they narrate, instead of filming, they film that they film the filming” (Nöth *Self-Reference* 3). It is precisely this, the self-reflexive nature that characterises metafilms:

[They] interrupt the flow of narrative in order to foreground the specific means of [...] filmic production. To this end, they deploy myriad strategies – narrative discontinuities, authorial intrusions, essayistic digressions, stylistic virtuosity. They share a playful, parodic and disruptive relation to established norms and conventions. They demystify fictions, and our naïve faith in fictions, and make of this demystification a source for new fictions. (Stam xi)

In recent years metaisation has steadily increased across all media and genres. Self-reflexive techniques have found their way into popular culture and are widely adopted today. It is a development that should be seen in connection with a trend that emerged in the 1990s and is affecting the audio-visual media, which employ new methods of storytelling and are experimenting more often with their own medial means. They not only reflect on *what* they narrate but more often also *how* they do it.

This is where this paper sets off. Focusing on medium-specific forms of metaisation, I aim to explore the various ways in which contemporary film deconstructs its own narrative means. In order to do so, I selected seven films as a basis for my case studies. All films were released after 2000, are aimed at different audiences and cover a wide range of genres:

THE GUARD (2011), written and directed by John Michael McDonagh, casts “a fresh eye over ossified genre conventions” starring Brendan Gleeson as Sergeant Gerry Boyle,

an Irish Garda officer, who finds himself working together with his American counterpart FBI Agent Wendell Everett (Don Cheadle) to stop drug-trafficking (Canning 206).

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS (2012), written and directed by Martin McDonagh, is a “comedy about the whole culture of Hollywood genre pics” (James 34). It follows the screenwriter Marty (Colin O’Farrell), who is trying to write a film about seven psychopaths, and his friend Billy (Sam Rockwell), who desperately wants to help him but sets off a series of unfortunate events.

HUGO (2011), directed by Martin Scorsese, is an adaptation of a children’s book by Brian Selznick. It is set in Paris in the 1920s and takes the orphan Hugo (Asa Butterfield) as well as the audience on a journey, discovering the beginnings of cinema and especially the works of the French illusionist and filmmaker George Méliès.

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE (2000), written by Steven Katz and directed by E. Elias Merhige, poses the question: “What if the star of Murnau’s classic silent film *Nosferatu* wasn’t just acting?” (Atkinson 27) and revolves around the film shoot of the German classic. Murnau (John Malkovich) hires a vampire (Willem Dafoe) to play the role of an actor who then plays a vampire in his film. However, the vampire does not know acting and the rest of the film crew is oblivious to his true nature, a combination that leads to an ill-fated shoot.

TRISTRAM SHANDY: A COCK AND BULL STORY (2005), directed by Michael Winterbottom, written by Martin Hardy, a pseudonym “for the screenwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce, who decided that it would be inappropriate to take credit for what turned into a largely unscripted performance” (New 579), is a film that starts off as a film adaptation of Sterne’s classic but soon turns the camera onto itself. In the style of a ‘mockumentary’ it is set during the film shoot of the 18th century novel.

THE ARTIST (2011), written and directed by Michael Hazanavicius, is a ‘silent film’ set in Hollywood of the early 1920s. George Valentin (Jean Dujardin) is a film star with a declining career as his era, the era of silent films, comes to an end. Meanwhile for Peppy Miller (Bérénice Bejo) the face of the new ‘talkies’, it is only just beginning. The film tells the story of their intertwined paths.

BIRDMAN (2014), written and directed by Alejandro G. Iñárritu, is set at Broadway where the Hollywood actor Riggan (Michael Keaton) is working on his comeback. He is directing and acting in his own production but has troubles not only financing it but is also challenged by one of the main actor’s difficult persona (Edward Norton). While the

reminiscence of his past career is haunting him, the boundaries between his own life and that of the on-stage character start to blur.

On the story level, these films differ considerably. What they have in common, however, is their playful way in which they make reference to themselves. The writers and directors of the aforementioned films have created self-conscious works, drawing on and referencing a broad cultural knowledge.

Before investigating to what degree these references can be described as metareferential and how they achieve metaisation, it is necessary to establish the theoretical parameters with which the analysis is later conducted. Thus, the first part of the paper is a theoretical approach to the meta-phenomenon. Starting with more general terms of reference and the interrelated concepts of *intertextuality*, *intermediality* and *self-referentiality*, I try to lead to the complex concept of metareference. This way of proceeding should not only result in a better understanding of metaisation but at the same time allows to introduce forms of reference which film uses for metareferential accounts, as discussed in the second part. Research on self-reference in film has shown that an approach to film needs to be able to cover the film in its entirety, from production to consumption, by providing a broader framework without restricting itself to the film as a text (Withalm *Screen*). The analysis will therefore also consider the film as a system and its various stages, which can serve as points of reference for meta-elements.

This leads to the second and main part of the paper, concerned with the application of the aforementioned theoretical concepts to film. It analyses the various possible strategies which the selected films use for self-reflexive and meta-referential accounts. To better illustrate the different meta-elements and processes at work, each chapter focuses on one aspect through which film can achieve metaisation. For each chapter I chose a film and representative examples which illustrate the addressed aspect in an especially clear way. Naturally, the selected film but also the other films may include more meta-elements, which could also be grouped under the same heading – in fact, this is often the case. Only when examples from other films allow a differentiated perspective on the same aspect, I include them as well. Otherwise however, I do not list every single meta-element. Chapters which mainly focus on one single film are, for example, ‘sound’, ‘edit’ and ‘narrative strategies’, while the aspects of genre or intermedial reference, needs to draw on examples of different films to be adequately covered.

With the present paper I aim to show and reflect the most common forms of meta-references in contemporary film. The paper's findings will not only offer insights on self-referentiality in film and their medium-specific methods of metaisation but will also contribute to the meta-discourse, thus answering the call of scholars to further investigate the meta-phenomenon (Wolf *Metareference*; Hauthal et al.).

Theoretic Approach

1. Concepts of References

‘Intertextuality’, ‘intermediality’, ‘self-referentiality’ and ‘meta-referentiality’ are literary concepts which are based on various forms and degrees of reference. Broadly speaking they describe ways in which texts can refer to other texts, to themselves or do both but from a higher, so-called meta-level. The interrelatedness of these concepts is especially true for meta-referentiality which draws on aspects of intertextuality as well as self-referentiality.

From a historical perspective and especially with regards to theory concerned with the phenomena under considerations, all three concepts are relatively young as they emerged and established themselves predominantly in the 20th century. However, texts containing intertextual, self-reflexive or metareferential features have been in existence for much longer than that. Prime examples in literature are Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, as well as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *8½* (1963) by director Federico Fellini in theatre and film, respectively. This shows that the characteristics of these concepts are not a novelty to the arts. What is new, however, is a different and changed understanding of these concept as well as the terminology with which literary theorists try to define them. As Manfred Pfister notes in his study of intertextuality, these are generic terms for methods in literature which literary theorists have explored before, however, under different names: “[Die literarischen Verfahren werden] nun innerhalb des neuen systematischen Rahmens prägnanter und stringenter definiert und kategorisiert [...]“ (*Konzepte* 15).

Another aspect these concepts of referentiality share are the ongoing publications contributing to the large number of already existing studies, often trying to answer the call for clear terminology. Despite their efforts to clarify these concepts of intertextuality, intermediality and self-referentiality, the opposite appears to be true. The vast number of contributions to the topic has made it even more difficult to grasp the concepts (cf. Nöth *Self-Reference*; Rajewsky). Therefore it seems especially important to analyse the concepts in question a) to clarify what is meant when talking about ‘intertextuality’, ‘intermediality’ and ‘self-referentiality’, and b) to make this analysis applicable for the study of metareferences in films conducted in the second part of this paper. Regarding this, one should note that the concepts under consideration have their point of departure

in language and literary studies. In the following analysis I therefore approach these concepts first from a literary perspective before putting them into a filmic context.

1.1. Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality can be found across all different genres and media and is based on the understanding that texts are related to each other. As Graham Allen notes in his study *Intertextuality*, this is a major concept within discussions of contemporary culture and “seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life” (5). The term ‘intertextuality’ was coined by Julia Kristeva in her study *Word, Dialogue and Novel* in which she further developed and transformed the concept of ‘dialogism’ by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s understanding is that “[f]rom the simplest utterance to the most complex work of scientific or literary discourse, no utterance exists alone” (Allen 19). All utterances are dialogical and not only refer to what has been said before but are also influenced by these pre-existing texts. For Kristeva, texts are not only dialogical but actually also coincide with other texts: “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (qtd. in Allen 37). Adapting Bakhtin’s concept, Kristeva drastically expands the notion of text by detaching it from an authorial subject that is closely linked to Roland Barthes’ concept of ‘the death of the author’ (first publ. 1967). “Whilst Bakhtin’s work centres on actual human subjects employing language in specific social situations, Kristeva’s way of expressing these points seems to evade human subjects in favour of the more abstract terms, text and textuality” (Allen 37). Along with the individual subject of the author also the individuality of the text dissolves and thus it becomes part of a universal, collective text or ‘texte général (Pfister *Konzepte* 9). “According to her [Kristeva’s] theory *all* texts are intertextual, [...] and her concept, therefore, aims at characterizing the ontological status of texts in general” (Pfister *Postmodern* 210).

Although fundamental, Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality has been challenged. Critics have argued that her original and rather philosophical approach does not lend itself to interpreting individual texts. Considering Kristeva’s radical and all-comprehensive concept of intertextuality, it becomes clear why. Based on the belief that there is no blank space and that texts are always written into already prescribed space, every text is a reaction to pre-existing texts, which in turn are reactions to other texts. Any subject matter which a text can refer to has thus already been discussed or written on. Every structural

element – may it be words or syntax, features of text types or specific text elements – are shared with other texts, and under certain regards with all texts. As a consequence, there are no individual texts, only relationships between texts. Intertextuality is seen as a universal quality of texts (Pfister *Konzepte* 11-13; *Postmodern* 210).

In order to be applicable for literary studies, it has therefore been argued that the broad understanding of intertextuality needs to be narrowed down. Thus literary critics adopted the existing principle and devised a concept of intertextuality in which “one text pointedly refers to another” (Pfister *Postmodern* 210) and allows the comparison and examination of intertextual devices. In his study *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982), the critic and literary theorist Gérard Genette pursues a systematic analysis of intertextuality. Breaking down and classifying the various intertextual devices and forms which a text can contain, he establishes five categories. As a basis for his analysis, Genette defines ‘transtextuality’ as the underlying concept of all kinds of relations between texts whether overt or concealed, which could be described as “Genette’s version of intertextuality” (Allen 101).

His first category is called ‘intertextuality’ and defined as “the actual presence of one text within another” (qtd. in Allen 101) such as quotations, allusion and plagiarism. ‘Paratextuality’, as a second category, is the relationship of a text with its ‘paratext’, namely title, footnotes, table of contents etc. which directs the reader’s attention and controls the reception of a text. Filmic ‘paratexts’, for example, include opening and closing credits, subtitles, text inserts and, more broadly, film trailers and posters, as well as interviews with filmmakers or starring actors, additional released film material, behind the scenes footage etc.; any material that accompanies the film. The third of Genette’s categories is ‘metatextuality’ which he defines as critical commentary of another text: “It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it” (qtd. in Allen 102). The last two of Genette’s categories are ‘architextuality’ and ‘hypertextuality’. While the former is related to how a text defines itself or is perceived as belonging to a genre, the latter focuses on how one text (hypertext) is being derived from another text (hypotext). Genette’s narrow classification provides a helpful set of tools to closely analyse and establish different types of intertextuality within a given text.

By shifting the focus and narrowing down the concept, Kristeva’s critics give importance to individual texts and thus the individual subject of the author resurfaces.

Only those references count as intertextual that are clearly intended by the author, distinctly marked in the text and recognized and realized by the reader. In this

structuralist version of intertextuality the author retains authority over his text, the unity and autonomy of the text remain intact, and the reader does not get lost in a labyrinthine network of possible references but realizes the author's intentions by decoding the signals and markers inscribed into the text. (Pfister *Postmodern* 210)

The author's and reader's role gain importance as it is them who make the 'intertext' visible and communicable (Klett 5), an aspect that is also significant for metareferences, as we will later see. One needs to be aware, however, that there is always the possibility for readers to interpret texts and see intertextual relations which were not intended by the author or that the readership does not detect intertextual references which were put in the text by the author. These are aspects which this approach fails to recognise, or as it seems, deliberately omits. In my opinion, the focus should not so much be on the author and the question whether intertextual references have been put in a text intentionally or not – since once detected, they exist. Besides, the question cannot be unambiguously settled as, to say it with Barthes, the author is dead after all.

The brief outline of intertextuality has shown that, depending on the focus, the concept of intertextuality can be wide-ranging, incorporating a whole network of texts, or narrow and limited to the relation shared by two texts only. For the purpose of this paper, intertextuality is defined as the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts, including allusion, adaptation, translation, parody, imitation and other kinds of transformation.¹

In this context, 'text' is not a close concept restricted to literary studies but one that is broadened and can be applied to the non-literary arts. Although 'text' is traditionally associated with language and literature, with regards to the non-literary arts, Allen observes that "it is possible to speak of the 'language' of cinema [...] which involve[s] productions of complex patterns of encoding, re-encoding, allusion, echo, transposing of previous systems and codes" (174). Also Robert Stam notes "if the filmmaker is a writer, the film, by implication, is a text. [...] 'text', etymologically, means 'tissue', and [...] the filmmaker 'weaves' cinematic and extra-cinematic code into a textual system" (Stam 20). In addition, Allen points out that "just like literary texts, [films] constantly talk to each other as well as talking to the other arts" (175).

In the broadest sense, intertextuality in film may include film adaptations of literary works such as novels or plays and, for example, allusions to other movies. Film, as an

¹ This way of proceeding is also recommended by Manfred Pfister, who analyses the two main approaches to intertextuality in *Konzepte der Intertextualität*: „Für die Textanalyse und –interpretation ist sicher das engere und prägnantere Modell das heuristisch fruchtbarere, weil es sich leichter in operationalisierte Analysekatoren und Analyseverfahren überführen läßt [...]“ (25).

audio-visual medium, can also explore the non-literary arts and include intertextual reference to applied arts and music. Strictly speaking, however, the term ‘intertextuality’ only applies when the interacting texts belong to the same medium: when literary texts talk to literary texts or films to films.² Intertextuality that includes a correspondence between different types of media can be further distinguished and is summarised under the term ‘intermediality’.

1.2. Intermediality

The concept of intermediality is closely connected to the discourse of intertextuality and acknowledges that media do not exist disconnected from one another but constantly communicate with and influence each other; art forms cross media boundaries and appear in other media and works. As with many (theoretical) concepts in the humanities, intermediality also lacks a unifying theory and definition. Enjoying increased popularity since the mid-1980s, intermediality has been used as an umbrella-term by different disciplines to describe various and heterogeneous aspects summarised under the same term. A leading scholar on intermedial research, Irina Rajewsky, notes that “[a] variety of critical approaches make use of the concept, the specific object of these approaches is each time defined differently and each time intermediality is associated with different attributes and delimitation” (44). Therefore, intermedial aspects which are relevant for film in general and of interest for this paper are highlighted in the following.

Similar to intertextuality the concept of intermediality can be described in both a broad and in a narrow sense. In a broad understanding intermediality can be used “as a generic term for all those phenomena that (as indicated by the prefix *inter*) in some way take place *between* media” (Rajewsky 46), while more narrowly defined concepts of intermediality focus on “*specific* intermedial manifestations” (46). When interested in concrete intermedial relationships between individual texts only the latter approach can be fruitful. As Rajewsky suggests and also Jens Schröter (*Discourses and Models of Intermediality*) shows, the narrow approach to intermediality can be broken down into subcategories.

² This type of interrelatedness which I define as ‘intertextuality’ is sometimes also called ‘intramediality’ (cf. Rajewsky). *Intramediality* focuses on references within a *single* medium while *intermediality* is concerned with the relationships between different media. In a narrow conception of ‘text’ which is restricted to literary texts, intertextuality would be a subclass of intramediality, and so would be references by one film to another film. In order to avoid confusion and to emphasise the relevant aspects of each concept I use ‘intertextuality’ when talking about relations between texts of the *same* medium and ‘intermediality’ when the focus is on *different* media.

Grouping intermedial manifestation according to their defining features allows not only to systematise intermediality but also to analyse intermedial forms more closely.

When a 'text' has been transferred from one medium into another, one can define intermediality in the sense of 'medial transposition' such as film adaptations and novelizations. This category shares a certain correspondence with Genette's 'hypertextuality', as the focus lies on "the way in which a media product comes into being" (Rajewsky 51). It is a transformation that always suggests a hierarchical order from the 'original' or the 'source' (hypotext) to the newly adapted media product (hypertext). Film and cinema, from their earliest beginnings onwards, have relied on this type of intermediality. As a new and popular 'low-culture' art form, cinema depended on borrowing cultural value from well-established art forms by transferring "established and 'serious' forms of literature" (Allen 181) on to the screen which allowed cinema to relate to "a universally recognized aesthetic field" (181).

Although now recognised as its own (yet hybrid) medium, in its beginning film would have likely been seen as 'media combination' or fusions of different media, and part of intermedial forms that combine at least two conventionally distinct media. This category still includes phenomena such as opera, film, theatre and comics but also more recent and experimental forms like graphic poetry, sound art installation and many more (Rajewsky 52). What defines this category is the presence of at least two distinct medial forms which (each) keep their own materiality but blend into and constitute a new form. Rajewsky notes that concepts such as film, comic and opera, which are now viewed as separate media, show that over time "the combination of different medial forms of articulation may lead to the formation of new, independent art or media genres, a formation wherein the genre's plurimedial foundation becomes its specificity" (52).³

Finally one can detect and group intermedial forms which reference other media. Here the intermedial quality has to do with the imitation and thus representation of a medium by another. Although one can speak of media combination only one medium, namely the referencing medium is materially present: "The artefact of a certain medium (e.g., a film) does not contain another medium (e.g., a painting) as another but, instead, represents it" (Schröter 5). That is to say, the referencing medium uses its own media-

³ Considering film as a hybrid or intermedial art form that combines different media, such as sound, image and text, leaves us with a very restricted concept of media. For the purpose of this paper, especially when talking about 'film as a medium' or the 'medium of film', medium is defined by its code or sign system: "[C]inema has its own matters of expression (camera, film stock, lighting, etc.) and [...] workings of codes and subcodes [...], medium specificity is a matter of degree (for example, camera movement is more cinematically specific than, say, narrative) [...]" (*Dictionary of Film Studies*).

specific means and artistic forms to refer to another medium. Following Rajewsky, such intermedial references can either relate to “[...] a specific, individual work produced in another medium (i.e., what in the German tradition is called Einzelreferenz, ‘individual reference’), [...] a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre) or [...] to another medium *qua* system (Systemreferenz, ‘system reference’)” (52-53). Yet, as Schröter observes, “the term [intermediality] would be stretched too far if one were to already judge any mention of a word ‘painting’ in a film or in a book as intermedial representation” (5). Instead, he argues, only those representations count as intermedial which refer explicitly to the represented medium.

It is important to note that although one can categorise forms of intermediality as shown above, they do not necessarily always follow these clear-cut distinctions. Often intermedial configurations combine various aspects and thus can be assigned to more than one category. In film, for example, *SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD* (2010), an adaption with metareferential tendencies of the *Scott Pilgrim* comic series, can be classified in the category of medial transposition; and as it also makes explicit references to the comic genre it can additionally be counted towards intermedial references. Furthermore, the film makes use of “the so-called ‘as if’ character of intermedial references” (Rajewsky 54). It uses medium-specific devices, such as cuts, frames and composition, to re-represent the features of the other medium, namely the comic. As film, or any other medium cannot genuinely reproduce another medium, it can only use its own devices to imitate the medium it relates to. In *SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD* the ‘as if’ characteristic is being achieved through explicit references to comics such as a split screens that remind of panel sequences, or textual insertions of ‘sound words’ (onomatopoetic expressions such as ‘wow’, ‘peng’) or movement lines as they are often featured in comics.

With these different aspects of intermedial forms in mind, intermediality can be defined as the connection and reference of one medium to another. Reference to other media draws attention to both media and their particular artistic forms as Rajewsky notes:

[T]he definitive intermedial aspect has to do with *the reference itself* which a given media product (such as a text, film, etc.) makes to an individual product, system, or subsystem of a different medium, and to its medial specificities. Hence, the media product (and its overall signification) constitutes itself in relation to the media product or system to which it refers. (59)

Therefore, intermedial references always also imply a certain degree of self-reference.

1.3. Self-Referentiality

While the previous two concepts are concerned with connections and reference between different texts and media, self-referentiality and meta-referentiality concentrate – as the names suggest – on self-reflexion and instances in which a given text or medium refers to itself; whenever it is navel-gazing or looking into the mirror.

Since language has often been described and understood to contain self-referential qualities, the theory of self-reference has had a long tradition in literary studies. Nöth notes:

[w]hile most of these theories have been developed against the background of poetry, often with reference to Jakobson's definition of the poetic language [...] as a self-referential language, self-reference in prose and drama is a more recent topic. It has first been approached in the 1970s under the heading of metalanguage [and] later as metatext [...]. (5)

Approaching self-referential instances in literature under a 'meta-' category shows that the terms and concepts of self-referentiality, self-reflexivity – both aspects that constitute metaisation – and meta-referentiality are not only often used interchangeably but are, in fact, very much interrelated. As the concepts merge and the boundaries between them get blurred, it is often very difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins.

Werner Wolf argues that the terms describe similar, yet slightly different concepts and states: "[...] self-reference can be defined as a usually non-accidental quality of signs and sign configurations that in various ways refer or point to (aspects of) themselves or to other signs and sign configurations within one and the same semiotic system [...]" (*Metareference* 19). Self-reflexivity incorporates these aspects of self-reference but also reflects on the signs and elements of the same system, "[some] self-referential phenomena are only self-referential in a general way while others are, in addition, self-reflexive and/or metareferential". As metareferences establish "a secondary reference to texts and media" they can be seen as a special kind of self-reference or self-reflection (20).

Jean-Marc Limoges approaches self-reflexivity in the context of cinematography and follows Jacques Gerstenkorn's definition, who states that "self-reflexivity is given in any device that intentionally reveals (by showing or hinting at) the enunciative apparatus of the film itself" (qt. in Limoges 392). Limoges thus differentiates between "proper" self-reflexive devices and "merely 'reflexive'" ones. While the former reveals what Limoges calls "'the' device", that is the film itself, the latter refers to "'a' device", for example, a film within the film (392). This approach differs from what Wolf defines as 'self-

reflexivity' but allows to place self-reflexive devices (in Limoges' understanding) under Wolf's definition of metareferences.

A detailed analysis of self-referentiality (with focus on literature) can also be found in Scheffel's *Formen Selbstreflexiven Erzählens*. Although Scheffel does not use the terms self-referentiality and self-reflexivity, he distinguishes between the two concepts by referring to them in terms of "Sich-Selbst-Spiegeln" (to reflect oneself) and "Sich-Selbst-Betrachten" (to reflect upon oneself) (48). He argues that it is necessary to distinguish between *narrative* and *narration* in order to be able to comprehend the involved processes of self-referentiality. According to him, instances of 'Sich-Selbst-Betrachten' (self-reflexivity) can occur on the level of narration ("Ebene des Erzählens (extradiegetisch)"), as well as on the level of the narrative ("Ebene des Erzählten (intradiegetisch, metadiegetisch, meta-metadiegetisch etc.)") while 'Sich-Selbst-Spiegeln' (self-reference) is restricted to the latter (54). This approach closely relates to Genette's study in *Frontières du récit* in which Genette examines the tension between self-reflexivity and the narrative; "Genette refers to discourse, meaning the voice of the author and his or her self-referential accounts, which 'intrude' upon the text and suggests a threat to the 'purity' of narrative" (Poulaki 1). An aspect that is often also associated with the illusion-breaking quality of metaisation.

With this we reach facets of self-referentiality and self-reflexivity which already touch the realm of meta-referentiality, as the features of the discussed concepts, self-referentiality and self-reflexivity, are phenomena that point towards the text, medium or system they originate from.

This includes paratextual features that allow to direct the reader's attention and control the reception of a text. Self-reference also occurs whenever a part of a narration repeats itself, including similar or analogous structures and recurrent themes, such as flashbacks or loops; "[E]in Teil der Erzählung [steht] in einer Wiederholungsbeziehung zu anderen Teilen oder der Erzählung als Ganzes" (Scheffel 71). These features allow to draw attention to the text itself and thus can be classified as self-referential (Nöth *Self-Reference* 18). Additionally self-references may include aspects of intertextuality: Self-references that are restricted to the same text and do not relate to other texts, are an account of (intratextual) self-reference, "a film A that quotes a film B makes intertextual reference to its own medium" and "when several media are involved, such as painting in the cinema, films in games, or novels in the film, there is intermedial self-reference" (Nöth *Self-Reference* 19). Films often also show aspects of film-making or put film as a

system in focus which makes those films or sequences highly self-referential and/or self-reflexive. These examples highlight only a aspects of the numerous forms that self-references can develop. Therefore, self-referentiality can be understood as a general term for any instance of a sign referring to itself or aspects of itself. Whether these instances of self-referentiality are self-referential or even self-reflexive, however, and to what degree has to be assessed individually for the relevant reference.

2. Concepts of Metareference

As quoted earlier, metareferences are understood to be a special kind of self-reference or self-reflection which establish a secondary reference to texts and media and reflect on them from a so-called ‘meta-level’. The term ‘meta-’ originates from Greek *metá*, meaning ‘after’, ‘between’ or ‘with’ and is “prefixed to the name of a subject or discipline to denote another which deals with ulterior issues in the same field, or which raises question about the nature of the original discipline and its methods, procedures, and assumptions” (oed.com). Thus, the label ‘meta-’ is assigned to texts, media and genres which self-consciously and systematically draw attention to their status as an artistic and fictional product in order to pose, for example, questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Wolf, who conducts an in-depth study of metareferences across media, defines the term in the following way:

Self-reference produced by signs or sign configurations which are (felt to be) located on a logically higher level, a ‘metalevel’, within an artefact or performance; this self-reference, which can extend from this artefact to the entire system of the media, forms or implies a statement about an object-level, namely on (aspects of) the medium/system referred to. Where metareference is properly understood, an at least minimal corresponding ‘meta-awareness’ is elicited in the recipient [...]. (*Metareference* 31, ital. in the orig.)

Following this, “metaisation” is understood to be “the movement from a first cognitive, referential or communicative level to a higher one on which first-level phenomena self-reflexively become objects of reflection, reference and communication in their own right” (*Metareference* 3).

2.1. The Meta-Phenomenon as a Transmedial Concept

One can find meta-elements across all epochs, genres and media, the meta-discourse itself is relatively young, however. In his article *Is there a Metareferential Turn?*, Wolf argues that “metaization has increased in a *disproportionate* [...] quantity [...] in contemporary arts and media” (7). He points out that, although scholarly terminology containing the term ‘meta-’ can already be found in the late 18th century, most ‘meta-’ coinages appear in the 20th century and even more so in its second half. This is not surprising, since the meta-phenomenon draws on aspects of self-reflexivity and intertextuality, two concepts which emerged and established themselves mostly in the 20th century.

For a long time, research concerning the meta-phenomenon in the humanities only concentrated on individual media and primarily focussed on literary studies. To this day,

literature is the best researched medium in this context. Consequently, literary studies brought forth a vast number of terms and concepts that have “various degrees of affinity with ‘metareference’”, like ‘self-consciousness’, ‘self-reflexivity’, ‘metatextuality’, ‘introverted novel’ or ‘metafiction’, to name just a few (Wolf *Metareference* 15). The investigation of the meta-phenomenon in literary studies lay the grounds also for other disciplines which started borrowing literary concepts, adapting them to their own needs and applying them to metareferential aspects in their own field.

In recent years, the framework of individual disciplines with their individual focus on meta-elements has been broadened by a perspective and understanding of the meta-phenomenon as a transmedial concept. In *Metaisierung in Literatur und anderen Medien* Janine Hauthal et al. note; „Nicht erst die weite Verbreitung metaisierender Darstellungsverfahren deutet darauf hin, dass es sich bei der Metaisierung um eine transgenetisches und transmediales Phänomen handelt, sondern auch deren in verschiedenen Medien und Gattung erfolgende oder diese überschreitende Theoretisierung“ (5). Thus, Wolf suggests using the term ‘metareference’ as a “media-independent umbrella-term for meta-aspects in all arts and media” (*Metareferential Turn*, Preface v). Introducing a term that allows one to talk about and compare the meta-phenomenon better across different media and genres reflects a shift within scholarly discussions. The new terminology shows that researchers in the humanities try to do justice to the recent developments concerning metaisation in arts and research by approaching the meta-phenomenon in an interdisciplinary way.

The various terminologies such as ‘metafiction’, ‘metapoetry’ or ‘metadrama’ as well as more recent ones like ‘meta-textuality’ or ‘meta-critique’ show that not only literary genres but also aesthetic concepts can be subjected to self-reflective processes (Hauthal et al. 1-4). Wolf notes that this turn to metaisation is also reflected in everyday culture. Metareferences are no longer limited to postmodern or experimental works and products of the so-called ‘high culture’ but can also be found in comics, advertising, TV series and (Hollywood) film productions (Wolf *Metareferential Turn* 25; Hauthal et al. 2-5). This is why Wolf argues that the increased metaisation over the past decade, not only as a stylistic device in arts and literature, but also as an object of interest in scholarly discussion, has led to a metareferential turn. He remarks that it “falls within the realm of the humanities, and above all of the disciplines dealing with the arts and media, not only to analyse this phenomenon but also to try and make sense of it” (*Metareferential Turn* 25).

The large amount of secondary literature concerned with the meta-phenomenon shows that the addressed disciplines have been exploring the meta-phenomenon. Considering aspects of interest and relevance for their field, they have contributed to the meta-discourse. However, as Wolf (*Metaisierung*) and other scholars (see Hauthal et al., Nöth *Self-Reference*) point out, the meta-phenomenon has not yet been classified satisfactorily.

Hauthal et al. suggest that the wide, often inconsistent and somewhat inflationary use of the meta-terminology may have contributed to this lack of classification. They observe that the difficulty lies at the core of metaisation itself. Meta-reflexion can not only be achieved by different methods or forms, but can also fulfil various functions, just as content and reference of meta-elements can vary considerably. Following Hauthal et al. it is therefore necessary to systematise metareferential forms and terms in literature, media and arts, and analyse their functions in exemplary studies.

2.2. Aspects of Metareference

In the article *Metareference across Media*, Wolf discusses the concept underlying ‘metareference’ and explains his choice of terminology in great detail. There are two aspects in his examination of metareference which seem to be especially noteworthy. Firstly, self-referential signs are never entirely metareferential and secondly, the references need a recipient who will cognitively realise them (18-27).

Wolf starts his analysis by looking at metareference from a semiotic point of view differentiating between ‘heteroreference’ and ‘self-reference’. He argues that the former generally points to a ‘reality outside’ the semiotic system while the latter refers to itself or aspects within the same semiotic system. In a three way step he then continues to explain the difference between hetero-, self-, and metareference using examples taken from literature and concludes:

[In] contradistinction to heteroreference, which constitutes a primary reference to ‘reality’ at large or, in representation, establishes a represented (possible) world, self-reference refers to texts and media and related issues [...]. Metareference goes one step further: it established a secondary reference to texts and media (and related issues) as such by, as it were, viewing them ‘from the outside’ of a meta-level from whose perspective they are consequently seen as different from unmediated reality and the content of represented worlds. Metareference, thus appears to be a special kind of self-reference (and also of self-reflection), which is (theoretically) opposed to heteroreference. (22-23)⁴

⁴ For more detail consult Wolf *Metareference across Media*, esp. section 2. – 4..

Just after establishing these differences, Wolf puts them in perspective and admits that the boundaries described are not as clear cut as the theoretical concept might suggest. Rather than opposing terms, they should be perceived as poles of a scale, allowing gradations between these poles. Especially when analysing concrete instances of metaisation one will find that “they are usually located in areas in between these two poles and thus participate more or less in both [...] [by] show[ing] a mixture of both aspects to varying degrees” (23). Wolf even points out that “where metareference can be observed, in particular in the representational media, it as a rule occurs in combination with heteroreference”, and assesses that most metareferential elements are “double-coded” (24). The double-coded nature of metareference extends beyond individual elements and can also be seen in most metareferential works. Wolf argues when examining individual accounts of meta-referentiality (especially implicit ones) one will not find a binary opposition of hetero- and metareferences but rather a spectrum of degrees of metareference. This gradation of metareference can also be seen in the more or less intense effect that an individual element may have on the recipient, or in entire works; e.g. the film *THE GUARD* contains fewer metareferences than *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS*, making it metareferential to a lesser degree than the latter.

The recipient’s involvement leads to the second of Wolf’s metareferential aspects, namely the communicative dimension of meta-referentiality. Wolf draws similarities between metareferential works and communicative models, including participants of communication such as the recipient, the author as ‘sender’, the medium as ‘code’ and ‘channel’ as well as (cultural historical) context. He argues that “[i]n communication, metareference is not merely a ‘message’ encoded in a given medium but requires a *recipient* who cognitively realizes it” (25). Also here the double-coded nature of metareference becomes apparent. On a first level the ‘message’ sent is merely a (hetero)reference, which recipients will understand without problem most of the time. On a second level, however, the recipient needs to decode the content and realise the indirect message, namely the metareference for what it is⁵.

More precisely, it [the metareference] is not restricted to simple ‘givens’ within a work (text, artefact or performance): these ‘givens’ form mere potentials that may have meta-effects – but metareference requires the actualization of such potentials by recipients who are willing and able to cooperate, for it is in the recipient that

⁵ The content of a message always also depends on the sender’s intention. In the context of metareferences the sender, e.g. the writer, next to the *direct* content (i.e. allreferences) sends also a secondary *indirect* message. It is intended for the receiver, e.g. reader, who might or might not be able to decode it.

the most basic function of metareference, the eliciting of a medium-awareness, takes place. (25)

Metareferences that function well, in fact, always trigger some kind of awareness regarding the medial status of the work or the system which they occur in. Wolf points out that the more complex the metaisation and the stronger its effect, the more likely it is that the metareference was intended and put in place by the author. Arguably, there are difficulties with this assumption. Firstly, in most cases one cannot verify but only infer that the metareferences were intended; usually the author is assumed to be responsible for the meta-elements, by including “non-accidental ‘signs’ that invite a ‘meta-reading’” (26). Secondly, the distinction between intentional and non-intentional metareference is a difficult one for they can be quite similar. Showing recording equipment in film, for example, is often regarded as illusion breaking. Sometimes, however, this is intended, especially in movies which are concerned with film making, other times it happens by chance, for instance, when the recording camera can be seen in a reflection or a boom is in shot. Then the setting of a film can give clues to whether these illusion-breaking devices were intended or mere ‘accidents’. This example might seem straight forward, but there are also instances of e.g. critical metareferences that potentially critique their own system, which are not easily assigned to a certain group. To account for such instances in a general analysis of metareference would prove to be very difficult. This is why Wolf points out, “as a rule, the default option for most if not all elements of a work of art or medial performance is to perceive them not as accidental but as purposeful” (*Metareference* 41).

Therefore one can conclude that in order to be able to refer to metareferential devices as such, they need to fulfil the following features: Firstly, they have to be intentional; secondly, metareferences need recipients who are willing and able to cognitively realise them and thirdly they have to elicit a minimal corresponding meta-awareness (*Metareference* 18-27).

2.3. Forms of Metareference

Hauthal et al. propose three ways of systemising different forms of metaisation. Firstly, one can examine metaisation according to its function and possible effects (“Funktionspotentiale”), like disturbing the fictional illusion (see section 2.4.1). Secondly, by taking a look at the content of metaisation one can identify different forms

of discourse or modes, such as meta-narration⁶ or meta-commentary. A third way of systematising metaisation is to investigate where it manifests itself (“Erscheinungsort”) and thus differentiate various forms of media and genre (see Fig. 1). In this way media-specific elements of, for example, metatheatres, metafiction or metacinema come into focus.

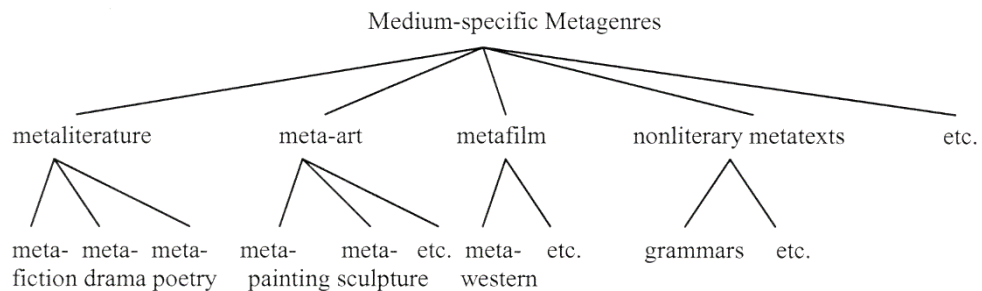


Fig. 1: Medium-specific meta(sub)-genres

The most prominent form is systematisation according to genre and media, since these criteria of classification are also most dominant in literary and media studies. The approach, also taken by this paper, primarily draws attention to medium-specific elements but it also allows one to take other aspects, such as function, into account.

Literary theorists have brought forth a number of studies concerning medium-specific forms of metaisation, the most comprehensive being Wolf’s study on aesthetic illusion and illusion-breaking of 1993. In comparison, research on self-reflexivity in film is far less advanced. Gloria Withalm notes that publications on filmic metaisation are rare and also remarks that a “film specific theoretical framework we can rely on” has yet to be established (*Movies* 256).

A first attempt of systematising self-referential film is made by Kay Kirchmann, who groups films according to their subject matter. The typology considers film in its entirety and nicely illustrates the wide range of filmic self-reflexivity, for example, films concerned with their own history, perception or reception. However, this typology forms a very general framework and one should be aware that not all meta-films fit into the proposed categories. Another issue with Kirchmann’s categorisation is that by focusing on films and their subject matter as a whole it neglects single accounts of metaisation and does not consider isolated self-reflexive elements which might not fit into one category exclusively (Konrath 54).

⁶ For a detailed and systematic approach to meta-narration see Nünning 2004.

It therefore seems more advantageous to adapt a more detailed framework, especially when interested in concrete aspects and elements of metaisation. Hence, I draw on Wolf's detailed analysis of metafictional forms which he developed for a media-independent approach. When examining metareferential elements in different media it is important to keep medium-specific forms in mind. Thus, in the following, Wolf's suggested typology of opposing metareferential forms with a main focus on film is discussed (Wolf *Metareference* 37-48, *Metaisierung* 25-48, *Illusion* 232-260).

2.3.1. Story vs Discourse-Mediated Metareference

According to structuralist theory, story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discours*) are the two elements which constitute a narrative. The content (events, actions, happening) as well as characters and settings of a narrative belong to the story, while the means by which this content is mediated is (part of) the discourse; "In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*" (Chatman 19).

The more suspense and interest a narrative can create for its recipients on the story level, the more likely and easily they are to immerse into the fictional world. This is why the story is at the core of every pro-illusionist narrative. Along with action, characters are the most important component of a story. In mainstream cinema the spectator is usually drawn into the film through identification with the protagonist. In meta-films this immersion often becomes impeded, because characters are no longer stable and reliable, but instead consciously flat, stereotypical or even become aware of their own fictional status (Konrath 56).

Maria Poulaki remarks that these self-referential methods are tools that trigger critical reflection, draw attention to the story's fictionality and thus can have a distancing effect on the recipients. She observes that "[w]hen it comes to film, direct instances of self-referential discourse are not common" (2), since the purity of the narrative is an aspect that is especially relevant in classic film. With the exception of films that consciously play with self-references. Traditionally, film aims at disguising the presence of a narrating authority by upholding the impression of objectivity and by maintaining the illusion of a film being the mere recording of 'naturally' occurring events (1-9). Discourse, however, "always reminds to the viewers the discrepancy between them being, on the one hand, enunciators of the filmic text (and 'makers' of the story) and, on the other hand, enunciated, subjects situated by the filmic discourse" (2). Thus, Poulaki claims that

devaluating the story is one of the most important characteristics of anti-illusionist texts and of many meta-films.

Accounts of self-references disrupting the narrative in film from a discourse level are, for example, so-called cameo appearances by directors in their 'own' films. Alfred Hitchcock is famously known for leaving his place behind the camera to appear on screen, mingling with actors and reminding the audience of his presence in the director's chair. The same can be said for Quentin Tarantino or Woody Allen whose appearances go even beyond the cameo role as W. Allen also stars in most of his films (Nöth *Self-Reference* 20; Stam 130).

Films do not need to directly address the aspect of film-making or point to the extra-diegetic world, in order to draw attention to discourse. "Especially the non-sequential ordering of events in a film is a form of overt, self-conscious – and self-referential – narration; a narration that also makes the viewer conscious of the presence of a narrative principle that manipulates the telling" (Poulaki 4). Such instances can increasingly be found in post-1990s film which have been described as "puzzle films" or "network narratives" (4) because of their tendency of complex narrative. Films like *BABEL* (2006) or *VINTAGE POINT* (2008) tell their stories from different points of views and in a non-sequential order. This can make the audience not only aware of the underlying narrative principle but it also demands more involvement from them to create and realise the narrative.

2.3.2. *Fictio* vs *Fictum* Metareference

The two opposing terms, *fictio*- and *fictum*-metareference, can be differentiated by the content of the meta-reflection. Any metareference, by definition, always includes some statement about the ontological status of the work in which it occurs. There are, however, metareferences which do this more prominently than others.

A metareference which reflects upon and makes the relevant work the subject of discussion, namely its constructedness, the specificities of its medium, its norms and conventions, can be described as a *fictio*-metareference (from Latin 'shaping, formation'). Pro-illusionist films try to conceal their artificiality and the implied ontological difference between life and art. *Fictio*-metareferences tend to foreground the method of mediation and are often located on the discourse-level or are discourse-mediated; e.g. by exposing its discourse they simultaneously draw attention to the fictionality of the work (Wolf *Illusion* 56-7; Konrath 61).

While *fictio*-metareferences are based on the dichotomy of ‘natural’ and ‘made’, the *fictum*-metareferences (from Latin *fictum*, ‘lie’) considers “the truth-value of the work under discussion or its ‘fictionality’ in the conventional sense” (Wolf *Metareference* 41). Art that aims at creating an ‘illusion of reality’ usually denies its *fictum*-status, which is also often explicitly stressed. Wolf notes that *fictum*-metareferences do not always need to focus on fictionality in the sense of ‘mere invention’ but can also extend to suggest truthfulness.

Erzählkommentare können die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers beispielsweise auf die Fiktionalität des Textes lenken und somit potentiell illusionsstörend wirken. Mündlichkeitsfingierende metanarrative Elemente im Erzählerkommentar aber können zugleich die Illusion des Erzählaktes verstärken und den Text als Erzählung authentisieren. (Hauthal et al. 7-8)

In other words, discourse-mediated metareferences which tend to draw attention to the fictionality of the artwork do not always have a distancing effect, but can also be perceived as affirmative towards the truthfulness of the mediated story.

Wolf argues that pro-illusionist texts aim to conceal their *fictio*-status and to create an illusion of life rather than to confirm their authenticity. Genres such as science fiction and fantasy, for example, create an aesthetic illusion within a consistent world, but lack referentiality in the real world (Konrath 61). Regarding this Gombrich claims that “illusion of life [...] can do without the illusion of reality” (284).

This is why Wolf notes that hiding the *fictum*-status of a work is even more than concealing its *fictio*-status. Although it does not correspond with the reality perceived by the recipient, the fictional world is inherently conclusive and autonomous. Therefore, a *fictum*-reference which breaks this aesthetic illusion is potentially more disruptive, than a *fictio*-reference which reminds the recipients of the ontological status of the work, an aspect which they are subconsciously always aware of (Wolf *Illusion* 192-194).

2.3.3. Explicit vs Implicit Metareference

Based on Linda Hutcheon’s distinction of ‘overt’ and ‘covert metafiction’ and depending on their discernibility (*Narcissistic* 7), one can distinguish between explicit and implicit forms of metareference. As a concrete instance of speech, an explicit metareference openly discusses metafiction, while an implicit metareference needs the recipient’s cooperation in a particularly clear way, for it is in principle possible to overlook the metaimplication (Wolf *Metafiction* 308). Implicit metareferences are “more covert devices which may also establish a meta-level and elicit reflection on the ontological

status of the text as a medium or artefact without, however, using explicitly metareferential expressions or signs” (Wolf *Metareference* 40). They include, for example, allusions to a particular style, genre or period of film history. Due to their ‘hidden’ nature, the recipients’ participation and cooperation is especially needed to avoid being passed unnoticed. However, “this does not mean that implicit metareference is necessarily less strongly metareferential, i.e., that it creates less metasemiotic awareness than explicit metareference. An implicit metasign can lead to as much or even more reflection on the nature of signs as an explicit metasign can” (Nöth *Semiotic Perspective* 89).

Wolf claims that (in verbal media) explicit forms can easily be defined by means of quotability. In literary works, for example, words such as ‘author’, ‘good book’ or ‘reading’ are “clear (and even quotable) metareferential phrases” (*Metareference* 40). According to Wolf, the criterion of quotability can also be applied to iconic media, such as paintings and film. Adopting the criterion for film is somewhat problematic, however. If explicit metareferences are defined by the criterion of quotability, the question arises whether explicit metareferences are restricted to filmic dialogue and expressions such as ‘the film’, ‘the actor’ etc. Regarding this, Withalm notes that film quotations can be reduced to filmic dialogue, “but always with a loss in tone, intensity, timbre, and the simultaneity of bodily and facial expression” (*Movies* 255). She points out that film quotations in the strict sense are therefore only insertions of pre-existing film material into a film, namely showing (parts of) a film within a film. Film as an audio-visual medium, by definition, applies verbal *and* visual elements. In my opinion, explicit metareferences should therefore not be restricted to either of the two.

Instead of focusing on quotability, explicit and implicit metareference could also be defined in terms of cooperation and awareness needed on the part of the recipient. Explicit references, for example, might sometimes not be perceived as such: Films that are set in the film-making industry are self-referential and explicitly show the system and mechanism behind the film. Still, they might not be perceived as radically self-reflexive as it is not unusual for people involved in film-making – producers, directors, screenwriters, actors, etc. – to talk about their profession (even though in terms of quotability they classify as ‘explicit’). “These comments and dialogues are often double-coded in the sense that they can either be viewed as being perfectly consistent with the diegesis or be interpreted on a meta-level” (Konrath 59). Thus, explicit metareference

could also be defined in terms of instant recognition or meta-awareness elicited in the recipient, which, of course, always depends on the medium-awareness of the individual.

2.3.4. Internal vs. External Metareference

These two opposing forms of meta-referentiality are closely related to intertextuality and intermediality and are defined by their scope and focus – namely, whether or not they extend beyond their own system. *Internal* or ‘intercompositional’ metareferences operate within the work under discussion, while *external* or ‘extracompositional’ metareferences concern all other forms of metareference which go beyond the narrow defined system of the particular work. Wolf admits that the extension of metareferences beyond the boundaries of the respective work might not seem to be an obvious choice at first. Extending the boundaries, however, allows one to incorporate other media systems so that intermedial references become part of meta-referentiality (*Metareference* 38).

Wolf argues that external metareference-fiction, in fact, always includes some kind of self-referentiality, since thematising other fiction and works will always have some effect on the referencing text and allows a distancing perspective on the very same. Thus, external metareference is an indirect form of metaisation, and parody is, for example, one of the possible forms in which it can occur (Wolf *Metareference* 39). While some exclude parody from the definition of self-reflexivity and meta-referentiality (e.g. Scheffel), Wolf and Stam insist on including it. Stam pointedly states “[s]ince the stuff of self-conscious art is the tradition itself – to be alluded to, played with, outdone, or exorcized – parody has often been of crucial importance” and additionally notes that parody always includes some “self-evident truths about the artistic process” (132).

2.4. Functions of Metareference

Just as metareferences can take on different forms, their function can also vary. They can serve the particular work they occur in, such as “its immediate medial, generic or aesthetic context, its author, recipient or the wider cultural-historical context” (Wolf *Metareferences* 65). Hauthal et al. note that most metareferential elements are ambivalent and can often be assigned more than one function. The systematisation of metareferential functions is not unified but always depends on the focus and scope of interest. Taking findings by Nünning, Limoges and Wolf into account, the following chapter explores functions of metareferences which are of interest in film.

The primary function of any reference is to mention or allude to something. The specificity of *metareferences* lies in the meta-level they establish and from which commenting on the object-level takes place. This metareferential comment can be explicit or implicit and can either refer to aspects or the whole object-level. Being a special kind of self-reference, metareferences thus can draw attention to (parts of) the work they occur in, the art form or media system the work itself belongs to, but also to other works (Wolf *Metareference* 64). “It may, for instance, imply a classificatory self-referential statement of the kind ‘I am a better work than the one in focus’ or ‘I belong to the same class of artefacts as the work referred to’” (64). Drawing attention to their own artificiality (“I am an artwork”) always implies a distinction between ‘natural objects’ and artefacts and is “fundamental to all other statements and functions at issue in metareference” since it also foregrounds the media quality of the relevant work itself (65).

2.4.1. (Anti-)Illusionist Effects and Aesthetic Function

Foregrounding the media quality of the work in question can have, as already discussed, a distancing effect on the audience. Since the metareference points towards the artistic character of the work, it reminds the recipients that they are dealing with a fictional (art)work which consequently might break the fictional illusion. Illusion-breaking is often described as the defining quality of metareferences. This is highly controversial, since metareferences do not necessarily break the fictional illusion. This and the wide range of functions that metareferences can fulfil is nicely illustrated by Ansgar Nünning’s scale of possible ‘functions of metaisation’:

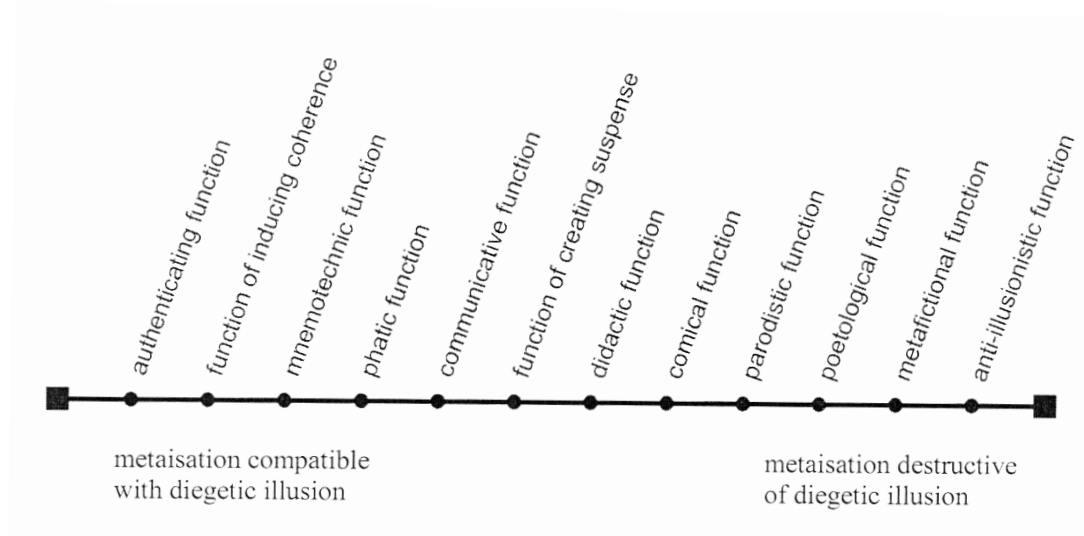


Fig. 2: Functions of metanarrative comments

Whether or not a metareference breaks the fictional-illusion depends on various factors, such as work, context and recipient. In his article *The Gradable Effects of Self-Reflexivity on Aesthetic Illusion in Cinema*, Limoges notes that “from a strictly formal perspective [references might] resemble each other but differ in terms of the effect they generate” (393). Thus, he determines five aspects which influence the illusion-breaking quality of metareferences: (im)perceptibility, context of reception, the genre, modalities of occurrences and motivation (397-404).

Concerning (im)perceptibility, Limoges notes that “[the] (anti-)illusionist effect of self-reflexive devices depends upon being perceived by the viewer; for a device, even a highly self-reflective one, which is not perceived, would not break the aesthetic illusion” (397). He points out that a cameo appearance, of e.g. the director, needs to be recognised by the audience. For a recipient who is not aware that the person on screen is the director of the film, will be affected differently than a recipient who is.

The *reception* of metareferences does not only depend on the person receiving them but also on the context in which they are being received. The recipients’ expectations towards a film but also the historical and geographical context have impact on the aesthetic illusion. Limoges illustrates this by giving the example of Mario Bava’s *BLACK SABBATH* (1963). The last frame of the horror movie – revealing the set and special effects used for shooting it – was edited out of the final version “to avoid, so it is told, displeasing audience members who may not have enjoyed having their belief affected so suddenly at the end of a scary movie” (399). Today, meta-movies and network narratives are much more common than they were a few decades ago. Thus, such a ‘twisted ending’ must have felt “more anti-illusionist back then than it is now, where we are privy to the original ending” (339).

When it comes to *genre*, Limoges argues that films which depend more on the audience’s immersion into the story, such as horror movies, risk affecting the immersion and illusion more than “let us say, a ‘film d’auteur’, where the audience is more disposed to having their immersion displaced” (400). Also the *modalities of occurrence* of a self-reflexive device in film can have a more or less (anti-)illusionist effect. The moment in which a self-reflexive device takes place, whether it occurs more towards the beginning or end of the film, as well as its length and also the frequency, adds to whether or not illusion is broken.

Finally, the level of *motivation* that the audience can find in or for metareferences can also impact the aesthetic illusion. Limoges argues that “once a device becomes perceived (by the recipient) as diegetically, symbolically or even dramatically motivated, it will be ‘naturalized’ and will somewhat lose its anti-illusionist effect” (402). For example, addressing the audience by looking into the camera will have a different effect if it is aimed at a diegetic camera and consequently directed at a diegetic audience, than when it is aimed at the recording camera itself and therefore the audience itself (402). *THE ARTIST* contains an example of this, when at the end of an intra-diegetic film Peppy Miller winks at the camera; Peppy looking at the audience is not necessarily anti-illusionist and self-reflexive because for the sassy wink is diegetically motivated.

2.4.2. Affirmative Function

Affirmative metaisation is often found in homages or nostalgic references to a certain tradition, historical period or genre. It is usually compatible with aesthetic illusion and suggests authenticity, induces coherence or creates suspense. It can also be means of e.g. celebrating the artist and his creativity or highlight the “self-confidence of a new medium and signalling its emancipation” (Konrath 52-53).

With regards to film, there are a number of movies, which under the pretext of ‘authenticity’, show and exploit the film-making milieu, promising a look behind the scenes, allegedly exposing its mechanisms and revealing the ‘truth’ of film-making – when in fact they are far away from demystifying the film industry. On the contrary, the films often idealise and romanticise it as “a wonderland of dreams fulfilled” and sometimes also “diabolize it as an enticingly sinful Babylon” (Stam 83). Not only can self-reflexivity help to reinforce existing myths but it can also be used as a form of cinematic advertising. On a superficial level, self-reflexivity as hidden advertisement pretends to enchant, while it is mystifying and affirming the message on a deeper level:

The self-referentiality of commercials that parody themselves or other commercials, similarly, are calculated to mystify rather than disenchant. The self-referential humor signals to the spectator that the commercial is not to be taken seriously, and this relaxed state of expectation renders the viewer more permeable to its message. The self-referentiality, far from demystifying the product or exposing hidden codes, conceals the deadly seriousness of the commercial – the fact that it is after the spectator’s money. (Stam 16).

It is not just commercials that are after the spectator’s money; Hollywood movies apply similar strategies to maximise profits at the box office. Affirmative meta-referentiality can therefore also be used as a marketing strategy (Konrath 63).

2.4.3. Critical Function

Metareferences operate from a higher meta-level which consequently involves a distance to the work in which it occurs. As metareferences bring distance between the work and the recipient, they invite them to take a critical stance and question established norms and values. The critical content of a metareference might be directed towards its own work or medium, the means of production or people involved in production, but it can also criticise social norms and make the audience, their habits and ways of reception its subject. Kay Kirchmann argues that critical self-reflexivity not only demystifies a work of art as an artificial object but also as an ideological product. Yet, “critical self-reflexivity also has its limitations[,] since it can only provide critique from within these modes of representation. Even if the purpose is a revelatory unveiling, the text as such will always to a certain extent be complicit with the system it criticises” (Konrath 64).

2.4.4. Communicative Function

The different effects of metaisation can also be described in terms of the function they can fulfil with regards to participants in a communicative framework (*Metareference* 64-70). This is suggested by Wolf, who differentiates between;

- a) ‘Work-Centred Functions’,
aim at foregrounding the qualities of the work in question and marking it interesting in various ways. This may be achieved by self-praise, making it intellectually appealing or generally amusing, or by distancing itself from and directing criticism at others.
- b) ‘Author-Centred Functions’,
allow to draw attention to the author, an aspect that “curiously even applies to postmodernist authors who produce in a context in which originality and the very concept of the author allegedly have lost value” (*Metareference* 66). Wolf notes that these references may reveal the author as particularly self-conscious and hence intellectual. Similar to self-praise, it also allows one to praise or critique other authors and their works.
- c) ‘Recipient-Centred Functions’,
are probably the most important metareferential functions, which have already been mentioned in the definition of the term, namely “eliciting a medium-awareness in the recipient” (67). Metareferences can support the aesthetic function of an artwork and thus

help the recipient to immerse into the fictional world, more often however, they try to impede this immersion and even destroy the aesthetic illusion.

Other aspects which are especially relevant for the recipient include, providing entertainment and (often humorous) amusement, as well as satisfying ludic desires. Moreover, Wolf argues that “the appeal to reason implied in metareference may also work as a gratifyingly intellectual stimulus for recipients who are capable of responding to it and who are thus given insights into the structure, aesthetics, and other facets of the work under consideration and at the same time are invited to quasi cooperate in its production” (68-69). However, whether all these functions can be achieved strongly depends on the recipients and their ability and willingness to realise and ‘work’ with metaisation.

3. Aspects of Metafilms

Metaisation is not bound to a specific medium. While metafiction, metapoetry or metatheatre as well as their medium-specific methods through which metaisation can be achieved are well-researched topics, the concept of metafilm or metacinema has not been explored in such detail. For the analysis of metareferences in film this is not necessarily a disadvantage. It allows one to explore the possibilities and boundaries of the meta-phenomenon in film in an impartial way. Besides, the concepts of metaisation established for other media provide a wide range of tools which can also be applied to film. Considering the affinity of theatre and film, the findings on metatheatre are of particular interest for the analysis of metareferences in contemporary film. Therefore, this chapter includes as short excursus to metatheatre, addressing general aspects of metaisation with regard to performance, and then turns to aspects of performance and spectatorship involved in cinematic presentations and perception.

3.1. Metatheatre

The term ‘metatheatre’ was first coined by the playwright and critic Lionel Abel. In his book *Metatheatre* (1963), a collection of essays, he introduces a new way of looking at drama, outlining the concept of metatheatre but – as his critics notice – never clearly defines it (Rosenmeyer 87; Hornby 31). Abel’s understanding of metatheatre is based on two concepts, “the world is a stage” and “life is a dream”, which he establishes on and relates to Shakespearean drama (Abel 83). In his survey he only classifies those plays as metaplays which have a meta-dramatic self-awareness; namely that the *dramatis personae* are aware of their own fictionality. They know that they are characters and part of a play, that their world is a stage and their life a dream (Rosenmeyer 88). Richard Hornby elaborated on the concept of metatheatre and developed it further, saying that: “Briefly, metadrama can be defined [...] whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself” and even goes as far as saying “in one sense [...] all drama is metadramatic.” (31) Hornby argues that playwrights while writing a play will always draw on their knowledge of other plays, the genre, or vocabulary just as the audience always relates what it sees, not only to the play itself but also to their previous experiences, “so that a dramatic work is always experienced at least secondarily as metadramatic.” The same can of course be argued for film, as screenwriters and directors, for example, use their knowledge and experience of writing, directing and watching films. From this consideration, which touches the realm of intertextuality, Hornby concludes:

“Metadrama is thus not a narrow phenomenon, limited to a few great playwrights or to a few periods in theatre history, but always occurring” (31-32).

3.1.1. Forms of Metatheatre

Returning to Hornby and his theory of metatheatre, he argues that there is a need to differentiate between the frequency and forms of metadramatical elements in plays. Hornby defines five different categories of “conscious or overt metadrama” (32):

1. The play within the play.
2. The ceremony within the play.
3. Role playing within the role.
4. Literary and real-life reference.
5. Self-reference.

Out of these five categories the *play within the play*, *role playing within the role* and *literary and real-life reference* also seem important to film. The *ceremony within the play* – characterised by a “formal performance of some kind that is set off from the surrounding action” (49) – could also be applied to film but is more “closely related to theatre via the medium of performance” (55) than it is to film and will therefore be omitted. As self-referentiality has already been explored in detail in the first chapter, there is no need to further elaborate on it here.

With regards to the *play within the play* one can distinguish between two general kinds: the ‘insert’ type in which the inner play is secondary, and the ‘framed’ type where the inner play is primary and only framed by the outer play. The degree of connectedness between the inner and outer play can vary considerably in both types. The same can be said for cinema, where we talk about the *film within the film* whenever film as a product or in production is shown. In Hornby’s understanding only those *play within the play* situations are metadramatic in which the outer play, its characters and/or its plot acknowledge the existence and performance of the inner play. He argues that in addition “there must be two sharply distinguishable layers of performance” (35). A distinction which is slightly problematic considering the shift in 20th century drama which blurs the boundaries between the inner and outer narrative. Before then, the *play within the play* was, for example, used in dream sequences to show what a character was dreaming. With the blurring of boundaries, however, it is no longer possible to clearly determine who is dreaming or to say whether the inner or outer play is the main one. The same can be said for film, where the blurring of dream sequences with the diegesis, for example, can be found in *TRISTRAM SHANDY*, *HUGO* and *THE ARTIST*.

The most prominent aspect of the *play within the play* is the mirroring of the theatrical performance which the audience is a part of, and which can also be transposed to film. “The fact that the inner play is an obvious illusion (since we see other characters watching it), reminds us that the play we are watching is also an illusion, despite its vividness and excitement [...]. We watch a play, within which there is another play – ultimately, all is play” (45).

Through *role playing within the role* a character becomes double-coded. It allows not only to show who the character is but also indicates what they want to be, for they are taking on a different role. It often even suggests that the role depicts the character’s ‘true self’ more accurately than his every-day, ‘real’ personality reveals. Hornby notes that *role playing within the role* can be found in various literary forms but is particularly suited for the performing arts because of the “added fascination in having the roles performed by actors” (68). He argues that “[t]his adds a third metadramatic layer to the audience’s experience: a character is playing a role, but the character himself is being played by an actor” (68). This aspect that also true for film and can be found in all of the chosen films. Generally speaking, role playing, among other functions, lends itself to examine aspects of identity which always also implies some level of reflection. Furthermore, the special acting situation exposes the very nature of role-play itself: “The theatrical efficacy of role playing within the role is the result of its reminding us that all human roles are relative, that identities are learned rather than innate” (73). Hornby thus concludes that *role playing within the role* is a device which allows to explore and reflect upon the concerns of the individual.

In his category of *literary reference within the play* Hornby considers aspects of intertextuality and intermediality. Since these concepts have been dealt with in the previous two chapters I exclude them here and only focus on *real-life reference within the play*. Similar to literary references, real-life references include allusions but instead of alluding to fictional characters and events the reference establishes a connection to real people, places and happenings. Hornby notes that the differentiation between what is ‘real’ and what is ‘unreal’, in the sense of what is possible or true also outside the diegesis (*fictum*-reference), often has little significance for the experience of the play or film (97). Only when attention is being drawn to the discrepancy of fact and fiction can real-life references start to unfold their metadramatic effect. Stripping away the fiction through real-life acknowledgement breaks the illusion and suspension of the dramatic world.

Hornby notes that these categories of metadrama can rarely be found in pure or isolated forms, instead they often occur together or merge into one another (32). The same is true for films and with some changes these categories can also be adopted to film.

3.1.2. Adapting Meta-Theatrical Elements for Film

While theatre and film share many aspects (e.g. performance of actors) it could be argued that the metareferential potential of drama differs considerably from that of film. Indeed, there are differences – the most obvious being that they differ in medium – but I do not believe that these differences are significant enough so that a comparison and adaption is unjustified. I want to point out two aspects, however, which I believe are important and one has to be aware of when adapting metatheatrical aspects to film. Firstly, in contrast to film theatre is more immediate, while, secondly, film has a higher potential for dramatic illusion than theatre.

In her article *When Metadrama is turned into Metafilm*, Hauthal critically comments on the first aspect. She points out that theatre is characterised by what James L. Calderwood calls “duplexity” (12) and that “[in] the case of theatre, the ‘duplexity’ originates from the grounding theatrical principle of the ‘as if’ conjunction with the ‘here and now’ of performance. On stage, objects and persons are ‘double’, being present and representing an absence at the same time” (Hauthal 585). This duplexity is crucial for meta-elements, mainly in ‘the play within the play’ and ‘role playing within the role’ since it can open a meta-level for reflection.

Hauthal and Calderwood notice that only what Coleridge once defined as the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ allows the audience to forget the theatricality of the performance in favour of dramatic illusion. When people go to the cinema, or the theatre, they are aware that what they are about to see is only staged. In theatre this illusion is especially fragile as “spectators can never be sure if what they see on stage is intended or not” (Hauthal 585). The dramatic illusion and the willing suspension of disbelief are important aspects of theatre and film alike. Just as theatre, film is based on role-playing and staging of events.

However, since only the recording camera, the production team and the actors share the ‘here and now’ of recording time and not the spectators (they only witness later re-productions/ projections of the filmed material), there is no genuine ‘duplexity’ as in a theatrical performance. (586)

The camera and the recording mediates between the actors and the audience. This also means that the fragility of dramatic illusion is lost, as the audience can be sure that what

it sees on screen is intended (except of course for some minor mistakes which might slip through (post)production). Compared to theatre, the production and reception of film enhances the illusion of the cinematic world: “Der dunkle Kinosaal überläßt das Publikum in einem größeren Maß seiner Imagination als der von stärkerer sozialer Kontrolle geprägte Theaterraum; die große Leinwand präsentiert ein Spektakel, das ‚wirklicher‘ erscheinen kann [...]” (Griem 307). Cinematic narration invites the audience in a particularly effective way to trust the fictional worlds. The interplay of image, sound and continuity editing allows the audience to perceive the fictional world not as being invented and made, but as being a mere recording of something already existing.

3.2. Metafilms

Turning to film and cinema, one can find a large number of movies which refer to their own medium and their own world: films that refer to film. Films that address aspects of film and film-making have been in existence since the medium’s early beginnings and date back to the silent film era (e.g. *THE MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA* (1929)). Christopher Ames notes that “virtually all aspects of the moviemaking industry have received film treatment at some time [...] many films do reveal a good bit about film-making techniques; and many films provide biting critiques of the excesses and absurdities of the Hollywood system” (10). And yet, self-conscious films have not received much critical attention (Ames 10; Withalm *Movies* 256).

One of the pioneers in the German academic context, Gloria Withalm, notes that when analysing film under the aspect of self-reference – or metareference as the present paper – the approach needs to be able to cover the “film in its entirety” by providing “a broader framework without restricting itself to the film as a text” (*Screen* 125). This broader framework is the “sociocultural (and economic) system” (129) in which the film is necessarily always embedded. Self-referential and self-reflexive films draw on both aspects and have developed many different ways of making reference to it. Film as a medium passes through various stages, from production, to distribution and consumption. All these stages – including the film itself, which is at the core of this cycle – can serve as points of reference for meta-elements and can, in turn, be alluded and referred to by meta-references, as the following diagram shows (Withalm *Film*):

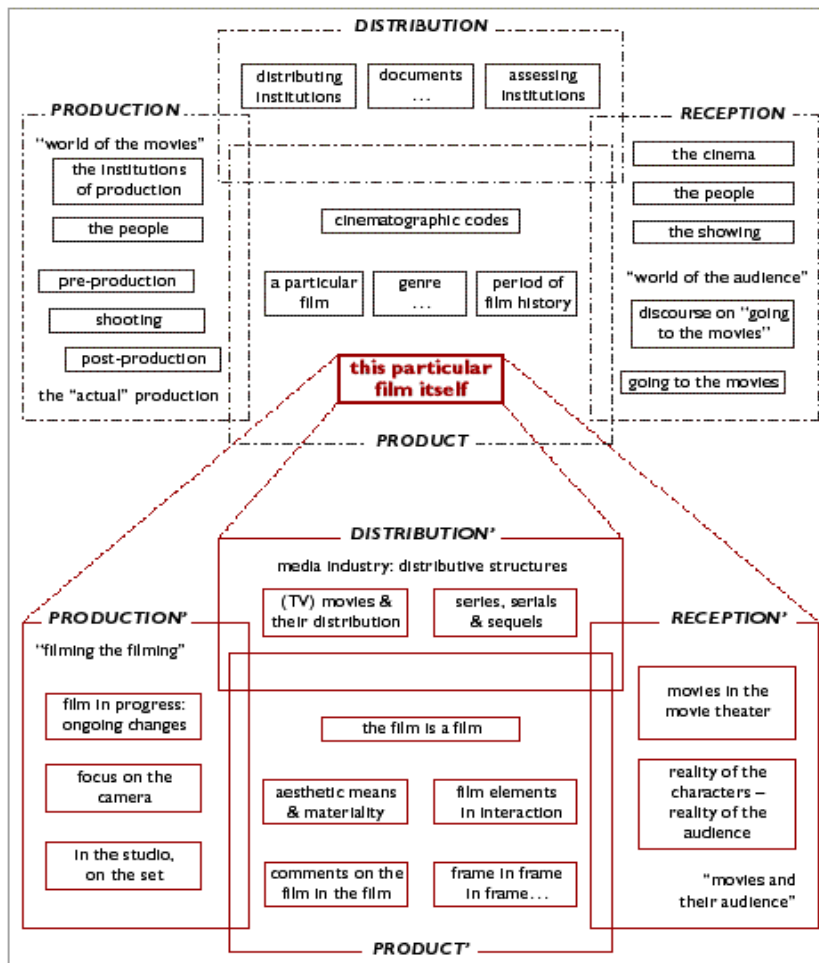


Fig. 3: Types of filmic self-reflexivity

Generally speaking, one can assess a film's level of reflexivity and meta-referentiality depending on its engagement with film as a system. Is film-making addressed merely as the underlying theme or in fact as the subject of the film? A film that is telling a (genre-specific) well-established story and simply uses, for example, Hollywood as its setting, is less self-referential than a film which foregrounds technical and thematic elements of film and film-making. The latter usually includes more metareferences, which consequently can evoke meta-awareness within the audience (Decker 54). To give an example, *THE ARTIST* – at a first glance – might appear to be a classic love story that only uses early Hollywood as its underlying setting, however, as the story progresses the film draws more and more attention to its technical details and the aspect of sound.

It is, however, not only the aspect of film-making which self-referential films address. Self-reflexive films might not be set in the film industry at all and still contain metareferential elements. What classifies metafilms as such, is the way in which they draw attention to themselves, their medium and/or constructedness. The specific ways in

which film can achieve such self-reflexion, are explored in detail in the following chapters. They all focus on different aspects of metaisation, which can be found in the selected films, and analyse metareferential elements more closely.

Applications to Film Analysis

1. References to Film as a System

Self-reflexivity in film can extend beyond the work itself and address the system in which it is imbedded. Movies that are set in the film industry or address an aspect of the *film as a system* naturally include more references to film than films which do not have a direct connection to the framework film. The following chapter approaches, what Withalm calls “the world of the movies” (Fig. 3), namely aspects of production, people and processes involved in film-making, and investigates how contemporary film uses them for metareferential accounts.

1.1. The Film Industry

The most famous and well known place for film-making is Hollywood.⁷ Obviously, not all films are produced there but all films that have film-making at the core of their narrative will, to some extent, be confronted with ideas about Hollywood film-making. Even if the film is not set in Hollywood, audiences will inevitably compare what they see with what they already know about film-making in Hollywood. This is due to the big influence which the American movie industry has on mainstream cinema:

All Hollywood movies are about Hollywood; some just happen to be set there as well. That is, all Hollywood films contribute to the larger story of film and celebrity that gives ‘Hollywood’ its complex meaning. Film audiences read the literal plot of movie simultaneously with that developing metanarrative of Hollywood to which each film contributes a piece. (Ames 2)

Most of the selected films belong to the group of films that thematise film-making in Hollywood. Films that look behind the scenes of the (American) dream factory and simultaneously emerge out of the very same. Even those films, which were not produced in Hollywood, contribute to the ideas and the concepts that the audience has about the film industry, as any film produced adds to the discourse of film.

Ames argues that whenever Hollywood films make Hollywood their subject “[...] they encounter a series of paradoxes. Films about Hollywood purport to take the viewer behind the scenes and behind the cameras, but by definition what appears on the screen must be taking place in front of the camera” (4). What most audiences – who are outsiders to the

⁷ “The biggest industry in the word [sic!] in terms of films produced is India. However, in terms of money and global reach Hollywood reigns supreme” (Lacey 99).

industry – know about the film industry is, in fact, mediated and produced by the very same; namely, through films, making-ofs, interviews etc., which all contribute to the filmic paratext. The appeal of films about film-making lies in their promise to unveil what is happening behind the scenes through stripping away the harmonious and uninterrupted filmic illusion: “But because the entire film inevitably is trapped in the cinematic realm for the viewing audience, the identification of a genuine ‘truth about Hollywood’ [or film-making] becomes ironic or paradoxical” (Ames 6).

The American film industry and its prime location ‘Hollywood’ has been addressed throughout film history. Christof Decker notes that Hollywood has a metaphorical function for American culture (56). Success, luxury, beauty and youth which are often associated with the ‘American Dream’ are promoted by its film industry. However, films about the world of film do not only celebrate and glorify themselves and their system, but often question these idealised expectations. By thematising itself, the film industry also confronts the audience with its downsides: The crumbling facades of stars and success, the power of money or the dominance of bureaucratic organisations which hinder the creative process of film-making:

Geschichten von Drehbuchschreibern und alternden Divas, von den letzten Genies der Branche oder von gescheiterten Existenzen im Umfeld der Filmstudios greifen Topoi auf, die zum Fundus der kulturellen Selbstverständigung in Amerika gehören, den eigenen Modus der Informationsvermittlung jedoch eher selten einschließen. (Decker 56)

Although not all of the selected films were produced in Hollywood, most of them address certain ‘crises’ that people experience when engaged or linked to film-making. In *HUGO* it is having to stop production and not being recognised as a filmmaker, *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS*, *TRISTRAM SHANDY* and *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* address difficulties that accompany the writing and making of film, while *BIRDMAN* and *THE ARTIST* thematise career problems of actors.

Addressing the film industry and the therein involved processes is an affirmative *fictum*-metareference. When the character George Méliès in *HUGO* shows a little boy around the film studios and notes “If you’ve ever wondered where your dreams come from, you look around... this is where they’re made”, then this can be seen as an affirmative meta-reference. Although it acknowledges the constructedness of films, it reinforces the myths and beliefs we have about film-making. Any film that is set in the film industry tries to make us believe that what we see contains (at least some) truth about film-making. Films about films are trying to uphold the illusion of the ‘reality’ of film-

making. However, since we are watching fiction films and not documentaries (and even their reality is mediated) what is presented as ‘truth’ is fiction, modelled after reality.

1.2. Actors and Stardom

The most visible and for the audience accessible part of the film industry are actors. They promote films, give interviews and hold the key to the world behind the screen, for they ‘are’ the characters on screen. Actors are crucial to film and like any other aspect of ‘the world of movies’ they, too, can serve as a point of reference for metaisation.

Films set in show business often draw attention to actors through the metadramatic element of *role playing within the role*. Actors play characters which are actors; in a further step these diegetic actors often play other, intra-diegetic characters themselves. In *BIRDMAN*, for example, Mike (Edward Norton) is a Broadway actor who takes on different roles for a living, as well as George (Jean Dujardin) in *THE ARTIST* who plays various different roles in intra-diegetic silent movies. Patterns like these are highly self-reflexive. They mirror processes which are at work outside the diegesis, in the making of the very film itself. It reminds the audience that what they see is a performance by an actor who, just like the character in the film, plays a role. Instances of actors playing characters that are acting for film or on stage can be found, for example, in *THE ARTIST*, *BIRDMAN*, *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* and *TRISTRAM SHANDY*.

Film can also address the various functions actors have in film-making, as well as their role as a public and private figure. Richard Dyer notes that “we’re fascinated by stars because they enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production (capitalism), with its particular organization of life into public and private spheres” (617). A part of the fascination with actors lies in the double-coded nature of role playing and performance:

Stars are obviously a case of appearance – all we know of them is what we see and hear before us. Yet the whole media construction of stars encourages us to think in terms of ‘really’ – what is [the actor] really like? [W]hich biography, which word-of-mouth story, which moment in which film discloses [them as they really are]? (Dyer 604)

It is exactly this interrelation of private and public, ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’ that films like to play with. Similar to theatre, the audience of a film can never be sure how much of the performance is ‘acting’ and how much of the performance depicts the ‘true self’ of the actor.

This is an element which *TRISTRAM SHANDY* openly plays with, as the main actors, Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, are not only playing 18th-century characters but also versions of themselves. When Brydon is told that his role as Uncle Toby demands him to shoot a scene with the (real-life) actor Gillian Anderson, he reacts like probably any other fan would:

BRYDON: You know how I feel about Gillian Anderson! ... I've got posters of Gillian Anderson. I think the woman is an angel. I got all of the X-Files on DVD.
COOGAN: What? I don't understand what the problem is.
[...]
BRYDON: The thing is: I can't act ...
COOGAN: [interrupting] I know that.
BRYDON: ... with Gillian Anderson. I have a proper sexual thing for Gillian Anderson. I covered her. And if I have to do a love scene with her ... I will blush.
COOGAN: But Toby would blush. That's good. Channel that! Method acting.

(*TRISTRAM SHANDY* 01:05:00)

Coogan's comment that Brydon should use his feelings as a way of method acting, supports the notion that an actor's performance is based on and partly reflects the actor's true self. This has an affirmative function for the film's own narrative, as *TRISTRAM SHANDY*, with its mockumentary style, wants to make us believe that Coogan and Brydon are not acting but simply themselves. Brydon seems genuinely excited about meeting his idol, a reaction the audience quite likely can identify with. However, the undertone of the scene, the slight mocking of his excitement stops the audience from wholly identifying with him. Instead it creates a critical distance, which allows the audience to reflect (their own) behaviour and attitude towards celebrities and stardom.

Film makes use of the audience's obsession with stars. Lacey notes that a "star's persona is a mask insofar that it may have little to do with the actual individual [...]. Stars are to an extent trapped by their persona once they have established it, as audiences expect to see a typical performance" (45). The audience's knowledge about an actor's personal life or their previous roles can be the basis for metareferences. Additionally, films can allude to the affinity of a character and the likeness of the actor's off-screen persona. A prime example of this can be found in *BIRDMAN*, where clear parallels are visible between the main actor, Michael Keaton, and the main character of the film, Riggan Thomson.

Riggan is an actor who gained fame by playing the comic-hero Birdman in a (fictional) Hollywood blockbuster of the same name. However, after the original "Birdman" movie and two successful sequels, Riggan's career declined. The play he is now directing on

Broadway – this is where we, the audience of *BIRDMAN*, join the story – should help him back into show business. To understand the indirect metareference at work, one needs to know that the actor Michael Keaton is well known for playing the comic-hero Batman. His portrayal of the comic-hero in Tim Burton's *BATMAN* (1989) and also the sequel *BATMAN RETURNS* (1992) gained him international success in the 1990s, followed by “several productions with mixed success” (IMDb) in the new millennium.

The parallels between the on-screen character and the off-screen person cannot be overlooked. To put it in words of a film critic: “[...] here you can almost feel Iñárritu [the director's] breath as he whispers into your ear: ‘Get it? He was Batman. Now he's baring his soul, he's trying to lift himself up by doing my movie, where he's a has-been who's writing/ directing/ acting/ producing an off-Broadway play. Get it?’” (Lucca 69). The similarity between the actor's and character's life plays with and into the audience's expectations and the question of how much we see on screen is role playing and how much is real.

1.3. Aspect of Film-Making

Films that have film-making at the core of the narrative are often labelled ‘film in film’ or ‘Hollywood on Hollywood’ and contain the most prominent and overt types of self-referentiality on the story level. Concerning their level of metaisation, Withalm notes that “telling a story on Hollywood or on shooting a film does not yet qualify these as ‘self-reflexive’ in the strict sense” (*Movies* 257). She argues that only films which include “the actual situation of shooting this very film itself” (*Movies* 257) – showing the set, the crew or in rarer cases even the shooting camera – can be regarded as self-reflexive and, as I defined earlier, metareferential.

In her analysis of ‘special cases of self-reference in the movies’ Withalm only considers the film as a whole and seems to neglect single and indirect accounts of metaisation. Films that address film-making point towards the apparatus and constructedness of film which is potentially anti-illusionist. Hence, showing e.g. a film set, even if it is not the set of the very film itself, has the potential to elicit a meta-awareness in the audience. Admittedly, indirect meta-elements like these, which are embedded in the story's narrative and diegetically motivated, are less obvious and might be easily overlooked, but they are metareferences nonetheless.

Typical examples of movies focusing on film production show a set, a look into the studios, the director or the film crew at work. Examples of directing in film can be found

in HUGO and SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE. The audience is also allowed to look behind the camera in TRISTRAM SHANDY and THE ARTIST. As Withalm illustrates in her model of filmic self-reflexivity (Fig. 3), the aspect of production does not only include the shooting of any or the very film itself but also aspects of pre- and post-production. Naturally, there are also films which explore these aspects. The following examples show how elements of pre-production are incorporated in SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS and used as a self- and metareferential device.

- SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

Since it concentrates on the phase of pre-production, SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS is not a typical example of the film-in-film genre. Nevertheless, it offers its audience a glance behind the curtains of moviemaking, as well as opening a meta-level to reflect on the making of and – in this particular case – the *writing* of films.

What the film suggests is that writing for the big screen is not easy, as the screenwriter Marty is struggling to come up with ideas for his screenplay *Seven Psychopaths*. The fact that Marty's screenplay and the film share the same name is probably the film's most prominent metareference. It seems as if the outer and inner film, or rather the (extra-diegetic) film and the diegetic screenplay coincide. This intratextual self-reference, the film's plot line and narration open room for reflection: Is the film SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS named after the diegetic film script *Seven Psychopaths*, or the other way around? Is the diegetic film *Seven Psychopaths* the same film we are watching? In order to understand how this perception is created, it is necessary to take a look at this plot device in detail. Generally speaking, it is supported by the film and the film within the film sharing the same title. Various self-references and self-reflexive comments on the plot as well as interwoven plot lines, add to our idea of the film script but also to the blurring of diegetic boundaries.

The script of *Seven Psychopaths* appears in several scenes throughout the movie. It is not only referenced by characters talking about it, but also shown in various stages of its development. In one of the early scenes Marty is working on his screenplay, holding a yellow scribbling block with only the words "EXT. LA STREETCORNER. DAY." written in the first line (Fig. 4). He then picks up a piece of paper that looks like the cover page of the screenplay *Seven Psychopaths* which yet has to be written (see Fig. 5). Interestingly SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS has the exact same beginning. The film opens with an image of an LA street corner during day and when taking a look at the original screenplay

of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS, one will notice that both the extra-diegetic and the diegetic screenplay start with the same lines. In the subsequent scene Billy and Marty discuss the progress of the screenplay:

BILLY: So how's the 'Seven Psychopaths' coming along, Marty?
MARTY: Slow, slow. I got the title. Just haven't been able to come up with all the psychopaths yet.
BILLY: How many you got?
MARTY: One.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 00:07:29)

These audio-visual comments reference and reflect the process of screenwriting. The film's narrative is kept in such a way that the film develops alongside Marty's screenwriting as well as the plot development of *Seven Psychopaths*. To some extent Marty and the audience share the same knowledge concerning the plotline of the film. The outer, main film unfolds along with the development of the diegetic film script. When asked what will happen at the end of the film Marty replies "I don't know what happens to them at the start" and neither does the audience.

During their conversation Marty is taking notes for the Jack O'Diamonds character, which Billy suggests. At this point neither the audience nor Marty is aware that Billy is the Jack O'Diamonds character and is therefore writing himself into Marty's screenplay. At the beginning of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS Billy seems like a normal, slightly eccentric character. However, as the film progresses and the more the Jack O'Diamonds' character takes shape in Marty's screenplay the more Billy changes as well. The attributes ascribed to the character of the script, the intra-diegetic story, seem to slowly show in Billy, the diegetic character of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS. In Hornby's terms this dualistic device is a type of *role playing within the role* which "sets up a feeling of ambiguity and complexity with regard to the character" (67).

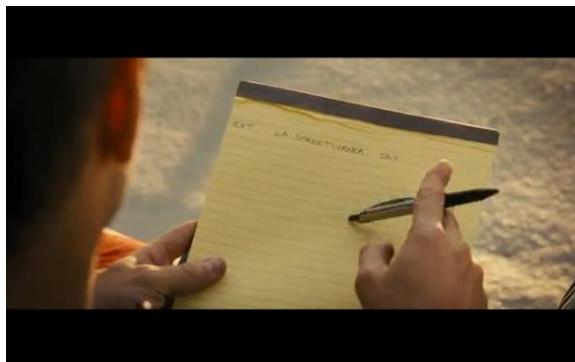


Fig. 4: Marty's screenplay – notes



Fig. 5: Marty's screenplay – cover page

In the scene following their talk, Marty is bent over his yellow scribbling block with the first page gone, now showing “1. THE JACK O’DIAMONDS, 2. THE BUDDHIST PSYCHOPATH” written on it, all of which are characters and will later appear in the film. Also when Billy puts a “Calling all Psychopaths” advertisement in the *LA Weekly* (a real-life reference), saying “I’m writing a screenplay with my friend called the ‘Seven Psychopaths’” the preproduction stage of film-making is being addressed. In the course of the film the script develops from simple note taking to an actual hard copy screenplay.

At one point in the story Billy recommends that Marty should use his bad feelings and put them into his writing. All these references suggest to the audience that this might be the way ideas for screenplays are collected. That crossing out characters, discussing the script with friends is how movies are being written. In a further step, it might also raise the question of how the script for the film *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS* itself was written and allows speculations as to whether the two might share any parallels. In the particular case of *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS* it does not only reflect screenwriting but even suggests that Marty is writing the very same film which the audience is watching. According to Withalm this and showing the shoot of the very film itself (see *TRISTRAM SHANDY*) is the “climax of self-reflexivity with regard to the production phase” (*Screen* 133).

2. Genre as Metareference

When considering film in a broader framework, the genre can also be the subject of meta- and intertextual references. Genre can be understood as the “negotiation between producers, film and audiences” (Lacey 46). Genre offers the audience not only an idea of what to expect but also a rough guide to what is possible in its fictitious world, for the rules of the genre also define its limits. Nick Lacey notes that this is the reason why even the most futuristic landscape can appear ‘realistic’ in the context of science fiction, since it is inherently conclusive with the fictional world and genre. An aspect which has already been discussed in connection with *fictum*-metareferences.

Genre is based on reoccurring motifs; “[genres] can be categorized by their ‘repetition of elements’: iconography (significant objects or sounds), narratives, settings and characters” (Lacey 48). How these elements are combined depends on the characteristics of a genre, yet there are no fixed rules. Due to genre being “a very fluid concept” (47), many films can, in fact, be attributed to more than one genre, making them so-called ‘hybrids’. A film that is serving its genre has an affirmative effect on the fictional illusion and helps the audience to immerse into the fictional world. Films that break with their genre conventions call attention to the very same. It is this metareferential strategy that can have a distancing or comical effect on the audience and is often employed by parodies or metafilms, as the following examples show:

- SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS and THE GUARD

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS is a film that plays with and is very much aware of its genre. The film includes a number of scenes in which genre and genre conventions are (in)directly addressed. At the beginning of the film Marty notes:

MARTY: See, I’m sick of all these stereotypical Hollywood murderous scumbag-type psychopath movies. I don’t want it to be one more film about guys with guns in their hands. I want it, overall, to be about love and peace.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 00:07:49)

This statement is not only a direct and critical metareference to genre and the “stereotypical Hollywood” film, but also an indirect and self-reflexive metareference to the film’s own story. SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS itself is located somewhere between the two extremes of “murderous” and “love and peace”, as it incorporates both, scenes of violence and peace. While Marty keeps reflecting and criticising violent gangster films and Hollywood’s preference for it, Billy persistently tries to influence Marty to write such a

film. The struggle between the two characters is reflected in the story and helps the film to its comical effect. Despite criticising the Hollywood genre, SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS does meet the genre's conventions, even if its purpose is to parody it. Partly a "revenge flick" (00:55:44) the film, for example, includes a villain, Charlie the gangster boss. His actions are motivated by revenge as he sets out to avenge the kidnapping, not of a member of his clan nor a relative, but his lapdog. Indulging in the genre, the film yet finds a way to distance itself from the very same by parodying the classic gangster boss character through his sentimental feelings for his pet.

Another way of drawing attention to the genre is by breaking it and thus pointing at it. In SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS this happens when Hans refuses take his hands up even though the criminal Paolo is pointing a shotgun at him. By withholding the expected behaviour he is not only taking the other character (and most likely also the audience) by surprise but he also breaks with a classic element of the crime genre and the conventions of surrender.

PAULO: Put your hands up!
HANS: No.
PAULO: What?
HANS: I said no.
PAULO: Why not?
HANS: I don't want to.
PAULO: But I've got a gun.
HANS: I don't care.
PAULO: But ... it doesn't make any sense.
HANS: Too bad.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 01:27:03)

Towards the end of the film there is another break with the genre's traditions. Knowing that they will soon face Charlie the gangster boss, Billy, Marty and Hans, are getting ready for the final shoot-out, an element of gangster or western films. However, when Charlie arrives at the scene to claim back his dog, the anticipated shoot-out does not happen.

BILLY: Where's your guns?
CHARLIE: You said don't bring none, so I didn't bring none. [...]
BILLY: You didn't bring a gun to the final shoot-out? Bullshit.
(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 01:32:30)

Billy is surprised and angered by this, for he expected Charlie to break the deal and bring weapons, which is also suggested by the film's genre. Conventionally, in a gangster narrative, the gangster boss will try to double cross and betray his opponent. Again, it is

the gangster boss who breaks with the genre and helps the film to its comical effect. Even when the final shoot-out finally happens, the genre's classical element does not follow the conventions. Billy and Charlie face each other and are ready to shoot, when Charlie's gun gets jammed. Instead of taking advantage of this, Billy, who is determined to have a 'proper' final shoot-out, allows Charlie to fix his gun.

The genre of crime and action films is also reflected in *THE GUARD*. Boyle repeatedly comments on characteristics of US-American crime films, "'I'm on it, Sergeant.' He thinks he's in fucking Detroit!'", and makes allusions to crime films.

BOYLE: What did they used to call those things? On the telly?
GABRIELA: I am sorry?
BOYLE: APB! [American accent] "I'm putting out an APB!"
[with a laugh] You never hear that anymore, do ya?
(*The Guard* 37)

The film thematises elements of crime, cop and gangster films but only partially puts them into practice. It seems as if the American (Hollywood) gangster film and its European equivalent are having a stand-off. This duality supports the portrayal of the main characters; while the FBI agent Everett conducts a by-the-book investigation, Sergeant Boyle follows a more unconventional style. These characteristics are used to support the "supposed Dublin-rural and Irish American value contrasts" (Canning 207). It also highlights the film's contrasting interpretations of the same genre and thus functions as a self-reference with metareferential potential.

Although both films, *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS* and *THE GUARD*, reflect and critically comment, on their genre, namely the crime or gangster film, they cannot avoid staying within its boundaries. These film endings are good examples of them being bound to their genre, both culminate in a 'final shoot-out' scene.

- BIRDMAN

In *BIRDMAN* the aspect of genre is only indirectly touched upon. There, it is less a question of genre but more of what is (im)possible in the diegetic world, which is used for metareferential accounts. The first scene of the film shows Riggan sitting cross-legged in mid-air. As the beginning of a film is used to introduce the audience to the fictional world and to establish its boundaries, this scene is not breaking the illusion for it is just beginning to build up. As the film continues, we learn that Riggan has telekinetic powers, which seem to stem from Birdman, the superhero character Riggan used to play. However, the film's narrative is kept in such a way that we cannot be sure if he really possesses these superpowers or whether they merely exist in his imagination.

“Genres offer a set of expectations that create a clear idea, for audiences, about what is possible in the film’s diegesis” (Lacey 47). Not being able to locate the film on the scale of genres, the audience needs to pay close attention to the story and any hints in the narrative in order to sound out the film’s boundaries and verisimilitude. Halfway through the film, Riggan, enraged by the lack of success, starts destroying his dressing room with his powers. When the producer Jack enters the room, the perspective changes and we see Riggan tearing apart the room with his bare hands. The image, presumably showing what is actually happening, breaks the illusion. Up to this point in the story, Riggan’s superpowers were (not likely but still) believable. This *fictum*-metareference disrupts the illusion of reality, which was established at the beginning of the film and which we believed to be consistent within the diegetic world. Therefore, we feel compelled to reflect and re-assess what is supposed to be ‘real’ and what is not and have to re-set the boundaries of the film.

The disclosure of Riggan’s mental condition allows us to recognise Riggan’s supernatural powers as fictional and imaginative. This is why later in the story, when the Birdman character suddenly walks behind Riggan on the street and is talking to him, the fictional illusion is not broken. Even when BIRDMAN suddenly breaks with its realism and includes an action scene that resembles that of a superhero movie, the aesthetic illusion stays intact. The intrusion of the ‘Birdman’ universe into the diegetic world only takes place in Riggan’s mind and thus is conclusive.

The final scenes of Birdman are set in a hospital room where Riggan wakes up after his failed suicide attempt. He is being visited by family and friends. When he is alone in his room again, he walks into the bathroom to take a look at himself. There he notices Birdman reflected in the mirror. In contrast to the rest of the film where Riggan always acknowledges Birdman’s presence, the two only look at each other and Riggan returns to his room: “He opens the window and feels the sun and the breeze on his swollen face. [...] We stay with Riggan, who seems to be thinking about something. He sees a flock of birds dancing in the sky. Then he grabs the side of the window with one hand and begins to step up onto the sill” (*Birdman* 112). The camera pans from Riggan, now standing in the window, into the room that is filled with bouquets of flowers. His daughter Sam returns the room but it is empty: “She spots the opened window [...]. Tentatively she walks toward the window. She gets there, summons her courage and looks down. Nothing. Slowly, confused, she tilts her head up and looks up into the sky. A smile, filled

with pride, begin [sic!] to wash over her face” (*Birdman* 112). With this scene the film *BIRDMAN* ends and leaves the audience with the question: Where has Riggan gone?

The final image suggests that he is up in the air; but did the film not establish, that Riggans superpowers are only a mental manifestation? Earlier in the film when Jack walked in on Riggan destroying his room, we saw what ‘really’ happened. Consequently, Riggan flying away is not possible, but then why is Sam looking up, smiling? *BIRDMAN* intentionally denies the audience an unambiguous ending. It could have shown Riggan on the ground, flying in the air or in any other position or situation, instead it avoids a clear ending and thus breaks with conventions. *BIRDMAN* leaves questions concerning the narrative unanswered. In fact, with the final scene it opens more questions than it answers. The audience, however, is left alone with them and has to make sense of the ending itself. In order to interpret the final scene, we need to reflect upon the film, its narrative structure and limits, and thus the ending can function as an indirect metareference.

3. Medium-Specific Metareferences

Audio-visual media have two channels with which they can convey information; sound and image. These defining information channels can be used separately or in combination, with their dynamic interplay adding an extra layer of meaning. As a general rule, the image track and the sound track supplement and intensify each other: the sound track, for example, supplies the moving image with the dialogue and sound, just as it contributes to the effect and impact that images have on the audience (Gymnich 135). “Sound shows us the image differently than what the images shows alone, and the image likewise makes us hear sound differently than if the sound were ringing out in the dark” (Chion 122). Film can therefore use its medium-specific devices – such as image, sound but also the editing of the two – to draw attention to itself.

3.1. Sound

Sound plays an important role for the perception and understanding of a film. This is why Michel Chion describes it as “added value”, in order to stress “the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression” (112). Broadly speaking there are two types of sound, diegetic and extra-diegetic. The *film score* (or film music) which was written for the film is extra-diegetic, while *dialogue*, *sound effects* and *ambient* (background) *sound* usually emanate from the narrative world. Generally, the sound in film is not naturalistic, which means that the sound is different to what one would hear if one was in the camera’s position. Therefore, just as the image recorded by camera, sound is always mediated. What the audience hears is decided by the filmmakers and mostly determined by the needs of the narrative (Lacey 16).

- THE ARTIST

In the film *THE ARTIST* the audience hears – except from the score – hardly anything at all. The modern black-and-white silent movie, not only draws attention to film-making and the involved processes therein but explicitly highlights the role of sound in film. It is set in and thematises the transitional period of the late 1920s and early 30s, which brought innovations for the film industry, namely the shift from silent films to so-called ‘talkies’. The story follows George Valentin, a successful silent film actor, and his fan Peppy Miller. Inspired by her idol the young woman starts her own acting career and while Peppy is the new rising star in Hollywood, George struggles to adapt to the changes in

the industry. There are many scenes and elements in the film where the aspect of sound is foregrounded (through sound) and which are metareferential in various ways.

The opening scene of *THE ARTIST* shows a man being tortured and screaming, what is missing however, and what we cannot hear are the screams. There is no diegetic sound, only the score in form of orchestral music. Sound and image do not correspond, or at least their interplay is different to what the modern audience is used to. The black-and-white image and the characters' dialogue presented through intertitles on screen, indicate that, clearly, what we are watching must be a silent movie. As many modern films allude to or reference silent films (*HUGO*, *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE*) this is nothing unusual. The beginning of the film is used to establish its narrative boundaries, therefore at this point the lack of sound does not break the aesthetic illusion. Yet, we are slightly irritated and waiting for sound to set in.

The torture scene continues, there is a cut which reveals a conductor in front of an audience, another cut now showing parts of the audience, the conductor and his orchestra and also a movie screen where the action of the previous torturing scene continues. We are watching a film-within-the-film. There are several more cuts, showing the orchestra and the audience from different angles, as well as a look backstage behind the diegetic-screen, where a sign reads "Please be silent behind the screen". Ironically, the actors and staff who are watching the film backstage are not only silent behind the screen but, in fact – just as the intra-diegetic characters – also silent on screen. The sign therefore functions as an indirect metareference pointing at the voicelessness of the characters.

THE ARTIST is not entirely silent, however. It seems as if the music produced for the film-within-the-film by the diegetic orchestra is also the score for the film itself. The music accompanies and fits the scenes, which depict not only the orchestra but also the audience's reaction, gasping and laughing. Again, we can see but not hear the reaction. Are we listening to the same music as the diegetic audience? Or is it the other way round, is the score of *THE ARTIST* also the score for the film-within-the-film? Not even three minutes into the cinematic experience and *THE ARTIST* makes the recipient question and reflect its use of sound.

When the audience on screen claps and cheers the thundering applause one expects to hear and is used to, fails to appear. This is irritating. In other films, such as *HUGO*, diegetic sound returns to the film at the end of the intra-diegetic silent movie, in *THE ARTIST* it does not. Here, if not before, it dawns on the present-day audience – especially those who were not aware of *THE ARTIST*'s 'special' feature – that also the outer movie is, in fact, a

silent film. They, too, are about to experience what the (diegetic) audience of the late 1920s are experiencing. It is precisely this discrepancy of past and present which allows the described meta-elements to develop to their full potential. Today's audience is accustomed to films with sound and colour, a movie that does not make full use of the two, stands out. *THE ARTIST* confronts the audience with their own viewing habits and invites them to reflect how the film they are watching relates not only to other modern but also historical films. The contrast and potential for metaisation arise out of the historical and cultural context and allows *THE ARTIST* to draw attention to its own 'unique' characteristic.

Most of the dialogue in *THE ARTIST* is – in contrast to today – written and displayed through intertitles. The characters talk much more than the intertitles reveal, however. Sometimes it is possible to lip-read and understand what the characters are saying, other times we are left to deduce the content from what we can see on screen. All these instances function as indirect metareferences which make us aware how used to and dependent we are on sound and speech. At the same time however, these elements give emphasis to the discourse level. Since we can still follow and understand the story, we become aware of the means through which it is transmitted, namely pantomime or 'over' acting by the actors as well as longer shots, which allow us to 'read' the scene.

Throughout the film there are references to sound in general and also sound in film. Implicit ones are, for example, instruments or actions which produce sound or music but which we, as the audience of a silent film cannot hear; a playing record player, Peppy sounding a horn or whistling. All these elements are indirect *fictio* metareferences which bring attention to the specificities of the film; that we can see sources of sound but cannot hear their acoustic signals. Since we know the sounds from our own experience in the real-world, as well as their conventional use in films (e.g. music from a record player to set an ambience) we can apply our sound-knowledge and fill the acoustic gaps produced by the film on the discourse level. This form of metaisation elicits an awareness of the narrative devices used in *THE ARTIST* to convey the story, indicating that it is not important *how* the horn sounds, but to know *that* Peppy is sounding it.

It is not surprising that the film uses this aspect to play with the audience's expectation and knowledge of sound. Towards the end of the film George tries to shoot himself. However, the crucial moment is concealed by a title card reading "BANG!". The audience can neither hear, nor see what is happening. From our own experience and out of convention we know that not only do capital letters indicate a loud sound but the

onomatopoeic expression ‘BANG’ can represent the sound of a gunshot. Therefore, the next image comes as a surprise: “George is in the same position. He still has the pistol in his mouth. Visibly, he’s heard a BANG from outside, because he takes the pistol out of his mouth and looks out the window” (*The Artist* 40). Down on the street Peppy who was coming to George’s rescue has crashed her car into a tree, the ‘BANG’ was the sound of her crashing. Here the ‘added value’ that sound brings to film, which Chion (112) was referring to, becomes apparent; precisely because it is missing.

More explicit metareferences are people and newspaper articles discussing silent films and ‘talkies’. When Zimmer, the producer, invites George to a screening of a sound test, George laughs about it and dismisses the idea of sound in film. Zimmer is convinced of the innovation and angered by George’s reaction: “Don’t laugh George! That’s the future.” (00:29:25) The modern audience knows that Zimmer is right. It is a self-reference to film history and anticipates the upcoming events, namely George’s decline as a film star.

This scene is the first time that sound in film is directly addressed and explicitly thematised in *THE ARTIST*. The subsequent scene then is the first instance where we can hear sound that emanates from the diegetic level. The scene is best described by the instructions in the screenplay:

INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - GEORGE’S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

We’re back with George in his dressing room. He’s removing his make up [sic!]. He moves some ordinary object and the object, as he moves it, makes a noise. We hear the noise it makes. Really hear it. It’s the first time we’ve heard a sound that comes from within the film itself. One second later, George realizes that the object made a noise. He moves it again, the object makes a noise again. George is worried. He tries another object and obtains noise again. His dog barks and we hear it! He gets up (chair makes a noise) and says something to his dog, but no sound comes out of his mouth when he speaks. He realizes this... Panic sets in, he turns to the mirror and tries talking again, but still no sound comes out. Not understanding what’s happening, the feeling of panic fully blossoms and he flees his dressing room!

(*The Artist* 14)

Acted out, the scene conveys the impression that George himself hears sound for the first time. The character of a silent film becomes aware of sound. Although we are used to the noises – the sudden sound feels nightmarish. There is not only the sound of the dog barking loudly and incessant telephone ringing, but also the ambient sound of cars on a street and people talking. Fleeing from the noise in his room, George stumbles out onto the street, the ambient sound is gone and we can see and hear girls laughing at him. After the girls have gone, the ambient sound returns. The audience, and it seems George too, can hear the wind in a nearby palm tree. He looks around and “[i]n front of him a feather

eddies slowly to the ground, carried by the breeze. It finally lands, making a completely abnormal and disproportionate noise like that of a building crashing to the ground in slow motion. George screams, but again his cry is silent” (14). There is a cut and, “George awakes with a start! He’s in bed and is having trouble shaking off his nightmare. The film continues as normal: in other words, silent” (14).

This nightmare sequence is metareferential in various ways. Generally speaking the sounds and effects audible in the sequence are not special, other films use them as well. What makes them stand out, however, is the context in which they occur. By definition a silent film does not contain diegetic sound, thus the sound effects are unexpected. On the one hand, it reminds the audience that although they are watching a silent film, today’s filmmakers have the technical possibilities to record and play back sound. This is illustrated by the use of all three diegetic aspects of sound: *dialogue* (the girls’ laughter), *sound effects* (barking, ringing of the telephone, sounds of objects falling to the ground) and *ambient sound* (street noise, wind). In addition it draws attention to the technical capabilities of film in terms of sound mixing and editing: sound can be omitted as a whole, specific sounds can be singled out or distorted. The feather’s loud noise highlights the artificiality of the sound because it is against all expectations: A feather falling to the ground should not make any noise, while a car crashing should make a loud bang. Both times our expectation are not fulfilled.

On the other hand, the scene might elicit the question why the silent film is breaking with its convention and plays diegetic sound. Does this suggest that characters of a silent film can speak and indeed hear sound but only we as an audience do not have access to it? The characters in the film can talk and hear (each other) – it is just the extra-diegetic audience which is unable to hear it. With the dream sequence, however, we gain access to the character’s subjective feelings and perception, including sound. Richard Raskin calls this type of sound “subjective sound”. It is similar to the point-of-view shot and reveals what the character hears, including sound that only occurs in the character’s mind (Raskin). The dream sequence breaks with the expectations we have towards a silent movie, and yet the diegesis remains consistently silent. It is the intra-diegetic dream sequence which carries sound. Once we leave it, everything returns to ‘normal’. This is, of course, a trick that would have not been possible in an actual silent movie but only available to modern sound film.

Another scene which makes explicit reference to sound, or rather the muteness of the film is when George is confronted by his wife Doris. “We have to talk, George” (48) she says

but he just looks at her, smiles and does not answer. Doris replies and the title card reads: “Why do you refuse to talk?” (00:41:30). Doris’ question directly points at George’s muteness and is, in fact, double-coded. It questions not only why he is not talking to his wife, but can also be read as critique of him refusing to take on a role in a sound film. The decision to talk could resolve his problems, save his marriage and give him back his career. George, however, stays mute. On the story level, he refuses to talk in film in general because he rejects the development; on the discourse level, even if he wanted to speak he cannot because he is a character of a silent movie.

At the end of the film, when the modern audience are adjusted to the silent world, they are abruptly pulled out of their silent film experience again. Peppy has convinced George to remain in the film business and together the two are now shooting a dance scene. It seems that George has finally accepted the change in the film industry and is willing to take part in the new style of film. When their dance scene ends we can suddenly hear their director say:

DIRECTOR: Cut! Excellent!
(Zimmer has both his thumbs up. The director says to
Peppy and George.)
DIRECTOR: One more? Please?
(George laughs and replies, and we hear him too.)
GEORGE: With pleasure!
(THE ARTIST 41)

George’s willingness to take part in a ‘talkie’ has enabled sound into THE ARTIST’s diegetic world. Just as George finds his way into sound films, also sound eventually finds its way into this film. The film ends with the director giving instructions that point towards the newly acquired medium “Sound rolling. Quiet please!” and him finally shouting: “... and... Action!” (42). Against convention, the clear vocal instruction which indicates the beginning of a shot, marks the end of the very film itself.

THE ARTIST is a good example to illustrate how a film can use metaisation to elicit reflection on medium-specific elements, such as sound. There are, of course, other films which use their medium-specific tools for metareferential purposes. Some examples of how sound can be used in a self-referential manner (without directly addressing sound itself) are illustrated in the following section.

- BIRDMAN and SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

As already mentioned, the sound and image track can intensify each other and be used to highlight (either of) the two. An example of such an interplay can be seen at the beginning of the film *BIRDMAN*. The opening credits do not appear all at once but in rhythm with the film's score, first word by word and then letter by letter. This technique foregrounds both, sound and image. It seems as if the sound of the drum makes the letters appear on screen and we become aware that they do so in alphabetical order. Since there are no letters without sound, our attention is drawn to the sound of the drum kit which is special, insofar as the jazz drumming soundtrack is – with exception of only one piece of orchestral music – the only type of score throughout the movie. The unique soundtrack is an element which sets the film apart from other films and has the potential to function as a metareference.

Usually, however, the synchronisation of sound and image will go unnoticed and helps the audience to immerse into the fictional world. Although the extra-diegetic aspect of sound has received a lot of attention in this analysis, diegetic sound is equally important. The most important aspect of sound in film might, in fact, be *dialogue*. Chion notes that “sound in film is voco- and verbocentric, above all, because human beings in their habitual behavior are as well” (113). Dialogue is crucial for the understanding of the story. Not being able to understand what is being spoken because of, for example, bad sound recording or mixing, will always draw attention to technical aspects of film. This will most likely harm the fictional illusion, especially, when there is no diegetically motivated reason for the deficient sound.

In *BIRDMAN* this seemingly happens when the two main characters, Riggan and Mike, walk through Times Square. The drum score gets louder and louder and it becomes more difficult to understand what the characters are saying. Then, however, the camera reveals a drummer playing on his drum kit. What we perceived as bad mix of extra-diegetic sound turns out to be, in fact, of diegetic origin. Keyvan Sarkhosh describes such elements as an “intrusion of [...] film aesthetic device[s] into the diegesis” (176). He notes that being able to see the source of the sound, which before was only audible to the audience, breaches “the boundary to the diegetic world [...], the score thus becomes diegetic and the characters can react to it” (176).

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS also uses the interplay of sound and image to point towards its fictional nature, for example, in the sequence when Billy is telling his version of how *Seven Psychopaths* should end. Billy starts telling his story while the camera depicts him

doing so standing at the campfire. There is a cut, a change of scenery. The scene is now showing a graveyard matching Billy's description, "Exterior. Cemetery. Night." (M.McDonagh 70), who is still talking but now in voice-over. "[Voice-over] können als Metaisierungsstrategie fungieren [...] [b]esonders oft finden sich homodiegetische Erzählinstanzen, also Sprecher, die ihre eigene Geschichte erzählen, die die Zuschauer in die Geschichte einführen [...]" (Gymnich 143).

When Marty interrupts Billy, the music abruptly breaks off and there is a cut back to the campsite (SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 01:02:20). This rough transition emphasises that what we see on screen is only a story told by Billy. In a further step, it also highlights the fictionality of the whole film. The scene uses also the interplay of *sound effects* and *dialogue* to point at the fictionality of the depicted scene. When Billy continues telling his version and is shown at the campsite, we can hear the sound effects of the intra-diegetic graveyard scene which are overlaying and supporting Billy's narration. When the graveyard is shown again Billy's voice-over is overlaying the scene. His voice imitating shooting sounds is more prominent than the actual sound effects. The sound helps the transition and blending between the rough cuts and contributes to the continuity of the edit. Although it does not break the fictional illusion, it draws attention to the filmic devices and reminds the viewers that what is depicted on screen is 'just' a story.

"Most potent non-diegetic sound is music. Music can be used in a variety of ways, such as cueing suspense and signifying the emotion being evoked" (Lacey 19). In addition to this, music can also be used to add an extra layer of (self-)reference and comment on the events in the film. In SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS the first song of the film "Angel of Death" can be seen as a reference to and/or comment on the two Mafiosi waiting for their victim, but even more so as an intermedial comment, anticipating the unexpected arrival of Jack O'Diamonds who catches and kills the two off guard. In another scene Billy and his secret girlfriend, Angela, are about to have sex but have to stop because Billy doubts that he can "keep it up" (00:42:30). The song that was chosen to accompany the scene is "Don't Start Loving Me If You're Gonna Stop". A tongue-in-cheek comment on the characters' love making.

Films that try to uphold the fictional illusion use the complementing interplay of sound and image to convey a matching and harmonious impression which allows the spectator to immerse into the fictional world. As the selected examples have shown, it is possible to break this fictional illusion and/or elicit a metareflection with the audience when either

of two are being used to draw attention to themselves, to the other or to the medium and its constructedness.

3.2. Image

The moving image is often perceived as the most important element of film. However, as already noted it is the interplay of sound and image as well as the editing, the sequencing of images, which allows film to convey its meaning. Since film heavily relies on images, it also uses its visuals to relate and draw attention to itself.

Usually, the audience follows the narrative through the ‘eyes of the camera’ and therefore the camera itself is not visible to them. Therefore, drawing attention to the camera, the recording device which mediates the images we see on screen, is a meta-referential strategy often applied by films. There are different explicit and implicit ways of making the camera ‘visible’ for the audience. Showing mud or water on the camera lens, which reminds the audience of the filming device, is one of many implicit strategies. Showing *a*, or even *the* recording camera is a more explicit way, which is often used by films set in the film industry.

THE GUARD and SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE use a different way of calling attention to the camera. SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE revolves around the film shoot of Friedrich W. Murnau’s NOSFERATU (1922). Whenever the diegetic film crew starts shooting the film, the image on screen changes and we follow the scene through the eyes of the diegetic camera. There is an iris-in, the image changes from colour to black and white and also the sound quality drops. These medium-specific effects are used to allude to the original film by imitating film-making of the early 20th century but with modern techniques.

THE GUARD also uses the change of image quality to draw attention to the camera. Everett and Boyle are depicted sitting in a bar. After an establishing shot and cut, the film presents the bar from a high-angle shot, namely the upper corner of the room. The editing and change of camera angle suggest that the scene is now shown through a surveillance camera, or at least from its position. The image of the subsequent shot resembles that of a surveillance tape of a security camera, there is time count, and a change in colour and image quality. This implies that we are no longer looking through the main camera, which in turn draws attention to the camera and the fact that films are mediated images (Gymnich 137).



Fig. 6: High angle shot – bar



Fig. 7: High angle shot – surveillance camera

Another way of self-reference or self-reflection using visuals is the repetition or recursion of images and scenes (Nöth 21). *THE GUARD* is making use of this device several times, on the one hand by quick flashbacks, which show a previous scene of the film again, and on the other hand also through the mise-en-scène and reoccurring or similar shots as part of the visual narration. The end of the film when Boyle is getting ready to stop the drug traffic (Fig. 12 and 13) relates to the beginning of the narration, when Boyle is getting ready and dressed for work (Fig.10 and 11).



Fig. 8 “Dressing – morning”



Fig. 9 “Look into mirror – morning”



Fig. 10 “Dressing – night”

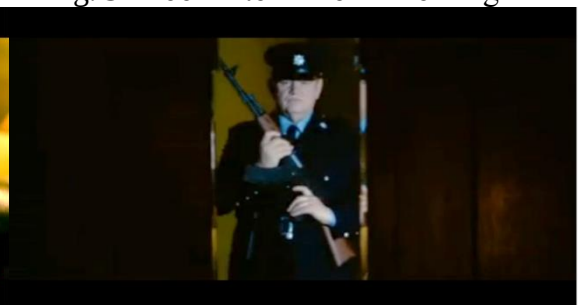


Fig. 11 “Look into mirror – night”

These examples only illustrate a number of the many ways in which film can use the image track for metareferential accounts. As the image is a defining feature for films, meta-references often depend (at least partly) on what is shown on screen and how this relates to other elements of the film. Many of the examples in the in following chapters include and depend on visual elements to various degrees, thus the image track will be a reoccurring theme.

3.3. Editing

Editing is a potentially disrupting device, yet most of the time it remains invisible. The audience will not notice the jumps between shots, since they are used to the way in which the recorded images are joined together. Editing concerns the content of the two shots and how this content relates one to the other (Lacey 31). Consequently it affects the story, character development and the pace of a film. It is an important aspect of filmic storytelling and influences how the story of a film is being perceived. Since editing changes the audience's perspective, Lacey points out, that it has the potential to disrupt: "However, continuity editing was developed with the purpose of preventing disruption, and audiences rarely notice editing" (33). As this paper is concerned with metareferences the following section focuses on, and examines aspects of (continuity) editing which cause disruption or elicit some kind of reflection with the audience.

- THE ARTIST, SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE and TRISTRAM SHANDY

The types of transition that editing uses can be grouped into five main types: cut, dissolve, wipe, fade out/in and iris (Lacey 31). These types have conventional meanings, e.g. dissolves can signify that time has passed, while wipes usually indicate that the events shown happen at the same time. Although these types of edit have conventional meaning, it is actually the context in which they occur that determines how to 'read' the transition (31-32). The iris-effect, for example, is a common device in silent film and today often used as pastiche and homage to the silent film area. Using this type of edit in contemporary film, therefore, always evokes and establishes some kind of connection to early film making. Examples of this can be found in *THE ARTIST* and *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE*. There the iris or wipe function not only as indirect references to silent films of the early 20th century but to some extent they also suggests authenticity.

Although *TRISTRAM SHANDY* employs continuity editing it still manages to foreground its filmic features and to draw attention to the edit. This is especially noticeable whenever the main character Tristram elaborates on parts of the story, for example, the 'Battle of Namur' (00:05:20). As the image track returns from the battle scene to the main story, the two story strands are linked by a wipe edit. Additionally the transition is visually and acoustically supported: the image on screen is visible bordered with an effect suggesting a strip of film or a dispositive (see figure 6). The sound supports this allusion by contributing a sliding sound effect that originates from a slide projector. The film uses its medium defining features (image and sound) to highlight other medium specifics, in this case the edit. This is one of many possibilities how film can draw attention to editing.



Fig. 12: Visually supported wipe edit

The different types of edits and the ways in which they are organised affects the perception of the film. Related to this are the four dimensions of editing: spatial, rhythmic, graphical and temporal (Bordwell qtd. in Lacey 36). The rhythm of a film is achieved through editing and refers to the shot lengths of a sequence. It can be regular, with shots having approximately the same length, or the rhythm might alter to build-up action, which usually is achieved through increasingly rapid editing and the reduction of the average shot length (ASL). Throughout film history the ASL has been reduced gradually (Lacey 36). David Bordwell summarises the development of ASLs in sound film:

“Hollywood films of the 1930s-1950s typically contained between 300 and 700 shots, giving them an average shot length of 8 to 11 seconds. In the 1960s, this norms [sic!] starts to change: Most films drop to between 6-8 seconds, and some down to 3-5. In the 1970s, the average accelerates more, with 5-8 seconds being the norm. By now films typically have 1000 shots. The 1980s see some narrowing: many films are averaging 5-7 seconds per shot, and several drop to 3-4 seconds ASL [...] [T]his fast cutting isn't limited to action films; comedies and dramas begin to be cut faster as well [...] After 1993 or so, many films have 2-3 seconds ASL [...]. (Bordwell 2)

The ASL is heavily influenced by the narrative and vice versa. Therefore, the decision whether or not to use of fast cuts in a films strongly depends on the film's narrative and the atmosphere it tries to create. Not every modern film makes use of fast edits and jump cuts. Examples for this are *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* and *THE ARTIST*, which are shot in the style of silent films. To make the film appear more authentic, the editing style of early Hollywood productions was also imitated. For present day audience this is an unusual experience. For example, the opening credits in *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE*, show nothing but abstract gothic images and last for more than 4 minutes. Compared to *THE ARTIST* (1min 40sec) or *TRISTRAM SHANDY*, where the opening credits accompany the continuing story (1min 45sec), the credits of *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* are irritatingly long and put the modern audience's patience to the test. This irritation inevitably elicits some reflection about film aesthetics and conventions, e.g. the film and opening credits themselves or in comparison to other films. The ASL, and with it the tempo of a narrative, can be used as a form of metaisation to stress technical aspects of film and film-making.

- BIRDMAN

A similar device is used in *BIRDMAN*. There, too, the edit draws the audience's attention to the fictionality and constructedness of story and film. Containing only sixteen visible cuts the film is, in fact, at the far end of the editing spectrum. The ASL is 7 *minutes* and the main shot lasts for over 90 minutes. The small number of cuts affects the length of the shots, and consequently also the rhythm and pace of the film. Describing films with slow pace Stam pointedly comments: "Their unusually slow rhythm comes as a kind of cultural shock to the spectator accustomed to the swift pace and saturation of incident typical of conventional fiction films" (145). A similar reaction is provoked by the long, continuous shot in *BIRDMAN*: "[...] [T]he editing and story presentation are simply too slow for a modern audience. We all capture information far more quickly from a visual medium than a generation ago" criticises the journalist Declan Hill in his film review. It seems that the edit as a self-referential device has fulfilled its purpose. It invites the audience to reflect how the film they are watching differs from other films and their usual viewing habits. In a further step it also makes them aware of technical aspects and special features of the very film itself, namely camera movement and editing style.

They suggest that the major part of *BIRDMAN* was shot in one single take. This raises questions about the film's production and it directs the audience's attention to technical aspects of film-making. We might start to wonder how the film was shot in order to achieve this effect: Was it actually shot in one single take or 'only' edited to look as if it had been filmed in one take? In a way, the film is playing with the audience and invites them to try and spot the potential cuts and edits. Something which neither the film nor the filmmakers are willing to reveal, however: "Like the director, who is trying to preserve some movie magic, the editors won't divulge how many cuts there are or what the longest shot was" (Desowitz).

The one-shot effect affects not only rhythm and pace but also how time in film is perceived, "editing does not just organize space, it is important in conveying time too" (Lacey 39). In most films, the story time is longer than the discourse time, as events of the fiction cover more time than is experienced by the audience in the cinema. Classical films use different types of edit to skip over dead space or 'temps morts', which allows time to 'disappear' through narrative ellipses. Dissolves and fades, as well as text insertions indicating a certain day, date or period of time (e.g. 'Monday' or 'one week later') suggest that time has passed (Lacey 39; Stam 140). The one shot effect, however, conveys the impression of real time. The film stays with the characters and follows the

events without cutting away; story and discourse time overlap. And yet, in *BIRDMAN* they do not. “The occasional attempts, within the fiction film, to establish a strict congruence between story and discourse time [...] constitute anomalies within the tradition, and are often obliged to ‘cheat’”, notes Stam (142). Similar is true for *BIRDMAN*. Not being able to use cuts to make time disappear, the film uses other devices to indicate the passing of time, which are more complex than it might first appear (Stam 142).

In *BIRDMAN* the main continuous shot spans over several days. Showing the passing of time in a single continuous shot can, for example, be achieved through a time-lapse. Halfway through the film, we follow Sam and Mike onto the rooftop of the theatre. While the characters leave the scene and thus the frame, the camera tilts up, revealing neighbouring buildings and the afternoon sky behind, hinting at the time of the day (00:53:00). It remains in this position as a time-lapse effect sets in, depicting the sky going dark, lights in the skyscrapers turning on and off until the sun rises again. The camera cranes down, through mid-air across the street and enters backwards through an open window where the action continues. A similar time-lapse scene occurs towards the end of the film (01:34:00). We follow Riggan who returns to the theatre after a drunk night out. The camera shows him entering through the main doors but remains outside the building. “Day turns to night, igniting the lights of the marquee, which reflect off of [sic!] the lobby doors. We hear wild applause coming from inside the theater. Seconds later, the doors of the theater open and the audience files out for intermission” (*Birdman* 100). A single continuous shot has evoked the passage of a whole day. Sequences like these can function as a metareference since they show how film can manipulate time. This is not a frequent but still conventional technique in film.

What is less conventional, however, is the second technique *BIRDMAN* uses. It is able to indicate time passing within a continuous shot by intertwining the temporal and spatial dimensions of editing. Riggan, still in costume, is shown alone in his dressing room visibly annoyed that his play is not developing the way he hoped. He desperately tries to stay calm but fails. Enraged, Riggan focuses on a vase of roses at the end of the table. It begins to shift. “Then, with a surge of anger, without ever touching it, he sends it crashing against the wall on the other side of the room” (*Birdman* 11). The camera follows the movement of the vase and shows the roses scattered across the floor. Following the clouds of dust hovering over the carpet, the camera slowly pans around the perimeter of the room until it shows a reporter sitting on Riggan’s couch (11). This is unexpected, was Riggan not alone in his room?

This type of transition in time differs strongly from conventional forms. It demands active involvement and reflection on part of the audience who need to deduce that some time has passed, between the breaking of the vase and the man sitting on the couch. The following sequence, showing three journalists interviewing Riggan, now dressed in a casual blazer, helps to make sense of this time jump. Instead of conventional cuts, *BIRDMAN* employs these transitions in time and space to lead from one part of the story to the next. Since the audience is not used to this playful type of editing, what the camera shows is not only disruptive but can also seem slightly misleading in terms of the perceived story time. Jake, the producer, learns that the actor Mike is willing to take part in the play and he may even be free to come to the theatre for a rehearsal that very evening. The camera follows Jake through the hallway backstage where he instructs a member of crew to “clear the theatre, send everyone to dinner and turn on the work lights” (00:12:30). In a high angle shot, the camera moves across the stage where lights are turning on, one after the other. This gives the impression that time is progressing normally and that discourse and story time overlap, which however they do not. Nothing in the shot gives away that the camera is not only moving through space but also time and only through the following scene this transition becomes apparent.

The lights reveal a man standing on the far end of the stage. As the camera moves down onto stage level, the man begins to speak: “Intimidating. Isn’t it?” (17). The camera moves closer towards the man, “Do you have any idea who walked these boards before you?”, the man turns towards the camera which is even closer now. Is he addressing us, the audience? He continues: “Geraldine Page, Marlon Brando, Helen Hayes, Jason Robards... [Riggan walks into shot] And now you. Riggan Thomson” (17). The man, who is talking, turns out to be Mike. It is the sequence following the camera movement which allows us to deduce that the camera movement across stage indicated a change in time, from the afternoon to the evening. The camera movement masks the invisible time jump, which we can only infer by the dis- and reappearance of characters.

However, the most striking and disruptive example of this edit type occurs in the middle of the film. Sam and Mike enter the ‘grid’ above the stage where the lights are located. The camera allows a glance down onto the stage. There, members of the theatre crew work on the set design which we can hear also in the background. The camera turns and focuses on Sam and Mike. Music sets in and overlays the now indefinable sounds from stage. The two start kissing. The music gets louder and we can hear Riggan off screen, reciting one of his monologues from the play. The two are still kissing as the

camera moves over the grid's railing and down onto the stage. The stage now shows a familiar scene, which we already know from previous sequences in the movie: Four characters around a table. The seat, which is allocated to Mike and his character, is taken but we cannot tell by whom. Has Mike, who earlier caused trouble, been replaced? "As the camera continues down from the grid, we discover an auditorium full of people staring at the actors on stage. [...] We pan along the auditorium back to the stage to find Riggan, Mike, Lesley and Laura in the kitchen" (80).

We are used to an exploitation of space in the cinema, where off-screen looks or gestures are assumed to imply a larger diegetic space, and

[...] whereby synecdochic fragments create in our mind the illusory sense of a continuum extending beyond the frame. The rectangular slice of profilmic reality included within the frame is assumed, by the laws of diegetic implication, to extend beyond the four edges of the frame and to the space behind the set and behind the camera. (Stam 139)

We assume that place and characters continue to exist, although we can no longer observe them and even though there is no proof that would confirm our assumption. We presume that Sam and Mike continue kissing in the grid, while the camera moves down onto stage and believe, that if it turned and allowed us a glanced back, the two would still be there. However, the laws of time and space do not apply to filmmakers. They are free to play with them at their will. This is what the camera movement and editing in *BIRDMAN*, as a metareferential device, draws attention to.

Conventionally camera movement takes the audience through space while time remains (relatively) stable; story and discourse time overlap. The opposite is true for time-lapse shots in which time passes while the camera remains stable in space. Sometimes these also include a 'fast-forward' camera movement but then both temporal and spatial change is shown. These particular shots in *BIRDMAN* are irritating and disruptive to the fictional illusion because the camera's movement across stage does not only imply movement through space but also through time. However, this is not instantly recognisable and only becomes apparent in connection with the follow-up shot. The transitions are supported through the audio track, which makes it difficult to recognise the temporal transitions for what they are. At times it is the score, other times it is the voice of a character which allows a smooth transition between the sequences.

As it is a potentially disruptive device, which the audience is not used to, the film slowly introduces the audience to its defining characteristic feature. In the first example, in Riggan's dressing room, the place remains the same as the camera is stable and only

pans across the room. The change of time is indicated by the appearance of new characters. In the second example, the film introduces movement to this interplay of time and space. The camera moves from behind the scenes onto the stage, where a new character is introduced. In the third examples, there is not only movement through time and space but additionally a character appears – only seconds after he has left the frame – in a different position in the same space. In conventional filmic storytelling, this is not possible and would not only break the illusion but also seem illogical and would make it difficult for the audience to follow the storyline.

The described techniques challenge the relation of time and space in the film. The one-shot effect throughout most of the film, in which story and discourse time are congruent, contrasts with the described transitions and makes them stand out. They illustrate how film can use and call attention to traditional techniques by shifting the relations between story and discourse time. *BIRDMAN* shows that conventional cuts are not necessarily needed for continuous storytelling.

4. Narrative Strategies of Metafilms

Self-conscious film can apply narrative and rhetorical strategies to achieve metaisation. One of the most prominent strategies is “to cast suspicion on the central premise of illusionistic narrative” (Stam 138) in form of *fictio*- and *fictum*-metareferences. In contrast to illusionist films that try to make us feel like spectators of actual events, which the camera just happens to record, metafilms with anti-illusionist tendencies try to make us aware of the underlying narrative strategies.

This tendency is at work in many samples of postmodern fiction. Along with the foregrounding of mediation strategies there is a shift of interest “away from the story told to the story telling” (Hutcheon *Narrative*, 35). In meta-cinema self-reflexivity is often complemented by the level of narration, which allows the narrating act to come forward. Instead of the enunciated the emphasis now lies on the enunciation itself (Poulaki 4). Annette Simonis even asserts a general trend in current media, especially after the year 2000, which is reflected by the audiences’ superficial interest in the characters and their (psychological) development. Instead, she claims, the audience gains pleasure from observing subtle medial structures which break and dissolve conventional plotlines. Due to the media shift and the tendency to network-narratives, which tend to acknowledge the audience and provide them with clues to comprehend the story, spectators (need to) become attentive observers of media-aesthetic means in film (10-13).

Film can make use of its medium-specific elements to draw attention to cinematic codes which usually remain within conventional boundaries and therefore hidden for the audience; an aspect which I elaborated on in the previous chapter. The forms of metaisation evoked by *BIRDMAN* through the camera movement and the one-shot effect could also be placed under this category. Camera movement and other medium-specific forms operate on the discourse level and are narrative strategies available to film to highlight its own medium-specific characteristics.

4.1. Story and Discourse (Time)

As already addressed in connection with metareferences in *BIRDMAN*, narratives – whether in literary fiction or film – have the choice of highlighting or obscuring the discordances between their two underlying time-schemes, namely discourse and story (Stam 140). Film enjoys the special advantage of being able to use all variations between story and discourse time; from extreme compression (covering a lifetime in a two-hour

film) to dilation whereby discourse time exceeds the story time by far. One way of calling attention to the twin time schemes of story and discourse is through parallelism.

The most conventional way of indicating parallelism is through cuts, sometimes with added text insertions ('meanwhile', 'at the same time'). The film cuts between plotlines and shows us two or more events which happen at the same time but at different places. In cases like this, the story time remains the same while discourse time continues. *TRISTRAM SHANDY* employs a different method of parallelism by showing certain events, which are happening at the same time, simultaneously through a split screen (Fig. 7; 8); thus, discourse and story time develop in parallel. Through this type of parallel sequencing the spacial separation of events is bridged; what happens at the same time, now also happens at the same place, namely on screen.



Fig. 13: 'Split screen'



Fig. 14: multiple split screen

Another way of manipulating story and discourse time is through a freeze frame, which stops the story time but allows discourse time to continue. In *TRISTRAM* the main character leads the audience through the narrative and comments on the events shown. Although he is a character of the story, he is not subjected to the story time when functioning as the narrator. He comments on the story from the discourse level and is free to move between the two. In the position of the narrator, Tristram can step out of the story, which freezes (00:19:25) or continues in the background (00:22:03) while he elaborates on the events shown. This is another way how film can manipulate story and discourse time and implicitly refer to its narrative strategies.

4.2. Blurring Boundaries

A further narrative strategy employed by meta-films is an aspect which I call 'blurring the boundaries'. This happens whenever the boundaries of plot strands or between inner and outer story, the intra-diegetic and diegetic world become fuzzy. For the audience it is difficult and at times confusing which diegetic-level or plotline the narrative is following. Sometimes this affects not only the story but also the characters. As it is not always clear

which (intra)diegetic story the film is showing, *blurring the boundaries* is a potentially disruptive meta-referential device. For the audience it becomes more difficult to follow the plot and their attention is drawn to the narrative strategy through which the story is mediated and altered from conventional storytelling.

TRISTRAM SHANDY: A COCK AND BULL STORY is a highly self-referential film that openly plays with its own reflexivity, as well as the meta-fictional nature of Laurence Sterne's novel which it is based on. The film is divided into two parts: The first is set in the 18th century and follows the life of Tristram Shandy, narrated by Tristram himself (which in the following is referred to as the 'Tristram-plot'); while the second part is set in the present day and shows the film shoot of (presumably) the very film itself (film-making-plot). Upon closer inspection, however, these two plotlines seem to merge, not only because the film-making-plot deals with filming and producing the Tristram-plot, but also because of added layers to both plotlines such as a dream sequence, flashbacks or interviews with the actors.

I want to draw attention to the first scene of TRISTRAM SHANDY, which opens a narrative layer that might not seem significant at first but is, in fact, relevant to the narrative structure of the film. At the very beginning of TRISTRAM SHANDY we follow a 'private' conversation between the two main actors, Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon who are playing themselves. For an audience who does not know the actors, this might not seem obvious. Knowing who the actors are clearly changes the perception and understanding of the film. Melvyn New from the University of Florida, for example, notes that "the primary actors, Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, are relatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic, yet much of the film seems to depend on an intimate knowledge of their film and TV careers, their tabloid existence, their relationship to one another" (580). Not knowing the two main actors' names, nor that they are doing an impersonation of themselves, eliminates one of the many meta-referential layers this film holds.

The first scene shows the two in a make-up room getting ready for their role; Coogan is getting a prosthetic nose fitted whilst Brydon's hair is being done by a make-up artist. For films that explore film-making it is not unusual to show actors in the mask, yet this particular scene (its edit, the handheld camera and the camera perspective sound) resembles more a making-of clip than a scene from a feature film. What usually accompanies the film as a paratext and can only be watched by the audience after the main film (as an extra on DVDs), is in this case part of the main story and the beginning of the movie. This *fictio*-reference breaks with film convention and as a result draws

attention to the specificities of the medium. Making-of videos evoke a sense of unmediated reality. They show us what happens behind the camera when actors are not ‘in character’ but seemingly themselves. Are we allowed a glimpse behind the scenes before the actual film? Is this ‘authentic’ behind the scenes footage or staged? Are we watching Coogan and Brydon getting ready for the film, *TRISTRAM SHANDY*, we came to see, or is this part of the main story? Questions which at this point of the film the audience is unable to answer.

The following sequence contains the opening credits and takes the audience into the 18th century. Tristram, played by Steve Coogan who is now wearing a costume, introduces himself to the audience: “I am Tristram Shandy, the main character of the story, the leading role” (00:03:26). Just as the two actors in the previous scene, Tristram’s opening monologue is a *fictio*-metareference pointing to the fictionality of the film. Tristram is aware that he is the main character of the story. What usually is a disruptive device, is in this case diegetically motivated, since Tristram wants to make us believe that he is telling his own story. The fact that an 18th-century man is quoting Groucho Marx, however, is implausible and adds to the fictional nature of the story. Additionally, it also us makes us question the *fictum*-character of the film.

Although Tristram continues to directly address the audience, the Tristram-plot is so compelling that we start to forget the fictionality of the story and also that Tristram is portrayed by the actor we were introduced to at the start.

The aspect of acting is addressed in both parts of the film and is also used to blur boundaries, not only between plotline but also characters (and their actors). In the Tristram-plot the aspect of *role playing* receives attention when the tragic circumstances of young Tristram accidental circumcision are shown. We first see the event involving the boy Tristram but then the grownup Tristram, who is leading us through the story, enters the room and addresses the audience by directly looking at them:

TRISTRAM: That was a child actor pretending to be me. I’ll be able to play myself later. Think I’ll probably get away with being eighteen, nineteen. Until then, I’ll be played by a series of child actors. This was the best of a bad bunch. He’s unable to convey the pain or shock of such an event.

(TRISTRAM SHANDY 00:06:00)

The scene is metareferential in various ways. Pointing out that the boy in the previous scene is, in fact, an actor ‘pretending’ calls attention to the *fictio*-status of the work. It

explicitly reminds us that we are watching a film and the people on screen are actors. Implicitly, Tristram's comment has an affirmative effect relating the truth-value of the circumcision-story; a *fictum*-metareference. Criticising, that the boy's acting does not resemble his own genuine reaction, highlights that what we are watching is a re-enactment of the event but a true event nevertheless. Also the child's reply "I think I can. Susannah [the maid] said I was doing it exactly how you did it" suggest that Susannah, just like Tristram himself, was there when the accident occurred and can verify not only the story but also his reaction. While the boy is unmasked as an actor, the characters Tristram and Susannah are not affected by this. Tristram seems to say "While this Tristram is played by a child actor, I am not. I am the actual, the true Tristram Shandy." Our willing suspension of disbelief allows us to trust Tristram, the character, when he invites us into his world. Thus, Tristram's statement only slightly harms the fictional illusion and does not break it entirely.

Halfway through the film the narrative and Tristram-plot is disrupted. As the camera pans and reveals the film crew, we are reminded of the actors behind the characters that are making the film we presumably have been watching so far. Yet the disruption of the Tristram-plot is not as strong as it might have been without the film's first sequence introducing us to the actors in the make-up room. It seems that we can now put this first scene into context, as an anticipation of the film-making-plot. From this point onwards the film mainly concentrates on film production, with many self-reflexive and meta-referential remarks about film-making in general, as well as the film itself. The portrayal of Steve Coogan shows similarities with the character Tristram and his father Walter, which Coogan also plays. The focus of *TRISTRAM SHANDY* seems to shift from the character Tristram to the actor Steve Coogan. The person we see on screen remains the same however, only the function and the character he impersonates changes: first Tristram, then himself. Insofar the second part of the movie could also be called 'The Life and Opinions of Steve Coogan: Actor'. A title which is suggested by one of the characters in the film for a newspaper feature on Steve Coogan.

Throughout the second half of the film there are some elements which add to the 18th century Tristram-plot. These insertions are held in the same style as the first part of the film, which – and this is what the narrative structure of the film so far suggests – were filmed by the crew of the film-making-plot. When the runner, Jennie, drives the two main actors home, she talks about her favourite part of Sterne's novel, which in her opinion should be included into the film. As she talks about it, we can see the scene as if it had

been shot by the film team. Showing an intra-diegetic story narrated by a character is a typical narrative device of film. Assuming, however, that this particular Tristram-sequences was also made by the diegetic film crew leads to a paradoxical situation. How can the film crew be shooting a sequence one of its members imagines? The scene is not really disruptive but blurs the boundaries between the different layers of the film.

Another scene of the film-making-plot includes the film crew testing a bigger than life model of a womb, within which Steve Coogan as Tristram is supposed to continue telling Tristram's story. The scene still has to be shot and according to the director will appear later in the film. Assumingly he talks about the Tristram-plot. The audience of *TRISTRAM SHANDY*, however, never gets to see the described scene in the Tristram-plot. Instead it is shown in a nightmarish dream sequence that mixes both plotlines and which can be seen as an additional layer to the film-making-plot. Is this the scene the director was talking about earlier in the film? And if so, does this then suggest, that the film crew is not only shooting the Tristram-plot but also their very own plotline? There is no definite answer to these questions. It seems rather that *TRISTRAM SHANDY* intentionally opens up these question without ever intending on answering them. There are no clear hints that would help to interpret the film. The few hints, on how to make sense of the interwoven plotlines, turn out to be less helpful and more of a hindrance as they actually add to the confusion.

The ending of the film could give some clues on how to interpret and relate the various plotlines, but even the ending itself is not straightforward. Towards the end of the shoot the film crew is getting ready for the final scene, the birth of Tristram. The final image is a close up of Steve Coogan, as Tristram who is playing the role of Tristram's father Walter. As the camera zooms out it reveals that the previous birthing-sequence was shown on a screen in a screening cinema as part of a private viewing for the film crew. From the Tristram-plot the film has returned to the film-making-plot. The members of crew, actors, director and producers are shown talking about the film they produced and whose final version they have just watched. Their conversations revolve mainly around the film, especially about scenes they expected to be in the film but which did not make it into the final edit. An actress verbalises, what at this point also the audience of *TRISTRAM* might be thinking: "I can't believe that was the whole fucking film!" (01:27:10)- Is it possible, that the film crew has just seen the same film as the audience of *TRISTRAM*? The feeling is certainly evoked but then again, how can that be possible when the film-making-plot continues?

The conversation between the director, the two main actors and the producers, who are very unhappy with the final product, eventually turns to the original novel. “‘How does the book end?’ ... ‘The book has got a great ending!’” (01:27:40) and with this we are shown the film version of Sterne’s ending to *Tristram Shandy* in the same style as all the other parts of the Tristram-plot before. The last image we see is a candlestick through an iris-out and the words “The End” displayed next to it on a black screen. Only a few seconds later “... of Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull story” is added. With this we have reached the end of TRISTRAM SHANDY.

However, as the end credits role, Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon are shown again, this time in the movie theatre, talking about the film they have just watched. Here again the following question arises: Have Coogan and Brydon been watching the very same film as the audience? The two mention scenes from the film-making-plot:

BRYDON: Did I do more Al Pacino in the car scene? I remember

...

COOGAN: You did more. You did a lot more ... and I must say ...

BRYDON: I’m sad to see it go. It served as a counter point to the stuff Naomie was doing.

TRISTRAM SHANDY (01:30:50)

The scene Brydon is referring to is the one describe earlier, where Jennie the runner shares her favourite part of Sterne’s novel. What is interesting about Brydon’s comment is that he mentions her real name, the name of the actor, Naomie Harris, and not the one of the character, Jennie. It seems that Rob Brydon and Steve Coogan shown during the final credits do not belong to the film-making-plot anymore, but are part of a different diegetic layer. However, it is not quite clear to which layer.

In my opinion, there are three possible interpretations of the ending of TRISTRAM SHANDY: Firstly, as the final sequence is very similar to the making-of sequence at the beginning of the film, one could conclude that the two share a diegetic layer. Consequently this would take the making-of sequence out of the film-making-plot. Therefore the two sequences at the beginning and end would function as a frame to the doubled-stringed TRISTRAM SHANDY narrative. Secondly, since Brydon and Coogan are resuming parts of the conversation they had in the making-of sequence (Brydon notes that he had his teeth done) and also comment on the film shoot (see quote TRISTRAM SHANDY (01:30:50)) the final sequence suggests that the two have been watching the same film as the audience of TRISTRAM SHANDY up to the point of the final credits. Thirdly, the ending suggest that questions such as “What is the ‘real’ ending?” or “How shall we interpret the ending?” are not important and answers irrelevant, since the ending is in accordance with

the rest of the film. It is the final blurring of boundaries and the last interweaving of plotlines. The ending could be seen as a metareference itself pointing at its ability to disorientate the viewer, eliciting reflection while leaving questions unanswered.

5. Filmic Self-References

Films that revolve around film-making, are set in the film industry, show or refer to film in any other way are, by definition, self-referential. In the narrow sense, filmic self-references comment on the film they originate from, and thus can classify as internal metareferences. In a broader understanding, namely that of *film as a system*, self-references can extend beyond a particular film and include any comment which points to the filmic cycle of production, distribution, reception and product (Withalm *Screen* 125-130). These external metareferences comment on other films and the sociocultural and economic system of film as a whole. One could therefore define the two forms of reference also in terms of *intratextual* and *intertextual* self-reference: “while (intra)textual self-reference concerns the level of an individual text, a single film [...], intertextual self-reference concerns references from one text to other texts of the same genre or medium, e.g., from one to another [...] film” (Nöth 14-15).

Film can use all its information channels for self-referential purposes. Self-references on the visual level are often considered to be indirect and less obvious than instances of self-referentiality through dialogue. When Steve Coogan in *TRISTRAM SHANDY* says that the narrator of the Tristram-plot constantly talks to the camera, it is more immediate than a duplication or reoccurrence of certain images or scenes, as, for example, the rehearsal and shooting of a dance scene in *THE ARTIST*. Similarly, it might seem that internal self-references are more direct than intertextual self-references, since the references refer to aspects of the work they occur in and which are present in the audience’s mind, while external references point to aspects with no direct proximity to the audience.

5.1. Metatextual Self-Reference

“Examples of metatextual self-reference are comments on the text [or film], its narrative form, its content and its structure, its plot, previous or subsequent chapters, its beginning and its end” (Nöth 18). Out of the selected films, *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS* includes the most metatextual self-references produced on the story level. A prime example is the car scene halfway through the film, when Marty, Billy and Hans are leaving Los Angeles and are driving into the desert.

MARTY: Hey! No, you know what I think the movie should be?
The first half should be a perfect setup for an out-and-out revenge flick.
BILLY: Yeah.

MARTY: Violence. Guns. All the usual bullshit. And then ... I don't know, man, it's ... The lead characters should just walk away. They should just drive off into the desert and pitch a tent somewhere and just talk for the rest of the frigging movie. No shoot-out, no payoffs. Just human beings talking.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 00:55:44)

Marty's comment perfectly summarises what has happened in the film so far and also anticipates the coming events. The film is building up as one would expect a classic revenge movie to do, but breaks with this expectation and even comments on it. The car scene marks a turning point in the film's narrative. The three are on the run trying to get away from Psychopath No. 3, Charlie the gangster boss. In the very scene the lead characters are driving off into the desert where they later pitch a tent and talk for twenty minutes (discourse time), until Billy declares "This movie ends my way!". This statement marks another turning point and directs the film to an ending that is proposed by Billy throughout the film.

At the campsite, Billy shares his version of *Seven Psychopaths* with Mary and Hans. After he has finished, he wants to know how his friends liked the story. The feedback Hans gives is a metatextual self-reference on Billy's version of *Seven Psychopaths*, as well as on the plot structure of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS itself.

HANS: It's got layers, you know.

BILLY: Layers?

MARTY: Like a pie. Like a cake. It's got ... It's got many layers. This is an important demographic.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 01:06:20)

Marty's comment on layers as an 'important demographic' is a self-reflexive device on the very film itself but also on narrative devices of films in general. The comment invites the audience to look closely at the film and its narrative strategy. The film we are watching includes 'many layers', that is various plotlines and diegetic-levels, which help the film to its metareferential effect.

Another prominent metatextual self-reference and self-reflection commenting on the film's own story occurs when Hans and Marty discuss the *Seven Psychopaths* script.

HANS: Martin, I've been reading your movie.

MARTY: What do you think?

HANS: Your women characters are awful. None of them have anything to say for themselves. And most of them get either shot or stabbed to death within five minutes. And the ones that don't probably will later on.

MARTY: Well... It's a hard world for women. You know? And I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

HANS: Yeah, it's a hard world for women, but most of the ones
I know can string a sentence together.

(SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 00:57:34)

Hans's observation is an internal metareference that points towards the (intra-)diegetic female characters of the film. Indeed, all women in the film die; either in the diegetic world and if they survive there, it is an intra-diegetic story that is fatal for their character. The self-reference goes beyond a self-reflexive comment on the film, however. It is an external metareference and critique of the culture of screen violence and writing of female characters in general. Additionally, this indirect self-critique anticipates any criticism and accusations of applying double standards; criticising violence against women and still indulging in it. Hornby notes that the "greatest metadramatic impact occurs when references are to recent and controversial works" (91).

Another of Billy's statement "You can't let the animals die in a movie. Just the women." critiques Hollywood's double standard of violence against women and animals. In addition, it is a reference to the actual preproduction and scriptwriting of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS. In an interview with *The Guardian* Martin McDonagh reveals that in the original script of SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS "not all of the animals would have survived" and that "the studio suggested it would be prudent for him to remove that bit" (Godfrey). The script had to be altered in order to be accepted by CBS Films. Billy's statement can also be read as an intertextual reference, pointing out that only Hollywood demands that pets must be spared in films. In contrast, M. McDonagh's first short film, SIX SHOOTER (2004), which was produced in Ireland, includes a very graphic scene of the shooting of a white rabbit. Ironically, SIX SHOOTER was awarded an Academy Award for best short film in 2006.

It might be presumed that intratextual self-references are restricted to films which are set in the film industry or focus on film, however, this is not the case. THE GUARD also contains metatextual self-references that summarise and comment on the film's events. Its most prominent metatextual self-reference can be found at the end of the film, when the Photographer takes a picture of Everett who is staring at the sea after stopping a drug trafficking and loosing Boyle to the sea.

PHOTOGRAPHER: That's a good one, now. Moody. You can use it
for the cover of your book.

EVERETT: What book?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Ah, you yokes are always writing books about
your fucking "experiences". Probably sell it to
the movies, then. A fish-out-of-water story, hah?
Lots of action, bit of humour, throw in a coupla

young ones getting their kit off and you're well away.
 EVERETT: You'd need a happy ending to sell it.
 PHOTOGRAPHER: A happy ending? Sure didn't you foil a multi-million-dollar drug-trafficking operation and knock off a trio of drug barons to boot? What's unhappy about that?
 (*The Guard* 107-108)

The suggestion that Everett could turn his experiences into a novel is on the surface level a reference to literature and the popularity of autobiographical novels. On a second layer it also reflects on film adaptations and the making of movies. Primarily, however, the photographer's brief comment is a disruption of the fictional illusion. It quite accurately condenses *THE GUARD*'s plot and opens a level of reflection, by suggesting that *THE GUARD* could not only be a film adaptation of a literary work but might even be a film about Everett's 'real' experiences.

5.2. Intertextual Self-References

Intertextuality in film is defined by the various relationships that a given film may have with other films.⁸ Allusions, parodies, quotations, imitations or homages are the source of intertextual self-reference, which can serve as a basis for metaisation (Nöth *Self-Reference* 19). Intertextuality is probably the most frequent form of filmic self-reference. Intertextual references in film can be "be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, direct and local or broad and diffuse. [...] Filmmakers choose, or are pressured, to make films in a certain genre, or 'in the manner of' a certain director, or according to a set of conventions. They can call attention to these influences or choose to obscure them" (Stam 132-134).

5.2.1. Allusion and Homage

Opposed to other media systems (especially the music industry) where the borrowing of other texts is seen critically, imitating, alluding to or re-enacting scenes from other films is common practice in film and usually considered an homage to the respective director (Ng 67-68). The style of the opening credits in *BIRDMAN*, for example, can be seen as an

⁸ I want to stress again that for the purpose of this paper, the concept of intertextuality and 'text' is not restricted to literary texts but includes filmic texts as well. Yet, intertextuality is restricted, in the sense, that only references and relation between texts of the same medium count towards intertextuality. The correspondence and interrelation of e.g. narrative structures of works belonging to different media is seen as intermediality and addressed in the following chapter (see chapter 'Intermedial References'). In this chapter, I focus on intertextuality in the sense of reference between films.

intertextual references to the French filmmaker Godard: “[T]he typography [...] is borrowed from that of Jean-Luc Godard’s color films of the mid-sixties, and Iñárritu’s credits are animated—with letters filling in onscreen in alphabetical order—exactly as Godard’s were in ‘Pierrot le Fou’ (1965)” (Brody). This connection can be interpreted as an homage to, but more likely it seems to be an allusion to Godard.

Allusion ... [covers] a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, homages, and the recreation of ‘classic’ scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth from film history.... (Ng 68)

As *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* revolves around the film-making of Murnau’s *NOSFERATU* it includes many allusions and references to the original. The film not only re-creates scenes, but also features scenes from the original. The imitations and direct film quotations (insertions of original film material) are included in a meaningful way, so that they are not immediately apparent, especially not for an audience that is unfamiliar with the original. Naturally, this limits their metareferential potential. The film is not a meticulous remake of the original, instead it includes key moments of *NOSFERATU* and also only those, which help the film’s own narrative. *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* deals with the making-of *NOSFERATU* only on a superficial level. More than trying to be historically accurate, the film uses the setting to reflect on the internal power structures of the film industry. This is where its metareferential potential unfolds:

[Der Film] ist eine ironische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Filmemachen und den ausbeuterischen Eigenschaften von Regisseuren, die mit Vampiren verwandt zu sein scheinen. Regisseure E. Elias Merhige und sein Drehbuchautor Steven Katz setzen sich mit ihrer eigenen Kunst auseinander, dem Verhältnis von Regisseur und Drehbuchautor, der Schauspielkunst und dem Starkult. (Houswitschka 62)

In contrast to *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE*, *HUGO* contains a number of historically accurate references to early film-making. Set in Paris of in the 1920s, the film follows the main character Hugo and his friend Isabelle who try to discover more about the filmmaker George Méliès. Their journey leads the children to a library where they find a book about early film-making, *The Invention of Dreams: The Story of the First Movies*. While the two read the story out loud (in voice-over), the audience is simultaneously shown original film material matching the book’s content. In a documentary style *HUGO* presents the history of its own medium to the audience:

HUGO: In 1895 one of the very first films ever shown was called a train arrives in a station. Which had nothing more than a train coming into a station.

ISABELLE: When the train came speeding towards the screen the audience screamed because they thought they were in danger of being run over. No one had ever seen anything like it before.

HUGO: [...] What began as a novelty soon grew into something more, when the filmmakers discovered: They could use the new medium to tell stories.

HUGO (01:09:20)

Thus, HUGO includes many self-references to *film as a system*. Similar to some of the meta-elements in THE ARTIST, it is the discrepancy of past and present, which allows these references to develop their meta-referential potential. The audience is invited to compare what they see with what they know about today's film-making. Additionally to the 'history lesson' in the library, the film includes references to all aspects of the filmic cycle, as defined by Withalm. It shows the production of early silent films, the by hand editing of filmstrips, film roles and manual film projectors; all elements which are disappearing in today's digital age and thus highlight the difference in past and present film-making.

5.2.2. Film in Film

Having characters discuss film or showing them watching a film is another way through which films can establish intertextual self-references. Showing film reception, by mirroring the audience and their behaviour and actions, draws attention to the medium itself and thus allows reflections on a meta-level. The films THE GUARD and SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS make use of this self-referential device in similar ways.

In THE GUARD Boyle is shown watching TV, however, this is not immediately apparent. The TV-scene is introduced by a close-up of a screaming man. The clear cut conveys the impression that the screaming man is part of the main plot. The slightly distorted sound and the editing of the following sequences, alternating between a close-up of Boyle and the screaming man, unveil, however, that the image of the screaming man is actually part of the film (THE SHOUT (1978)) Boyle is watching on TV.

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS uses the same method. A clear cut between scenes makes the audience at first believe that the two men slapping each other on screen are part of the plot. A wide angle shot, depicting the two men on a screen, reveals that Marty and Billy are actually sitting in an empty movie theatre watching a film (VIOLENT COP (1989)).



Fig. 15: Men on screen



Fig. 16: In the movie theatre

This scene references the film medium on different levels. Showing the movie theatre is a reference to the sociocultural aspects of film. It is holding up a mirror to the audience as the characters in the film are mirroring what the audience is doing, namely watching a film in a movie theatre. At the same time it is an intertextual reference to a film which also exists in the extra-diegetic world. Including an already existing film in the film's narrative is part of the aspect Hornby defined as "literary or real-life references".

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS, TRISTRAM SHANDY and THE ARTIST are set in the film-making industry, therefore it is not surprising that the characters talk about film. However, one can also find many references to the film genre in HUGO and THE GUARD, whose characters are not part of the film industry. One of the most prominent film references in THE GUARD happens in an early scene when Sergeant Boyle and McBride try to make sense of the writing in blood "5 1/2" on the wall at the crime scene.

MCBRIDE: There's a film called 8 1/2. Fellini.

[Boyle looks blankly at him.]

There's another film called SE7EN.

BOYLE: Are you just going to list a load of fucking film titles with numbers in them? I can do that, sure. FOUR FOR TEXAS. ROBIN AND THE SEVEN HOODS. TEN THOUSAND BEDROOMS. Is that your idea of police work, hah?

(*The Guard* 7)

References to other films or film characters appear throughout the film. When Boyle is in the bar drinking with Everett he says "Like the Fat Man said, if you've got to be careful not to drink too much, it's because you're not to be trusted when you do". Boyle quotes Kasper Gutman, played by Sydney Greenstreet in THE MALTESE FALCON (1941). In another scene he claims to be "the last of the independents", which is a quote and intertextual reference to the movie CHARLEY VARRICK (1973). Sergeant Boyle and Agent Everett share their last name with two character from CHARLEY VARRICK. The intertextual relationship of the two films might also provide a clue of how to interpret THE GUARD's ending. At the end of CHARLEY VARRICK the main character manages to escape against

all odds, which can be read as hint that also the main character of *THE GUARD* might make his getaway and survive.

It might seem that the given examples of intertextual self-references only highlight connections between films and have very limited potential for metaisation. Admittedly, these references are primarily intertextual but by no means are they at odds with metareferences. As established earlier, references can be metareferential to a stronger or lesser degree. Additionally, the metareferential potential lies in their communicative dimension as described by Wolf:

In this context, metareference, and notably the aesthetic and intellectual value potentially conferred by it, may also function as a stabilization of a more or less elitist group of connoisseurs of media ‘consumers’ who have become such experts in the respective medial or aesthetic conventions that laying them bare [...] become[s] the source of a particular in-group pleasure [...]. (Wolf *Metareference across Media* 68)

This implies that whether or not we experience and realise the metareferential potential of intertextual self-references, strongly depends on our knowledge of the films or concepts they refer to.

6. Intermedial Reference

Hugo reading a book, George studying the newspapers, Mike and Riggan acting on stage, Sergeant Boyle watching TV, Marty working on his computer – all these scenes, taken from the films under discussion, show characters engaged with different forms of media. Intermediality is constantly present as film refers to and connects with other media. Nöth notes “when several media are involved, such as painting in the cinema, films in games, or novels in the film, there is intermedial self-reference” (*Self-Reference* 19). Intermediality establishes connections between different media and allows to highlight specifics of either of the two, or both by e.g. contrasting them: “In a way, borrowings from other texts or media are certainly allreferential, since there is reference from one message to another so that the object of the quoting sign is a quoted sign from which it differs” (*Self-Reference* 19). It is this difference that film uses to make intermedial metareferences to draw attention to its own mediality.

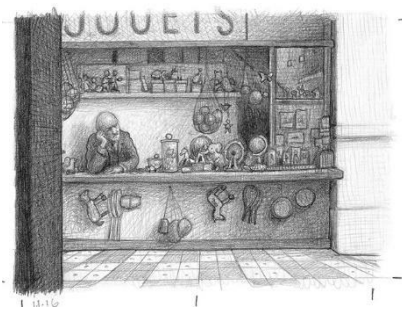


Fig. 17: Papa George in his shop (book)



Fig. 18: Papa George in his shop (film)



Fig. 19: Hugo looking out of the station clock (book)



Fig. 20: Hugo looking out of the station clock (film)

The most prominent intermedial accounts in film are probably film adaptations of literary sources, such as novels and plays. Also the set of films chosen for this analysis includes adaptations; HUGO is based on a children's book, while TRISTRAM SHANDY thematises film adaptation of an English classic. Adaptations are not always apparent to the spectators, especially when they are not familiar with the source material a film is based on.

For an audience that does not know the original children's book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), for instance, it is nearly impossible to notice the intermedial references included in *HUGO*. Similar to visual intertextual references such as the imitation of the mise-en-scene of other films, *HUGO* references the book on the iconographic level. The set design as well as the shots are inspired by and based on pictures of the book (Fig 17-20). In an interview the author, Brian Selznick, notes, "The camera movements are based on my drawings, but bigger, grander and more operatic than anything I could have imagined" (Vulliamy). Although the film's sequences are "an exact recreation of what Selznick has drawn" (Vulliamy) the references are subtle and can only function as indirect metareference for those familiar with the original.

In contrast to *HUGO*, *TRISTRAM SHANDY* explicitly mentions the intermedial relationship it shares with Sterne's novel. As part of the film-making-plot Steve Coogan (playing himself) gives an interview on set, in which he and the interviewer Anthony Wilson (also playing himself) talk about the film project:

WILSON: Why *Tristram Shandy*? This is the book that many say is 'unfilmable'.

COOGAN: Ahm, I think that's the attraction. *Tristram Shandy* was a postmodern classic, written before there was any modernism to be post about. So it is way ahead of its time and ahm, in fact, for those who haven't heard of it, it was actually listed as number eight on the *Observer's* top-100-books of all time.

WILSON: That was a chronological list.

(*TRISTRAM SHANDY* 00:36:10)

Openly addressing *Tristram Shandy* as 'unfilmable' anticipates criticism and reflects the self-awareness of the filmmakers regarding the difficulties ascribed to a film adaptation of the novel. In a sense it also invites the audience to judge, whether the novel legitimately carries the attribute 'unfilmable' or whether *TRISTRAM SHANDY* proves the critics wrong and is able to be successfully adapted for film.

The interview is not shown in its full length, instead, a voice-over tells the audience; "If you want to see the EPK interview, it will be part of the DVD package along with the extended versions of many of the scenes, which should act as footnotes to the main film" (00:36:50). Footnotes and 'film extras' belong to what Genette defines as *paratext*. They accompany a written text or film, respectively, and provide the audience with additional information concerning the main text. Comparing the extras on a DVD with footnotes therefore seems an obvious choice, but there is one important difference between these

two types of paratexts. While readers of a literary text can spend as much time as they choose on the reception of the text, along with any complimentary footnotes (which they may, or may not choose to read), the reception of a film is determined by the film's pace and edit and cannot be controlled by the audience. Thus, the information provided through the voice-over creates a paradoxical situation, especially, for an audience watching the film in cinema. They are made aware that there is further information and film material available, which presumably is essential for the understanding of the film, but at the same time come to realise that they by no means can access this information. We cannot help but feel that we are missing out on parts of the story. The effect that this indirect metareference has on the audience helps to emphasise the difference of the two paratexts. As a result, the audience becomes aware of the differences between the two media, which in return highlights the structures and information channels available to film: In contrast to footnotes in a book, which can be accessed immediately, the audience of *TRISTRAM SHANDY* has to wait for the DVD release to obtain the film's 'footnotes'⁹.

TRISTRAM SHANDY repeatedly includes *fictio*-metareferences by referring to its own status as an adaptation of literature. It not only addresses the qualities of the literary source; "It's a big book, plenty to choose from" (00:57:50); but also the problems which filmmakers face when writing adaptations:

WILSON: Who's playing Widow Wadman? She's my favourite character. [...]
 COOGAN: Right. She's not in the film.
 WILSON: No?
 COOGAN: No.
 WILSON: It's a great love story!
 COOGAN: I know. In the *book* it's a great love story but there's so much in the book, you know, it's so rich ... you gotta ... you know ... loads of stuff in it ...
 (TRISTRAM SHANDY 00:37:10)

This dialogue, like many others throughout the film, draws attention to the fact that film adaptations can never fully represent the original; firstly, because adaptations are characterised by selection and interpretation and secondly because the change in medium always also implies a transformation of the original. Implicitly, this is addressed when the filmmakers discuss characteristics and scenes of the book, which in their opinion should (not) be included in the film.

⁹ In fact, the released DVD of *TRISTRAM SHANDY* contains the promised EPK interview and additional scenes, which indeed help to understand the film better.

Their conversation highlights special elements of Sterne's novel and also the difficulty of 'translating' metafiction to film. It is an aspect which many films have problems with, as Stam points out: "Many of the cinematic adaptations of self-conscious novels, including the more successful ones, often flounder on precisely this point. While they incorporate certain reflexive devices, they do not metalinguistically dissect their own practice or include critical discourse within the text itself" (Stam 159). Stam criticises that these adaptations often fail to address the "question of literary (or filmic) criticism or theory" (159) and also lack metatextual commentaries. *TRISTRAM SHANDY* seems to be an exception. The film starts as an adaptation of a metareferential novel but then turns into a metareferential film about itself.

Returning to the sequence of the filmmakers and the problem of transposing metareferential devices from literature to film, the screenwriter notes; "The black page. When the good parson Yorick dies, the book has a completely black page", while he talks the screen suddenly, too, turns black. There is a short pause, nothing but a black screen, until someone replies, "I don't know how interesting a black screen will be for an audience" (00:58:30). This metareference indirectly addresses the audience to reflect about the black screen they have just seen. Was it surprising, interesting or irritating? How else could a black page be transposed to film?

In this scene, the film tries to recreate a specific feature of the book with its own artistic means. This can be described as a, so-called, 'as-if' character of intermedial references. The film pretends to have instruments of the other medium at its disposal, which in reality it has not (Rajewsky 54-55). This 'as-if' factor allows film to transpose the black page into film and thus to evoke a sense of the original medium.

BIRDMAN applies a similar strategy of intermedial reference. As already mentioned, the story revolves around the actor Riggan, who adapts Raymond Carver's short story ("What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (1981)) for theatre. Although the story unfolds around the theatrical adaptation, *BIRDMAN* is not an adaptation of the Carver story but a film about a theatre production based on a literary source; "[it] look[s] at the spaces that exist between books, movies, and theatre. All of these forms are constantly in dialogue with each other, whether through direct adaptations or indirectly" (Boffa). Still, the film focuses more on theatre and, following the film-in-film distinction, could be described in terms of theatre-in-film. It uses the 'as-if' character of intermedial references as an illusion-forming quality to allude to and imitate theatre: "In 'Birdman,' the long take converts cinema to theatre—and back" (Brody).

The edit of *BIRDMAN* evokes a sense of real time which is also experienced in theatre. The one-shot effect allows the audience to stay closer to the characters for the film does not cut away. In his film review for *The New Yorker*, Richard Brody notes:

Iñárritu stages the action, onstage and off, like theatre; the camera is almost always in motion, and it follows the actors and their perfectly timed comings and goings and performances, which, as onstage, demand continuity of action and characterization. In lending movie acting the technical difficulty of stage performance, Iñárritu reinforces the theme of ‘Birdman’—the higher artistic dignity of acting in the theatre.

Additionally, the tension building up in some of these scenes is not disrupted through cuts but only slowly dissolves as the story continues, giving the film a more theatrical feel. In an interview with *Good Morning America*, the actor Emma Stone describes that even the production of the film sometimes felt like preparing for a play: “As difficult as it was and as long as it took to kind of adjust to the choreography of it [, I liked the difference]. [...] You [the interviewer] were saying it felt like theatre, it sort of did feel like theatre. [Rehearsing the scene] Over and over again, [because] it needs to be perfect” (YouTube).

This intermedial ‘as-if’ character is not always appreciated by the audience, however, as Hill laments:

Iñárritu failed because he did not understand the differences between theatre and cinema. Acting for theatre is fundamentally different from acting for cinema. [...] [T]he director seems to have forgotten all these things. It is as if Iñárritu fell in love with 1950s theatre and edited the film to make a play rather than a movie. (Hill)

Although it may not be well perceived, the intermedial metareference fulfils its purpose. Hill’s criticism indicates that this intermedial form of metaisation can disrupt the aesthetic perception of the film, which allows the audience’s attention to be drawn to film-specific means. This shows that intermediality can function as and support metaisation.

BIRDMAN also draws attention to theatre experience and thus indirectly highlights the difference of perception in theatre and film. In the scene before Riggan shoots himself on stage, the tension that is building up is supported by the difference in knowledge between the film and theatre audience; the extra-diegetic film audience is aware that it knows more than the theatre audience. We can anticipate the upcoming event, while the diegetic audience is oblivious to Riggan’s mental state. During the scenes set on stage, both audiences experience *role playing within the role*. Yet, only we know that Riggan is stepping out of character, leaving the intra-diegetic world of the play, while the theatre audience still believes that he is acting.

The willing suspension of disbelief allows film and theatre audience alike to forget the theatricality of the performance in favour of the dramatic illusion. As theatre is more immediate than film, the audience of a theatrical performance cannot be sure that what they see is staged and intended or not (Hauthal 585). In this particular scene, the diegetic audience should actually trust what it sees: A man is shooting himself on stage. But because they are immersed in the dramatic illusion and thrilled by the ‘performance’, they do not realise that Riggan’s performance is changing from acting to ‘being’.

For the film audience the sequence is dramatic not only due to the events shown, but also because they know that the theatre audience is the victim of a fundamental fallacy. We want them to see through the illusion and wonder when the audience might realise that what is happening in front of them on the stage is real.

Both audiences are mistaken, however. The theatre audience believes that Riggan is acting, while in the diegetic world Riggan is, in fact, shooting himself. The film audience believes it is true, forgetting that they are merely watching a film and that Riggan shooting himself is fiction on screen. *BIRDMAN* uses the ambiguity of ‘real-life’ reference for metareferential purposes. In film the concept of real-life is ambiguous. It can either mean the extra-diegetic world, that is the reality and the world in which the audience watches a film, or it can refer to what the characters within the diegesis consider to be real. From the audiences’ perspective the characters’ reality is necessarily always fictional and not real at all. Yet, the spectators’ willing suspension of disbelief allows them to forget the fictionality of the diegesis in favour of the dramatic illusion, which they then consequently accept as ‘real’. Having characters address the ‘real’ world calls attention to the ambiguity of ‘reality’ in fictional works, as well as to the viewers’ willingness to forget the fictionality of the respective film.

When incorporating other media, film has many possible ways to draw attention to intermediality. Sometimes film addresses its intermedial connections more directly, as the previous examples have shown, other times the intermedial reference is indirect and less obvious. Films often depict individual works produced in another medium or refer to other media systems. As already discussed, these representations need to be explicitly referred to or thematised by the film to be counted among intermedial references. By including other media, film can borrow meaning ascribed to objects or certain works of art belonging to another media, which allows film to make intermedial self-references.

THE GUARD includes such intermedial self-references by showing and telling, as its characters discuss literature. Sergeant Boyle visits his ailing mother in a hospice. His

mother is shown sitting on a park bench, holding a paperback. When Boyle wants to know what she is reading, she shows him the book. There is a cut and the book's cover is briefly depicted full screen. The film uses this intermedial reference to indirectly comment on the story. Oblomov, the main character of the book Boyle's mother is reading, spends most of his day in bed and is unable to find a way out of the lethargy and drowsiness that govern his life. Similar is true for Boyle's mother who is terminally ill and cannot escape her illness nor the dull life in the hospice: "They are all so fucking boring. [...] The inmates. Gloomy" (*The Guard* 15).

In another scene, it is the drug dealers who discuss Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, which leads to a comical and also meta-referential effect:

SHEEHY: Quote me something, then.
O'LEARY: "What does not kill me—"
SHEEHY: Ah, for fuck's sake. Every child knows that one.
(*The Guard* 25)

This conversation contains a slight disruptive element as we do not expect the characters, especially not drug dealers, to engage in highly philosophical and literary discussions. Sheehy's response "Every child know that one" indirectly passes the question to the audience: Would they be able to quote Nietzsche or Schopenhauer?

As the given examples have illustrated, intermediality in film can take on various forms; from including and thematising works of other media, to adaptations, allusions and imitations of a different medium through the 'as-if' method. Intermedial references allow film to establish connections between itself and other media, which in a further step, and especially through contrasting the two media, can elicit meta-reflections on film itself.

Conclusion

Metareferences in film take on various forms and fulfil different functions. Most meta-elements found in the selected films try to distance the audience from the narrative primarily to encourage critical observation on the medium, often by impeding their immersion in or disrupting the fictional illusion. This has an emancipatory effect on the audience, turning them from passive consumers into active participants who critically engage in the initiated reflection on the medium (Huber 119). As I have illustrated, meta-references in film can extend beyond the work they originate from and address the system in which it is imbedded. Thus, metaisation is not bound to a specific genre or type of film. Meta-elements can be found, for example, in films aimed at children, like *HUGO*, in romances, such as *THE ARTIST*, but also in comedies or action films, similar to *BIRDMAN* and *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS*.

The selected films show a wide variety of metareferences. Some of them are explicit and easily detectable, like comments on the plotline in *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS*, while others are more implicit, such as intertextual references to other movies or intermedial references to different media, as found e.g. in *THE GUARD*. What all of these films and metareferences share, however, is their sometimes more, sometimes less direct way in which they foreground aspects of film(making) and filmic storytelling. The metareferences are not only used to highlight the film's genre, its medium-specific devices, like sound effects or editing, but also to foreground its narrative structure as well as connections it might share with other films and media, which in return allows the film to make a self-referential statement about itself or its medium.

For each chapter I selected examples which illustrate the addressed aspect in an especially clear way. While I included as many examples as possible to show the wide range of metareferences in film, I could not incorporate all. Consequently, there are still more metareferences to be found in all of the selected films. I want to point out that although I did not include all meta-elements, I still tried to select a representative sample of every film and aimed at covering all the films equally. The reason that this could not be done and why the selected films are not evenly represented, lies with the films themselves. Some of them contain significantly less meta-elements than others. This might raise the question whether the selected films can then legitimately be called metafilms. As it is not the aim of the paper to answer this question, I only want to refer to Wolf's differentiation of 'metareferences', 'metaworks' and 'metagenre':

It should be noted that metareference [...] is first and foremost applicable to individual phenomena within certain works ('meta-elements'). Yet, if meta-phenomena become salient features of a work as a whole, one may speak of a 'metatext', a 'metadrama' etc., and if several 'metaworks' exist within one and the same medium, they may even be said to form a metagenre. Thus, 'metafiction' can refer to individual passages of a novel, to a novel as a whole, or to a novelistic genre.

Regardless of whether all of the selected films contain enough meta-references which would allow to classify them as metafilms, the meta-elements that they employ, reflect the tendency of post 90s-films described by Gymnich, Simonis and other scholars. Films tend to experiment more with their own medial means and no longer solely use them to convey and support their narrative.

TRISTRAM SHANDY and SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS are replete with metareferences. Both films are set in the film industry and address their very own production which is the climax of self-reflexivity and meta-referentiality in film (Withalm *Screen* 133). The two films use, for example, the narrative strategy of *blurring the boundaries* not only to obscure the borders between plotlines but also of characters, actors and their roles. By doing so, they characterise as 'network narratives' which in an especially effective manner draw the audience's attention towards the film's own narrative strategies and mediality. In both films, the plot discloses only for those who actively follow the film and its narrative by reflecting its playful way of filmic storytelling.

BIRDMAN and THE ARTIST employ a slightly different method. They, too, are set in the show business and apply metadramatic strategies, such as *role playing within the role*, to elicit medium awareness with the audience. The defining characteristic of these two films, however, is their particular use of media-specific devices, namely that of sound and editing/ camera movement. They utilise their media-specific means to draw attention to the very same. This allows them to simultaneously highlight their importance for film in general as well as for their own specific narrative.

HUGO, THE GUARD and SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE contain far less meta-references than the other four films. The majority of their meta-references are diegetically motivated, evolving out of their story, and are directed at other films or the film as a system. As the audience today is more familiar with these types of references their meta-referential potential is less strong. The three film differ significantly from the others, inasmuch as they do not use their medium-specific means to foreground the very same.

BIRDMAN uses editing and camera movement to draw attention to its one-shot effect, THE ARTIST almost rejects diegetic sound to draw attention and experiment with sound.

In *TRISTRAM SHANDY* and *SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS* it is the interwoven plotlines which allow the films to draw to their narrative structure.

Decker notes that in contrast to the more radical forms of (self-)reflexive cinema, such as experimental films or documentaries, feature films still focus on narration and storytelling. Although the conditions and boundaries of cinematic narration are being explored, fiction as such is never totally rejected (55). This is certainly true, as all of the analysed films try to convey a story. Especially with *TRISTRAM SHANDY* and *THE ARTIST*, however, it seems as if the story merely serves as a basis or pretext, which allows the film to explore its own medial means and to present it to the audience in a playful manner. The films are dissecting themselves for the pleasure of the audience. In that regard, Stam pointedly notes that “breaking the toy and discovering how it works in no less pleasurable than playing with the toy itself” (qtd. in Konrath 66). It is no longer only the story that stays with us but the way in which it is told. Therefore these movies belong to a small, but growing number of films which tell their story in a different way;

[...] the film’s style or texture or structure becomes its dominant and most memorable aspect, making a stronger impact on our minds and senses than any of the other thematic elements. Such films have a quality that sets them apart – a unique look, feel, rhythm, atmosphere, tone, or organization that echoes in our minds and senses long after we leave the theater. (Boggs 23)

The above mentioned films elicit such feelings in the audience. Thus, we can conclude that the metareferences employed, have been used to good effect in order to create new experiences for the cinematic audience and it seems as if this self-reflexive and playful way of film will be with us for the foreseeable future.

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Appendix I

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Konrath 52, adopted from Wolf
Metaisierung

Figure 2: Nünning 40

Figure 3: Withalm *Film*

Figure 4: SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

Figure 5: SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

Figure 6: THE GUARD

Figure 7: THE GUARD

Figure 8: THE GUARD

Figure 9: THE GUARD

Figure 10: THE GUARD

Figure 11: THE GUARD

Figure 12: TRISTRAM SHANDY

Figure 13: TRISTRAM SHANDY

Figure 14: TRISTRAM SHANDY

Figure 15: SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

Figure 16: SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS

Figure 17: Vulliamy, *The Guardian*, Web.
<<http://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2012/feb/12/hugo-martin-scorsese-brian-selznick#img-17>>

Figure 18: HUGO

Figure 19: Vulliamy, *The Guardian*, Web.
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Figure 20: HUGO

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Index

- allusion 12, 13, 29, 38, 53, 66, 84, 85, 95
 BIRDMAN 7, 44, 45, 46, 53, 54, 55, 62, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 84, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104
 blurring boundaries 37, 48, 74, 75, 80, 97
 critical 24, 26, 34, 46, 51, 53, 96
fictio- 27, 73, 75, 76
fictum- 27, 28, 38, 44, 51, 54, 73, 76, 77
 film in film 17, 29, 37, 47, 48, 86, 92
 HUGO 7, 37, 44, 48, 57, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 96, 97, 99, 105, 106
 illusion 6, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 35, 38, 39, 44, 51, 53, 54, 57, 62, 63, 71, 72, 77, 84, 92, 94, 96
 illusion-breaking 18, 24, 25, 31, 32, 53
 intermediality 10, 14
 intermedial (self-)reference 8, 14, 15, 16, 18, 30, 63, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96
 intertextuality 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 20, 30, 36, 38, 84
 intertextual 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 51, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 96
 metafilm 6, 36, 41, 51, 73, 96, 97
 meta-phenomenon 8, 9, 20, 21, 22, 36, 97
 metareference 8, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 40, 44, 47, 48, 51, 54, 55, 57, 62, 69, 76, 77, 80, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 97
 metareferential 8, 10, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 39, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 51, 53, 57, 60, 61, 65, 71, 76, 82, 85, 88, 92, 94
 meta-referentiality 10, 17, 18, 23, 30, 33, 41, 97
 metatextuality 12, 21
 metatextual 81, 82, 83, 92
 metatheatre 25, 36, 37
 real-life (reference) 37, 38, 46, 50, 87, 94
 role playing 37, 38, 39, 45, 47, 49, 76, 93, 97
 self-reference 8, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 31, 40, 47, 48, 53, 59, 65, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89
 self-referentiality 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 30, 33, 37, 47, 81
 SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS 7, 23, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 62, 63, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 106
 SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE 7, 44, 45, 48, 57, 64, 66, 67, 85, 97, 99, 102
 THE ARTIST 7, 33, 37, 41, 44, 45, 48, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 66, 67, 81, 86, 87, 96, 97, 98, 99
 THE GUARD 6, 23, 51, 53, 64, 65, 83, 84, 86, 87, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 104, 106
 TRISTRAM SHANDY 7, 37, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 66, 67, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 97, 98, 103, 106

Appendix II

Abstract – “Metareferenzen im zeitgenössischen Film”

In den letzten Jahren ist ein stetiger Anstieg der selbstreflexiven Verfahren und Metaisierung in der Gegenwartskultur zu beobachten. Dieser Trend spiegelt sich auch in zeitgenössischen Filmen wieder, die immer öfter mit neuen Erzählmethoden und den eigenen medialen Mitteln experimentieren. Vor diesem Hintergrund beschäftigt sich die vorliegende Arbeit mit unterschiedlichen, selbstreflexiven Strategien, die der zeitgenössische Film anwendet, um die eigenen narrativen Mittel zu dekonstruieren. Im ersten Teil der Arbeit erfolgt zunächst eine theoretische Annäherung an das Phänomen der Metaisierung sowie eine Klärung der wichtigsten Termini. In einem weiteren Schritt werden die, meist literaturwissenschaftlichen, Konzepte für die Filmanalyse adaptiert und schließlich exemplarisch im zweiten Teil der Arbeit anhand von konkreten Beispielen veranschaulicht. Hierfür wurden sieben zeitgenössische Filme ausgewählt, die alle nach dem Jahr 2000 veröffentlicht wurden. Trotzdem sich die Filme erzähltheoretisch stark unterscheiden, zeigt sich in der näheren Auseinandersetzung, dass sie ähnliche Strategien der Selbstreflexion anwenden, was darauf hinweist, dass Metaisierung nicht an ein spezifisches Genre oder eine Art von Film gebunden ist. Die Analyse der Filme konzentriert sich hauptsächlich auf medienspezifische Formen von Metaisierung und zeigt des Weiteren, dass der Film Meta-Elemente gezielt einsetzt, um eine kritische Auseinandersetzung des Publikums mit dem eigenen Medium zu fördern. Die vorliegende Arbeit liefert einen Beitrag zum Metadiskurs im Film und bietet Einblicke in filmische Selbstreflexivität sowie medienspezifische Formen der Metaisierung.

Abstract – “Metareferences in Contemporary Film”

In recent years metaisation has steadily increased across all media and genres. This trend is also reflected in contemporary films, which employ new methods of storytelling and are experimenting more often with their own medial means. This thesis explores the various ways of self-reflexivity which contemporary film uses to deconstruct its own narrative means.

To date, the concept of metaisation has mainly been approached by literary studies, while meta-references in other arts and media have not been treated in sufficient detail. Thus, the study sets off by laying out the theoretical dimensions of metaisation before looking at how these, mostly literary concepts, can be adapted and applied for film analysis. In a

second step, the theoretic findings are then exemplified in a close analysis of seven, contemporary films, all released after 2000. Although the films differ considerably on the story level, they employ similar strategies of metaisation, showing that metaisation is not bound to a specific genre or type of film.

Focusing primarily on medium-specific forms of metaisation, the analysis shows that most meta-elements found in the selected films try to encourage critical observation of the medium on the part of the audience. The paper's findings contribute to the meta-discourse in film, offering insights on self-referentiality in film and its medium-specific methods of metaisation.

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