*“Birdman”.* USA, 2014. Director: Alejandro González Iñárritu. With Michael Keaton, Edward Norton, Naomi Watts, Emma Stone, Zach Galifianakis.

**Blockbuster and Feelings**

Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu, with a background of relevant productions (Amores Perros, 2000; 21 Grams, 2003, Babel 2006; Beautiful, 2010) raises his own bar with his *Birdman* and his stakes are higher. He’s after the golden statue of the Academy of Arts and Science of Hollywood and so gathers around him a compact and restless team of scriptwriters (Giacobone, Dinelaris, Bo --who was the producer of an outstanding film, The Last Elvis, 2012).

González Iñárritu summoned them to further elaborate on a single starting point: a man in his underwear is levitating. At first, they only counted on that. No more. Next step: to sustain the film as one uninterrupted shot, no cuts, no exits, no air, and with the torturing background sound of drums, relentlessly playing. It was necessary to make do with this and then build up a script that could allow for the creation of a plot that depended on “the unexpected virtue of ignorance”, as the subtitle reads.

The leading character (Riggan Thomson) is played by the almost retired actor in real life, Michael Keaton, who **represented Batman, the Dark Knight,** in two films –in 1989, and in 1992, both under the direction of Tim Burton, who found the disturbed appearance of Keaton as very adequate; a guy who had demonstrated he was a good comedy actor.

### In that sense, then, the names *Batman* and *Birdman*, evoked some sort of resonance. The decadent actor played by Keaton, is created on a stream of different winged heroes following the tradition of DC Comics –Captain America, Superman, Captain Marvel, Spiderman, (and others). In addition, the character is an altruistic avenger; he’s the good guy, perhaps a bit worried, perhaps anxious for love, but a winged hero after all. Furthermore, he flies over earthly things, and from there he boasts of being in possession of truth and justice. Another reference point comes to the rescue of González Iñárritu and his team. Riggan-*Birdman* insists on putting a play on Broadway, an adaptation of Raymond Carver’s story: “[What We Talk About When We Talk About Love](https://www.google.com.uy/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCQQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fheadzthenovel.com%2Fwhat-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-love%2F&ei=evrxVOyDDLeHsQSqlIDYAg&usg=AFQjCNFfZi1GfiFNzbzrSJkD9k9JCzKHCA&bvm=bv.87269000,d.cWc)”. This fact contributes more material to explore and work with.

### The camera slithers likes a reptile through the backstage of a Broadway Theatre, crosses darkly lit corridors, enters dressing-rooms, steps on the stage, climbs grids, looks at the orchestra seats and we view the first performances during a dress rehearsal of the dubious adaptation made by Riggan. All is filmed with no cuts: the actors go from the stage to the roof, and even to the street, they come back to the theatre, to their routine, to their rehearsals, to stage, to mystery and perhaps to ignorance, as the subtitle suggests. In this way, the producer is probably showing, in Pirandello’s manner, the paradox facing the comedian, already mentioned by Diderot: Where do I really exist? Here, on stage? Or up on the stage grid? Or up in the sky? Or perhaps below, smashed against the pavement under Broadway lights? What is love? Birdman’s deep voice gives Thomson legendary and nostalgic replies. As *Batman* would have done, *Birdman* advises Riggan not to leave him, and to stop trying to do something different. They were so much happier when they could fly, when they were heroes and would spread love! The creative skills of González Iñárritu and his team show they know their job well.

### However, could today’s public in general understand those dark corners of the soul that Carver’s creative descriptions convey through the type of hopelessness we can read between lines? (Literature is hard, people swallow quickly, “there is no time” to get your fingers dirty, or to let stories bring tears to your eyes; stories that are obscure, dirty, intellectual and make your soul drowsy. Unlike the senses, that awaken the spectator, who perhaps feels oppressed by the relentless long shot (plus the disturbing drums) and even by the absence of roaring fire and smoke, and the presence of a thundering silence that extends up and above… in the sky. Let’s add a little bit of that ingredient. Is time for the show, time to use blockbuster resources (they are the locked birds that need to fly high). *Birdman* needs to be portrayed –really an impressive ugly bird disguise- flying over the clouds; then proceeding to cause a series of explosions, create fire curtains, make heaven explode, and then bring the black fantasy bird back to earth.

The viewer --perhaps not completely satisfied at the end-- unwraps the jewels of good acting that is worth mentioning: Emma Stone, standing out as a charming and versatile daughter of *Birdman*-Riggan. Michael Keaton, in an earnest performance he manages decently well. Edward Norton effortlessly unfolds good resources that he specifically shows in a subtle *in crescendo* way. Zach Galifianakis, playing an impeccable producer afraid of a business flop. Special effects are marvelous, as is the photography (splendid) of the also Mexican, Emmanuel Lubezki.

***Juan Carlos Capo***