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Breaking the Mold: How Rango Redefines the Western Protagonist

Bachelor's thesis in Film Studies

Supervisor: Sven Østgaard

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Bachelor Thesis, FILM2205

Candidate Number: 10052

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Summary:

The primary objective of this bachelor's thesis is to explore how the main character in the film *Rango* fits into and challenges the conventions of the Western genre. This will be achieved through a comprehensive genre analysis, using the book *Ride, Boldly Ride* by Mary Lea Bandy and Kevin Stoehr as a foundational theoretical framework. The thesis will employ genre analysis to dissect various aspects of the movie *Rango*. This approach will involve examining the film's narrative structure, character development, thematic content, and stylistic choices in the context of Western genre conventions. The study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of genre evolution and the ongoing relevance of Western themes in contemporary cinema.

Sammendrag:

Hovedmålet med denne bacheloroppgaven er å utforske hvordan protagonisten i filmen *Rango* passer inn i og utfordrer konvensjonene i westernsjangeren. Dette vil bli oppnådd gjennom en omfattende sjangeranalyse, ved bruk av boken *Ride, Boldly Ride* av Mary Lea Bandy og Kevin Stoehr som et grunnleggende teoretisk rammeverk. Oppgaven vil bruke sjangeranalyse for å se på ulike aspekter av filmen *Rango*. Denne tilnærmingen vil innebære å undersøke filmens narrative struktur, karakterutvikling, tematiske innhold og stilistiske valg i konteksten av westernsjangeren. Studien har som mål å bidra til en bredere forståelse av sjangerutvikling og den pågående relevansen av western temaer i moderne kino.

5590 words (Without Front Page, Table of Contents, References and Summary)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Why Rango?

The Western genre in film has for a long time been one of the most prolific American film genres. Through this popularity among directors and the audience it has had a long and varied history. Going through many changes in everything from shooting locations, to the typical characters in western stories and what kind of story is being told. From the golden age of Hollywood to contemporary examples of the genre much has changed, but it has still kept its recognizable style. In this text I will be looking at a curious example of a western movie, and a western protagonist, that breaks the mold of what the typical western hero should be. This movie is the 2011 animated movie called *Rango* (Verbinski 2011), a fresh take on a formula that has in more recent times seen more experimental ways of telling a western story. Being an animated movie many people might think that *Rango* is just another movie made for kids, without much to say or much substance at all, just wearing a coat of western genre paint. This however is not the full truth since *Rango* uses its 1 hour and 47 minute run time to create a story and main character that stand out among previous westerns.

1.2 The Goal Of Analyzing Rango

Since the western genre in movies has for a very long time been a staple of American filmmaking, it has seen many iterations over the decades, but it has still kept its distinctive style throughout the years. “In all Westerns you have enigmatic characters; you don’t know how they arrived or how they got to where they are. The only possessions they have are on their horse.” (White 2019, 27). In the typical Western, the main character, usually the hero of the story, is a badass from the very beginning of the film. Or at least they have the potential to very easily become a badass, they are usually no nonsense types which befits a person living out in the harsh and unforgiving west. The main character of *Rango* however is an outsider, a pushover and someone who does not fit the typical idea of a western hero. The purpose of this text is therefore to analyse the western movie *Rango*, more specifically its protagonist,

and the surroundings he finds himself in, in an attempt to find out if he can be called a typical western hero or not.

2 Theory And Method

2.1 Genre Analysis

In this section, I will use something called genre analysis to understand how movies fit into their categories and how they follow or change the usual rules of their genres. I will be using the book *Ride, Boldly Ride* as my main source to understand how the Western genre functions. Genre analysis means looking at things like the setting, the characters, the story, and the style of the movie. For Westerns, this might include the frontier setting, heroes who are strong and brave, and clear battles between good and bad.

Using genre analysis, with insights from *Ride, Boldly Ride*, to help with identifying what makes a movie a Western and how some movies might change the usual way these stories are told. By pointing out usual building blocks in the western genre and how they have changed over the years. For example, comparing the portrayal of Rango, a chameleon that literally and figuratively changes colors, but can still not fit in with the rest of the cast, with the steadfast characters of classic Westerns, illuminates shifts in how protagonists are crafted in contemporary western cinema. Moreover, *Rango* uses both parody and homage in its narrative execution, which will be analyzed later in this text to show how the film comments on and uses the genre's conventions.

2.2 The Methods Of The Analysis

In the analysis part of this text, I will primarily be using the book *Ride, Boldly Ride* and its theories around the Western genre and how it has evolved over the years. This comprehensive resource provides valuable insights into the thematic and stylistic shifts that have occurred in Western films, making it an ideal framework for analyzing the movie *Rango*. I will use this

book to analyze four different aspects of the movie Rango, each crucial in understanding its place within the Western genre and how it both adheres to and diverges from traditional conventions.

Firstly, I will examine the use of violence and justice in Rango. Traditional Westerns often depict violence as a necessary means to achieve justice, with the hero typically engaging in gunfights to restore order. In Rango, the portrayal of violence is nuanced and sometimes parodic, raising questions about the morality of violence and its effectiveness in resolving conflicts. This section will explore how Rango addresses these themes and what it suggests about the nature of justice.

Secondly, I will analyze the landscape of the movie. The Western genre is renowned for its iconic landscapes, which often symbolize the vast, untamed frontier. Rango features a desert setting that both honors and subverts these classic depictions. The analysis will focus on how the film uses its environment to enhance the narrative and reflect the internal struggles of its characters.

Thirdly, I will look at the clothing that Rango wears and how it affects the plot. In Westerns, clothing often signifies a character's role and transformation. Like how Rango's attire evolves during the movie, going from a hawaiian shirt in the beginning to fully western attire by the end of the movie, symbolizing his journey from an outsider to a hero. This section will delve into the significance of these costume changes and their impact on the story.

Finally, I will conduct a more in-depth analysis of Rango's complex moral journey throughout the film. Unlike the straightforward heroes of classic Westerns, Rango is a character with significant flaws and uncertainties. His development over the course of the movie reflects the modern Western's tendency to present morally ambiguous protagonists. This analysis will explore how Rango's experiences and decisions shape his character and what this indicates about his role as a western hero. To achieve this analysis, the movie will be examined within these aspects individually, allowing for a focused and detailed exploration of each element. Following this, there will be a discussion that synthesizes the findings from these individual analyses, providing a comprehensive understanding of Rango's place in the Western genre. But first, to provide a little context around the movies that will be part of the analysis, there will be an explanation of the plots of each movie included.

3 The Plots

3.1 The Plots Of The Movies

To get a better overview of the movies that will be discussed in the analysis later in this text, this section will be dedicated to explaining the plots of both "Rango" and the other movies chosen for comparison. Providing a detailed summary of each film's narrative will help establish a foundation for the subsequent analysis, allowing for a clearer understanding of how "Rango" fits within and deviates from traditional Western conventions. This comparative approach will not only highlight the distinctive features of "Rango" but also illustrate a small part of the genre's evolution and its response to contemporary cultural and cinematic influences. I will provide a brief overview of the plots of the movies *Rango*, *Dead Man*, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, and *Django Unchained*.

3.2 Rango

Rango is an animated western adventure film that begins with the main character Rango, a chameleon with an identity crisis. Voiced by Johnny Depp, living a sheltered and mundane life as a pet within the confines of his terrarium, using several props within his shelter to create dramatic stories with himself as the protagonist. This however does not last as his life takes a dramatic turn when an accident during a family road trip suddenly throws him out of the family car, his terrarium shattering on the highway, as he is stranded in the Mojave Desert. Lost and alone, Rango embarks on a journey through the desert to find water and a new place to call home. After several near-death experiences he finds a drainage pipe where he can sleep for his first night in the desert. During the night a dehydrated Rango has weird dreams about his deepest fears, not having a purpose or a character he can be in real life, before he is awoken by a flood of water exiting the drainage pipe and depositing Rango at the feet of one Miss Beans.

Miss Beans takes Rango to the local town of Dirt, where he goes to the saloon in hopes of finding water to quench his thirst. He is disappointed when he finds out that the town is going through a water crisis and that they only have cactus juice to drink, cactus juice being the equivalent of alcohol in the world of *Rango*. He is then interrogated by the locals about who he is. Finally seeing a way to create a character and through that a place for himself within their society, Rango tells tall tales to the other occupants of the saloon, presenting himself as a hero figure to the townspeople. Rango, or at least the character he creates for himself is a badass cowboy from “Out West” who kills a man before breakfast. Creating in this sequence a parody of a typical western character. He then manages to make the locals believe that he is this heroic figure, through the accidental death of a hawk that has been hunting Rango since he fell out of the car and into the desert, and is then made the town's sheriff and is given the job of solving the town's water crisis.

Since his entire personality is something he created on the spot and is entirely fake, he has no idea how to actually do this. Creating problems for a now fraudulent sheriff who has to hide his inexperience while trying to fix the town's problem. His investigation introduces him to the film's antagonists the mayor, a power-hungry tortoise who controls the water supply to manipulate the town, and Rattlesnake Jake, a gunslinger just like Rangos made up character who enforces the mayor's will. In the end he faces his own fears and insecurities, which culminate in a showdown with Rattlesnake Jake. This confrontation forces Rango to drop his charade and embrace his true self, a hero who is brave and resourceful in his own unique way.

3.3 Dead Man

Dead Man (Jarmusch 1995) is a Western film directed by Jim Jarmusch that is often described as a "Psychedelic Western". It stars Johnny Depp as William Blake, an accountant from Cleveland who travels to the frontier town of Machine in order to take up a promised job. Upon arrival, he finds that the position has been filled, and his life spirals into chaos after a deadly confrontation. After killing a man in self-defense during a lover's quarrel, Blake is wounded and becomes a wanted man. Pursued by lawmen and bounty hunters, he encounters a Native American named Nobody, who believes Blake is the reincarnation of the poet

William Blake. Nobody becomes Blake's guide and spiritual mentor, leading him on a transformative journey through the Western wilderness. As they travel, Blake transitions from a timid accountant to an outlaw, gradually taking on the persona of the poet-warrior as outlined by Nobody. The journey is marked by encounters with various eccentric and often macabre characters typical of Jarmusch's films. Ultimately, *Dead Man* is a meditative and existential exploration of identity, spirituality, and death, set against the stark and unforgiving landscape of the American West.

3.4 The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (Leone 1966) is a Western film directed by Sergio Leone and is the third installment in the "Dollars Trilogy." This iconic film stars Clint Eastwood as Blondie (The Good), Lee Van Cleef as Angel Eyes (The Bad), and Eli Wallach as Tuco (The Ugly). The story is set during the American Civil War and revolves around these three diverse and sharply drawn characters who are intertwined in a quest to find a buried fortune in gold. The plot unfolds as Tuco and Blondie form an uneasy alliance where Blondie turns in Tuco for the reward money, then rescues him just as he is about to be hanged, and they split the reward. This scheme continues until Blondie abandons Tuco in the desert. Meanwhile, Tuco manages to survive and seeks revenge by forcing Blondie to trek across the desert without water. Their story intersects with that of Angel Eyes, who is also in search of the gold. After various betrayals and shifts in alliances, the trio finds themselves in a three-way standoff over the buried treasure, located in a cemetery. Each character's tactics and motivations come to a head in this climactic scene, famous for its dramatic tension and operatic cinematography.

3.5 Django Unchained

Django Unchained (Tarantino 2012) is a Western film directed by Quentin Tarantino that blends elements of the Spaghetti Western with the director's signature style of storytelling, characterized by sharp dialogue, graphic violence, and dark humor. The film stars Jamie Foxx as Django, a freed slave who teams up with Dr. King Schultz played by Christoph Waltz, a

German bounty hunter, to rescue Django's wife, Broomhilda played by Kerry Washington, from a cruel plantation owner, Calvin Candie played by Leonardo DiCaprio. The plot kicks off when Schultz frees Django from a chain gang and trains him as his deputy bounty hunter. The pair make a deal: Schultz will help Django find and rescue Broomhilda if Django assists him in capturing the Brittle brothers, a trio of ruthless outlaws. Their partnership leads them on a violent journey through the antebellum South. As they pursue their quests, Django and Schultz hone their skills and form a deep bond. Their search eventually leads them to Candie's plantation, known as "Candyland." Here, they devise a plan to buy Broomhilda's freedom by masquerading as potential buyers interested in Candie's fight-to-the-death slave matches. The story builds to a tense and violent climax when their ruse is discovered, leading to a dramatic shootout. Django manages to escape, returning later to rescue Broomhilda and exact revenge on those who wronged him.

4 The Analysis

4.1 Characters And Violence In Westerns

In traditional Westerns, violence often serves as a straightforward solution to conflict. In *Rango*, however, violence tends to be more symbolic and less about solving problems through physical means, like in the scene where Rango runs away from a hawk through the town of dirt (Verbinski 2011, 00:30.30 - 00:34:03). He never actually means to harm the bird, he just wants to run away from it, even though it in the end gets crushed beneath a water tower filled with rocks. The film utilizes a style of violence that is often exaggerated and cartoonish, never really taking the death of the bird seriously, and mostly just brushing it off as an accident. This style aligns with the conventions of animated films where violence is shown in a more comedic or less realistic manner. There is never any blood and violence is used very sparingly in the movie, most of the time there are only threats of violence.

This is not to say that *Rango* does not have violence or the signs of violence in it, one of the characters has an arrow going through one of his eyes for example. Now we do not see this arrow ever entering this character's body during the movie, since it has already happened

before it started, but it is called into attention a couple of times and this character has several close ups during the film. Several of the other characters also have signs of being victims of violence, with several having scars and the town doctor even missing an ear as can be seen in the first bar scene of the movie (Verbinski 2011 00:22:08). Though it is still a far cry from more violent westerns like *Django Unchained*, another contemporary western by Quentin Tarantino with his usual flair for over the top violence and gore. Which is to be expected since *Rango* is still an animated movie made for a broad and primarily young audience.

“Classic Westerns usually feature the figure of a leading solitary hero whose violent expressions are nonetheless shown as positive, since violence is used for the elimination of the enemy, the re-establishment of order and the triumph of law. It is in this monopoly of violence, allowed to a single hero by civil society in order to counter an illegal spiral of violence, that it is possible to find the most relevant legal issue in the genre of the Western.” (Battisti 2014, 364).

Unlike this description of how violence is typically used in westerns, *Rango* breaks with this mould. Showing that he is not a typical western hero that has no issues with doling out violence on any evildoers who could threaten the lawful and civilized society. In fact it does the opposite of this, making it so only the antagonists of the story use any meaningful amount of violence. Such as when Rattlesnake Jake carries the mayor of Dirt with him during the end of the movie, most probably to some grisly end (Verbinski 2011, 01:42:03). Whereas *Rango* does not commit any violence against the mayor or his henchmen, making it clear that *Rango* does not follow directly in the footsteps of most western heroes.

4.2 The Landscape Of Westerns

In a few contemporary westerns like *Rango* the environment often has issues like environmental degradation or climate change, marking a shift from the more traditional man versus nature of older westerns. This shift from the previous conquest of nature to a focus on the environmental effects of human development are central to the plot of *Rango*.

“Such battles were typically waged over unclaimed land that was waiting to be conquered and controlled and cultivated, precisely the type of empty landscape that was the backdrop of these more action-packed Westerns shot in the Southwest, chiefly in California.” (Bandy and Stoehr 2012, 17).

This is how Bandy and Stoehr describe the older type of western, where the heroes of the story would fight Native Americans and bad guys, and through their fights they would be taming the wild west, usually as a lawman, bounty hunter or similar. This however does not fit with the plots of most contemporary westerns like *Rango* and, the 1995 western *Dead Man* where the land is not fought over, but instead is a character, and at least in *Rango* central to the development of the plot and Rango's journey.

In *Ride, Boldly Ride* Bandy and Stoehr discuss how the landscape in a western is not only a part of the background, but instead a character in and of itself (Bandy and Stoehr 2012, 27). The reason I bring this up is because of the character of the landscape itself. Due to it being a character it interacts with the protagonist of *Rango* many times in the movie, there are several times where Rango almost dies because of this environmental character. Rango has to learn how to survive in the desert, making the desert a central part of his character arc, he goes from a directionless character, for example when he is left to die in the desert at the very beginning of the movie (Verbinski 2011, 00:11:10), where the desert and its dangers are the only things pushing him towards where the story needs to go, to a hero of the town of Dirt.

The landscape itself aiding the hero by threatening his life, making him a hero by directly pushing him towards a drainage pipe, where he takes shelter, that directly leads to his meeting with Miss Beans (Verbinski 2011, 00:15:57). This leading to Miss Beans giving Rango a ride into town and eventually having Rango be made the Sheriff of Dirt. *Rango* has a blend of both a man versus nature and an environment as a character in its plot. It blends both aspects of the older western, where the protagonist had to overcome and conquer the environment, in the form of Rangos many near death experiences, eventually learning to survive in the desert. While it also gives the environment a character all of its own, making it a central part in the plot, with the water crisis, and also as a way to push the protagonist in the right direction.

4.3 The Clothing And Characters In Westerns

Rango's clothing evolves throughout the film, mirroring his transformation from an ordinary pet to the sheriff of the old West town of Dirt. As Rango attempts to integrate into the town and carve out a new identity for himself, his attire undergoes a transformation. He goes from his Hawaiian shirt and eventually adopts a more Western-style outfit, which includes a sheriff's hat, a vest, and a bandana (Verbinski 2011, 00:46:43). This change is symbolic of his acceptance of his new role within the town and his desire to fit into the existing social structure. The clothing is not just a practical adaptation to the environment but also an attempt to craft a persona that aligns with the expectations of the townsfolk.

The Western-style clothing Rango chooses is emblematic of the traditional American cowboy, which helps in shaping his image as a hero and a figure of authority, an image he uses many times throughout the movie to make people believe in the character he has created for himself, like when he threatens a trio of bank robbers with a fine. Not really understanding that they are in fact bank robbers (Verbinski 2011, 00:47:06 - 00:48:25). The sheriff's badge, in particular, is a powerful symbol of law, order, and responsibility. It signifies his commitment to protecting the town and upholding justice, themes that are central to the narrative of the movie. Moreover, Rango's attire is not merely about blending in or taking on a superficial role; it becomes a part of his identity transformation. The clothes act as a shield that initially masks his insecurities and fears. As he grows into his role, the outfit no longer serves as a costume but becomes a true representation of his newfound courage and leadership qualities, like when he is standing victoriously at the end of the movie (Verbinski 2011, 01:41:28), no longer needing to act like he is the sheriff of the town and instead accepting what and how he is.

Rango is also a chameleon that cannot blend into his surroundings. Something of an awkward quirk that is only really brought up early in the movie, but serves as the audience's introduction to his internal struggles. Such as when he tries to hide from the hawk at the beginning of the movie, where he struggles to blend in with the environment (Verbinski 2011, 00:12:26). Something that is central to the plot of the movie is Rango's wish to fit in with the other characters, to find his place in the world. Through both his failed attempts at blending

in with his chameleon abilities and his adoption of western attire, eventually leading to him becoming the hero that he always wished he could be.

4.4 The Moral Complexity Of Rango

“The newer Westerns emphasized battles between cowboys and “Injuns” and, within white society, between heroes and villains.” (Bandy and Stoehr 2012, 17). In *Ride, Boldly Ride*, Bandy and Stoehr discuss the evolution of Western heroes from straightforward, morally clear figures to more nuanced and flawed individuals (Bandy and Stoehr, 2012). Rango, a character with many internal battles, embodies this shift. Unlike Clint Eastwood’s iconic Man with No Name in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, who epitomizes the stoic, mysterious gunslinger, Rango is verbose, clumsy, and overtly comedic, traits that defy the traditional stoic Western hero mold. Rango's journey from a pet chameleon with an identity crisis to a self proclaimed sheriff fighting corruption in the town of Dirt is an example of the shift to a more modern narrative arc. His transformation is less about adopting traditional heroic traits, like being a stoic, violent gunslinger, and more about discovering his own values and capacities. This is consistent with Bandy and Stoehr's observations of contemporary heroes who often redefine what it means to be a hero through personal growth and moral challenges (Bandy and Stoehr 2012, 156-157).

Rango's character development is marked by moments of doubt, mistakes, and personal revelations, which is a significant departure from the infallible heroes of classic Westerns. His initial decision to become the sheriff is not driven by a desire to uphold justice but rather by a need for acceptance and a sense of identity. Not really hearing what Miss Beans is saying while he is getting new clothes made for himself (Verbinski 2011, 00:38:33 - 00:39:23). Using his new identity as a shield, blocking out the rest of the world, and acting like he himself thinks a sheriff and hero should act. Throughout the film, Rango struggles with what it means to be a hero, which involves confronting his own falsehoods and embracing more altruistic motivations. Going from a character who does not know who he is, then going over the highway to meet the spirit of the west, a character, based on Clint Eastwood’s the man with no name, who tells him that only his deeds can make him a hero, not his looks and attitude (Verbinski 2011, 01:27:24 - 01:28:11). This journey to the other side signifying the

death of Rangos ego, his willingness to go along with whatever happens, and his now ignited wish to save the people of Dirt.

In John White's book *The Contemporary Western* he writes about American exceptionalism, the idea that America is better than any other country in the world. White writes about how this way of thinking has become normalised in American cinema, partially because of their loss in the Vietnam War and partially because of 9/11 (White 2019, 99-100). *Rango* while not disproving this idea, it does not subscribe to it having a conflicted hero who is wrong a lot of the time, something that does not build up the idea of exceptionalism in any form, breaking this newer convention in american cinema that affects some movies. It is also less black and white in its morality than some other contemporary westerns. Take *Django Unchained* for example, a movie about a freed slave in the American south fighting to save his wife who is still a slave. There is a clear moral conflict, between the slavers and the slave, making it easy to understand who to cheer for. *Rango* however has a theme of climate change in its overarching plot, something that sets up an equally clear moral conflict between the townspeople and the greedy mayor. But *Rango* is not as clearly good in the story, since he has doubts and even hurts the people who start to consider him a friend. The point being that there is a difference between how the protagonists are viewed by the audience.

4.5 The Finds

In traditional Westerns, violence often serves as a straightforward solution to conflict, with heroes typically using force to restore order. In contrast, *Rango* employs violence in a more symbolic and less direct manner. The violence is exaggerated and cartoonish. This aligns with animated film conventions, where violence is depicted comedically and unrealistically, with little to no blood and minimal actual violence. Despite its lighter tone, *Rango* does not shy away from the signs of violence. Characters bear physical evidence of past violence, such as an arrow through one character's eye and various scars and injuries on others, indicating a background of danger. However, this depiction is still far less graphic than in more violent Westerns like Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*. Classic Westerns typically feature a solitary hero whose use of violence is justified to eliminate enemies and restore law and order. In contrast, *Rango* subverts this trope by making its hero reluctant to use violence. The film reserves significant acts of violence for the antagonists, such as Rattlesnake Jake. *Rango*

himself refrains from violent retribution, highlighting his departure from the traditional Western hero archetype. The film presents a hero who relies more on wit and bravery than on violence, offering a fresh perspective on heroism and the use of violence in Western narratives.

The landscape of *Rango* is a character in and of itself, its not just in the background looking pretty, but actively takes part in the story and pushes the plot forward. Rango's survival in the desert, starting from his near-death experiences, is crucial to his character arc. The desert's challenges push him from being directionless to becoming the hero of the town of Dirt. Rango blends the traditional man versus nature aspect, where the protagonist must overcome the environment and conquer it, with the modern portrayal of the environment as a character that significantly influences the plot. The desert's role in the water crisis and as a force that propels Rango towards his destiny exemplifies this blend, highlighting and encapsulating the evolution of the Western genre.

Rango's clothing evolves throughout the film, mirroring his transformation from an ordinary pet to the sheriff of the Old West town of Dirt. As Rango attempts to integrate into the town and carve out a new identity for himself, his attire undergoes a transformation. The Western-style clothing Rango chooses is emblematic of the traditional American cowboy, which helps in shaping his image as a hero and a figure of authority, an image he uses many times throughout the movie to make people believe in the character he has created for himself. As he grows into his role, the outfit no longer serves as a costume but becomes a true representation of his newfound courage and leadership qualities. Additionally, Rango's inability to blend into his surroundings despite being a chameleon introduces his internal struggles early in the movie, giving the audience a heads up that not everything is right in Rango's life. His journey throughout the film revolves around his desire to fit in and find his place in the world.

The moral complexity in the movie is far above what one would expect from a simple and easy to follow childrens movie. That is not to say that it is an extremely complex plot, but the movie discusses themes like not having a place to fit in and a sense of not knowing who oneself is, which is fairly unusual compared to many older western movies where the good guys shoot the bad guys and not much more happens. The movie also happens to have a protagonist that struggles a lot with his own failures, especially his lies to the other characters

around him. Making him a more self-conscious western protagonist than what is usual. Unlike the stoic, mysterious gunslinger epitomized by characters like Clint Eastwood's Man with No Name in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Rango is clumsy and unsure of himself during a good portion of the movie. Rango's journey from a pet chameleon with an identity crisis to a self-proclaimed sheriff fighting corruption in the town of Dirt highlights a more modern narrative arc focused on personal growth and moral challenges. Overall, Rango represents a significant departure from traditional Westerns by featuring a flawed, evolving hero whose journey is defined by internal growth and moral ambiguity. This analysis reveals how Rango fits into and challenges Western genre conventions, offering a modern take on the Western hero.

5 Conclusion And Ending

Is Rango any different from a typical western hero? Well in many ways yes, he is a much more conflicted character than a traditional western protagonist. Not really knowing who he is or what his place in life is at the beginning of the movie, but through many trials he finally realises who he has been the entire time. Though in other ways he is similar to contemporary western protagonists, fighting for more than just the law and justice, fighting for what is right. That is not to say that this analysis has found everything there is to find in this movie. Not at all, it is simply scratching the surface of a much larger topic that can be stretched in a number of different directions. There are many more aspects to this film that this analysis could not touch on in such a short span, leaving the door open for more in depth analysis of both *Rango* and other westerns, both new and old. Along with several themes within Rango itself which would have expanded beyond the borders of this text, its spiritual and psychedelic sections being only one example of many. This text was also held back by the fact that it only really delves skin deep into any of the themes and aspects of the movie that is explored, and if it could have been longer there would be much more that could be said about this movie. But in the end a question was asked and an answer was given, whether that answer is right is not clear, but at least some parts of Rango's character break with the established conventions of the western hero.

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