

VIOLENCE, IDENTITY, AND RESISTANCE: A DRAMATIC CHARACTERIZATION ANALYSIS OF *KICK-ASS 2*

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Abstract. *This study explores the dramatic characterization in the film Kick-Ass 2 (2013), directed by Jeff Wadlow, by analyzing how characters construct identity, morality, and resistance in a hyper-violent comic-based narrative. Using a literary-critical approach grounded in drama theory and psychological realism, the research focuses on three main figures: Dave Lizewski (Kick-Ass), Mindy Macready (Hit-Girl), and Chris D'Amico (The Motherf***er). The study investigates how their characterization reflects contemporary anxieties about youth, justice, and vigilantism in postmodern cinema. Each character functions not only as a symbolic archetype but also as a dramatic subject undergoing internal conflict and transformation. Through close reading of dialogue, performance, and symbolic action, the paper reveals that Kick-Ass 2 subverts heroic conventions and explores the blurred boundaries between fantasy and trauma. The film, while often dismissed as satire or parody, contains dramatic depth that mirrors real-world issues such as gender identity, moral decay, and the performativity of violence. This analysis contributes to the broader discourse on character development in modern drama and the ethical paradoxes embedded in superhero narratives.*

Keywords: *Characterization; superhero drama; violence; identity; morality; vigilante; Kick-Ass 2*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini menganalisis karakterisasi dramatik dalam film *Kick-Ass 2* (2013), karya sutradara Jeff Wadlow, dengan fokus pada bagaimana tokoh-tokohnya membentuk identitas, moralitas, dan perlawanan dalam narasi komik yang hiper-keras. Melalui pendekatan kritis berbasis teori drama dan realisme psikologis, studi ini mengeksplorasi tiga karakter utama: Dave Lizewski (Kick-Ass), Mindy Macready (Hit-Girl), dan Chris D'Amico (The Motherf***er). Penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana karakterisasi mereka merefleksikan kecemasan kontemporer tentang masa muda, keadilan, dan vigilante dalam sinema postmodern. Tiap karakter berfungsi bukan hanya sebagai arketipe simbolik, tetapi juga sebagai subjek dramatik yang mengalami konflik batin dan transformasi. Dengan pembacaan dekat terhadap dialog, gestur, dan aksi simbolik, tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa *Kick-Ass 2* menyimpang dari konvensi kepahlawanan dan justru mengeksplorasi batas kabur antara fantasi dan trauma. Film ini, meski sering dianggap satir atau parodi, memiliki kedalaman dramatik yang mencerminkan isu nyata seperti identitas gender, kerusakan moral, dan performativitas kekerasan. Analisis ini memberi kontribusi pada wacana pengembangan karakter dalam drama modern serta paradoks etis dalam narasi pahlawan super.

Kata kunci: *Characterization; superhero drama; violence; identity; morality; vigilante; Kick-Ass 2*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of film and popular culture, the superhero genre has evolved beyond the binary representation of good versus evil, embracing more complex portrayals of identity, morality, and trauma. *Kick-Ass 2* (2013), directed by Jeff Wadlow and based on the graphic novels by Mark Millar and John Romita Jr., exemplifies this evolution by deconstructing the conventional superhero narrative through excessive violence, satirical tone, and psychologically charged characters. While often classified as action or satire, the film, when analyzed through a **dramatic lens**, reveals layers of performative depth, internal conflict, and ideological tension. This paper explores the film's central characterizations Dave Lizewski (Kick-Ass), Mindy Macready (Hit-Girl), and Chris D'Amico (The Motherf***er) as dramatic subjects shaped by social context, personal trauma, and conflicting desires.



In the study of drama, **characterization** is defined as the process through which authors and performers create the illusion of a human presence on stage or screen, often using dialogue, physical gesture, internal monologue, and symbolic interaction (Lutterbie, 2011). As Robert Barton (2012) explains, dramatic characters in modern performance are not merely agents of plot but vessels of psychological and cultural inquiry. Within this frame, *Kick-Ass 2* can be understood not only as entertainment but as a site of dramatic experimentation, where characters struggle with notions of identity formation, public violence, and moral ambiguity.

The character of Dave Lizewski, an ordinary teenager turned vigilante, is portrayed as a postmodern tragic figure. Lacking superpowers and driven by idealistic delusions, Dave embodies the **anti-heroic impulse** that defines the subversive superhero trope (Ndalianis, 2009). His internal conflict stems from the contradiction between his desire for heroic meaning and the harsh reality of pain, humiliation, and loss. This mirrors the Aristotelian notion of *hamartia*, or tragic flaw, though reframed within the absurd violence of contemporary culture. Dave's actions, while intended as heroic, often escalate the very violence he seeks to stop a paradox that aligns with modern critiques of vigilantism as a performative, rather than ethical, act (Ferguson, 2010).

Similarly, Mindy Macready, or Hit-Girl, presents a compelling study in gendered performance and psychological duality. As a teenage girl trained to be a ruthless killer, Mindy represents both **empowerment and trauma**. Her dual identity torn between adolescent normalcy and violent legacy raises questions about the formation of selfhood under conditions of loss, surveillance, and male mentorship. According to Mulvey's (1975) foundational work on visual pleasure, female characters are often objectified in cinema; however, Mindy disrupts this pattern by wielding violence and agency. Yet, as scholars like Brown (2011) have argued, this empowerment is ambivalent: Mindy's strength is rooted in militarized masculinity, and her character is constantly negotiating between autonomy and inherited violence.

Chris D'Amico, rebranded as "The Motherf***er," serves as the film's grotesque antagonist and a distorted mirror of Dave. His descent into villainy reflects a **satirical commentary on wealth, privilege, and toxic masculinity**, especially in its most adolescent and performative form. As a failed legacy character who seeks power through fear and fame, Chris illustrates the Freudian dynamic of oedipal rivalry, parental abandonment, and moral perversion. His transformation into a caricature of evil exposes the performativity of villainy itself, aligning with Butler's (1997) theory of performative identity, in which repetition and exaggeration constitute the self.

Analyzing *Kick-Ass 2* within the framework of **dramatic characterization** enables us

to engage with the film on a level beyond genre conventions. The characters are not just exaggerated figures of a comic-book universe; they embody real-world anxieties about power, adolescence, and ethical agency. Their decisions are shaped by internal and external pressures grief, social isolation, fame, and revenge rendering their arcs both emotionally resonant and thematically complex. As Carlson (2004) notes, drama thrives on **conflict and transformation**, and these three characters illustrate varying degrees of psychological rupture and adaptation. The film's narrative, though stylized and hyper-violent, dramatizes the consequences of living out heroic fantasies in a society saturated with media spectacle and moral relativism.

Moreover, this study is situated within the broader context of **superhero drama as social commentary**. As noted by Gray and Kaklamanidou (2011), post-9/11 superhero narratives often reflect collective fears and political skepticism, transforming heroic figures into contested sites of meaning. *Kick-Ass 2*, while lacking the gravitas of Marvel or DC blockbusters, engages with similar themes in a more brutal, low-budget aesthetic that foregrounds the human cost of violence and the fragility of moral intention. Its characters are not saviors but survivors, navigating a chaotic world without moral absolutes.

From a methodological perspective, this study employs a literary-dramatic analysis focusing on **dialogue, mise-en-scène, physical performance**, and symbolic action to interpret how characterization functions within the dramatic structure of the film. Drawing on concepts from dramatic theory, performance studies, and cinematic characterization, the paper interprets character arcs not simply as narrative devices but as reflections of cultural ideology and psychological tension.

This research is guided by three interrelated questions:

1. How are the main characters in *Kick-Ass 2* constructed through dramatic techniques of characterization?
2. What internal and external conflicts shape their actions and transformations?
3. In what ways does the film subvert traditional heroic tropes to expose ethical and identity crises?

By exploring these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the **dramatic potential of cinematic characters**, especially within hybrid genres like action-comedy-superhero films. It aims to demonstrate that *Kick-Ass 2*, despite its chaotic tone and hyper-stylization, offers a meaningful exploration of violence, identity, and moral ambiguity through its three central figures. As drama, the film compels us to reflect on what it means to act heroically and whether such action is even possible in a world fractured by spectacle, trauma, and performative ethics.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Dramatic Characterization

Classical and contemporary theories of characterization provide the conceptual base for reading *Kick Ass 2* as a dramatic text. In classical terms, **Aristotle** positions character as second to plot, emphasizing consistency together with the capacity for change within a coherent causal structure (Aristotle, 1997). Modern performance studies extend this view. For **Barton** 2012, contemporary characters often hold contradictory roles such as victim and aggressor or altruist and narcissist because they mirror unstable ethical environments. **Lutterbie** 2011 adds a cognitive lens, arguing that audience responses to character emerge from embodied cues such as voice, gesture, and temporality that trigger affective and interpretive processes. **Carlson** 2004 notes that drama thrives on conflict and transformation. These premises inform the analysis of Dave, Mindy, and Chris as figures whose arcs pivot on ethical ambiguity, trauma, and agency under pressure.

2. Performativity and Identity

Identity in *Kick Ass 2* is best read as something enacted rather than possessed. **Goffman's** dramaturgical model distinguishes front stage impression management such as costume, setting, and script from back stage zones where identities are rehearsed or suspended Goffman, 1959. **Butler** 1997 reframes identity, including gender, as performative, produced through iterative acts under regimes of normativity and surveillance. Dave's heroism is a moral costume that must be repeatedly performed for audiences both online and offline, while Mindy's oscillation between Hit Girl and the high school student stages the strain of reconciling militant training with normative femininity. Performativity theory therefore anchors the claim that the film's identities are precarious roles negotiated in and through spectacle.

3. Cinematic Construction of Character

Film form shapes how spectators infer psychology and motive. **Bordwell and Thompson** 2013 show that mise en scène, framing, lighting, and costume operate as narrative codes that guide character attribution. Dave's do it yourself green suit and yellow gloves visually signify naive, aspirational heroism, while Chris D'Amico's shift into BDSM styled black leather externalizes a descent into theatrical cruelty and adolescent nihilism. Reading character through visual design clarifies how the film's hyperbolic style communicates internal states and moral drift without relying only on dialogue.

4. Superheroes as Ethical Laboratories

Post 9/11 superhero cinema frequently interrogates the legitimacy of vigilante justice

and institutional authority. **Gray and Kaklamanidou** 2011 argue that comic book films have become sites where competing ethical frameworks are tested and blurred. **Ndalianis** 2009 traces how comics and their adaptations complicate the omnipotent hero myth through self reflexivity and genre hybridity. In this light, *Kick Ass 2* functions as a post ironic narrative that couples dark humor and excessive violence with adolescent insecurity. **Ferguson** 2010 proposes the idea of superhero ethics to explain how apparently prosocial vigilantism can reproduce the very violence it claims to oppose, a useful key for understanding Dave's Justice Forever initiative and its unintended escalation of harm.

5. Parody, Satire, and Genre Subversion

Parody here is not mere pastiche but a critical strategy. For **Hutcheon** 1988, parody performs critical revision, repeating an established model while transforming it to generate new meanings. *Kick Ass 2* exaggerates archetypes such as the noble vigilante, the femme fatale, and the grand villain to expose their hollow centers, a hero who cannot lead, a heroine who resists domestication, and a villain whose menace is mostly spectacle. Parody becomes a dramatic device that reveals the emptiness of image driven subjectivities especially Chris and the ethical fatigue behind heroic posturing.

6. Gender, the Gaze, and Violence

Debates on gender in mainstream cinema often revolve around visual pleasure and objectification. **Mulvey** 1975 contends that classical film form codes women as objects of the look, aligning visual pleasure with patriarchal structures. *Mindy or Hit Girl* complicates this thesis. She wields agency and lethality, yet that agency is rooted in masculinized training and trauma. **Brown** 2011 highlights the ambivalence of action heroines, whose empowerment is negotiated within economies of fetishism and popular spectacle. *Mindy's* revenge on school bullies both inverts and repeats the logic of the gaze and of violence, showing how empowerment can slide into the rehearsal of inherited aggression.

7. Synthesis and Analytical Axes

The literature supports three complementary axes for analyzing *Kick Ass 2*:

1. Dramatic and psychological axis, which tracks consistency, conflict, and transformation Aristotle, 1997; Barton, 2012; Lutterbie, 2011; Carlson, 2004.
2. Performativity axis, which examines how identities are staged through costume, ritual, group dynamics, and impression management Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1997.
3. Genre, visual, and ethical axis, which links visual style and parody to questions of vigilante morality and gendered power Bordwell and Thompson, 2013; Gray and Kaklamanidou, 2011; Ndalianis, 2009; Hutcheon, 1988; Ferguson, 2010; Mulvey, 1975; Brown, 2011.

Within this framework, the film is read not only as action satire but as a dramatic text that stages identity crises and ethical contradictions through performance and image. This review grounds the subsequent analysis of how characterization is constructed, how internal



and external conflicts shape decisions and arcs, and how the subversion of superhero conventions opens inquiry into violence, identity, and resistance in contemporary popular culture.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis framework, rooted in the principles of close reading, intertextual interpretation, and literary critical theory. As this research investigates symbolic patterns, ideological implications, and stylistic techniques in Ottoman poetry, the methodological design prioritizes textual immersion, hermeneutic interpretation, and theoretical reflection. The literary critical method is particularly suited for examining culturally layered and metaphor-rich texts such as *divan* poetry, in which meaning is constructed not merely through direct statement but through allusion, allegory, and symbolic density (Ricoeur, 1977; Eagleton, 1983).

Understanding characterization in dramatic and cinematic texts requires a synthesis of literary theory, performance studies, and cultural criticism. At its core, **characterization** is the artistic process of constructing fictional personalities who engage the audience emotionally and intellectually. In classical drama, as Aristotle (trans. Butcher, 1997) defined in *Poetics*, character (*ēthos*) is second only to plot in dramatic importance and must be consistent yet capable of change. However, contemporary drama and film often portray characters who are fragmented, paradoxical, or self-contradictory particularly in postmodern texts that resist moral clarity.

Robert Barton (2012) suggests that dramatic characters in modern media often perform conflicting roles simultaneously victims and aggressors, heroes and narcissists because their psychology reflects the unstable ethics of the modern world. This duality is especially evident in superhero narratives, where protagonists must construct their identities amid conflicting codes of justice, legality, and personal trauma. In *Kick-Ass 2*, the characters are not driven by divine mission or patriotic duty but by loneliness, vengeance, guilt, and adolescent confusion.

Performance theory, notably developed by **Erving Goffman (1959)** and later by **Judith Butler (1997)**, emphasizes that identity is not a stable essence but a **performed construct**, shaped by repetition, surveillance, and social expectation. Applying this to character analysis means examining not just *who* the character is but *how* they enact themselves through gesture, language, costuming, and space. For example, Mindy's shift from masked assassin to high school student is not just narrative but performative it dramatizes a crisis of gendered identity, caught between cultural femininity and trained

violence.

In cinematic terms, **mise-en-scène**, cinematography, and costuming play crucial roles in defining character. As **Bordwell and Thompson (2013)** argue, every visual element in a film contributes to our reading of a character's psychology and narrative function. For instance, Dave's green suit and yellow gloves are not only absurd but symbolic of his naive desire to “fit in” as a hero, despite his physical inadequacy. Chris D’Amico’s transformation into The Motherf***er, clad in black leather and BDSM gear, visualizes his descent into sadistic nihilism, parodying both villain and victim roles.

Scholars of the superhero genre have pointed out that many modern superhero films now function as **ethical laboratories**, where ideas of good and evil are tested, blurred, or inverted. **Gray and Kaklamanidou (2011)** note that films like *Watchmen*, *Deadpool*, and *Kick-Ass* question the legitimacy of vigilante justice and challenge the myth of the moral hero. In this context, *Kick-Ass 2* represents a **post-ironic superhero narrative** it mocks heroism while still dramatizing its emotional necessity.

This study also draws from **Linda Hutcheon’s (1988)** notion of *parody as critical revision*. While *Kick-Ass 2* is overtly exaggerated, it uses parody to dismantle normative structures: masculinity, fame, and even the genre’s own tropes. The three central characters each parody familiar archetypes the noble vigilante, the femme fatale, the tragic villain but simultaneously evoke pathos, inviting the audience to feel their trauma, disillusionment, and rage.

By combining theories of **dramatic construction**, **performance**, and **genre subversion**, this literature review frames the character analysis in *Kick-Ass 2* not as a reading of “who’s good or bad,” but as an exploration of how drama constructs ethical, psychological, and symbolic complexity in characters that initially appear as exaggerated comic figures.

This study applies a **qualitative literary-dramatic analysis** rooted in textual interpretation and visual performance. The method focuses on how characterization is constructed through multiple dramatic devices: dialogue, movement, costuming, *mise-en-scène*, and narrative trajectory.

1. Primary Data Source

The primary data for this research consists of the 2013 film *Kick-Ass 2*, directed by Jeff Wadlow. Particular attention is given to scenes involving the three central characters: Dave (Kick-Ass), Mindy (Hit-Girl), and Chris (The Motherf***er). Key scenes were selected based on their dramatic intensity, character development, and thematic significance (e.g., transformation scenes, confrontations, internal monologues).



2. Analytical Framework

The analysis is guided by a combination of:

- **Character theory** (Barton, 2012; Carlson, 2004),
- **Performance theory** (Butler, 1997; Goffman, 1959),
- **Film semiotics** (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013),
- **Superhero narrative criticism** (Gray & Kaklamanidou, 2011; Ndalianis, 2009).

Each character is analyzed in terms of:

- **Motivation and conflict** (internal and external),
- **Character arc** (transformation or regression),
- **Symbolic representation** (gender, trauma, power),
- **Performative identity** (how identity is enacted through behavior and costume).

3. Interpretive Process

The film was viewed multiple times with focus on:

- Verbal cues (e.g., key dialogue),
- Visual coding (e.g., costume shifts, facial expression, lighting),
- Thematic framing (e.g., trauma, revenge, performance),
- Interaction dynamics (e.g., protagonist-antagonist relationships).

The analysis employs a **hermeneutic approach** to interpret how cinematic form dramatizes character psychology and social ideology. Rather than generalizing audience response, this study foregrounds textual features and their rhetorical effects within the conventions of dramatic storytelling.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Dave Lizewski (Kick-Ass): The Performance of Heroism and the Myth of Agency

Dave Lizewski, the titular character of *Kick-Ass 2*, embodies the tragic absurdity of modern heroism. Initially portrayed as an ordinary teenager craving purpose, Dave's decision to become a vigilante is rooted in his disillusionment with passivity and the search for masculine identity. Unlike traditional superheroes who possess extraordinary abilities or divine origin, Dave's transformation is driven by fantasy, boredom, and frustration an identity crisis dramatized through violence.

His green costume, mismatched boots, and amateurish behavior visually signal both his comic origins and psychological naivety. According to Barton (2012), characters who don the role of hero without inner development become dramatic caricatures figures whose actions outpace their psychological growth. Dave's desire to "do something meaningful" is never matched by his capacity for ethical reflection or leadership, leading him into deeper chaos.

A key moment of dramatic irony occurs when Dave, in an attempt to build a "Justice Forever" team, unknowingly escalates violence in the city. While the group sees themselves as saviors, their actions are performative and disconnected from structural justice. This mirrors what Goffman (1959) calls the **front-stage identity** where individuals act in accordance with audience expectation rather than authentic belief. Dave's entire identity as Kick-Ass is a costume not only of fabric but of delusion, stitched together by online fame and social pressure.

His internal conflict becomes especially apparent following the death of his father an emotional rupture that finally strips away his fantasy and forces him to confront the consequences of his actions. At this moment, Dave transforms from an idealist into a **disillusioned realist**, mirroring the classical tragic arc described by Aristotle (1997): recognition (*anagnorisis*) and reversal (*peripeteia*). In narrative terms, this shift marks the maturation of his character, but dramatically, it leaves him hollow a hero without victory.

2. Mindy Macready (Hit-Girl): Gendered Violence and the Duality of Identity

Mindy Macready is arguably the most psychologically complex character in *Kick-Ass 2*. Trained from childhood to be a lethal weapon, Mindy oscillates between her inherited identity as Hit-Girl and her social mask as a teenage girl trying to live a "normal" life. This duality dramatizes the **conflict between performative gender norms and internalized violence**, making her a fascinating subject of characterization.

In school scenes, Mindy attempts to integrate into female social circles, mimicking behaviors, interests, and expressions she does not understand. Her failure to do so and the



humiliation she suffers exposes how gender is culturally performed rather than naturally assumed, echoing Judith Butler's (1997) concept of **gender performativity**. Mindy is not simply a girl who happens to be a fighter; she is a fighter who must learn how to "be" a girl within a society that associates femininity with passivity, consumption, and flirtation.

This contrast is further dramatized in the scene where Mindy takes revenge on a group of bullies by triggering their physiological breakdown with an electronic device. The moment is theatrically exaggerated, but it also symbolizes the **reassertion of agency** through subversive violence. Here, violence is not mindless; it is calculated, strategic, and emotionally loaded a dramatic reversal of victimhood into domination.

Mindy's development is underscored by her final scene in the film, where she chooses to leave the city, stating she must find her own path outside the costume. This decision constitutes what Barton (2012) calls a **psychological exit** a choice that reflects growth through self-awareness rather than violence. While Dave's heroism dissolves into disillusionment, Mindy's journey moves toward reintegration, making her the only character who exits the drama with autonomy intact.

3. Chris D'Amico (The Motherf*er): Theatrical Villainy and the Breakdown of Moral Logic**

Chris D'Amico is introduced as a parody of the comic-book supervillain: wealthy, immature, emotionally stunted, and desperately craving attention. However, as the narrative unfolds, his character transforms from comedic absurdity into something darker and more unsettling. Chris embodies the **performativity of evil**, constructing his identity through theatrical gestures, sadistic actions, and symbolic costuming.

His adoption of the name "The Motherf***er" and the BDSM-inspired outfit he dons mark a grotesque transformation. As Bordwell and Thompson (2013) explain, costume in cinema is not merely decorative it communicates character psychology. Chris's attire parodies both fascist and punk aesthetics, visualizing his descent into **symbolic villainy** without depth or ideology.

What makes Chris compelling as a dramatic character is not his menace but his **lack of conviction**. Unlike classical villains driven by ideology or loss, Chris seeks revenge for a death he barely understands, driven more by wounded ego than grief. This reflects what Ferguson (2010) terms "adolescent nihilism" a form of rebellion detached from purpose, grounded instead in spectacle.

A pivotal moment is when Chris accidentally kills his own henchman or is abandoned

by his followers. These moments strip his villainy of power, exposing it as fragile performance. In his final confrontation with Dave, Chris's death is neither heroic nor tragic it is anticlimactic, even ironic. His demise confirms what Carlson (2004) asserts: that in postmodern drama, villains are often **satirical echoes** of heroic ambition, ultimately consumed by their own absurdity.

Chris D'Amico's characterization thus dramatizes the **collapse of moral architecture** in a society where villainy is aestheticized, monetized, and performatively empty. His final moments, surrounded by sharks in a tank of his own design, represent a literal and symbolic end: the villain devoured not by justice, but by his own theater.

Comparative Summary

All three characters in *Kick-Ass 2* reflect different facets of modern drama:

- **Dave** performs heroism but ends in existential loss.
- **Mindy** struggles between inherited violence and gender norms, achieving escape through self-realization.
- **Chris** enacts villainy as parody, undone by his own emptiness.

Together, they represent a **triptych of performative identity**, where each character dramatizes the consequences of playing roles they do not fully understand or control. The film itself, beneath its chaotic tone and hyperviolence, becomes a stage on which identity, justice, and agency are enacted, tested, and often undone.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the dramatic characterization of three central figures in *Kick-Ass 2*—Dave Lizewski (Kick-Ass), Mindy Macready (Hit-Girl), and Chris D'Amico (The Motherf***er) by examining how each constructs and performs identity, agency, and morality within a hyper-violent, postmodern superhero narrative. Through literary and dramatic analysis, it has been demonstrated that beneath the film's parodic surface lies a set of complex character arcs that reflect profound tensions between performance and authenticity, power and vulnerability, fantasy and trauma.

The character of Dave Lizewski illustrates the collapse of heroic fantasy when it collides with real-world consequences. His journey from naive vigilante to a disillusioned survivor dramatizes the tragic arc of failed agency a postmodern reinterpretation of the classical tragic hero. Dave's narrative progression suggests that the desire to "make a difference," while noble in rhetoric, can unravel into chaos without ethical grounding or self-awareness. As a dramatic figure, Dave performs heroism but fails to embody it, making his characterization a critique of contemporary masculinity, internet fame, and the illusion of individualism.



Mindy Macready, by contrast, embodies the tension between trained violence and imposed femininity. Her internal conflict between being Hit-Girl and simply being Mindy exposes the pressure placed on young women to conform, disarm, and domesticate their power in socially acceptable forms. Mindy's character arc provides a nuanced dramatization of gender performativity, where the rejection of both patriarchal violence and passive femininity becomes an act of liberation. Among the film's characters, Mindy is the only one who finds a resolution that affirms her identity rather than consuming it. Her exit from the stage (both literally and metaphorically) marks a rare moment of empowered autonomy in a narrative saturated with identity crisis and emotional fragmentation.

Chris D'Amico represents the grotesque parody of villainy. His exaggerated descent into sadistic theatrics and moral emptiness mirrors the aestheticization of evil in popular culture. As a character, Chris does not possess the ideological depth or philosophical conviction of traditional antagonists; instead, his villainy is driven by emotional immaturity, narcissism, and a desperate craving for recognition. His characterization functions as a dramatic warning against the commodification of rage and the performative emptiness of modern villainy. His death, both symbolic and ironic, affirms that evil built on image rather than substance collapses under the weight of its own absurdity.

Taken together, these three characters form a dramatic triangle of postmodern identity: the hero who cannot lead, the girl who must reject violence to survive, and the villain who performs cruelty to mask vulnerability. Through them, *Kick-Ass 2* engages with fundamental questions central to the study of drama: What makes a character believable? How does performance shape identity? What are the ethical consequences of role-playing in a world devoid of absolutes?

The film's setting an urban environment saturated with surveillance, fame, and pain acts as an extension of the theatrical stage, where every action is public and every costume becomes a declaration. Drawing on Goffman's (1959) framework of identity as performance and Butler's (1997) theory of gender and selfhood, the study illustrates how the characters' choices reflect deeper social anxieties: the fear of irrelevance, the desire for control, and the fragility of identity in a mediated world.

While *Kick-Ass 2* may appear as a violent parody of superhero culture, it subtly leverages the conventions of dramatic structure to interrogate the psychological cost of enacting heroic or villainous identities. By amplifying character contradictions and dramatizing their breakdowns, the film contributes to the ongoing evolution of the superhero genre not as escapism, but as a mirror reflecting the disorientation of modern selfhood.

From a literary and dramatic perspective, this analysis confirms that characterization in *Kick-Ass 2* is not superficial or merely functional. It is richly layered, emotionally turbulent, and ideologically charged. The characters may originate from comic-book pages, but their dilemmas are human, their arcs are tragic, and their choices are meaningful. They are, in effect, tragicomic figures of a world that has blurred the lines between spectacle and sincerity, parody and pathos, violence and virtue.

This study ultimately contributes to the field of drama and character studies by highlighting how cinematic figures can operate as dramatic subjects even in genres typically dismissed as light or excessive. Future research might expand on this framework by applying it to other hybrid genres or exploring the intersection of trauma and character development in superhero narratives more broadly.



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