Semiotic Analysis

The Signifier: "Altered Carbon," a Netflix original series.

The Signified: To "Alter" means to "change or cause to change in character or composition, typically in a comparatively small but significant way."
"Carbon" is "the chemical element of atomic number 6," found in most forms of life.
The show's title signifies that it has something to do with with altering/changing forms of life.

Syntagmatic Analysis: The trailer mentions in its introduction to the main character that he had been "under" for 250 years. Though not explained specifically in the trailer, Takeshi (the main character) has been in multiple bodies prior. The trailer treats time as something that is of little importance to those rich enough to disregard it. The show grapples with themes of human mortality and time's changing connection it. This is done both as a story-motivator as well as a draw for audiences interested in their own mortality.

Denotation: The trailer denotatively represents a sci-fi series taking place in the future where humans transfer their consciousnesses into countless bodies to live forever.

Connotation: The trailer connotatively represents an adaptation of a popular book series written by Richard K. Morgan starting in 2002. It takes place in a future where the rich live forever by uploading their consciousnesses into new bodies whenever they die or feel like it, while the poor live only their given lives. It is an allegory on elitism, classism, and human mortality.

Paradigmatic Analysis: Going along with the Syntagmatic, the show's main sources of drama and exposition come from patterns of opposition. Life (something claimed by the rich, who have become "gods" of sorts) versus Death (something only felt by the poor, who look up to the elite as figures of hope, godliness, and also the crushingness of their place within the caste).

Images: The trailer's images are mostly glamorously gritty cyber-punk future cities and colorful CGI, with bits of brutal violence and artistic shots. This show's main pulls are its visual effects, colorful and engrossing future-set universe, exciting action, and its cast of beautiful actors. These are all aspects that are displayed by images shown in the trailer. Here are some examples:

This shot is what is kindly referred to as "the ab shot." Commonly used in plenty of action-based movies and television shows, this shot is almost always shown in the trailer, used as a way to show the eye candy of the film. It's essentially the producers/studios saying, "Look how buff this actor is." Many films use a similar method with their actresses, but often from a more objectifying gaze, being more heavily influenced by patriarchal culture's continued hold on Hollywood.

This image is one of the multiple examples of the show's focus on action, meant to showcase the choreography, level of violence (which is clearly high), and the general "cool" factor of the show.
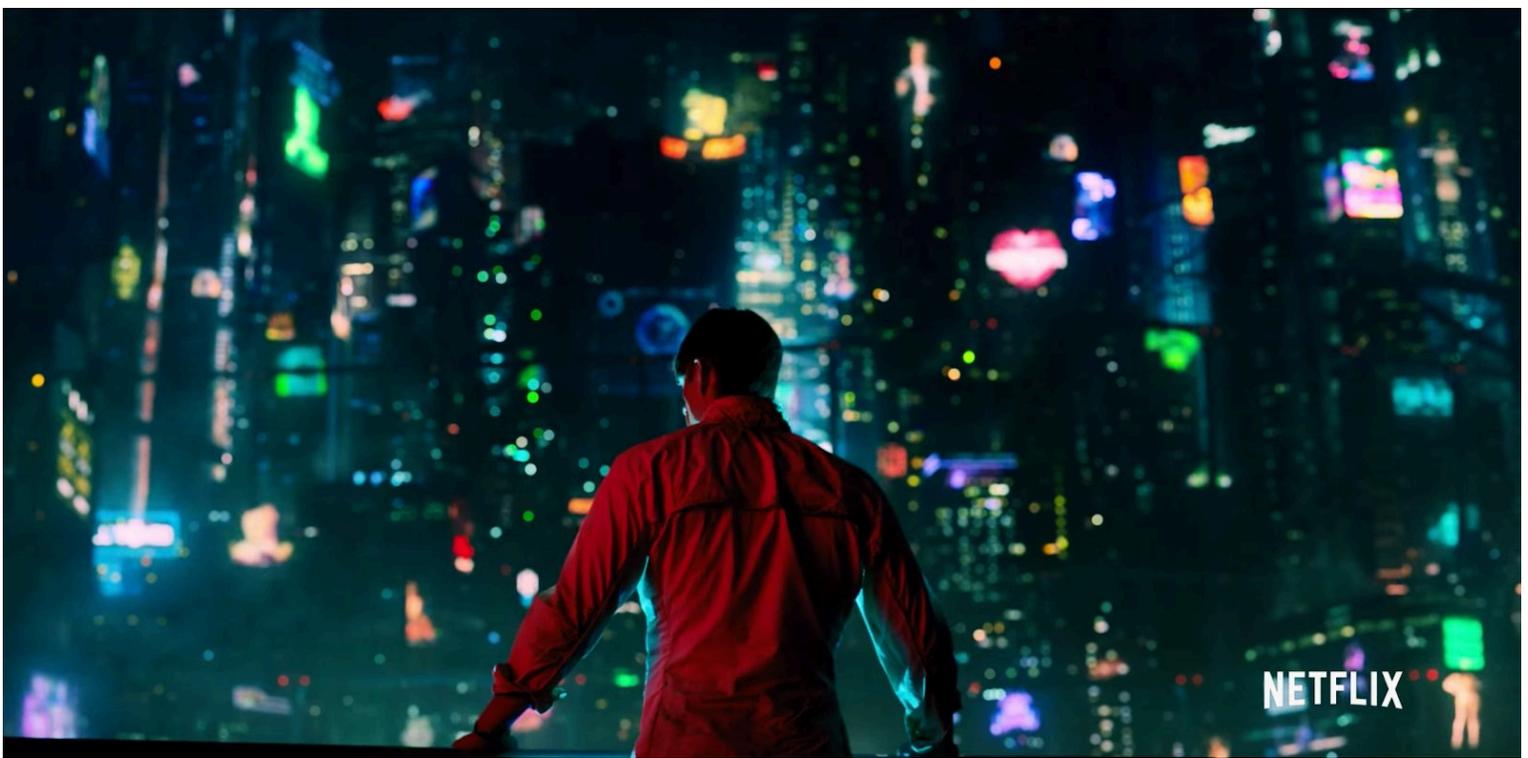
This shot showcases a combination of flashy, colorful CGI and the show's futuristic, mega-city setting. The shot not only purveys the setting, but also the mood, tone, and theme. Its grim contrast and gritty tone show a future that is high-tech and full of wonder, but also the the underside, the crowded, grimy alleys.

Intertextuality: Besides being adapted from a book series, the themes, images, and creative vision have been influenced by multiple films before it. The "cyber-punk" subgenre of science-fiction is one that was established by the film "Blade Runner"(1982). It is a style that combines gritty, "realistic" science fiction with noir story structures, as well as style. It features a lot of trenchcoats and dark-light contrast in its shot composition.

Structuralism: As mentioned, though this is a science-fiction series, it falls more specifically into the "cyber-punk" subgenre. This is not to say that it does not escape that genre description occasionally. "Altered Carbon" sells itself as a "Blade-Runner" like show, but with updated visual effects, more action, and a more straightforward story. It contains the violence and excitement of an action series, the conflict of a dystopian series, and the futuristic science of a sci-fi series.

Ideology: The show does have many political and socio economic beliefs feeding into its storytelling and themes. The film treats the rich, "immortal" characters as extravagant, excessively self-centered, and having absolutely no regard or care for people who live on the ground (the rich literally live in the clouds in supertall buildings). It does not carry these beliefs fully throughout the show, often suspending the social commentary to show off nudity, CGI, or brutal action scenes.