

AUTEURS OF CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE-FICTION CINEMA:
THE NATURE OF TRUTH AND REALITY IN THE WORKS OF CHRISTOPHER
NOLAN AND THE WACHOWSKIS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Mass Communication

Sam Houston State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Scott W. Stamper

May, 2017

AUTEURS OF CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE-FICTION CINEMA:
THE NATURE OF TRUTH AND REALITY IN THE WORKS OF CHRISISTOPHER
NOLAN AND THE WACHOWSKIS

By

Scott W. Stamper

APPROVED:

Grant Wiedenfeld, PhD
Committee Director

Chris White, PhD
Committee Member

Robin Johnson, PhD
Committee Member

Ronald Shields, PhD
Dean, College of Fine Arts and Mass
Communication

DEDICATION

To my friends and family for all their love and support.

ABSTRACT

Stamper, Scott W. *Auteurs of contemporary science-fiction cinema: The nature of truth and reality in the works of Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis*. Master of Arts (Digital Media) May, 2017, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Contemporary science-fiction cinema raises two important issues. Can a genre known for the spectacle of computer-generated imagery say anything about truth and reality? Can a filmmaker articulate philosophical ideas through such a collaborative and commercial medium? In fact, these issues have confounded the art of the cinema since the beginning.

Auteur Theory, developed in the mid-twentieth century, is the belief that the director is the most important cog in the wheel of filmmaking because he or she ultimately shapes the final vision of the film: how it moves and how it plays. By focusing on auteur directors film critics can find rich and layered meaning in films that might otherwise appear to be nothing more than mere entertainment for the masses. Even today in the film factory of Hollywood artists can still speak to philosophical questions of human existence. This study will consider directors known for sci-fi blockbusters: Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis. Their films have a unique style and a consistent ideology that makes them worth studying as the works of auteurs.

This critical study of key films across their respective careers reveals that Nolan and the Wachowskis are pondering the same question, the nature of truth and reality; however, they come at it from different perspectives. Nolan concentrates on the power of the lie while the Wachowskis advocate the beauty of truth. The best films of these auteurs address how we perceive reality and what it means to be human.

KEY WORDS: Auteur Theory, Science Fiction, Blockbusters, Cinema Studies, Films, Christopher Nolan, The Wachowskis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the professors and schoolmates I've had over the years.

PREFACE

I've thought a lot about why the films of Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis mean so much to me. Is it their knack for visual storytelling? Could it be their styles? Their philosophical touches? Their affinity for complex narratives that question the nature of reality? It's all of these things. But it's something more and something deceptively simple. They are highly emotional filmmakers who have big ideas. They make me care about their characters first and foremost. That's what I remember about their movies more than anything else: the emotional journey they took me on; the pain, the joy, the victories, the losses, the wrongs put right. There's an emotional intelligence in the films of Nolan and the Wachowskis that makes for a deeply rewarding storytelling experience. Then they give my brain something to chew on by making their films complex, intellectual, and philosophical. That's why I keep revisiting their movies time and time again.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
PREFACE	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
The History of Auteur Theory	4
Problems and Applications of Auteur Theory	8
CHAPTER II: CHRISTOPHER NOLAN.....	15
<i>Memento</i>	17
<i>Batman Begins</i>	19
<i>The Prestige</i>	22
<i>The Dark Knight</i>	25
<i>Inception</i>	27
<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i>	30
<i>Interstellar</i>	32
Chapter Summary	34
CHAPTER III: THE WACHOWSKIS.....	35
<i>Bound</i>	36
<i>The Matrix</i>	38

<i>V for Vendetta</i>	40
<i>Speed Racer</i>	44
<i>Cloud Atlas</i>	46
Chapter Summary	48
CONCLUSION.....	49
WORKS CITED	50

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Auteur Theory holds that a film is a reflection of the personal creative vision of the director. This means the director is the primary force of the movie in the same way that a writer is the primary force of a novel as its author. The word “auteur” means simply author in French, but has entered English as a way to name the director as an author in the specific medium of cinema. In other words, an auteur is a director who is a serious cinematic author. The Auteur Theory posits that each director has a distinct creative voice that that can be identified through style and subject matter.

The intent of Auteur Theory is not to impugn the work of the screenwriter, the producers, or the studio. Everyone, from the writer to the cinematographer to the composer is an important cog in the machine. Movies are a team effort; however, under the Auteur Theory, the director is the most important cog because the final product reflects how the director ultimately shapes the vision of the film, how it looks, how it behaves, and how it plays. Auteur Theory is a simple methodology to establish that movies are an art form and that directors have an artistic voice that goes into the making of their movies.

With that in mind, this study will apply Auteur Theory to the films of directors working in contemporary Hollywood. These directors have managed to carve out a niche for themselves in a market driven by blockbusters and franchises. As individuals, these directors have managed to become brand names, perhaps not on the level of Hitchcock or Spielberg, but certainly in their own right. Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis have

succeeded in separating themselves from the herd of other directors by consistently making great films with unique personal styles and an underlying ideology. For better or worse, audiences know exactly what to expect when watching a movie directed by Nolan or the Wachowskis. Their stories tend to be intellectual yet emphasize the emotionality of the situation, a combination that makes their movies incredibly rewatchable.

Critics have long debated the key meanings and messages in their films. When it comes to Nolan they tend to focus on his obsession with mind games and complexity such as Amy Biancolli in her review of *Inception*:

What's more, it's only the latest indication that Christopher Nolan might be the slyest narrative tactician making movies today. Anything that can be said about the film (and I'll say some of it in a moment) will likely baffle viewers with a low tolerance for noodle-twisting sci-fi, computer-dazzled effects or Leonardo DiCaprio. But don't hold any of that against this extraordinary movie, a profoundly strange - and strangely profound - spelunking trip through the cavernous human psyche. (Biancolli)

With the Wachowskis the focus is on their tendencies toward Eastern theosophy and mashing up their influences, such as Alan Jones who sums up *The Matrix* as “thematically complex, yet intelligently integrating eastern philosophy, Lewis Carroll and ancient mysticism” (Jones). Those reviews are a sample of reams of criticism. However, the focus is narrow and these auteurs are not considered together.

They've taken remarkably similar journeys as directors. They started out as indie darlings who made dark neo-noir films. They then graduated to making philosophical themed sci-fi blockbusters. They went on to make superhero films that serve as treatises

on the George W. Bush administration. Through all of this they are at their core optimistic and humanistic storytellers who wear their influences on their sleeves and inject a bit of philosophy into their movies.

When watched side by side it becomes obvious that Nolan and the Wachowskis are two sides of the same coin. Nolan and the Wachowskis have, throughout their respective careers, addressed questions of how we perceive reality and what it means to be human. They're just coming at it from different perspectives. Nolan concentrates on the power of the lie while the Wachowskis focus on the beauty of truth.

The main difference separating Nolan from the Wachowskis is that the Wachowskis tend to approach their stories from an omnipresent perspective, while Nolan tackles stories from inside the human psyche. *Memento* is about the memory of someone who cannot trust his own thoughts and judgment. *The Prestige* is about illusions and the people who create them. His Dark Knight trilogy is about power and control and someone trying to bring it to bear on the chaos around him. Through all of these movies we learn the story as the protagonist does. In this fashion Nolan is more of an explorer of the human consciousness and the power storytelling has on it.

The Wachowskis, on the other hand, cover stories from the outside looking in. The Wachowskis are more direct with their themes and messages. *Bound* is literally about breaking out of the closet. *The Matrix* is a metaphor for breaking free of the corporate rat race. *V For Vendetta* is a cautionary tale about how a country can easily slip into fascism. *Speed Racer* is a parable about the dangers of selling out to a corporation to achieve your dreams. *Cloud Atlas* is a giant allegory about self-improvement through reincarnation.

The through-line in all of these movies is the desire to be free and show the world your truth. The desire to be who you are in your heart and soul, convention be damned.

When the paths of the careers are traced, one cannot help but notice that there is a surprising amount of overlap between them that makes worth studying as a group. No previous study has considered grouping these auteurs together.

Through a comparative approach, I will show that the directors share a common theme and message. Nolan and the Wachowskis both grapple with self-actualization and transcendence. Like Plato, both posit that the most important part of being human is to know thyself. For Nolan, the act of storytelling is crucial to understanding humanity. With the Wachowskis, self-knowledge is not only about coming to terms with who you are, making sure the world sees your truth and accepts it.

The History of Auteur Theory

The building blocks of auteur theory were provided by filmmaker and theorist Alexandre Astruc in his essay “Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Styleo.” Astruc argued that filmmakers should be able to express themselves personally through the camera the way an author does with the pen:

Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The film-maker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen. In an art in which a length of film and sound-track is put in motion and proceeds, by means of a certain form and a certain story (there can even be no story at all - it matters little), to evolve a philosophy of life, how can one possibly distinguish between the man who conceives the work and the man who writes it?

Could one imagine a Faulkner novel written by someone other than Faulkner?

And would *Citizen Kane* be satisfactory in any other form than that given to it by

Orson Welles? (Astruc 35)

Astruc clearly compares the cinema auteur to a novelist. He chooses an American novelist and a Hollywood director as examples, so it is also clear that he is talking about mainstream cinema and not merely independent art films.

In his 1954 *Cahiers du Cinema* article “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” French New Wave film critic Francois Truffaut posited that French cinema had lost something essential. If one were to ask Truffaut, he would say that French directors of the time added nothing of value to the classic works of literature they were making into movies. He called this group of established but voiceless filmmakers the Tradition of Quality.

This was not meant as a compliment. Truffaut liked to say, “There are no good and bad films, only good and bad directors.” Tradition of Quality directors fell into the latter category. To Truffaut, they became glorified stage-setters with no artistic style or ambition. He believed that they placed more importance on the literary respectability and fidelity to the source material than on doing what they needed to do in order to make a psychologically rich film.

Truffaut saw filmmaking as a means of personal expression, and he believed that many French directors were failing to achieve this. Directors that churned out soulless adaptations of classic literature were his main targets. He stated, “I simply cannot bring myself to believe in a peaceful co-existence of the Tradition of Quality and the cinema

d'auteurs" (Truffaut 56). The young film critic called for a modern generation of auteurs to replace the Tradition of Quality.

Truffaut saw directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Howard Hawks, Jean Renoir, Jacques Tati, and Robert Bresson as true cinematic authors or "auteurs" with vision, style, and imagination. These directors managed to achieve a mastery of the cinematic arts and make films that reflected their worldviews and personalities. Again Hollywood was an important source of auteurs despite being known as a film factory in this period.

Film critic and theorist Andre Bazin took issue with some aspects of the Auteur Theory. While he applauded the idea of elevating film to an important art worth studying and also condemned lazy stage-setters, he was concerned about the Auteur Theory ignoring the inherently collaborative nature of filmmaking. He also saw elevating the collective work of one director above another as problematic, because one film by a non-auteur could be better than the lesser films of an auteur. Using Orson Welles as an example, Bazin writes:

A rapid maladjustment between the film-maker and the cinema can occur, and this can abruptly affect the quality of his or her films as a result. Of course I admire Welles's *Confidential Report*, and I can see the same qualities in it as I see in *Citizen Kane*. But *Citizen Kane* opened up a new era of American cinema, and *Confidential Report* is a film of only secondary importance. (Bazin 138)

This is where Bazin breaks with his colleagues. Bazin argues that it is entirely possible and more than likely that an auteur will make a bad or forgettable film that pales in

comparison to the rest of his work. For one to argue such films have more merit than a legitimately great movie by a non-auteur would be foolish and shortsighted.

Film critics in America took Truffaut's idea and ran with it. The term Auteur Theory was created by critic Andrew Sarris in his seminal essay "Notes on The Auteur Theory in 1962." Sarris saw Auteur Theory as a way to judge films by their directors. He defined a series of three concentric circles as a way of determining whether a director qualified as an auteur or not. The first level is technical competence. The director must at least have a fundamental understanding of the basics of filmmaking when crafting a film. In the second circle a director must have a distinguishable personality with recurring characteristics and signatures that can be seen in his or her body of work. In other words, the director must have a clear and distinctive style that sets his movies apart from other directors. The third and final circle stipulates there must be an interior meaning to the movie that creates a sort of tension between the director's personality and the material that he is working with. Sarris does not define clearly what he means by "interior meaning" but for our purposes we shall define it as having a clear ideology, a set of ideas and a characteristic manner of thinking.

If a director was technically competent in that he or she can put together a good movie but one without a sense of style or interior meaning, that would make the director a technician or journeyman, to use today's parlance. If the director were technically competent and able to inject some style into his or her movies but without any interior meaning, that would make them a stylist. If the director were technically competent, able to inject some style into his movies, and create an interior meaning then they would be a true cinematic auteur. Directors who matched Sarris' criteria included the likes of Jean

Renoir, Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Charlie Chaplin, John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Fritz Lang. To Sarris, they were true cinematic visionaries whose entire body of work had to be studied to truly appreciate their genius.

In his 1972 essay, "The Auteur Theory," Peter Wollen identified some limitations in the concept put forth by Sarris. Wollen writes, "Owing to the diffuseness of the original theory, two main schools of auteur critics grew up: those who insisted on revealing a core of meanings, of thematic motifs, and those who stressed style and *mise-en-scène*" (Wollen 78). Now it is a matter of debate of where one finds the auteur, whether contained in the style or the thematic subject matter.

The first school of thought studies a director's entire body of work to find the central theme or ideology. The second school focuses on directors who stressed style above everything else. According to the former, one can see a core set of beliefs along with recurring patterns in a director's filmography. To the latter, a director is identifiable by the same visual style and tempo in all of their films. Wollen believes the first is more important than the second. The true auteur lies in the themes and motifs that are present in his films. This study follows Wollen's emphasis on interior meaning or ideology.

Problems and Applications of Auteur Theory

There is no better case of the auteur theory in action than Hitchcock's *Psycho* and the 1998 remake from Gus Van Sant. In his review Roger Ebert writes: "What makes *Psycho* immortal, when so many films are already half-forgotten as we leave the theater, is that it connects directly with our fears: our fears that we might impulsively commit a crime, our fears of the police, our fears of becoming the victim of a madman, and of

course our fears of disappointing our mothers” (Ebert). Under Alfred Hitchcock, the 1960 *Psycho* is a daring piece of avant-garde horror with meticulously crafted shots and a sense of dread that challenges the viewer, keeping them on edge and enraptured for the whole running time.

On the flipside, there is the 1998 *Psycho* by Gus Van Sant. The same script was remade shot for shot, yet it is a boring and lifeless movie that offers nothing to the horror genre. It carries none of the dark and lurid flare that Hitchcock brought to the material. This is the same story told by two very different directors. The first version is a true classic in every sense of the word, while the second is an empty technical exercise. Of the remake Roger Ebert writes:

If you have seen Hitchcock's film, you already know the characters, the dialogue, the camera angles, the surprises. All that is missing is the tension--the conviction that something urgent is happening on the screen at this very moment. The movie is an invaluable experiment in the theory of cinema, because it demonstrates that a shot-by-shot remake is pointless; genius apparently resides between or beneath the shots, or in chemistry that cannot be timed or counted. (Ebert)

The difference between these two versions of the same script, even filmed with the same shots, is the auteur element of interior meaning. It elevates the 1960 Hitchcock version into what all critics agree is a great film. The remake however is missing that crucial ingredient.

The problem with the Auteur Theory is that filmmaking is by nature collaborative and sometimes questions of authorship can arise despite the name credited as the director.

It is also somewhat limiting as screenwriters, producers, and even cinematographers can be seen as auteurs.

Take, for instance, the 1982 horror classic *Poltergeist*. Tobe Hooper is credited as the director, but if you were to ask people who made the movie their first instinct would be to say Steven Spielberg and they would not be entirely wrong. Spielberg is the producer and co-writer of the movie. He storyboarded the movie, cast it, was present on-set all the time, and oversaw postproduction. It carries all the typical Spielberg signatures (themes of communication, daddy issues, suburbia, etc.) and fits perfectly into his oeuvre. Place *Poltergeist* in Tobe Hooper's body of work, and it stands out like a sore thumb next to movies like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Funhouse*, and *Lifeforce*, because almost none of Hooper's style is present in the movie. Sean Hutchinson writes, "Scene by scene, ascribing the authorship gets murkier. The question of who really directed *Poltergeist* will never really be answered. As in the case of so many creative works, the lines that separate collaborators' input is blurry — not that the casual viewer would much notice or mind" (Hutchinson).

A similar situation happens with the movie adaptation of *V For Vendetta*. Ask people who made it, and their first answer would not be the director James McTeigue. It would be the film's producers, writers, and second unit directors Lana and Lily Wachowski. Watch McTeigue's other movies like *Ninja Assassin*, *The Raven*, or *The Invasion*, and there is a substantial drop in the quality of filmmaking. Those movies are hollow and wooden, while *V For Vendetta* is sharp, vibrant and alive. Something does not feel quite right with *V For Vendetta* being McTeigue's movie. Mentally remove his name from the director's credit and replace it with The Wachowskis and then things fall

into place. Themes and signatures of oppressive governments or institutions, revolution, hidden identities, male/female dynamics, martial arts, transformation, etc., make *V For Vendetta* a perfect match for *The Matrix*, *Speed Racer*, and *Cloud Atlas*.

In such situations, it becomes a guessing game of figuring out whose influence one can spot the most. And the collaborative nature of filmmaking sometimes makes it a very difficult game to play.

John Hughes movies are such a case. Hughes himself directed *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Weird Science*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and *Plains Trains and Automobiles*. He wrote but did not direct *Pretty In Pink*, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, and the *Home Alone* movies. Howard Deutch was the director of the first two and Chris Columbus directed the *Home Alone* movies. But here's the rub: Hughes's signatures are so prevalent they are thought of as his movies, not the works of Deutch and Columbus. Hughes is the true auteur of those movies. Writing for *The New York Times* AO Scott says of Hughes, "But I don't think I'm alone among my cohort in the belief that John Hughes was our Godard, the filmmaker who crystallized our attitudes and anxieties with just the right blend of teasing and sympathy" (Scott). Hughes was the voice of a generation he wasn't actually a part of, but that does not matter because Hughes' movies captured the zeitgeist of the 1980s and what was going on in the mind of teenagers back then.

The Hughes situation also occurs in Aaron Sorkin's movies. Sorkin is a prolific screenwriter whose hallmarks are so dominant they often overshadow the influence of the directors of his movies. Rob Reiner is not seen as the auteur of *A Few Good Men* or *The American President*. Mike Nichols likewise is not the auteur of *Charlie's Wilson's War*

nor is Bennett Miller the auteur of *Moneyball*. The credit in all cases is given to Sorkin because his influence was felt the most.

Certain films can show the influence of multiple auteurs, as Sorkin's case also demonstrates. With *The Social Network* and *Steve Jobs* Sorkin's signatures are paired to the styles of David Fincher and Danny Boyle to create a perfect union of their respective voices. *The Social Network* is a David Fincher film through and through; however, one cannot help but notice Sorkin's voice through the script and the patter of the dialogue. *Steve Jobs* is without a doubt a Danny Boyle film but the presence of Sorkin is equal to Boyle's. Talking to *Hollywood Reporter* writer Christy Gosz, David Fincher says, "Part of what makes Sorkin is not just the tonnage of words but the fact that you're watching a person navigate the jungle of their self-doubt, the jungle of their thought process" (Gosz). It is not just the snappy dialogue that makes Sorkin great; it is that the audience is watching people work through something in their dialogue. His contribution as a screenwriter has the weight of an auteur; and some films bear the weight of multiple auteurs in collaboration.

Auteurism gets even more complicated with franchises. George Lucas is the creator of *Star Wars* and director of the first film *A New Hope*. For the sequel, *The Empire Strikes Back* directorial duties were given to Irvin Kershner, and writer Lawrence Kasdan oversaw the development of the script. Very little of Lucas is felt in what is universally considered the best *Star Wars* movie. Richard Marquand directed the third entry *Return of the Jedi* under the supervision of Lucas, and it is generally seen as Lucas' movie with Marquand being an afterthought. At this point, George Lucas and his audience began to drift apart. Fans felt like he was exacting too much control over the

property at the expense of his more seasoned collaborators. Tinkering with the original movies even further by adding in cosmetic changes and re-releasing them as Special Editions in 1997 did Lucas no favors among critics, nor did preventing the originals from ever being released on home video; they felt that these interventions diminished the quality of the originals. As time went on, Lucas became something of an anti-auteur with everything bad about the prequel trilogy and the fourth *Indiana Jones* movie being attributed to him. Robert Dean Lurie writes, “This is auteur theory turned on its head. In this scenario the auteur—Lucas—becomes a symbol not of splendidly unfettered creative expression but of absolute power corrupting absolutely. He has, in fact, become the Evil Empire to the fans’ Rebel Alliance” (Lurie).

The situation is even more precarious in the Marvel Cinematic Universe where directors are treated like interchangeable assistant directors that answer to mega producer Kevin Feige, who really runs the show. The contributions of Joss Whedon, Peyton Reed, and Joe and Anthony Russo barely make any noticeable difference in quality to *Age Of Ultron*, *Ant-Man*, and *Captain America Civil War*. All three movies feel like they were made by the same person, Feige, despite being directed by filmmakers who have their own set of quirks and tendencies. Anything that Whedon, Reed, and the Russos brought to the table has been lost thanks to Feige’s overreliance on a strict formula that left these filmmakers with very little room to operate.

The Auteur Theory is not a perfect one. In fact, the Auteur Theory is not really a theory at all. It is more of a method or principle that serves as a guideline for how one discusses movies critically. While it seems fairly obvious to think about a film as the vision of a director, it was not an all too common train of thought at the time Truffaut and

Sarris were writing their articles. Most people thought of movies in terms of the stars or the studios not so much the director, unless they happened to be Alfred Hitchcock, who was a master at self-promotion in the media.

Sarris really should have called it the Auteur Method. Auteur Theory has a nice ring to it but it is a something of a misnomer, because a theory seeks to explain something completely. A methodology is less complete and merely an approach. Sarris' theory does not explain any particular films or their interior meaning. What it really does is offer directions for critics who must find the interior meaning of films themselves. That is what Sarris was getting at with his series of concentric circles. He created a method to classify directors in ways no one had ever thought of before. It helps fans, critics, and writers when they defend filmmaking as an art form and give directors and their works an identity that's easily recognizable.

Applying Sarris' method has led me to the conclusion that Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis are most definitely worthy of being classified as auteurs. They are competent filmmakers who have an understanding of the basics. They have a unique style that is felt in all their movies with recurring quirks and signatures. There's also an interior meaning to their movies. They are filmmakers trying to hit on something personal in their movies. In the case it's the nature of truth and reality. For The Wachowskis the truth is a positive agent of change. It's intrinsically beautiful and wondrous. With Nolan the truth can be beautiful but not what his characters need. Sometimes his characters need the lie and that becomes the truth.

CHAPTER II

Christopher Nolan

Christopher Nolan is now one of the highest profile directors in Hollywood. Starting with *Memento* in 2000 Nolan has built up a remarkable body of work that ranges from neo-noir and mystery yarns to superhero tales and sci-fi epics. He is known for nonlinear and multilayered storytelling, fast-paced editing, and psychologically complex characters. Writing for *The New York Times* Gideon Lewis-Kraus notes “Part of the reason his work has done so well at the box office is that his audience members — and not just his fans, but his critics — find themselves watching his movies twice, or three times, bleary-eyed and shivering in their dusky light, hallucinating wheels within wheels and stopping only to blog about the finer points” (Lewis-Kraus). It is this combination that has made his movies endlessly rewatchable. They contain layers and layers of hidden meanings and new truths waiting to be discovered.

Like Tarantino before him, Nolan is something of a post-modern mashup artist, only with more subtlety than Tarantino. It is probably his most overlooked trait as a director, as most people tend to focus on his nonlinear storytelling. *Batman Begins* is a reworking of Frank Miller’s *Year One* graphic novel with nods to various episodes of *Batman The Animated Series* and Dennis O’Neil’s *The Man Who Falls* graphic novel. *The Dark Knight* is a combination of Jeph Loeb’s *The Long Halloween*, *The Joker’s Five Way Revenge*, & *The Man Who Laughs*. *The Dark Knight Rises* mashes up the likes of *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Knightfall*, and *No Man’s Land*. *The Prestige* is Nolan’s spin on David Cronenberg’s trippy psychological thriller *Dead Ringers*. *Inception* combines

James Bond tropes with Dennis Quaid's 1984 camp sci-fi movie *Dreamscape*.

Interstellar is a mashup of a 2001 *A Space Odyssey* and *Contact*. Nolan is able to take what has come before him and combine it in such a way that it becomes something new.

All of Nolan's films concern the power of the lie; the lies characters tell each other, and the lies they tell themselves to keep moving forward. In his book *The Fictional Christopher Nolan* author Todd McGowan writes:

A lie establishes a fictional version of events that don't correspond to what is actually happening or what has happened. The problem with our usual conception of truth is that it separates truth from this fiction and views truth as an original state that fiction or deceit corrupts. But for Nolan's cinema, the link between truth and fiction always remains clear: if one wants to discover the truth, one must first succumb to the fiction that seems to obscure it. (McGowan 5)

In other words, the power of the lie is the thing for Nolan. His heroes must either learn the truth or they must become the lie they've been telling themselves.

When his movies are viewed in succession it becomes apparent he is striving to get at what it means to be a storyteller and what it means to be human one aspect at a time. Each movie grapples with a specific aspect of the human psyche, the things that make us who we are. *Memento* is about obsession and memory. *Insomnia* is about guilt and paranoia. *Batman Begins* is about conquering fear. *The Prestige* is about hatred and a professional rivalry gone too far. *The Dark Knight* is about finding that one thing helps us make sense of the world. *Inception* is about the power of dreams. *The Dark Knight Rises* is about overcoming emotional and physical pain. *Interstellar* is about ambition and the

need to explore. The through-line in these films is the lie as an underlying truth of the human psyche and the key to the power of storytelling.

Memento

Memento (2000) is not Nolan's first movie (that honor goes to 1998's *Following*), but it is the movie that made Christopher Nolan who he is as a storyteller. It is to him what *Duel* was to Steven Spielberg, a low-budget affair that showed what he was capable of. *Memento* is an otherwise boilerplate noir wrapped around themes of memory and time, but what makes it special is that it is told in reverse chronological order. It begins with the hero killing the bad guy and traces the steps backwards to see how he got there.

The movie is a fascinating portrait about a man affected by "anterograde amnesia," short-term memory disorder in which he is unable to make new memories. It is also a somewhat clinical examination of how he functions on a day-to-day basis. Leonard has to take copious notes about daily events (going as far as to mark them down in sharpie on his body) and photos of people he meets just to function. With *Memento* Nolan is exploring what it must be like to be a fictional character at the mercy of a writer. Leonard has no agency for the most part. He's lost in a haze until someone points him in a certain direction that he then follows all the way through.

By structuring the movie like a puzzle-box, Nolan puts the audience in Leonard Shelby's shoes. They get a sense of how Leonard grapples with short-term memory loss. If Nolan had presented the story in a normal, linear way, it would not have been effective. The mystery would have been lost. By taking this nonlinear approach the audience feels something akin to what Leonard feels when he discovers that Teddy, the undercover

officer who has been helping him, is the thief who broke into his house and raped and (he believes) murdered his wife.

We are further crushed when we discover the truth about what happened to Leonard, that his wife actually survived the attack but developed diabetes as a result while he developed short-term amnesia after getting hit on the head by a baseball bat. As Leonard's memory loss became worse over time she began to believe he was faking it. To test him she had Leonard give her multiple insulin shots to the point she overdosed and died. As the film unfolds, we learn everyone in the movie is lying to Leonard and using him for their own ends.

As if that wasn't cynical enough, there is also the sting of Natalie betraying Leonard. When the audience first meets her they are given the impression she's a kind but battered woman who wants to help Leonard get the mysterious John G (later revealed to be Teddy). But as the subplot unfolds we find out she's the resident femme fatale who is using Leonard to get her own revenge on John G and have a little fun with Leonard after he once slapped her to get what she knew.

The most important scene is the one where Leonard muses to Natalie about memories and time. He says:

I don't even know how long she's been gone. It's like I've woken up in bed and she's not here... because she's gone to the bathroom or something. But somehow, I know she's never gonna come back to bed. If I could just... reach over and touch... her side of the bed, I would know that it was cold, but I can't. I know I can't have her back... but I don't want to wake up in the morning, thinking she's still here. I

lie here not knowing... how long I've been alone. So how... how can I heal? How am I supposed to heal if I can't... feel time? (00:36:20)

Because he has no short-term memory the whole world is a lie, or a potential lie, to Leonard. The absence of time reveals how fundamental it is to one's conception of self. In this way the lies of the other characters are built upon Leonard's uncertainty of his self in the world. Furthermore, Nolan hints that we the audience are in a state similar to Leonard. For the fiction of storytelling to work on us we must lose ourselves and our sense of time. The process ends as we become aware of this situation and recover ourselves. But what drives that process is not critical thought but emotion. As the scene unfolds, it becomes clear that this is moment Nolan became Christopher Nolan. This is the moment he went from a calculating structuralist in the mold of Stanley Kubrick to a director who puts the emotionality of the characters and the situation first. With this scene Nolan realized the most important thing is how a movie makes the audience feel. All the complexity won't mean a thing if there's not an emotional anchor to center it around.

Batman Begins

Batman Begins (2005) is the most comic book-like entry of The Dark Knight trilogy. Inspired by Richard Donner's *Superman* as well as Frank Miller's *Year One* and Dennis O'Neil's *The Man Who Falls* Nolan took the franchise back down to earth after Schumacher's disastrously camp turns with the Batman character in the 1990s.

The quote "Why do we fall? So we can pick ourselves back up" is repeated throughout the movie. Not only does the movie capture Bruce's character arc throughout

all three movies, it's a somewhat meta-account for the arc of the Batman movie franchise in general. They had to fall into camp so they could rise to greatness once again.

Vilja Johnson notes, "Nolan's two Batman films insert the filmmaker's distinctive worldview into this particular interpretation of the caped crusader. Nolan's work pushes and plays with the boundaries of the Batman mythos, adjusting the moral code which guides other versions of Batman" (Johnson 953). As with Tim Burton's *Batman* we are dealing with a director's specific vision of Batman. But Nolan's Batman is a crusader out to save the soul of the city he loves, even at the expense of his own.

Nolan makes Gotham City feel like a real place again by bringing the darkness and the grime of the comics to the big screen. He brings back an emotional core to the Batman movies by making Bruce Wayne a real fleshed out character and Batman a force of nature. Nolan takes things seriously while leaving room for character and situational humor when appropriate.

Batman Begins is first and foremost an action thriller about self-discovery and conquering your fears that just happens to have Batman in it. While others have played with the origins of Batman before none have done it to the extent of *Batman Begins*. This film gave people the most cinematic insight into the life of Bruce Wayne and what motivated him to become Batman. The film showed them how and why he did it every step of the way.

There's also another quote laced throughout the movie, "Theatricality and deception are powerful agents." It's the first of many clues into Nolan's approach to storytelling that he sprinkles in all his movies. Nolan is telling us that he's not above

going over the top and deceiving his audience to get a reaction out of them. Nolan may be something of a cinematic trickster but he's an honest one.

Instead of beginning with the murder of Thomas and Martha Wayne like most versions of the Batman origin story, Nolan decides to jump ahead and cover a period of time most storytellers ignore: the training Bruce undertook to become Batman. Nolan then flashes back to a scene depicting a childhood trauma where Bruce fell down a well and was swarmed by bats, leaving him with an intense phobia for the next 20 years. For the next hour he jumps back and forth between Bruce's childhood and his training with Ra's al Ghul's League of Shadows. Bruce's self-discovery involves learning to deceive others, culminating in the Batman persona he uses to conceal himself. Seen through the lens of Nolan's other work, Batman emphasizes how theatricality and performance are central to the development of the self. *Batman Begins* also emphasizes how storytelling is central to the self for both the teller and the audience. Not only are theatricality and deception powerful agents, Nolan may be saying that theatricality and deception are the agents of power. In other words, the way that power and control function in people is through self-conscious performance. Here again the lie is important to discovering the reality of human existence. Where *Memento* focuses on the past, *Batman Begins* focuses on the development from childhood to adulthood. While one was about discovering the truth the other is about becoming the lie. What the two films share is a core of emotional trauma over loss that fuels the self-conscious development of character.

The Prestige

The Prestige (2006) is perhaps Nolan's most personal film as a director because it offers the clearest insight into how he sees himself as a storyteller. The movie concerns the professional rivalry of Robert Angier and Alfred Borden, two 19th century London magicians who were once friends until Borden got Angier's wife killed in a stage accident. Since then the two men become trapped in a dangerous cycle of sabotage and one-upmanship that culminates in Borden being arrested for Angier's murder.

The Prestige is about two professionals with different approaches to their jobs and what they're supposed to be doing. Angier is an average magician but a masterful showman able to draw the audience into the wonder of it all. Borden is a great magician who can figure out any trick, but he lacks a flare for the theatrical. He is a working class magician who just wants to show the masses how clever he is. Meanwhile Angier is an upper class showman who wants to make the audience believe in the possibility of magic. It's this dichotomy-turned-rivalry that drives the conflict of the movie.

This theme is further expanded to the world of scientific invention when Angier gets involved with Nikola Tesla in his quest to figure out Borden's "Transported Man" trick. In this illusion Borden instantly travels between two wardrobes on opposite ends of a stage. Angier initially suspects that Borden is using a double but dismisses it because that's too easy of a trick. Angier turns to famed inventor Nikola Tesla for help, a man trapped in his own dangerous rivalry with former employer Thomas Edison over which form of electricity will become America's standard. It's in this subplot where the movie's first real magic trick takes place. What was once a Victorian era thriller about obsession and jealousy becomes something else, a science-fiction tale about hubris. Angier was so

blinded by hatred of Borden that he missed the obvious. Borden was a twin who used his brother in his acts, which Angier will only discover at the end. By dismissing the obvious Angier has to go the long way around to land on a more complex version of the same trick. Using Tesla's machine in his "New Transported Man" act Angier creates a clone of himself night after night - clones that he's forced to terminate if he wants to maintain the secret. Borden is hanged for the murder of Angier, which is really one of these clones, in the final act of the film. Although the film is set in 19th century London the use of clones in the trick is relevant to scientific invention today. The film also subtly reflects on the 1890s invention of the cinema, which can be thought of as a cloning of reality.

While the movie presents Angier and Borden's rivalry in shades of gray the film is ultimately on Angier's side in the end because he's shown to be the better magician. He took something ordinary and made it extraordinary. What Nolan is getting at here is a metaphor for the nature of adaptation. Filmmakers have to take the source material available to them, make it their own and turn it into something new. Angier took something ordinary and everyday (in this case the concept of twins) and made it into something extraordinary and otherworldly (clones). Angier went the long way around to create something new.

When the Borden twin finally confronts Angier and shoots him Angier offers Borden one final insight. "You never understood why we did this. The audience knows the truth: the world is simple. It's miserable, solid all the way through. But if you could fool them, even for a second, then you can make them wonder, and then you... then you got to see something really special. You really don't know? It was... it was the look on

their faces.” (2:01:34). Angier dies and Borden spots one last dead Angier clone in the distance. He’s forced to wonder if Angier got away with it all in the end.

With this speech Nolan reminds himself and his fellow storytellers why they create these fictional cinematic worlds. It’s to amaze the audience, make them wonder and believe in the possibility of magic even if it’s only for a second. Echoing this statement George Faithful writes,

Like all of the best preaching, film, and science fiction, Nolan’s work presents a vision of who we are and who we ought to be. He calls us to be heroes defined by illusion. We need to show the world what it needs to see, not how things actually are; we need to say what it needs to hear, whether or not that is the truth; and we need to act like the people the world needs us to be, if not the people it deserves. By pretending, we become – if not the thing we pretend to be, then at least something more than ourselves. Then we will know the perfect lie, and the lie will set us free. (Faithful 414)

Nolan’s magicians tap into the deep human need to be lied to, to be duped. Yet the audience is not only aware it is being duped, it actively seeks out this condition. Not only does the performer pretend to be a wizard, the audience also pretends to be dupes. The shared act of performance is a fundamental aspect of the self that Nolan underlines in *The Prestige*. It is not only a film about magicians; it is a film about audiences. As professional magicians, Borden and Angier are the ultimate audience for each other’s tricks. Their emotional and masculine rivalry makes this situation real. Angier becomes the greater magician because he truly believes in Borden’s performance. Perhaps Nolan is

saying that he must truly believe in the story and characters for the magic of cinema to work. He must be audience as well as storyteller, he must be both at once.

The Dark Knight

The Dark Knight (2008) is superhero movie perfection. It rises above the conventions of the genre to tell a Michael Mann-style crime thriller about Batman facing the chaos he inspired when he took up his crusade. As he's about to shut down the mob for good, Batman finds himself in a battle of wills with a mass murdering clown called The Joker over the very soul of Gotham. Nolan drops the comic book style from *Batman Begins* and in doing so creates a sense of urgency and a general 'too close to home' feeling that keeps *The Dark Knight* moving forward till the final frame. Heavily inspired by Jeph Loeb's *The Long Halloween* and Denny O'Neil's *The Joker's Five Way Revenge* Nolan turns the middle chapter of his Batman saga into a commentary on the War on Terror, about the use of force as a response to escalating threats.

Nolan's themes of identity and theatricality merge and become personified in his version of the Joker, a character who the audience is given no salient detail about other than that he's a terrorist and wears clown makeup like warpaint to scare people. By making the Joker a blank slate Nolan turns him into a living Rorschach test that represents whatever his target or victim fears most. The scariest thing about this Joker is not the smile, the hair, or the gimmicks it's that everything he says is the truth because he believes whatever lie he is spinning at any given moment with complete and total conviction.

Nolan adds a new player to the mix in District Attorney Harvey Dent. Called the White Knight of Gotham, Dent is as driven as Batman and Commissioner Gordon to clean up the city - but within the limits of the law. It's this commitment that makes him the purest of the trio. When he's able to hit the entire Gotham City mafia with RICO charges he ushers in a new era for Gotham. But it's all undone when The Joker begins tearing the city apart with seemingly random attacks. The Joker's plan comes into focus when he rigs two evacuating ferries (one containing civilians and the other containing the prisoners Dent locked up) with explosives. He will blow them both up by midnight, but will let one live if the passengers of either boat blow up the other first. It's a test to see if Gotham is as hopeless as he believes it is. In the end, astonishingly, neither one agrees to blow up the other. Batman manages to apprehend the Joker before he can pull the trigger.

The film's tragedy is the fall of Harvey Dent into insanity and vigilantism. The Joker targets Dent and breaks the man's psyche by killing his girlfriend. Then Dent embarks on a revenge spree going after everyone involved, including Gordon and Batman for failing to prevent it all. Ultimately Batman is forced to kill Dent to save Gordon's family. He then makes the decision to take the fall for Dent's crimes to ensure that the District Attorney's work is not undone, leaving the mob locked away for good. Batman is willing to become the lie Gotham needs at the moment. He substitutes a white lie for the fallen white knight.

Nolan makes an interesting comment on ethics and justice with the film's ending. The mafia is unequivocally evil, so the white lie is morally justified. The technicalities of the justice system, which might require the mafia to be released if Dent's crimes are made transparent, are less important than an underlying moral conviction of the mafia's

guilt. In this way the film could be read as a defense of the neo-conservative War on Terror with laws like the Patriot Act that empower secret agencies like the NSA to bypass the regular legal system. However, the film is not so simple. Dent is an icon of the moralistic War on Terror who is shown to be self-serving and is eventually corrupted by his enemy. With this film Nolan ties his reflection on lies and deception to the institutions of justice. The law places the truth of storytelling above individuals to society at large. The performances of different roles are like white lies. If they are grounded on moral conduct, like the boat passengers who choose not to kill the other to save themselves, then a just outcome is preserved.

The brilliance of *The Dark Knight* is that it manages to serve as a commentary on the War on Terror without explicitly saying it is. For the two and half hour running audiences are engaging with the movie as a thrilling crime epic in the Batman universe. *The Dark Knight* keeps the themes below the surface allowing one to enjoy the superhero action and not be taken out of the movie by its real world parallels. It's proof that high art and populist cinema can be one in the same.

Inception

Implanting ideas into people's heads is part of the job when you're a director or a storyteller of any sort. Nolan makes that point perfectly clear with *Inception* (2010). As his previous three movies have shown, it is possible that blockbusters can be both smart and escapist entertainment. *Inception* maintains the perfect balance of outlandish spectacle and narrative storytelling. It's a heist film that plays with dream imagery on a blockbuster scale with the best practical visual effects Hollywood has to offer. Nolan

spends the first hour of *Inception* more or less explaining the basics of the premise and getting you invested in the plight of Cobb and his team of information extractors. By taking this approach the second hour is allowed to go all out and become an action-packed extravaganza that pays homage to James Bond movies and M.C. Escher.

If *The Prestige* is a metaphor for the adaptation process then *Inception* is a giant allegory for the power of filmmaking and the filmgoing experience in general. When one watches a movie they're essentially seeing another person's dreams captured on celluloid or digital. Meanwhile the films are implanting ideas into people's heads and if the movie did its job right the audiences won't be able to shake it.

The movie stars Leonardo DiCaprio as Cobb, the leader of a corporate espionage team who use a collective dreaming device to extract information from someone. Yet this time they have been asked to do the opposite of extraction, inception – to plant an idea in a person's mind. The team leader Cobb is meant to be the film director. It's his job to design the world and make it feel real to the dreamer. Arthur is the producer; he has to do the legwork and put the team together for Cobb. Ariadne is the writer; Cobb needs her to help create the foundation of the dream world. Saito, the man Cobb's doing the job for is the movie studio. He's the one who holds all the power. Eames is the actor, he's playing other people in the dreams Cobb creates. Yusuf is the special effects tech or a representative figure of the rest of the main film crew, it's his job to make sure Cobb has everything to pull off the inception. Robert Fischer is of course the audience, the mark into whom Cobb implants an idea, specifically the idea that he should break up his father's company when he inherits it. Just before the heist begins Cobb and Eames have the exchange below, in which Nolan weaves the allegory of filmmaking:

COBB. "I will split up my father's empire." Now, this is obviously an idea that Robert himself would choose to reject. Which is why we need to plant it deep in his subconscious. Subconscious is motivated by emotion, right? Not reason. We need to find a way to translate this into an emotional concept.

ARTHUR. How do you translate a business strategy into an emotion?

COBB. That's what we're here to figure out, right? Now, Robert's relationship with his father is stressed, to say the least.

EAMES. Well, can we run with that? We could suggest to him breaking up his father's company as a "screw-you" to the old man.

COBB. No, 'cause I think positive emotion trumps negative emotion every time. We all yearn for reconciliation, for catharsis. We need Robert Fischer to have a positive emotional reaction to all this. (0:50:06)

There's a couple of things going on in this scene but "How do we translate a business strategy into an emotion?" and "I think positive emotion trumps negative emotion every time" are the two important lines to discuss. The former is Nolan addressing the essential dilemma of the Hollywood creative: how to go about turning corporate decisions, intellectual properties, studio notes, etc. into art. That is a problem writers and directors have always struggled with and will continue to struggle with.

The latter is another clue that speaks to Nolan's approach as a storyteller. His movies are not downers despite being labeled dark and gritty. His movies always build to catharsis or some kind of positive endnote. Even *The Prestige* can be read as positive if you believe Angier got away or Borden used the machine to make himself a new twin.

So what does *Inception* say about Nolan? If taken literally he sees himself as a dreamer taken away from his family. He's forever at the mercy of a corporation and can only return home once he's done the job and planted an idea into enough people's minds. The spinning top at the end, which Cobb uses to test whether he's in a dream or in the real world, represents the possibility that Nolan may never be done making movies.

The Dark Knight Rises

The Dark Knight Rises (2012) is Nolan's final Batman movie. Drawing upon Frank Miller's 1985 *The Dark Knight Returns* as well as the *Knightfall* and *No Man's Land* storylines from the 1990s the *The Dark Knight Rises* is a rare feat in superhero cinema: the closer of the superhero trilogy that the director always planned. Many have tried to achieve this goal but they have either become burned out and left by the time the third entry rolled around, or studio executives have pushed them out. But not Nolan, he saw his trilogy through and ended it on his terms.

There is no denying that the film is a step down from the cinematic perfection of *The Dark Knight*, but it is an otherwise fantastic conclusion that sends Nolan's Batman out in style. *The Dark Knight Rises* is his ode to the films of David Lean, where character drama plays out against a backdrop of war or revolution. It makes explicit what was implicit in previous movies, attacking claims that *The Dark Knight* was a pro neo-conservative fantasy head-on and flat out refuting any such notions. It's a class warfare social drama that rewrites the endings of both *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight* from victories for Batman to mistakes that he and Gotham needed to suffer the consequences for.

Like William Fichtner's Mafioso bank manager in *The Dark Knight* before him, the first major character we meet in *The Dark Knight Rises* signals what direction Nolan is taking the story. Fichtner's character was meant to evoke Michael Mann's *Heat* while Aiden Gillen's anonymous George W. Bush era CIA agent serves as an unambiguous signpost that Nolan's now going for a Dickensian social drama in the mold of *The Wire*.

The Dark Knight Rises serves a true sequel to *Batman Begins* with *The Dark Knight* functioning more like a bridge between the two movies. *Batman Begins* culminates with Batman deciding he doesn't have to save Ra's al Ghul from the impending train crash. Now somewhere along the way this decision started to irk. It began to feel like the filmmakers missed the point of Batman's heroic journey in *Begins* by letting him effectively kill the bad guy, something cinematic Batman would do without question but not the version from the comic books people know. The third film's scenario suggests that the earlier transgression of killing the enemy was by design, because here Batman ends up paying for that decision tenfold when Bane and Talia al Ghul reform the League of Shadows, invade Gotham, and finish what Ra's al Ghul started by turning the city into a prison state walled off from the rest of America.

The Dark Knight Rises also makes Batman pay for his somewhat neo-con decision to cover up Harvey Dent's crimes so the criminals he prosecuted would remain behind bars. Bane reads to the media the confession Gordon wrote as a ploy to destroy the image of Batman and Gordon as heroes. The mafia escaping from Blackgate Prison is the final domino in Bane's plan to tear the city apart. He uses Batman's previous 'white lie' cover-up to frame the convicted crime lords as victims of a corrupt institution. It's a clever bit of media manipulation that shows how intelligent and astute Bane really is.

Bane's wicked lies are a response to Batman's white ones, and steer the hero back toward truth and transparency (without fully arriving at Dent's white knight purity).

The Dark Knight Rises is a treatise on the tendency for revolutionary movements and causes to get hijacked by blatant demagoguery and cynical manipulation. They rarely empower the people they're claiming to fight for and pretty often are used as a way to make the world burn, to paraphrase *The Dark Knight*. In Nolan's terms, they're just another lie and a bit of performance theatre.

Interstellar

Interstellar (2014) is Nolan's love letter to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* by way of Robert Zemeckis' *Contact*. It's a sprawling sci-fi quest movie about the search for humanity's next home wrapped around a father-daughter story that's all too rare in Hollywood. The film plays with some hard concepts of science that can be difficult to absorb if you think about all the technicalities. But it is confident enough to expect the audience to just go along with the hard science without having to explain every little thing along the way. If you watch the story for the emotion it's tight as a drum.

Interstellar is a double metaphor of a movie. On one hand, it's about America collapsing into itself and no longer exploring and innovating the way it used to. It's about how we're consuming our natural resources to the point the Earth can no longer provide for us. On the other hand, it's also about Hollywood's lack of ambition and how studios aren't willing to take risks the way they used to and how they need to start playing with big ideas and going further.

The theme of the lie enters the picture when Murph, played by Jessica Chastain, discovers there was no plan in place to evacuate humanity to space stations and other planets after they figure out interstellar wormhole travel because the math was too complex. Instead the real plan (dubbed Plan B) was to seed human DNA on the nearest habitable world and hope for the best. When Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) leaves three-dimensional space and enters the tesseract he has all of time and space open to him. He sends Murph the data she needs and humanity is now able to travel the stars. Cooper believed in the lie so much he made it a reality. This white lie is born of love and hope, another fundamental aspect of the self. Hope plays a role in the justice Batman seeks, but in *Interstellar* the goal has shifted to familial love, social preservation, and adventure. Upon the moral emotion at the center of Batman Nolan adds *Memento*'s theme of companionship with all the complex emotions it entails. Deception and performance turn out to be crucial for all of them as a step toward a more ultimate truth that cannot be grasped immediately.

Interstellar is Nolan reflecting on our place in the universe and the thing that connects people to one another, love, be it familial or romantic. *Interstellar* is an old fashioned sci-fi film that commits to the ideas of the story, the characters, and the science of it all. It's brash and bold yet earnest and an emotional roller coaster of a film that has something to say. Christopher Nolan is literally and figuratively telling us to reach for the stars again and become explorers once more. He's reminding us that us that our best days aren't behind us, that there's more still ahead.

Chapter Summary

In sum, for Christopher Nolan the act of storytelling is crucial to understanding what it means to be human. We find our truths in the act of storytelling. The stories we tell help us navigate a big and confusing world that never seems to make any sense. Storytelling is how we organize our existence into something important and meaningful.

The truth can be a beautiful thing in the work of Christopher Nolan. It can help his main characters find their way out of the darkness. But it can also be a destructive force of nature that shows them the folly of their ways and leave them off worse than when they started. It plays into his ever-present theme of the lie. Truth and fiction are often the same for Nolan. Determining which is which depends on the character and what they need to learn to achieve some semblance of inner peace or self-awareness. The truth can show them the light, or giving into the lie can make them who they want to be.

CHAPTER III

The Wachowskis

Lily and Lana Wachowski are filmmakers who put everything into their movies. They step up to the bat every time to achieve their unique vision, not to merely satisfy the audience or the studio. They always shoot for the moon. Their movies rebel against the status quo to reveal the connections people share as a whole. They strive to teach us that there is no default setting, just conventions waiting to be smashed, a corner waiting to be turned. They make bold sweeping stories about the desire to be free, expressing your personal truth, and the power of caring for your fellow man.

Originally known as Larry and Andy Wachowski, “the Wachowski brothers,” in 2010 and 2016 each came out publicly as a trans woman and adopted the first names Lana and Lilly. Looking back now on the Wachowski’s filmography, the theme of breaking social convention to reveal a deeper truth is illuminated by their proud queer identities. The themes of social performance and radical political change also bear the imprint of queer culture. But their movies are not restricted to a queer audience. They are for everybody. It is no surprise that their success in Hollywood comes from the universal human scope in their stories, with an earnestness that anchors spectacle around human truth.

Their eyes for action and spectacle are something most directors lack. They revel in ambitious concepts with an intense commitment to style and heart. There’s an emotional intelligence and honesty about their movies. The Wachowskis question the

nature of physical reality, but not to deconstruct it or push any kind of nihilism. Writing for Film School Rejects Landon Palmer notes:

The Wachowskis' shared earnestness and ambitiousness can engender both the greatest strengths and most debilitating weaknesses of their films, but these characteristics have also thrown into relief what other large-scale filmmaking so often refuses to do. For in recent years, a film by the Wachowskis has meant a looking glass into a bizarro-world Hollywood where standalone features are used to make grand statements through novel, even counterintuitive means. (Palmer)

The films of the Wachowskis are not the most logical of creatures. They are emotional beings first and foremost. Their films are the work of people who care about the stories they're telling. They pursue their obsessions with a genuine sincerity that's hard to find in a lot of blockbusters. Their films can be called silly. They can be called over the top. But what they cannot be called lazy and dishonest. The films of The Wachowskis are optimistic, empathetic, and real.

Bound

The Wachowskis made their debut with *Bound* (1996), an erotic neo-noir that's alternatively scary, funny, and sexy. *Bound* is their answer to *Memento*, a self-assured small-scale crime thriller that served as a calling card for their bigger projects. *Bound* does something unusual for a noir movie. It shifts the focus to a female lead and tells a lesbian-centered tale of forbidden love. Like all Wachowski movies *Bound* is a story about escape and liberation. An ex-con turned handyman named Corky wants to help Violet break free of the forced marriage to a slimeball gangster named Caesar. Together

they form a plan to set Caesar up to kill his associates and steal 2 million dollars in cash he's laundering for them.

The film takes awhile to build to the heist choosing instead to focus on building the connection between Corky and Violet as they engage in their affair under Caesar's nose. Film critic Jason Wallis writes:

The femme fatale is often the most interesting aspect of any film noir, and *Bound* offers two well-developed female leads (pun not intended, honest). Both are suitably dodgy and potentially dangerous, and in separate movies they would have stolen the show. But together, these two vixens make a classic team, sharing a delicate chemistry that gradually becomes more evident as the plot unfolds.

(Wallis)

When the heist kicks into gear it becomes a locked room thriller with nerve-racking tension that keeps escalating until the moment Caesar meets his inevitable demise.

Caesar is one of the best villains of the 90s. A dupe but one clever enough to eventually realize his wife and her girlfriend are playing him and unhinged enough to qualify as dangerous. It's high wire of a balancing act where much of the film's tension comes from. You just never know what Caesar is going to do next.

When Caesar ties Corky up in the closet he becomes the embodiment of a system that won't allow Violet and Corky to live their personal truth. It's at this point the movie becomes a metaphor about literally coming out of the closet. The killing of Caesar is an act of liberation that frees both Violet and Corky allowing them to ride off into the proverbial sunset together.

Bound is steeped in a modern-day noir style that makes for a visual feast that uses every ounce of design in the apartment building serving as the setting. It's a slick and confident movie that works you over and plays with your emotions until the very end. *Bound* is a sharp and clever to the point you find hard it hard to believe that this was the Wachowski's first movie. Most directors are lucky to have a movie this well done several entries into the career. The Wachowskis did it on their first try. That's how talented they are as filmmakers.

The Matrix

In 1999 the Wachowskis shifted gears to *The Matrix*, a sci-fi classic that marries Hollywood blockbuster sensibilities with martial arts and gun-fu action. Drenched in Christian allegory and Eastern philosophy, *The Matrix* is a parable about breaking free of the soul-sucking corporate rat race and achieving self-awareness.

Evoking everything from Hong Kong action films to Christian allegory and Buddhist teachings gave *The Matrix* an utterly unique sense of purpose. It wasn't just a cool movie filled with novel special effects. It meditates on the nature of reality and free will. The movie had something on its mind. It was trying to impart some words of wisdom in its own gloriously over the top fashion, those words being "Know thyself" and "You define your world."

When the Oracle tells Neo that he is not The One, that was the story he needed to hear at the time. Neo was not ready to rise to the challenge just yet. He needed one final push and got it when Agent Smith kidnapped Morpheus, the man who made him aware of his reality. Becoming The One was something Neo had to figure out for himself. After

coming to terms with what he was Neo decided to show the rest of the world what the Matrix was with Superman-style takeoff at the end of movie. The Matrix was a dream machine with limitless possibilities. It could allow you to do anything, even fly like Superman.

The movie's blend of comic book storytelling and kung-fu imagery made it stand out in 1999. Writing for *The New Yorker* Alexander Hemon says, "Audiences responded to its cool, ultramodern style while rooting for its heroes, whose only reliable power was their old-fashioned humanity. The movie's philosophical underpinnings won it a cult following, as well as numerous academic studies." (Hemon) *The Matrix* became an instant hit and its impact is still being felt today through movies like the *John Wick* franchise.

The Wachowskis were overnight sensations. But that came with a very big caveat. Call it the Orson Welles Effect. Every single film they made afterwards was doomed to live its shadow or struggle to have an impact on pop culture in quite the same way. The original Matrix was such a sensation that not even the two sequels could live up to it. Audiences collectively walked away from *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions* disappointed as sharp metaphors and character work gave way to bloated action, empty spectacle, and pretentious musings.

The Matrix was a new myth gifted to us by The Wachowskis. That's why we keep going back to the original with reverence. When we watch *The Matrix* we feel like we're hitting on some kind of universal truth that we've always known in our heart of hearts. That the world in front of us isn't all there is, that we define our reality.

V for Vendetta

Adapted from Alan Moore's classic graphic novel of the same name *V for Vendetta* (2006) tells the story of a Britain that's become a totalitarian state ruled by a corrupt government after a false flag operation in the not too distant future. To shake the country out of apathy a masked man called V uses terrorist methods to strike at the corrupt government. He is a crusader for truth on the political stage who shows the connection between individual identity and the integrity of the state.

Originally a commentary about the Margaret Thatcher UK of the 1980s, the Wachowskis turned *V for Vendetta* into a warning about the dangers of Neo-Conservatism, the War on Terror, and their effects on the American conscience. Released in 2006, a scant five years after 9/11, *V for Vendetta* was a daring piece of speculative fiction that asked western audiences to root for a revolutionary who was using terrorist methods to attack a corrupt government and wake up a sleeping nation to the horrors they've allowed to happen in the name of homeland security. The sci-fi movie is set in the future, sometime after the year 2020, when the world is in turmoil following wars and pandemics. Britain is ruled as a fascist state with a racist, nativist, anti-Islam, and anti-homosexual cultural policy.

Being an inherently political movie *V for Vendetta* isn't afraid to make statements designed to strike a chord with people. The movie will frequently stop the action to let V make speeches worthy of Shakespeare. The finest among them being this gem:

Good evening, London. Allow me first to apologize for this interruption. I do, like many of you, appreciate the comforts of every day routine - the security of the familiar, the tranquility of repetition. I enjoy them as much as any bloke. But in

the spirit of commemoration, whereby those important events of the past, usually associated with someone's death or the end of some awful bloody struggle, a celebration of a nice holiday, I thought we could mark this November the 5th, a day that is sadly no longer remembered, by taking some time out of our daily lives to sit down and have a little chat. There are of course those who do not want us to speak. I suspect even now, orders are being shouted into telephones, and men with guns will soon be on their way. Why? Because while the truncheon may be used in lieu of conversation, words will always retain their power. Words offer the means to meaning, and for those who will listen, the enunciation of truth. And the truth is, there is something terribly wrong with this country, isn't there? Cruelty and injustice, intolerance and oppression. And where once you had the freedom to object, to think and speak as you saw fit, you now have censors and systems of surveillance coercing your conformity and soliciting your submission. How did this happen? Who's to blame? Well certainly there are those more responsible than others, and they will be held accountable, but again truth be told, if you're looking for the guilty, you need only look into a mirror. I know why you did it. I know you were afraid. Who wouldn't be? War, terror, disease. There were a myriad of problems which conspired to corrupt your reason and rob you of your common sense. Fear got the best of you, and in your panic you turned to the now high chancellor, Adam Sutler. He promised you order, he promised you peace, and all he demanded in return was your silent, obedient consent. Last night I sought to end that silence. Last night I destroyed the Old Bailey, to remind this country of what it has forgotten. More than four hundred years ago a great citizen

wished to embed the fifth of November forever in our memory. His hope was to remind the world that fairness, justice, and freedom are more than words, they are perspectives. So if you've seen nothing, if the crimes of this government remain unknown to you, then I would suggest you allow the fifth of November to pass unmarked. But if you see what I see, if you feel as I feel, and if you would seek as I seek, then I ask you to stand beside me one year from tonight, outside the gates of Parliament, and together we shall give them a fifth of November that shall never, ever be forgot. (0:18:46)

This long speech is conscious of its own political resistance as words that oppose the state, as literally a freedom of speech that has been repressed. V simultaneously looks back in commemoration of a historical uprising with a traditional idea of freedom, and forward to a new liberal state. Long speeches like these are themselves a traditional form of politics but a radical break from the convention of sci-fi action movies.

Like *The Matrix* before it *V for Vendetta* is very much about the ideas beneath the story, this case being the nature of government and what it is supposed to do, which is protect and help the people, not keep them tied down. The state has a role to play in individual self-actualization. The film implies that good government helps the people live their personal truth and bad government imposes artificial identities that corrupt the soul. Writing for USA Today Claudia Puig notes,

The film has echoes of *A Clockwork Orange* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Despite its disparate influences, *Vendetta* feels captivantly original. The multilayered film can be appreciated strictly as an action thriller or for its deeper message about personal responsibility, political oppression and revolutionary change. One

powerful theme centers on the notion that ideas live forever, their power undiminished even as those who espouse them die. (Puig)

The characters of *V for Vendetta* are trapped in a system that won't let them be who they are to various degrees. The biggest example is the main character V, a man who was subjected to an experiment that took away his memories of who he was in exchange for incredible strength and stamina. The state literally molded his identity to fit its will and purpose. On the other end of the spectrum you have Gordon Deitrich, a gay talk show host who has to live in the closet due to the conservative nature of the new Britain. The character of Evey is the bridge between these two figures.

The Wachowskis take the theme of being "in the closet" to the extreme in the final act when the whole of Britain dresses up in Guy Fawkes masks, like V, to march on the government. The metaphor being that they've all had something essential taken away from their identity as Brits: their integrity. When Evey blows up the Parliament building at the end of the movie Britain does away with the last vestige of the system that allowed the country to fall into fascism. They have their collective integrity again. Now they have a chance to start over and build something new, something better. Something of the people, by the people, for the people. The film ends with the dawn of a new but uncertain future in the hands of a younger generation. The key idea here is that personal truth or self-actualization depends upon a political state. Performance of the self and the state both derive their value from integrity. While the film's radical anarchism could be seen as a mere component of the spectacular drama, its allegiance to personal freedom is essential.

Speed Racer

If *The Matrix* is an allegory about breaking free of the corporate rat race then *Speed Racer* (2008) is metaphor about selling out to a corporation in order to live your dream. Read in a certain light the movie could be the Wachowskis's way of working through whatever went wrong with The Matrix sequels and exorcising those demons.

The Wachowskis bring the style of the cartoon to contemporary cinema with state of the art digital effects and push it to the extreme, as they are wont to do. It's a hyper kinetic visual feast for the eyes and cotton candy for the inner child in us all. The movie is colorful and vibrant to the point it feels like you're watching a live action cartoon with real actors inhabiting its world.

Yet the key feature of *Speed Racer* is not its colorful surface but its earnest character. A gleefully absurd movie, it relishes the ridiculousness of the reality it creates and doesn't apologize for its in your face earnestness. Writing for *Slate* contributor Chris Wade says:

It may, in fact, be this sincerity that really turned the critics off. *Speed Racer* is, in the end, a heartfelt family film, ...The Wachowskis could have made the knowing, sarcastic snarkfest people expect from a property like *Speed Racer*. The movie might have been reviewed more kindly if they had done so. Instead, they made a brilliant visual cartoon that dares to ask that you take it seriously. (Wade)

With such dazzling (almost garish) visuals and a fantastical world of car racing one might have expected the movie to have a kitsch character that does not take itself seriously, laughing ironically at everything. But at the heart of the film is an earnest story with characters whose real integrity is at stake.

The Wachowskis find their way into the narrative through Speed's brother Rex. Marked for death by the cartel that run the world of racing, Rex has to fake his death and get plastic surgery to change his appearance. Then he can take on the cartel in the form of Racer X, a vigilante driver who helps the police in their effort to expose the cartel. Like V before him Rex is no longer able to be who he was in order to change the system that ruined his life. He must wear a mask in order to protect himself from an oppressive outside force. Rex teams with his innocent brother and a Japanese racer to outrace the cartel and expose their methods of cheating that they use to stay in power. Rex's mask and secrecy is only a means to overthrow a repressive regime and then live freely, out of the closet.

The Wachowski characters and Nolan's both use deception as a means to a deeper truth, but there is a fundamental difference between them. Comparing Batman to Rex we see two different kinds of self. Rex is not his true self under the disguise of Racer X; that persona only serves to achieve the goal of restoring his true self, something the film implies he may never be able to do. Meanwhile disguise and performance are fundamental to the nature of Batman. He is duplicitous to his core; so only through active performance can he express his true self. Nolan's world and characters are more complex, equivocal, and almost tend to pessimism. But a certain hope comes across in a subtle way, the same hope that the Wachowskis herald more radiantly.

Speed Racer is about a yearning for innocence. For things to be the way they were, before whatever you loved got corrupted and turned into something it wasn't meant to be. But like any Wachowski movie it's relentlessly optimistic in its belief that the corruption can be rooted out and that things can move forward and improve. That belief

in progress counterbalances any tendency to nostalgia. What they really yearn for is the truth and integrity of childhood, with a Romantic idealism that political action and personal growth can restore that beautiful truth for adults and for the future.

Cloud Atlas

Cloud Atlas (2012) is one of the most beautiful and powerful movies audiences will ever see. Six separate but interconnected stories spanning many centuries are told throughout the movie with actors playing different characters in different lifetimes as a group of souls find their way toward peace and self-enlightenment.

In 1850, Adam Ewing is being poisoned by a quack named Dr. Goose as he travels home to America on a cargo ship. In Edinburgh 1936 bisexual composer Robert Frobisher cons his way into the home of aging composer Vyvyan Ayr to help him write his last masterpiece. In San Francisco 1973, journalist Luisa Rey investigates a corporate conspiracy to sabotage a nuclear power plant. In London 2012, publisher Timothy Cavendish finds himself locked up in an old folks home against his will. In Neo Seoul, 2144, a bio-engineered woman named Somni sparks a revolution against a corporate government. In Hawaii 2321, Zachry Bailey escorts a scientist hoping to save the last of humanity to the top of a dangerous mountain. This may seem random but there is a method to the madness. The fun part is discovering how these stories connect and play off each other.

Cloud Atlas is an emotional roller coaster. The movie isn't just a metaphor about self-improvement; it's a reminder that one's actions have meaning and weight, a

reminder that people aren't insignificant specs on a blue rock hurtling through space. It says that life matters and people decide their own future through their own actions.

Cloud Atlas is a movie that treasures the beauty of humanity and spirituality. It firmly believes that our bodies are just vessels for a soul, that when one door closes another opens, that the universe won't give up on you and will keep giving you chances to put right what once went wrong. Peppered throughout the last hour of the movie are these little insights, mostly from Sonmi and Frobisher, like, "Our lives are not our own. From womb to tomb, we are bound to others. Past and present. And by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future" (2:33:43); "I understand now that boundaries between noise and sound are conventions. All boundaries are conventions, waiting to be transcended. One may transcend any convention if only one can first conceive of doing so. Moments like this, I can feel your heart beating as clearly as I feel my own, and I know that separation is an illusion. My life extends far beyond the limitations of me." (1:59:46); or "To be is to be perceived. And so to know thyself is only possible through the eyes of the other. The nature of our immortal lives is in the consequences of our words and deeds that go on apportioning themselves throughout all time" (2:25:21). These little musings are affirmations for the soul. For all of the movie's complicated structure it ultimately comes down to this; we are all connected, you always have a choice, and our actions have consequences both for ourselves and for others. At the end of the movie you just feel good about humanity and life in general.

Chapter Summary

The Wachowskis view storytelling as way to teach people about the nature of reality and humanity. They genuinely believe in the collective goodness of humanity and that it can keep improving. That reality is something we define and that universe is on our side. Their movies are designed to be empathy machines that show people the transformative power of caring and helping each other.

For the Wachowskis the truth is intrinsically beautiful. It frees their characters from the things weighing them down and holding them prisoner in a false reality. It lifts them up from the material world and takes them into the spiritual realm and makes them part of something bigger than themselves.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Christopher Nolan and the Wachowskis make sweeping statements about the nature of human existence and question how we define our reality. In their works the theme of the truth is the most important. The quest for the truth or the moment of epiphany is a quest for their characters to become complete, fully realized.

When it comes to Nolan the truth is a murky issue because sometimes the lie is the thing his characters need to keep going or to become the best versions of themselves. Nolan's philosophy can be summed up as: reality is subjective. Sometimes you have to fake it till you make it. If you want to be Batman, you can be Batman. It's all a matter of believing the story you tell yourself.

The lesson of the Wachowskis is this: all you see before you is not all that there is. Our selves are not fully realized until we have learned who we are and figured out what we need to become. Only then can we express our truth and be at peace with our reality.

Despite working on blockbuster productions in a science-fiction genre known for spectacle, this study has made evident the substance of these films. Nolan and the Wachowskis are undoubtedly auteurs that have managed to express their personal vision within the collaborative and commercial medium of Hollywood cinema.

WORKS CITED

- Astruc, Alexandre. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo." Graham and Vincendeau, pp 31-38. Originally published in *L'Écran français*, 30 Mar. 1948.
- Bazin, Andre. "On the Politique des Auteurs." Graham and Vincendeau, pp 130-148. Originally published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Apr. 1957.
- Biancolli, Amy. Review and summary of *Inception*, 2010. *The Houston Chronicle*, 14 July 2010, www.chron.com/entertainment/movies/article/Inception-1719086.php.
- Ebert, Roger. Review and summary of *Psycho*, 1960. *RogerEbert.com*, 6 Dec. 1998, www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-psycho-1960.
- Ebert, Roger. Review and summary of *Psycho*, 1998. *RogerEbert.com*, 6 Dec 1998, www.rogerebert.com/reviews/psycho-1998.
- Faithful, George. "Salvation from Illusion, Salvation by Illusion: The Gospel According to Christopher Nolan." *Implicit Religion*, Vol. 17, no 4, Nov 2014, pp. 405-416.
- Graham, Peter and Ginette Vincendeau, editors. *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Grosz, Christy. "Inside Aaron Sorkin's Writing Process." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 8 Jan. 2011, www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/aaron-sorkins-writing-process-69586.
- Hemon, Alexander. "Beyond The Matrix." *The New Yorker*, 10 Sep. 2012, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/09/10/beyond-the-matrix.
- Hutchinson, Sean. "Did Steven Spielberg Shadow-Direct the Original 'Poltergeist'?" *Inverse*, 25 May 2015, www.inverse.com/article/3342-did-steven-spielberg-shadow-direct-the-original-poltergeist.

- Johnson, Vilja. "It's What You Do that Defines You: Christopher Nolan's Batman as Moral Philosopher." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 47, no 5, pp. 952-967.
- Jones, Alan. Review and summary of *The Matrix*, 1999. *Radio Times*, n.d.,
www.radiotimes.com/film/rk5b/the-matrix.
- Lewis-Kraus, Gideon. "The Exacting, Expansive Mind of Christopher Nolan." *The New York Times*, 1 Nov. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/11/02/magazine/the-exacting-expansive-mind-of-christopher-nolan.html.
- Lurie, Robert Dean. "Star Wars, George Lucas, and the Pitfalls of 'Auteur Theory'." *The American Culture*, 23 Jan. 2015, theamericanculture.org/star-wars-george-lucas-and-the-pitfalls-of-auteur-theory/.
- McGowan, Todd. *The Fictional Christopher Nolan*. U of Texas P, 2012.
- Nolan, Christopher. *Inception*. Warner Brothers, 2010.
- , director. *Memento*. 2000. Lionsgate, 2011.
- , director. *The Prestige*. 2006. Buena Vista, 2007.
- Palmer, Landon. "The Hidden Brilliance of the Wachowskis." *Film School Rejects*, 2 Jun. 2015, filmschoolrejects.com/the-hidden-brilliance-of-the-wachowskis-1bfa29d29021.
- Puig, Claudia. "Vengeance is theirs in sharp *Vendetta*." *USA Today*, 15 Mar. 2006, usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/reviews/2006-03-15-v-for-vendetta_x.htm.
- Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962." *Film Culture*, no. 27, Winter 1962-63, pp. 1-8.
- Scott, A O. "The John Hughes Touch." *The New York Times*. 7 Aug. 2009.
www.nytimes.com/2009/08/08/movies/08appraisal.html.

- Truffaut, François. "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." Graham and Vincendeau, pp 39-64. Originally published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 1954.
- Wachowski, Lana, et al., producers. *Cloud Atlas*. 2012. Warner Brothers, 2013.
- . *V for Vendetta*. Warner Brothers, 2006.
- Wade, Chris. "Speed Racer, the Wachowskis' Masterpiece." *Slate*, 25 Oct. 2012, www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2012/10/25/speed_racer_the_wachowskis_masterpiece_is_underrated.html.
- Wallis, Jason. "*Bound* (****) Heist thriller mastered by Wachowski Brothers." *Lodi News-Sentinel*, 25 Mar. 2006.
- Wollen, Peter. "The Auteur Theory." *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, Revised ed., Indiana UP, 1973, pp. 74-115.