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Narrative Archetypes and Paratextuality: Analysis of Three Films by Christopher Nolan

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ABSTRACT

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Nonlinear films display unconventional narratives that leave ambiguous endings that create rewatchability, making audiences want to rewatch and review the films. These films also create conversation on social media outlets and infiltrate discussion on popular culture. This rhetorical analysis examines narrative structure, narrative archetypes, and paratextuality of three nonlinear Christopher Nolan films: *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet*. By examining how these different forms of narrative display the moral messaging and structure within each film, this analysis provides context in how nonlinear narratives promote rewatchability and create continuous paratexts. Through Nolan's films, nonlinear film styles create more than rewatchability as Nolan specifically uses narrative archetypes to create character archetypes. The character archetypes produce multiple narratives that allow different viewpoints for audiences. These three different films also explain that there is a thin line between ambiguous endings and rewatchability for these types of films.

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Introduction

Nonlinear storytelling is not new to film and cinema, especially in the post-modern era of films. More and more films represent an episodic and nonlinear style of storytelling that have moved beyond the classic chronologically linear three-act structure of beginning-middle-end. Film directors such as Stanley Kubrick, Orson Welles, Akira Kurosawa, Christopher Nolan, and Quentin Tarantino have created several alternative films and unconventional narratives that has created this new style of unorthodox film narration which has also been called the "Tarantino effect" (Berg, 2006, p. 6). These unconventional film narratives have started to move beyond small independent and art house studios and have claimed blockbuster success and ratings as well as become financed by bigger studios and corporations with these types of films becoming more mainstream in popular culture.

Previously, unconventional and alternative films were seen as a novelty and were much harder to find. Because of the alternative style, nonlinear films were harder for a general population to enter or to understand. These films are unusual because they are experimental with how time is structured chronologically, and their endings are usually incomplete or ambiguous. The normal narrative usually follows a structured narrative archetype such as the hero's journey (Campbell, 1949) or other classic fable and myth structures (Booker, 2004). The alternative film style leave films without a conclusion creating an ambiguous ending that does not clearly define where the narration will go and leaves audiences with more questions than answer. These ambiguous endings also allow room for audiences to make their own interpretation beyond the director's intention. With these films becoming more popular, the unconventional narratives and ambiguous endings inspire online discussion and internet chatter which consist of fan theorizing and alternative explanations to why the films were made or what the films answer. These

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outsides sources or paratexts illustrate that these films, with their unorthodox story structures, are the types of films that initiate these types of online conversations.

The nonlinear narrative of this type of film has had scholars try to classify and analyze why these movies are becoming popular and different (Berg, 2006). While research has begun to look at how this type of narrative functions and can possibly be explained, there are more and more films changing the structure of narrative and showing an alternative use of time and space which is changing how audiences view film, especially in a theater. The unorthodox narrative can be found in all movie genres, and film directors with an unconventional style attempt to make a change in multiple genres. Christopher Nolan films enter this category because his films are representative of familiar genres, but they display alternative perspectives on time and space, thus creating a different understanding of what narrative structure can be. Other literature has analyzed specific films of Christopher Nolan via the mode of ethics (Brislin, 2016, McGowen, 2012), trauma (Joy, 2020), the reality of space and time, and the dialogue of dreams (Fisher, 2011), however there is a space and lack of information about Nolan's narrative process and the effect it has on the message of the film and cinema.

The purpose of this study is to examine three films that are representative of popular films with unconventional narratives such as the Christopher Nolan films: *Inception* (2010), *Interstellar* (2014), and *Tenet* (2020), in the ways that they portray structural narrative archetypes and nonlinearity and ambiguous endings according to narrative perspective (Fisher, 1984) and story archetypes (Booker, 2004). The paratextuality of these films are generated through ambiguity and can reveal how conversation outside the text has impacted viewing. By the nature of these films, conversations of paratexts are generated on social platforms to find coherence of the films. This study will analyze how these nonlinear films change structure of

narratives that promote rewatchability and how conversations that surround the films lead to continuous paratexts. This study contributes to the literature by understanding how Nolan uses narrative archetypes to create character archetypes that allow for rewatchability. It also displays how ambiguous endings lead to rewatchability that generates continuous paratexts that surround an original text or film.

Literature Review

Narrative Perspective

One of the approaches to analyzing the films will be through the narrative perspective. First proposed by communication scholar, Walter Fisher (1984), the narrative perspective paradigm of rhetorical analysis is to create an understanding of a text in the realm of storytelling and how the bigger picture of these stories causes the audience to react and behave (Sellnow, 2010). Fisher (1984) describes this bigger picture as narrative rationality and focuses on the symbolic actions of the narrative as well as the coherence and fidelity, or trueness, of a text. Narrative fidelity is considered by how true or familiar a story has with the experience that the listener has to the narrative. By processing the fidelity of a narrative, the clarification of a story's nature and value are presented (Fisher, 1987). This type of analysis begins by looking and describing the text's main features such as the setting, characters, narrator, events, and the temporal relations of the events. To describe temporal relations, the text is analyzed by their order of events and can be classified as *syntagmatic*—where one event leads naturally to another—or *paradigmatic* which displays events in flashbacks and flash forwards (Sellnow, 2010). Examples of a syntagmatic text is any narrative that leads chronically from beginning, middle and end such as most fairy tales. Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) and Tarantino's

Pulp Fiction (1994) are considered paradigmatic because of their use of flashbacks and flash forwards.

An analysis using the narrative perspective allows for a greater understanding of the messages being sent to and received by an audience. This type of approach can be used on multiple topics containing a story such as: politics, movies, music, folklore, books, and advertisements to provide an understanding and analysis of mediated messages (Fisher, 1987; Roberts, 2004; Sellnow, 2010). Beyond the study of topics, the use of narrative perspective has come in play with different mediums such as television, film, and social media site like YouTube where storytelling can be affected by the editing style of each of the platforms (Humphreys, 2018). The medium and type of message change the way the audience can receive the information and the ways that it will be processed (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967).

In context of the narrative paradigm, the text should have a moral focus to provide valued reasons (Fisher, 1985). These reasons also called "good reasons" are defined as the elements that justify "the accepting or adhering to advice" in a communication setting (Fisher, 1978, p. 378). The ethical value of the text helps determine the human relation and connection to what is being communicated beyond the words, and what symbolic meaning is being represented (Schneewind, 1982). In film or a text, the virtues and ethical values are a guide to the audience to verify the identification and moral reasonings of the narration of a text. Brislin (2016) applies the ethical lens to Nolan's films to find the functionality of time and space to rationalize the ethics behind the manipulations of time. The analysis finds multiple ethical dilemmas of sacrifice, humanity, and revenge that question if moral reasoning can transcend time suggesting that all narratives are subjected to a moral universe. Each text analyzed under the narrative paradigm theory should convey the moral and value of reasonings to understand the influence an audience may receive

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(Fisher, 1987). These values have been established by other philosophers such as Aristotle, McIntyre, and Nietzsche to find and identify the value of human reasoning (Schneewind, 1982).

Episodic and Dramatic Rhetoric

The narrative perspective also elaborates upon the original teachings of Aristotle (1997) and his ideals of dramatic and episodic rhetoric. Dramatic or linear rhetoric is shown in the form of a basic, cohesive plot that has a beginning, middle, and end. This structure can vary in storytelling, but it performs a specific structure for the plot to have cohesive understanding for the narrative and storytelling form (Aristotle, 1997). Episodic rhetoric is where the story is told in episodes, or in a modern sense, the story is told in a nonlinear fashion where the action can happen *in media res* or form the storyline in an out-of-order sequence. Aristotle claims that episodic rhetoric is the "worst of all the plots and actions" because of the distortion of narration (Aristotle, 1958, p. 20). This narrative distortion affects audiences because the cause-and-effect sequences are ruined, limiting the audience's ability to emotionally connect with the storyline (Finkelberg, 2006).

While Aristotle argues for better plot through linearity rather than episodic plot because of the lack of confusion, Krijanskaia (2008) argued through the lens of theatre, that plots can be built beyond linear episodes, destroying narrative structure, but creating a metaphysical plot that is still understandable. While in perspective of theatre, the metaphysical plot perspective can bring in a new context to films and other story messages because it goes beyond classical rhetoric. The different types of narrative that reject the dramatic and linear narrative are called counter-Aristotelian narratives. Diverging from natural narrative transitions, the counter-Aristotelian narrative adds complexity and ambiguity to the plot (Economopoulou, 2009). This counter-Aristotelian narrative can offer different interpretations of storylines and variance where

classical rhetoric can lack in full content understanding (Krijanskaia, 2008). These variances within narrative structure create a place where narrative perspective and plot lines may be out of sync and require analysis on the variations in a text.

Narrative Structure and Archetypes

Along with understanding the narrative perspective, the purpose of plot and archetype has been studied in many forms in the literature. Psychologist, Carl Jung (2014), suggested that there are several different archetypes found in humans or their unconscious that are created by their similarities and everyday interactions with other humans rather than by the information and attributes that keep them separate (Papadopoulos, 2006). These different archetypes are shown as four different types: the mother figure, rebirth or transcendence, spirits in fairytales, and the trickster-figure. The archetypes are the unconscious "representations collective" that influence the conscious state to help understand myths, dreams, and other psychic experiences (Jung, 2014, p. 5). These archetypes are suggested as a part of the human consciousness and lead to the natural storytelling that has been found throughout history. Through development of culture and language, archetypes help narratives to evolve (Vaughn Becker & Neuberg, 2019). The reversal can be stated that narratives help archetypes with their development, evolvement, and cohesion, which has the same effect upon the characters in the narrative (Green et al., 2019). Humans' natural need and ability to tell stories and engage with different characters has helped develop the many types of storytelling functions and plot points.

With the need to tell stories to understand the human condition consciously or unconsciously, narratives archetypes can be found in any story or myth to find understanding, or all stories can fit into one archetype as suggested by Joseph's Campbell's (1949) hero monomyth. The monomyth suggest that hero myths all have similar stories and archetypes that

provide for the hero's journey. That journey consists mainly of 12 steps that secure the rites of passages in three basic steps of "separation, initiation, and return" (p. 23). The hero's journey can be classified in different ways with a variety of storylines and can lead a main character or plot into several main narrative changes (Vogler, 2017). The monomyth does provide a structural framework that has been provided as an analysis tool for other literature texts (Phillips, 1975).

Building on Jung (2014) and Campbell (1949), Christopher Booker (2004) analyzes stories and myths of all styles to claim that are only seven major plots or story archetypes in which narratives can be classified. The plot points are as follows: *overcoming the monster*, *rags to riches*, *the quest*, *voyage and return*, *comedy*, *tragedy*, and *rebirth*. The archetype plot points are descriptive for a text to find cohesion and natural ending. The7 story needs to have a challenge, but a conclusive ending to relay themes and character development (Moin, 2020). The plot archetypes are developed through the means of constriction and expansion to relay the movement between events. A story plot must move the characters through actions that constrict or slow the movements, then a scene of expansion or opening that allows the story to flow. This provides a depth to the plot and deepens the structure of each of the archetypes. Also, the seven different plots can overlap and mix with other archetypes within certain narratives and are not completely defined where one plot must be structured within one single archetype (Booker, 2004).

Consistent with the theory of narrative paradigm, character development is also an important factor for creating a whole and natural story arc. With character relationships reaching a set value by demonstrating "masculine and feminine" values, and the characters revealing the psychological trait of their fatal flaws (Booker, 2004, p. 267), characters cannot be perfect because stories reveal the ideal image of human nature. There needs to be a representation of

light and dark which is portrayed through masculine and feminine traits. At the completion of a story, and in conjunction with Jung's psychological values of archetypes, the masculine and feminine traits need to find a oneness with each other to find the true self (Leigh, 2011). Through the opposite traits, either masculine and feminine or the dark and light representation, the plot finds the fidelity that is asked for in Booker's idea of whole plots and by the narrative paradigm theory. Many of Booker's plot types, specifically *the quest*, *overcoming the monster*, and *the voyage and return* archetypes match the findings of the monomyth of the hero's journey. Recognizing that these archetypes are changeable with context, but maintain the same shape, allows storytelling to be diverse and experimental, though not all stories may fit into these concise archetypes (Knudsen, 2014).

These plots are significant in telling a story and can interact with the narrative theory by adding more context to the given message of the text. Each plot type controls the archetype narration that an audience needs to feel connected to the whole text. Without this plot structure, the story is detached from its narrative purpose. This shift has occurred with modern stories with psychological twists that remove the audience from basic plot points to a disintegration of narration (Booker, 2004). The separation of these story archetypes, also known by Booker as "losing the plot", comes from the dissolvement of the ego from the self (p. 413). This has become a common phenomenon in certain texts since modernists drove away from 19th century realism, and postmodernists exceeded past the avant-garde of modernists (Storey, 2015; Mihoc, 2011). These "lost plots" still offer a centralized plot and explain why the story may fall behind the normalized perspective of the seven basic plots (Booker, 2004). The disintegration of narrative from these plots may still be categorized within the seven archetypes. However, there is a gap in the research about narrative disintegration and if those plots still align with the seven

archetypes. These unconventional narratives that alter timelines may be creating or eliminating these specific archetypes.

The structure of the narrative can also be influenced by the amount of action, or stories told in one text. This type of narrative structure is known as *metalepsis*, which is defined as a fictional world that contains multiple stories and different worlds all in one place (Wolf & Bernhart, 2018). Metalepsis, which was originally introduced by Gérard Genette, focuses on diegetic characters as they enter a metadiegetic universe (1983). In other words, metalepsis is how the commentary of a character influences a story that is held within a story. This literary term has been used to analyze Christopher Nolan's works of space and time because of his metadiegetic universe that are held in his films, especially in the film, *Inception.* In the world of the film, the world and dreams are embedded with layers and consequences that create the world's fictional metalepsis (Kiss, 2012). Beyond the metalepsis and metadiegetic world, Lugea (2013) creates a taxonomy to describe the multiple worlds that exist in Nolan's film worlds. These multiple fictional worlds are given an ontology by outlining the complex layers of narrative structure that exist in these types of alternative films.

Rewatchability

Previous literature has revealed how nonlinear films have been analyzed and categorized. A classification of alternate and nonlinear films creating the "Tarantino Effect" are defined as where narration is out of sync (Berg, 2006). Berg argues that Tarantino films and similar movies are creating a new narrative to confound viewers and the terms of linearity. These nonlinear movies are forcing viewers to repeat and rewatch these films because they are "denser, more complex, and less classical movie narratives" (p. 57). While these films are becoming more complex, they are also returning to old rhetorical strategies of reflection and reviewing to

understand the messages contained within the films. "Continual re-creation" or repeated views of films is part of the narrative fidelity and valued reasoning that holds audiences to process the complexities of life (Fisher, 1987, p. 65). Previous analysis of Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) inserts the complexity of nonlinear films with space and time. This complexity does not confuse the audience, but it helps them recognize the plot structure among the chaos, although the film is not in linear sequence (Tsend & Bateman, 2012). *Memento* is a "dense web of cohesive ties" as it displays a film that reverses time but has clear "narrative comprehension process" (pp. 114-115). This new narrative style leads to a new understanding and comprehension from the viewers when different forms of structure are introduced.

Nonlinear Styles of Nolan Films

These nonlinear types of texts and films feature multiple types of complexity and cohesion within their narrative structures. The categories that feature these narrative styles can be split into nonlinear storytelling and nonlinear storyworlds (Willemsen & Kiss, 2020). The nonlinear storytelling considers the narration of the plot out of chronological order. Nonlinear storyworlds feature the world itself and are a "deviation of linearity" that represent the film world's creation of parallel universes or scenarios that bring in time travel, which are represented in sci-fi genre (p. 174). Christopher Nolan films can reside in both the nonlinear storytelling and nonlinear storyworld format and classification because of the different structure of time that he has in each of his movies. *Memento* tells its story out of chronological order, whereas the film *Interstellar* (2014) jumps through time and space in the world itself. The storyworld format can develop impossible plots that create an "estranging effect" for the storyline and deconstructs narrators, characters, and the notion of real-world of time and space (Alber, 2009, p. 80). Considering the narration and style that is formed by storyworlds can add insight to how these

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nonlinear plot structures fit into the seven basic story plots, and the way archetypes can be altered by the form.

Film and the Structure of time

Further classification of nonlinear films comes from the structure of time and space in film. One point of identification of film is the modular narrative where the narrative is beyond the classical format of structure and displays a destabilized version of the past, present, and future in scenes. The modular narratives are classified as the following: anachronic, forking paths, episodic, and split-screen. The anachronic films involve the use of split time using flashbacks or flashforwards that manipulate the plot, whereas forking paths films display opposite versions of the same story and manipulates the story. The episodic narratives, as previously explained, are shown in episodes that can be abstract or constructed as some form of anthology. This differs from the split-screen that displays multiple events that are happening at once or combining several stories to be shown at once. In the classification of Christopher Nolan films, the anachronic and split-screen modular structures are the most congruent and representative with his film models. The anachronic structure can be seen in *Memento*, whereas the split-screen structure is shown in the *Dark Knight Trilogy*, *Inception*, and *Dunkirk* (Cameron, 2008).

Cinematographic time is how the structure of a film and the representation of time is manipulated within the images of film. As commented on by Tonkonoff, "The image of linear and cumulative time of classical reason is unable to contain the representation of psychic processes, which obey another temporality" (Rella, 1998, p. 206). Film and time are not presented with the same valued reasons, which is why time can be manipulated by cinematic film. Time is considered as a condition or state for the personal existence (Tarkvosky & Hunter-

Blair, 1989). For storytelling, it has been argued that narrative is the human relation to time (Ricoeur & Blamey, 1990). With this condition of time, the variations in time in film becomes part of the experience for the audience, where time is not lost, but gained because of the cinematic effect of the impacts of time and space.

Time can also be altered in cinematography by how it is presented, or through the lack of time presented. This is shown through time-gaps, absence, and intervals. The chronology of cinema can be logically altered by these spaces in time where the narration is not completed, in order to serve as an "approach to narrative experimentation" (Van Eenoo, 2018, p. 20). The art of film and creating stories allows for experimentation because it can manipulate time to make illusions in cinematic time rather than real-world time that produces an impression of time (Tarvosky & Hunter-Blair, 1989). Cinematic nonlinear storytelling can be effective because it can tell a narrative while the meaning of time unravels. This is because of the effectiveness of cross-cutting images that alternates images to portray meaning, either emotional or symbolic, in a film (Bordwell et al., 1985). While juxtaposition in cinematic images leads to a certain story plot being told, it does depend on the type of nonlinearity and abstractness to create a story with a cohesive plot.

When under the changes and subjections of nonlinearity and the manipulation of space and time, the idea of narrative shifts. One of Nolan's first movies, *Memento,* separates itself from the normal structure of time and space because of its plot that runs backwards and its features of flashbacks and flashforwards. Time and space are also affected in the movie because of the main character's amnesia (Tseng & Bateman, 2012). Changing linearity loses the structure of time, but not the narration. By knowing the ending of the film from the beginning, the narration fills the holes, yet it tricks the audience. The manipulation of the space-time continuum in cinema leads

to the assessment that Nolan's films are based on deception because of the differential use of plot, time, and space (McGowen, 2012). This keeps the cognitive structure, but the nonlinear plot deletes the need for time balance within films. The fight with real-time in films becomes nonexistent in nonlinear cinema, which is why films drive to experiment further and further from the natural feel of time.

Intentional Fallacy

When the nonlinearity of modern films can influence and allow for their reconstruction of narrative, the audience can accept the cognitive dissonance. This acceptance can be attributed to the intentional fallacy which asserts that the author has no claim of interpretation of their work after it is published (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946). The author is irrelevant to the text and the meaning when it comes to criticism of the text (Wilson, 1980). The textual reading and comprehension is furthered by and that analysis and comprehension are up to the reader alone is furthered by Roland Barthes (2001) who suggest that the meaning of the text should be discovered by the reader rather than rely on the intention of the author.

The intentional fallacy comes through the analysis of new critical theory in which the meaning and analysis of a text is found in the structure and words of a text and not the outside biographical and meaning that comes from the author (Brooks, 1979; Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946). In terms of film and cinema, the focus of the intentional fallacy derives meaning from the text and structure of the film. With the removal of the author or the director, the criticism of the intentional fallacy is determined with how the text is presented without the influence of what the director intended, but by what is actually presented and structured in the film. When texts are left to the audience to decipher and engage with, ambiguous plot lines and nonlinearity do not need to have a conclusive ending. There should be an ending to these nonlinear films and texts, but

they do not need to be subjected to a conclusive idea if the audience has the right to interpret the text because the author cannot impose his or her own meaning.

Ambiguous endings allow the audience to create their own meaning and understanding of a film or text. Such methods of ambiguity have found placement in many nonlinear films where endings have no complete conclusion. These ambiguous tones in Nolan's films shape character identity and themes. This becomes a frame in which the audience can connect with the film, as well as decide and analyze the text for themselves. A text's cognitive understanding is linked to the messages that are communicated to the audience by whatever themes may prevail (Hill-Parks, 2011). To understand the function of the manipulation of time and its impact on an audience, one study conducted an analysis on an audiences' understanding of cognitive shifts over time. It found that a narrative film is like narrative text, and the relative shifts in time and space are important to film understanding, but independently related (Magliano et al., 2001).

Paratextuality

From understanding what the text or film is saying for itself is important as well as the conversation that happens around that text. Paratextuality looks at the context that is surrounding a text and how it influences how the text is interpreted (Genette 1997a). All forms of texts and media can have a paratext. These texts can appear as reviews, authorial discourse, and interviews. Paratexts are meant to function to add interpretation to an isolated text and can shape the meaning of the original text.

Paratextuality can be broken into sections and types of texts such as *peritext* and *epitext* Peritext examines things directly related to the text such as captions and illustrations, while epitext examines the outside elements such as reviews, blogs, and other discourse that discusses the original text (Genette 1997a). The source for these types of texts can come from the author as

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well as other sources such as different criticism of the text (Brookey & Gray, 2017). These other elements such as epitext and peritext alter the original text (Genette, 1997a) and cannot be separated from the text because it has become a part of the text not only from conversation but from what is added from the outside texts (Brookey & Gray, 2017). Paratexts should not overwhelm the original text and should add meaning and insight creating functionality (Genette, 1997b). Other literature suggests that paratexts can be used to attack or subvert a text's preferred meanings of different readings. This allows audiences such as readers and producers to create and use paratexts for entertainment and critical analysis (Gray, 2012). Paratexts are informative to the cultural and societal ideas surrounding a text which makes paratexts an intrinsic part of the text and is part of the actual text itself (Brookey & Gray, 2017).

From Genette (1997b), paratexts do not only provide a transition from the original text, but also a transaction to provide influence. In perspective of the intentional fallacy and the displacement of the author, paratextuality does not necessarily care about the authorial intentions, but of the identifying the textual elements and effects that have come from the author (Sedlmeier, 2018). This is due to the nature that texts can draw different meanings and entities because of the different interpretation of language that creates the analysis of paratexts (Genette, 1997b; Gray, 2021). Critical discussions suggests that Genette cares about authorial intent creating the distinction of *epitext* and *peritext* (1997a), yet Gray argues that authorial intent does not matter because paratexts may be external to an original text but becomes a "constitutive part of the text" (2021, p. 34). Specifically with popular culture and films, texts are always accompanied by paratexts suggesting that a text cannot exist by itself as implied by the intentional fallacy. Paratexts consistently create more and more texts, although some paratexts will have either "quiet" paratexts or "loud" paratext (Gray, 2021). These different texts with loud

paratexts "become more prominent, famous, and part of popular culture; they produce and attract more paratexts" (p.35). Gray also suggests that paratexts attract and capture the social trappings of audience opinions which can be shown through popular culture references such as Star Wars that proliferate into everyday life and conversation. The spread of paratexts creates endless possibilities in how paratexts are view and how ambiguous films add to the conversation of prolific texts.

With the transactional and unending nature of paratexts, different texts can be assigned a function for narration and structure. Baruah (2021) viewed paratexts as a method to liberate film and television narratives that lead to more themes and past simplification of a text that the perspective of new criticism may provide. From this perspective, there is more to discover about paratext and how it interacts with narrative structure.

Ambiguity

Films can be low, moderate, or high in terms of ambiguity (Pryluck et al., 1982). The differences between types of ambiguity are found in the ways images are pieced together to create context and a story. From Pryluck and others' study on the ambiguity of film, researchers measured ambiguity in terms of different images put together. They measured their images by a group of participants agreeing and disagreeing with certain organization of images. Low ambiguity is when images easily connect to the narrative and there is hardly room for different interpretations, moderate and high ambiguity lead to more interpretation between images with high ambiguity leading audiences to suggest different meaning and context based on the images alone (Bohlinger, 2017; Pryluck et al., 1982). Low ambiguity suggests that each movie has one interpretation, and that high ambiguity leaves an audience with no conclusions or lack of answers, with moderate ambiguity in the middle of the two extremes. With ambiguous films, this

type of cinema is more concerned with commentary (Bohlinger, 2017) and is a type of cinema that creates "psychological effects in search of their causes" (Bordwell, 1979, p. 58).

With the many ways that narratives are developed and portrayed, there are multiple advantages to studying nonlinear films. Different stories, films, and types of cinemas can contain a wholeness to a text or simply be incomprehensible. There is a space for literature to recognize and study the different ways stories can become congruent though the stories lack linearity; this is a new developing area of interests in cultural studies. Understanding how film utilizes space and time to manipulate an audience's cognitive recognition is important in taking the next steps of analysis for nonlinear and avant-garde films.

The many different studies that have looked at Nolan's films have focused on the core ethical values of space and time (Brislin, 2016; Joy, 2020; Kiss, 2012; Tsend & Bateman, 2012). There are spaces to fill looking at how the narrative specifically is impacted by Nolan's use of time-twisting plots rather than on the ethical and emotional implications that Nolan's films have. There is a wide range of theories to study and interpret these types of nonlinear films but finding the complexities of a narrative and archetypal structure still need to be analyzed. Other studies have viewed how time has been manipulated in Nolan films, but there is a depth missing when analyzing the archetypes and plot structures. Further analysis and research can also determine if the cultural impact that these types of films have on cinema and how it may be changing the film landscape.

Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the literature with nonlinear films and their narrative structure, this study will use three of Christopher Nolan's films as a case study to analyze the moral reasoning and narrative perspective, story archetypes in a nonlinear setting, and the paratextual

conversations from videos and reviews that surround these films. This study aims to investigate the following questions:

RQ1: How does Nolan experiment with cinematic story form and moral reasoning and coherence?

RQ1a: With the nonlinear film style, does Nolan create or alter a new story archetype?

RQ2: How do the paratexts around these films amplify or detract from the original text?

RQ3: How does the nonlinear film style of Nolan's films illustrate the phenomenon rewatchability?

Methodology

From the collection of alternative and nonlinear films, Christopher Nolan has made several films that defy time and space which alters the conventional narrative. Of the many films that Nolan has made, many are scattered through genres. *Inception* displays a heist genre within a dream using time in distinct layers. Next, *Interstellar* is a space genre that displaces time through the space/time travel and the fifth dimension. Finally, *Tenet* is a spy thriller that convolutes time between going forward and backwards within time. With a sample from three different genre types and different narrative conventions, *Inception*, *Interstellar,* and *Tenet* provide a case study to view how Nolan uses different modular narratives and approaches each one with an unconventional view of time and space, as well as display different narratives and archetypes between them. Each film has generated questions with the ending that has created fan theories and assumptions about narrative that also provide useful paratexts to analyze. To answer the research questions, I will conduct an analysis on the narrative perspective, the classification

of story archetypes, the intentional fallacy, and the conversations or paratexts that surround each film.

Narrative Perspective

Taking each film, the analysis uses the narrative perspective or paradigm, which will examine the coherence and fidelity of the text with the plot and its functions as well as representation of characters. The narrative paradigm can be broken down into two parts for analysis of coherence and fidelity. To find coherence of the film's narrative, factors of the structure of the narrative such as the how the plot, although nonlinear for each movie, is represented and the credibility of each main character in the film (Fisher, 1987). Credibility of the characters is contingent upon character's behavior and if it is in line with the narrative and rings of truthfulness from human experience (Stutts & Barker, 1999). For each film, the plot will be described based on actions in the film, the setting, characters, and their relationships, and how the story is told in relation to time.

Determining the fidelity of the films is processed by the moral reasoning of the narrative. This is based on the facts of the narrative and if the argument of the film is demonstrating an effective argument or rhetoric. The following questions that will be asked to determine fidelity: (a) if the reasoning patterns are followed in the narration, does the narrative display logical sense; and (b) are the facts of the narration displaying ethical values. From answering these questions, the narrative fidelity can be established and will help with the interpretation of the moral that is conveyed from each film as well as the potential implications that the texts offer. The moral can be determined through the good reasons that the film provides by analyzing the positive or negative ethical elements that come from moral judgments (Fisher, 1978; Fisher, 1984; Sellnow, 2010) From answering questions about the text and analyzing each part that is

displayed in the narrative, the coherence and the fidelity of each film can be interpreted to find answers for the analysis of the narrative perspective.

Narrative Archetypes

The analysis for each film for narrative archetypes is similar to the evaluation of the narrative perspective. Booker (2004) has stated that there are seven different archetypes that narratives can fit into based off their structure. Each movie plot will be determined if it fits into one or multiple of the seven different archetypes. Classifying the films from the different archetypes can help reveal if nonlinear plots can fit precisely into the different archetype or if the nonlinear structure of these movies have created a new or different archetype that has not been classified. By understanding the archetype, the structure of the film can provide insight to why more of these types of stories are being told in film.

Intentional Fallacy

The new criticism theory of the intentional fallacy provides specific analysis on each film structure and what the text has to offer by itself. This process is conducted by doing a close reading or in this case a close viewing of each of the films to reveal what themes emerge from the nonlinear format and structure. By looking closely at *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet*, the analysis will strictly look at the message that each film portrays rather than interpret what Nolan wanted or decided to do for each film. This consists of understanding what messages are revealed in the text specifically as well as understanding the structure of each film and if the messages within the film can stand by itself.

Paratextuality

The analysis for the paratexts surrounding Nolan's films will come from outside sources of the film. Paratexts are interpreted as items that surround the text that relates to the author

(Genette 1997b) and are informative to the cultural and societal ideas that surround a text (Brookey & Gray, 2017). Comparison of the paratext to the original films will help with the analysis of the interpretation of each film by adding how conversations around the film impact the narrative and other cinema. The paratexts will add into the conversation from the intentional fallacy because paratexts bring the analysis to the reader and look at the text outside of the original text giving context to how each film has been interpreted by others.

Paratexts can form from ambiguity in different texts. Ambiguity in films can be low, moderate, or high by the way images and the story is pieced together. The films of *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet* are ranked in moderate and high in terms of ambiguity and are analyzed by their ambiguous endings and how that adds to the paratexts of each film. Since paratexts can be considered "quiet" or "loud" and can proliferate in ambiguity (Gray, 2021), this analysis will focus on loud points of paratext for each film. This is operationalized through two outside sources of paratexts, called in this analysis from the top video most viewed video on YouTube for each film, and the top two most helpful reviews found on IMDb for each film.

Summaries of the Films

Inception

Inception (2010) is a film about a thief, Mr. Cobb, who steals ideas through dream technology. Cobb, working for Cobol Engineering, initially tries to steal information from a man named Saito, but Cobb fails and is later hired by Saito. He rallies a group of four other people to help him plant an idea inside the mind of a CEO named Robert Fischer, who just obtained his father's company. The team consists of Adriane, the new architect for the dreams; Arthur, the point man; Saito who funds the operation; and Eames as the forger. The team prepares for the dream heist by developing plans, sedatives, and time to complete the heist on a flight from

Australia to L.A. to persuade the CEO to disintegrate portions of the company. However, once in the dream state, trouble brews from Cobb's subconscious version of his dead wife, as well as trained security against the dream functionality, and the team must race to complete their objective between three different dream levels and the dangers of death because of the chance of falling into limbo and losing their mind. The film moves between layers of reality, dreams, and dreams inside of dreams, as the team works to persuade the CEO of the ills of his father, and Mr. Cobb fights to keep his sense of reality.

Interstellar

The sci-fi space drama *Interstellar* (2014) is about the race to save humanity as earth loses food and life sustainability. To ensure the future of human life, Cooper and other space scientists use interstellar travel to journey through a wormhole in search of other planets that may sustain life. The race is on between space travel and the time on earth where Cooper's daughter, Murphy, is trying to solve the problem of life sustainability. The Endurance team consisting of Cooper, Amelia Brand, Dr. Doyle, and Dr. Romilly have two plans where plan A solves gravitational theory to create space settlements, or B starting life on a new planet with frozen human embryos. The Endurance team investigate a hostile ocean world and by the time they return to space, the scientist has lost 23 earth years due to the gravitational pull of a black hole, Gargantua. The film switches between scenes on Earth with Murphy struggling to answer the equation and feeling all is lost because Professor Brand had no plan to actually save Earth. Meanwhile, Cooper decides to take the team to visit a different scientist's world, Mann's planet, to find habitability, and instead find a broken scientist that only wanted to be rescued on in unlivable planet. After disaster and death, Cooper sends his ship into the black hole to provide gravitational answers for Murphy, and he falls into a fifth dimension, or the tesseract, that

represents time in a physical space displayed as Murphy's bedroom where he can send the lifechanging information of gravity. The film reveals that Murph is successful in saving Earth, and Cooper receives the chance to say a proper goodbye to a dying Murph.

Tenet

The film, *Tenet* (2020), is a spy thriller about a protagonist who is fighting to save the world from international espionage. After a distraught end to a fast-paced opera heist, the protagonist starts a new heist with a code "tenet" to discover a nuclear World War 3 plot. The plot is surrounded by items that are inverted, where their entropy runs backwards. The Protagonist meets Neil who helps with the espionage plots, and both of them begin to deal with Sator, an arms dealer using inverted items. The protagonist uses Sator's wife, Kat, to get close to him to discover how Sator plans to destroy the world. Through worldwide travel in Mumbai, Estonia, and Vietnam, the spy team find turnstile machines that invert humans and items. The plot runs forward and backwards through a car chase scene and through a week in the past to stop the completion of a device, the algorithm, created in the future to destroy the world. The spy team tries to stop Sator before he terminates the world through radiated items that have come from the future by inverting themselves into the past and to rescue the algorithm. By the end, the Protagonist realizes that he from the future has overseen the whole project.

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Analysis

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Narrative Perspective

As discussed by Sellnow (2010), Fisher's narrative perspective and analysis of text is analyzed through four main functions of setting, characters, relation of time, and the interpretation of the moral or rationality conveyed. To understand the narrative of the text, the intended audience for each for film needs to be determined. For the three films, the audience is

determined as people who have access to the film suggested as 13 years and older. All three

films are targeted towards a younger audience who enjoy mind-bending fantasy and sci-fi stories.

For *Interstellar*, the audience should have some background in understanding time and gravity.

The following analysis will look at *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet* in how these concepts relate

rationality and fidelity in their texts. From the film perspective, sound will also be analyzed for

coherence in these texts. For reference of how the films narrative analysis is structure please see

Table 1.

Table 1: *Narrative Characteristics Examined in Fisher's Narrative Perspective*

Narrative Qualities	Description
Intended Audience	Who is the target audience?
Setting	Where the action takes place, and does it provide coherence to the narrative?
Characters	Descriptive traits and actions of the characters. Are they static or round?
Narrator	Oral or Visual commentary within a text.
Sound	How diegetic and non-diegetic sound affect the narrative.
Events	Active and Stative events direct the meaning of the fidelity and coherence of a narrative.
Causal Relations	Cause-and-effect relationships that are caused by human action or forces of nature.
Temporal Relations	Representation of time in the narrative through syntagmatic or paradigmatic time.
Morals	What are the ethical values being conveyed?

Note. Characteristics of the narrative perspective were organized by Sellnow (2010).

Inception

 Setting. Like most of Nolan's films, the setting of *Inception* occurs in different parts of the world, and in different settings of dreams. The initial setting occurs in a dream, and as the narrative continues, the setting of the dream and the real-world setting becomes extremely important to understand how the narrative creates time and justify characters actions. In the physical world, the setting takes place in Kenya, France, and an airplane from Australia to the United States. Other scenes display pieces of locations that are linked to Cobb and his wife such as an elegant hotel and their real-life world. However, Cobb has also created dreamlike versions of these places against his own advice. With the action of the heist occurring physically in reality on the flight, the dream sequence can begin and transform the setting. The dream settings are broken into three of four levels with the first dream: a rainy city; the second level of the dream: a hotel, and the third level: snow covered mountain hospital complex. The four level of the dream is termed as Limbo, where people are lost for large amounts of time in the furthest dream state. The characters who arrive here come because while sedated, characters do not wake up in death, but fall into Limbo. This place consists of vast space where anything can be created and is shown as the pieces of Cobb's past with his wife.

 The rationality of the setting, dreams settings, and the manipulation of such is of "good reasons" because the explanation of dreams makes sense (Fisher, 1978). Cobb describes dreams and their settings as an endless sphere of creation because "dreams feel real" (Nolan, 2010, 0:27:00). The architect of the dream creates the setting and environment and then manipulates it. This causes an instability in the setting because the world can change and alter in the dreamscape. The instability creates a sense of falsehood in what the physical world is in the film

as well as the dreamscape causing the lines to blur in the text as to what setting is disguised or real.

The settings of Cobb's life create the link between the real world and the dream world. Cobb's home lies in both physical space and dream space which creates tension between rationality. Throughout the film, Cobb's home and his children's unseen faces demonstrate the unstable reality that lies in understanding if the world is real or not. The ending scene reveals the faces of the children and the reality of Cobb's home, but because of dream sequences that take place in the home and flashbacks, the setting of the house is unstable causing rationality to feel lost.

Characters. The main characters that help dictate and guide the story are Cobb, Saito, Arthur, Eames, Ariadne, Yusuf, and Robert Fischer. Each of them plays a role in the dream heist and helps complete the narrative function. The main narrative focuses on Cobb as he devises and creates the team for the heist; he also creates part of the conflict by withholding information about the heist and his own subconscious state. Cobb's credibility is instilled by the fact that Saito is hiring him for a job surrounding the dream technology. Cobb is the link between the characters as the main protagonist and antagonist in the film because of his subconscious projection of Mal, who seeks to cause chaos in the dreams. Saito's credibility is formed by financing the whole operation and rescuing Arthur and Cobb from Cobol's men. Other characters such as Eames, Arthur, and Yusef serve to provide skills, humor, and explanation to the plot, but offer very little character development and predictability in the role they provide. Saito and Cobb are also predictable characters in terms of actions and have very little development and change. Cobb experiences a slight change of perception and reality by the climax of the film, but still exists mainly as a static character.

The character that displays the most growth and development is Ariadne because she comes into the dream scene as a rookie, and Robert Fischer because he is the one being exploited through the heist. Ariadne quickly learns and adapts to the heist, leveraging unpredictability with her actions such as when she confronts Cobb and provides information for the team. This builds her character's credibility in the narrative because she becomes a pivotal member of the team, provides moral reasons to her actions of the dream, and understands the tribulations that Cobb brings in the dream. Robert Fischer's character is forced to grow because of the manipulations upon his character to change his perspective of his father. The dream allows Fischer to change and become part of the heist for the survival of the narrative and the heist team. As Fischer is implemented to be a part of the team, his character creates credibility by reacting and participating within the scheme of inception. Part of the chaos of the heist is manufactured by Fischer's mind protection which adds another layer to his unpredictability to his character.

Narrator. Narration of a film can be depicted in both a verbal and visual way (Thomson-Jones, 2007). The narration is based upon camera position and what is shown visually to the audience which becomes the text (Bordwell, 2013; Schmidt, 2009). Visually, the unknown narrator or camera perspective, skips around without drawing full attention to how the scene starts or ends. This plays upon the construction of the dream state and the development of the film suggesting that dreams are unreliable; the narration and reality can be altered so that the audience cannot trust what is being shared or spoken as truth. From the visual narrator, the text focuses on Cobb and his experience of narration. But Cobb is unreliable from the beginning because of his trauma of dreamlike realities and deep dreaming (Joy, 2020). The overall narration does not clarify the story, but it adds to the ambiguity because of the fast-paced action of the visual scenes.

Sound. While the narrative perspective does not encapsulate sound within an analysis because of the static placement of texts, a narrative analysis should be conducted on sound to understand the complete complex of an audience's interpretation of a film (Schmidt, 2009). Within *Inception*, the sound creates movement between scenes. Within the text, the song, "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien" (Piaf, 1960), is used as the kick to wake the dreamers. This influences the music and sound heard through the rest of the dream stages where the composition of the film ties into the diegetic sound because it is used as a source for the dreamers to know when the dream will end. This is featured through Arthur since he hears the music, and he is the one dreaming in the second level which allows for the third level dreamers to hear the music as well. The music retards as it travels through the different stages, morphing the sound to the characters. The addition of this diegetic text or sound adds a layer of coherence to the narrative to understand how the team can judge time in a dream as well as to the moral reasoning of dreams that the narrative has been portraying.

Events. With the main premise of the film inquiring about the reality of dreaming, the film moves as a fast-paced thriller that puts reality and dreams at a juxtaposition. The events of the film revolve around active events describing the how architects can build dreams and creating a foundation of how the dream world works. From the discussion of dreams, a person "never really remembers the beginning of a dream" which technique is replicated in events throughout the entire film (Nolan, 2010, 0:27:13). Many events start *in media res*, or in the middle of things, displaying the dreamlike quality that encompasses *Inception*. This quality makes all the events move in a rapid-pace and adds a layer of confusion to what reality is because the events that take place in the physical world acquires the same attributes of *in media res*. Such examples of these events are when Cobb goes to meet Eames in Mombasa and they are

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chased by Cobol's men, as well as when the team is planning the heist. Events phase in and out of dreams to explain and collaborate in how the team will complete the objective to manipulate Fischer. With constant scenes beginning in the middle of the action, the coherence of the film is affected by the constant jumping in the setting affecting how the events occur. There is a layer of confusion because the events lead to the constant questioning of how the event or dream started which will never be answered because of the premise and moral of the film.

Events that are more static give more explanation on how to decipher reality and the dream world by the creation of totems. Totems are explained as an item that only the character knows about so that when the character looks at the totem, the character to know that he or she are "not in someone else's dream" (0:34:16). This idea of the totem and how it plays statically and sometimes actively within the events lead to the perception of what constitutes reality. Throughout the entire film, totems are seen for each character such as Arthur's loaded die, Ariadne's pawn, Eames's poker chip, and Mal's pewter top that Cobb uses. The connotation of the totem implies that one can rely on a totem for reality. This is counterproductive to Cobb however because he is shown relying on Mal's totem which defeats the purpose of a totem, implying that Cobb lies between reality and dreaming because of his lost relationship with his wife. The film creates a key to decipher the messages of the dreams with the use of the totem, but this also adds a level of complexity for the coherence of the film in keeping track of totems and how they are used by the characters.

While not dissecting every event of the film in this analysis, the pinnacle active event occurs during the climax and resolution of the film. The scenes where Ariadne and Cobb enter limbo to rescue Fischer and Saito leads to the final resolutions of Cobb's trauma with Mal. Also, the conclusion of inception is shown by allowing Fischer to realize what is in the safe and if the

idea was successfully planted. It also leads to the culmination that Cobb stays behind to save Saito. These active events lead the way to the coherence of the plot because it ties up the loose ends in the film by saving Saito, allowing Fischer to know the idea, and Cobb leaving Mal behind. These events also allow the film to keep its moral reasonings because it is staying within the logic of the dream in the sense of how inception supposedly works. However, the final scene with Mal's totem of the top leads to the questioning of reality and dreams allowing the narrative to succumb to ambiguity which affects the coherence and reasoning of the film. This questions reality and dreaming as a whole to the applicability of what scenes are useful to understand the ending of the film.

Causal and Temporal Relations. The causal relations focus on the cause and effect of relationships (Sellnow, 2010). Except for minor incident, such as the death of Fischer's father, all the events are a caused by a human relation that Cobb and Saito use to bring together the heist plan. The dreams are a forced cause which allows for the manipulation of the world that the characters are dreaming. One of the main cause and effect reaction events is the truth that Cobb withheld from the team. Cobb does not tell the team that they will not wake up if they die because of the sedation that they are all under. This adds a layer of mistrust and confusion and consequences to the team and the dream. Without knowing the truth, the team becomes affected by the decision and fear of Limbo and time which leads to the moral reasoning that it is better to lie to the team to get the job done.

The temporal relation of the film is subjected to the functioning of dreaming allowing the scenes to jump to different memories and points of time. The film begins with a scene with a flashforward highlighting the disruption of time that will occur later. The paradigmatic time sequences itself between the multiple dream layers. Time is always moving forward in the film

but is disrupted by the dreamscape because each layer features time in different lengths as the team falls deeper into the dream. *Inception* displays syntagmatic time in relative terms because the action is constantly moving forward, and the dream levels are shown as the range across time. Besides the many jump scenes in exposition, the film's temporal relations are more consistently syntagmatic, but it is the disruption of paradigmatic time that relates the feeling of the dream.

  Morals. The moral of *Inception* shifts between contrasting ideas of dreams and reality. This is situated by Cobb as the main character, and what is defined by reality. The ending scene reveals that family is the most important thing because Cobb is reunited with his children. Cobb chooses his children and decides that is his reality by ignoring the totem on the table. However, the discussion of the moral of dreaming and reality is elevated by the scene that people leave reality to dream because they do not come to sleep; "they come to be woken up" (Nolan, 2010, 0:43:25). This extenuates the moral that dreaming is better while sleeping and may be the only way to live. This confliction between reality and dreaming drives the narrative to expand on what is reality without answering the question.

  Based upon Fisher's need for moral fidelity (1984), the reasoning pattern that is created within the narrative is followed by the characters action. The narration and the morals do not conflict within the film's construct of what is reality and what a dream represents. Through this, the film displays logical sense within how a dream is supposed to function, but the narrative can mislead the logic because of the thin representation between dream and reality. The narration displays morals within the text, but not all of them are represented as good ethical things and are represented as dark regret which creates danger in the narrative. This fails the reasoning that the

film displays good judgement, but the final scene represents ethical values of the importance of family which transcends both dream and reality.

Through the text and the intentional fallacy, the message portrayed to the audience is what idea can be planted in our minds by others. With the text and the ambiguous ending, the idea is planted that reality and dreaming are more similar than previously thought, and that idea that Cobb planted in Mal, that her world is fake, is also planted into the mind of the audience. This suggestion displays the moral that ideas can form beyond dreaming and enter reality concluding that inception works. The text plants the idea that not everything that is shown in the film is real allowing the audience to second guess the ending on what reality and dreaming is because the mind can be easily manipulated.

The final scene can be interpreted in different ways because of the significant meaning of totems and how reality is portrayed through the narrative and scene. The top totem can be interpreted to determine reality or dreams, but it can also symbolize Cobb's unhealthy regret and desire to keep his wife with him. As he walks away from it, the top loses its significance because it wasn't Cobb's totem in the first place to differentiate between reality. Totems are also used as a way for the character to know that they are not in someone else's dream. This can be significant in the interpretation of Mal's top and how it is used in the text because it leads to the suspicion that the top represents something other than the significance of reality, but to Cobb's regret that filters through the dreams. With different interpretations, the text can become a discussion board and allows for rewatchability as the audience is allowed to come to his or her own conclusions.

Interstellar

Setting. The film is set within a dystopian world that is covered in blight and crop failures. With the reasoning that the answer to saving Earth is to travel to space through a wormhole, the other main setting is that of the spaceship, the Endurance. Through space, the characters travel to different worlds, a giant ocean world and a dangerous icy planet. The main settings on Earth are the NASA headquarters and Murph's bedroom at the farm. Murph's bedroom becomes the key setting between space travel and Earth because of the connection that is built by the tesseract that represents the fifth dimension making time a physical space.

Most of the settings either on earth or the other planets demonstrate the biological fight that humans have against nature. The spaceship is also subject to the perils of gravity and black holes, while humans try to hold onto what little control they have over their environment. With ecological issues on earth, the fight to survive the setting is felt by all characters, not simply in the unknown parts of space. The setting reveals the biological reasonings for the narrative, however, in terms of trueness, humans would not expect to travel away from Earth to simply survive. The setting is relative to understanding that there is a human experiment to explore and see beyond the unknown but loses its coherence in relying on a wormhole to save all of mankind.

Characters. When the characters are introduced, many are predictable and flat characters because many characters simply provide information while action is being produced by the story's dilemma and travel. The main character, Cooper is introduced as a farmer, but has the background of an engineer and space pilot. His credibility comes from his knowledge of his craft for piloting as well as the strong connection he has for his family. His family is his motivation for leaving and trying to return. While his character is developed by his family ties, Cooper does not develop that much and is more static in comparison to his actions. Beyond the

minor surprises that his character has introduced, Cooper's character displays classic white male socio-economic status and values that leaves his character rather flat. The static nature of other characters is displayed in the Endurance crew members such as Romilly and Doyle, where they are there to provide information for the context of the film but are killed during the exploration on different planets.

Machinery is characterized through the film, such as TARS, KIPP, and CASE that feature settings of humor, sarcasm, and honesty that can be adjusted. The robots help assist in the different tasks such as landing and research for the crew. TARS is sufficient that he helps relay the data to Coop to save mankind. The character allows for the comparison of machine to human and what it means to have a "survival instinct" (Nolan, 2014, 1:50:29). The characterization of the machines creates the notion that man can be more than a static character, yet in the display of the narrative, machines and humans are more alike in their character development than by their clear differences of man versus machine.

Through the whole narrative, there is a suggestion of "they" who are representatives of a different dimension. "They" provide wormholes and the tesseract to help Cooper. Other dimensional things are also created and relative to the "they" who that have been put into place to help mankind. While never given an actual image for a character, Cooper puts a name to the situation by suggesting that "they" are humans from the future that have learned to communicate in a different way to save Earth. This gives moral reasoning that communication can be shared through love as well as no boundaries of time and space can stop Earth from saving itself.

There are static characters such as Tom, Cooper's son, and Donald, Cooper's father-in-law, that provide the family motif and only contain credibility as characters because of it. Amelia Brand and Murphy Cooper provide credibility within their characters as providing logic, reason,

and love to the narrative. This provides the moral reasons as to why or why not the mission to leave earth should be accomplished. But other characters like Mann, as well as Murph, are unpredictable in their reactions and how they treat their physical space. Murph's character traits are more shaped by the namesake of Murphy's law, which allows for predictive unpredictability. Mann's true intentions are hidden, but as those are shown, his actions become predictable as his character creates an oxymoron of wanting to leave the loneliness of the planet, by flying by himself to steal the Endurance. All the characters are predictable within their actions but build a credibility to the text based upon moral reasons.

Narrator. The visual narration focuses on Cooper's story in space. The audience sees scenes from Earth, but they are limited in understanding. Through visuals, the audience sees the space journey and the Earth journey, but more from the timeframe of Cooper and Murphy. The narration is unreliable because the visual communication of the narrator adds to the ambiguity of the story. Questions go unanswered in how time has affected those in space and those on earth. The overhead narration that heard as the Endurance team make their way to space which implements the theme from Dylan Thomas's poem, "Do not go gentle into that good night" (1937). With flashforward snippets interviews of what Earth was like before, narration seeps in from the future that helps predict that Earth will be saved. The visual and spoken narrator captures a space journey that is altered by time in a different way but allows for coherence of how the future affects the narrative plot.

Sound. The sound of the film creates the poignant adventure of space time that connects to the coherence of the narrative as well as to the moral reasonings of what is important on Earth. The consideration of space as a vacuum, much of the diegetic sound is created by nature or lack of it. Cooper carries a recording of Earth sounds such as crickets chirping, thunder, and rain to

keep the sense of home to avoid the emptiness of sound in space and machines. Other natural sounds indicate danger, as well as mechanical sounds such as engine failure and or ship damage sends signals of what threatens the crews' lives. One part indicates how non-diegetic sound and diegetic sound combine with the reality of sound in space, when Mann unlocks the airlock, and the ship and part of the Endurance explodes. There is no sound playing simulating what the crew would hear in space. This expression of sound tries to keep the audience within the reality of the narrative.

Beyond the sound that characters can hear within their environment, the characters struggle with hearing themselves talk, which adds to the confusion of the audience because they also cannot hear the conversations. This occurs when Mann fights Cooper and when Amelia is trying to talk to Cooper before he launches to the black hole. The conversations lose their coherence because the sound cannot pass the barrier of the narrative. This type of sound begins to blur the lines between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. The film also creates non-diegetic sounds in terms of narration that the crew cannot hear, along with film's soundtrack that creates tension along the theme of time. The tension is shown in the sound by the moment the team arrives on Miller's planet, the audience hears a tick-tock sound creating the sensation of a countdown clock. This amplifies the fidelity of the text because the moral message is being relayed that time is an important resource.

Events. The events of the film are manipulated through the importance of time and gravity. With interdimensional travel, time is subjected to the effects of gravity within the narrative. The two varying timelines of the Endurance crew and of Earth becomes the most important factor because of the people left behind on Earth. Without the connection to humankind on Earth as the crew member's home, the connection and dependence on time would

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be absolved. The events that are linked to gravity and time start with the mysterious ghost in Murph's bedroom. Through this connection, the characters discover NASA that leads Cooper on the journey of leaving Earth. When Cooper is about to leave and Murph is angry, she emphasizes that she figured out the binary coded message sharing "One word; stay," which doesn't deter Cooper from leaving but leads to the conclusion through time, that Cooper is the one who sent the message himself (Nolan, 2014, 0:38:56) leaving the moral message of the importance of staying and helping family. The connection in the narrative that Cooper is the ghost in Murph's bedroom leads to answers about how the one event leads to the conclusion. However, these connections do not provide coherence for the narrative and lead to a lack of clarity because of the confusion of how Cooper enters the tesseract and how he explains how the tesseract works within layers and layers of Murph's bedroom through love. Cooper's explanations and conclusions about the tesseract's origins of the people from the future leads to more confusing conclusions about the narrative and space travel rather than satisfying moral reasoning and coherence within the narrative.

For most of *Interstellar*, the main events lie around traveling to different planets to determine habitation for Earth. Surrounded by the concept that time will slow for the crew, but Earth's clock moves at the same time provides added pressure to each event, which creates credibility within the text for how the crew must act in terms of using time as a resource. Miller's planet creates the tension around time because of the large gap between years as well as the first moment that a crewmate was lost. The time lost on the planet displays the concept of theory versus reality. In term, coherence and understanding for the film is created by a large gap in knowledge for physics when the audience's understanding is assumed as too generalizable.

Beyond time, pressures of resources and the nature of humanity become common themes within the narrative. Such foreshadowing of human nature is mentioned by Amelia Brand suggesting that the Endurance crew faces "great odds; death, but not evil" which becomes critical with the events with Dr. Mann and how he sabotages the team because of his desperate plea to leave loneliness (0:51:59). Professor Brand's death relate to the desperation on Earth and with the Endurance crew when there is a realization, the Professor Brand was relying upon plan B rather than solving how to help leading mankind to their death. This creates chaos and moral fidelity within the narrative because it requires other characters to act to create events that lead to the solution of Earth's problem.

The event of the tesseract leads to the solution of how certain events were affected by time and gravity. While amid confusion about how the tesseract was created and the representation of time as a physical space in the fifth dimension, Cooper obtains the relative information to send to Murph. This scene becomes crucial in the fidelity of the text because it provides solutions to previous scenes about the dust in Murph's room, her ghost, and how people from Earth made it old age from the flashback shown in the narrative. However, the tesseract creates more questions within the narrative that are simply left unanswered with no glimpse into what the future will hold in how the tesseract was created or how a wormhole appeared. This is due to the position of complicated physics that is created in the narrative which leaves questions unanswered as to unburden the audience.

Causal and Temporal Relations. The cause-and-effect relationships that take place within *Interstellar* are created through human interaction and connection as well as nature. The premise of the film is created by crop failure, which causes the characters to choose the develop plans to leave space which results in the narrative of the film. The human cause-and-effect

relation is the built upon the relationship that Cooper has with his daughter, Murphy. Their relationship is represented to transcend time and space because Cooper can interact with his daughter through the tesseract to give her the gravitational equation. The entire film hinges upon their relationship of guilt, regret, and love with how answers are found in space and the motivations of the mission. It creates the emotional appeal, also displays why Cooper will make decisions for mankind and himself but reject Amelia Brand's decisions when she suggest Edmund's planet because Cooper knows she loves Edmund. This relation creates the discontent within the narrative and moral reasoning as to what the best decision is for the crew. The relationships between characters and the setting of earth display the reasoning that man should not be alone. This is especially poignant with the actions of Mann when he sees the Endurance crew and desires anything to leave his planet to join humanity again.

The temporal relations of *Interstellar* are representative of both syntagmatic and paradigmatic time. The initial flashforward about life on earth displays the paradigmatic time of what to expect in the future of the film. Other moments of paradigmatic time are created when Cooper enters the physical space of time of Murph's bedroom. This relation connects how events are instigated and constructs time in physical way rather than linear. This physical space allows time to move and separate from a linear timeline. Most of the film lies in syntagmatic time with one event happening after another. Time is shown as passing for earth and for the space explorers. With time being representative through space, the timeline is coherent to how time works through quantum physics.

Morals. This film deals with deep ethical dilemmas that leads to philosophical questions of what one should do for the greater good. Within *Interstellar*, Cooper faces the dilemma of if he should stay with his family on Earth or become the pilot of the Endurance that can lead to the

rescue of all of humanity. This demonstrates the moral reasonings of utilitarianism ethics that one choice will produce the greatest good for the greatest number (Shaw, 2012). While Cooper tries to convince Murph and his past self to stay behind, he still chose to leave which resulted in the answers humanity needed, as well as the message of "stay" would not have been sent without him leaving creating a paradox within the ethical dilemma that he had to leave to send the answer.

The tradition and moral of the story are like other space adventure stories to explore what has yet to be touched. It reflects the expression of Manifest Destiny of the specific insight that man will expand its ownership of land beyond where they currently are. This sentiment is forced in the movie based on the environmental hazard representative of global warming. Man needs to go beyond his current planet to find the frontier, or in colloquial terms, explore space as the final frontier. This is represented by the ending that Cooper cannot stay with his family, and he leaves once again to find Brand on a different planet.

Interstellar fulfils part of Fisher's fidelity and coherence (1984), yet the film deviates within the narrative to share a story that creates tension around moral reasoning and dilemmas. The film follows the reasoning patterns set by the narrative of the film however irrational it seems that mankind should leave Earth to find a different place to settle. This one part makes the film lose logical sense, yet the film demonstrates the relativity of time and gravity in a rational and logical sense portraying a unique narrative of interstellar travel even when certain characters actions leave behind logical sense. The film clearly displays ethical values of life and death within the need to save Earth and family. The values are representative of protecting the future and exploring to find a better future that demonstrate true ethical values.

Tenet

Setting. In typical spy fashion, *Tenet* creates settings in exotic places around the world

to gather information for an international spy thriller in places such as Russia, Vietnam, Estonia,

Norway, and Mumbai. The settings create a narrative that propagates the world that creates the

sentiment that the whole world will punish if Sator succeeds in sending the algorithm to the

future. Through these places around the world, it is the action in the buildings and roadways that

demonstrate the use of the setting in the narrative such as the Opera house, the Oslo airport, and

the Estonian roadway that creates action, and becomes the centers for inversion points for the

characters. The scenes of exposition jump from places within a location that can jumble the

coherence within the background narrative. The location narrative simply creates different

background in context of inversion and entropy. The location of the inverted machines become

extremely important in terms of gaining information about the narrative of the antagonist, and

the existence of Stalsk-12 leads to the why of climax. The setting becomes manipulated by the

fast-paced action and creates a complicated timeline in understanding the timeline for the

location of when dangerous inverted events are occurring.

Characters. Many of the characters are static with no background or development to the

character. With no background information, and simply the information that he is a spy, the main

character has no previous story or connection to who he is or what he represents and is simply a

protagonist. The Protagonist is never given a name or called by name, but in the simple utterance

"I'm the Protagonist" (Nolan, 2020, 2:23:49). For the Protagonist, the lack of name and identity

creates a flat and predictable character. His motivations are simply to save the world, creating a

lack of empthy for the characters. The self-description with no official title is built upon the

character's death. With the protagonist's death (faked or real), the character does not need to be

given a name because his role moves the plot, but as a spy to remain hidden and nonexistent in the physical reality. He also uses other characters to his advantage for his immediate needs, such as Kat, and eventually helps her situation after he uses her to get to Sator. The Protagonist has credibility with his spy skills and that he can retrieve and exploit information providing credibility to his character for the role. But the character offers no other developments other than his past is mysterious and so is his future which creates a lack of connection and credibility for what the Protagonist really wants.

Other characters also display credibility by suiting their narrative roles, but they share little development within the narrative and are represented as movers of the plot than with distinct credibility to represent ethical virtues. With Sator, he provides credibility within his role as an antagonist that wants to destroy the world, and Neil helps saves the world, as Kat becomes the woman on the side suffering through it all. The characters are more static than active in their roles by being predictable with their actions. Neil however remains mysterious with his background of knowledge about the protagonist and his education. As little attributes are revealed, Neil becomes a more complexing character that does not resolve questions in the film, but simply arises more because of the whereabouts of his backpack and that he sacrifices himself to save the world.

Narrator. The narration of *Tenet* is fast and sporadic making the film seem like a redacted spy document. The film has an unreliable narrator because the information is coming from different sources while following the Protagonist. The different sources are not reliable as to the truth of their information. The narration is also altered because of the variation of time forward and inverted. The narration becomes strategic by explaining why things happened in the past have already happened, making the events inevitable. However, the narration is manipulated

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with time because forward events are also shown backwards which makes the final scene of the tenet temporal pincer movement narration confusing because scenes jump from one red team member moment in time to another blue team member moment, but it is all represented at the same time. Since scenes jump back and forth, the narrator, or the visual images, becomes unreliable especially from the viewpoint of the Protagonist because the audience is only shown partial information that the Protagonist is receiving. Thus, the narrator and visual scenes keeps information hidden because the film slowly reveals information that is pertinent to the mission.

Sound. As with time, the sound is influenced through the distortion of timelines and chaotic action of car chases and airport explosions. Through the present timeline, diegetic sound is coherent and is simply distorted for the audience through the sounds of explosions that cover character dialogue. When time is inverted, language is distorted and reverted for those who hear it naturally. While the characters are surround by other languages through their world travels, it is the backwards language that throws the events of the car chase into the tailspin that corrupts the coherence of the sound of the narrative. Other natural and environmental sounds hide torture and death such as the trains in the railway yard, and the sailing boats when Sator fell overboard.

The non-diegetic sounds have an impact on the audience as the symphonic music through becoming obligatory loud during times of action to hide diegetic dialogue. Such background music heard represents the pulsing heartbeat as the Protagonist rushes to rescue the plutonium from Sator. The music is played to involve the audience within the action of the fast-paced events to replicate what the characters in the film may or may not actually hear in a film. This distracts from the coherence of the film because it hides dialogue for the audience which ruins the exposition that the film relates to the plot.

Events. The events of *Tenet* are presented mainly as a plot that is simultaneously moving forward and backwards in time in a palindromic structure. Because of this structure, the film easily loses coherence of logical sense because of the way time is shown for the characters and the multiple timelines or forward and inverted time in the events. Clarity is found when the inverted characters participate in the actions that already occurred such as the event of the Olso airport where the Protagonist and Neil run into a man dressed in black and fight. The event leads to the inverted turnstiles where it is revealed that man dressed in black was the Protagonist and simply, an inverted future version of himself. These types of occurrences create the events of the film such as the car chase in Tallinn that has an inverted Sator and Kat trying to stop the Protagonist. It also leads to the large operation in Stalsk-12 that provides confusion as to what version of time does the audience see each character. These events are extremely active in composition as well as action to explain how inversion works and how the motives of Sator is being generated by contact of a future that wants to destroy the past.

The event that reveals coherence, but also complicates the function of the narrative is Neil's explanation that he has known the Protagonist for a long time. The revelation demonstrates that the Protagonist has been organizing the future and operations that questions the whole relationship each character has with one another, as well as add another layer of confusion on how the events of the film impact the actual solution to stopping Sator. The event allows the main character to realize the morality that he has the power to change the future and he has been doing it all along in his ignorance. *Tenet* complicates how events are viewed in a film because it creates a world that lives by the truth of what happens happened expecting the future to be inevitable and destined to the events it is controlled by. However, it takes advantage

of the reasonings that the future can have a possibility of being changed because of inversion and the Tenet organization.

Causal and Temporal Relations. The causal relations are generated through the character's motives and manipulations to affect the future. The film's narrative cause-and-effect functions are intertwined and is exploited through inversion corrupting time and how events are portrayed. Although time is viewed as "cause before effect" (Nolan, 2020, 0:15:29), the inversion of objects and people change that cause-and-effect by displaying effect before cause which disrupts the temporal relations. This continues through the entire film leading to the conclusion that scenes will not be displayed logically because they cannot be shown in a clear coherent order. However, since most of the events are caused by humans and their manipulation of time, the film creates the sense that the whole film has more of a puppeteer in charge of time recreating the sense that all the actions are motivated by human causes. While some of the events are clearly shown to have a human cause, others are simply inferred and correlated to the dangers of the future trying to destroy time. This assumption is explained as the source of the moral trouble of saving the world but is never clearly revealed as the cause because the future people trying to destroy the world is an intangible object that is only represented through Sator.

Tenet's temporal relations come in matter of the palindromic nature of time and its inversion. While time moves linearly for the Protagonist and how information is revealed to him, time moves forward and backwards paradigmatically resulting in the chaos of a world twisting time in on itself. From a constructive view, the timeline flows within the action of forward and backwards time because time is viewed as a human construct rather than unmendable object. Yet, the construct of time and its inversion simply leads to chaos that events that have happen happened, while the characters live to complete the events that are inevitable. Time becomes

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incoherent leading to the destruction of the fidelity of the film because time is distorted by the application of inversion.

      Morals. For ethical values, the film demonstrates that the world is worth saving and that all actions have consequences within and out of time. The value of saving the world is shown through the sheer will power of the Protagonist willing to do all he can to stop Sator. That is the largest motivation within the film and that trumps over rescuing Kat from blackmail and understanding arms dealers. The film has an innate need to demonstrate that all actions have consequences that are bound by a certain law or principle such and entropy or the inversion of it. Kat represents the moral reasoning that a mother has the right to take care of her child and the freedom to do so. She shows ethical values in a positive way to be a caring and understanding mother, and a closed off wife to stop the abuse she has faced from her husband. These different values portray the moral that allows the film to be coherence and connected by one thing which is to stop Sator from destroying the world.

      By the text itself, the narrative fails to complete fidelity because the audience becomes confused by the multiple breaching timelines and coherence in maintaining visuals on certain characters. With characters like Neil and Priya, who know things but reveal nothing due to "ignorance is our ammunition" (Nolan, 2020, 1:53:11), the narrative becomes further divided on information that is visually shared with the audience. Without more specific clues and insights on what inversion is and how it is represented within objects, the film cannot complete the fidelity that is required in the narrative perspective but can only be questioned by the audience.

      Tenet aligns itself with reasoning patterns by explaining how inversion works, but the film fails to clarify and strategize how different scenes are connected. The inversion allows characters to move backwards through time, but the narrative loses its logical sense by creating

different versions of time that becomes complicated to control when the events more beyond one singular timeline. With little explanation on why inversion works or how it is created, the film loses its coherence. However, the main ethical value that the world is worth saving travels through the whole film, but other values are limited because the characters simply use each other rather than teach principles about morality and simply aims for justice and peace against the future.

Narrative Archetypes

There are seven different narrative archetypes according to Booker (2004) that are listed as *overcoming the monster*, *rags to riches*, *the quest*, *voyage and return*, *rebirth*, *tragedy*, and *comedy*. These narrative archetypes can be summarized in five different points along plot lines that are feature or represented as the call, the journey, arrival and frustration, the final ordeal, and the goal (p.83). These five points can be summarized or phrased differently for different archetypes, this is because basic structure of stories underline all these archetypes and are more generalized as the initial phase of how the hero is constricted, a new road opens to create a way for resolution, then there is more tension and constricted plot (see Table 2). The final stages continue with a dominant dark power and the light power prepares for the final confrontation, and then there is the moment of liberation or escape (p. 228). Nolan's films feature these plots in different ways as to the overall film and the context of the character developing a story that can contain multiple narrative archetypes.

Inception

Beyond the genre of the heist, *Inception* represents the narrative archetype of *the voyage and return* for the overall film. However, elements of the quest are representative with the goal orientation of the heist. Looking at Cobb as the main hero, *the quest* narrative archetype is

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representative of Cobb's goal to return to his children. From this point of view, the different

stages of *the quest* begin to show an emphasis on how the ending of the narrative archetype

creates dissonance between archetypes.

Table 2: *Booker's Narrative Archetypes and Descriptive Plot Points*

Types of Narrative Archetypes	Overcoming the Monster/The Voyage and Return/Tragedy	Rags to Riches	The Quest
Plot Stages			
1	Anticipation Stage	Wretchedness at home and the call	The Call
2	Dream Stage	Hero goes out into the world	The Journey
3	Frustration Stage	Central Crisis	Arrival and Frustration
4	Nightmare Stage	Final Ordeal	Final Ordeals
5	Thrilling Escape	Union	The Goal

Note. The narrative archetype of comedy was excluded for irrelevance.

Main Narrative Archetypes. In *the quest* narrative, the call is featured with Cobb

accepting the job to plant an idea into Robert Fischer's mind and creating the plan. The journey

takes place by finalizing the heist plan and through the development of Ariadne understanding

how dangerous Cobb's subconscious is for the team. Once the heist starts, the narrative enters

the arrival and frustration stage where the characters make their way between the dream layers to

complete their goal while in the midst of dangerous mind projections. The final ordeal happens

in the third dream level where the team has Fischer understand what is in the safe and see if the

idea was planted. While this is occurring, Cobb is dealing with his trauma of Mal and saving

Saito and Fischer from Limbo so that he may be able to return home. The goal is knowing that

the idea was planted, and Cobb finally makes it home to see his children.

From the perspective of the *voyage and return* narrative archetypes, the film involves every character making the voyage into the dream and the need to return from it. The prime example character to display the narrative archetype is Ariadne as the newest member of the team and knowledge of dream technology. She falls into this new world of dream architecture and finds exhilaration but also curiosity and danger because of Cobb's background. The frustration stage happens within the heist dream where things continue to digress and become worse with Saito's imminent dream death and Fischer is shot and falls into Limbo. This second stage also unironically carries the name of the dream stage which can be interpreted literally that the characters have entered the dream or the heist. The escape from Limbo for the characters leads to the thrilling escape and conclusion for this type of archetype.

Alternative Narrative Archetypes. Portions of the other narrative archetypes are visible in terms of *rebirth* such as Saito waking up after being killed in the dream state and surviving Limbo. Cobb's version of Mal takes part of the *overcoming the monster* archetype as the team needs to overcome and fight Mal to finish their task. Particularly Robert Fischer's character, the heist dream forces him into the *rebirth* narrative archetype. With the dark power that overcomes him being taken hostage within a dream because the team views that he is controlled by the dark power of his father. Within the second dream stage, he is told that he is dreaming and in danger, especially of death or Limbo. The threat of the projections and making it into each dream level becomes bigger and harsher as they go down until the dark nearly triumphs when Mal shoots Fischer. The redemption or rebirth occurs when Ariadne saves him from Limbo, and he opens the safe to find the idea that his father truly cared about him. The narrative archetype of *rebirth* signals that the overall quest was achieved. This signals that not only are there multiple narrative archetypes shown based upon character's perspectives, but that the completion and

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representation of one archetype such as *rebirth* can signal the completion and development of another archetype such as *the quest*. These different narrative archetypes are represented when the narrative is switched to look at other character's perspectives rather than simply the main character. Especially in these films, where action occurs to other members of the team that the main character is not involved in, it is important to see how the narrative can change. With different character viewpoints revealing different narrative archetypes, *Inception* displays evidence that Nolan is using narrative archetypes as character archetypes. The narrative archetype is conducive to the plot, but *Inception* suggest that the difference of the narrative lies in how the characters use the narrative archetypes.

The ending scene provides further complications between narrative archetypes because of the ambiguity and representation of what the top symbolizes as reality because it appears as a crucial plot point in determining where reality is, or the emphasis on if the characters have escaped the dream stage. With little implications about the state of the top continuing to spin or fall over, a conflict between realities is created through the various narrative archetypes represented and questioned if the film can have a truly happy ending in a certain archetype. Specifically with the clear representation of *the quest* and *the voyage and return* archetype within *Inception*, the narrative archetype creates some control over the importance of the ambiguity shown in the ending. With *the quest* archetype, the importance of the ending is with the goal, which is to plant the idea in Fischer's mind that he shouldn't be like his father. The secondary goal is that Cobb returns to see his children. The narrative gives evidence that both goals were achieved with Fischer opening the safe and hearing from his father about his disappointment in trying to be like his father. Cobb enters the U.S. and finally gets to see the faces of his children. Within the question of ambiguity as to whether the world is real or fake is not pertinent because

the goals were achieved in the narrative which completes the goal of the particular archetype and satisfies the means to the end of the goal.

However, in terms of *the voyage and return* archetype, the narrative needs to end with a return to the real world because the adventure is all about falling into a new world and returning to the world where the characters belong. The emphasis is placed on the return which signals the characters return after growth. The narrative does display scenes where the characters awake on the plane and walk through the airport. This becomes sufficient for the conclusion of the narrative archetype, but the suggestion of an alternate ending creates a sense of confusion and lack of completion because of the suggestion that the dream, or the narrative is not over.

Interstellar

As with *Inception*, *Interstellar* displays similar narrative archetypes with *the quest* and *the voyage and return* depending on which character becomes the center of the story. Because the main characters are static with little character development within the film, the minor characters are highlighted by the different narrative archetypes as well. From the viewpoint of Cooper, the narrative is viewed as a *voyage and return*. The premise is for him to return to Earth to his family. From that moral reasoning, the pressure of time motives how the narrative portrays sequences. For the other members of the space team, such as Amelia Brand, the narrative archetype is represented as *the quest* because they plan to settle at a different world because they left nothing behind on

Main Narrative Archetypes. *The voyage and return* narrative archetype is represented for Cooper in the anticipation stage by choosing to be the pilot for the Endurance. Once the space travel begins, the characters "fall into the other world" (Booker, 2004, p. 105). The anticipation stage for the film can also be viewed as the dystopian world that Earth has transformed into on

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screen allowing the audience to fall into the narrative world. The second stage of initial

fascination occurs multiple times in *Interstellar* because they are visiting different worlds. It

occurs when they travel through the wormhole and make it to the planetary system that contains

the black hole, Gargantua. It also happens when they arrive at Miller's planet and Mann's planet.

The final scene of the Earth substation also reflects this initial fascination stage. The frustration

stage is shown through the multiple problems that arise with the number one problem being time.

The issues arise when the team finds out that being on Miller's world for 1 hour equates to 7

years on Earth. Other problems arise with the death and damages to the ship when the team

discovers it is a giant ocean world and is uninhabitable. Problems are represented on Earth when

Murph's discovers that Professor Brand never had a solution to the equation and that the space

trip was meant to be a one-way ticket.

The problem of time and resources are aggravated by Mann's deception for his world,

want of rescue, abandonment to the team, and destruction to the ship. This is when the film's

narrative enters the nightmare stage because it is exacerbated by the loss of time once the

damage has been done to the Endurance and that half the crew is gone, signaling that there will

be no return voyage. The thrilling escape is partly represented by Cooper is the tesseract. The

scenes displaying Murph's bedroom all through time suggest that time can be changed and

altered through this dimension where time is in physical form. However, once the information is

sent and Cooper loses consciousness floating in space, the narrative reveals no thrilling escape,

but simply the discovery that Cooper survived to arrive at the Earth substation, where decades

for Earth had passed. Although, not an official return to Earth, Cooper did return to see his

daughter, Murph, as an old dying woman. This completes the narrative arc that the voyage

happened, and a return was completed. The ambiguity enters the narrative because the film's

narrative and scenes suggest that Cooper has gone on another voyage to find Amelia. Within *the voyage and return*, an important item for the hero is that he/she learn something from the story. Cooper helps solve the gravity equation by sending it to Murph, but he learns about how to help the past, while mourning the fact that he left at all. These pieces tie *the voyage and return* archetype together with the hero learning that it would have been better to stay, but overall Cooper facilitated the rescue of mankind.

The quest narrative archetype also accurately describes the action and narrative of *Interstellar*. The call takes form when Cooper finds NASA and accepts the position to pilot the space craft to save his family and humanity. The journey is the two-year flight to the wormhole and the space travel in between. The arrival and frustration stage happens on each planet that the team visits because both visits are thwarted because one has massive destructive ocean waves, and the second by Mann's sabotage to Cooper and the team. The final ordeal is dealing with Mann's chaos and salvaging the ship to make the decision to visit the last planet with little hope in saving Earth, which changes when Cooper enters the black hole and visits the tesseract to achieve the final step which is the goal. He found Murph and was able to relay the message and answer about gravity to help Earth in time.

Alternative Narrative Archetypes. While the main space team of Amelia Brand and Cooper take most of the attention of the film's narrative, Murph is on Earth trying to solve the gravity problem to save mankind with Professor Brand. Her narrative archetype differs because she does not go on an outside journey and experiences more of the *rags to riches* narrative. The first part includes wretchedness at home and the call, which occurs for her because of the dystopian world she lives in and with her school not understanding her intelligence. Her call comes when she receives the coordinates to NASA from her bedroom and Murph and Cooper

visit their headquarters. The family's acceptance at NASA allows for the second phase to happen where Murph leaves the dystopian world and finds a home at NASA to solve scientific equations and find success in helping the space mission. The third phase or central crisis is centered on Professor Brand's death, where he reveals that their studies have all been for naught, that the equation was solved, and there is no hope for Earth, but for the singular success of the space team. Murph finds the fourth stage of independence and the final ordeal by taking the gravity equation into her own hands by starting over and not giving up, as well as understanding the answers in her bedroom when the whole farm is burning. The final completion is at the Earth Substation where the narrative reveals that the station is named after Murphy Cooper and that she solved and saved mankind because she was able to receive the gravitational information from her father.

These archetypes show similarities between how narratives are structured and that within the same films, multiple narrative archetypes can be interpreted and displayed depending on the character and action that involves the character. While the similarities between the narrative archetypes and plot points display the basic plot structure, especially as different parts of the voyage or quest can be repeated within the narrative, the differences in the narrative can highlight other important themes of time and how important the journey is either in space or on Earth. These themes are displayed differently depending upon the narrative archetype that becomes the focus and upon the character perspective, thus creating a character archetype that falls within these narrative archetypes. With *Interstellar*, the return journey is the most important thing to Cooper's character which increase the growth and attitude of the main hero. However, when the narrative archetype focuses on a different character, the ending is highlighted differently because the goal changes for the main character of the arch. Cooper may be the center

role for Interstellar, but Amelia Brand and Murph become important side characters that display their own archetype. This suggests that minor characters create and further the action in a narrative to create more nuanced ambiguity that allows the audience to find different tropes and messages within the narrative archetype creating a layer of character archetypes.

Tenet

Within *Tenet*, the main film has an overarching narrative archetype of *the quest*, however, the different characters all experience different archetypes from their character's point of view. The overall plot of the quest demonstrates what the Protagonist and Neil need to do to achieve the goal of saving the world from time demolition. However, the Protagonist experiences the narrative archetype of *rags to riches* in terms of character development and realization, while Kat experiences *the overcoming the monster* narrative archetype.

Main Narrative Archetypes. *The quest* narrative archetype is displayed throughout the entire premise of the film and follows Neil's archetype story. The call occurs when the protagonist wakes up from death and learns about the phrase Tenet and travels to talk to Barbara about inversion and entropy. The journey for *the quest* is when the Protagonist and Neil travel all over the world for information from Mumbai to the Oslo airport. When Kat gets shot and the Protagonist inverts himself, the arrival and frustration stage begins because the plot begins to invert in time for the narrative. The frustration stage lies around Sator taking what he wants and trying to take Kat in the process. The arrival happens because the protagonist experiences the inverted state for the first time. These scenes lead to the final ordeals stage which occurs through the tenet campaign with the temporal pincer movement that occurs in Stask-12. The goal for the team is to simply to stop Sator of sending the algorithm to the future to end the world. This is achieved when Kat kills Sator and the team stops ROTAS from sending the algorithm. From the

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point of the visit in Mumbai, Neil joins and advocates for the protagonist and the success of the mission. Throughout the quest, Neil participates between the scenes as help to achieve the goal. Neil's objective is to stop ROTAS, but through his death when it is revealed that he was the blue soldier that was shot down in the bunker. The narrative doesn't reveal how the steps take place to the objective take place, but the implications between inversion and time display the narrative that Neil is more involved than presented within the film.

While *the quest* narrative archetype follows the Protagonist on the objective to save the world from Sator and ROTAS, the protagonist experiences *the rags to riches* archetype through his own self-discovery of what the Tenet organization and world is. The beginnings scenes of *Tenet* reveal the wretchedness and the call because the Protagonist is rescuing plutonium and is then tortured. His call comes after his "death" where he accepts the call by making it through the lonely time at the ocean windmill farm. The Protagonist continues to go out into the world by learning from Barbara about Tenet and runs into the central crisis after running through all types of hoops to learn about Sator and what he is really after that leads to the riveting car chase and rescue of Kat. Again, the final ordeal leads to Salsk-12 and the temporal pincer movement where the protagonist and Neil stop ROTAS. This also leads to the independence reveal of *the rags to riches* archetype because Neil reveals that the Protagonist has been the one in charge of the whole operation since the beginning and he was simply unaware. This leads to the completion stage that the original quest is over, and that the Protagonist can live to fulfill his role as the leader of the Tenet organization. While partially filled with similarities of *the quest*, the Protagonist experiences *the rags to riches* by gaining access to the Tenet organization and realizing that he is in fact in charge of it in the future fulling his role as the protagonist. The

Protagonist also builds his attire to blend into the world of riches (billions) to "save the world, and then balance the books" (Nolan, 2020, 0:26:36).

       Alternative Narrative Archetypes. While the protagonist is dealing with the algorithm and the saving of the world aspect, Kat is dealing with a different narrative archetype of *overcoming the monster* because she is the one having to deal with the monster that is Sator. The Protagonist simply uses Kat to complete portions of the quest, and she must individually conquer Sator. The anticipation stage occurs for Kat when she meets the Protagonist for dinner, where she describes what type of monster Sator is. The dream stage, or the preparation to fight the monster is when the Protagonist states that he will take care of the painting that Sator is blackmailing Kat with, and she believes the Protagonist because he defeated Sator's men. However, the Protagonist does not deal with this problem which causes Kat to enter the frustration stage when Sator reveals he still has the painting. She then cuts Sator's line in the sailing boat to try to escape the abusive monster. The nightmare stage occurs when Sator kidnaps Kat and threatens and shoots her because of the Protagonist's unwillingness to give information because he's a spy. The final stage of the thrilling escape from death where the monster dies occurs in Vietnam a week in the past when the shot version of Kat approaches Sator and kills him, and escapes through the freeing imagery of Kat diving off the boat into the ocean away from the past trials. This narrative archetype captures the villainous ties of Sator and the harm he was causing not only to his wife, but to the world.

       Tenet easily demonstrates the different narrative archetypes that can be displayed by each character in the film. When the attention is shifted from the main character to the side characters, a different story is revealed from the different narrative archetypes displaying character archetypes. While there may be an overall theme happening within the film, the narrative can

change upon perspective. Such is the example if the film highlights the villain's narrative archetype, the narrative displays *a tragedy* because of Sator's path to destruction that leads to his eventual death because if he "can't have her, no one can" (Nolan, 2020, 1:52:04). With such nuance structure within a film, the variation of time is not the cause for multiple story arcs, but simply the characterization of who is telling the story.

Paratexts

Although without the author authority, paratexts of reviews and video explanations of film provide commentary to how audiences interpret and conversate to critique and question the directorial choices. Specifically for Nolan films, a paratextual analysis allows different layers of meaning to emerge from the original text of the film. Paratexts also emerge by the conversations that surround a text which can be generated by ambiguity. Each film by Nolan has a level of ambiguity to it because of the design and manipulation of time that is created in each film. As previously mentioned, there are different levels of ambiguity (Pryluck et al., 1982) and types of paratexts (Gray, 2021). *Inception, Interstellar,* and *Tenet* have created loud paratexts because of the large amounts of commentary that has formed since the release of each film. In terms of ambiguity, *Inception* is considered high level ambiguity because it has a large amount of interpretation between images because of the ending scene of the top that may or may not fall revealing dream or reality. *Interstellar* has a moderate amount of ambiguity because of the use of physics within the film of interstellar travel as well as the conclusion that Cooper has another adventure to go on allows for moderate interpretation of the ending. The changing variation of time allows *Tenet* to have high ambiguity because very little about the tenet organization was revealed. In fact, the ending of *Tenet* created more questions and speculation about the Protagonist role and Neil in terms of their friendship and partnership because the audience

realizes that they are seeing the ending of one character and the new beginnings of another. With moderate and high ambiguity being shown in these films, the paratexts reveals how other people rewatch and examine the text and ambiguity that lies within the films.

The following paratextual analysis examines the top video on YouTube and the top most helpful reviews on IMDb about the films that highlights part of the conversation that is generated through outside social commentary. Paratexts can be split into two different forms of text, peritext and epitext, where the peritext is generated from the text itself such as captions and trailers. Epitext looks at reviews and other text that comes from outside the original source text. The text selected is representative of epitexts, but for this analysis the text will overall be considered simply as a paratext. While not a complete of significant examination at multiple platforms and documentation, the paratexts discusses the conversation and theories that fans have generated and commented on as well as the how others view the productivity of the films.

Inception

YouTube. The top video that discusses the ending of *Inception* comes from Screen Rant (2018), a profile that regularly critiques movies and provides social commentary on ridiculous moves in specific movies. Their short video explanation reveals that they have solved the riddle to the ending scene, and they provide the necessary clues to break down the ambiguous ending of *Inception*. The video discusses how the spinning top scene created discussion and debates about the films true ending. Screen Rant breaks down into five different points to determine that Cobb is no longer dreaming through a breakdown of the original ending, scenes with Michael Caine, the true totem, transportation, and smaller clues. These different sections discuss the film's narrative and uses of totems. It suggests that Cobb's totem is his wedding ring which is the key to know if he is dreaming or not because he only wears it in the dream. Other statements are how

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a character arrives to a scene can explain reality, as well as further outside commentary is include from personal interviews with Michael Cain about his character as Cobb's father-in-law. The information provided comes from other paratexts where Michael concludes the ending is reality because Nolan said that any scene with Michael is reality. The information provides conclusions to what the text is about suggesting that all the clues lead to the answers that finishes the commentary on the film.

Although the video provides evidence to the claim, Screen Rant asks for comments on the video to ask people if they agree or disagree with the conclusion. This only begins to generate paratexts and metatexts to the original movie. Simply, the video creates more conversation around the text by creating a discussion and suggesting a solution to ambiguity. The video has received over 2 million views and was released over 8 years after film's release providing context that *Inception* continues to spark debates and promote rewatchability because the conversation does not cease. With Screen Rant mentioning the different clues to the conclusion, the video subtly suggests another rewatch of the film to confirm or deny the evidence provided.

IMDb. Using reviews as a paratexts allows for further exploration beyond the text, but into the actors beyond their characters and the representation of their skills. The two reviews give expression to why the film is rewatchable and a critique to what was and good and bad about *Inception*. The most helpful review was written eight years after the film was released (Adrien_ngoc_1701, 2019), mentioning that it was their third time watching the film. The second review discusses the pros and cons of the film generating commentary of what the film adds to industry (Clipturnity, 2010). The paratext draw attention to the visual alluring elements of the film, and the different take of the Heist genre. Specifically, the Adreien_ngoc_1701 (2019)

review highlights other features of Nolan's films to classify the level of masterpiece that *Inception* caters to. The review also highlights the plot points and how the film narrates the message of struggle in making it through life. The paratext emphasizes that the ending is historical and controversial, but it lacks little meaning to the context of the whole film. This reaffirms that the film creates commentary providing loud paratexts and that reviewers and the audience need to dissect the films in order to understand them and process the meaning behind the film. Clipturnity's review elaborates on the notion of realism and messaging that is fast paced keeps the audience in a roller coaster that is relevant to modern moviegoers (2010).

The paratexts of these reviews also reveal the flaws of the characterization. While *Inception* creates paratexts in terms of the plot and narrative, the characters lack no imagination. While the commentary poses the characterization into a negative light, the critique of characters simply creates more conversation about the films and their rewatchability because of the plot rather than the focus of characters. Because of the helpfulness of the reviews, the criticism allows for others to rate the review higher or lower generating more feedback to the review as well as how it reflects upon the film.

Interstellar

YouTube. The most viewed video about *Interstellar* discusses the faults that lie in the film with things that are cliché or repetitive. The video comes from CinemaSins (2015) that calculates all the sins that occur in the film and the video includes commentary from astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson to explain the more technical and harder to understand concepts that occur in the film. The video counts up to 104 sins for the film indicating how many things are wrong, predictable, or simply unbelievable as the video deconstructs the content of *Interstellar*. While providing entertaining commentary to the movie as a whole, the paratext

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questions several parts about the unbelievability of the science of the film. However, multiple times, the astrophysicist, would comment on how *Interstellar* accurately displays Einstein's theory of relativity, the accuracy of g-forces in space, and the depiction and fundamentals of a black hole. The commentary of the video not only invites natural criticism to the entertainment but singles out how the good and bad narrative plot points and admits when the commentator is wrong about a "sin." The video has been seen over 8 million times suggesting that people want the video deconstructed because of the complicated physics and reality that the movie portrays. The video mentions other sources to help understand the complicated science, and that other books were made about the science of *Interstellar*. The paratext leads to the conclusion that the film can be complicated for the audience that it seeks out because of the need to understand time and gravity. The paratexts continuously brings in other forms of paratexts as well to explain the film.

IMDb. While short reviews of *Interstellar*, the most helpful reviews describe the fascination of rewatchability and captivating visual effects. The first review simply titled "I waited 5 years to watch it again" reveals the expanse of movies that twist in news that allow the audience to become excited to see films again and again (Ksa_2010, 2019). This paratext provides the insight that the *Interstellar* is insanity but creates the sense to relive through what does not seem normal. The other review considers the visual effects and performance that captivates an audience and appears to be better than others due to the commentator's desire for the film to win awards (Patterson13, 2015). The short reviews provide the helpfulness to others who have seen the original text that they agree with the outside commentary. However, not all people agree which leads to more controversial opinions about how these types of films are

viewed and that simple reviews and conversations around the film are not enough but must generate opinions that compete against each other.

Tenet

YouTube. The most video for explanations on *Tenet* come from New Rockstars (2020) that finally explains the film by breaking down the plot and each character timeline of the Protagonist, Sator, Kat, and Neil. The deconstruction begins by explaining the method of time travel that the film extrapolates which the commentator claims is a type four, time travel film where events that have happened have always happened, extending further paratextuality references to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. The explanation of time travel clarifies how the events represent reality but can be confusing because time travel is not instantaneous but time inversion.

The video deconstructs the timelines of characters visually to explain where characters are and how the plot functions around their motives leading to the timeline of Neil that is the most confusing and leads to the commentary of things that the film suggest rather than plainly states. As the film suggest that Neil knows much more about the organization of tenet and physics, New Rockstars film breaks it down that Neil not only sacrifices himself in the end, but that he is Kat's son Max. The evidence is based upon the video's statement that the inversion name of Maximilien is Neil (New Rockstars, 2020). This is also based upon the ending scene where the Protagonist protect Kat and her son from Priya leading to the opportunity that the Protagonist can teach and recruit Max to join Tenet. The paratext leads to more questions about the meaning of the film and how to answer questions about the film without the film revealing the exact answers. The film, *Tenet*, directly leads to the need of additional commentary and that the audience is confused or wants more evidence to how characters function in the film. The

breakdown of Neil's timeline from New Rockstars explains how inversion creates up to three different versions of a character, and possibly more depending on the need to solve problems in time. This adds layers of confusion of keeping track one character, and then multiple versions of the same character. The paratext clarifies visually the timeline, but only at a surface level, barely scratching the intricacies of the story that Nolan is telling.

IMDb. Simple reviews do not capture the varying opinions of *Tenet* but give to a consensus in commentary about the film that state it is confusing. The first review does not even rate the film and states that a film should not need multiple watches. Johnjooliver (2020) criticizes the film due to the exposition and sound effects that convoluted the narrative of the film. According to the paratext, a film's rewatchability does not necessarily equate to lack of understanding or original idea, but that a film should not need to be rewatched to be explained. The other review by Catlou92 (2020) suggests the same principles of the paratexts that the idea is too complicated to watch once, which suggests that audiences do not want to go back to suffer confusion again. This paratext refuses to elaborate on the film in general and seeks only to tell the confusion behind the narrative. The reviews do not seek understanding which indicate that the paratexts of reviews share opinions rather generalize commentary.

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Discussion

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The nonlinear styles of Nolan's films *Inception, Interstellar,* and *Tenet* create narratives that lead to ambiguous conclusions that are not expected of the narrative archetypes which generates conversations about the meaning of the films. The text of the films by themselves lead to questions and unreliable answers without the understanding of other texts and how the plot connects to other inspiration of music and designs such as a producer. Each film can display

different moral reasoning, narrative archetypes, and paratexts leading to the conclusion that there is a wholeness to the text when combined together.

From the lens of Fisher, Nolan's films never complete the coherence and fidelity requirements of the narrative perspective. The coherence of the text varies between films, but all of them blur the lines of reality and time disrupting the logical sense within a narrative. This is also represented through the lens of a lack of moral reasonings because the characters of the films lack depth and breadth to create and maintain their objectives. Yet, Nolan's films blended sections of fidelity and coherence to portray a plot that there is more to life than what is visually represented. Specifically, *Inception* and *Interstellar* demonstrate clear morals about family and to do what is best for them. Each film displayed different viewpoints of ethical dilemmas, yet *Tenet* displayed a moral to save the world, but focused more on lack of cohesion and clarity allowing the film to fail the narrative perspective. This begs the question: if the messages of these films are reaching audiences, do they violate the fidelity that Fisher's narrative perspective demands?

Nolan's films defy Fisher's specific meaning of coherence and fidelity for a narrative story because the films invite the audience to create a different story than the one that is being told. Reality and dreams are not all that different, Earth needs to be rescued from ecological problems, and people need to rely upon others in the past and future are messages portrayed in the films. These moral messages allow for a degree of freedom within a narrative that a text can find portions of fidelity and coherence by creating a nonlinear plot that allows the audience to conversate and create paratexts. The films do display fidelity, but their nonlinearity creates the lack of coherence. This suggest that specific audiences will find the fidelity of these stories but may be confused and retreat to rewatch or avoid the films. From this analysis, nonlinear films

can be disruptive within the narrative perspective, but if the moral reaches the audience, these films will succeed with Fisher's meaning of fidelity.

Beyond the moral messaging, lies the foundation of the narrative archetypes. Although Nolan does not create a new archetype, *Inception, Interstellar,* and *Tenet* display how archetypes are morphed and adjusted to the characters of the narrative archetype than the overarching narrative of the what the film suggests. With the way Nolan uses narrative archetypes, a world of character archetypes is created. This suggests that Booker's narrative archetypes are not simply for the plot but are used to classify narratives in terms of how characters are used and displayed. The hero of the story motivates the plot, and this analysis discovered that it is not simply how the plot demonstrates a narrative, but how characters use the narrative archetypes differently within a plot. Nolan builds upon layers of narrative archetypes by using the characters. The blandness of the characters reveal that each character takes a narrative archetype to portray, divulging that major and minor characters have a character archetype. In fact, the closeness of the archetypes suggests that the plot is closer to one archetype and hero's monomyth more than seven distinct narrative archetypes. More interesting is that fact that the different narrative archetypes can be applied to reveal different messaging and understanding in nonlinear plots such as *Inception*'s blurred lines of reality through the differences of the voyage and return archetype and the quest. With each character creating the opportunity to portray different narrative archetypes, character archetypes become an amalgamation of plot that intermingles within the story's events and understanding. The variety of narrative and character archetypes suggest that these films are rewatchable because a different narrative archetype can be found in each viewing simply by paying attention to a different character.

From the procurement of paratexts, Nolan's films reveal that hidden messages can only be found through paratexts and commentary outside of the text. The paratexts of the three films discovered ways to amplify and detract from the original text. In all three films, the paratexts videos produced commentary to understand the film, and invited other users to add to the commentary. This creates an ongoing cycle of increasing paratexts or intertextuality that is produced from the films. The amplification of paratexts reveals easter eggs, further examination of character portrayals, and the need for the audience to dive into understanding even when understanding cannot be achieved. However, different paratexts can also detract from the film's commentary and understanding. Different reviews from IMDb critique the films in terms of cons about the narrative and character unrelatability. This occurred with all the films, but specifically *Tenet* faced the largest criticism because of the confusing plot lines that created a barrier to rewatchability. This suggest that once the exposition is too confusing that there is a barrier to rewatchability in films, and people simply refuse to watch, comment, or understand a nonlinear film. There seems to be a line between the amount of ambiguity that a film displays and how the audience feels to rewatch a film.

This analysis used the intentional fallacy to look closely at the films' narrative structure and moral reasoning without disruption from outside influences. The films clearly disrupt time and space displaying the need for clarity in how narrative structure and archetypes are manipulated within the original text and the conversations that surround it. The contribution of paratexts allow all types of differing texts to influence the original which can include the author's own words. Nolan created films that purposefully end ambiguously, which he has described as the point of creating films with the theme of reality and dreams (Knopf, 2020). Nolan has stated with the ending of *Inception*, that "there is no definitive answer" (Jensen, 2010,

para. 4) because "there's deliberate ambiguity" (Knopf, 2020, p. 335). The creator of the work pushes the same ambiguity of the films adding the sentiment that texts will constantly create paratexts because these films leave questions that the director is not willing to answer.

Limitation and Conclusion

This analysis looked only at two specific types of paratexts within IMDb and YouTube. As discussed in the analysis and discussion, paratexts are prolific and continuous in their conversation with original texts. The limitation of this analysis lies with the type and the amount of paratexts discussed because a small sample from YouTube and IMDb cannot cover an entire analysis of paratextuality. There is simply too much paratexts to describe in this paper alone, and further analysis can be conducted on how paratexts can fully impact the conversation that lies with rewatchability and ambiguity of nonlinear films and Christopher Nolan films. A more in-depth analysis of different types of paratexts and how they impact specific films can lead to new research for content and rhetorical analysis, as well as how these paratexts multiply and add to the conversation of each other and the text that is being discussed. Other areas of paratextuality could also lead to further insights of how Nolan films create conversation for their ambiguous endings. Other research could also look specifically at the paratexts that surround the ending of each film and how fans and audiences interact with these types of text. Beyond paratexts, other research is needed to investigate the line between ambiguity of films and rewatchability as this analysis has discovered.

Overall, modular narratives disrupt the plot, but there are means by which audiences can interpret and focus on coherence, fidelity, and commentary. Nolan takes deliberate steps to create a film that can change the way the audience views different film genres. The films create believability within the distortion of time because each film centers on linearity while

manipulating outside forces. With less-developed characters, Nolan's films create character archetypes within narrative archetypes creating a space for the audience to enter the film themselves continuing the need to rewatch to see themselves in the films. While these films are not directed towards all types of audiences, those who enjoy them will keep coming back to add to the commentary of the film and discover new insights each time they watch. *Inception*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet* are nonlinear types of films that lead to rewatchability because of their ambiguous endings that audiences try to answer by themselves, with others, and through the interpretations of paratexts.

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