

The Grey Area in a Black and White World – Duality in Christopher Nolan’s Films

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ABSTRACT

Duality has been a reoccurring theme that has enticed readers and moviegoers to be enraptured by the complexities of the story and characters alike, from the pages of novels written during the Victorian Era to the silver screen. Christopher Nolan is no stranger to the idea of implementing duality into his films, adding dimensions to the characters and making the story more engaging. Even elements in the mise en scene leave much to be admired and analyzed by both audiences and scholars. This article takes a closer look at selected works from Nolan and the elements in his films that exhibit duality.

Keywords: Christopher Nolan, duality, human behavior, morality, symbolism in film

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INTRODUCTION

Films, like other forms of media, have been designed to tell stories that are filled with characters and conflict; a classic case of good vs. evil. Subsequently, this good-vs.-evil formula loses its impact when overused. To overcome the banality of this age-old-storytelling method, more dynamics were added, like the internal struggles within each character and the external battle between characters; thus duality develops.

Though directed only a handful of films for the past two decades, Christopher

Nolan's works are masterpieces in the film industry garnering profitable box office returns and critical acclaim. His style of using non-linear multi-layered narratives has cemented him as one of the foremost modern auteur directors in the current generation. Nolan's films have also delved deep into the nature of man, and the external and internal conflicts faced by man on a physical and mental level. Films like *Insomnia* (2002), *The Prestige* (2006) and *The Dark Knight* trilogy (2005, 2008, 2012) have tapped into this theme of duality to give the characters more depth and dimension to result in more engaging stories.

Thus the centerpiece of this article: taking an in-depth look at how Nolan exhibits duality through his films. Whoever takes interest in this article would also be able to draw ideas on how film language can be used to portray social themes that are reflected in real life.

Concept of Duality

The word "dual" refers to anything that is related with the number two ("Dual", 2019). This can include the fields of math and science to philosophy and psychology right down to the creative subjects of literature and art (Villiers, 2003). The concept of duality has existed for eons dating back to ancient Chinese philosophy during the third century BC with the iconic yin and yang symbol. The concept behind the black and white logo is harmony or balance between two opposing forces in life; there is always the good and the bad, then there is the bad within the good and the good within the

bad (Harikumar, 2018). The peculiar thing about the philosophy of yin and yang is that there is no clear sense of good and evil. Harikumar (2018) used a standard kitchen knife for example. The object itself is neither good nor bad, but what we do with it determines the positivity or negativity of the outcome. It is all a matter of perspective.

The study of art and literature have also turned up some very interesting topics on duality. Phillips (2017) stated that opposing viewpoints were not necessarily opposite of each other or 180 degrees apart; it was more of "90 degrees from the point of view of one, and 270 from the point of view of the other". Characters can be independent agents with their own opinions, or be part of the collective where they all ride the same boat on a particular topic. Phillips (2017) further alluded to the yin and yang symbol in Chinese philosophy; a relationship amongst characters was not just a two-way dynamic, but a highway of interconnected thoughts and emotions. Evidently, duality has become a prevalent topic in a lot of areas of research especially in the creative line.

Early Examples of Duality in Fiction

Duality in Classic Literature. The theme of duality has long been a part of literature before the emergence of the film, especially during the late-Victorian era. Here, Lauren McDonald discussed the two different perspectives of duality originally proposed by Mona Ericson: the "both/and" perspective which interrelated two conceptually distinctive ideas, and the "either/or" perspective in which "two

conceptually distinctive ideas share no middle ground” (McDonald, 2008).

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886) is riddled with elements of duality between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde even though both personalities inherit the same body. The references to the concept of duality from the both/and and either/or perspectives are abundant within the character of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Dr. Jekyll’s handsome looks accentuate his position among the upper class and appear “good” to the general public, while the ugliness of Mr. Hyde clearly reflects the ugliness of the lower class and has no qualms about appearing “bad” in the eyes of the public. However, since both the good and bad reside within the same body and the boundary between the two is blurred, it hints towards a deeper meaning that individuals are capable of being both good and evil which aligns with the both/and perspective of duality (McDonald, 2008).

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde (1891/2000) is another piece of literature that tackles duality, telling the story of a man who maintains his youth by selling his soul and having a portrait of him age rather than him. The most obvious case of duality here is the struggle between good and evil that exists within Dorian. While Dorian himself is portrayed as good and the painting is depicted as evil, one can argue that both exhibit the forces of good and evil since Dorian and the painting are one in the same, or rather the portrait reflects the inner nature of Dorian. In fact, it was

common behavior during the late-Victorian era to hide one’s true nature from the public eye to avoid criticism from a society that demanded normalcy and dictated what people “ought to be like” (McDonald, 2008).

Vernon Lee’s *Dionea* is another short story that tackles the complexity of morality and questions what is right and wrong, leaning more towards the both/and perspective of duality. *Dionea* drew criticism from late-Victorian society due to their “simple-minded” idea of morals, specifically that a person can only swing one way or the other but not both, which is exactly what the main character of the same name went through (McDonald, 2008). However, modern readers are more open to the concept of duality probably due to how evolved people’s way of thinking have become.

Duality in Early Hollywood Films. Duality can also be a tool in giving more dimensions to a character in Hollywood films. One good example is Scarlett O’Hara from the movie *Gone with the Wind* by Fleming and Selznick (1939). She may come off as a spoiled, manipulative, shrewd woman who is only after men’s money, but if you look deeper, there is a sense of duality within her flaws. That is the kind of multi-dimensionality in characters that captivates audiences as highlighted by Becca Puglisi of WANA International through Lamb (2013). Scarlett’s spoiled behavior hides a certain boldness in getting what she wants; her pursuit of materialism is seen as resourceful. Cleverness can go hand in

hand with manipulation; selfishness and persistence can exist on the same page. These ideas conform to Ericson's both/and perspective of duality. Puglisi supports this theory by stating that real people have many facets with our "positive attributes having associated negative elements" (Lamb, 2013).

Most of Alfred Hitchcock's movies probe into the realm of duality like *Psycho* (1960), most notably through the character Norman Bates, who suffers from split personality disorder as revealed at the end of the movie when he is dressed as his late mother which leans towards the either/or perspective of duality. The sense of duality extends further to his drives and desires when interacting with Marion Crane. Some part of Norman wants to escape the "trap" he is in, while another part of him feels tied to his small little world or rather it is the other personality that holds Norman back, suggesting that the line between the two personalities may be blurred which coincides with the both/and perspective of duality.

There is also a sense of duality within Marion Crane. Marion steals \$40,000 from the bank she works in after overhearing a conversation about how money can buy happiness, thinking she could buy her own happiness. Though she initially had a guilty look on her face, that guilt eventually turns to satisfaction as a smile crosses her countenance. This is Hitchcock's way of expressing the conflicts within the characters as there may be some discontinuity between their natural impulses and intellect. He also

challenges the audience to ask themselves if there is morality in one's voyeurism or if there is entertainment in watching a murder (Sharma, 2012).

The trend of creating multi-layered characters and stories concerning duality have intrigued audiences and directors. Fast forward to the 21st century, another director, Christopher Nolan, has emerged and continued this trend of stories which delve into the nature of man.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology has long been associated with various researches concerning film studies. Among the different types of qualitative methods used for researching film, content analysis is one of the most common and traditional methods as it functions as a door to the various aspects of film language itself like looking into the mise en scene, narrative, editing, and sound. The concept of duality is deeply ingrained into Nolan's stories, so narrative analysis is used to look into how the story fleshes out each character's dualistic nature. Elements that are concentrated on through narrative analysis are the structure, function, substance, and performance within the story (Parcell & Baker, 2018). Things like the linearity of the narrative and the framing of a scene all play a part in drawing out the duality of the characters and the story.

Along with analyzing the narrative, there are some items or physical entities in Nolan's films that embody the spirit of duality or a marker towards the concept of duality within the story and characters.

For that, object analysis is also utilized to identify certain physical symbols related to duality. Object interpretation, like other content analysis techniques for film, are among the more traditional qualitative methodology in the field, dating back to the 1950s when Andre Bazin used the same methodology in France and later by German film theorist Siegfried Kracauer during the 1960s (Gambarato, 2010). The thing about film research of this nature is that there is no analytical model or guideline for coming up with standardized answers or deductions, making it widely open to interpretation and adding to its subjectivity. That is the beauty of analyzing film especially when trying to draw out the symbols in the film landscape. As Lefebvre (2006) put it in the words of Eisenstein, everything that was a part of a film, from the music to the setting, expresses the unexpressible through the use of cinematic form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Insomnia – The Fog Shrouding Right and Wrong

Insomnia (2002), one of the more underrated films by Christopher Nolan, is not an original film but an adaptation of the 1997 Norwegian film of the same name (Spiegel, 2017). Nevertheless, Nolan found room to put his own flavor into the remake, and it remains a highly valuable film when studying Nolan's filmmaking style, including the theme of duality. *Insomnia* tells the story of Detective Will Dormer who goes to Nightmute, Alaska, from Los Angeles to investigate the murder of a

teenage girl. What started off as a standard murder investigation, turns into a complex tale of deception when falsifying evidence and friendly fire between cops blur the line between right and wrong.

Detective Will Dormer is a fine specimen of a character that exemplifies the dualistic nature of man – how complex and double-sided their decisions may appear at times. When he first arrives in Alaska, he appears as an honorable, reputable detective met with adoration by other younger detectives. During the final act of the film, the details regarding one particular case that has been a thorn in Dormer's side are revealed. Dormer was investigating a child stalker who abducted a young boy and gave him a painful death after a hanging gone wrong. Due to lack of evidence, Dormer fabricated new evidence with the boy's blood and planted them in the stalker's apartment. However, a drop of blood spilt onto his shirt sleeve in Figure 1. This exhibits the both/and perspective of duality in Dormer's character. A figure of justice like Dormer is expected to uphold the law and do the right thing, but are his actions justifiable? Maybe not. But as Dormer puts it, "the end justifies the means", suggesting that sometimes doing the right thing requires you to do the wrong thing (Nolan et al., 2002).

Dormer's past catches up to him when he finds out his partner Hap Eckhard discloses the fact that Internal Affairs is conducting a deep investigation involving Dormer's old case, and that Eckhard cut a deal with them in order to gain some benefits. Dormer later finds himself in a bind when he has to cover



Figure 1. Dormer wiping off the blood from his shirt foreshadows the guilt that Dormer would not be able to wipe away in *Insomnia* by Nolan et al. (2002).

up his accidental murder of Eckhard while chasing after the suspect of the primary case. Backed into a corner, he is forced again to resort to false testimony of where the shooter was standing, and evidence of a fake bullet to cover his mistakes.

Things become more convoluted when the murderer Walter Finch confronts Dormer and reveals that he witnessed the whole incident between Dormer and Eckhard. Dormer is reluctantly cajoled into guiding Finch on how to tip the cops off to some other “guilty” party. Despite fulfilling his end of the deal and framing the victim’s boyfriend, Dormer is still persistent on bringing Finch to justice with the knowledge that his reputation would be tarnished once

he reveals everything about accidentally killing his partner.

The setting of *Nightmute*, Alaska itself is a representation of duality in the story. The first thing people notice is that there is 24 hours of daylight, no clear distinction between day and night like two sides of a double-sided coin. The light also represents Dormer’s conscience tearing away at his guilt over covering up the shooting of his partner Eckhard. Since the incident, Dormer covers up the blinds in his room to block out the light, and along the way further barricades the windows by taping the blinds and stacking up furniture as shown in Figure 2. Regardless, the light always finds a way through and deprive Dormer of his sleep.

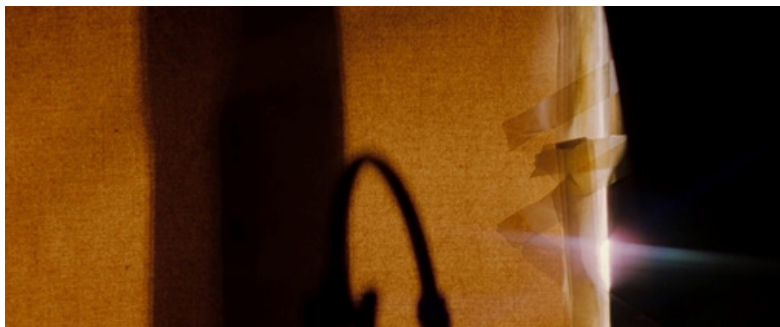


Figure 2. A glint of light seeping through the blinds and tape, a personification of the truth breaking through the barrier of lies in Nolan et al.’s (2002) *Insomnia*.

The fog during the chase scene in the forest in Figure 3 is also a metaphor for everything that happens in *Insomnia* surrounding Dormer. The lines of morality become blurred as Dormer faces the dilemma of either standing up for justice as required by his job or going against justice to protect his reputation as an officer of the law. Such is the nature of humanity where making difficult choices puts people between two fires, and *Insomnia* clearly captures that sentiment.

***The Prestige* – External and Internal Conflicts**

Magic is all about playing with the perception of the audience. Morrow (2016) pointed out Nolan's use of misdirection and manipulation in *The Prestige*, drawing people's attention to one thing at a time and then throwing them off track to leave them in constant suspense. Batty (2012) drew a similarity between a conventional film and the narrative arc of a magic trick; a film could be divided into the beginning, middle, and end much like how the magic tricks in *The Prestige* had three acts too: the Pledge,

the Turn, and the Prestige. Nolan's stylistic direction combined with themes of duality splendidly highlights the rivalry between the main characters in *The Prestige*.

The Prestige follows the rivalry between two professional magicians Alfred Borden and Robert Angier who are always trying to one up each other at their own game. After the tragic accident of Angier's wife Julia at the hands of Borden, Angier commits his life to ruining Borden. His obsession takes him all the way from London to Colorado to meet with Nikola Tesla and commissions him to build a special machine. Equipped with his new tools, Angier prepares for one last magic showdown in London against Borden.

There is a lot to dissect when it comes to the exhibits of duality in *The Prestige*. First is the relationship between Angier and Borden. At first glance, they are two very different individuals with contrasting backgrounds – Angier is from the aristocratic class while Borden is from the lower class. But when it comes to the conflict between the two protagonists, they are more alike than different. Both attempt to sabotage each



Figure 3. The fog in this scene acts as a metaphor for how blurred the lines of morality are in Nolan et al.'s (2002) *Insomnia*.

other's work through the use of disguises. And during the second act of the film, both Angier and Borden try to one up each other on the same trick – The Transported Man. This obsession with rivalry goes to show that even members of different classes can behave so indifferently. Even Olivia, the assistant who served Angier but later switched to Borden, tells Borden during the second half of the film that he and Angier “deserve each other”, suggesting that Borden and Angier are not so different after all (Nolan et al., 2006).

The trick The Transported Man itself is also a construct of duality. The way the trick works is a man goes into one box and appears in another box with the help of a small object and a double. Angier's improved version of the trick with the help of Tesla's machine takes things even further as it has the ability to create an actual double out of nothing over a very long distance. The risky part for Angier is the uncertainty of where his consciousness might lie after the double has been created. Whether his mind has been transferred or merely duplicated is a question not even Angier nor the film audience can answer.

Tesla's machine also has an air of duality surrounding it. Tesla makes an astounding comment about society's attitude to change. Society is amazed by only one change at a time, but when too many occur within a short time frame, amazement turns to fear (Nolan et al., 2006). The same thing can be said of Tesla's and Angier's field of work, and the machine's contribution to each field, as explained in Tesla's farewell

note to Angier: “The truly extraordinary is not permitted in science and industry. Perhaps you'll find more luck in your field where people are happy to be mystified” (Nolan et al., 2006). The phrase “one man's meat is another man's poison” seems apt in describing the irony of how Tesla's machine can either bring smiles to the realm of entertainment or frowns to the world of science.

While the rivalry between Angier and Borden illustrates the external dualistic conflict, there is also the internal conflict that exhibits a sense of duality. As established at the end of the film, Borden has been using a double all along, only he brings this sense of duality to every aspect of his personal life. Borden and his double dubbed Fallon throughout the entirety of the film have been constantly switching places with each other to preserve the secrets of the trick. This surreptitious practice goes as far as one of them in love with Sarah the wife and the other in love with Olivia the assistant. Even the character of Borden alone develops a second stage persona under the name of Freddie the Professor once he started gaining popularity with the help of Olivia.

Borden's relationship with Sarah and Olivia also suffers from this dichotomy. Sarah has a sixth sense of telling whether Borden's love for her is either genuine or fake; she claims it helps to keep things honest between them. Once Olivia comes into the picture, one of the Borden doubles becomes smitten with her and brings her into the web of duality already set, putting undue stress on Sarah. Sarah eventually

falls apart from having to face Borden's "inconsistent" love for her, resulting in her suicide in Borden's magic workshop. That scene of Sarah dangling from the neck in Borden's workshop speaks volumes about how Borden's dedication to magic, in keeping the whole dual act, brings about suffering for those around him.

On the subject of identities like Borden's Freddie and Angier's The Great Danton, Badjugar (2016) referred to ancient philosophy in order to explain how Borden and Angier attempted to achieve the impossible by creating an alternate identity. There is some truth in relying on duality to achieve greatness due to the fact that Borden would never have been able to pull off *The Transported Man* all by himself, but with the help of his double to pull off the trick, Borden made the impossible possible.

Borden and Angier touch on the sacrifices made for their work. Like Badjugar covered before, Borden's double helped him to achieve the impossible, but in order to keep *The Transported Man*'s secret alive, Borden had to sacrifice all sense of a normal life; have himself and his double share one life just to make sure no one catches on. Angier's argument for his sacrifice, though Borden does not buy it, is having to step into Tesla's machine every night creating a clone, not knowing if he would be "the man in the box or in the prestige" (Nolan et al., 2006). While both have different opinions on the meaning of sacrifice, the either/or perspective of duality, what their so-called sacrifices have in common is that the lives around them are destroyed – even

each other's. Thus their sacrifices can also be considered to be a both/and perspective on duality since they have similar effects on others.

O'Connell (2017) threw in a theory about Tesla's machine. If the machine had the power to create a clone of anything that entered the machine, why did Angier not create a single clone? Why the need to put a water tank under the stage and "drown himself" every night? For this, O'Connell points to what Cutter, the ingenieur who mentors both Borden and Angier, says during Julia's funeral. Cutter says that drowning is a bit like "going home", although later at the end of the film, Cutter reveals that he lied and that drowning is "agony" (Nolan et al., 2006). Angier wants to feel that agony, but at the same time, he wants to "go home" to be together with his wife. Badjugar (2016) added to this by saying that since Angier's wife drowned at the hands of Borden, Angier's drowning also serves as some kind of repetitive justice for Borden. This is not the only evidence of repetitive justice in *The Prestige*. Sarah's suicide by means of hanging also comes back to bite Borden when he himself is tried for Angier's "death" and sentenced to hang until dead as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5. It is almost poetic how justice comes in twos in *The Prestige*.

The Dark Knight – The Mask or the Face
Superheroes are great examples of duality since they have two sides to their identity: the hero and the normal man; also the battle between good and evil that they are constantly involved in. But no superhero



Figure 4. Borden's wife Sarah hanging in his workshop in Nolan et al.'s (2006) *The Prestige*.



Figure 5. Borden's sentence by hanging in *The Prestige* by Nolan et al. (2006).

tale exemplifies the concept more than Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* from *The Dark Knight* trilogy.

Bruce Wayne aka Batman is a billionaire playboy by day, and a vigilante by night. Nolan tackles that particular theme on a whole other level by examining which is the mask and which is the face, bringing the both/and perspective of duality into the picture. At the end of the previous film *Batman Begins*, Bruce comes to terms with the fact that the persona of Bruce Wayne is the "mask" to hide his "real identity" as protector of Gotham (Nolan et al., 2005).

Fast forward to *The Dark Knight*, Bruce still struggles with the knowledge that Gotham still needs Batman. With the

entrance of Harvey Dent acting as the new District Attorney and bringing his own brand of justice to the criminals, Bruce clings on to the hope that he can relieve himself of the Batman persona. Unfortunately, that proves to be more complicated than anticipated with Batman's nemesis The Joker taking center stage wreaking havoc on everything, and bringing down what Batman and Harvey are trying to accomplish. In the end, Bruce has to continue to embrace the role of Batman a little longer.

The either/or perspective is written all over the relationship between Batman and The Joker even in the comics before the making of this film. There is a reason why The Joker is described as Batman's

archenemy by both the fans and the creators due to their contrasting personalities and outfits; polar opposites of one another. One of the producers of the classic *Batman: The Animated Series*, Burnett (2004), stated that The Joker was “the perfect Batman villain because he is the antithesis of Batman”, having no historical connection other than to oppose everything that Batman stands for.

The way Nolan portrays these two characters fit in perfectly with the mythos already present. The Joker has no motive or laid out plans and destroys everything in his path; he just “wants to watch the world burn” (Nolan et al., 2008). Throughout *The Dark Knight*, The Joker has always attempted to throw Gotham to the brink of chaos and force Batman to cross the line of his own moral code. One instance is probing Batman to knock him down on his Batpod only for Batman to swerve out of the way at the last instance. There is also the final confrontation between Batman and The Joker in an abandoned building where Batman throws The Joker off the roof, only to catch him halfway and string him up with his grappling gun. This is where The Joker realizes that Batman is truly “incorruptible”, always saving Gotham without sacrificing his personal code of conduct.

Then there is the famous interrogation scene between Batman and The Joker in the police station. Here the Joker talks philosophy with Batman about how ugly human beings really are; willing to “eat each other” when things go south, and how they will only need others when necessary after which they are “cast aside like a leper”

(Nolan et al., 2008). The Joker even touches on Batman’s so-called role as a hero; no matter how hard he tries or how much he does for Gotham, Batman will always be looked upon as a freak like The Joker, suggesting that Batman and The Joker are more to being on the same side of a coin instead of opposing sides.

The cinematography also captures the dualistic nature being referred to here. Wally Pfister, the recurring director of photography in most of Nolan’s films, does a good job of shifting the position of Batman between the right and left of the frame in order to highlight The Joker’s points. There is a certain psychology that is associated with the movement of the camera and the position of characters in film. A study done at Cleveland State University (Egizii et al., 2018) found that lateral movement from the left to the right is easier on the eyes and minds of audiences, and how most filmmakers have a tendency to lean towards left to right movement over right to left since it feels more natural. Characters on the left side of the frame looking or moving to the right exhibit more positive energy, maybe even heroic (Egizii et al., 2018). And that is where we see Batman in the beginning of the interrogation scene in Figure 6. But as the conversation drags on, we notice a shift in Batman’s position to the right of the frame looking left in Figure 7 suggesting that there may be some antagonistic aspect to Batman’s nature despite his heroic deeds as protector of Gotham as pointed out by The Joker.



Figure 6. Batman on the left of the frame looking right towards the Joker in Nolan et al.'s (2008) *The Dark Knight*.



Figure 7. Batman's position changes to the right of the frame looking left in *The Dark Knight* by Nolan et al. (2008).

The antagonistic side arises later in the interrogation when The Joker pushes the right buttons by taking Bruce's love interest Rachel hostage, forcing Batman's hands on The Joker. This supports The Joker's twisted goal of corrupting Batman and pushing him to his mental limits, proving that no matter how much good Batman does for Gotham, eventually it will show that he and The Joker are one in the same.

This concept is a nice segue into the next part about Harvey "Two-Face" Dent, the district attorney who has dedicated his career to combating corruption and crime in Gotham only to fall into it himself. Harvey Dent, unlike the dark knight of Gotham, is considered the white knight of Gotham,

hardly needing a mask and stepping into the limelight of the courtroom and the press to take on the criminal underworld. So Batman and Harvey Dent represent the duality of the fight against justice, one doing things by the book and the other resorting to more outlawed tactics.

Dent does bring up another sense of duality in heroes at the beginning of *The Dark Knight* where he says: "You either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain" (Nolan et al., 2008). Through this statement, Dent forebodes the struggles the heroes have to go through. We have already seen Batman being pushed to the limit by The Joker nearly crossing the line at some points

during the film, but Dent himself also faces that dilemma throughout the film.

A good place to observe this behavior in Dent is when he steals an ambulance carrying one of the assassins of the mayor of Gotham and drives out to the middle of an abandoned alley to interrogate him. As much as he wants to shoot the assassin for what he has done, he instead leaves it up to his coin. However, due to the coin being double-headed, Dent never actually pulls the trigger but merely fools the assassin into giving up the location of The Joker. So the coin acts as a barrier keeping Dent from crossing the line, and as a symbol for the “goodness” in Dent. Once Dent gets caught in the explosion caused by The Joker, not only is half his face burnt but also half his coin is burnt; thus, the line separating good from evil is broken and the downfall of Harvey Dent begins as he turns into the villain Two-Face.

The Joker convinces Dent to take a darker path by making the argument that even though he himself has done some very inhumane things, he is simply acting according to nature without a plan and that the higher officials like the mayor, the politicians, and even Commissioner James Gordon “have plans” and love to scheme for their own ulterior motives (Nolan et al., 2008). Even criminals have plans, suggesting that there is not much difference between the figures of society. In other words, the figures of society are actually worse than the biggest criminals in Gotham which supports McDonald’s earlier statement about how human beings

are capable of both good and evil, coinciding with the both/and perspective of duality.

What The Joker proposes is that Dent “introduces chaos to society” which is ironically “fair” (Nolan et al., 2008). That is where everything is stripped bare and made simple in twos. Dent has become the very thing he has fought against for so long, and has proven that heroes eventually live long enough to see themselves become the villain. That is until Batman ends him and takes the blame in order for Dent’s reputation to go untarnished; thus, all he has done for the city would not be in vain. So Batman ends up becoming a villain in the eyes of Gotham, though he is also a hero, albeit a dark one, to those who know what really transpired.

It should be noted that it is not just the main characters that exhibit duality, but even the citizens of Gotham showcase the complex nature of man. A prominent time when the morality of people is questioned is when The Joker gives each ferry at the harbor the bomb detonator to the other. What is interesting here is the occupants of each ferry: one ferry is composed of the upright or law-abiding citizens of Gotham while the other harbors the prisoners, the law-breakers, of Gotham.

There is a concept in psychology known as the fundamental attribution error in which people concentrate more on the personality of others rather than the gravity of the situation itself (Grinnell, 2016). With their lives placed on the line, all rational thought gets thrown out the window; and the civilian passengers insist on blowing

up the ferry with convicts before they get blown up by them. After all, being criminals, they “had their chance” and might not think twice about blowing civilians up. So far, the regular citizens have proven that they are “as ugly as The Joker” capable of nefarious deeds. Although as time passes, the awareness of the situation becomes more apparent on both ferries as neither has chosen to blow the other one up. One particularly brutish-looking convict takes the detonator and throws it into the lake, claiming that this is what everyone “should have done 20 minutes ago” (Nolan et al., 2008). This is a textbook example of “not judging a book by its cover”; just because someone has a lot of tattoos with a scar on

his face and is wearing a prisoner’s garments does not mean he is not capable of remorse or good deeds.

Another thing to note is how Wally Pfister again plays with the framing of the scene. Figure 8 shows the convict who eventually throws the detonator into the lake standing on the right of the frame looking left, while Figure 9 shows the citizen who picks up the detonator also standing on the right of the frame looking left. The symbolism behind this is that while they are of different status in society, they both have some sense of negativity surrounding them; the convict exhibits it externally while the citizen embodies it internally.



Figure 8. The burly convict who throws away the detonator on the right of the frame looking left in *The Dark Knight* by Nolan et al. (2008).



Figure 9. The average citizen who volunteers to “get his hands dirty” on the right of the frame looking left in *The Dark Knight* by Nolan et al. (2008).

CONCLUSION

The study of duality has been a longstanding one in many fields of study whether it involves numbers or words. While there may not be much to contribute to the subject itself, the way that the theme of duality is tackled in the numerous pieces of literature and films leave a lot to be admired and open to analysis and interpretation. Implementing duality into the stories of films adds more complexity to the characters and more layers to the story.

Christopher Nolan has implemented duality in his films in a variety of ways. In *Insomnia*, he uses the environment like the fog and sunlight as symbols to reflect the duality in certain situations. He also inserts external and internal conflicts in *Memento* to give more depth to the two main characters on top of the constant duel they are in. Last but not least, Nolan gives more depth to the well-established Batman mythos in *The Dark Knight* by exploring the duality within and surrounding the characters along with brilliant cinematography to flesh out the themes and symbols. Nolan's films have proven that with duality, the world within the film is taken to a whole different level by adding complexities to the characters and twists to the story. Such practice has allowed not only Nolan but other directors to make the plot of their films more engaging, just like authors in the past have done with their novels.

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