

# Whose Labyrinth?

## Gender, Architecture and Filmmaking in Christopher Nolan’s “Inception”

Thomas Moser

*“I am an architect; I’m drawing up the plans.”<sup>1</sup>*  
– Taylor Swift

### Abstract

In his Hollywood blockbuster *Inception* (2010), Christopher Nolan introduces the character Ariadne as a seemingly convincing portrayal of a female architect to Western mainstream media. This chapter critically examines the ways in which Ariadne is depicted as a creative and talented architect with notable agency, while also interrogating the extent to which traditional gender roles are challenged through her. However, the analysis reveals that Nolan ultimately reproduces heteropatriarchal concepts of genius, thereby denying Ariadne’s womanhood and autonomy as an architect. A media-theoretical and production-aesthetic approach further demonstrates how the film’s postmodern self-referentiality continually positions Nolan himself as the actual “architect” of the narrative and its cinematic visualisation. In doing so, the film not only undermines Ariadne’s creative abilities but also questions the credibility of a female architect as an independent and authoritative figure altogether.

### Taylor Swift Architect

What consequences could arise for women in the architecture and construction industries if Taylor Swift—arguably the most influential pop musician of our time—were to identify herself as an architect? For comparison, Swift’s attendance at twelve games of the Kansas City Chiefs, where her partner Travis Kelce plays, is estimated to have increased the combined brand value of the National Football League (NFL) and the Chiefs by \$331.5 million.<sup>2</sup> Since this surge of publicity, the league has experienced a historic rise in female viewership, with nearly 70 % of Swift’s most devoted fans expressing newfound interest in live NFL broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Kelce’s red jerseys have become a frequent sight at concerts on her *Eras Tour*. One can only speculate about the potential consequences if Taylor Swift had shifted her mainstream media influence toward architecture instead of football, perhaps even enrolling in a relevant degree program. Although this hypothetical scenario may seem improbable at first glance, it is less absurd upon closer consideration. Swift maintains strong ties to academia, with her artistic work serving as the subject of extensive research literature, academic conferences, and university courses.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, she herself received the distinction of an honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from New York University. However, her connections to architecture, both literal and metaphorical, are particularly striking.

1 Lyrics from *I Think He Knows*. Cf. Swift (2019).

2 Cf. Dozier (2024). However, these surveys even fail to account for the Super Bowl victory achieved by Kelce’s team in February 2024.

3 Cf. Flanagan (2024).

4 In recent years, a growing body of research literature spanning a wide range of disciplines—such as “Swiftonomics,” “Swiftology,” and “Swiftory”—has emerged, focusing on Taylor Swift and her oeuvre. In addition to academic conferences dedicated to her, such as the “Swiftposium” held in 2024 at the University of Melbourne, several hundred papers have been published on her work. Notable recent contributions include Glasenapp (2024) and Robb & Mills (2024), alongside a steadily increasing number of full-length academic books.

On a literal level, Swift purchased the historic Samuel Goldwyn estate in Beverly Hills for nearly \$25 million and oversaw its meticulous restoration to its original state.<sup>5</sup> On a symbolic level, Swift has been repeatedly represented as an architect within the context of her music. In the song *I Think He Knows* from the album *Lover* (2019), the lyrical first-person narrator—commonly understood by fans to reflect Swift herself—proclaims, “I am an architect; I am drawing up the plans.”<sup>6</sup> This self-description has been enthusiastically embraced by her followers and transformed into a recurring motif. For instance, on the streaming platform Spotify, a user named FG curated a playlist titled *Taylor Swift is an Architect*, featuring songs with particularly celebrated “bridges”—musical transitions that Swift often uses in a traditional manner to link the second and third choruses.<sup>7</sup> This playful interpretation has been further reinforced through visual representations of architecture. A sweater sold by Midnight’s Market Co. on Etsy, for example, features the words “Swift Architects” on the front, styled as if referencing a professional architectural firm.<sup>8</sup> On the back, eight schematic bridge designs are displayed, each overlaid with lyrical excerpts from Swift’s musical “bridges” (fig. 1). These creative intersections of architecture and music have even entered professional discourse: in 2024, the architecture platform *Archinect* announced, as an April Fool’s prank, that Swift would deliver the keynote address at the upcoming AIA Conference on Architecture & Design.<sup>9</sup> Such an imagined scenario highlights her cultural reach, as it is likely that a Swift-led keynote would generate viewership figures comparable to those of a Kansas City Chiefs game.

Although Swift is unlikely to ever enroll in an architecture program, the lack of visible role models in popular culture remains a significant and consequential issue in the field. This deficit, along with the gendered stereotypes associated with the architectural profession, has recently come into focus through the controversy surrounding the Barbie doll co-developed by Despina Stratigakos.<sup>10</sup> In *Where Are the Women Architects?*, Stratigakos draws attention to the striking absence representations of female architects as skilled, accomplished, and multidimensional figures in Western mainstream Cinema. Greta Gerwig’s *Barbie* (2023), for instance, entirely omitted any significant role for architect Barbie, further compounded by its debatable “plastic feminism.” As has frequently been noted, the “über-macho protagonist”<sup>11</sup> of Ayn Rand’s novel *The Fountainhead* (1943) and its film adaptation has helped entrench the image of an uncompromising, “genius” male architect in the imaginations of generations of male architecture students.<sup>12</sup> The fact that this archetype was constructed not by a man but by a woman, Ayn Rand, underscores just how deeply the alleged incompatibility of artistic creativity and femininity is embedded in Western culture.<sup>13</sup>

Major productions, such as *The Towering Inferno* (1974), *The Belly of an Architect* (1987), *Indecent Proposal* (1993), *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), and even the endearingly clumsy protagonist of the cult series *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2014), have depicted male architects with diverse and nuanced life trajectories. By contrast, the rare portrayals of female architects in film often reduce their characters to struggles with personal or professional inadequacy. For example, Melanie Parker (Michelle Pfeiffer), the female architect in the romantic comedy *One Fine Day* (1996), is shown failing under the double burden of career and child-rearing without male support (represented by George Clooney). When Melanie trips over her own architectural model because she has left her son unattended, the film perpetuates a male-controlled narrative that equates a woman’s professional aspirations with a neglect of her “biological and social destiny” to care for her children.<sup>14</sup>

5 Cf. *The Real Estate Conversation* (2017).

6 Swift (2019).

7 Cf. FG. Taylor swift is an architect. Conversely, there is also a multitude of musical metaphors for architects who direct or conduct spaces.

8 See also a post by the user Irene (lillyswift13) on the X platform: “The fact that Taylor Swift didn’t lie when she said ‘I am an architect, I’m drawing up the plans’ cause she makes the best bridges ever and that’s the tea.” Cf. Irene (2020).

9 Cf. *Archinect* (2024).

10 Cf. Stratigakos (2016).

11 Stratigakos (2016), p. 9.

12 Cf. Heynen (2012).

13 On this topic, see also Budde (2017), pp. 40–41. Jeff Britting recently noted that, when Rand began writing the screenplay for Warner Brothers, the studio simultaneously hired two male writers to produce alternative versions of the script. Cf. Britting (2023).

14 Cf. also Stratigakos (2016), p. 27.

In stark contrast, Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) stands as the only major Hollywood blockbuster to consciously attempt to subvert these stereotypical patterns. It is surprising, therefore, that the film has yet to receive substantial attention from feminist architectural scholarship. This paper seeks to address this gap by examining how the character of Ariadne is portrayed as a creative and skilled architect with significant agency, as well as to what extent her depiction challenges traditional Western—specifically Anglo-American—gender roles. The analysis will demonstrate, however, that Nolan reproduces key elements of the patriarchal concept of genius, ultimately denying the character her femininity. A media-theoretical and production-aesthetic analysis further reveals how the film, on multiple levels, emphasises the fact that Nolan and his all-male VFX team are positioned as the true architects of the narrative—not merely in a metaphorical sense but as the ultimate creators of the cinematic world itself.



FIGURE 1 Back of the Swift Architects Bridge sweatshirt by Midnights Market Co, Etsy online store 2024. (Photo: © Midnights Market Co.)

### Ariadne's Gender

*Inception* follows the conventional structure of a heist film, although the team, led by the protagonist and widowed father Dominick Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio), does not break into bank vaults but into the dreams of corporate heir Robert Fischer (Cillian Murphy).<sup>15</sup> The objective is not to steal anything, but to implant an idea—an “inception”—on behalf of a competitor. To ensure that Fischer believes the implanted thought originates from his own mind, the team must design a highly convincing and intricate architectural environment within which Fischer’s dreams unfold, facilitated by a specialised technological apparatus. The burglars must then navigate this dream architecture without alerting Fischer’s subconscious, which acts as a kind of security system. Cobb, however, no longer designs these environments himself, haunted by guilt over driving his wife Mal (Marion Cotillard) to suicide in a dream they had constructed together. Her figure now repeatedly intrudes on the dream heists, manifesting from Cobb’s subconscious and threatening to sabotage the team’s missions. Compounding these challenges, the previous architect, Nash (Lukas Haas), betrays the group early in the film, leaving Cobb in search of a new team member for the mission. Cobb turns to Stephen Miles (Michael Caine), an architecture professor at the École d’Architecture in Paris, who introduces him to his exceptionally talented student, Ariadne (Elliot Page)<sup>16</sup> (fig. 2).

15 For the plot, see the screenplay as well as the movie itself. Cf. Nolan (2010) and Nolan (n.d.).

16 Page came out as a trans man in 2020; in the film itself, however, their deadname is still used.



FIGURE 2 Miles introduces Cobb to Ariadne at the École d'Architecture. Film still, *Inception*, 2010, directed by Christopher Nolan. Streaming via Prime Video. (Film still: © Warner Bros. Pictures)

Ariadne is quickly initiated into the complex mechanics of dream infiltration and subsequently designs the three nested dream levels through which the team operates during a transcontinental flight with the sedated Fischer. Moving between these levels involves entering deeper states of sleep, symbolising their descent into Fischer's subconscious. On the third level, Fischer is led to encounter his deceased father, whose imagined presence is manipulated to plant the desired idea in Fischer's mind. Despite the intervention of Mal's disruptive apparition, the plan succeeds. However, the finale takes a darker turn when Ariadne insists that Cobb descend into Limbo—the deepest and most unstable level of the dreamscape—where individuals lost in dreams may remain permanently. It is here that Cobb confronts Mal one last time and finally admits to his feelings of guilt, choosing to remain in Limbo with her. In the film's ambiguous conclusion, Cobb mysteriously awakens with his accomplices on the plane, seemingly successful in their mission. He then reunites with his children, yet the question of whether this reunion takes place in reality or within yet another dream remains deliberately unresolved by the film.

Research on *Inception* has expanded so extensively that providing a concise overview has become increasingly ambitious. Shortly after the film's release, two comprehensive anthologies, both titled *Inception and Philosophy*, were published independently of each other, establishing a foundational field of academic inquiry.<sup>17</sup> Since then, parallels between the film and contemporary studies in neuroscience, cognitive processes, and the effects of dreams have drawn particular attention. Similarly, recurring interest has emerged in the metaleptic aspects of *Inception* and their place within Nolan's broader oeuvre, which, with films such as *Memento* (2000), *Interstellar* (2014), and *Tenet* (2020), is largely defined by complex narrative structures and what Allan Cameron termed "modular narratives."<sup>18</sup> *Inception*, however, forms only one part of the scholarly engagement with Nolan's larger body of work, which has been examined from a wide variety of perspectives.<sup>19</sup>

Notably, while architecture is often staged in Nolan's films in a meaningful and visually striking way, it has received comparatively little critical attention.<sup>20</sup> Gender issues in his work, on the other hand, began to be addressed in 2015 with Jacqueline Furby and Stuart Joy's edited volume.<sup>21</sup> Most analyses focus on Nolan's male protagonists, whose masculinity is typically fractured by trauma, guilt, or a sense of overwhelming responsibility.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, only a limited number of contributions have engaged seri-

17 Cf. Botz-Bornstein (2011) and Johnson & Irwin (2012). This explicitly philosophical perspective integrates seamlessly into broader discussions surrounding his entire body of work. See for example Dunn (2017) and Goh (2022).

18 Cameron coined this term to describe Hollywood films characterised by multi-layered, non-linear narrative and temporal structures. Cf. Cameron (2008). See also Bordwell (2010) and, more recently, Rußegger (2021).

19 In addition to the previously mentioned parallels to contemporary findings in the natural sciences, his engagement with the film noir tradition and the postmodern deconstruction of genre boundaries played a significant role early on. Cf. Petkovic & Vukovic (2013). However, it is only in recent years that his short films have garnered increased scholarly attention. For examples of this focus in Nolan research, see the volumes McGowan (2014), Furby & Joy (2015), Joy (2020), Helbig (2021), and most recently (Parkinson & Labroulière).

20 One notable exception is a contribution focusing on the architecture of the fictional city of Gotham as depicted in Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy, set within the Batman universe. Cf. Damler (2022), notably pp. 28–34. See also Husson (2011) on building and dwelling in *Inception*; this area of inquiry within film studies has been significantly shaped by Giuliana Bruno, particularly through her highly influential *Atlas of Emotion*. Cf. Bruno (2002).

21 Cf. Furby & Joy (2015).

22 See, for example, the chapter by Margaret A. Toth, which situates *Memento* within a Hollywood film landscape that, since the early 2000s, has increasingly depicted male characters as mentally impaired, or at the very

ously with his female characters. For instance, Miriam Kent recently explored the role of Catwoman in Nolan’s Batman trilogy, building on Tosha Taylor’s earlier essay on Bruce Wayne’s three love interests.<sup>23</sup> Taylor’s work highlights the significance of these female characters for the narrative arcs of the films, arguing that they are tied to traditional archetypes of the *femme fatale* and the *femme fragile*, categorised as “Sinner,” “Saint,” and “Psychopath.”

According to Taylor, these archetypes are not simply reproduced but are developed further through what she describes as “metatextual subversions.”<sup>24</sup> For example, “the virtuous woman remains virtuous, but she ultimately rejects the male hero. The femmes fatales do not deviate from archetypal progressions, but the challenges they pose to the hero are not easily overcome with brute strength or heteronormative masculine sexuality.”<sup>25</sup> Taylor draws on the established methodologies of feminist film theory, particularly psychoanalytic and semiotic approaches, alongside Laura Mulvey’s seminal concept of the *male gaze*, to analyse instances of resistance to patriarchal cinematic traditions.<sup>26</sup> Taylor’s findings suggest that, in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), the character of Talia Al Ghul (Marion Cotillard) functions as the “performer of the gaze,” while Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) and Bane (Tom Hardy) are relegated to the position of “its objects.”<sup>27</sup> This shift challenges traditional gendered visual hierarchies in film. While such analyses do not position Nolan as a feminist filmmaker, they do reveal a deliberate awareness of gender stereotypes and a postmodern motivation to unsettle and deconstruct them. These gestures, however, should be understood not as a wholesale subversion of patriarchal norms but as a more nuanced attempt to engage with and problematise cinematic conventions.



FIGURE 3 Ariadne tries to pass Cobb’s test by drawing a labyrinth that is as difficult as possible for him to solve, film still, *Inception*, 2010, directed by Christopher Nolan. Streaming via Prime Video. (Film still: © Warner Bros. Pictures)

Unlike Batman, who is constantly surrounded by desirable female characters, *Inception* lacks the dominant motif of heteronormative male fantasies—a point underscored by Arno Rußegger, who argues that the film is devoid of eroticism, even in a cinematic sense.<sup>28</sup> While Cobb’s wife, Mal, is undeniably conceived as a conventional *femme fatale*, it is Ariadne who emerges as the central figure driving the narrative forward. Ariadne is responsible for designing the three dream levels that enable the success of the mission in the first place, and she plays a crucial role in helping Cobb confront his deeply repressed feelings of guilt during the film’s climactic finale. Notably, the iconic

least fragile or traumatised. Cf. Toth (2015), but also Deakin (2015) and Bordwell’s verdict that *Inception* is “a blend of science fiction, fantasy, action pictures, and male masochism.” Bordwell (2010).

23 Cf. Taylor (2015) and Kent (2024).

24 Taylor (2015), p. 72.

25 Taylor (2015), p. 72.

26 For an introduction to feminist film theory, see the reader Thornham (1999), which demonstrates that essential focal points—such as genre and the relationship between the screen spectacle and the viewer—have been integral to Nolan research from the outset. Additionally, see Mulvey’s seminal essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, introducing the concept of the Male Gaze. Cf. Mulvey (1975).

27 Cf. Taylor (2015), p. 71.

28 Cf. Rußegger (2021), p. 79.

image of the folded Parisian cityscape (fig. 3)—a visual hallmark of the film—is also attributed to her. Ariadne is portrayed as young, clever, determined, and self-assured, making her a role model for both architecture students and young women in general.

The mythological resonance of Ariadne's name is particularly significant. It is worth noting, without further elaboration, the persistent influence of mythological references in feminist film theory drawing on Freud and Lacan, where such allusions remain central to psychoanalytic interpretations. In Greek mythology, Ariadne famously assists her lover Theseus in navigating Minos' labyrinth after defeating her half-brother, the Minotaur, using the now proverbial thread. The film repeatedly invokes this myth, such as in the "aptitude test" scene where Cobb asks Ariadne to draw a labyrinth in two minutes, only to take an entire minute himself to solve it with a pencil.

However, in the original myth, it is not Ariadne but the inventor and architect Daedalus who designs the labyrinth. This inversion allows Ariadne in *Inception* to be interpreted as a feminist reclamation of architecture. While Mal can be seen as paralleling the Minotaur, linked to Ariadne by blood, Ariadne appropriates Daedalus' role with confidence, creating intricate dreamscapes while retaining her identity as a woman.<sup>29</sup> In this reading, the skyscrapers she designs on the first dream level could be understood—following Merrill Schleier's analysis—as phallic symbols representing the heteronormative-masculine dominance of capitalism.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Ariadne's role disrupts this structure: she is the only capable architect in the narrative, while the men around her fail time and again. It is therefore evident that Nolan intentionally sought to present a strong, young female architect in *Inception*. Through her talent, creativity, and agency, Ariadne not only challenges traditional gender roles but also reclaims a position of power and competence in a domain traditionally marked by patriarchal connotations.

On closer examination, however, this seemingly empowering image of Ariadne proves to be fraught with contradictions. To begin with, the representation of women in the film is deeply problematic. The reference to Ariadne from Greek mythology, a woman unhappily in love with the actual hero, Theseus, exposes inherent limitations in the character's conception. Similarly, Nolan's *Ariadne* is portrayed as intrusive, impulsive, and ultimately unprofessional, as she repeatedly disregards Cobb's personal boundaries. In her review published in the *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, Sarah Fleming critiques this dynamic, referring to "Ariadne's ignorance" and noting the tension between this flaw and her "architectural genius."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, outstanding creativity—described in the film as "genuine inspiration"—is legitimized only through alignment with patriarchal narratives of genius. On the one hand, Ariadne meets Cobb in Paris, a setting synonymous with the modern art avant-garde, reinforcing her association with male artistic innovation. On the other hand, her incomplete education positions her within traditional narratives of autodidacts and dropouts, perpetuating the myth of the "natural genius" whose brilliance transcends formal training.<sup>32</sup> Yet, despite this supposed brilliance, Ariadne remains dependent on white male figures like Cobb and Miles to validate her work and her architectural capacities.<sup>33</sup> Her success in the aptitude test, for instance, is framed as contingent on Cobb's uncompromising critique. It is only under his intense scrutiny that she seems capable of achieving top performance, a moment he condescendingly acknowledges with the comment, "more like it."<sup>34</sup>

Ariadne's extraordinary productivity is closely tied to her lack of judgment, which necessitates the repeated explanations of the (dream) world by the seemingly omniscient male figures on the team. Her "genius," however, appears fundamentally at odds with her femininity. While both Mal and Ariadne operate within the dreams of men, sabotaging their subconscious in different ways, Ariadne is portrayed as neither a *femme fatale* nor a *femme fragile*. Instead, she is effectively stripped of her identity as a woman with her own sexuality altogether. This is explicitly highlighted midway through

29 Rajko Petković and Krešimir Vuković, on the other hand, have argued that Ariadne fulfills the roles of both Daedalus and Ariadne for Cobb. While this may hold true in terms of her narratological function, the character is clearly designed—both in name and representation—as a woman who embodies both aspects. Cf. Petković & Vuković (2013).

30 See Schleier (2009) for her study on U.S. "Skyscraper Cinema" during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

31 Fleming (2012), p. 166.

32 The numerous examples span from Michelangelo and Paul Cézanne to Andy Warhol.

33 When Cobb turns to Miles and says, "I need an architect who is as good as I was," the professor responds, "I got someone even better." This structural reliance on male patronage reflects a dynamic that Linda Nochlin famously identified for female artists as early as 1971. Cf. Nochlin (2021).

34 See also the script Nolan (n.d.).

the film, when Mal provocatively asks Ariadne whether she even knows what it feels like “to be a lover.” Ariadne meekly confesses that she does not, further stressing her detachment from any form of sexual experience or agency.

Later in the film, when team member Arthur (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) kisses Ariadne—ostensibly to avoid drawing attention during a chase—the lack of any emotional or sexual connection is glaring. Arthur dismisses the act with a flippant and indifferent “worth a shot,” fortifying the absence of romantic or physical allure. This de-sexualisation is further reflected in Ariadne’s wardrobe: her loose-fitting clothing, muted tones, vests, and scarves present a stark contrast to Mal’s sensual attire, which includes figure-hugging tops and spaghetti straps. The careful costume design visually emphasises Ariadne’s systematic de-sexualisation, trying to frame her as a naive and defiant child rather than as a fully realised woman. Her remarkable creativity, seemingly incompatible with traditional markers of femininity, becomes the basis for her characterisation as an “unfeminine” genius.

For centuries, dominant Western heteropatriarchal thought traditions have sought to justify the supposed contradiction between genius and femininity, often relying on deeply entrenched gender ideologies.<sup>35</sup> As Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, and Leslie K. Weisman demonstrated, the sexualisation of both architectural labor and its product has played a particularly insidious role in this process.<sup>36</sup> This extends beyond the frequent comparison of creative and biological procreation to include the notion that “architecture [...] is precisely a matter, both for men and for women, of forming the female body.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, heteronormative ideologies consider the presence of women in architecture inherently unsettling. This issue becomes even more pronounced in the case of Nolan’s Ariadne, whose exceptional architectural talents are not confined to individual buildings but encompass the creation of entire cities.

The association of the cityscape with the female body, subject to male domination, has deep roots, flourishing particularly since the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, and has historically obstructed the path for women architects.<sup>38</sup> In patriarchal thought, masculinity is positioned as the prerequisite for creating, shaping, and modifying bodies in a god-like manner—whether through architecture, medicine, or even sexual conquest. Within this polyvalent conception, women are relegated to the roles of caretakers and maintainers of the body-architecture-urban space, rather than designers or creators. In *Inception*, however, Ariadne transcends this traditional role, engaging in architectural and urban planning practices that are explicitly depicted as male-coded acts of creation. Not only does she design buildings, but she also constructs entire cityscapes—an act that, within said framework, is understood as a decidedly male creative-procreative power. From a both misogynistic and homophobic perspective, this role must entail the symbolic loss of Ariadne’s femininity.<sup>39</sup> Under these conditions, Ariadne’s architectural creativity—a woman being sexually involved with a female city-body—could be read as a form of lesbian practice, opposing the heteronormative ideologies that dominate Nolan’s films. Yet, *Inception* itself does not recognise or accommodate such a subversive possibility. The entire plot is structured around the reunification of Cobb’s archetypal heteronormative American middle-class family—a husband, wife, and two children—torn apart under dramatic circumstances. In Nolan’s oeuvre, lesbian desire equals no desire at all, leaving no space for Ariadne’s sexuality to play any meaningful role. Her “genius,” stripped of any sexual dimension, ultimately collapses under the weight of this heteronormative framework, with even the faintest suggestion of her sexual identity systematically negated.

35 Feminist art history has fundamentally defined its field of investigation around this misrepresentation. Notable examples include Nochlin 2021 and Battersby 1994, as well as, from an architectural-historical perspective, Stratigakos (2016), Pepchinski et al. (2017), and Budde & Pepchinski (2022), which are mentioned here as representative studies.

36 Cf. Agrest et al. (1996).

37 Bergren (1996), p. 79. Ann Bergren demonstrates that this connotation can already be found in Aristophanes’ Greek comedy *Ecclesiazusae*.

38 Cf. Hnilica (2006), pp. 94–102. For an exploration of how architecture contributes to the construction of bodies, with a focus on gender and sexuality, see Katarina Bonnevier’s *Behind Straight Curtains*, Bonnevier (2007).

39 Cf. Hnilica (2006).

## Whose Labyrinth?

Within this misogynistic corset, Ariadne is inherently unable to produce independent architecture, despite the praise she receives from the male characters in the narrative. Philosopher Thomas Kapper has analysed the ontology and narratological function of her world-building, asserting that “she builds the stage where the show can go on. [...] She takes chaotic dream space and creates a structure for meaning in the form of architecture.”<sup>40</sup> The scaffold Ariadne creates is what allows the audience—both within the film and in front of the movie screen—to perceive the dream world through their senses and cognitively process it. Valentin Husson expands on this idea by attributing proto-architectural potential to her creations, writing: “She creates a world while letting the subject dwell in it.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, Husson is skeptical as to whether Ariadne’s designs can truly be classified as architecture in the stricter sense, or whether her “building” equals merely a precursor to architecture.

One key issue is the ambiguity surrounding the spatial boundaries of Ariadne’s constructed dreamscapes. It remains unclear whether her designs extend to entire worlds that can be freely explored or if they are limited to the immediate areas shown on-screen. Beyond these narrative uncertainties, the architecture itself is strikingly homogeneous, as seen in the folded Parisian neighborhood or the streets on the first dream level, which evoke generic urban spaces reminiscent of both New York and Los Angeles. The inability to definitively locate these images in either city—or indeed any specific urban center—underlines their unremarkable and generic quality. Ariadne’s architecture is, above all, a capitalist cityscape modeled on pre-existing urban environments, particularly the high-rise canyons typically associated with American metropolises built by white men. Through this lens, Ariadne’s work can be interpreted as an extension of the patriarchal mainstream of architectural design. As feminist architectural researcher Jane Darke observed in *Women, Architects and Feminism*, women in architecture—like those from economically disadvantaged or educationally marginalised backgrounds—are compelled to assimilate into the prevailing white-male, middle-class norms of the discipline during their training.<sup>42</sup> When students asked her whether women design differently than men, Darke consistently answered in the negative, citing this systemic assimilation as the reason. Similarly, Ariadne reproduces these norms, crafting architecture that conforms to the expectations of the men around her and providing them with a stage on which to perform.

It is not without a certain cynicism that the architecture Ariadne designs is literally situated within male consciousness, most prominently within the mind of dream hostage Robert Fischer. For these dream settings to remain imperceptible to the male subconscious, it appears they must meet male guidelines of design. Moreover, the architecture itself ultimately originates not from Ariadne, but from the minds of Christopher Nolan and his all-male visual effects team, consisting of Paul Franklin, Pete Bebb, and Andy Lockley.<sup>43</sup> In 2021, the three collaborators discussed their work on *Inception* as part of the “Dream Teams” series for the digital science journal *Inverse*, where they revealed insights into their creative process. Journalist Ralph Jones paraphrased Franklin, stating that the folded Paris sequence was inspired by a scene from *Batman Begins* but credited Franklin himself with the “vision” for its execution.<sup>44</sup> In a nod to the mythological Ariadne and the film’s narrative, Jones summarised the team’s contributions by observing that Franklin, Bebb, and Lockley “turned Christopher Nolan’s wildest dreams into a cinematic reality.”<sup>45</sup> Their technical achievements did not go unrecognised: Alongside special effects supervisor Chris Corbould, the trio won the 2011 Academy Award for Best Visual Effects for their work on *Inception*. While it goes without saying that the architecture and scenography in a film are not created by fictional characters in any technical sense, *Inception* represents an exceptional case. The film’s central focus on dream architecture establishes a direct dialogue between film and architecture, highlighting the close relationship between the two media and accentuating the conditions of their production.

40 Kapper (2011), pp. 122–123.

41 Husson (2011), p. 270.

42 Cf. Darke (2022), p. 11.

43 Their company “Double Negative,” which now operates under the name “DNEG,” was responsible for the VFX.

44 Cf. Jones (2021).

45 Jones (2021).

The analogy between architectural and cinema practices emerges from a broader media-theoretical and aesthetic debate. As late as 1977, James Monaco argued in his film theory that no other art had shown as much resistance to film as architecture.<sup>46</sup> He attributed this resistance to architecture's strong functional determination and the fact that, unlike architecture, film cannot be experienced haptically. However, with the growing importance of film for the architectural avant-garde—exemplified by Bernard Tschumi's *Manhattan Transcripts* in the mid-1970s—Walter Benjamin became the key figure in reestablishing the kinship between the two disciplines. In 1935, Benjamin had attributed to film a tactile “Chockwirkung” (“shock effect”) mediated by visual acuity.<sup>47</sup> For Benjamin, the analogy between film and architecture resided in their shared reliance on integrated haptic-optical perception, endorsed by this somatic shock effect, as well as their capacity for collective reception—unlike painting, for instance.<sup>48</sup> This perspective turned the prevailing view of the relationship between architecture and film on its head. By 1993, UCLA architectural historian Anthony Vidler stated the opposite of Monaco's claim, observing: “Of all the arts, however, it is architecture that has had the most privileged and difficult relationship to film.”<sup>49</sup> In 1994, scholars such as Giulia Bruno and Catherine Lord made significant contributions to the Cine City: Film and the Perceptions of Urban Space 1895–1995 conference, held at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities in Santa Monica. The event marked a pivotal moment in the academic examination of this extensively theorised relationship.<sup>50</sup> With reference to Victor Hugo's famous bon mot “l'imprimerie tuera l'architecture”<sup>51</sup> (“printing will kill architecture,”) architecture has only recently been positioned as a narrative medium within a genealogical continuum that connects it to the book and, ultimately, to film.<sup>52</sup> However, parallels and analogies have been drawn particularly in the creative processes that precede the realisation of both architecture and film.<sup>53</sup> Under his pseudonym Maurice Schérer, *Nouvelle Vague* director Éric Rohmer programmatically declared “le cinéma, art de l'espace,”<sup>54</sup> (“Cinema, the art of space”) identifying the *tertium comparationis* of the two disciplines in their mutual preoccupation with the organisation of space. This connection was further elaborated by Soviet experimental filmmaker and theorist Dziga Vertov, who, in 1923, located this spatial *modus operandi* in the camera itself, describing it as a prosthetic extension of the director's body. I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I've managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room.<sup>55</sup>

In the animated concept of the camera-architect as a living being, the traditional anthropomorphising of architecture since Vitruvius converges with the debate on the vitality of film—a discussion shaped by thinkers like Bergson, Lukács, and Deleuze.<sup>56</sup> The interplay between these traditions unfolds with specific significance in *Inception*, as the film not only foregrounds the architecturally conceived design of its narrative spaces but also reflects on and stages itself as an architectural construct. While Nolan's films consistently exhibit a strong degree of self-referentiality, *Inception* can almost be read as an allegory of filmmaking. The motif of collective dreaming on the screen has already been recognised as a mirror image of the collective reception of fiction in the

46 “If there is one category of art that has been relatively immune to the influence of film and the recording arts, it is architecture.” Monaco (1977), p. 41.

47 Benjamin (1980), p. 497. In a 2016 article, Alison Kahn and Igea Troiani explored the influence of cinematic media on contemporary architectural theory. Cf. Kahn & Troiani (2016).

48 Cf. Benjamin (1980), p. 497 and 504.

49 Vidler (1993), p. 45.

50 This was followed by significant works such as Bruno (2002) and Bruno (2007), Khouloki (2007), as well as the anthologies Binotto (2017) and Vahdat & Kerestes (2024).

51 Hugo (1904), p. 142.

52 Cf. Johnson (2020), notably pp. 150–154.

53 Cf. Stara (2020), p. 39. In this context, film has also been utilised and analysed as a tool of architectural practice, particularly for building documentation and as a medium in architectural education. See Troiani & Campbell (2020).

54 Schérer (1948).

55 Vertov (1984), p. 17.

56 According to Lukács, what cinema lacks in comparison to theater is the “absolute Gegenwart” (“absolute presence,”) yet this absence does not render the “Bilder des 'Kino' keinesfalls weniger organisch und lebendig” (“images of 'cinema' any less organic and alive.”) Lukács (1911), p. 45. Translations by the author.

cinema.<sup>57</sup> The interpretation of *Inception* as an allegory of filmmaking was first put forward by Johnson and Irwin in their 2012 edited volume. In the appendix, which compiles trivia and partially speculative observations, the editors interpret the members of the heist team as personifications of the key entities involved in film production: Cobb personifies the director, Ariadne the screenwriter, Saito (Ken Watanabe) the production company, Arthur the producer, Eames (Tom Hardy) the actor, Yusuf (Dileep Rao) the special effects expert, and the dreaming Robert Fischer the audience.<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Olson has critically examined this production-reflective reading of *Inception* and identified further support for it in Nolan's subversive media purism.<sup>59</sup> However, Olson suggests a more precise alignment of Ariadne's role within the narrative, proposing that she be interpreted as a production designer, responsible for creating models and other visual elements, rather than as a screenwriter. Narrative decisions, Olson argues, align more closely with Cobb and Eames. This allegorical reading gains further credibility from a 2010 interview between Christopher Nolan and Amy Taubin:

I think there are a lot of connections between what Leo is engaged in—what his character is capable of doing and how he puts the team of people together to do it—and the process of making a large-scale Hollywood film. There are a lot of striking similarities. When for instance the team is out on the street they've created, surveying it, that's really identical to what we do on tech scouts before we shoot. [...] In writing about a process that interested me, it naturally became analogous to my process. Olson (2015, p. 50.)

Olson goes so far as to read Cobb—down to his hairstyle and beard—as an intentional reflection of the director himself. Regardless of whether one subscribes to this interpretation, the analogies between the plot of the film and its production process, as explicitly stated by Nolan, are evident. The fact that the film's narrative structure has frequently been described using architectural metaphors, such as its “overall architecture,”<sup>60</sup> oscillates between a superficial allusion to the urban spectacles depicted on screen and a media-theoretical framework of cinematic epistemology. Nolan not only integrates architecture prominently into the storyline but also assigns Ariadne's architecturally framed world-building a central role in structuring the entire film experience. So much so, in fact, that the boundaries between the spaces she creates and those considered “real” within the narrative logic become indistinguishable to the audience. This deliberate blurring of reality and fiction gestures toward a postmodern self-awareness of cinematic construction while also drawing parallels with architectural practices. However, Ariadne's authorship of the architecture(s) is consistently destabilised by the narrative itself, as the film assiduously reassigns authorship to Nolan as the true creator. This aspect is further reinforced by the aesthetic similarity between architectural and (Nolan's) cinematic practice discussed above. *Inception* is not merely a film with architectural elements; “the film is Nolan's labyrinth all the way,”<sup>61</sup> allowing a partial resolution of the inconsistency with the mythological reference. Against this backdrop, Ariadne does not fully inherit the role of the labyrinth's mythological creator but instead functions as a guide, helping the hero, Cobb, navigate the labyrinth constructed by Daedalus-Nolan.

*Inception* grossed nearly \$839 million, won four Academy Awards, and was even re-released in August 2020 to celebrate its tenth anniversary.<sup>62</sup> By 2013, the film had sold nearly 9 million DVDs and Blu-rays in the US alone, solidifying its status as a cult classic of the early 2010s and a milestone in modular narration. Given this widespread popularity, *Inception* held the potential to introduce a talented, emancipated, and compelling female architect to a global audience. Instead, in a film centered on male guilt and atonement, Ariadne remains a creative tool within a male god complex and ultimately

57 Rußegger criticized the concept of dreams presented in *Inception*, arguing that it lacks sufficient phenomenological proximity to actual dream experiences. Cf. Rußegger (2021), pp. 78–79. See also Olson (2015).

58 Cf. Johnson & Irwin (2012), p. 351.

59 See Olson (2015), p. 45.

60 Bordwell (2010).

61 Phillips (2010). With this threefold characterization, Nolan also, as it were in passing, meets Deleuze's assertion that filmmakers must be taken as seriously as architects and, above all, as philosophers in their creative work. See the preface to Deleuze's first book on cinema, Deleuze (1983).

62 Cf. *Inception* (n.d.).

functions as the *dea ex machina* creation of the director-architect, toward whom the film persistently points. Despite Ariadne's status as arguably the most recognisable female architect in cinematic history, it appears that even in fiction, the manifestation of a convincing role model for young women and aspiring female architects remains elusive.

The lack of attention to Ariadne within feminist studies, despite the prominence of *Inception* in popular culture and the extensive research on gender in Nolan's oeuvre, speaks volumes about the subtle ways in which her character is de-sexualised and diminished. Although architects such as Zaha Hadid and Denise Scott Brown have since been integrated into the traditionally male-dominated canon, Western society still struggles to fully canonise the concept of a competent female architect as an independent figure. Ariadne's narrative arc makes painfully clear how pervasive the genius myth and male agency remain, even decades after the advancements of second-wave feminism.

Taylor Swift's work, ironically, reflects a similar perpetuation of outdated gender norms. In *I Think He Knows*, the song quoted at the very beginning of this chapter, Swift merely reinforces a romanticising metaphor in which the manipulation of male emotions is framed as a necessary part of a woman's identity in love. When Swift sings, "I am an architect," she positions herself primarily as a binary "love architect,"<sup>63</sup> crafting fictional characters through hetero-hegemonic and capitalist ideologies, much like Nolan. Even her mainstream-friendly expressions of solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community fail to obscure this underlying structure. In contrast, the character of Ariadne embodies a potential for resistance that operates outside of Nolan's direct influence—particularly when viewed today, in light of Elliot Page's coming out as a trans man.<sup>64</sup> Page's performance of a de-sexualised woman architect in *Inception* (2010) takes on new layers of meaning through this lens, exposing precisely the patriarchal and heteronormative architecture of Nolan's Hollywood cinema.

63 Miller (n.d.).

64 See Page's memoirs *Pageboy*, Page (2023).

## References

- Architect. (2024, April 1). Taylor Swift to give keynote at 2024 AIA Conference. *Architect*. <https://architect.com/news/article/150422042/taylor-swift-to-give-keynote-at-2024-aia-conference>
- Battersby, C. (1994). *Gender and genius: Towards a feminist aesthetics*. Women's Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1980). Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. In R. Tiedemann & H. Schweppenhäuser (Eds.), *Walter Benjamin* (Vol. 2; pp. 471–508). Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1935)
- Bergren, A. (1996). Female–fetish–urban form. In D. Agrest, P. Conway & L. K. Weisman (Eds.), *The sex of architecture* (pp. 77–96). Harry N. Abrams.
- Binotto, J. (Ed.). (2017). *Film–Architektur: Perspektiven des Kinos auf den Raum*. de Gruyter.
- Bonnevier, K. (2007). *Behind straight curtains: Towards a queer feminist theory of architecture*. Axl Books.
- Bordwell, D. (2010). *Inception; or, dream a little dream within a dream with me*. <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2010/08/06/inception-or-dream-a-little-dream-within-a-dream-with-me/>
- Botz-Bornstein, T. (Ed.). (2011). *Inception and philosophy: Ideas to die for*. Open Court.
- Britting, J. (2023). *Adapting "The Fountainhead" to film*. <https://newideal.aynrand.org/adapting-the-fountainhead-to-film/>
- Bruno, G. (2002). *Atlas of emotion: Journeys in art, architecture and film*. Verso.
- Bruno, G. (2007). *Public intimacy: Architecture and the visual arts*. MIT Press.
- Budde, C. (2017). Die Zukunft ist weiblich. In M. Pepchinski, C. Budde, W. Voigt & P. C. Schmal (Eds.), *Frau Architect* [Exhibition catalogue] (pp. 37–41). Wasmuth.
- Budde, C., & Pepchinski, M. (Eds.). (2022). *Women architects and politics: Intersections between gender, power structures and architecture in the long 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Transcript.
- Cameron, A. (2008). *Modular narratives in contemporary cinema*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Damler, D. (2022). *Gotham City: Architekturen des Ausnahmezustands*. Campus Verlag.
- Darke, J. (2022). Women, architects and feminism. In Matrix Book Group (Ed.), *Making Space* (pp. 11–25). Verso. (Original work published 1984)
- Deakin, P. (2015). Men in crisis: Christopher Nolan, un-truths and fictionalising masculinity. In J. Furby & S. Joy (Eds.), *The Cinema of Christopher Nolan* (pp. 85–98). Wallflower Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1983). *Cinéma 1: Image-mouvement*. Éditions de Minuit.
- Dozier, E. (2024, February 11). How much money has Taylor Swift made for the NFL? Explaining how the singer has generated millions in revenue for the Chiefs. *The Sporting News*. <https://www.sportingnews.com/us/nfl/news/taylor-swift-how-much-money-revenue-nfl-chiefs/569936c7a2bdc0a2930d6129>
- Dunn, G. A. (Ed.). (2017). *The philosophy of Christopher Nolan*. Lexington Books.
- FG. Taylor swift is an architect: a collection of taylor swift's best bridges in order of how much serotonin they give me [Playlist]. <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3SMVtGZhj24z4XwLzDNFV>
- Flanagan, J. (2024, January 25). New survey: Streaming TV reigns supreme for Super Bowl LVIII. *Adtaxi*. <https://www.adtaxi.com/blog/new-survey-streaming-tv-reigns-supreme-for-super-bowl-lviii/>
- Fleming, S. (2012). Inception. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 24(2), 165–166.
- Furby, J., & Joy, S. (Eds.). (2015). *The cinema of Christopher Nolan: Imagining the impossible*. Wallflower Press.
- Irene [@lillyswifft13]. (2020, August 13). The fact that Taylor Swift didn't lie. [Tweet]. X. <https://x.com/lillyswifft13/status/1293935557987491843>
- Glasenapp, J. (2024). *Taylor Swift: 100 Seiten*. Reclam.
- Goh, R. B. H. (2022). *Christopher Nolan: Filmmaker and philosopher*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Helbig, J. (Ed.). (2021). *Christopher Nolan*. edition text+kritik.
- Heynen, H. (2012). Genius, gender and architecture: The Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. *Architectural Theory Review*, 17(2/3), 331–345.

- Hnilica, S. (2006). *Metaphern für die Stadt: Zur Bedeutung von Denkmodellen in der Architekturtheorie*. Transcript.
- Hugo, V. (1904). *Notre-Dame de Paris: 1482* (P. Meurice, Ed.). Librairie Ollendorff. (Original work published 1831)
- Husson, V. (2011). Building and dwelling in Inception. In T. Botz-Bornstein (Ed.), *Inception and philosophy: Ideas to die for* (pp. 269–278). Open Court.
- Inception (n.d.). *The Numbers*. <https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Inception>
- Johnson, D. K., & Irwin, W. (Eds.). (2012). *Inception and philosophy: Because it's never just a dream*. Wiley.
- Johnson, M. V. (2020). Filming architecture and the architecture of film: A reading of the Maison de Verre. In I. Troiani & H. Campbell (Eds.), *Architecture filmmaking* (pp. 139–154). Intellect.
- Jones, R. (2021). *The VFX company behind Inception reveals the movie's biggest secrets: "You have to be on your A-game."* <https://www.inverse.com/entertainment/behind-the-scenes-visual-effects-in-inception>
- Joy, S. (2020). *The traumatic screen: The films of Christopher Nolan*. Intellect.
- Kahn, A., & Troiani, I. (2016). Film as architectural theory. *Architecture and Culture*, 4(3), 485–498.
- Kapper, T. (2011). Ariadne's clue to life, the universe, and everything. In T. Botz-Bornstein (Ed.), *Inception and philosophy* (pp. 119–128). Open Court.
- Kent, M. (2024). Catwoman in all but name: Gender and adaptation in Christopher Nolan's Selina Kyle. In C. Parkinson & I. Labroulière (Eds.), *A critical companion to Christopher Nolan* (pp. 261–278). Lexington Books.
- Khouloki, R. (2007). *Der filmische Raum: Konstruktion, Wahrnehmung, Bedeutung*. Bertz + Fischer.
- Lukács, G. (1911). Gedanken zu einer Aesthetik des "Kino". *Pester Lloyd*, 58(90), 45.
- McGowan, T. (2014). *Fictional Christopher Nolan*. University of Texas Press.
- Miller, J. (n.d.). Taylor, love architect? Analyzing the "I think he knows" meaning. *Swiftly Sung Stories*. <https://swiftlysungstories.com/i-think-he-knows-meaning/>
- Monaco, J. (1977). *How to read a film: The art, technology, language, history, and theory of film and media*. Oxford University Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen*, 16(3), 6–18.
- The Real Estate Conversation. (2017, February 9). Taylor Swift takes on architectural conservation. <https://www.therealestateconversation.com.au/2017/02/09/taylor-swift-takes-architectural-conservation/1486583150>
- Nochlin, L. (2021). *Why have there been no great women artists?* (C. Grant, Ed.). Thames & Hudson. (Original work published 1971)
- Nolan, C. (n.d.). *Inception. Screenplay*. <https://www.nolanfans.com/library/pdf/inception-screenplay.pdf>
- Nolan, C. (Director). (2010). *Inception* [Film]. Warner Bros., Legendary Pictures, & Syncopy Films.
- Olson, J. (2015). Nolan's immersive allegories of filmmaking in "Inception" and "The Prestige." In J. Furby & S. Joy (Eds.), *The cinema of Christopher Nolan* (pp. 44–61). Wallflower Press.
- Page, E. (2023). *Pageboy: A memoir*. Doubleday.
- Parkinson, C., & Labroulière, I. (Eds.). (2024). *A critical companion to Christopher Nolan*. Lexington Books.
- Pepchinski, M., Budde, C., Voigt, W., & Schmal, P. C. (Eds.). (2017). *Frau Architekt: Seit mehr als 100 Jahren: Frauen im Architekturberuf* [Exhibition catalogue]. Wasmuth.
- Petkovic, R., & Vukovic, K. (2013). Legendary Caesar and the architect Ariadne: Narrative, myth and psychology in Christopher Nolan's "Batman Begins", "The Dark Knight" and "Inception". *PsyArt*. [https://psyartjournal.com/article/show/vukovic-legendary\\_caesar\\_and\\_the\\_architect\\_ariad](https://psyartjournal.com/article/show/vukovic-legendary_caesar_and_the_architect_ariad)
- Phillips, M. (2010, July 15). Inception. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/movies/sc-mov-0713-inception-20100715,0,6233986.column>
- Robb, C. M., & Mills, G. (Eds.). (2024). *Taylor Swift and philosophy: Essays from the tortured philosophers department*. John Wiley & Sons Incorporated.

- Rußegger, A. (2021). Metaleptische Abenteuer: Über Christopher Nolans "Inception". In J. Helbig (Ed.), *Christopher Nolan* (pp. 76–88). edition text+kritik.
- Schérer, M. [Rohmer, É.] (1948). Le cinéma, art de l'espace. *La revue du cinéma*, 2(14), 3–13.
- Schleier, M. (2009). *Skyscraper cinema: Architecture and gender in American film*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Stara, A. (2020). The depth between frames: Architectural representation in two films by Elizabeth Price and Rut Blees Luxemburg. In I. Troiani & H. Campbell (Eds.), *Architecture filmmaking* (pp. 39–56). Intellect.
- Stratigakos, D. (2016). *Where are the women architects?* Princeton University Press.
- Swift, T. (2019). I think he knows. *Lover*. <https://open.spotify.com/intl-de/track/2YWtcWi3a83pdEg3Gif4Pd?si=630d12caff5d4781>
- Taylor, T. (2015). Saints, sinners and terrorists: The women of Christopher Nolan's Batman. In J. Furby & S. Joy (Eds.), *The cinema of Christopher Nolan* (pp. 62–73). Wallflower Press.
- Thornham, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Feminist film theory: A reader*. NYU Press.
- Toth, M. A. (2015). "Memento's" postmodern noir fantasy: Place, domesticity and gender identity. In J. Furby & S. Joy (Eds.), *The cinema of Christopher Nolan* (pp. 74–84). Wallflower Press.
- Troiani, I., & Campbell, H. (Eds.). (2020). *Architecture filmmaking*. Intellect.
- Vahdat, V., & Kerestes, J. F. (Eds.). (2024). *Architecture, film, and the in-between: Spatio cinematic betwixt*. Intellect.
- Vertov, D. (1984). *Kino-eye: The writings of Dziga Vertov* (A. Michelson, Ed.). University of California Press. (Original work published 1923)
- Vidler, A. (1993). The explosion of space: Architecture and the filmic imaginary. *Assemblage*, 21, 44–59.