


4-3-2019

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Bosch, Brandon, "Bat Meets Girl: Adapting the Dark Knight's Love Life to the Big Screen" (2019). *Sociology Department, Faculty Publications*. 634.

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Published in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (2019)

doi 10.1080/10509208.2019.1587341

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Published April 3, 2019.

Bat Meets Girl: Adapting the Dark Knight's Love Life to the Big Screen

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It is no secret that Hollywood loves a good romance. What is perhaps sometimes overlooked however is how important romance and female characters are to male-dominated action films. Esma Kartal argues women and romance are deliberately placed into action films to create “romantic relief” and attract female viewers for greater crossover appeal.¹ In addition to romance, Yvonne Tasker observes how women in action films serve as a witness for “the hero’s suffering” and humanity in action films.² Finally, a classic use of women and romance in action films is that of the damsel-in-distress, which continues to this day in many superhero films.³

However, the standard script of romance and damsels-in-distress is largely absent in Batman comic books. Batman has been many things over the years in comic books,⁴ but he has never been in a committed relationship with a woman for very long. While Batman did often have to save girlfriend Julie Madison, Batman’s young male sidekick Robin was typically used for the “damsel-in-distress” role after he was added to the comic book in 1943.⁵ Julie Madison, Linda Page, and Vicki Vale were the main “normal” girlfriends that were romantically paired with Bruce Wayne.⁶ However, as Mike Madrid (2009) notes, “Bruce and Batman

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might have had romances with girls like debutante Julie Madison or reporter Vicki Vale, but showed neither any true affection.”⁷ The lack of women in Bruce Wayne’s life—coupled with his live-in adolescent crime-fighting partner Robin—led to accusations of homoeroticism.⁸ In response, Batwoman (Kathy Kane) was added to the comics for romantic intrigue, but romance was still presented as a “trap for Batman to avoid.⁹ Summing up Batman’s philosophy about romance, Robin says that Batman “can’t risk a big romance now—not until he’s ready to retire”.¹⁰ However, even when Wayne did take such a “risk” and began dating Silver St. Cloud, he was abruptly dumped when she discovered his superhero career, telling him that she refuses to worry “when your luck will run out!”¹¹ Batman’s poor love life is no coincidence, as DC co-publisher Dan DiDio argues that Batman-affiliated superheroes “shouldn’t be happy in their private lives.”¹²

Interestingly, the greatest source of romance and sexual tension in the Batman comics arguably stems from female antiheroes and villains. Batman comic book writer Grant Morrison notes, “The bad girls in *Batman* were all deranged fetish queens who loved and hated the hero in equal, exquisite measure.”¹³ Catwoman (Selina Kyle) is a highly sexual jewel thief whose costume and whip resemble a dominatrix;¹⁴ Talia al Ghul is a murderous antihero who bears Wayne’s child; and Poison Ivy uses plant pheromones to make people (including Wayne) to fall in love with her. The incompatibility between romance and crime-fighting is highlighted when Talia marries Batman and becomes pregnant, and Batman becomes preoccupied with providing a normal family life for his unborn child. Observing that Batman cannot be both a superhero and a husband/father, Talia decides to lie about a miscarriage and leave Batman.¹⁵ The dangers of romance is also seen when Catwoman once tried to kill Vale and Wayne in a fit of jealousy¹⁶ and when Batman and Catwoman even tried to date, with the evening being interrupted by their need to fight crime.¹⁷ In sum, in Batman comic books, romance is essentially doomed, first because Wayne is too committed to fighting crime as Batman to have a serious relationship, and second because many of the women that Wayne interacts with are *antiheroes* or *villains*.

Given this comic book source material, there are some obstacles to typical Hollywood storytelling conventions of empathetic women whom are romanced and rescued. In this essay, I explore to what extent Hollywood has incorporated Bruce Wayne’s issues with women into the Batman films. More specifically, I look at representations of female characters, romantic relationships, and femininity in Batman films. To understand

how Hollywood negotiates this balancing act between comic book source material fidelity and blockbuster formulae, I look at all nine of the feature-length Batman films that received theatrical release. These films are Leslie H. Martinson's *Batman: The Movie* (1966), Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992), Eric Radomski and Bruce W. Timm's *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* (1993), Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman & Robin* (1997), and Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008), and *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). I leave aside Lambert Hillyer's *Batman* (1943) and Spencer Gordon Bennet's *Batman and Robin* (1949) because they are serials, not feature-length films. I also exclude Sam Liu's *Batman: The Killing Joke* (2016) because it only played in select theaters for a single night to promote DVD sales. Zack Snyder's *Batman vs Superman* (2016) and *Justice League* (2017) are excluded because they are not solo Batman films.

The Dark Knight's Hollywood Romance

Reflecting Hollywood storytelling conventions, romantic storylines between Batman and at least one other female occur in all nine of the Batman films. Women appear as "normal" (non-hero/non-villain) girlfriends/romantic interests in five of the nine Batman films. Given the small amount of well-known Batman love interests from the comic books, it is perhaps unsurprising that only two films feature normal girlfriends from the comic books, namely photojournalist Vicki Vale (*Batman*) and the wealthy Julie Madison (*Batman & Robin*). Interestingly, filmmakers were willing to simply *make up* love interests for Wayne, as psychologist Dr. Chase Meridian (*Batman Forever*) and Assistant District Attorney Rachel Dawes (*Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*) have no prior comic book history.

Romance is created in the films beyond Batman as well. Characters who did not exist in the comic books were created as love interests for the Joker (moll Alicia Hunt) in *Batman*, the villain Two-Face (assistants Sugar and Spice) in *Batman Forever*, and the villain Mr. Freeze (assistant Ms. B. Haven) in *Batman & Robin*. In *Batman Forever*, there is also a brief romantic moment when a pre-Robin Dick Grayson gives a big kiss to a woman he just rescued (saying, "I could definitely get into the superhero gig"). Even when the characters come from the comic books, several films create sexual tension that did not exist in the comic books, such as the Joker being in love with Vicki Vale in *Batman*, the Penguin

being in love with Catwoman in *Batman Returns*, and Poison Ivy seemingly interested in Mr. Freeze in *Batman & Robin* (“You never said anything about a wife!”). In short, filmmakers showed little reluctance in taking artistic liberties with Batman comic book characters or creating new ones for the sake of romance.

The romance extends to female antiheroes and villains, who appear in five Batman films. Notably, Wayne exhibits romantic interest in *all* of the primary female anti-heroes/villains, and actually formally dates a female anti-hero/villain in *Batman: The Movie*, *Batman Returns*, *Mask of the Phantasm* and *The Dark Knight Rises*. Although there is no formal dating with a villain in *Batman & Robin*, there is a bidding war between Batman and Robin on who can date Poison Ivy, a scene where Wayne hallucinates that he is kissing Poison Ivy while he is in fact kissing Julie Madison, and a scene with Robin meeting up with Poison for a late-night rendezvous (although it turns out to be a sting operation). Sometimes the female is a sympathetic antihero, such as Catwoman (*Batman Returns*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) or the vigilante Andrea Beaumont/Phantasm in *Mask of the Phantasm* (another love interest created just for film). Other times the romantic feelings involve a more straightforward female villain like Catwoman in *Batman: The Movie*, Poison Ivy in *Batman & Robin*, and Talia al Ghul in *The Dark Knight Rises*.

The result of all of these romantic relationships with girlfriends, antiheroes, and villains is a surprising amount of romantic pairings and love triangles. Occasionally, a character will be genuinely conflicted between two romantic rivals. In *The Dark Knight Rises*, there is a love triangle between Wayne and the villains Talia al Ghul and Catwoman, with apparent jealousy from the latter towards Batman (Catwoman asks, “You’re going to wage a war to save your stuck-up girlfriend?”). In *The Dark Knight*, Rachel Dawes must choose between marrying District Attorney Harvey Dent and Bruce Wayne.

However, most of the films simply feature two or more characters romantically pursuing the same (typically female) character in a love triangle, with the female character really only interested in Wayne. In *Batman*, Bruce Wayne, journalist Alexander Knox, and the Joker are all in love with photojournalist Vicki Vale. In addition is a love triangle between a pre-Joker Jack Napier, moll Alicia Hunt, and Crime Boss Lord Grissom. In *Batman Returns*, both Batman and the Penguin romantically pursue Catwoman (as well as Wayne dating Catwoman’s alter ego, Selina Kyle). There is a pseudo-love triangle in *Batman Forever*, in which Dr. Chase Meridian is torn between choosing Wayne or Batman (thinking they are

different people), with Wayne lamenting, “She wants Batman, not Bruce Wayne.” In *Batman & Robin*, there are love triangles between (1) Wayne, Julie Madison, and Poison Ivy, and (2) Wayne, Robin, and Poison Ivy, in addition to (3) a lesser love triangle between Robin, who is attracted to Batgirl and Poison Ivy, (4) a love triangle between Mr. Freeze, his cryogenically frozen wife Nora, and Poison Ivy, and finally (5) a triangle between Mr. Freeze, his wife Nora, and his assistant Ms. B. Haven. Overall, six of the nine Batman films feature a love triangle in which two characters have romantic interests in the same person.

It is worth noting that there are also two additional films that feature some romantic rivalries, although they do not constitute real love triangles. There is a scene in *Mask of the Phantasm* where two women are draped over Wayne, another woman playfully asking if he will ever get engaged, and a former Wayne girlfriend walking up to Wayne and angrily dumping a drink on him. While there is no love triangle in *Batman Begins*, the film features a scene with Wayne dating sexy models to appear superficial and avert suspicion about him being Batman, but he accidentally runs into Rachel Dawes (his love interest), which produces an awkward misunderstanding. In sum, whereas romance is an occasional occurrence in Batman comics, it is almost inescapable in the films.

Romance as a Threat to the Superhero Life

Romance is repeatedly shown interfering with the work of being Batman, dividing his loyalties between serving the public and being in love. The difficulty of juggling romance and being a superhero is seen in *Batman*, as Vicki Vale becomes angry at Wayne for avoiding her after their one-night stand. When Wayne tries to explain that he has “another life,” Vale becomes upset, assuming that he is married. Later, when Vale confronts Wayne about being Batman, she asks him, “I just got to know [sic], are we going to try to love each other?” with Wayne coldly replying “I’d like to. But [the Joker’s] out there right now. And I’ve got to go to work.” In *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, Wayne agonizes over his growing romance with Andrea Beaumont. Speaking to his parents’ grave, Wayne begs for permission to drop his plans to be a vigilante and live a normal life instead: “I know I made a promise. But I didn’t see this coming. I didn’t count on being happy.” Tellingly, when Wayne proposes to Beaumont, a cloud of bats rushes past him and climbs into the sky, as if this part of his life was to be lost forever (or perhaps that it would always overshadow

his romance). This dilemma also exists for some of the women in these films. In *Batman Returns*, Catwoman declines Batman's offer to be together, saying, "I just couldn't live with myself." In *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, Andrea Beaumont declines Wayne's marriage proposal so that she can fight crime as the vigilante Phantasm.

Romance also threatens Batman by making him too emotionally attached to an individual. In *Batman Begins*, Wayne is lectured by his butler Alfred for letting things get too "personal" when he recklessly endangers the safety of others in order to rescue love interest Rachel Dawes. Similarly, in *The Dark Knight*, Batman appears to lose self-control (to the extent that he worries nearby police) when he begins beating up the Joker during an interrogation after learning that Dawes' life is at risk. Moreover, Batman attempts to save Rachel Dawes instead of rescuing District Attorney Harvey Dent.

Sexual desire makes Batman vulnerable to manipulation and attack. In *Batman: The Movie*, Wayne's date with Miss Kitka (Catwoman in disguise) becomes heated enough that Robin becomes bashful and stops engaging in surveillance, which results in Wayne being captured. In *Batman Returns*, Batman comments, "Mistletoe can be deadly if you eat it," and Catwoman replies, "But a kiss can be even deadlier if you mean it." The film reinforces this message, with Catwoman lulling Batman with seductive behavior before violently attacking him. Susceptibility to Poison Ivy's love pheromones threatens to break up Batman and Robin's partnership in *Batman & Robin*. In *The Dark Knight Rises*, Catwoman's betrayal of Batman leads to his back being broken by the villain Bane, and Batman is later stabbed by Talia al Ghul, with whom he had recently slept with.

Given how threatening female romance and sexuality are depicted in the films, it is perhaps unsurprising that despite all of the romantic intrigue, only *Batman*, *Batman Forever*, and *The Dark Knight Rises* feature a romantic ending. It is telling that *Batman* and *Batman Forever* end with the women knowing Batman will be late in coming home (because being a superhero takes precedence), and that Wayne dates Selina Kyle in *The Dark Knight Rises* only after he has retired as a superhero. Thus, even while allowing for a happy romantic ending, the films still seem to retain the comics' pessimistic view of a superhero's romantic life.

The threat of female sexuality is not limited to Wayne. In *Batman*, Crime Boss Grissom attempts to kill his right-hand man Jack Napier for sleeping with his mistress. Also in the film, Vale begins to passionately kiss the Joker in order to keep him from noticing Batman's arrival. The disarming power of female sexuality is also evident in *Batman Returns*,

where a security guard reacts to Catwoman by saying, “I don’t know whether to open fire or fall in love.” In *Batman & Robin*, Poison Ivy uses her pheromones to either kill or control the minds of men, while Mr. Freeze must ward off sexual advances from Poison Ivy and his assistant Ms. B. Haven while desperately trying to find a cure for his wife (“My passion thaws for my bride alone.”). In *The Dark Knight Rises*, the villain John Daggett asks one of his associates, “And can we get some girls in here?” moments before Catwoman ambushes him (“Careful what you wish for.”). Taken together, these events suggest that women and female sexuality can be the downfall of any man—good or bad.

In addition to being an object of threat, female characters also serve to highlight Batman’s more human qualities and to underscore his vulnerability and duality. In *Batman*, Vale observes Wayne placing flowers in an alley. Later, her reaction to learning about the death of Wayne’s parents serves to underscore how important this event is in Wayne’s life (“Oh my God. Both of his parents were murdered in that alley. That’s why he went there.”). In *Batman Forever*, Dr. Meridian unwittingly explores the impact of Wayne’s murdered parents on his life (“Bruce, you’re describing repressed memories”) and its relation to Batman’s psychology (“it’s as if he’s cursed to pay some penance. Now, what crime could he have committed to deserve a life of nightly torture?”). With Andrea Beaumont (*Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*), we see that her decision to become a murderous vigilante has been a tempting path for Wayne as well, who has deliberately avoided killing criminals (Wayne’s butler, Alfred, notes that “Vengeance blackens the soul, Bruce. I’ve always feared that you would become that which you fought against.”). In *Batman Begins*, Rachel Dawes serves to bring attention to how much Wayne has changed since the murder of his parents, and that Batman is his true character (“Your real face is the one that criminals now fear. The man I loved, the man who vanished, he never came back at all.”). In sum, women are often used as a narrative device to help express or bear witness to the emotions that the secretive and stoic Batman is reluctant to do himself.

Women in need of Rescue

Female characters can further humanize Batman and provide more dramatic motivation to his character by playing a damsel-in-distress. Although Batman typically does not save female characters in his comic books, he attempts to rescue a seemingly helpless female in six of the

nine Batman films. In *Batman*, Vale is directly rescued by Batman several times, such as from the Joker, the Joker's henchmen, and from poisonous gas. In *Batman Returns*, the Penguin and Catwoman kidnap the helpless Ice Princess to use as rescue bait for Batman. In *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*, Andrea Beaumont needs to be rescued by Batman before the Joker is able to suck her into a wind turbine. In *Batman Forever*, Dr. Chase Meridian must be saved from falling to her doom, and a nameless female character is also rescued by Robin from the Neon Gang. Assistant District Attorney Rachel Dawes needs to be saved from mobster assassins, a lethal dose of fear gas, and a fear-crazed crowd of people in *Batman Begins*. In *The Dark Knight*, Batman saves Rachel from being slashed by the Joker, and then moments later saves her after the Joker lets her fall through a window.

Although not typical damsels-in-distress, there are other instances of women needing to be rescued in the films as well. While Batman does rescue a pre-Catwoman Selina Kyle in *Batman Returns*, the narrative point seems less about Kyle being rescued and more about Kyle observing how she would like to strike back at criminals like Batman does. Batman also rescues Catwoman from falling, although it is during their violent fight. In *Batman & Robin*, Robin rescues Batgirl from falling over a ledge during a dangerous motorcycle race. However, Batgirl also rescues Robin and Batman later in the movie, and thus feels more like an equal, not a helpless damsel. In addition, Batman also rescues the cryogenically frozen Nora Fries from Poison Ivy, although this action is a minor subplot in the film. In *The Dark Knight Rises*, Batman helps Catwoman escape from "trained killers," but she is not a helpless victim because she fights along with him. Moreover, Catwoman later saves Batman's life, which further distances her from a damsel-in-distress role.

Finally, in a few instances the "damsel" in distress is in fact male. In *Batman: The Movie*, Wayne thinks that he is protecting and trying to rescue Miss Kitka (secretly Catwoman), not realizing that this effort is part of a trap. As it turns out, the real "damsel" in the film is an elderly male captain (Commodore Schmidlapp) as well as members of the United World Organization (an obvious United Nations parody). *The Dark Knight Rises* also features a fake damsel-in-distress, as Miranda Tate (Talia al Ghul in disguise) pretends to be a prisoner of the villain Bane. In *The Dark Knight*, Batman must save Commissioner Gordon, Gordon's young son, and his wife from being executed by Two-Face (the emotional tension is clearly centered most on the son being rescued).

As noted earlier, Robin typically played the "damsel" in Batman comics. Robin appears in a familiar form in three Batman films (*Batman: The*

Movie, Batman Forever, and Batman Forever). True to comic book tradition, Robin is rescued in *Batman Forever* (e.g., from the Neon Gang, from Two-Face and the Riddler) and in *Batman & Robin* (e.g., Batman deactivates Robin's motorcycle when it seems that he will not be able to make a jump, Batman thaws Robin after he was frozen by Mr. Freeze, Batgirl saves Robin during a fall). Robin also appears as a bit of an intertextual Easter egg in *The Dark Knight Rises*, when it is revealed that a character's first name is "Robin." However, in addition to being an orphan and helping Batman on a case, this character is very different from the comic book Robin (e.g., he is an adult cop that received no training from Batman, he does not wear a superhero costume, and none of the sidekicks had "Robin" as their real first name). Whether one wants to treat this character as Robin, he is nonetheless rescued by Batman from being shot. Despite these outliers, it is clear that overall the Batman films have a general preference for women being objects of rescue over men, despite the contrary history of much of the Batman comic books.

The ridicule of femininity

Many of the Batman films engaged in mockery of women, particularly those having stereotypically feminine traits. For example, despite taking pictures of atrocities for a living in *Batman*, Vicki Vale is shown shrieking and even passing out from fear, often for comic relief. Vicki Vale also stereotypically lies about her weight to Batman. *Batman Returns* ridicules the Ice Princess, a ditzy blond beauty queen ("The tree lights up and I press the button... no, no, wait, wait. I press the button, and then the tree lights up"). In *Batman & Robin*, Batgirl rebukes Poison Ivy, telling her "Using feminine wiles to get what you want? Trading on your looks? [...] Chicks like you give women a bad name." In *The Dark Knight*, when a blond female companion asks mobster Sal Maroni if they can go somewhere quiet to talk, Maroni contemptuously remarks, "What makes you think I want to hear you talk?"

The derision of femininity in particular is expressed through Catwoman. Selina Kyle's transformation from a meek, mousy secretary into the strong, confident, and sexually assertive Catwoman in *Batman Returns* is marked by a scene in which she sheds the femininity of her apartment by violently stabbing her stuffed animals, destroying her dollhouse, and spray painting black all of her pink clothes and her nearly all-pink apartment. Catwoman embraces her aggressive quality, telling Batman, "Life's a bitch. Now so am I." The mocking of femininity is also seen when

Selina Kyle ridicules the name (and assumed femininity) of Wayne's last girlfriend ("Vicki? Ice skater or stewardess?"). Catwoman in *The Dark Knight Rises* similarly embraces her aggressive image, as seen in how she responds to being called a "dumb bitch" ("Nobody ever accused me of being dumb.").

The negative associations of femininity in some of these films are also seen in how female characters invoke femininity to mask their true power. For example, in *The Dark Knight Rises*, we see that Catwoman has razor sharp inserts in her boot heels, and when an assailant asks if they make it hard to walk, she brutally kicks him in the legs ("I don't know. Do they?"). Also in the film, Selina Kyle tells Wayne (who has just caught her stealing from him) "Look, you wouldn't beat up a woman..." before kicking his cane from beneath him. Later in the film, Selina Kyle avoids arrest by cynically playing the part of a hysterical female bystander after she just shot a henchman. In *Batman Returns*, Catwoman cynically exclaims, "How could you? I'm a woman" after Batman knocks her to the ground while they fight, and attacks him again when Batman stops to apologize.

The mirror opposite of this ridicule of femininity is Wayne's evident preference for strong women. In *Batman: The Movie*, Wayne falls for Soviet journalist Miss Kitka (although she is really Catwoman in disguise). In *Batman*, Wayne's love interest is Vicki Vale, a respected photojournalist known for her work on the atrocities that occurred in the country Corto Maltese. In *Mask of the Phantasm*, Wayne only seems to be more enamored with Andrea Beaumont after she flips him to the ground while he practices martial arts. In *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*, Wayne's love interest is Rachel Dawes, an Assistant District Attorney who knowingly risks being killed by the mob in order to do her job. In *Batman Forever*, Wayne's love interest is the psychologist Dr. Chase Meridian, who works out with punching bags, fights off criminals, and is sexually assertive with Batman ("My place, midnight."). Dr. Chase Meridian nicely summarizes Wayne's taste in women, telling Batman "You like strong women. I've done my homework."

Conclusion

If Batman's filmography is any indication, Hollywood film conventions play an important role in the adaptation of source material like comic books, which affects representations of women, romance, and female sexuality. In line with Hollywood storytelling conventions, Batman films are full of girlfriends, romance, love triangles, and damsels-in-distress,

despite the relative lack of precedent in the Batman comics. In doing so, these films arguably reinforce heteronormativity and the “transformative” power of love in the same way many other films do.¹⁸ Batman films also routinely feature women underscoring the softer side, vulnerability, and anguish of the superhero. These findings mirror the *Spider-Man* films’ emphasis on romance much more than their comic book counterpart and the use of women to provide emotional support and caution for Spider-Man.¹⁹

Batman films’ depiction of the incompatibility of women and Batman’s superhero lifestyle is less benign. In the spirit of the comics, Batman films show female sexuality as a threat to the superhero life, and most Batman films do not end with a happy romance. As a result, we see women and romance—and the physical and existential threats that they present—as inevitable in Batman films. While the use of romance may be done to increase greater crossover appeal to female filmgoers, it remains an open question on how women actually respond to seeing female characters presented as a danger to Batman.

Finally, femininity was regularly ridiculed in the films. The consistency of these findings links with claims that the superhero genre emphasizes masculinity,²⁰ and that many recent Hollywood films tend to ridicule—as well as celebrate—the “girliness” of female protagonists.²¹ Although the Batman comics generally avoid women altogether, the films arguably exhibit more sexism because they often reduce women to stereotypical objects of compassion, romance, rescue, and comic relief, and female sexuality as a threat to Batman’s rational judgement, safety, and autonomy.

It is also worth noting that although the Batman comic books do have several female heroines to draw upon (e.g., Batwoman, Barbara Gordon [Batgirl, Oracle], Carrie Kelley [female Robin]), there has only been one true heroine in a Batman film, with Batgirl’s appearance in *Batman & Robin*. Given that including such female characters would arguably be more cannon than focusing so much on romance, this decision likely reflects Hollywood’s apprehension of casting female heroines in superhero films. Given the growing acceptance of strong female leads in film, it is possible that there will be more female heroines (and fewer love interests) in future Batman films. However, such an outlook should be tempered by the 2016 adaptation of Alan Moore’s celebrated graphic novel *The Killing Joke* into an animated movie. *Batman: The Killing Joke* was heavily criticized for fabricating a sexual relationship between Batgirl and Batman, which has historically been seen as more of a father-daughter relationship.

On a final note, it is worth mentioning that film audiences and Batman fans alike appear relatively accepting of the amount of seemingly noncanonical romance in Batman films. Fans routinely criticize Alfred's decision to let Vicki Vale into the Batcave and the violation of Batman's alleged "no guns" and "no killing" code in the Tim Burton Batman films, as well as the gravelly voice of Christian Bale's Batman, but no equivalent fan outrage has been expressed toward changing Batman's character to facilitate such a large degree of romance in his films. Given the hostile reaction of fandom directed at newer *Star Wars* films and the rebooted *Ghostbusters* film, the general lack of criticism about this change to Batman is striking, and suggests that audiences have become thoroughly acclimated to the heteronormativity of most Hollywood scripts.

After being captured by Batman near the end of *The Dark Knight*, the Joker remarks "This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object." This statement is a fitting commentary on the cinematic collision between the immensely popular Batman comic book franchise and the film industry. As it turns out, while certain characterizations and storylines from the Batman comic books did break into the films (namely, the dangers of female sexuality), it is apparent that elements of the source material did in fact yield to the powerful inertia of standard Hollywood storytelling conventions. Yes, Batman was able to get his big-budget films, but it meant he had to play by some of the rules of big-budget films, and face one of his greatest fears: Women. Of course, compromise is often inevitable in life. Or, as the Joker phrases it in *Batman*, "You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs."

Notes

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