

Letters on The Dark Knight Rises

14 August 2012

Below we publish a selection of readers' responses to "The Dark Knight Rises: Dubious and distortive," an August 9 review by Adam Haig.

Spot-on. I was having similar (though less-developed) thoughts when watching the film the night before this review was published.

Immediately after the film, I went on the WSWS on my phone, searching for a review. It was not yet published, and I was somewhat frustrated. I was delighted to find the newly published review the following morning.

Today I posted the link to the review on Facebook. A friend quickly commented, "Calm down, just enjoy it :) x".

To me it is not enough to simply sit back, watch and do nothing afterwards—such blockbuster films as this serve a role for the ruling elite in disorienting worker militancy by portraying Bane's hostage-taking as an example of a "revolution".

Therefore, I will continue to post the WSWS's critique on such films, despite (for now) being alone amongst my Facebook friends in doing this.

BH

9 August 2012

As a Liberal, I appreciate your concern about the film, but frankly, this film is more complicated than that. It is, in fact, not clearly conservative. There are really only two wealthy characters highlighted in the movie. One is a gun-hating billionaire who spends all his money on those less fortunate (orphans), or on an environmental project, or fighting crime. The other is a

corporate slimeball who is willing to join forces with a terrorist to gain more power. In fact, the attack on the stock exchange was to shift that power to the corporate bad guy and away from Bruce Wayne. There was absolutely nothing about that attack that was to represent Occupy Wall Street or the 99 percent. You could make a case that Bane tries to appeal to the majority in other scenes. But you can also make the case that the public is mostly horrified by Bane and hardly follows him willingly. If anyone represents the 99 percent in this film, it's Selina Kyle. And she becomes one of the best characters in the film.

There are those on the right who want to see messages in these Nolan films. There are those on the left who are concerned Nolan is taking a conservative stand. Then there are those of us who see a whole lot more than that.

Charles G

9 August 2012

I want to write in support of Adam Haig's review of *The Dark Knight Rises*. I came into the theater with low expectations and still came out astonished by how depraved and malicious this film was. I made the comment to a friend that it made *Doctor Zhivago* look like *Battleship Potemkin*, although I don't think even that comes close to encompassing how reactionary this film is.

As I sat there in the theater, in stunned silence, I asked myself, "After everything that has happened in the past two years, this is how it finds its reflection in film?" Instead of exploring the new horizons opened by such seminal events as the Wisconsin protests and the Egyptian Revolution, we get a sharp counterrevolutionary turn to the right? What are the implications of this film? It must be that Hollywood has

become so averse to social reality that whenever social reality rears its head, it feels compelled to blot it out with reactionary garbage, or at least attempt to. Perhaps this film is a seminal event in the history of bourgeois culture, albeit for all of the wrong reasons.

Tom A
9 August 2012

Dear Mr. Haig,

I appreciate your commentary on the recent Christopher Nolan film, *The Dark Knight Rises*. I, too, saw the film and felt moved to comment. I would like to attempt a contrary analysis. Primarily, I was impressed in a different way with regards to both the medium and the message. First, the latter.

While on the surface Nolan's characters do indeed exhibit all of the tell-tale signs of right-wing reaction, they also put themselves on public display, free for deconstruction. I believe the crux of the film is not, in fact, social revolution but something deeper—nihilism itself.

The retired Batman, the imprisoned Bane, the dirty police, all of them are struggling with a Hegelian negation located within the self. The film presents a wide range of ideological reactions to the material base, including the proud working-class ethic of Joseph Gordon-Levitt. As such, it struck me more as contemplative than reactionary, the film and the characters being rather separate.

As a quite delightful deconstruction, the film lends itself to direct discussion of the medium itself. This is solidly based on story elements.

Firstly, Bane's Army employs armored vehicles and thermonuclear weapons: two facts which cannot possibly be interpreted as anything but ironic portrayals of imperialist power. What Mr. Haig's analysis fails to grasp is the way that today's imperialism utilizes the same pseudo-populism as Bane's army, and Nolan's ironic, accurate depiction of such. This, of course, includes the over-the-top Robespierre dramatization of the Occupy movement, for some refreshing levity.

Furthermore, the format of the movie is such as to provide a contrast between reactionary tropes and the face of real social revolution. For every Occupy sit-in activist who addresses real issues and doesn't possess a thermonuclear weapon, this movie provides a convenient contrast of what a total maniac would look like. It is a referent, pace Foucault, Nolan's original intention is irrelevant. Wearing bat costumes, etc., are all meant to mark this cinema as dream works, not as actual guide maps. As such, I highly enjoyed Nolan's twisted depiction of all the ways one's foray into the world could go wrong.

Peter M
Japan
10 August 2012

I was somewhat sad to see Alan Moore on your list, even though you are correct in that he contributed a well-known Batman story called *The Killing Joke*. However, it should be noted that Moore, as a very thoughtful anarchist and social critic (not your position, but one that does deserve to be respected), himself later regretted this story and said it was “clumsy, misjudged and had no real human importance”.

Which is also a pretty good summation of Nolan's films, if you ask me. The rest of your article captures their banal conservatism quite well.

Jonas K
10 August 2012



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