

DISSERTATION

DC UNMADE: FAILURE, FANDOM AND
THE JUSTICE LEAGUE FILMS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN

Submitted by

Ryan Greene

Department of Communication Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2024

Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: David Scott Diffrient

Carl Burghardt

Evan Elkins

Rosa Martey

Copyright by Ryan Kent Greene 2024

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

DC UNMADE: FAILURE, FANDOM AND THE JUSTICE LEAGUE FILMS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN

Unmade films have received little attention as a general category, and this is doubly so for unmade superhero genre projects. The fact that these unfilms are failures in otherwise vibrant action franchises has typically led to their elision from canonical narratives. In studying two of the many defunct superhero films in Warner Brothers's DC catalog, it is possible to compare the failures of each in order to discern the industrial and narrative practices that contributed to their collapse. I apply scholarship on failure and comic book film adaptation to the case of George Miller's *Justice League: Mortal*. I trace the director's grand vision of a franchise juggernaut that was ultimately cancelled due to a confluence of bureaucratic interference and backlash against the promise of unlimited, speculative success. I then turn attention toward WB's second attempt to create a superhero ensemble film, Zack Snyder and Joss Whedon's *Justice League* (2017). From the ashes of the film's financial underperformance and critical failure rose a dogged fan movement to release an unknown and totally different director's cut. To understand this fan community and its impact on unproduction, I evaluate the Snyder Cut movement's defense of Zack Snyder's unmade DC Extended Universe, their battle against Warner Brothers and their refusal to accept failure. Taken together, these two unproductions demonstrate two divergent visions of failure. One lacked fan backing and so rests inert, its pieces scattered across the internet. The other rose from the unfinished realm of shadow cinema, lifted up by fans who vilified its producer while demanding that executives pay for its release.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Scott Diffrient, for his guidance and insights throughout my PhD program. I would also like to thank Dr. Carl Burghardt, Dr. Rosa Martey and Dr. Evan Elkins for their invaluable feedback and suggestions on this project.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom, who taught me to never give up.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
INTRODUCTION: THE UNJUSTICE LEAGUE.....	1
A Timeline of George Miller’s Justice League.....	3
A Timeline of The Snyder Cut and ZSJL (2021).....	5
Reasons to Study Unmade Superhero Films.....	8
The Importance of Warner/DC as Repository of Unmade Superhero Movies.....	10
Telling Histories of the Unmade.....	12
Research Questions.....	18
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	20
Failure.....	20
Adaptation.....	26
Unproduction.....	32
Fandom.....	39
METHODS.....	46
Accessing the Unmade Through Ripping-Off.....	50
Ethical Considerations.....	52
Historical Positivism.....	53
Historical Ambiguity.....	54
Foucauldian Discourse.....	56
Fidelity Discourse.....	58
Chapter Preview.....	59
CHAPTER 1: JUSTICE LEAGUE: MORTAL.....	65
The Cultural Frontier and Justice League.....	71
Tower of Babel, Road to Ruin.....	80
Failed History of a Failed History.....	88
CHAPTER 2: JUSTICE LEAGUE: MORTAL IN SCRIPT AND COMICS.....	101
Batman and Killing, JL:M and Comics.....	104
Batman v. Wonder Woman.....	120
Fans Discuss JL:M’s Fidelity.....	129
That Which Crops Up No More.....	130
CHAPTER 3: THE SNYDER CUT OF JUSTICE LEAGUE.....	132
Kneel Before Zack.....	132
Unproduction Studies’ Role in Justice League.....	134
The Origins of The Snyder Cut Movement.....	143
The Fastest Man Alive, Unmade and Remade.....	147
Concept Art of the SnyderVerse.....	153
Superman’s Black Suit.....	158
The Insatiable SnyderVerse.....	160
CHAPTER 4: DEFENDING THE SNYDERVERSE.....	168
LightCast and Negotiating Fan Imaginaries.....	168

Zack Snyder, Mussolini Fanboy?	178
Undead Auteurs and AI Fans	185
#FionaZhengIsReal	198
CHAPTER 5: SUICIDE SQUAD AS UNPRODUCTION PLAYBOOK	201
David Ayer's Suicide Squad.....	201
The Cut That Doesn't End	226
CONCLUSION: SUPERHERO UNPRODUCTION AND BEYOND	227

INTRODUCTION: THE UNJUSTICE LEAGUE

A lone goddess on horseback raises her sword. Her armor gleams in the morning sun. She spurs the steed onward, across scarred plains, charging toward a single target. This goddess is Wonder Woman, and she has come to kill the Minotaur. Her gladius cuts through air and tears the bull-man's leathery throat. She wheels around to return for her prize. Her feet strike the earth and a plume of dust rises as she stoops, lifting the Minotaur's head high. The Amazonian warrior sisters around her roar for victory.¹

This was to be Wonder Woman's introduction in a film no one has ever seen. It would have been called *Justice League: Mortal* (hereafter *JL:M*). This was a 2007 project by director George Miller, who would make *Mad Max: Fury Road* eight years later.² Wonder Woman's appearance is itself an unmade artifact within the unmade film, as the aforementioned sequence is wholly absent from *JL:M's* script. The scene was once under consideration but was only discussed among cast and crew. It was never written down. Scenes like this are not unusual for unmade films, as a definitive version of what would have been rarely exists in any kind of intact form. Instead, the unmade continuously defines itself in a layered skein of discarded pieces. These left behind parts were relevant at specific points in time. So too are the confluences of inchoate ideas that form the unmade. That the Wonder Woman scene doesn't appear in the script should not suggest that its content was never seriously considered at some stage of collaborative preproduction. Each unproduction carries its own subsumed ideas that exist only as the verbal ephemera of the past. These are the impromptu discussions held late at night in a director's trailer that never solidified into type on a page. Their existence is tenuous, but they still shape the overall discourse surrounding an unmade idea as fans and media outlets discuss it. Sometimes

these verbal ephemera are mentioned years later in a forum or a podcast. More commonly, they dissolve into nothing.

The unmade is a creative “life in reverse,”³ to borrow Paul Virilio’s phrase. Unproduction scholars face incomplete, functionally dead art. To study these works is to unimagine disaster in many cases, like rewinding footage of a trainwreck to glean insight into its mechanical disintegration. That which could have been is thus stalked by the traumas of its unmaking even as scholars try to imaginarily reassemble its components. Discourse about unproduced work, whether intentional or not, skews toward both the eschatological and the fetishistic. Here lie ruins shattered by misfortunes and errors in judgement. Their impact on history is unknowable, as unproduction is almost never studied. They are defined by their absence from, not presence in, history. It can be tempting to imagine certain works as reservoirs of unrealized success, as if their disaster could simply be detached from their material essence and discarded at will.

A similar narrative appears within critical treatment of directors and their unworks. Each become imaginary heralds of a new artistic genre, a new franchise or cinematic paradigm that could have begun. This is the aggrandizement of the misunderstood, persecuted or unlucky visionary author who could have been “the first poet of a civilization not yet born,” as Eric D. Smith writes.⁴ This kind of discourse imagines what film would be if only common society and the film industry were less backward and less overstuffed with “commercial monsters.”⁵ The argument is often that capitalistic expectations would not have broken the visionary director with their bourgeoisie sensibilities and demands for broad appeal over authentic, artistic merit. Romanticized images of the director destroyed by studio box office imperatives are part of why discourses of failure, as James Fenwick rightly points out, can yield more interest than the contents of the production itself.⁶ This popular figuration upholds the director as the source of

creative authority. This is something that is negotiated with fans, particularly in the case of superhero unfilms, which have a built-in fanbase drawn from comics and other superhero-themed media.

A Timeline of George Miller's *Justice League: Mortal*

In the present project, I study three superhero unproductions. The first is *Justice League: Mortal*, and the second is *The Zack Snyder Cut of Justice League* (2017). Both were meant to establish blockbuster franchises for Warner Brothers (WB). The third is an unproduced *Suicide Squad* film that would have added to Zack Snyder's film universe.

The first piece I focus on is George Miller's *Justice League: Mortal*. The unfilm's timeline begins in February 2007, when Warner Bros. hired Kieran and Michele Mulroney to write a script.⁷ In September of the same year, director George Miller joined the project.⁸ In an ill-fated attempt to secure a tax break and to take advantage of a favorable exchange rate between the Australian dollar and the U.S. dollar, WB and Miller began pre-production in Australia that same year.⁹ Had everything gone according to plan, filming would have begun in February 2008 at Sydney Heads, which is a series of small islands that make up the entrance to Sydney Harbor. However, several unrelated events greatly complicated the filming process. An arm of the Australian government known as the Film Finance Corporation questioned whether *JL:M* should receive any tax breaks.¹⁰ Fans disliked Miller's choice to cast unknown actors. Christian Bale, star of the then-upcoming *The Dark Knight* (2008) movie, voiced his displeasure with the idea of another actor playing Batman in *JL:M*. Finally, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike of 2007/08 forced all work on *JL:M* to a halt. WB put the film on indefinite hold in January 2008, while it was still in pre-production.¹¹ The following month, the company announced that the film's location would move to Vancouver. It was ultimately cancelled in April 2008, well before

its intended 2009 release date. The wild success of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* in July, 2008, all but guaranteed that *JL:M* would never be revisited, as Warner Brothers Pictures Group President Jeff Robinov announced that Superman would be reimagined in a darker way to fit with the Dark Knight trilogy.¹² In 2010, WB initiated its fateful decision to hire Zack Snyder to reboot Superman into a grim and gritty, Nolan-adjacent film universe. *JL:M* seemed like it would remain little more than a footnote in WB's history as new plans for a Snyder-led film universe began to take shape. The Mulroneys's draft script then leaked online in 2013, thanks to a cast member who anticipated the film's demise and stole a copy before the WGA strike occurred.¹³ An unproduced documentary on *JL:M*'s demise was announced in 2015, only to linger in development for years afterward.¹⁴

Screenwriters Kieran and Michele Mulroney's scuttled *JL:M* script is a relic at the time of this writing. Little interest in it remains, beyond floating scraps of social media nostalgia about the DC film universe that *JL:M* might have begun. There are no hashtags, charities or conventions lobbying for it to be made. *JL:M*'s main historical relevance lies in the fact that, in 2007, it was the first attempt to launch Warner Brothers's live-action Justice League franchise. Being the first, *JL:M* passed down a filmic DNA to its successor. This was Joss Whedon's *Justice League* (2017), a similarly fraught creation. Although a critical and box office flop, the film nonetheless emerged from development. Unlike *JL:M*, Whedon's *JL* exists as a theatrical, DVD and BluRay release.

Beyond that, there once loomed an alternate 4-to-6-hour version of *Justice League*. It was an entirely different film than the theatrical release. It was supposed to be directed by Zack Snyder, the same man who had begun Warner Brothers's interconnected DC Extended Universe

(DCEU) with the movies *Man of Steel* (2013) and *Batman v. Superman* (2016). Among fans, this unfilm was known as the Snyder Cut.

After *Justice League: Mortal* collapsed, Warner Brothers spent the following nine years intermittently planning to make another *JL* film.¹⁵ They at last accomplished this after creating a filmic universe to compete with Marvel Studios. WB would gradually build up this so-called DC Extended Universe beginning with a Superman origin story in Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel* (2013). Batman and Wonder Woman's introduction followed shortly thereafter in Snyder's *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). David Ayer's *Suicide Squad* (2016) and Patty Jenkins's *Wonder Woman* (2017) helped set the stage for a major collection of DC superheroes to appear on screen. In November 2017, despite this buildup effort, Joss Whedon's *Justice League* released to extremely negative fan and critical reception.

A Timeline of The Snyder Cut and Zack Snyder's *Justice League* (2021)

The following is an overview of major events surrounding the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut movement, which campaigned for Warner Brothers to produce an unmade version of their much maligned theatrical *Justice League*. The transmedia object that made up this unproduction is referred to as The Snyder Cut, after dismissed director Zack Snyder. Its contents include endotexts such as the scattered script teases, concept art, and unfinished screen shots that Snyder posted on Vero and Twitter from 2017 to 2021. It also includes an exotext, or the unfilm's structuring absence in history, which is discerned through news reports and fan discourses as well as through comparing the unfilm to other relevant unproductions and finished works of its time. The Snyder Cut is the undeveloped, imaginative state of what would later become a finished product that streamed on HBO Max: a 4-hour movie called *Zack Snyder's Justice League*.

League (2021). The release provided a look into what could have been the DC Extended Universe if Zack Snyder had been allowed to direct his planned *Justice League II* and *III*.

In April, 2014, Warner Brothers announced that Snyder, who directed *Man of Steel* (*MoS*) (2013) as the first entry in the DCEU, would go on to direct *Justice League*. WB's decision was primarily based on the fact that *MoS* had performed well at the box office, despite mixed critical reactions to Snyder's violent interpretation of Superman.¹⁶ Snyder was already set to begin production on the follow-up to *MoS*, which would be titled *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (*BvS*) (2016). During his production of *BvS*, Snyder was perceived as the preeminent visionary voice in the DC Extended Universe.¹⁷ *BvS* released in March of 2016 to negative critical and fan reviews, and its earnings also disappointed WB's management.¹⁸ This led Warner Brothers CEO Kevin Tsujihara to reconsider Snyder's pivotal role in DCEU films going forward.¹⁹ Then, Snyder abruptly announced he was stepping down to be with his family after his daughter died by suicide in May 2017.²⁰ Warner Brothers sought to reassure viewers, announcing that Snyder had handpicked former *Avengers* (2012) director Joss Whedon to finish the film. In November 2017, Whedon's version of *Justice League* opened in theaters only to become a critical and commercial failure.²¹

Within hours of the theatrical *JL*'s opening, an online fan movement began to form in various corners of the internet. They proclaimed that Snyder had a much longer, unseen version of *Justice League*. Moreover, they wanted to see it and demanded that WB release it.²² First, there was superfan Fiona Zheng's website, ForSnyderCut, which chronicled events surrounding Snyder's firing and any information on his cut. Then, there were fans who began tweeting #ReleaseTheSnyderCut and organizing real-world protest events.²³ The campaign continued into 2018 and fans began crowdfunding, buying billboard ad space and flying planes with sky

banners urging WB to release the cut. These non-political protest events were timed for Comic-Con International in San Diego, as well as raising money to donate to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).²⁴ Snyder himself encouraged these protests by retweeting photos of the events, marching alongside fans for AFSP and intermittently teasing screen shots and plot points from his cut, which he assured fans was real. While activities like these sound innocuous, the Snyder Cut campaign was also marked by social media mockery and online threats directed at Warner Brothers's management.²⁵ Some fans even made online death threats toward film critics and Warner Media employees.²⁶

In November 2019, the month of the second anniversary of the theatrical *Justice League*, the Snyder Cut saw an outpouring of support from the cast of *Justice League* (2017). These included Gal Gadot (Wonder Woman), Jason Momoa (Aquaman), Ben Affleck (Batman) and Ray Fisher (Cyborg), as well as Snyder himself.²⁷ On March 18, 2021, *ZS JL* was officially released on Warner Media's streaming site, HBO Max²⁸. Many critics saw the Snyder cut as a substantial improvement compared to the original,²⁹ and this perception only encouraged fans to refocus their campaign on a restoration of Snyder's entire DCEU.³⁰

An offshoot of this was the #ReleaseTheAyerCut movement, which referred to director David Ayer's 2016 *Suicide Squad*. The film was supposed to be a darker, 2-and-a-half-hour version of the theatrical release, and Ayer confirmed its existence in a May 2020 Twitter post, shortly after WB announced *ZS JL*'s release.³¹

Snyder assured his fans via social media sites Vero and Twitter that he had planned an entire SnyderVerse of unmade *Justice League* spinoff films. The Snyderverse achieved mythological status in the two years after *Justice League* (2017)'s official release, and fan desires to see it ultimately reinvigorated and reframed *JL:M* (2007) as a kind of unfinished,

spiritual primogenitor. They also prompted David Ayer to borrow the Snyder Movement's momentum and protest strategies to create interest in his unproduced version of another DC Extended Universe film, *Suicide Squad* (2016).

Reasons to Study Unmade Superhero Films and the Trinity's Role

Studying unfinished films holds a unique significance in the field of cinema. These films bring to light the raw, unpolished aspects of film making, making visible the challenges faced by directors, actors, and crew during production. Unfinished films are thus important in understanding the creative process of film making itself.³²

An unfinished film searches out alternative endings and perceptions. It leaves room for speculation. Viewers can discern unresolved plotlines, deleted scenes, unexplored character arcs and themes, and visualize alternative endings. Film audiences participate in social media discussions, debates and fan opinions about what could have been. This helps bring fan communities together. In the right historical moment, a savvy director can utilize these communities to help pressure studios to finish unmade content.

The superhero film genre is especially relevant to the study of unfilms because of superheroes' relationship with failure. Comic writer Danny Fingeroth points out that superheroes overcome fear, limitations and failure. They battle against overwhelming odds, and triumph against them at least some of the time.³³ Moreover, their fantasy stories encourage people to face average, everyday struggles, as they are such a part of mass popular consciousness that few people wonder how they became such an accepted part of popular culture.³⁴ As Fingeroth highlights, this can be seen in everyday utterances like "Don't Hulk out over this," "My Spider-Sense is tingling," "Riddle me this, Caped Crusader," and "Who do you think you are, Superman?"³⁵ Superheroes and their ubiquitous fantasy narratives promote the idea that, under

difficult circumstances, “we can take the next step into the darkness” because that’s what a Wonder Woman, a Superman or a Batman would do.³⁶

Contending with failure and incompleteness is an inseparable part of most superheroes’ backstories.³⁷ Superman, widely regarded as the first true comic book superhero, lives with failure and trauma. He is the last survivor of a destroyed planet who lost his parents as a child. Further, his identity on earth is broken in two. Superman is perpetually torn between his weak and ineffectual civilian identity as Clark Kent and his status as a flying, alien god. William Savage writes that Superman and heroes like him resonate with average people from all over the globe because most people are “alienated from themselves, and bitter about the disparity [. . .] between the theory that they are in control of their own lives and the reality of their powerlessness and weakness.”³⁸ People feel hurt and are hurt, and superheroes offer a way to navigate these conditions.

Wonder Woman forsakes her homeland, the idyllic Paradise Island, and steps into a world where she is surrounded by war, violence and prejudice. She does so not by meeting viciousness with more of the same, but with diplomacy and pacifism. Batman, too, manages to seize back purpose from the trauma of his parents’ deaths.

The point is simply that The DC Trinity of Superman, Wonder Woman and Batman are inspiring because they demonstrate that confronting tragedy, failure and trauma has been at the core of superhero fantasies since their earliest, World War II era iterations. These things define the core of their characters, who are among the most recognizable hero icons the world over. This is the major reason why I focused on unfilms about the Trinity. Unmade cinema has been ignored and understudied, in large part, because of the natural human aversion to looking closely

at failure. Superheroes and the Trinity more specifically show that not only can failure be looked at, but it can sometimes, against all odds, be overcome.

The Importance of Warner/DC as Repository of Unmade Superhero Movies

Film history has primarily focused on what exists. Shifting scholarly attention to the unmade would seem like an obvious choice, yet comparatively few have engaged with the proposition. Some, like film scholar Eric D. Smith, see “synecdochic relations”³⁹ in unproduction studies. Component pieces of canons, genres, even sentences materialize their own micro-histories that are unhooked from any grand narratives that would cause them to make sense in a conventional way. The postmodern moment, with its propensity to deconstruct grand narratives and approach their identitarian fragments,⁴⁰ helps explain the late but still rising interest in unfilm. Commemoration and romanticization of film’s past successes, by themselves, can also obscure and censor history. Perhaps looking at history’s less-flattering moments can be a way of subverting a general assertion that studied film history must always follow successful art.

Divining the importance of that which is marked unimportant is an undertaking in need of a brighter historical spotlight. Fans and industry professionals negotiate among themselves with historical, narrative, industrial, and geopolitical events. Somewhere within this burst of interacting discourses resides the essence of the unmade. While I acknowledge that my project’s detailed, behind the scenes approach to failed production processes and discourse surrounding them is not as familiar or as normative in academic spaces, it is increasingly common in popular texts. Julie Salamon’s *The Devil’s Candy*, for example, is an account of how a production can become a trainwreck on multiple levels. This often happens due to “demented optimism” toward the idea of success. Irrational positivity tends to ignore calls to change the production process

and can turn the act of finishing a film into an over-complex, Sisyphean task, sometimes due to a director's unwillingness to change their vision.⁴¹ I look at the unproduced Justice League and SnyderVerse films in a similar fashion. These Warner Brothers productions were heralded as the start of massive superhero film universes that never quite materialized as intended. I examine these works with a more academic, elevated approach to what happened behind the scenes. The conceptually dense material alongside a lighter, narrativized approach to history is a fruitful and necessary union.

Although relentless positivity and a desire to make failure into a steppingstone toward success will still be part of any unfilm, scholars and fans of unproduction take a different approach. The more that directors and studios cancel projects, the more material unproduction scholars have to work with. This is not exactly *schadenfreude*, as unproduction's observers tend to be deeply sympathetic towards artists who fail. When I began writing about Justice League unfilms, Warner Brothers was the greatest source of superhero unproductions. Their DCEU was sputtering in spectacular and terrible fashion, and many proposed projects were being cancelled. By comparison, Warner/DC's main rival in the domain of superhero movies, Disney's Marvel Studios, had only a cancelled *Inhumans* movie that would have released in 2019.⁴² The MCU's careful planning may be good for viewers, but the DCEU's disastrous planning offers more opportunity for unproduction studies.

Regardless of what scholars and fans think of their failed projects, most studios do not dwell on their unproductions. Warner Brothers, for instance, has refused to allow any *JL:M* content to appear in documentaries. Yet, there is some evidence that the company's stance on their own failed projects is changing. Andy Muschietti's *The Flash* (2023) included a brief

appearance by Nicholas Cage's Superman.⁴³ This strange character is known only to unproduction fans of Tim Burton's cancelled *Superman Lives*, a film that was cancelled in 1998.

Telling Histories of the Unmade

Some scholars, like Luca Peretti, believe the unfinished snippets comprising unfilms should be treated as a collective, autonomous object which "exists" despite never coalescing into a sequentially watchable film.⁴⁴ Peretti also excavates an important difference between an unfinished film and an artifact like *JL:M* (which is fundamentally a screenplay, occasional cast descriptions of scenes, scant pieces of concept art and three adapted DC comics arcs). A screenplay is a component of a process, while a film is the process itself.⁴⁵ Since these components cannot be seen in totality, there is the matter of who defines their contours to fans and critics. Unfinished films have primarily been addressed through an above-the-line viewpoint that reinforces various auteur's accounts.⁴⁶ Above-the-line individuals shape a film's artistic vision and are often associated with the film's production budget. They are the screen writers, directors, producers and principal cast. Historian Filippo Ulivieri uses an auteur and above-the-line approach to Stanley Kubrick's abandoned projects as described by the auteur's assistant directors and executive producers. This auteur focus is the dominant approach for analyzing the unmade.⁴⁷

Yet, it is not the only approach. Peter Kunz argues that failure studies should expand to encompass unproduced works with a different, less auteur-focused methodology. He instead foregrounds the loosely connected trawling of creative material left in the wake of a dissolved production. Both Ulivieri and Kunze agree that successful films are not the norm, but exceptional when considering the multitudinous unfinished, unreleased and half-started ideas drifting around Hollywood. A film that merely "exists," regardless of critical, financial or fan reception, is a

success in the broadest sense. A made film has avoided Development Hell, or a protracted period where a film's status remains "in development" while little progress is made toward its completion.⁴⁸

The acts of learning and studying themselves consist mostly in throwing out information and deciding what is not relevant.⁴⁹ Unproduction studies finds that thrown out materials are worth pondering, and moreover seeks to establish an academic canon among historical ruins. Through critical and fan contemplation, trash becomes a parallel mode of success that is often mythologized for its imagined potential to be great, to be visionary, and to be all things to all fan imaginations. Studio castaways may be recognized, turned into fable and sought after in fan communities.

An unproduction cannot be wholly understood from an auteur viewpoint. An ingenious director or screenwriter is not the sole producer of a nonexistent work. Unproduction needs a proper exigency to make its study possible. It needs what rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer might call a rhetorical situation, which surrounds and gives rise to a certain kind of art during a particular societal exigency.⁵⁰ Art manifests in response to an urgency in society. In terms of my study, this is the idea that "cometh the hour, cometh the unproduction." There must be a pressing reason for a normally inert and hidden unproduction to rise into public consciousness to be looked at and discussed, as these are not usual activities for unproductions.

Critics can think of unfinished texts as a palimpsest of history, discourse, drawings, photography and literature, writes Giuliana Bruno.⁵¹ Fans might know about an unproduction through its script, which is a kind of literature, but there is not always a script. There is so much variance in each individual unproduction's material makeup that studying each one is a unique undertaking. This is part of why Kunze focuses primarily on power dynamics between above and

below-the-line labor involved in a partly conceptualized, animated production of *Cats* from 1995. Kunze's study zeroes in on the intended production and refrains from considering fan response, likely because of the time period of the unproduction.⁵² In an internet age dominated by short form social media outlets like Twitter, fan responses to movie content are ubiquitous even before film production begins.

Conversations surrounding unproduced movies are thus primarily facilitated by social media and sustained by fan and critical discourse expressed on an array of apps and forums. The availability of technology and popular conversations within these technological platforms are responsible for unfilm's rise to a greater degree than any musings from the project's creators.⁵³ The Snyder Cut, for instance, was just a mishmash of loose ideas. These included fan speculation based on social media snippets provided by Zack Snyder, leaked still frames from footage that the director pilfered from WB, as well as entertainment media discourse surrounding Snyder's departure from his own movie franchise. None of the fan conversations, marches, charity drives and other non-political protests around these events would have been possible without Twitter and similar platforms. The same is true for the fan activism surrounding the Ayer Cut.

Where, then, do the unproduced Justice League universe films actually exist, other than in Miller and Snyder's minds, in scattered media and in fan speculation? The best available answer is Google, although the search engine is far from a perfect archival source. As late as February 4, 2019, a Google search for "Zack Snyder upcoming movies" showed that Snyder was set to direct *Justice League Part 2*, and that the sequel was slated for release during that same year.⁵⁴ Any fan would've recognized the inaccuracy: Snyder left the franchise and WB's employ under suspicious circumstances well before *Justice League's* completion in 2017.

From this standpoint, Google as archival materials source deserves meditation. In the 21st century, computers evolved to process data at millions of times the speed that the human brain is capable of, and with this astounding, progressive leap forward go ludic fears of mechanized replacement, control and devastation.⁵⁵ Google's presumably all-seeing eye and capacity for archiving also means that the search engine is a site of resurrection, as John Durham Peters observes. Forgotten materials, projects and people all have a way of appearing again, as if "back from the dead."⁵⁶

To say that *JL:M*'s failure resulted from purpose lack of fan engagement would be an oversimplification. There is no evidence that Miller was at all aware of the fan backlash to *JL:M*. Further, a confluence of historical, industrial and narrative factors all contributed to *JL:M*'s extinguishment. Yet, it is undeniable that his centralized decision making resulted in an outdated approach to filmmaking that left the production vulnerable to the vicissitudes of government agencies that wanted to see *JL:M* fail.

While Miller's *JL:M* is a cautionary tale about the follies of single-minded authorship, Snyder's approach was antithetical to Miller's in two major ways. Its unproduction relied on a grassroots approach, and was able to do so because of the prevalence of Twitter as an arena for fan discourse. The director's online fan engagement, as well as an outpouring of fan sympathy, fed on one another. This symbiotic relationship placed public pressure on WB's executive leadership to release The Snyder Cut as *Zack Snyder's Justice League (ZSJL)* in 2021.

The unproduction histories of *JL:M*, The Snyder Cut and The Ayer Cut illustrate the persuasive power of a highly motivated fandom. Increasingly, fans are the deciding factor in whether superhero franchise films fail. They also determine the degree to which failed franchises are remembered and eulogized. Their voices can lift an unproduction out of development hell, if

directors and producers take the time to listen. Whether they commemorate or refuse failure, fan movements are redefining what superhero cinematic canon is and how it should be studied. Sometimes, merely recognizing an unproduction is enough. Fans in these cases accept failure and cradle the bones of what never was. At other times, fans rage against the injustice of a ruined yet visionary unproduction and cry for recompense from offending executive producers. In either case, fandoms rethink failure. They are not the only component for unproduction scholars to analyze, but they are important when considering unmade superhero franchise films.

The Heideggerian notion of presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) contends that when a tool breaks down, one's seamless immersion in the process of its use is interrupted. Awareness of this now broken thing's presence is forced. The ideal outcome is to seek a solution and resume the process. The gap between proceeding as usual and being abruptly halted encourages reflection and solution seeking so that the past state of processual immersion and an imagined future state of the same may be sutured together, allowing work to continue. Language like this resembles a mental process well familiar to fans of comic book characters. As Scott McCloud writes, the gutter, or the space between comic panels, allows the reader to fill in the gaps between moments and actions.⁵⁷ In a sense, a similar action is required when imagining what an unproduced superhero film might have been. An unproduction is not a sequential art form like comics, and its component pieces are instead scattered, but there is an echo of the familiar in McCloud's declaration that comic panels "fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments."⁵⁸ Fan movements surrounding unproduced works tend to generate discourse in the form of fan conversations and press coverage of fan movements. These then expand unproduction history itself.

I evaluate the cases of three maverick directors. All passionately wanted to complete their respective films. Miller failed, Snyder succeeded in part, and Ayer is still agitating for WB to make his unfilm. The main determiner of success or failure was the rhetorical situation surrounding each film, as these gave rise to. For instance, there is no evidence that George Miller knew of the negative fan reactions his casting choices created. Without short form social media platforms like Twitter, fan considerations were less of a factor for directors and studios' decision making in 2007. By 2017, fan discourse on Twitter and Vero were the drivers for Zack Snyder's fan movement, and later for David Ayer's similar movement. Snyder and Ayer used these to organize nonpolitical protests and push for their films to be funded and released.

I therefore argue that fans and the directors of unproduced superhero films use social media to perform what I call transmedia closure. This is a suturing together of the various kinds of scattered internet endotexts and exotexts that make up a superhero unproduction, including leaked scripts and film clips, comic book source material, fan art and concept art, similar completed films, and press reports. This collaborative effort uses fidelity to comic books and to other completed superhero films to help envision what the unproduction would look like as a finished ideal.

All of this is possible because of social media. Fans who reacted to Miller's *JL:M* in 2007 did not have the benefit of platforms like Twitter that could instantly connect them with Miller in real time, but they nonetheless performed transmedia closure in online comments. Whether willfully or because of the lack of an organized fan presence on social media, Miller did not connect with DC fans and their complaints about his direction for *JL:M*. Directors who are able to take advantage of this fannish process would seem to have a much greater chance of motivating studios to revisit unproduced projects.

Research Questions

In studying the unproductions of *JL:M*, The Snyder Cut and its adjunct, The Ayer Cut, I seek to understand how three maverick film directors confronted projects that spiraled into failure. Despite tremendous efforts, Miller was unable to rescue *JL:M* from falling apart. Snyder succeeded in his multi-year effort to save his cut from the oblivion that would claim the rest of his planned DC Extended Universe. David Ayer and his fans turned the Snyder Cut Movement's social media strategy into a playbook, and their efforts are ongoing. Certainly, the directors' choices played a role in these outcomes, particularly their respective considerations of comic book source material and their unfilms' relationship to other Warner Brothers film properties. However, other factors played central roles in shaping their unproductions, such as mandates from governmental agencies and production studios. The availability of short form social media platforms like Twitter, which easily allowed fans to gather together and pressure Warner Brothers to make The Snyder Cut, were also a deciding factor. With these elements in mind, I propose the following research questions:

RQ 1: What kinds of historical exigencies caused George Miller's *JL:M* to become unmade?

RQ 2: Likewise, what kinds of historical exigencies led to the unmaking of The Snyder Cut, only to later push it back into production as *Zack Snyder's Justice League*?

RQ 3: How does fidelity discourse, wherein comic book source material is compared to an unproduced adaptation, influence whether or not an unproduced superhero film one day becomes produced?

RQ4: How does a director's relationship with superhero franchise fans effect a film project's success or failure?

RQ5: How do fans use discourse to sustain a social media movement to make unproduced superhero films?

In the course of answering these questions, I will draw on theories from the study of failure, unproduction, adaptation and fandom.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Failure

Any discussion of unproduced works must first include failure's role in creating these felled objects. Current scholarship on failure offers three broad categories. Material failure, accident and trauma can be interwoven to help formulate an approach to failed film projects. Material failure is defined through dualism. First, an object that fails (whether it be a living entity or an artistic object, such as film) contains an interrupted temporality. To fail is to crack in twain the present reality and the future one would like to achieve. This fissuring bears a terrible moral weight, as what "should be" has been diverted from its intended path. The reality left in failure's wake is intrinsically warped. Material failure, then, exists as a gap⁵⁹ between one mode of being and its discontinued Other, which cannot be called into being. Failure is a liminal space, and to scrutinize it rather than to move on is to dwell (perhaps unwillingly, as with trauma) in a moment preceding an uncertain recovery, with the knowledge that a lost path will never be recovered in the way envisioned.⁶⁰

As Richard O'Brien comments, there seems to exist a "crowded field of ghosts,"⁶¹ which are failed projects and the people and systems contributing to their failure. These spectral graveyards orbit the greatest success stories, as any artist is destined to be frequently rejected through the materials they seek to master. In the world of film, scripts are rejected and concept art goes unused. The person whose material work fails thereby claims an uneasy relationship with canonical successes.

Failure, viewed as trauma, is what Slavoj Žižek calls Divine Violence: the overwhelming and random catastrophe bereft of sense, an "intrusion of justice beyond law."⁶² As in the Biblical story of Job, no meaning can be found in such serendipitous annihilation; indeed, Job is correct

when he rejects his friends' insistence that his boil-cracked skin, the deaths of his loved ones, and the loss of his livelihood are justified because of some unconfessed sin, recognizing that this assertion is an attempt to displace trauma's dissatisfying emptiness with symbolic explanations.⁶³ Divine Violence is not inflicted but merely occurs, and thus holds no meaning. As a manifestation of existence's inherent injustice, unfairness and madness, its targets are those who merely live; those everyday people who happened to be in the way.

Žižek himself uses filmic analogies to describe the concept, pointing to Detective Abrogast's death in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), where the viewer's gaze shifts from a god's eye shot to the subjective viewpoint of the killer, who attacks the hapless victim. As Žižek concludes, the sequence "is as if God himself has lost his neutrality, brutally intervening, delivering justice."⁶⁴ Similarly, David Freeman, the last screenwriter to work with Hitchcock before his death, remarks on another of the director's most infamous films by drawing out representations of life's chaotic incursions: "We are all guilty all the time, and retribution will come for our unnamed sins. The birds will seek us out and will use no logic that we know. They will destroy us and be still and destroy us again."⁶⁵

Divine Violence is a wry assertion, ironically prodding at humanity's collective desire to find purpose in disasters whose scope escapes rationality. Filmic narratives often represent the scope of such tragedy, and society's willingness to overlook and forget it's horror, through the throngs of nameless extras whose diegetic deaths count for little. According to George Toles, "They are the long-shot victims of natural disaster [. . .] recipients of a big explosion's largesse, or the Storm Troopers toppling with their useless body armor."⁶⁶

Accordingly, *JL:M*'s script contains scenes of mass death, as nameless citizens are infected with nanobots and transformed into undead cyborgs. Superhero films such as Zack

Snyder's *Man of Steel* (2013) and *Batman v. Superman* (2017) were widely criticized by fans, critics and comic creators for their heroes' indifference to mass casualties wrought by their destructive battles.⁶⁷ These deaths count viscerally, but cannot possibly impact the viewer emotionally, and the fact that viewers nonetheless care deeply about the pain and strife of a beloved protagonist holds no irony strong enough to rupture the film's suture. The objects of Divine Violence, especially when said violence has not happened to us, are those who are other than we are, whose aspirations we have been encouraged to overlook and whose loss fails to perturb us because we cannot help but be indifferent.

Accidental, technological failures can be understood as an unfortunate yet immutable occurrence, given that human creation inevitably gallops toward an ataxia preceding the void. In a world where technology is increasingly necessary for artistic production, its functions are ever farther beyond the grasp and attention of the common viewer. Therefore, only a terrible accident can bring technological mechanisms into view.⁶⁸ The final frontier in society's long history of continual accidents, Paul Virilio prophesies, will be science's follow-up to the atom bomb: the human form's violation, through genetic engineering.⁶⁹ While apocalyptic, these figurations of accident leave both a mass of people whose lives are unaccounted for and the human body's fundamental mutation in the face of scientific amorality, both of which are common tropes in superhero cinema (and its failed, unproduced antecedents). The accident reveals what "was hidden, just waiting to happen"⁷⁰ and is an invention in its own rite, or at least the malformed and shambolic wreckage that always already stalks invention itself.

The opposite of this, of course, is the personally felt loss and failure, which demands not only meaning-seeking but also moral judgement from the subject. We are at worst racked with guilt if the failing is ours, and at best still "morally on the hook," feeling some sense of

responsibility to rectify a failure wrought by our indirect actions or inaction.⁷¹ Both these responses are fundamentally moralistic, and are reactions that Arjun Appadurai situates within the hegemonic discourses of corporate, Neoliberal order, which dominates most industrial discourses and encourages us to view failure as a stepping stone that must be learned from in order to catapult us toward future success.⁷² This view blithely recasts sufferings as “moments of infinite progress,”⁷³ thus quashing critical examinations of failure as an event whose recognition reveals that which is both unconsciously and intentionally concealed.⁷⁴

Some scholars of failure encourage widescale rejection of Neoliberal impetus toward refashioning all failure into progress. Highlighting that squashing failure’s jagged edges into the supra-structure of generic positivity disallows a certain set of stories from ever seeing the light of critical and popular examination. Jack Halberstam derides positive thinking as a “North American affliction,”⁷⁵ contending that scholars must venture into “impossibly dark and negative”⁷⁶ realms of failure. Historical “losers”⁷⁷ must be addressed in order to study people, art and projects consigned to be what Catherine Benamou, invoking Walter Benjamin, dubbed “the trash of history.”⁷⁸ Low Theory is a mentality that eschews moral judgements about personal failure in favor of scrutinizing the structural and industrial elements that derailed an idea,⁷⁹ Halberstam turns a Benjaminian searchlight on repressed and cast-out artistic histories, finding value in projects whose apparent uselessness nonetheless speaks volumes about the sociocultural conditions facilitating their destruction.

Failed works and historical trash are rhetorically situated in the utmost discarded depths of the consumer psyche, residing in a fallen space below all art. This is not unlike the dislocating trauma which overwhelms any failed human endeavor and causes us, like Jonah, to cry out from the belly of the whale, demanding that God explain himself for casting us into the deep. Beverley

Clack, like Žižek, is skeptical of assigning success narratives to such a failure, instead observing that the path to spiritual depth is oft precipitated by a loss of all sense. This occurs when one falls and loses more than oneself in failure's descent.⁸⁰ To realize a dream may be life-affirming. To fall short when the dream is within grasp leads to being haunted by "a certain lack, to remain unfulfilled and perpetually at the bounds of otherness, whispering at the ghost of a success"⁸¹ never achieved.

Studying art that is broken and whose productive processes lie derelict, becomes a meditation on the everydayness of being smashed apart and left to refigure our remaining shards. The trauma following descent can hollow a person, replacing the inner self with a "traumatic image or event"⁸². This image or event must be revisited again and again until such time as the descent can be overcome and at least some splintered aspects of the self can be reconstituted. Matthew Bowker views a state of traumatic failure as untenable and something which must be understood experientially and fought against, lest it replace one's inner reality.⁸³

In parallel to this, Rex Stevens remarks that Emmanuel Kant situated Reason (the source of morality) as practical only when it determines the will.⁸⁴ Moral judgement becomes impossible in the traumatized subject, as the self is lost: "The man in this predicament is morally lost because no reliable guides are available to him."⁸⁵ Such assertions about the human psyche's capacity to recover only with trauma's direct address is mirrored in "recovering" discarded art; as Peter Kunze asks, "by studying failure, do we not make it a success of sorts?"⁸⁶

Occasionally, the artist whose work transcends its time period produces a "language not yet legible to his contemporaries"⁸⁷ and is thus rewarded (or punished) with failure. Yet, it is this tragic failure that serves as a precondition for the birth of a new art form; what appears as artistic deformation in one era may resurrect itself, finding acceptance under different social and

historical conditions.⁸⁸ Failed fragments, when unearthed through detective work, present themselves as pieces of a whole that “wants” to come into being. In uncovering and assembling the discarded, scholars of failed works examine an “absent trauma precipitating such forensic restoration from the outset.”⁸⁹ That the filmic failure is haunted by trauma is fitting, as the act of film viewing, whether completable or not, is a haunted thing.

The concept of The Absent One refers to the always-sutured, assumed spectator whose point of view the audience takes up, as the viewers desire what l’absent possesses: narrative meaning, pleasure in watching and diegetic immersion.⁹⁰ However, an incomplete film offers no such possibility, as its constitutive elements are piecemeal. While the viewer of a complete diegesis can choose not to identify with l’absent’s gaze, failure removes the choice altogether. In this sense, contemplating a failed work and refusing The Absent in a feature film both hold something in common. In such cases, the viewer tarries with the text, producing, as Spencer Mackoff writes, “an awareness of the film’s shortcomings, contradictions and incompleteness, leading to spectatorial failure to suture.”⁹¹ Illusion and narrative domination are cast aside, leaving behind the question “in whose place am I looking?” To look at the abandoned work is to look through a kind of trauma orbiting the film as relic.

With regard to looking at unproduced work, there is also a clash between a kind of Heideggerian facticity and factuality of memory. Facticity is the richness of phenomenological, personal accounts of memory.⁹² In the context of fans contemplating the phantom text of an unproduced comic book genre, film facticity is relevant to the complex, intertextual references to comic book lore that comic readers both utilize and teach to non-readers.⁹³ Facticity of memory can also apply to the majority of non-comic readers who will still view unproduced film in comparison to the canonical oeuvre of say, Marvel Cinematic Universe films. Factuality of

memory is rooted in scientific or empirical recollections⁹⁴ devoid of nostalgia and closer to objectivity than subjectivity.

Adaptation

Some scholars contend that adaptation has become its own filmic genre, with distinct aesthetic markings recognizable to both readers of the origin source, or hypotext, and non-readers who only watch the adaptation itself, called the hypertext. Adaptation itself has a tendency to dissolve sanctified quadrants of authorship, medium, time and space, a quality which Linda Hutcheon describes as “palimpsestuous.”⁹⁵ For this overarching reason, I utilize adaptation studies to help evaluate *JL:M*'s script, since the work amalgamates multiple different comic book arcs and draws on character lore known to DC fans. Thomas Leitch describes four standout characteristics signaling an adaptation. First, adaptations are sometimes period pieces, set in the past or adapting works from the past into a modern context.⁹⁶

JL:M follows this pattern in its melding of different comics separated by several culturally transformative years in the pre and post 9/11 eras. With comic to film adaptations in general, choral tampering is common: Patty Jenkins' *Wonder Woman* (2017) is a World War I drama, while its sequel is arbitrarily set in 1984. Similarly, *Captain Marvel* (2019) is set in the 1980s. The same is true of *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016), also set in the 1980s, with its sequel set in the 1990s. Each of these films include superficial aesthetic markers, set pieces and era-appropriate slang to reinforce the period settings, but their choice of decades serves little narrative purpose other than to instill a kind of nostalgic novelty.

The visual elements of adaptation are supported by the second marker of adaptation as genre: period music, which does not necessarily have to be composed in the time presented on screen. Period music in this sense only needs to valorize specific historical events.⁹⁷ While no

known scores were produced for *JL:M*, the third marker of adaptation is heavily utilized in its script. This is a fetishizing and aesthetic obsession over the source medium. For instance, turning pages, as in the flipping comic pages seen in the title sequences of Marvel movies, lend the film the originating text's authority.⁹⁸ Kieran and Michele Mulroney's writing repeatedly lifts visual ques and panels from its comic book source material, in an almost Snyderesque fetishizing of comic book panels as source material. Fourth, the adaptation uses intertitles to both remind and inform the audience, deciding what they should and shouldn't already know.

Liam Burke builds on Leitch's adaptation markers by narrowing its scope to comic book adaptation. The author cites the influence of one of Stan Lee's books, *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* (1978), which outlined techniques for making superhero books look dynamic.⁹⁹ One major conveyance in this work is the notion that comics are bound by rhetorical convergence, or the idea that narrative drawing should convey optimal legibility.¹⁰⁰ To impart this on a generation of young comic artists, Lee's philosophy drew on the historical interplay between comics and cinema, as the two media have relayed framing techniques between each other since film's inception.¹⁰¹ The standout techniques for Marvel-brand dynamism were exaggerated depth of field to accommodate characters in the background of close-up shots,¹⁰² Dutch angles to set the horizon at an oblique angle in relation to the frame,¹⁰³ and extreme high and low angles.¹⁰⁴ Films adapting comic books often utilize similar visual presentations to make mundane dialogue scenes feel engaging.

It is important to separate aesthetic simplicity in comics from their notoriously convoluted character development. Films may seek to borrow the simplicity of rhetorical convergence techniques from comics, but they must in turn simplify decades of contradictory narrative bulk. As former Marvel Entertainment CCO and Marvel Studios founder Avi Arad

commented on the 2008 reboot of *The Incredible Hulk*, “our Hulk will be a diet Hulk. Lighter, focused on the love story, Hulk as hero, his battle with the villain.”¹⁰⁵ This desire to make superheroes relatable and easily accessible is infused within Marvel’s storytelling philosophy, and Stan Lee’s earliest creations were outcasts and misfits who stood somewhere between mainstream and marginal society.¹⁰⁶

This pairing down of character backstory, then, speaks to Terrence Wandke’s parameters for character revision. Revisions are needed, as they often free characters from outdated or confusing cultural markers and bring them into conformity with new social norms.¹⁰⁷ Comic characters function as “modern mythology for geek culture”¹⁰⁸ and repeatedly lend updated dressings to legacy characters, thereby allowing fans to “recognize [themselves] again.”¹⁰⁹ Unproductions like *JL:M*, however, can depart excessively from what fans expect, thus contributing to their spiral into marginality. The twin upsets of an all-new cast of Justice League members in addition to Batman committing murder may have proven too much for viewers.

While touted in Stan Lee’s work, there are obvious problems with overuse of rhetorical convergence technique, which can become visually confusing. Scholars of adaptation are best served by recognizing these shortcomings and simultaneously acknowledging the evocative power attached to rhetorical convergence. If an actor’s skills are properly evaluated by their emotive performance, then a comic artist’s skill must be measured by the ability to elicit the desired emotion on paper.¹¹⁰ Burke’s perspective explicitly links comic readership to the unmade, as he views comic emphasis on the body’s kinetic movements in a decidedly static medium as depicting an image against “all the images that could have been chosen – comics itself is a medium of what could have been.”¹¹¹

Since comic art must encapsulate how a single panel represents the before and after of an action, the medium regularly compresses hundreds of images worth of individual motions into one.¹¹² In this sense, comic readers may be uniquely suited to patching together unmade, adapted film fragments, as their favored medium requires that they imaginatively fill in the blanks left by comic gutters, or the space between panels and their crystalized, kinetic action moments.¹¹³ Comic book movies involve “elisions as well as additions,”¹¹⁴ since most comic source material uses multiple issues or even title arcs and cannot be adapted with complete faithfulness (if total fidelity is even possible to retain after media transference).

Pascal Lefevre focuses on the semiotic and ontological differences between illustration and the sequential photographs comprising a film,¹¹⁵ as well as the implications put forth by each format’s parameters. Further, the gutter, that distinguishing feature of comics, marks a viewer’s movement around imaginative spaces not necessarily confined to the visible illustrations on the page, as opposed to film’s presumed linear viewer experience.¹¹⁶ The gutter itself is meant to be filled with images conjured in the reader’s thoughts, which disseminate from page into mindscape. Film’s goal is to suspend the viewer’s disbelief, immersing the mind in diegetic narrative and progressing from beginning to end within a set time frame.

Films only sporadically make overt visual reference to comic media, as strategies like inseting word bubbles, split screens, digital comic panels and slow-motion shots risk irreparably breaking verisimilitude by overpopulating moments of attraction.¹¹⁷ Pre-production’s comic and illustrative parts are discarded in the final piece, and for this reason they warrant more attention.¹¹⁸ Tension between fixity and movement is still another defining characteristic in the relationship between comics and film. Comics can suggest movement through dynamic poses, line work and the gutter, while film reproduces movement. Therefore, a film which deliberately

slows down a frame so the audience can feast on awe-inspiring imagery can be read as a nod to comics' tabularity.¹¹⁹

A film engaging in split screens and slowed shots upholds the comic book references within itself. Pete Travis's *Dredd* (2012), for instance, used a diegetic plot device (a drug called "slo-mo") as an excuse to render comic-like shots. These moments are intermittently grafted into the film and resemble a zero-gravity experience. As Alain Boillat adds, comics' unique form of intermedial transference "denaturalize both the codes of comics and those of cinema."¹²⁰ The hypotext finds expression in film without reproducing itself.¹²¹ Film as host medium creates an intermediated space where comic aesthetics encounter the DNA of the hypertext and evolve it accordingly. The cellular merger is an aesthetic enhancement, as opposed to a tainting or bastardization.¹²² Adaptations "adapt their filmic subject to technological developments and the possibilities of representation offered and favored by their contemporary contexts."¹²³

As Linda Hutcheon comments in a somewhat techno-deterministic stance, advancements in CGI can be seen as responsible for the comic adaptation's contemporary success, as it makes "fidelity to the imagination" of fans possible to degrees unseen prior to the late 2000s.¹²⁴ Others have opined that action-oriented fantasy hypotexts were waiting for CGI as the only media advancement that would permit their stories to be convincingly told on screen.¹²⁵ Kyle Meikl considers new technology's impact on fidelity discourse to be a kind of stopping place or interstitial gap in which adaptation of a narrative's non-human elements take center stage in film. He contends that film is anti-anthropomorphic, as its technologies do not center the human actor, but mediate ways that human and non-human actors intermingle with one another in ways never before seen.¹²⁶ So too must the CGI-facilitated transposition from comic to film be recognizable to the lay audience. As in the example of Kevin Feige's MCU, comic to film adaptations

accomplish this most easily with viewers who are at least passingly familiar with print lore hypertext. The appropriation of aesthetics and narratives from a comic are interpretive and creative,¹²⁷ and as such comic book visuals make their way to the screen in an array of approximations and in varying degrees of imperfection.

There is tension in the casting of human actors juxtaposed against CGI environments, as comics are perhaps the most conducive to adaptations with stylized digital settings. A comic adaptation is both live action and digital animation working together.¹²⁸ The role of digital post production has been to yield a new kind of bodily representation, one that tears a fissure between established genres to call into being a new space, as Pierre Floquet surmises.¹²⁹ Bodies are digitally altered and transcribed so as to fit the comic film's exaggerated world, where aesthetics straddle the entirely digital world of video games. In the comic films of the late 2000s and beyond, hybridity between actors and digital VFX techniques became a source-accurate way to represent comics on screen. With regard to entirely digital characters voiced by actors, Floquet believes that great digital animation is able to use expressive facial movements to create a characters' thoughts without verbal statements.

This idea stands in stark contrast to Tomasovic's emphasis on the unedited heroic body as reservoir of expression within comic films. Lefevre's comments, too, imply a more liberal approach to comic adaptation, as he observes how few adaptations adapt comic book plots and visuals with utter faithfulness (even in cases where comic writers and artists are consulted to help condense their original story). In unproductions, direct adaptation is both impossible and all that is possible, as the level of fidelity is left up to the melding of comics, concept art, storyboards and other paratexts within the fans' imagination. Nonetheless, comic-to-film adaptations do use comic pages as storyboards, transcribing set, lighting, point of view and layout into shots.¹³⁰

Floquet refers to this storyboarding technique as part of an overall “metissage” of comic film adaptation, which he sees as a hybrid film form consisting of practical effects, VFX and comics.¹³¹

Comics are important in this figuration, but they do not occupy the only central role in the process. Fidelity to comic book sources in this view is only relevant to viewers who are familiar enough with the source material to recognize its echoes on film.¹³² However, as Burke’s insights show, this does not presage a division between fans and non-fans or comic readers and non-readers. Non-fans often ask fans for context after watching comic book movies, thereby learning to value fidelity to the hypotext as their friends and contacts teach them about comic lore.

Evaluating phantom films, which Simone Murray defines as films that lack any sort of evidence of pre-planning and were only speculated about among fans and media outlets, offers new possibilities for adaptation studies. In centering these partly imagined relics, scholars reinvent fidelity criticism’s focus on comparing hypotext to hypertext and using the so-called original to morally judge its spawn.¹³³ Looking at phantom adaptations adds greater nuance to compare-and-contrast approaches. It also encourages us to ask why an adaptation was derailed and what the cultural impact of this derailment was, especially among those fans who anticipated the film’s release.¹³⁴

Unproduction

Unproduction is “a history of cinema without the film,” or the study of unmade film’s leftover fragments.¹³⁵ This typically takes the form of scripts, storyboards and trade magazine reports. Stories of failed films possess an air of mysticism, and fans of these films desire to view the abandoned work as ruinous,¹³⁶ its own kind of Divinely Violent moment in the lives of cast,

crew and filmic narrative. Harry Waldman likewise notes failure to finish a film can irrevocably besmirch a director with a reputation for being unable to complete projects, both in the public's eyes and those of producers.¹³⁷ For these reasons, speculative stories tied to the legendary project that unraveled tend to be more captivating than documentaries and later-released cuts which purport to represent the director's original vision.¹³⁸ The abandoned work, in this view, is not so much a cursed artifact as a resting distillation of the fate which awaits all things living and nonliving: a breaking down, a buckling in the face of life's increasing complexities. Ira Wells builds on this, emphasizing that unproduced cinema is art based on longing for lost and absent memories.¹³⁹ That is, unproductions tend to be surrounded by "the Tragic Rhetoric of Failure."¹⁴⁰ This is one of several constraints placed on unproduced work, which serve to stigmatize it into scholarly obscurity.

Incompletion and abandonment of creative works can seep not only into human memory, but into aesthetic style. To the extent that it impacts narrative, it is a "theme [and] a structuring principle," as Sarah Keller notes.¹⁴¹ It can be especially useful to compare a completed work with an incomplete one, as Keller believes doing so aids critics in thinking about film continuity in novel ways.¹⁴² Lingering feelings of completion and incompleteness result in what Keller names the "frustrated climax"¹⁴³ of the unfinished. This is a "tension plateau"¹⁴⁴ that is maintained throughout a work rife with seemingly disconnected and inconsistent editing, settings, color saturations, lighting, character behavior and so on. Incompleteness permeates a film at a cellular level, leaving the work's axis subtly askew and thereby altering the gravitational forces governing its narrative and aesthetic laws. A "finished" movie which holds some connection to an unfinished shadow, then, is an open-ended product, and as such it trails behind it things like homage, references, memes, and other fan imaginings to extend its own life. As Ira Wells puts it,

“[. . .] without our imaginative capacity to ‘see’ that unmade film, to believe in the art that might have been, those documents would remain the inert, disposable items they were intended to be.”¹⁴⁵

Unfinished work’s cultural value always seems dubious, as well as an artist’s fear that releasing an unfinished product will allow, as Matthew Harle puts it, “the reader to impose his own imagination upon the material, with too little control from the author.”¹⁴⁶ A parallel to this third category can be seen in questions of attribution surrounding film releases. Film’s inherently collaborative nature and complicated authorial status can lead to what David Scott Diffrient calls “aesthetic desecration,” when a studio releases an extended cut or CGI-heavy revision of a classic film.¹⁴⁷ In this case, the author or director has cause to fear fans who tweak their nascent work into something unrecognizable. Fans often feel the same way when a director or studio meddles with the vision that they have come to love.¹⁴⁸ A director’s bad habits can also be encouraged if a studio is too liberal with time and funding, as in the case of Stanley Kubrick, who accumulated a substantial library of unproduced material due to his studio-supported tendency to abandon projects.¹⁴⁹

That the filmic artifact in these cases is materially nonexistent, incomplete or ruined, then forces scholarly reevaluation of what counts as a text in the cast-down, r-below-all that James Fenwick names Shadow Cinema.¹⁵⁰ Unproduction studies’ possibilities manifest a dialectical tension between reifying auteurism and lending greater attention to film’s historically erased collaborators, both above and below-the-line as well as among fandom. On one hand, failed films that had a tremendously negative impact on their directors can easily fall into the Tragic Rhetoric of Failure, wherein a genius’s dreams are crushed by his own excess authenticity. This is the view that uncompromising vision has to be curtailed by financially interested and

creatively bankrupt executive producers.¹⁵¹ The romantic martyrdom of such visions is indeed alluring, such that fans and critics of the unmade find something inspiring in the image of a director standing alone against the film industry's callous machinery,¹⁵² only to fail in an upended David and Goliath scenario.¹⁵³

The world of failed comic book films is awash in accounts of Rhetorical Tragedy. In example, Warner Bros. executive producer John Peters, who was notorious for meddling in the Batman and Superman franchises of the 1970s, 80s and 90s,¹⁵⁴ butted heads with director Roger Avary over an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, with the two disagreeing on the amount of punching and brightly-colored spandex costumes that should be added to the original, gothic story. Avary pushed for fidelity to the source, pitching toned-down costuming without any hint of flashy superheroism, while Peters wanted *Sandman*, as a comic book film, to piggyback on the success of the Batman franchise by transforming into a superhero movie. The disagreement eventually ended in Peters firing Avary, with the latter commenting years later that "It was like I had crawled out on this creative limb, and when I looked around all of my supporters were gone, and John fucking Peters was sawing the branch off."¹⁵⁵

Harle, like Halberstam, advocates against evaluating unfinished work with completeness as its ultimate criteria. Unfinished text is interruptive, but it is also "interminable and inchoate" as it launches multiple narrative lifelines.¹⁵⁶ He finds that creative work is made artificial only when affixed with an end and declared "finished," as the act of creation is metaphorically another dialectical clash between the "eternal creative drive" and the fact that one's life will end.¹⁵⁷ Rather than view the unproduced as melancholic, though, critics should consider the unfinished as a process of anti-work. This refers to the artist who pursues unfinished matters elsewhere, and resituates unfinished work as "act, development or performance" instead of

something whose purpose is to be finished.¹⁵⁸ With regard to scripts, Harle sees discarded notes as taking up a space of writing, not a “disordered storage unit” of ideas to be later attached to a finished piece in assembly line-like fashion.¹⁵⁹

While Harle rehabilitates unfinished anti-work as valuable to the artist’s creative process, Fenwick’s focus on filmic production practices illuminates that unproduced work can also be a side-effect of industrial strategy. In the 1950s, independent film studios were often overseen by the majors, who adopted “a strategy of overdevelopment.”¹⁶⁰ Overdevelopment as a business strategy assumes that an overabundance of pending projects is ideal, since most are likely to fail or be rejected by film studios.¹⁶¹

Charles Solomon elevates the status of unproduction by studying unfinished Disney animations, calling for a rehabilitation of unworks: “As the discovery of an unfinished obelisk revealed how the Egyptians carved Cleopatra’s needle from a gargantuan block of granite, an examination of some of the hundreds of films that studio artists began to develop but didn’t complete offers special insights [sic].” In particular, Solomon’s case studies of various unproduced Disney features and shorts reveal that these “failures” were often adapted into comics and picture books at a later date.¹⁶² This was due in large part to Walt Disney’s insistence that the animation division save their sketches and file them alongside transcripts of their story meetings and avoid throwing out even partly finished ideas.¹⁶³

Unproduction must also be considered in terms of fan audiences who pursue inaccessible works. For James Kendrick, this means studying films which are lost, destroyed, fragmented, locked away in vaults, or kept from release by legal red tape. All of these categories comprise Phantom Films as a category. These films function as the “structuring absences;” they are intangible and can never be viewed in full, but nonetheless constantly haunt film history’s

peripheries, ever asking “what if?”¹⁶⁴ Kendrick’s theory is vital in categorizing different types of Phantom work, and he organizes them into three overarching groups: first are those that were accessible at one time (whether through mainstream outlets or through video piracy’s para-cinema networks).¹⁶⁵ Second are those incomplete work prints, which are often locked away in salt mines or vaults and barred from release by legal complications. Third are those which never moved beyond initial planning elements such as storyboarding, concept art and draft scripts.¹⁶⁶

All of these phantom films are drawn together in unreachability and must be “reconstructed imaginatively.”¹⁶⁷ While Kendrick’s three groups are fastidiously broken down into multiple subtypes, the most elusive of all (and the primary focus of the present project) is one specific subtype of Nonexistent Phantom Films, known as the aborted film. These become legendary precisely because of their unreality, or the fact that they only exist within public and critical perception of what might have been.¹⁶⁸ Their aura thus “supersedes any artistic accomplishments they claim.”¹⁶⁹ Paratextual interviews with directors as well as production drawings are the typical route to studying aborted film, and Whitney Strub reinforces this, commenting that “unfinished projects” are often made up of bare sketches and storyboards.¹⁷⁰

The unfinished detritus surrounding an aborted film leads fans and critics not only to speculate about what could have been, but to unearth the causes of a film’s demise. Tim Burton’s whimsical observations of the scuttled *Superman Lives* project are revelatory. WB planned to release the film in 1995 and handed the project to John Peters, who declared to potential directors that he wanted “accessibility with merchandising potential.” Burton, approached to direct, observed a slew of Peters’ outlandish ideas in the working script: recycling a giant mechanical spider from WB’s *Wild Wild West*, a “no flying” rule for Superman to conserve budget, and a “gay robot assistant” designed to operate Superman’s Fortress of Solitude.¹⁷¹

Having signed a “pay or play” deal, wherein he was richly compensated regardless of the film’s release, Burton said “WB were a little sensitive, because they were getting a lot of bad press that they had screwed up the Batman franchise. In corporate, all the decisions are basically fear-based. So, one aspect that led to their decision [to cancel *Superman Lives*] was the fear that they were going to screw up another franchise.”¹⁷²

This anecdote from Burton (as well as Roger Avary’s similar criticism of WB and John Peters) reinforces the longstanding tendency among above-the-line creatives (and the general moviegoing public, which osmotically absorbs these production horror stories) to view filmmaking teams as “idiots, savants and exploitation merchants in it for the cash.”¹⁷³ Hunter cautions, though, that a film’s failure cannot always be laid at the feet of those producing, directing or writing it: “Sometimes, they [filmmaking teams] are just problem-solving professionals on a budget,”¹⁷⁴ and sometimes the only way to solve a film while preserving the dignity of those involved is to cease making it rather than add to the ever-growing canon of So Bad It’s Good film. In such cases, the project’s failure is a buffer against public embarrassment.

Both Kendrick and Strub’s textual approaches suggest a largely industrial focus for unproduction studies, which focuses on the creations and commentaries of above and below-the-line personnel. However, unproduction scholarship tends to overlook fan contributions to aborted film as imagined text, which pour over possible narrative moves, sometimes inventing missing story elements through fan scripts and hoaxes. For instance, in 2003, Marvel Comics writer Mark Millar ignited an internet hoax by claiming that Orson Welles had completed a script for a Batman film, which would’ve starred Gregory Peck in the titular role.¹⁷⁵ Although hoaxes are a manipulative tactic that can be disappointing and irksome to fans once exposed, their sheer hype

can also invigorate a fanbase to support an unmade project. It can also lead to strong backlash that derails the project, as Hannah Hamad has pointed out.¹⁷⁶

Fandom

Fandom scholarship can be divided into three waves. First came the “Fandom is Beautiful” wave, which focused on rehabilitating fannish activities that had previously been deemed pathological.¹⁷⁷ In this time period, the word fan elicited associations with the likes of assassins John Hinckley Jr. and Mark David Chapman. Jenkins mentions the term “fan” as rooted in “fanatic,” a word that evolved from meaning a religious devotee to the madness of a demon-possessed person.¹⁷⁸ As such, substantial rehabilitative work was required. Henry Jenkins initially characterized media fans as primarily female, white and middle class.¹⁷⁹ Janice Radway declared that women’s media interests were confined to the “pink ghetto” of entertainment forms that wider society did not take seriously, such as romance novels.¹⁸⁰

Rather than condemn fans as childish or dangerously obsessive, work under the Fandom is Beautiful banner pointed out how broad social contempt for fans also reflected their marginal status in terms of taste, gender, race and class. Fans in this wave were also situated as “young, female, queer, outsiders, poor and ethnically different.”¹⁸¹ However, fandom itself was idealized as a space where such barriers could be discarded for more equal social relations.¹⁸² As Matt Hills observes, fandom is not only enacted through consuming media, but in using it to perform one’s fandom and thus recapture a panoptic-haptic control over images “that once sped past during the viewing.”¹⁸³ First Wave fan studies thus celebrated fans’ enjoyment and performativity in order to offset mainstream media coverage of fans as neo-religious cultists and violent psychopaths.¹⁸⁴

The Second Wave of fandom scholarship took a pessimistic view of fan circles, observing how, rather than producing utopian communities where formerly marginalized geeks were treated fairly by their own kind, fandoms instead produced hierarchies mirroring those in the outside world.¹⁸⁵ Unlike the First Wave, Second Wave fan studies deemphasized fans' personal enjoyment and motivations in favor of criticizing sociocultural conditions embedded within fandoms.¹⁸⁶

The subsequent Third Wave, then, recognizes that fan spheres and common, pop cultural spheres are no longer as separate as they once were, and cites the erosion of traditional divisions between media production and consumption. It also stresses the importance of fan activism¹⁸⁷ and race, class and gender identities in influencing (and being influenced by) media industries.¹⁸⁸

In the current milieu of convergent identarian and industrial interests, two paths to fan empowerment exist. One is the day-to-day teaching that fans engage with while describing their fandom object to friends and family, which offers its own interpersonal esteem.¹⁸⁹ Second, one can reliably cite the industry-approved fan impetus to write one's own fanfiction as a way of breaking into a chosen industry and crossing the threshold from fan to professional.¹⁹⁰ Jenkins, too, upholds fan works as a mode of community-building. In modifying existing media, fans move beyond fascination to struggle with their favorite narratives, articulating "alternative possibilities within the original works."¹⁹¹

Far from determining fans' personal interpretations, media texts provide "raw materials" for fan production, a process Jenkins calls textual poaching.¹⁹² Where "old" media like TV and film initially reacted to fan use of copyrighted characters with prohibitionist tactics like lawsuits and cease and desist letters,¹⁹³ Scott reminds that convergence culture changed this by promoting collaboration between producers and consumers in the Internet Age.¹⁹⁴ Clearly, the view that

fans have risen from obscurity to occupy a place of influence is a compelling one. Yet, more pessimistic scholars like Erin Hannah view this as little more than a myth, believing that media industries merely want fans to feel the facsimile of empowerment when in fact the power to create products remains where it always has: in the hands of a few select billionaire media moguls.¹⁹⁵

Seeing collaborative olive branches extended by industry professionals again runs the risk of taking a “Convergence Culture is Beautiful” viewpoint. Mel Stanfill does not find media industry encouragement and incorporation of fan works to be real evidence that fans have suddenly become powerful in comparison to producers. Nor does she accept utopian assumptions that collaboration means a level playing field between cultural manufacturers and fans with marginal identities.¹⁹⁶ Fan participation, considered an oddity in pre-internet eras, has gradually become another commodity to be managed and monetized.¹⁹⁷ Scott borrows from Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer to dub this collaboration The Convergence Culture Industry.¹⁹⁸ They declare that producers value affirmational works which uncritically support character brands through tributary artwork, while disavowing critical, satirical or just plain weird fan work.

Fans who produce affirmational art tend to want to become “fantrepreneurs” and turn pro,¹⁹⁹ or achieve the dream of being hired into the industries they love. Scott situates affirmational work as an enunciative fandom.²⁰⁰ In this case a sycophantic brand promotion on the part of already technically skilled and primarily male fans. Such fans tend to police narrative canon for accuracy and gauge fellow fans’ authenticity,²⁰¹ demanding displays of correct knowledge.²⁰²

In parallel, Stanfill remarks that fan labor creates a surplus value in which media companies reap the benefits of fanwork as free advertising without compensating the fan.²⁰³

Usually, the affirmational fan's dream of going pro never materializes into a stable career and, at best, relies on small brand promotional agreements and other low-paid gig work that trickles down from industry sources. Producers view transformational work, or work whose goal is to "twist [the source] to fans' own purposes," with suspicion.²⁰⁴ Fans who produce transformational works, or works that fundamentally change canonical narratives to serve the purposes of fan fiction, are more often subject to lawsuits and litigation, labelled inauthentic by other fans or outright ignored by producers for being too negative.²⁰⁵

In this system, female fans tend to be labelled inauthentic or as fake geek girls, a term referring to feminists disguised as fans who use fan objects to promote a leftward political agenda.²⁰⁶ Some fandoms scholars believe that this perception arises from the fact that their transformational works often include erotica, slash fiction involving canonically straight characters in same-sex relationships,²⁰⁷ and other radical departures from official narratives that are embarrassing to producers' brand. As Derek Johnson writes, male fans celebrate comics, games and media that are tentatively viewed as outsider and non-manly interests, while at the same time seeking to exclude women fans.²⁰⁸

In the same hand, producers who attempt to include women (by introducing female protagonists, for example) face accusations from subsets of their male audience that they are "mainstreaming" their content or giving into social justice imperatives.²⁰⁹ In addition to cultivating backlash against women's satirical, erotic and transformational fan works, male fans, in Scott's view, struggle with the irony of being championed and catered to by media industries while still being depicted as social misfits embodying failed masculinity in many media products.²¹⁰ Stanfill also points to this tension, claiming that while the assumed prime audience of straight, white male fans are able to choose marginality, fans from minority backgrounds

cannot. It is therefore easier, in Stanfill's view, for normative fans to exert their authority over fans they label Other.

This manifests as policing a fandom's boundaries, as in the case of GamerGate, where a small yet vocal subset of gamers mobilized against supposedly progressive messaging in games, such as the inclusion of female characters and fans.²¹¹ Further, Stanfill finds that the paratextual coverage of fandoms fixates on male fans. This occurs even when fan objects are apparently unmanly, as in the case of cultural fascination with bronies, or male fans of the *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (2010-2019) cartoon.²¹² This is not to suggest that real, demographic majorities of media fans are always men, but only that industries favor the fanboy as their "new favorite character archetype."²¹³ Such men, as constructed by entertainment industries, follow their own well-trammeled hero's journeys. This character archetype is usually a paunchy, unattractive man who lives with his suburban parents past an appropriate age, who begins in "guyland," a place between being a boy and a man.²¹⁴ They typically must set aside their fannish objects in order to 'get the girl,'²¹⁵ start a family and achieve a normal life.²¹⁶

While most fan scholarship focuses on scattered media forms, Jenkins zeroes in on growing interest in San Diego Comic-Con. He calls its modern-day iteration a "gathering of the tribes" of fans across multiple different media types and a place where Hollywood goes to understand what fans want to see in movies.²¹⁷ In order to display how historically unusual the current fan moment at SDCC truly is, Erin Hanna has catalogued comic book fandom and how its representation at San Diego Comic-Con has changed since its inception in 1970. As with TV and film fandom, there is a perception among Comic-Con attendees that the gathering originally supported the unpopular arts (comics), but now supports the popular (Hollywood) ones.²¹⁸ This lamentation is rooted in consuming and making comics as a disruptive activity that does not

conform to dominant cultural hierarchies. Liking ludic art and cartoons is, at its root, still seen as something that should eschew mainstream pop cultural interests and remain niche or exclusive.²¹⁹ Comics fans lament how their favored medium, once SDCC's centerpiece, has become diminished to an intellectual property farm for film studios seeking to start superhero franchises.²²⁰

At the same time, there is yet another fan divide between Marvel and DC adherents who do accept their comics' film side. DC fans use online forums and memes to situate Warner Bros. / DC Entertainment as catering to film buffs and DC Comics aficionados. These fans see Marvel Studios as a crude exercise in mass appeal to non-reading fans and casual viewers.²²¹ They also present themselves as steeped in the references to religion and mythology saturating Zack Snyder's films, for example. They view their dominant-hegemonic²²² agreement with Snyder's messages as nonetheless an underdog activity in comparison to less complex Marvel film narratives.

These kinds of fan divisions and rival discourses may appear film-centric, but the idea of comic fans talking to one another is deeply rooted in comic culture. First Wave fan studies tends to describe fans as resistant to media industry discourses, the comics industry is largely responsible for originally bringing comic fans together through letter columns published in Marvel, DC and Gold Key Comics. Stan Lee, for example, sought to include the knowledgeable reader by selling a participatory world within the pages of Marvel's comics.²²³ DC editors, like their Marvel competitors, published and responded to reader comments in Marvel's Bullpen Bulletins letter column, publishing names and addresses of fans so that like-minded readers could contact one another and promote their fan magazines.²²⁴ Additionally, fanzine publishers

sometimes found employ at Marvel and DC offices, meaning their free labor was aspirational, and was performed while hoping for industry employment.²²⁵

METHODS

I use the foundational methodology of Peter Kunze as a starting point for collecting and evaluating unmade materials. A scholar of in English Literature and Radio, Television and Film, Kunze suggests that unproduction is primarily based on scripts, but should also include other production-related documents like studio notes and marginalia written into scripts. He envisioned this approach for scholars with access to these physical materials, noting his visit to the Harry Ransom Center in Texas to see archived paper collections.²²⁶ Unproduction must locate unfinished scripts, set designs, unused costumes, and concept art. These materials are the traditional means by which unmade movies are evaluated, with the goal of providing “analysis into the day-to-day operations of screenwriters, production companies, or studios.”²²⁷

To Kunze’s list of standard study materials for unproduced film, I add the unfinished texts pilfered by studio workers and proliferated on websites like Reddit and Twitter/X. As I will discuss, these illicit materials are the most important components in each of the superhero unproductions I evaluate here. It stands to reason that unproduction would draw its materiality from illicit material. After all, if WB had its way, these pieces would never have become available to the broader public. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes, “historical narratives are premised on previous understandings, which are themselves premised on the distribution of archival power.”²²⁸ When archival materials like unmade scripts, video clips and still frames are barred from the public’s view by legal red tape and studio vaults, this fundamentally limits understandings of cinema. It blocks understandings of failure and failure’s role in history itself. It determines what success means through studio-driven curation of which materials matter and which do not.

The marginalia jotted onto physical, paper scripts that Kunze studies can manifest in a different way in the internet age. When a director with a social media account tweets about their unmade and leaked script, these comments can be considered a kind of online marginalia akin to the notes jotted onto physical, paper scripts. These online comments can potentially become part of a larger discourse built between directors, fans, studios and press outlets. The fact that these unproduced documents are viewed and discussed at all has a legitimizing effect on them. As Kunze writes, studying unmade materials “challenges both industrially produced accounts and traditional scholarly practice, focusing on the quotidian over the extraordinary and the ignored over the celebrated.”²²⁹

The present project is also guided by film scholar Catherine Benamou’s approach to studying unmade films. Since these unfilms are incomplete projects, they cannot be gathered, viewed or evaluated in the same way as a theatrical film. Rather than a full script, a whole film reel or digital recording, there may be only loose ideas stated on social media and no footage at all associated with an unfilm. Most unmade movies are just scattered pieces of different media, which fans evaluate and piece together into a tentative whole. As Benamou theorized, an unmade film is composed of three parts. First are the unmade film’s endotexts, or material corpus. As in Kunze’s approach, these can include scripts, unfinished footage, still frames, directorial notes, concept art and any partially finished costumes or sets.²³⁰

In the case of *JL:M*, my primary endotext was a full script draft of the unfilm that would-be Batman actor Armie Hammer stole from the film’s Australian set location in 2007 and leaked to the fan-run subreddit *r/DC_Cinematic* in 2015. Using fidelity criticism, which I explain later in this chapter, I compared the leaked script to key narrative moments from the three comic book stories that screenwriters Kieran and Michel Mulroney used to inspire *JL:M* (*Justice League of*

America: Tower of Babel, *Superman: Sacrifice* and *O.M.A.C. Project*). For the Snyder Cut's endotexts, I looked at short video clips, screen grabs and comments that the director posted to his Vero account, which were publicly accessible to non-Vero users during the time I wrote this project's Snyder Cut chapters.²³¹ Another key source of endotexts was the director's Twitter/X page, @ZackSnyder, as well the @RTSnyderCut fan page and the innumerable Twitter fans who retweeted the screenshots and digital marginalia. When evaluating the Ayer Cut, I similarly looked at endotexts posted on David Ayer's Twitter/X account, @DavidAyerMovies, and retweeted by the fan page @RTAyerCutSS.

The second part of Benamou's unmade film is exotext, or historical contexts surrounding the unfilm. These include press reports, documentaries, the style of the unfilms' director or auteur, and any discourse that helps clarify the "structuring absence" the unfilm left in history.²³² Exotext is best understood by understanding how the film was compared to made and unmade projects in history.²³³ As such, I examined historical accounts of the geopolitical film production atmosphere present during *JL:M*'s attempted creation, drawing together professional scholarship on the Australian film industry's relationship with Hollywood studios during this time. I then examine news reports that compared George Miller's unmade *Justice League Mortal* to other franchising efforts around its intended release year of 2008/09, news reports on a failed documentary about *JL:M*, as well as fan comments on the small number of *JL:M*-related news articles whose comment sections are still available online. I also looked at fan discourse on the r/DC_Cinematic page that focused on the *JL:M* script and its divergences from the comic book source materials. In the case of Zack Snyder's Cut of Justice League, I compare the unproduction to Warner Brother's theatrical release of *Justice League* (2017). I considered fidelity discourse among news outlets and fans who compared the theatrical version Snyder's director's cut, which

streamed on HBO Max in 2021. To find these, I looked at Twitter/X posts comparing various scenes and narrative choices in the two films. I approached media and fan discourse on the Snyder Cut in similar fashion, considering reactions to and reportage on Snyder's Twitter/X posts and leaked script pieces.

The third part of an unfilm is the general idea of what the unmade film could have been, which ties together the endotext and exotext into an envisioned, finished product.²³⁴ Benamou states that studying unfilm is to reassemble the fragments of endo and exotext. This is “an archaeological reconstitution into a provisional whole” that she calls an unfilm's Synchronic Emergence.²³⁵ With this concept in mind, I evaluate *Justice League: Mortal*'s envisioned whole primarily through fidelity criticism of its script as compared to its comic book inspirations. Snyder attempts to envision the larger SnyderVerse, or Zack Snyder's filmic universe had it not been cancelled. The first and most obvious objects of study here are the press reports surrounding the Snyder Cut campaign, as well as Snyder's leaked screenshots and interactions with fan questions on Twitter/X and Vero. These materials helped envision what the Snyder Cut would look like as a finished product long before WB decided to produce it. Additionally, I look at fan works created by the Snyder fan group LightCast Podcast, which were posted and discussed on Twitter/X. Their *Project Justice League* was supposed to be a lengthy series of motion comics describing theoretical Justice League sequels.

At the same time, unfilm has a Diachronic Emergence, or the way in which discourse about the unfilm changes, thus changing the unfilm's cultural status over time.²³⁶ An unfilm that failed and was barely noticed in 1970 due to inaccessibility or obscurity of its materials may finally be recognized and heralded as an unfinished work of genius in 2027, for example.

When scholars and fans pour over unmade films, it is essential to gather both endotexts and exotexts, as well as fannish imaginings of what a finished version could have been. When fans share these texts in online forums and on social media, their public exhibition reclaims them from the vaporous other space where they would otherwise lie inert and forgotten. As historian Matilda Bathurst writes, unmade art put on public display becomes more than just an adjunct of something real, but its own authentic work.²³⁷ Unmade films are legitimized through viewing, but viewing them has not always been easy.

Accessing the Unmade Through Ripping-Off

A methodology for studying unproduction must not only explain how to find and make sense of unfilms as transmedia works of art. It must also consider the historical problem of access to the unmade. A hermeneutic reading of unfinished scripts, notes, clips, stills, sets, and concept art would have rarely been possible during most of film history. In the 1960s and 70s, for example, there would have been few ways for a director to distribute a script draft to massive networks of interested viewers without the blessing of official channels like production studios and publishing houses. In one such instance that has received scholarly attention, Civil Rights leader James Baldwin wrote script drafts for a Malcom X film that remained locked away as “closet screenplays” until he pitched them to Hollywood in 1970. These attempts backfired when one studio wanted to cast a “darkened” Charleton Heston as Malcom X and tried to reduce Baldwin’s nuanced racial commentary to a series of action sequences.²³⁸ Baldwin’s best recourse was to publish the script as a book in 1972, then continue to revise unused Malcom scripts in subsequent years. The story may have played out differently if Baldwin had Twitter.

The process of putting unfilm pieces together via social media platforms, search engines and fan forums is something that was only possible because of a historical moment. In this sense,

how one accesses the unmade is determined by technological availabilities of a given era. In parallel to the troublesome access issues surrounding unmade movies, James Kendrick highlights technological progression's impact on being able to see rare and out of circulation films. As he observes, "we live in an era of unprecedented access, and access transforms rarities into mass commodities."²³⁹ Kendrick refers to the vast network of hardcore fans who will find a way to make out-of-circulation films available even if a studio has no intention of re-releasing them.²⁴⁰ Rare movies are not quite like unmade films. However, they are similar in one way: whether the film is complete or not, viewing any art that is typically unviewable lends a "singularly atypical, special quality."²⁴¹

Production drawings, scripts, film clips and still frames are the best available objects of study for what Kendrick calls phantom shards.²⁴² These are unfilms that were never finished and whose incomplete materiality is in scattered pieces. By this definition, all three of the unfilms I evaluate are phantom shards. Kendrick suggests that shards can tell a great deal about the historical period in which their pieces were made. In example, Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's *Bezhin Meadow* (1936) exists in only the first and last frame of each shot, as this was all the director managed to salvage after Stalin's government destroyed the bulk of the production's other materials.²⁴³

While far removed in time and circumstance from my case studies, both Baldwin and Eisenstein's unproduction stories teach that often it is a director or someone else on the inside of a doomed production who is the only one capable of salvaging any phantom shard materials and eventually releasing them to the public. The act of doing so takes on an element of subterfuge and, in some cases, illegality. Although fans who seek out leaked scripts and clips online have not directly stolen from the studio, they are nonetheless morally on the hook in some sense. They

are participants in a viewing process stained by film studio workers' online distribution of pilfered film shards. As Foucault writes of studying illicitly acquired and taboo materials, "however one might handle it, even to cast it far from oneself, it sticks nonetheless and always soils."²⁴⁴

Indeed, unmade films are often accessed through stigmatized means. The unmade's endotext is in some ways parallel to what Ramon Lobato calls "informal media," which he defined as exchanges of pirated media on torrent sites, video hosting and user-created virtual worlds.²⁴⁵ Unmade leaks are not the same as informal media. While my sources of study (JL:M, The Snyder Cut and The Ayer Cut) were initially stolen by studio workers and leaked onto the internet in pieces, there is no monetary damage for the studio in losing them. Neither is there direct monetary gain for fans and scholars who look at them, since it is not as if one had sought out a pirated theatrical film. As De Certeau described the process of workers engaging in *la perruque*, or ripping-off: time, not goods, are subtracted from the workplace "for only scraps are used."²⁴⁶ In the case of an unmade film, there is no complete product whose value can be stolen, and the studio has already lost time in developing a project that never became a finished film. The only thing that studio workers engaging in *la perruque* cost the studio is perhaps their public image, by drawing attention to their failures.

Ethical Considerations

De Certeau may see little ethical issue in using ripped-off materials, but he does not deny their stigmatized quality. Perhaps some of the ethical problems surrounding the study of leaked scripts and clips can be seen analogously in scholarship on movie piracy. It should be reiterated that *la perruque* is not the same as piracy, as it uses inert scrap material and so avoids financially damaging the studio. It cannot wholly evade the comparison, though. In a 1992 interview, media

theorist Friedrich Kittler commented that American attitudes toward piracy were characterized by the moral belief that “one should not hack or patch or copy.”²⁴⁷ The consumer was to “surrender to industrially determined products”²⁴⁸ and avoid interfering in the industrial creative process. The result of these moral boundaries is to discourage consumers from “interrogate[ing] the power concentrated in the hands of technology producers and information distributors.”²⁴⁹ Here is the assumption that looking at pirated materials (or leaks, in this project’s case) is inherently disruptive. One might assume that fandoms around leaked texts would be motivated by the thought of tearing down the studio and taking power back for their own creative endeavors. Yet, as Laikwan Pang states, piracy’s rampant presence means that the original products are sought after.²⁵⁰

Historical Positivism

Ripped-off items are typically stigmatized as objects of “deep suspicion, censure and omission.”²⁵¹ De Certeau highlights that their study is eschewed in academic journals, which historically debase the ripped-off and “consign them to oblivion.”²⁵² In doing so, research institutions decide a narrative of what is common sense and worthy of curation, discarding what is not worthy and thus constructing a “natural” view of history. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, positivism is a mode of studying history that presents scholars’ roles as seeking or approximating the truth. It assumes that historical narratives are valid and that they do not leave anything out that is significant, as Akihiro Kitada summarizes.²⁵³ In the positivist view, history is a story of “those who won,”²⁵⁴ and “tropes of power” are concealed behind a “naïve epistemology”²⁵⁵ that fails to consider power as a determining factor in selecting what is worthy of study. In Paul Ricoeur’s observation, positivism all but dismisses the selection processes that producers of history use to choose what histories are worthy of inclusion in overarching

narratives of what happened.²⁵⁶ Thus, for Ricoeur, power is only another element within the larger story of events. Positivism does not consider power's role in constructing existent narratives and in leaving out inconvenient details by labelling irrelevant the pieces of history that challenge and complicate accepted narratives. Neither does it consider that scholars and authoritative outlets are not the only chroniclers of the past.²⁵⁷ In cases where authoritative chroniclers overlook aspects of film history, it is possible consider discourses proffered by studios, directors, cast and crew, as well as fan discourses on unproduced movies and the comics that inspire them.

The act of ripping-off therefore gives rise to an "ethic of tenacity."²⁵⁸ History that is not supposed to be looked at and that contradicts and deconstructs common sense narratives simply by existing can only be shared through modes of exchange marked illegitimate. To study unmade film is to study leaked script drafts whose distribution was not sanctioned by any studio and that appear as PDF links on reddit pages and Twitter links, as in the case of *JL:M*'s script, as well as Snyder and Ayer's leaked Twitter posts of their respective director's cuts. Normally, viewers are not meant to read scripts or see visual production snippets in their rough draft forms, as these would be embarrassing for writers, directors and studios alike.

Historical Ambiguity

Understanding historical ambiguity's methodological importance for the present project begins with the historical approaches whose elisions it seeks to discern. I have already mentioned historical positivism's particular weaknesses. Along with historical positivism goes the notion that history is based on recalling important events, or the "storage model of memory-history."²⁵⁹ This model's primary shortcoming is the assumption that all that is remembered is all that was significant. Events that a chronicler was unaware of or events that had not yet been revealed²⁶⁰

are also important and are part of an ambiguous methodological approach to history. As Trouillot writes, historical narratives are “bundles of silences”²⁶¹ that were created during specific exigencies. Deconstructing each one requires a different approach. History only reveals itself through the production of specific narratives, and so an ambiguous historical approach to deconstructing silences is based on studying accounts of “participating members of the public” who are not professionals²⁶² and who make history outside of academia.²⁶³ Amateurs not only produce history, but also learn it first from other amateurs and from popular culture. Movie characters teach about fictional as well as historical figures, and comic books fill in the gaps that film leaves.²⁶⁴

La perruque is not only worker appropriation of factory or corporate materials. It requires an audience to appreciate it, as it is a kind of gift economy or “generosities which are also ways of asking for something in return.”²⁶⁵ In the case of a film studio worker who rips off unfinished scripts and clips and then presents them piecemeal to fans on social media, what is asked for in return is twofold. When a leak occurs decades after the original production failed, the leaker simply asks fans, critics and scholars to “see what we tried to do.” The viewer’s task is to fill in the gaps between what is and imagine how different film history would have been. I therefore use la perruque as a general, tactical approach for gathering scripts and images from subreddits and Twitter pages.

In the case of Kieran and Michele Mulroney’s leaked *Justice League: Mortal* script, I found a version posted on the subreddit r/DC_Cinematic.²⁶⁶ There, I accessed the script through a link to a google doc of the draft. One might rightly ask how to know if these ripped-off endotexts had been tampered with or altered by the fans who re-posted them. I have compared my own reading to mainstream media industry reports of the plotline to ensure they match.

Then, to access Zack Snyder's ripped-off snippets of his Snyder Cut, I looked at the director's account on the Twitter clone site called Vero. This relatively unknown platform was Snyder's preferred place to post unfinished visual materials for his fans and news media outlets. I tracked posts and fan reactions on Snyder's Twitter account, which re-posted the Vero material from 2019 – 2023. I also read media reports from a range of different websites highlighting revelatory posts. I stayed informed on the evolution of the Snyder Cut movement through a variety of different journalistic reports on the group's goals, fundraising activities and real-world protests. Shards of David Ayer's cut of the DCEU movie *Suicide Squad* (2016) similarly appeared on Ayer's Twitter page, in posts of screen shots and select script pages.

Foucauldian Discourse

Discourse is a system of knowledge and techniques that becomes tied up with the practices of power.²⁶⁷ Foucault noted discourse's repetitive nature and its ability to change perceptions through repetition.²⁶⁸ Discourse does not have to be continuous or systematic, though; it can be diffused and "made up of bits and pieces"²⁶⁹ and often cannot be "localized in a particular institution."²⁷⁰ When directed at the powerless, discourse acts not just to reify the powerful but to mark the powerlessness of those they seek to punish.²⁷¹ Discourse also works in the reverse, with uprisings of the powerless nearly always sustained by the prospect of minute, material concessions. Really, though, discourse surrounding uprisings is a battle for the soul and is only represented materially.²⁷² Although fandom is oft dismissed as unrelatable to uninitiated non-fans, something universally human emerges from Snyder Cut fan discourse. They find their own failures and tragedies reflected in the fight to release the film and in the heroes who, despite their despair and brokenness, stand for something good.

Foucauldian discourses are two-sided in that they also glorify those who should be punished. This is especially so if the condemned can “wage a struggle with which one all too easily identify[s].”²⁷³ If such a criminal can also evade legal punishment, the result of even condemnatory press coverage is glorification among the public. Snyder’s stealing of Justice League footage from Warner Brothers, his use of bots to boost the Snyder Cut’s Twitter engagement and his refusal to call his fans off from their social media harassment campaigns against Warner executives serve as examples of Foucault’s observation. These acts, many of which were duplicated by David Ayer and his fan movement, reinforce the director’s status as a wounded underdog among his fans and in the popular press. Large groups respond to unfair treatment with “a discourse of the heart” that “leaps forth like a cry from the body, which is revolted at the sight or the imagination of too much cruelty.”²⁷⁴ I sought out discourse of the heart in Snyder fans’ fervent defenses (on Twitter and in real-life campaigns) of their favorite director after he was fired from the theatrical Justice League.

I evaluated the Snyder Cut movement by studying Twitter comments and press reports related to the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse hashtags. These represent the discourse of the two major Snyder fan campaigns and how fans framed Snyder and Warner Brothers. I examined fan reactions to Snyder’s piecemeal screenshot posts and public statements, as well as fan reaction to Warner executives’ decisions. I also sought to understand the way Warner changed its own discourse toward fans at different strategic points in the Snyder fan movement’s lifespan. Toward this end, I read varied entertainment media coverage of Warner’s press statements on the Snyder Cut and its supporters. These press outlets included, but were not limited to, *The Rolling Stone*, *Comic Book Resources*, *Deadline*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Wired*, *Business Insider* and many more.

When the powerful make rules to restrict discussion, a “discourse of infraction”²⁷⁵ arises to mock and challenge them, as Foucault observes. Indecent speech and acts committed by the less powerful are valorized, as they insult the rule maker. When something is not supposed to be discussed publicly, then the discourse of infraction pervades. One strategy that the powerful use to control such discourse is to co-opt it by encouraging discussion and regulating public discourse into something useful rather than antagonistic.²⁷⁶ What Foucault describes is a competing discourse between centers of power and those at power’s margins. This dynamic of competing discourse appears in the Snyder Cut movement. Fans initially sought recompense on Snyder’s behalf, hounding Warner Brothers to fund his cut of Justice League. Warner alternated between ignoring and pathologizing fans before changing strategies and praising fan enthusiasm before the cut’s release. Then, Warner reverted to its previous response, once again pathologizing requests to restore more of Snyder’s planned DC Extended Universe movies. I therefore apply Foucault’s notion of discourse of infraction and discourse of the heart to help understand the changing discourses between fans and Warner Brothers.

Fidelity Discourse

Superhero movies are fundamentally screen translations of comic books. They should be evaluated in comparison to their comic book source material. George Bluestone based his theory of adaptation on the notion that printed works and film had a relationship that was “overtly compatible [and] secretly hostile.”²⁷⁷ Film’s source texts could portray the past, present and future as media that tapped into the imagination to a greater extent than film was presumably capable of doing.²⁷⁸ The novel could cause the audience to perceive the concept of a mental image, while film merely led to perception of the visual image.²⁷⁹ The realm of the mind was upheld as greater than the realm of sight, in Bluestone’s estimation: “The film, by arranging

external signs [. . .] can lead us to infer thought. But it cannot show us thought directly. A film is not thought; it is perceived.”²⁸⁰

While fidelity discourse approaches that pedestalize origin texts as superior in their greater authenticity have been criticized as reductive,²⁸¹ Bluestone’s idea relates to a comic book fan’s interpretation of a comic book film, as fans evaluate film scenes through the lens of the printed works they have read in the past. Fan comparisons between character designs and plot points in the comics and an adapted film are common. For fans, enjoying an adaptation is contingent on its ability to evoke “recognition and remembrance”²⁸² of its source. This is why, in addition to evaluating historical factors, the Mulroney’s *JL:M* script must be considered alongside the three comic book texts from which it takes inspiration, as the authors not only borrow heavily from each but amalgamate the three books together visually, narratively and thematically to create their script. The Snyder Cut fans also used fidelity to discuss their preferred unfilm, and both fans and media outlets compared the behavior of Snyder’s characters to their comic book counterparts. At the same time, they compared the Snyder Cut’s visual style and narrative choices with the theatrical Justice League. Ayer’s cut, too, was compared to its theatrical version in press reportage and fan comments on Twitter.

Chapter Preview

In Chapter 1, I demonstrate that George Miller situated *JL:M* as the potential savior of the film industry in his homeland of Australia, and of Warner Brother’s superhero franchising efforts. This hope was rooted in the industrial practices of a bygone, 1980s cinema boom era, as well as a cultural zeitgeist wherein speculative success narratives were championed right up until the point of a major Australian film industry downturn. *JL:M*’s unproduction reveals the dangers of directorial single-mindedness. It is also a cautionary tale about the hype surrounding success

narratives and their tendency to ignore the small yet systemic problems that can compound themselves, leading even well-made plans toward implosion.

Perhaps the most consequential in the end, was Miller's single-mindedness in casting unknown actors, which alienated fans who already liked Superman actor Brandon Routh in *Superman Returns* and Batman actor Christian Bale in *Batman Begins*. These industrial and geopolitical problems, as well as Miller's missteps, led to *JL:M*'s downfall. *JL:M* is a failure so complete that it resists rehabilitation. It forces beholders to stop and sit with its ruins rather than churning up another success narrative as part of an endless march toward a commercial release. *JL:M* is an unproduction that, after fighting a good fight, can eternally rest, even as fan attitudes toward it have softened in the years since its script leaked online in 2013.

Since *JL:M*'s script is the core endotext of this unmade film, I examine a leaked version of it in Chapter 2. To help understand some of the fan complaints about the characters and plot in *JL:M*, I utilize fidelity discourse to compare the *JL:M* script to its three main comic book hypotexts. These are Mark Waid's *Justice League of America: Tower of Babel*, Greg Rucka's *Superman: Sacrifice* and Rucka's *O.M.A.C. Project*. I then consider negative fan reactions to specific narrative moments in the script.

While Miller's lack of ability to engage with fans contributed to *JL:M*'s doom, some unproductions insist on rising from their graves again and again. Chapter 3 examines the only other Justice League unproduction, or the campaign to release the Snyder Cut. I will discuss how Snyder, unlike Miller, utilized an outpouring of fan support to push his unproduction toward release. I then consider how fans facilitated this through what were, at times, highly flawed and contentious modes of nonpolitical protesting. Fans used their knowledge of comic characters and imagery to criticize Joss Whedon's theatrical version of *Justice League* (2017) as inferior to

Snyder's planned version. WB's reaction to a Snyder family tragedy all but guaranteed that fans would perceive their beloved director as besieged. This victimage served to unite and motivate fans under the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut movement, which retweeted Snyder's occasional social media snippets of unreleased scenes and art. I evaluate Snyder as a director who passionately wanted to continue his projects and found himself derailed and discarded by a combination of Warners's profit imperatives and destructive events that cropped up. Unproduction studies tends to illuminate hierarchical balances of power among above-the-line workers in particular.²⁸³ This became visible when fans turned WB into an enemy of their movement, with Snyder as a martyred and returned fan-auteur.

In chapter 4, I turn attention toward Snyder Cut fans' various attempts to defend their movement from internal and external threats. I note how fans within the movement who misbehaved along the lines of plagiarism and tracing, as well as sexism and racism, were dealt with through transmedia invocations to comic book standards of ethics. I then focus on how fan defensive measures changed when Zack Snyder was accused by non-fans and media outlets of astroturfing, or using bots to augment the social media movement. Snyder was also accused of being secretly far-right. Rather than censure their leader, as they did other fans, the Snyder Cut Movement instead hit back at accusers on social media.

Since Snyder fans' campaign resulted in the successful production of the Snyder Cut, it follows that other directors might consider similar fan-driven campaigns through Twitter. Chapter 5 evaluates *Suicide Squad* (2016) director David Ayer's appropriation of the Snyder Movement's tactics into a playbook for his own #ReleaseTheAyerCut fan campaign.

It is worth acknowledging that when the only histories available are provided in a director's telling and in the accounts of the few above-the-line workers willing to speak on the

subject, scholars are presented with an incomplete history at best. While Miller's story remains comparatively unclear, it is well-documented that Snyder lost his stake in DC Entertainment's answer to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The narratives he set up in *Man of Steel* (2013) and *Batman v Superman* (2016) were largely thrown out as a result of WB CEO Kevin Tsujihara's dissatisfaction with critical ratings.²⁸⁴ That is to say, like *Justice League:Mortal*, the failure of replacement director Joss Whedon's theatrical *Justice League* destroyed not only itself, but the very franchise it was meant to kickstart. In the aftermath of this vaporization are visible the interchange of firings and hirings preceding Snyder's fateful jettison. These events spawned the Snyder Cut as a kind of DC Elseworlds story. Fans first believed its release to be a path to finding justice for their charismatic idol, and later for restoring his entire universe.

In DC comics, Elseworlds is a publication label exploring alternative histories in DC lore, Elseworlds explore how timelines would have branched differently if certain events defied readers' memories. The series imagines what would happen if the classic events known to all fans were altered, creating another reality.²⁸⁵ What would become of truth, justice and the American way if, as in Mark Millar's *Superman: Red Son*, baby Kal-El's spaceship had crashed in Stalin's USSR?²⁸⁶ How might Bruce Wayne's One Rule, his code against killing, change if Batman was a vampire?²⁸⁷ Both *JL:M* and The Snyder Cut feature some characters behaving in ways that drastically diverge from comic book norms.

The Mulroney's Batman of *JL:M* does indeed break his One Rule of never killing. Snyder's Batman and Superman were also both darker and more prone to indirectly murdering criminals than contemporary fans and critics were accustomed to. The violent Superman and Batman of Snyder's universe were (very) loosely inspired by DC's *Injustice* publication timeline. In this timeline, Superman becomes a brainwashed dictator and rules earth with an iron hand.

Snyder's film and its fan movement criticize top-down rule by WB's soul-crushing regime and inaccessible executives. Evil Superman's Justice League is dubbed "The Regime" in the *Injustice* comics. This is comparable to the Snyder Cut's heroes when they try to stop Darkseid, an otherworldly autocrat, who manipulates events on earth from a sequestered throne room on his fiery home planet.

Unlike Miller, the blame for Snyder's initial failure did not rest even partially with random freak accidents or bad luck; he and his fans felt they knew exactly who to blame. To fully understand the reasons behind these differing yet similar approaches to failure in two of Warners's flagship superhero efforts, it is necessary to travel back in time through a Google-mediated cyberspace. Amid snippets of glitching articles, one finds *Justice League: Mortal*'s imprint (or it's curse) in Snyder's extinguished DC Extended Universe.

The Snyder Cut's significance extends far beyond the film's initial period of uncertain completion. Deborah Snyder, Zack Snyder's wife, suggested the idea of revitalizing defunct projects through ever-multiplying streaming services. She also pointed out that WB never could have made a profit on a reissue of *Justice League* if theaters were the only available venue. The past two years and the resultant explosion of streaming competition, she declared in 2020, were game changing for underrecognized projects.²⁸⁸ Even before it's streaming announcement, The Snyder Cut's public visibility managed to rekindle interest in unproductions thought long-dead.

George Miller's *Justice League: Mortal* stands as one such example, as the film received a limited degree of renewed fan and journalistic attention in the aftermath of the Snyder Cut. The film had been so thoroughly forgotten that a planned documentary meant to chronicle its failure also failed.²⁸⁹ Warner's fan service (some would say capitulation) in heeding Snyder's fans has been a watershed moment for other unrealized projects. Concept artist Matt Hatton posted a

collection of photos for *JL:M*,²⁹⁰ and director Ryan Unicomb announced his intent to revisit the *JL:M* documentary.²⁹¹ DC Films and Warner have proven themselves open to disconnected alternated realities depicting the same characters,²⁹² drawing on the printed comic's of Elseworlds publications.²⁹³ For a period of time, there were concurrently two different live-action Jokers played by Joaquin Phoenix and Jared Leto, and three different Batmen (Ben Affleck, Michael Keaton and Robert Pattinson) whose universes did not interact.

Given Warner's willingness to incorporate industry ruptures into narrative film continuity, one wonders how many more unproduced works might one day appear in streamed form. Snyder fans have wondered the same and have become known for their relentless social media requests for WB executives to release the remaining SnyderVerse films. Some critics liken this behavior to anti-feminist fans' reviews bombing *Captain Marvel* (2019) on Rotten Tomatoes, as well as those who mocked Kelly Marie Tran's role in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017).²⁹⁴ Could the current political climate lead Warner to rethink whether the Snyder Cut should represent a one-off project, or the beginning of a parallel DC film Universe? Snyder Cut fans continue to hope for the latter outcome, against all odds.

CHAPTER 1: JUSTICE LEAGUE: MORTAL

There are certain actors who have defined Batman on screen. Names like Adam West, Michael Keaton, Christian Bale and Robert Pattinson readily come to mind. No one ever got to see little-known actor Armie Hammer play the character for director George Miller's unproduced *Justice League: Mortal (JL:M)* film, aside from in a few leaked promotional images.²⁹⁵ *Justice League: Mortal* is a canceled film that was originally set to be released in 2009. The film was inspired by the DC comic book arcs *Justice League: Tower of Babel* (2000) and *Superman: Sacrifice* (2006). The movie would have featured a different Batman from Christopher Nolan's, and would have reportedly featured D.J. Cotrona as Superman, Megan Gale as Wonder Woman and rapper Common as Green Lantern.

Justice League: Mortal was supposed to be the first blockbuster superhero ensemble film. It would have preempted Marvel Studios' *The Avengers* by nearly four years. Had things gone as planned, perhaps legions of fans would today await the next yearly bunch of Warner/DC films instead of the next set of Marvel Studios movies.²⁹⁶ However, this is not the reality that came to pass. Warner Brothers' DC films have consistently fallen below critical expectations since Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel* launched the DC Extended Universe (DCEU) in 2013. The situation has only worsened with time, as seven of the eight superhero movies Warner/DC released between 2020 and 2023 were box office flops.²⁹⁷

The DCEU officially ended with *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom* (2023). Given the dire state of WB's comic book films, it is easy to look back to 2007 and wonder how and why the first DC film universe fell apart. Batman actor Armie Hammer has described how he and the project's writers created the *JL: Mortal* script by packing into a crowded room somewhere in

Australia and churning out as many ideas as possible in the scant hours before Warner Brothers suspended the film's production.²⁹⁸ For a supposed last-minute effort, fans have nonetheless praised the script as remarkably well-written. Quality for comic book film fans often depends on fidelity to other transmedia efforts, and so they have compared *JL:M*'s script to the *Justice League* animated TV series and have remarked on its loyalty to DC writer Mark Waid's *Justice League: Tower of Babel* comic series.²⁹⁹

In Chapter 1, I argue that George Miller's *JL:M* failed primarily due to the director's approach. Miller sought Australian co-production status for his film, which would have earned a large tax rebate for WB's production costs. However, Miller's approach was stuck in the past. He sought to use the same co-production strategy that had worked for him in the 1980s, when Hollywood co-productions were king in Australia. By 2007, the country's film production landscape had taken a decidedly anti-Hollywood and nationalistic turn thanks to the government's Film Finance Corporation, a change that Miller was not prepared to navigate. These factors combined with opposition from *The Dark Knight* (2008) director Christopher Nolan and fan backlash against casting choices permanently derailed the project. Even if social media platforms like Twitter had existed in 2007, negative fan reactions to news articles covering *JL:M* circa 2007 suggest that no fanbase would have rallied to help Miller's finish his film. In these ways, *Justice League: Mortal* simply lacked the proper rhetorical situation to manifest as the completed blockbuster it might have been.

None of this should suggest that Miller was anything less than enthralled with making *JL:M*. Batman actor Armie Hammer detailed Miller's meticulous development of scenes and characters. For instance, each scene's storyboards were magnified to giant sizes and hung on the walls of one studio room. The panels stretched from floor to ceiling so that "you could read each

scene like a comic book.”³⁰⁰ Miller also developed psychological profiles of each of his characters, hiring psychiatrists, Joseph Campbell experts and brain surgeons to consult with the cast and crew during each tabled meeting on set. He required his actors to train for their roles, sending Aquaman actor Santiago Cabrera to swim with dolphins in Northern California so he would “get used to being around sea creatures.”³⁰¹ Miller flew Superman actor DJ Cotrona to Australia a month before his fellow cast members, revealing his plans for the film. Cotrona was thus already acclimated to the production when the other actors arrived, meaning they had to rely on him for guidance just as the Justice League would look up to and follow Superman. Adam Brody, who played The Flash, trained with rubber bands so he would be “fast and twitchy.”³⁰² Hammer himself was purposely left out of meeting details so that he would develop a suspicious and contentious relationship with his co-workers, mirroring Batman’s antagonism toward his own team.³⁰³

It was, of course, all for naught. In George Miller’s telling, an unaccountable arm of the Australian government torpedoed his efforts, robbing moviegoers of a great superhero epic. Miller also lamented the cancellation’s dire effects on the Australian film industry, which he believed could be revitalized toward its former glory through *JL:M* and similar Hollywood co-productions. In the aftermath of the film’s cancellation, he pointed to a government regulatory entity that he felt held narrow views of which films could be successes while enjoying a near monopoly over which projects were greenlit and which were consigned to history’s dustbin (at least, within Australia from the late 1980s to late 2000s).

As an artistic failure, *JL:M* might parallel Kurt Godel’s model for a hypothetical universe. Godel envisioned a creationary sum “allowing time loops in which events in the future cause events in the past and then cause their own causes.”³⁰⁴ In this paradigm, couldn’t later

reflections on an unmade work speak to the work's own past? It must be acknowledged that failed projects have a certain unmoored-ness from linear history that invites fans and scholars to adopt a paranoid gaze. This is a way of seeing that peers into the workings of industry from an outsider's perspective and recognizes that official narratives can be the best way to hide the historical truth of what occurred in plain sight.³⁰⁵ The paranoid is thus subject to seeking patterns where they may or may not actually exist.³⁰⁶ Matters that are not supposed to be seen or discussed can also be inherently threatening,³⁰⁷ particularly to existing explanations for why a project failed, and the studio impulse to brush aside these failures is strong.

The study of failure is rarely a linear process. The lingering evidence of what *JL:M* could have been resides in the discordant internet jetsam of news reports, primarily occurring around the film's unproduction in 2007. There are also numerous reports and fan discussions on Reddit related to a *JL:M* script leak in 2015. *JL:M* also enjoyed a brief resurgence in interest when Joss Whedon's *Justice League* was released in 2017, and again when Zack Snyder's *Justice League* streamed in 2021. That is to say, *JL:M*'s unproduction passes through dormancies and back into popular conversation depending on the status of the *Justice League* as a film franchise.

Many links promising revelatory *JL:M* cast interviews or behind-the-scenes photos and concept art are now broken, but much else remains. As far as the material substance of *JL:M* itself, there are industry paratextual accounts of the finished script, and a script draft that was stolen from the film set and leaked online in 2015. There are *JL:M*'s comic book hypotexts, which are Mark Waid's *Justice League: Tower of Babel*, Greg Ruck and Mark Verheiden's *Superman: Sacrifice*, and Greg Rucka's *O.M.A.C. Project*. There are interview snippets from un-director George Miller, un-producer Dan Lin and the un-cast, as well as Boss Logic concept art and promotional photos of the cast dressed in iconic spandex garb. One photo shows Armie

Hammer (Batman), Megan Gale (Wonder Woman), DJ Cotrona (Superman), Adam Brody (The Flash), Common (Green Lantern), Santiago Cabrera (Aquaman), and Hugh Keays-Byrne (Martian Manhunter) standing together in costume.³⁰⁸ The practical effects studio Weta Workshop built the suits, and several of the actors described their respective suit's unique features in MTV interviews.

One of Warners Brothers's struggles had been its lack of comic book film success outside of Batman and Superman properties. By the time *JL:M* entered production in 2007, the studio's non-Batman and Superman efforts of the previous twenty years had been *Swamp Thing* (1982),³⁰⁹ *Supergirl* (1984),³¹⁰ *The Return of Swamp Thing* (1989),³¹¹ *Steel* (1997),³¹² *Road to Perdition* (2002),³¹³ *Catwoman* (2004),³¹⁴ *Constantine* (2005),³¹⁵ *A History of Violence* (2005) and *V for Vendetta* (2006). Of these, *Swamp Thing*, *Road to Perdition*, *Constantine*, *A History of Violence* and *Vendetta* were box office successes, with Warners's other comic book films settling among their worst-performing financial failures.³¹⁶ Hence, the studio had sufficient financial motivation to promote a release featuring both Batman and Superman, whose brand recognizability might support unproven League members like Martian Manhunter, Aquaman and Green Lantern.

When any project is met with failure, it is easy for industry discourse to take over and either ignore the unproduction or retrospectively it's frame financial disaster as essentially no one's fault and a stepping stone toward future success. One of these two outcomes is what happens when industry narratives are accepted at face value and failure is not examined beyond these exculpatory statements. Yet, as Arjun Appadurai has pointed out, to put failure under a microscope is to push back against misleading, industry-positive narratives, even if that narrative is, as in *JL:M*'s case, that failure should simply be forgotten.³¹⁷ It is uncomfortable to discuss ruined projects, and in some cases it is impossible. Those production workers with the most

revelatory knowledge tend to be bound by nondisclosure agreements. They may also feel responsible for failure regardless of whether they truly are. In some cases, we might think it is even the fault of the consumer, who lacked the requisite sophistication to appreciate a project in its time. In such situations, a discourse of mere moral failure is proffered, wherein larger and uncontrollable circumstances are held responsible for creative and financial collapse rather than specific individuals and their decisions. Blame diffuses so that the agents in charge are simultaneously responsible yet unable to be blamed.³¹⁸

George Miller refused a blameless narrative and instead outlined the project's death as a perfect storm of meddling bureaucrats, industry malcontents, clashing egos and serial continuity problems. His version of *JL:M*'s collapse remains the most detailed account available, and the main cast has corroborated aspects of his retelling of events in a limited handful of interviews. As Miller's recollection goes, WB wanted to shoot in Australia for tax break purposes. To gain approval, this meant production needed to meet recently overhauled and extremely stringent governmental standards to be considered an "Australian controlled project," despite Miller's Australian citizenship. As he recalled in a 2017 interview, "There was a board that no longer exists that the government cobbled together from people who knew nothing about the film industry. They struck it down by one vote."³¹⁹

This organization was the Film Finance Corporation (FFC), which arose from the highly specific Australian film production zeitgeist of the 1980s through late 2000s and dissipated shortly after WB cancelled *JL:M*, seemingly sticking around just long enough to derail Miller's ambitions. Shortly after *JL:M*'s production began in Australia, WB paused production before cancelling the project altogether when the FFC's new rebate initiative was announced in January, 2008.³²⁰

Miller's approach to *JL:M* echoed the Hollywood backlot model of a long-passed cinematic boom era in 1980s Australia. In 2008, bringing back anything close to the bubble of Hollywood co-productions seen in the past was unrealistic. A nationalistic backlash against excessive foreign collaborations had risen out of the 1980s boom period and persisted through the 1990s and 2000s. The boom period itself had collapsed due to the irrational positivity and unwarranted success narratives of a speculative market. Miller's approach upheld *JL:M* as the start of a new era of collaboration, with himself guiding a lucrative rise to prosperity for the Australian film industry. Concurrently, Warner Brothers viewed the project as a launchpad for future superhero franchise films. My goal is not to give a detailed economic analysis of these periods, and I seek instead to highlight Miller's approach to filmic failure and how it contributed to *JL:M*'s cancellation. Nostalgia for the boom period hearkened to a return to the 1980s boom period model without acknowledging the reasons for its original collapse, thus proffering a vision of recurring failures as steps on an upward path to eventual success rather than weak points that should have been addressed in order to prevent system failure. With this production blind spot, the film fell prey to regulatory agencies that viewed the boom period as a problem and were designed to prevent its recurrence.

The Cultural Frontier and Justice League

Australian cinema has long maintained a contentious relationship with international cinema, and especially with Hollywood productions. Australian film agents' interactions with Hollywood are "permanently unequal,"³²¹ as the Australian film market is dwarfed by that of the U.S. and thus its film milieu is defined by flows and transfers of popular genres, texts, fashion and concepts.³²² This has led to perceptions, reductive as they are, that Australia is a receiving culture in that its most popular films tend to be international co-productions. Hollywood, on the

other hand, has been the dominant sending culture.³²³ Such figurations of sending and receiving cultures reinforces the idea that Australia is a cultural frontier.³²⁴ The term describes a view where outside influences relentlessly threaten to change receiving cultures and dilute their authenticity,³²⁵ which creates a negotiated and ever-shifting bilingualism between the cultural area of the sending culture and the receiving culture, as per Tom O'Regan's summary of Yuri Lotman's observations.³²⁶ This back-and-forth has also been framed as a debate wherein proponents of an Australian "national cinema" argue that quality films should be homegrown and thus primarily government financed and regulated. This is the mentality that "It's hard enough to make a film in your home town without having to soothe the egos of barbarian Californian foreigners."³²⁷

Proponents of a more free market approach suggest that quality means international partnerships, private investment and films aimed at a global rather than solely domestic audience.³²⁸ The nativist argument tends to focus on terms like low-budget, government-funded, indigenous and Australian. Opposite this is the free marketer philosophy which, as Elizabeth Jacka summarizes, is resistance to government regulation of quality cinema.³²⁹ There is a gapping between the two sides in the debate that results in uncertainty about what kinds of art counts as original or unoriginal.³³⁰ Unoriginality is thus the contested space where the Australian nation finds itself pushed to the cultural frontier by the film cultures of larger hegemonies like the US, UK or Hong Kong. The implication here is that a receiving culture must either work toward greater cultural autonomy or be forever subsumed.

Some scholars have criticized the hegemonic "West versus rest"³³¹ implications of the sending/receiving culture theoretical model. Others have pointed out the unfairness of the idea of one-directional talent flow,³³² which suggests that filmmakers and studios from sending

cultures bring their superior production methods to receiving cultures and leave them better as a result. While the sending/receiving model remains contentious, I mention it here primarily because the 10BA era which helped kickstart George Miller's early career promoted Western investment in Australia's developing film sector.

Thus, in calling for a return to a 10BA-like model with *JL:M*'s heavy Hollywood influence, Miller unintentionally reenacted the fate of so many scuttled film projects which fell victim to the hype of speculative investment and fizzled out as a result of protectionist backlash and poor moviegoer and critical response. In the 1980s, 10BA productions were made as tax shelters in film form, and "the amount of tax money seeking shelter was far beyond original government estimates, and there was no longer any control over where the money was going or what films were being made [. . .] There was little need for concern about what would happen to 10BA films once the applause had died away [. . .]."³³³ 10BA movies were often criticized as something akin to hazmat storage to contain investor's risky betting.³³⁴ Miller may have ignored the factors contributing to 10BA's scaling down to his and Warners's detriment. In *JL:M*'s case, taking an implicit view of the era's failings as the result of nativist short-sightedness within government and not the irrational exuberance of a speculative bubble which, much like industry promotion of *JL:M* as Warners's superhero mega franchise in waiting, touted a view of failure comparable to Appadurai's descriptions of an ever upwards trajectory up to the point of collapse. While some factors like the 2008 Writers Guild of America strike were out of Miller's hands entirely, he and Warner Bros. seemingly overlooked local Australian regulations that would halt this DC film universe before it ever launched into theaters.

As O'Regan highlights, Meaghan Morris named unoriginality Australian cinema's defining feature in the 1980s, and indeed of the country in sum total. There are three modes by

which unoriginality is rhetorically constructed among critics and the general moviegoing public. Endemic originality is the first of these. It is rooted in anti-Americanism, and situates Hollywood's dominion as a more pleasurable and entertaining form of imperialism. Here, the frontier country is reduced to little more than beautiful background scenery for American film stars.³³⁵ The first phase also decries the meddling of American financiers and their tendency to throw money at projects, turning film into a lurid investment. The ideal outcome in this way of thinking is for local cinema to create its own originality and authenticity to beat back Hollywood's imperial encroachment.³³⁶

The second mode is positive unoriginality or center-periphery. It seeks to accept the reality of cinema as a Western cultural industry that houses no room for quaint ideations of authenticity, creative spark and so forth. In this comparatively self-effacing paradigm, frontier states like Australia are drawn into Hollywood's vast influence and have little agency or ability to create new, genre-defining works of art. The resigned attitude of equanimity in this second mode views this center-periphery model³³⁷ as simply the way things are.³³⁸

Last is the adaptive mode. It posits that the best way to ensure Australian cinema's long-term survival is to appropriate more successful, foreign fare. In this view, George Miller's *Mad Max* (1980) took the American "road-movie genre," did it better, then resold it to American moviegoers to great fanfare.³³⁹ At this point, the receiving culture learns to produce blockbusters with a unique, local flavor. It becomes a sending culture and a new semiotic sphere of influence, now exporting its cultural creations to other frontier areas and even back toward the sending spheres from which it learned.³⁴⁰ No longer a maker of copies, as in the second mode, the former cultural periphery becomes a hegemon in its own right, sending ideas and intellectual capital back into Hollywood.³⁴¹ The lesson of the adaptive mode is that difference is forged within

likeness.³⁴² Discourse surrounding *JL:M* primarily travels between endemic and positive unoriginality. It would have been difficult to sell the unfilm as an example of Australian appropriation, although Miller's defense of the film as vital to the local film industry's revitalization can be read as a part of the adaptive construction, as I will illustrate.

The Film Finance Corporation was an attempt to protect Australia's domestic film market from becoming another speculative bubble as was seen in the 1980s. The FFC had played a role in deciding which foreign coproductions qualified for government funding since its inception in 1988.³⁴³ The FCC's establishment also meant added government scrutiny of the coproduction label and effectively tasked the Australian Government with determining which Australian/Hollywood co-productions qualified as authentically Australian fare and would thus be eligible for government funds. No official from the now defunct FFC has ever commented on the decision to withdraw *JL:M*'s 40% tax rebate. The problem arose from the FFC's protectionist approach, which may have found fault with the fact that the Justice League was property of Warner Brothers, an American company. It had not been the original creation of Australian citizen George Miller. There was also the concern, echoing Morris's first mode of unoriginality, over how the public might view the supposedly homegrown authenticity of a big budget film revolving around quintessentially American pop culture and starring primarily American actors.

As the director of equity for the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (Australia's equivalent of the Screen Actors Guild), Simon Whipp, explained shortly after the film's rebate was blocked in 2008: "for the public, both in and outside of Australia, this will be seen as an American film."³⁴⁴ Miller quickly appealed the FFC decision, declaring that the fight to film *JL:M* was a fight on behalf of the Australian film industry's future success and its ability to one day stand on its own as an entertainment production hub. Depending on Hollywood partnership

for greater autonomy may sound counter intuitive. Part of his reasoning can be contextualized through Yuri Lotman's stages of cultural transfer. As O'Regan explains, this is a model designed to explain how foreign entertainment products are perceived within a receiving culture. It is also a road map for how a receiving culture may become a sending culture by appropriating and learning from items sent by another sending culture.³⁴⁵

Despite Miller's bravado, Warner Brothers halted *JL:M* and nullified any remaining hope that production could resume. Miller denounced the FFC's decision as regressive and close-minded, lamenting the squandered hundreds of millions in revenue, all the hundreds of creative jobs that had been lost, and the loss of Hollywood talent that Australian production crews could learn from. Miller argued in favor of a mega-franchise model. He pointed to New Zealand as a trailblazer, with Hollywood co-productions on *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995 – 1999), *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995 – 2001), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001 – 2003), *The Adventure of Tintin* (2011) and a planned *Halo* film that was later postponed indefinitely and recycled into *District 9* (2009). Miller's point was especially salient, as New Zealand had narrowly secured a tax credit for *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, edging out Tasmania as the primary shooting location and undercutting the rising value of the Australian Dollar.³⁴⁶ Notably, all of these film examples had *The Lord of the Rings* director, Peter Jackson, attached as director or producer, suggesting that Miller had envisioned *JL:M* as the start of his role as directorial bridge between Australia and another Hollywood mega franchise.³⁴⁷ It also would've been a means to draw foreign investment away from Vancouver, the go-to Hollywood backlot for the vast majority of Hollywood's overseas filming locations at that time.³⁴⁸

Miller essentially wanted to establish what David Neuman calls "Hollywood South,"³⁴⁹ or the idea that filming locations in Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast were the future of

big budget co-productions.³⁵⁰ In other words, Miller's vision of the future stemmed from an era of heavy foreign investment that boomed during his early career. After all, one of his greatest hits, *Mad Max: The Road Warrior* (1981), was financed through 10BA investments.³⁵¹ Miller had never been a supporter of censorship, and didn't care for regulatory bodies that sought to boss him around. *Violence in the Cinema Part 1* (1972) was the first film he made with his producer, Byron Kennedy, which satirized professional critics' censorious attitude toward violent movies.³⁵² When he had difficulty securing an M rather than an R rating for *Mad Max 2* (as *Mad Max: The Road Warrior* was called in Australia) he commented that "that incident made me really cynical about the way censors work."³⁵³ This view helps explain why he purposely avoided working with the FFC.

In industrial accounts of Miller's story, government bureaucratic interference, apprehensiveness toward outsiders, and opaque and arbitrarily enforced restrictions derailed the project. If Simon Whipp's reasoning can be taken as a microcosm of the Australian government attitudes toward American film fare, then lingering reticence toward partnering with U.S. projects since the 9/11 era may partially explain the FFC's opposition. Australian Labor Party and Leader of the Opposition from 2003 – 2005, Mark Latham, described PM John Howard's relationship with George W. Bush and his support of the War on Terror as "fawning compliance" and called for Australia to focus on building business ties in Asia instead.³⁵⁴ At the same time, Australian screens had been dominated by foreign films, primarily from Hollywood, with 90% of ticket sales from 2000-2010 coming from foreign productions.³⁵⁵ In other words, anti-U.S. sentiment was brewing in Australian politics and entertainment for years leading up to *JL:M*'s downfall.

Miller's comments on the film's stagnation in his home country were not made lightly and had been echoed by industry reporters throughout the 2000s, many of whom mourned the domestic screen market's failure and Australian movies' low quality.³⁵⁶ While Miller believed that bigger budgets and Hollywood collaboration would again revitalize the industry, the fact that scholars view the 1980s film boom as a speculative bubble that would inevitably burst calls the sustainability of these conditions into question. By the early 2000s, as Labor Party leader Latham had encouraged, Australia's ore exports to China and other Asian countries had raised the Australian dollar's value so much that it nearly equaled the value of the US dollar. Gone were the boom days of the 1980s and 1990s, when Hollywood studios were able to produce at around 60 cents on the US dollar.³⁵⁷

Miller has consistently blamed the FFC's meddling for *JL:M*'s failure, and it is worth knowing this villain's origin story. The 10BA era was known for its runaway productions, or Hollywood co-productions filmed in Australia.³⁵⁸ It was also known for uncontrolled investment. That is, for all its problems, 10BA still held the possibility of absurd profits if one was in the right place at the right time and knew the right investors. The FFC's regulation of the film industry has not been associated with financial growth since its beginnings.³⁵⁹ From its creation in May 1988 to its dissolution in July 2008, the FFC invested A\$1.345 billion in Australian productions which earned A\$274.2 million at the domestic and international box office, "a cumulative return of negative 80 percent."³⁶⁰ This occurred despite the organization marketing itself as a vehicle for film investment recoupment.³⁶¹ Some of the top earning Australian-directed films of the 1990s deliberately flouted the FFC, securing funding exclusively from American studios. Miller's production house, Kennedy Miller Mitchell, followed this strategy in partnering with Universal Pictures on *Babe* (1995) and *Lorenzo's Oil* (1992).³⁶² The FFC was an

organization that failed in the one goal it was created to fulfill before failing to sustain its own existence just months after helping to derail *JL:M*. Like Miller, Australian film industry scholars Alex Burns and Ben Eltham label the FFC's tax rebate policy as a major contributor to not only the organization's own shuttering, but to the Australian film industry's failure in the decade of the 2000s.³⁶³ Financially speaking, the FFC would leave behind a twenty-year legacy of staggering failure.

In 2008, Miller made entreaties for the FFC to expand its definitions of an Australian coproduction to include a film like *JL:M*. Those who supported it touted the importance of international cooperation with the thought that Australia could piggyback on foreign (though mostly American) studios to improve the earnings and quality of homegrown films. Even as state governments competed to attract Hollywood investment,³⁶⁴ critics in the federal government and FFC argued that this approach would reduce Australian productions to mere backlots for Hollywood's globalist race to the bottom.³⁶⁵ Even as far back as 1999, the FFC's reports had cited the difficulty independent Australian films could face in fostering enduring relationships with writers and directors who were competing in a globalized market.³⁶⁶

Miller's clash with the FFC was only the first nail in the film's coffin, with the second arriving in the form of the massive 2008 Hollywood writer's strike.³⁶⁷ Finally, there were Christopher Nolan, Brandon Routh and Christian Bale. Routh played the titular character in Warners's *Superman Returns* (2006), and would have been replaced by the relatively unknown DJ Cotrona for *JL:M*. This, when Warners had still slated Routh to play Superman in a planned 2009 *Superman Returns* sequel, and when the popular TV series *Smallville* featured yet another Clark Kent played by Tom Welling. While Marvel and DC would later lean into doppelganger characters existing across a multiverse of different continuities, this idea had not taken hold in

comic book films in the 2000s. Complicating matters further, Warner Brothers did not ask Batman superstar Christian Bale (who had filmed *Batman Begins* two years earlier) to play *JL:M*'s Batman. Bale raised concerns that inconsistent casting would confuse audiences and harm the Batman brand.

After all, *JL:M* would have been released just as the marketing campaign for *The Dark Knight* (2008) began. Bale stated in an interview that “it would be better if it [*JL:M*] didn't tread on the toes of what we [himself and Nolan] are doing. It would be better if it came out after *Batman 3*.”³⁶⁸ Some outlets contend that pressure from Bale and Nolan led WB to rethink the wisdom in introducing two separate Batmen and potentially drawing audience eyes away from the already proven, Nolan-helmed *Dark Knight* films. At the same time, WB wanted to compete with Marvel Studios' shared universe, an idea which Bale disdained.³⁶⁹

At one point, a planned documentary promised to reveal precisely why *JL:M* failed, in similar fashion to Frank Pavich's acclaimed 2013 documentary on Alejandro Jodorowski's derailed *Dune*. This exposé on *JL:M*'s failure never materialized. Beyond a spate of hopeful articles heralding its announcement and looking forward to its release and a few pieces of concept art, little remains of *JL:M*.³⁷⁰

Tower of Babel, Road to Ruin

In 2016, George Miller would comment: “We almost got there. And it wasn't to be. But that happens a lot, where films line up and the stars look like they're aligning and they didn't.”³⁷¹ Indeed, as Richard O'Brian observes, creative people are often outfoxed by something they have mastered.³⁷² Miller expressed another sort of paranoid belief: that prematurely discussing a project tends to contribute to its downfall in roundabout ways, citing his early announcement of his attachment to *Contact* (1997) and quick dismissal from production. He notes a similar pattern

not only in *JL:M* and cites unearned enthusiasm for projects in their nascency as an unfortunate way of jinxing progress or leading filmmakers to overlook serious problems that end in the project's derailment.³⁷³

The investment world, which played such a prominent role in creating the 10BA era under which Miller made his fame, holds an idea similar to the notion that premature celebration of a project somehow leads to its downfall. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan coined the term "irrational exuberance"³⁷⁴ in a 1996 lecture, defining it as a rapid inflation of assets not grounded in reality but in speculative hype. Greenspan cited Japan's construction bubble which led to unfinished bridges to nowhere.³⁷⁵ Miller observes that it seems best to finish a work and simply allow audiences to judge its visible merits, rather than allowing hype to generate unfulfillable expectations and overinflate a director's confidence, potentially pushing him toward self-sabotage.³⁷⁶ Prematurely hailing future success is an attempt to fill the gap between a concept and its fulfillment with reassuring verbiage. It is an effort to stent a project's hemorrhaging before it succumbs to the hidden obstacles that strafe the peripheries of any collaborative work.

As these promises of impending greatness accumulate, they widen the gap between reality and utopian imagination. Hype can generate a fugue state, wherein those involved fail to recognize when a project has passed the point of no return and is leading toward disaster.³⁷⁷ Beyond that unstated threshold is failure, and failure is a gap that permits the implosion of one existential state and allows for the beginning of a new one,³⁷⁸ as Aaron Parkhurst, David Jeevendrampillai and Timothy Carroll have written. In *Justice League: Mortal's* case, the film's shelving leaves a gap in which the genetics of the future DC film universe can be seen in fragmentary form, giving context to WB's production strategy.

In 2007, WB was reassessing its approach to superhero films. DC's superheroes went uncontested at the box office in the late 1970s, 80s and 90s, primarily thanks to *Superman* (1977), *Superman II* (1980), *Superman III* (1983), *Batman* (1989), *Batman Returns* (1992), *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman and Robin* (1997) performing well at the box office overall (if not always with critics). The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a resurgence of higher quality Marvel films, with Stephen Norrington's *Blade* (1998), Bryan Singer and Brett Ratner's *X-Men* trilogy (2000, 2003, 2006), and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* trilogy (2002, 2004, 2007). After false starts with an adaptation of *Catwoman* (2004), WB found another hit in *Batman Begins* (2005). Plans formed for a Joss Whedon helmed *Wonder Woman*³⁷⁹ and a *Flash* movie by David S. Goyer.³⁸⁰ After pouring \$223 million into Singer's *Superman Returns* (2006) to see suboptimal returns³⁸¹ and subsequently cancelling Whedon and Goyer's projects, WB considered a course correction from the strategy of using individual hero's films to slowly build up to an ensemble film depicting the Justice League. Instead, they would make a Justice League film and branch out into multiple spinoffs if the film proved financially successful³⁸² (a strategy that, despite its failure, WB would eventually attempt again with *Batman v. Superman* and Joss Whedon's ill-fated 2017 *Justice League*).

Investing in an idea that could spawn a franchise not gradually but nearly instantaneously brings James Fenwick's strategy of over development to mind. Film studios will sometimes promote movies that are little more than a title and a tagline in order to drum up interest and trust in the studio's ambitious brand image.³⁸³ Rather than promote individual film ideas, WB wanted to create *JL:M* as a compression chamber of imagined, wildly successful future IP. Like a filmic big bang, it would scatter spinoffs outward in all directions, starting a new DC Universe. In a broad sense, the playbook parallels the breakneck optimism pervading the corporate sector seen

in the 1990s, which hit a fever pitch in the 2000s. It also influenced the financial elites and executives surrounded by the viral promotion of “the law of attraction,” or the notion that one can control the world and manifest success with positive thinking.³⁸⁴

At least initially, there was little reason to suspect that *JL:M*'s story would be anything other than a resounding success. Warner Brothers hired Kieran and Michele Mulroney to draft an initial screenplay,³⁸⁵ which head of production Jeff Robinov mentioned in an interview, saying “The Justice League of America has been a perennial favorite for generations of fans, and we believe their appeal to film audiences will be as strong and diverse as the characters themselves.”³⁸⁶ WB's first choice for director had been Jason Reitman, who had recently directed *Juno* (2007) and *Thank You For Smoking* (2005), but he would reject the offer, expressing his disinterest in mega-franchises.³⁸⁷ Miller arrived as the studio's second choice, building on the Mulroney's screenplay to create a script that would later leak onto the internet in 2013.³⁸⁸

As per the leaked script, the plan was to take an essentialist approach, adapting together the general spirit of three Justice League comic arcs – the first being Mark Waid and Howard Porter's *Justice League of America: Tower of Babel* (2000). The second was Gail Simone, Mark Verheiden and Greg Rucka's *Superman: Sacrifice* (2005), a story coinciding with a Justice League arc called *O.M.A.C. Project* (2005). The film would have pitted the League against megalomaniac Max Lord,³⁸⁹ a character who Pedro Pascal would later play as a con-artist businessman and self-help guru in Patty Jenkins's *Wonder Woman 1984* (2020). The futuristic artificial intelligence called Brother Eye would have been a second villain. This character, too, was later alluded to in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) when Bruce Wayne commissions a city-wide surveillance system able to monitor every citizen in Gotham.

WB allotted \$250 million to production costs and cancelled the project days before filming was initially scheduled to start. The script leak revealed a plan that would have had The League in-costume in almost every scene, deemphasizing their civilian personas. The script makes clear that superheroes are not a novel concept in its universe. Origin stories and exposition about metahumans are scarcely present. As per WB's executive plan to expand its new universe into spinoff films, there is an assumed familiarity with superpowered individuals, though the script doesn't detail how many years superheroes have been an accepted part of public life. This was also a world wherein superheroes' presence on the world stage had brought peace to such an extent that Wonder Woman is seen on a diner TV addressing the United Nations about what to do with humanity's newfound global tranquility.³⁹⁰ Critics have commented on the script's lack of deconstructionism and lighthearted, episodic feel, especially in comparison to Zack Snyder's later and far more cynical work on *Man of Steel* and *Batman v. Superman*.³⁹¹ Others have observed that *JL:M* characters' personalities and narrative world are similar to the widely beloved *Justice League Unlimited* cartoon series featuring Bruce Timm and Paul Dini's long running takes on DC's animated universe.³⁹² The Flash (Barry Allen) is the relatable jokester who looks up to the rest of the League, Wonder Woman is the team's leader and diplomat to the human world, and Batman, as one critic describes, "is a pointy-eared, fascist dick."³⁹³ This criticism of Batman's *JL:M* portrayal sounds familiar in 2023, when WB Discovery's Blue Beetle trailer features a side character snidely proclaiming that Batman is a fascist.³⁹⁴

The *JL:M* script's flawed, paranoid and near-villainous portrayal of Batman also took inspiration from the DC Comics zeitgeist of the 1990s. The decade's first major Batman event was *Knightfall* (May 1993³⁹⁵ – August 1994³⁹⁶), which saw the normally stoic and controlled Dark Knight psychologically crumble in the face of newcomer villain Bane's master plan. After

Bane undoes decades of Batman's crime fighting by releasing hundreds of supervillains from their cells in Arkham Asylum,³⁹⁷ Batman wears himself out while trying to save Gotham from the destruction they unleash. In a now iconic full-page spread, Bane raises a mangled Batman over his head, extends a knee and breaks his spine,³⁹⁸ leaving him confined to a wheelchair for the remainder of the story and forced to choose a successor.³⁹⁹ As Andrew Farago and Gina McIntyre observe, this was the first storyline where Batman's elaborate contingency plans had totally failed, to the point where he could neither protect Gotham City, his wards nor himself from criminals. *Knightfall* demonstrated in humiliating fashion that Batman was no longer infallible; he could not successfully plan for every scenario.⁴⁰⁰ The following *Contagion*⁴⁰¹ and *Legacy*⁴⁰² arcs saw a recovered Batman dealing with an outbreak of genetically engineered Ebola in Gotham, leaning heavily on his Bat Family of proteges for support.

Barely averting the virus's return by foiling supervillains Ra's al Ghul and Bane's joint plot to bomb Gotham, Batman realizes that some threats require him to trust his teammates and allow them access to his inner workings. He thus rejoins the Justice League after a protracted absence, in the pages of *Justice League of America* (1996 – 2006). Series writer Grant Morrison encapsulated Batman's character arc in this era, saying "I saw Batman as humanity's representative at the table of the gods. In the context of the JLA, he's the optimum man, the strategist and pragmatist who thinks of strategies none of the others could."⁴⁰³

When DC Comics writer Mark Waid wrote the *JLA: Tower of Babel* comics in 2000, he sought to emphasize Batman's negative qualities and open a fissure between Batman and other heroes. Not only would Batman be fallible, but he would be so utterly sure of his own righteousness that his failure would be assured yet remain unrecognized up until and still after his plans imploded. *Tower of Babel* features Batman secretly creating plans to incapacitate the

Justice League just in case he ever needed to fight them. The villain Ras al Ghul then steals these plans and uses them to defeat Batman's friends. Waid's Batman is one who is slow to self-reflect, as the writer has stated: "Even after Al Ghul perverted his contingency plans, I'm not sure Batman would have felt he did anything wrong other than allow for them to be stolen. Regret is not an often-used word in Bruce's vocabulary."⁴⁰⁴

As with the *Tower of Babel* comic arc, the Mulroneys's script revolves around Batman's contingency plans to take down the League if any of them turned toward evil or became brainwashed, as well as the resultant breakdown of trust between the League and Batman. Martian Manhunter is unknowingly invaded by microscopic nanobots which cause him to spontaneously combust when exposed to oxygen, thus exploiting his character's weakness toward fire. The other League members become similarly infected, with each new artificially-intelligent sickness attempting to destroy the heroes from within. Batman discovers that Max Lord, who befriends Bruce Wayne early in the film, knows his secret identity and has hacked his nanotech, fusing with the mass surveillance program Brother Eye.

In the *JL:M* script, Max Lord's motivation is straightforward. He is the last survivor of a U.S. government experiment called O.M.A.C. (One Man Army Corps) Project, which sought to turn abandoned children into superpowered soldiers. The torturous process spans decades and ends up killing all experimental subjects but Max himself. In adulthood, he seeks to eradicate super powered individuals (called metahumans in DC comics) aside from himself and rule over humanity. Lord overtakes Superman's mind and turns him against the Justice League. An evil Superman is a utilitarian decision in both cases; if Superman isn't removed from the game in some fashion, he will logically end the villains' machinations too quickly.

The *JL:M* script borrows most heavily from Greg Rucka's *O.M.A.C. Project* and Mark Waid's *Tower of Babel* comics. Batman's paranoia, untrusting nature and behind-the-back machinations backfire and create the very scenario they were designed to prevent, namely the League's most powerful members being brainwashed by a supervillain. All of these points are central to Rucka and Waid's comic books as well. One of the major differences was in the villain's death. In *JL:M*, Batman kills Max Lord, while Wonder Woman does the deed in the comics. This plot element wasn't released to the general public until *JL:M*'s 2013 script leak, so it had no influence on fan perceptions of *JL:M* during its unproduction in 2007. However, fans reacting to a Batman who kills in 2013 viewed this as a betrayal of Batman's code against killing. It is not unreasonable to assume that, had the script been accessible in 2007, fans then would have felt similarly.

In Mark Waid's *Superman: Sacrifice* comic, Wonder Woman breaks Max Lord's neck to stop him from using O.M.A.C.'s robots to conquer the globe. This move, while controversial among Wonder Woman fans,⁴⁰⁵ made narrative sense given the character's gradual ebb toward martial violence that began with Frank Miller's reinvention of her in 2003's *The Dark Knight Strikes Again!* Zack Snyder's later *Man of Steel* (2013) and *BvS* (2016) films drew criticism for Batman's implied, off-screen killing of criminals and brutal methods that looked like they could have killed certain thugs.⁴⁰⁶ It was one of the main reasons that fans took issue with Snyder's character iteration.⁴⁰⁷ Simply put, comic book Batman is not supposed to kill any more than is Superman, and hasn't overtly done so in mainline DC canon since his initial Bob Kane and Bill Finger *Detective Comics* and *Batman* appearances in the late 1930s and early 40s.⁴⁰⁸ Even then, criminals' deaths were depicted in a detached manner, as Batman would inadvertently cause

them to fall from a rooftop or into their own deathtraps. Yet, in Miller's *Justice League: Mortal*, it is Batman who executes Max Lord while Wonder Woman refuses the task.

Beginning with his introductory scene, Batman sits in front of his surveillance system, listening as the Bat computer voyeuristically scans his teammates and details their weaknesses. A brief exchange with Alfred cements his paranoia and detachment from the other heroes: "What if something happens? They're not human. None of them. Not fully. And with their powers? If not me, who's going to watch them?"⁴⁰⁹ *JL:M*'s Batman mistrusts metahumans and is not above violating civil liberties if it means gaining power over this feared group. Batman, it initially seems, could be the villain of the story. However, Alfred pulls him back from his brooding and into a surprise birthday party, reminding the reader that Batman still has a human side anchored to a handful of confidants. After he powers down the AI and leaves the Batcave, Brother Eye flashes the words "Creator Directive Override,"⁴¹⁰ and continues scanning for metahumans.

Thus, the script breezily deemphasizes Batman's worrying qualities, overshadowing them with a greater threat and thereby allowing the hero to remain heroic. Given the commentaries on mass surveillance present in the comics and script, *JL:M*'s Batman can be read as an embodiment of a security state, whose machinations are far easier to condemn during times of peace than during times of war. Being a superhero morality tale, *JL:M* concludes with Batman acting as a hero "should" by fighting against the data abuses he enabled and redeeming himself by breaking his code against killing to try and stop Max Lord.

Failed History of a Failed History

Media scholar Jack Halberstam finds that "losers leave no records."⁴¹¹ This may be so, but in *JL:M*'s case, there has been one sustained effort to piece the project together. The documentary that would describe *JL:M*'s unproduction process was supposed to be called

George Miller's Justice League at one point. It has an *IGN* page consisting of a single sentence, with no release date. A DC fan and Hollywood film marketer named Ryan Unicomb is attached to direct. Unicomb is an Australian citizen with “additional crew” credits in *Zack Snyder's Justice League* (2021), *Dune* (2022), *Jurassic World* and *Morbius* (2022). He has also been involved with marketing efforts on several Hollywood blockbusters, such as *The Flash* (2022), *The Batman* (2021) and *The Boys* (2019 – 2024) Amazon Prime series.⁴¹² His *JL:M* documentary's IMDB page describes the unfilm as an abandoned film that “would have adapted the DC Universe to the big screen.”⁴¹³

Unicomb's *George Miller's Justice League* would undergo a protracted production limbo and long gaps in between progress updates before Unicomb declared it officially dead, only to announce its tentative resurrection again. Unicomb's imploding documentary suggests the difficulty in scrutinizing that which is meant to stay buried in a society where failed works are inextricably tied to pessimism, negativity and discomfort. To think of that which has failed is to experience a mental bloc that crops up to defend the mind from such psychic poison. It is “the story of art without markets, drama without a script, narrative without progress”⁴¹⁴ that makes failure difficult to ponder. These inchoate stories also lend insight into the nature of creative failure as an embarrassment and disappointment. Like any absence, creative failure is carved out of something that should be, and in that should-ness rests the pain of a great, American dread: being a nobody who “fails to resonate with a narrative life.”⁴¹⁵ It is worse still when success seems within reach only to dissipate, leaving one alone to contemplate, eventually becoming both accustomed to disappointment and part of an anonymous horde “at home in flickering greyness.”⁴¹⁶ Therefore, those who fail tend to avoid discussing their experiences publicly, and

this is a major obstacle to the study of unproduced work, to say nothing of the bureaucratic and legal barriers to accessing stories of an unproduction's demise. Unicomb, explains this problem:

“It’s as difficult as ever to get information and for the most part – and this is part of why it’s taken so long – it’s akin to getting blood from a stone. Because for so many people, it’s such a sore point. For producers, it’s a sore point because millions of dollars were spent on something that never came to fruition. For some people, it was something that would have made or broken their careers, and they have had to readjust their expectations of what their career was going to be or is.”⁴¹⁷

References to trauma pepper Unicomb’s description of the documentary process, which involved over five years of building relationships with *JL:M*’s individual production crew members. Superhero films are typically planned as franchises and their characters and titles are widely known among general audiences. As such, a project like *Justice League Mortal* cannot easily be forgotten and swept aside, as can a small indie film or obscure character piece. Its failure maintains a legacy to match its elevated place in popular culture, and it haunts former participants both on the side of production and those in executive seats. Of course, the fulfillment of a dream is life affirming, but to fall short is to be relegated to a peripheral other space where one ruminates upon a success glimpsed from afar, over and over.⁴¹⁸ To someone whose ambitions failed and did not rebound to the heights barely missed, success stories are ghostly and interaction with them is filled with anxiety, as literature scholar Richard O’Brien finds.⁴¹⁹ Unicomb has commented on WB’s refusal to play any official role in the documentary, despite

George Miller and partner producer Doug Mitchell knowing about the project since it began in 2015. There is a presumption of guilt and suspicion is cast on those who will not abide by official narrative explanations for a disaster.

Those who might prefer a version of events running counter to official outlets risk exposing a more complex version of history.⁴²⁰ They risk explaining an accident, and accident often transforms under scrutiny. It becomes more difficult to believe that the failure resulted from random, unavoidable events spat forth by some indecipherable universal machinery. Details mean that blame, even if diluted and distributed over many potential recipients, will be cast in some measure. The absence of detail means that blame can be assigned to “that which crops up”⁴²¹ as unforeseeable bad luck. Framing an undesirable event as a catastrophic coincidence contains an inherent plausibility simply because the destructive force of chance maladies is felt in most people’s lives at some point. However, the approach itself is inherently obscuring and tends to act as cover for the powerful. This is not to suggest that WB played some unknown role in undermining *JL:M*, or that George Miller’s accounts are inaccurate. Instead, it is to observe that if a collaborative work proffers only one account of a failure, it is an inherently incomplete account.

Miller and Mitchell have made it clear that their official involvement in the documentary is contingent on whether WB allows material they created for *JL:M* to appear, a reality that has complicated the project and barred access to above-the-line talent.⁴²² Still another speculated reason behind WB’s silence was the documentary’s timing. In 2015, WB was planning the 2017 *Justice League* with Zack Snyder, and the company may not have wanted a film highlighting their previous failure to pollute public opinion of the Justice League properties. Speaking to his frustration, Unicomb described Justice League film adaptations as cursed, not only because of

JL:M's failure, but also because of the later 2017 *Justice League*'s critical and commercial failure: "It's like trying to climb a mountain and falling down every time, and then when you finally get to the top, it's an avalanche that just carries you back to the bottom," Unicom has said.⁴²³

It may be worth lingering on the idea of cursed film, how it has been understood in popular imaginary, as well as its relationship to failure. The notion can apply to production injuries and seemingly random deaths surrounding both horror and non-horror films. Tragedies such as Dominique Dunn's murder shortly before *Poltergeist*'s (1982) release or Jack McGowran and Vasiliki Maliaros deaths during *The Exorcist*'s (1973) production take on an added mystique due to the occult themes of the films that "killed" them, but a cursed film is not necessarily demonic.⁴²⁴ They are also grouped as those replete with production delays so severe that they derail the product, as in the case of Orson Welles' *It's All True*. Early scholarship on these types of unproductions tended to focus on the resulting reputation destruction and failed directors losing credibility with studios.⁴²⁵ However, fans have for many decades taken up such films in a markedly different, if not fetishistic manner.

In August 1950, The Festival of the Cursed Film debuted in Biarritz, France. The event showcased unreleased films deemed too violent or otherwise disturbing by their distributors, in addition to films cancelled due to public outcry. Claude Roy objects to these classifications, stating that a true festival of cursed films "ought to be held in limbo where sleep the stillborn films that the rules of the commercial game (or the stupidity of the leaders of the industry) have condemned. *The true cursed film does not exist at all*, and it is only in a necropolis of manuscripts that one may celebrate its sabbath."⁴²⁶ Note here the lack of distinction between the "true" cursed film and an unproduced film. Yet, Roy's divide between completed films censored

out of the public's eye and those films stifled in their own forever nascent germinations by timid producers and craven bureaucrats lies at the heart of not only early views on the unproduced, but contemporary fan movements surrounding unproductions. It speaks as well to failure's very nature. Since ancient times, intellectuals have toyed with the notion of what failure's "substance" might be. It is something that manifests itself materially, but is not tangible. Materiality is thought of as a vehicle for the otherworldly force that is failure, read as catastrophe. Despite its own intangibility, catastrophe attaches to and finds expression throughout tangible substances. An erupting volcano, a crashing train, or an exploding power plant can all be seen, their tremulous vibrations felt, the clatter and roar of their insane tintinnabulations heard.

If it were possible to remove failure from its substance, the result would be calamity expressed as a universal, senseless truth; a Bible Black piece of the universe designed to destruct and self-destruct. Depending on its severity and the trauma left in its wake, it is called either bad luck or catastrophe. In the case of comic heroes, the wonder and hope in human invention is found in Superman's first appearance in 1938.⁴²⁷ If Superman was faster than a locomotive, then it was inevitable the train accident would trial him as "DC's dark icon to Superman's bright image."⁴²⁸ Superman was indeed the Man of Tomorrow. The shadow of idealistic invention's accompanying, disastrous underside debuted with Batman in 1939,⁴²⁹ on the eve of American entry into the most destructive war in human history.⁴³⁰

Comic illustrator and historian Jim Steranko points out that Batman was meant to be Superman's dark opposite. Not only did he lack Superman's near immortality. He eschewed the public eye rather than soar through blue skies for all to see. He was as a vigilante who skulked through alleys, moldering warehouses and sewers in search of criminals.⁴³¹ Steranko describes Batman and Superman's thematic divergence. Where Superman promised to help those in need,

Batman's war on criminals was based in "misanthropic vengeance [. . .] one [Superman] summed up the humane qualities that man could have, while the other [Batman] reflected humanity's relentlessly cold-blooded nature. Violence and evil turned in upon itself as Batman purged the comics underworld of crime."⁴³²

Regarding failed films, the assumption often is that authenticity and free expression are being quashed by greedy, short-sighted and inartistic executives in the name of profit. This, plus a mass audience's ignorance and inability to appreciate anything but bland blockbusters are often presented as the main reasons artistically authentic films fall apart. Film scholar Henri Agel once cautioned that this view risks giving excess credence to cinema snobs, who, while occasionally being responsible for bringing truly worthy cinematic unknowns to public attention, are not usually sound in their judgement of a film's worth. Cinema snobbery risks "placing the extravagant on the same level as the authentic."⁴³³ Concurrently, proponents of unreleased film risk descending into a performative, quasi-religious fanaticism which collates the unmade with nonconformity while ironically pushing the notion that its widespread screening must surely result in its popular appreciation and critical canonization.⁴³⁴ Such hopes often sound inspiring. It is natural to wish for the success of something one loves, and to hope that others would find within it similar affection if only they were to see. Yet, that very same impulse is nonetheless the unraveling of all that unproduction is. To make a failed film is to change it from failure to success.

In some cases, the ideal outcome for an unfinished film is to become a completed blockbuster hit, especially with a genre as rooted in popular culture as superhero films. As Agel puts it, "To favor exceptional films without taking interest in all the rest is rather like putting the cart before the horse."⁴³⁵ Applying this idea to unproduced leads to a striking realization. Most

films exist as unmade visual and narrative shards. The made film *is* the exception, the incredible miracle that overcame all obstacles to its creation. The unmade are “all the rest” that drift past filmgoers’ notice. For each unmade film, like *Justice League: Mortal*, that receives some measure of spotlight, a hundred others lie buried in an unfathomable embolus whose contours seem too vast to quantify. They are absorbed in the Benjaminian trash of history.

Unicomb hinted that he would focus on below-the-line production crew experiences from people who had never spoken about the film publicly, particularly because prominent above-the-line members had already discussed many aspects of the film in interviews and social media snippets. In example, actor Adam Brody has touched on his Flash role, as he and DJ Cotrona had flown to Australia to practice script readings shortly before WB curtailed production. Hailing George Miller as a genius for his work on *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Brody guessed that *JL:M* would have been groundbreaking for its time, but adds “But who knows? Maybe what could have been is better than what would have been.”⁴³⁶ This throwaway remark addresses one problem in advocating for failed movies to be taken up again and produced. No matter how tightly written the script may be or how enthusiastic the crew, reality may not surmount gilded ideals.

It also recalls how fickle public perception can be. Twitter commentary on *JL:M* in 2023 slings effusive praise for *JL:M*. Users assure one another that the script would be recognized as brilliant if only more people would bother reading it. They express hope that it could one day appear in a comic⁴³⁷ or animated film,⁴³⁸ or that Miller himself might one day return to breathe life back into the project.⁴³⁹ To look back at fan comments from 2007 is another story, as fan like and dislike are not constants but moods and phases of fandom that individuals pass through.⁴⁴⁰ As Benamou writes, unproduction has a Diachronic Emergence, wherein perception of the

unmade can shift over time and in different decades. Jonathan Gray sees intense fan disappointment in the “most recent” version of a respected film franchise, whether it be a sequel, prequel, spinoff, or reboot. Unfulfilled desires for a great follow-up to a classic film “invoke the alluring presence of a missing ideal” and this is magnified when there is a perceptible fall from grace or the sense that a beloved property has been perverted.⁴⁴¹

In scattered interview snippets, Miller has discussed *JL:M* and similar Hollywood co-production mega projects as the saviors of the Australian film industry that would re-usher in a 10BA-like era. Miller considered that local filmmakers could eventually learn enough from these co-productions to transform their home country into a hegemonic leader of global pop culture. They would be capable of exporting content rather than merely receiving it. Fan reception simply did not agree with or meet this lofty level of marketing hype.

Fan comments on news sites covering *JL:M*'s rumored casting and early production in 2007/08 are scornful and full of ridicule. Many question the decision to cast all-new JL members when Warners already had two perfectly serviceable Superman and Batman actors in Brandon Routh and Christian Bale.⁴⁴² One fan site rejoiced in the film's cancellation and the production's departure from Australia, demanding that Miller be fired and replaced with someone more talented.⁴⁴³ The comments section wished that the no-name cast would be thrown out of a plane on the way back to Hollywood. One reader rejoiced: “Yay! It's like the world doesn't want this to happen.”⁴⁴⁴ Others describe the film as “destined to suck,”⁴⁴⁵ “slightly less than crap,”⁴⁴⁶ and “doomed”.⁴⁴⁷ Still others declared “there isn't enough talent in this film to get one decent performance,”⁴⁴⁸ “they are trying to kill it with bad actors,”⁴⁴⁹ “I will never pollute my eyeballs with this shit in a million years,”⁴⁵⁰ and “Why don't they cast Rikki Lake as Wonder Woman, Carrot Top as Batman, Will Farrell as the Flash . . . then they can have a completely f'd up

cast!”⁴⁵¹ Fans also excoriated an early rumor that Hayden Christensen of Star Wars prequel fame would be Superman, finding it emblematic of Miller’s tone-deaf decision to seek out low-quality actors: “It would be cheaper and much more emotive to cast a sheet of actual steel.”⁴⁵²

At the time of this writing, media outlets regularly lampoon superhero films for their excessive use of multiverse concepts, with endless variations of the same character piling up. The perceived problem has become pervasive enough that the “superhero fatigue”⁴⁵³ that Steven Spielberg once predicted has evolved into “multiverse fatigue.”⁴⁵⁴ In 2007, recasting superheroes was associated with a mistake, or evidence of behind-the-scenes studio bumbling, rather than a multiversal narrative strategy. Miller never attempted to correct this perception, as he did not specify how or if his new cast and universe would relate to those of Brian Singer and Christopher Nolan. Fans were left to assume that a new cast meant no interconnectivity. The comic book idea of DC Elseworlds (parallel timelines with no connection to DC canon), which James Gunn would champion⁴⁵⁵ once he and producer Peter Safran took over as DC Studios co-chairs in 2022,⁴⁵⁶ had not yet taken root among average moviegoers.

Armie Hammer, who was supposed to play Batman, reacted to leaked photos of the League’s costumes, pointing out that they featured extras wearing the suits and that these represented the initial costume designs, not the final products that the actors would have worn on screen. His finished Batman suit, he proclaimed, cost around \$300 million and had functional joints,⁴⁵⁷ unlike the seamless suits in Tim Burton and Joel Schumacher’s franchises. In 2018, he also tweeted “The Green Lantern was supposed to be black. Common was going to nail that role.”⁴⁵⁸ He detailed Batman’s dour mindset, describing him as a deranged, psychologically damaged younger version of the character who cannot overcome his own trust issues.

Hammer has emphasized the script's brutal Superman Wonder Woman fight and the film's depictions of civilian deaths in its wake, as well as in the aftermath of a mass nanobot infection which contaminates and kills Max Lord's fast-food customers.⁴⁵⁹ He took credit for the script's release, admitting to stealing a copy and smuggling it out on a CD, in a move presaging the later theft behind the Snyder Cut's 2021 release, in which Zack Snyder stole physical reels of the full cut from WB headquarters.⁴⁶⁰ Unlike the group of unnamed and traumatized production crew members Unicomb alludes to, Hammer came to believe that the film's failure was good for him personally. He pointed out that he was cast to play Batman at age 19 and likely could not have carried the role well, even in an era where George Clooney's campy depiction was still the most recent Batman. Hammer drew a larger lesson from the film's failure, if a conventional one for failure narratives, saying that if he had succeeded at a young age, he would not have had to struggle through the industry and mature in the same way. He even added the cliché, "everything happens exactly as it's supposed to."⁴⁶¹ Failure studies would urge recognition of the fact that, while DJ Cotrona and Armie Hammer achieved success in spite of *JL:M*'s collapse, most of the cast did not. Megan Gale would have been synonymous with Wonder Woman, joining Linda Carter and later Gal Gadot. There are some roles so iconic, O'Brien writes, that to miss them is to be haunted by the phalanx of critics, fans and lore surrounding the character.⁴⁶² While O'Brien uses Hamlet as a role highly associated with making or breaking stage actors' careers, the equally brooding Batman can be seen in a similar light for superhero movie actors.

Annika Hagley and Michael Harrison have observed that the main reason Batman was kept campy on screen (through the Adam West TV series, Burton's *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992) as well as Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman & Robin* (1997)) was to avoid alienating audiences with a hero who appeared too similar to the crooks,

killers and vigilantes he fought.⁴⁶³ Schumacher was particularly aware of this. Although he filmed a darker version of *Batman Forever*, which became known as The Schumacher Cut and found its way into deleted scenes released on subsequent DVDs, he nonetheless based the theatrical release and its follow-up on the idea that superheroes needed to “inhabit a specific moral and ethical discursive space.”⁴⁶⁴ For Batman, the dichotomous roles of crime fighter and vigilante are forever oscillating within his singular figure, a state of being that prompts Scott Bukatman to declare that “displacement and condensation” are Batman’s real superpowers.⁴⁶⁵

Here lies the written word’s inadequacy in expressing failure. It slips from the edges of description because those involved don’t typically wish to utter its name. When they do discuss it, they call it something other than it is. It becomes a learning experience or a stepping stone toward something greater, as Jeevendrampillai, Parkhurst and Carroll write.⁴⁶⁶ It is not dwelt upon and is treated as a space of passing through, a liminal hell one should desperately desire to leave behind. Failure studies posits that while it is a natural reaction to flee from the uncomfortable, doing so risks losing insights. While those directly involved in a failure will blame failure on individuals or processes in an inherently biased fashion, students of failure studies must approach the failed object like an artifact. Its cracks and fractures will tell how and perhaps why it ceased to function as it was supposed to, as “what is concealed is made visible in distress.”⁴⁶⁷ Production crew, directors, actors and screenwriters judge a failed film like *Justice League: Mortal* and imbue a moral designation to its collapse as those who lived through it. For scholars, it is easier to take a detached vantage point, viewing the film’s failure not while pushing it forward as a potential success that crumbles between one’s fingers, but as an often-beloved retrospective piece. This is an eminent reason to study failed films. The more attention is

paid to this unsung corpus, the more cultural attitudes on failed art change, causing the moral stigma around them to fall away.⁴⁶⁸

CHAPTER 2: JUSTICE LEAGUE: MORTAL IN SCRIPT AND COMICS

Blame for *JL:M*'s failure is distributed among Miller's single-minded authorship, the shifting geopolitical relationship between Hollywood and Australia, and the film's lack of an organized fanbase. Twitter and similar platforms did not exist in 2007 during the film's production. Because of this, a record of fans' communications with each other is scattered across comment sections for various news articles, meaning that fans who might have supported Miller never organized together and did not directly interact with him. There were no Facebook groups lobbying for *JL:M*'s release, either. Without a constant social media battle, as played out during efforts to restore the cancelled SnyderVerse, discourses on *JL:M*'s unproduction were limited. There could be no cries to #RestoreTheMillerVerse, even if Miller's casting had not alienated fans.

Aside from Miller's casting choices and *JL:M*'s close proximity to *The Dark Knight*'s release window, there is another reason *JL:M* alienated fans. The Mulroneys's script describes a scene where Batman breaks the main villain's neck.⁴⁶⁹ This effectively violates Batman's longstanding moral code against killing, and the script describes the lethal act as sounding "like the sickening snapping of twigs, like knuckles popping."⁴⁷⁰ This departure from the fans' view of Batman as their hero who does not kill contributed to the negative backlash.

I first analyze key scenes in the *JL:M* script and their development of Miller's Batman, as well as how these portrayals diverged from their comic book inspirations in order to rationalize Batman's decision to kill. I then focus on fans' perceptions of how the script diverged from comics canon in a variety of ways, including Batman's portrayal. I suggest that Batman's killing of *JL:M*'s main villain, although framed as a sacrificial and redemptive act in the unfilm's script,

was nonetheless off-putting to fans in 2007/08. As fans saw this as a betrayal of the character's core principles, the scene contributed to fan alienation and further disallowed any possibility that fans might support *JL:M*'s continued production.

To illustrate this, I begin by performing a fidelity criticism of the *JL:M* script. I consider this script as a work adapted from three comic book inspirations. These are Mark Waid's *Justice League: Tower of Babel* (2000), Greg Rucka's *Justice League: O.M.A.C. Project* (2005) and Greg Rucka and Mark Verheiden's *Superman Sacrifice* (2006). I then consider fan reactions to the script's differences from these comics, particularly the changes made to Batman's moral code. I focus primarily on the subreddit r/DCcomics, which featured a thread dedicated to the *JL:M* script that appeared shortly after the document was leaked online in 2015.⁴⁷¹ I also examine mentions of Batman's killing and discourse on the quality of the film in the comment sections of various entertainment news articles that reported on *JL:M* in 2007/08.

While all texts have a driving ideology of some kind, different interpretations are possible due to fissures within narrative. A viewer's social standpoint may encourage or even demand a divergent reading, and this is the case for fans of comic book films who "read" a diegetic film world through the lens of print lore.⁴⁷² To such viewers, authenticity rests with print media, and a comic book film is best when it faithfully translates print to screen. That the majority of franchise films are adaptations of some preexisting media also demonstrates serialized film's dependency on adaptation and its fan-perceived duty to fulfill certain comic book canonical benchmarks.⁴⁷³ Directors who craft adaptations with multiple, potential source materials can either choose to improve upon a single work or combine key elements from many into a kind of 'greatest hits' adaptation.⁴⁷⁴ This latter approach is what the Mulroneys did for their *JL:M* script.

Comic-to-film adaptations are subject to the same plethora of choices. Any comic book franchise film has hundreds of story arcs to choose from or mix and match.

Kristin Thompson is one of few scholars who cites (financially) failed superhero franchises as a particularly underdeveloped area for failure studies. Thompson references a slew of pre-Marvel Cinematic Universe efforts such as *Howard the Duck* (1986), the Stan Lee-produced, direct-to-DVD *Captain America* (1992), *Daredevil* (2003) and *Elektra* (2005), and Ang Lee's *Hulk* (2003). Citing the twin successes of *The Dark Knight* and *Iron Man* in 2008, Thompson presciently wrote of the superhero genre: "the comic book / superhero franchise will dominate the fantasy genre for years to come. The entry of Marvel into film productions all but guarantees it."⁴⁷⁵

The study of unmade films is fundamentally a struggle for legitimacy. Adaptation expanded to encompass not just the movement from novel-to-film, but comic-to-film. Adaptation is "an intersemiotic transposition from one system of signs to another," according to film scholars David Roche and Benoit Mitane.⁴⁷⁶ This perspective loosened adaptation's previously restrictive definitions, which evaluated only films based on novels.⁴⁷⁷ With this new definitional expansion, scholars began to examine everything from lone illustrations and sketches to comics, as well as dance, opera and many other expressive forms.⁴⁷⁸

Adapted works trail palimpsests of inspirational shadow texts, each of which inform and mutate one another⁴⁷⁹ while bubbling beneath the adapted work's surface. Film adaptation specifically functions to show and perform actions. In the case of an unmade, nonexistent superhero film, comics and concept art are a reservoir of authenticity and unassailable representation of what their unmade film might have been. This can animate a movement to not only push toward making the unmade, but to use every aspect of the made as evidence of its

inferiority to the unmade. An adapted work thereby functions as both a hierarchical pinnacle and a portal by which its typically lesser source material may achieve legitimation.⁴⁸⁰ As I will point out, fans viewed *JL:M*'s comic book inspirations as the source of character authenticity and disapproved of the changes made to their storylines in the script.

Batman and Killing, *JL:M* and Comics

Batman's moral code has persisted for over 80 years in comic continuity. His time as a vigilante killer primarily lasted from his introduction in *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939) to his declaration of the One Rule against killing in *Batman* #6 (December 1940). If Batman's *JL:M* murder of psychic mastermind Max Lord was intended as a return to early Golden Age form, it would likely have been lost on all but the most hardcore comic book fans.

Batman's moral failure in the *JL:M* script provides the base elements for Max Lord's designs to kill the League. Max steals Batman's secret contingency plans, which were designed to defeat each of his teammates if they ever turned to villainy. Batman and Max together illustrate a "doubling up"⁴⁸¹ of failure, which is in turn found in Western culture's origin myths. Bernard Stiegler points to the Ancient Greek myth of Epimetheus and Prometheus as the archetype at the crux of all technological origin stories. Tasked by the gods to imbue living creatures with defining abilities (such as flight for the birds), Epimetheus forgets to empower humanity with any such gift. As a result of this failure, rooted in forgetting, Prometheus steals the fire of knowledge from Olympus and becomes fallen in Zeus's eyes. He is chained to the Caucasus Mountains and forced to watch eagles consume his liver day after day.⁴⁸² The myth illustrates Techno-Failure's compounding nature, as it rolls up upon itself, to become an immensity the more it is forgotten. Finally, its momentum reaches such kinetic power that the window to forestall its catastrophic effects is lost. In this sense, Batman and Max stand in for

Epimetheus and Prometheus as dually failed technological heralds, both of whom suffer dire consequences for their endeavors.

Through written editing cues, the *JL:M* script suggests a link between Batman and Max Lord. In most scenes featuring Batman, there is a cut to a similar scene with Max. This is seen particularly in cases where Batman spies on others through his computer monitor. The Brother Eye mass surveillance system is displayed on his Bat-computer monitor as a stylized red iris. Early on, the text describes Batman using Brother Eye to watch Superman and Aquaman in Atlantis, as well as Wonder Woman and Martian Manhunter in New York. At the same time Max Lord watches Batman deep in the Batcave from his own monitor, and the script's language makes their connection obvious: "Maxwell Lord seated in front of his own jumbo screen, watching. Just like Batman."⁴⁸³

The comic book version of Max Lord, seen in Greg Rucka's *O.M.A.C. Project*, is far more violent. When Max interrogates his underling, Sascha Bourdeaux, she is chained to a stone wall in a dungeon, in a scene left out of the Mulroney's *JL:M* script. Most of Max's psychological abuse of other agents within his spy organization (called Checkmate) is also omitted. In Post-9/11 cinema, torture scenes inevitably conjured debates over so-called enhanced interrogation techniques and the shadowy, undemocratic workings of black sites like Gitmo and Guantanamo Bay.⁴⁸⁴ Torture itself is meant to shatter the victim's sense of self and of imagined rules governing their existence. It is no wonder the Mulroney's chose to omit these scenes in *JL:M*. Superhero scholar Tom Pollard asserts that Hollywood depictions of terrorism in the Post-9/11 era sought to avoid criticism of U.S. government policy during the War on Terror. This position was assumed to keep directors and studios from being branded as treasonous by the general public.⁴⁸⁵

Because the use of his mind-reading abilities causes his nose to gush blood, Max keeps a white cloth in his belt, methodically drawing it out whenever he is about to tear into a victim's mind. The cloth is constantly stained red, suggesting a slasher's knife, and evoking the vampiric pleasure he derives from forcibly extracting information. Concurrently, Max's powers damage his brain, implying in both the script and the comics that their use is the true cause of his twisted nature. Thus, blame for his villainy is further muddled. He even plays into this, bellowing to the Justice League: "Where were any of you when I needed you!?"⁴⁸⁶ He loses control of his life and actions at moments convenient for helping him alleviate culpability or villainy, allowing him to see himself as a heroic figure.

As Batman arrives back at the Batcave, battle weary from his first encounter with one of Max's O.M.A.C. soldiers. He prompts Brother Eye to pull any files on O.M.A.C., only to see the search disabled. Then "it crashes. Then blinks back on. With a message. A threat. A disaster."⁴⁸⁷ As he tries to override the block, the words "You don't control it anymore"⁴⁸⁸ appear on screen. Max has locked him out, removing Batman's oversight and thus reducing his Protocols to an extension of O.M.A.C.'s original mission to create a super soldier powerful enough to destroy all other metahumans.

Max's wresting of Brother Eye from Bruce, as well as his mental puppetry of Superman both establish the façade that he has retaken control of his destiny, where O.M.A.C. robbed it from him as a child. This is not the case. In fact, Max's surrender of will is so complete that he not only subsumes his own life to the project's goals despite everyone else associated with O.M.A.C. being long deceased; he eventually merges himself with the machine, becoming a collective hive mind and living surveillance apparatus. The League falls prey to Max's nanomachines in ways similar to their fates in the *Tower of Babel* comics, with each hero

abruptly suffering from individual weaknesses. As the realization slowly occurs to him, the *JL:M* script compares what is happening to the heroes with Batman's contingency plans:

Batman: Its attacking at their strengths. Fire. Water. Willpower. Just like...

Alfred finishes for him: 'Just like you would have?'

Batman: If, Alfred, only ever if...⁴⁸⁹

Batman confesses that his surveillance system has been compromised and that it knows all the JLAs weaknesses and ways to hit them. He explains why he did it: "What if – What if you turned against us? Against the world? What if someone controlled you, changed you?"⁴⁹⁰

Batman is framed as more human and more apologetic in his confrontation with the League, whereas in *Tower of Babel* he behaves as if it is they who are being unreasonable in criticizing his surveillance of their godlike power. When Superman confronts him in the comic, demanding to know why he created the Protocols, Batman rebuffs the question with a cryptic "I had my reasons" before changing the subject to stopping Ra's al Ghul's world domination plot.

In *Tower of Babel*, Superman has an excruciating encounter with Talia al Ghul who, wielding a piece of red Kyrptonite that she stole from Batman's secret Protocol files on Clark Kent, turns his skin transparent and amplifies his super-hearing to an agonizing degree.⁴⁹¹ Superman recovers by the time he has the chance to demand answers from Batman, but is still clearly reeling from the experience. While fighting Ras's al Ghul's minions in one of their bases, Superman sees a red emergency light and whips his head toward it in a wide-eyed panic, remembering the red Kyrptonite's glow.⁴⁹² A wedge has formed between Batman and the League.

This is visually represented when Batman shows up after the JLA have freed themselves from Ras's al Ghul's nanomachines. Batman begins barking orders as if nothing is amiss, and the panel following this lacks any speech bubbles. It features only the League standing around Batman and staring at him in silence.⁴⁹³ Batman continues his instructions, demanding that Superman fly him to confront Ra's al Ghul. Superman tries again, asking "Why?" Batman dodges the issue again, saying "Because I know where he is and you can fly." While Superman complies, he adds with a scowl "That's not what I meant."⁴⁹⁴

The coup de grace arrives after the League defeats Ra's al Ghul, and Batman returns to the Batcave. Oracle appears on a giant monitor, lecturing Bruce that all of the Bat Family (Tim Drake's Robin, Dick Grayson's Nightwing and herself) are being viewed with suspicion by their respective super teams, who now think that they are working with Batman to harvest personal data and exploit weaknesses. Oracle asks for some response, as Batman remains stone-faced as if he sought to sew suspicion on purpose. Batman frowns and shuts her monitor off.⁴⁹⁵

While the Batman of Mark Waid's *Tower of Babel* refuses any accountability and brushes aside his peers' judgement, the Batman of the Mulroneys's *JL:M* projects a greater desire to atone for the situation. Mark Waid's *Tower of Babel* Batman espouses the same logic as the Mulroneys's version, citing a past attack wherein the space tyrant Agamemno took over the League's minds.⁴⁹⁶ His explanation is wholly without remorse or apology, though. Moreover, he believes himself to be above criticism. Waid's *Tower of Babel* Superman lifts Batman off the ground, angry at his betrayal. Batman adds "I thought you were nonviolent?" Wonder Woman hits him and says "he is, but I'm not."⁴⁹⁷ This moment alludes to Max Lord's murder in *Superman: Sacrifice*, when Wonder Woman uses martial violence to stop him permanently. It is Batman who kills in the *JL:M* script, snapping Max's neck. Here, Batman's only path to

redemption is through killing and breaking his code, effectively sacrificing his moral conception of himself in a redemptive act.

As Pollard writes, “fear transforms into terror when amplified to an extreme.”⁴⁹⁸ Post-9/11 film genre expresses fear and paranoia about humanity’s impending destruction in a random and uncaring universe; it is the feeling that a sword of Damocles hovers and could crash down upon the world’s collective neck at any moment. Eschatological themes flow alongside fear and dread of coming Apocalypse, a word meaning “lifting the veil.”⁴⁹⁹ Apocalypse therefore alludes to that which is willfully forgotten, those hidden failings which stalk the material only to accumulate greater and greater metaphysical consequence and explode once they can no longer be ignored.

As in Aristotle’s ancient thought experiment, disaster unravels from materiality and takes a pure form, which is the end of all things. Aristotle contended that disasters reveal substance while being incapable of existing autonomously; if it were somehow possible to unmoor accidents from substance and condense them into an object of their own, they could only be considered “non-beings.”⁵⁰⁰ They would be an aftershock without earth to rend. Thousands of years after Aristotle, contemporary Failure Studies contend with this concept anew. As per this original bifurcation of failure and materiality, Western philosophy traditionally views material as something static, inert and dead until animated by an outside force,⁵⁰¹ whether a human hand or a disaster such as a hurricane or tidal wave.

Narrative progressions following contrition, punishment, and redemption figure prominently in Post-9/11 genre films, as do depictions of government deception, overreach and nefarious and covert military operations.⁵⁰² *JL:M*’s script possesses each of these elements. In accordance with its genre, it vilifies the U.S. Government’s complicity in covert human

experiments within the O.M.A.C. project, which experimented on children and created Max Lord. Although the program was covered up, its consequences return with a vengeance in the form of Lord as sole survivor and vengeful arbiter of Armageddon. His grievances about government torture and illegal detention follow Post-9/11 genre views of heroic characters seeking vengeance against those who abuse their legislative powers to deceive the people.⁵⁰³ Max is thus meant to be a sympathetic villain.

Max's plan seizes a life of its own and threatens to reduce the population to an AI hive mind. This is a far truer end of the world than their human creator's original comic book plan to destroy metahumans in the *O.M.A.C. Project*. There is the suggestion here that total accountability is too high a price to pay for justice, as achieving it would essentially demand the surrender of all free will, a dissent-less utopia built on forced compliance.

In the logic of *JL:M*'s script, nothing short of complete moral destruction is sufficient to set Batman on a redemptive path, as demonstrated when Superman confronts him one final time. He declares "The darkness in you. The paranoia. The rage. It's too much. Finally, this time – it's too much."⁵⁰⁴ Bruce counters that, if Superman was the only metahuman, the world would still have to invent someone like Batman as a safeguard. The logic is the same type that gave rise to the atomic bomb: if not me, then someone else and someone worse.

Even as Superman's warning textually highlights how close Batman has come to outright villainy, the *JL'M* script continues to visually juxtapose Batman, Max and the AI. The text refers to Brother Eye's voice over as "Batman's computerized voice,"⁵⁰⁵ not only drawing connection between him and Max but also between Batman's mechanical, inhuman logic and the machine he spawned. It is ironic, then, that killing is his path to redemption in *JL:M*. The Batman of *Tower of Babel* is metaphorically cast down when the League votes him off the team for his

spying and data collection, he is seemingly unaffected by their rejection. The Mulroney's *JL:M* version casts himself into the belly of the whale, seeking depth. As Beverley Clack observes, true willingness to look into a deeper level of being emerges primarily through trauma.⁵⁰⁶ Only through complete personal breakdown can the self act against all expectations of previous behavior.

If Appadurai is correct in asserting that it is no longer possible to differentiate between a person and a tool in the 21st century,⁵⁰⁷ then perhaps the two may be distinguished if the breaking of a person yields a different result than the breaking of a tool. Here, the Heideggerian notion of "Vorhanden," or presence at hand, is useful. When using a machine or component part, the user has no cause to question either its internal processes or the nature of the work being performed; all of this simply proceeds uninterrupted, toward the goal at hand. However, when a failure or breakdown occurs and the tool ceases to function as anticipated, it demands the user's attention if equilibrium is to be restored. Breakdown and subsequent interruption then function as a space for reflection. This assertion crumbles in the face of modern technologies whose engineering is at once so inscrutable and so disposable to the average person that a breakage yields no new knowledge.

This, to Appadurai, is the difference between breakdown and a total failure from which nothing can be gained.⁵⁰⁸ Ideally, breakdown causes a pause or a gap in the regular procession of a thought paradigm, an irrevocable confrontation with a failure, and thereby a transformation of human nature should one survive the breaking. This is why Batman shows no remorse in the *Tower of Babel* and *Superman: Sacrifice* comics. His system of surveillance breaks, but he does not, and in this lies his greatest failure as a hero. Instead, Wonder Woman intercedes, performing

the killing of Max Lord herself. When she refuses to do so in the *JL:M* script, Wonder Woman indirectly forces Batman toward a brutal redemption.

Between the *JL:M* Batman and the Batman on the comic page arise diverging kinds of failure. The former permits himself to be shaped by his failure rather than retaining the same set of ardent beliefs in his own superior morality. He does not treat failure in a linear way, and finally refuses to push aside its warnings to preserve a grimacing façade of success. He acknowledges, through his willingness to shatter his own moral code against killing, that things beyond his control have once again shaped his personhood.⁵⁰⁹ Regardless of medium, Batman is born of one such moment in his Detective Comics #33 (1939) comic book origin story.

His parents' pointless deaths at the hands of a random mugger redefine young Bruce Wayne's life, nearly destroying him on the path to traumatic reinvention. By refusing to change his behavior in the *Tower of Babel*, Batman also refuses to allow a second traumatic rearrangement of his world. In a relevant scene, he also refuses to allow Ra's al Ghul to resurrect his dead parents, another event that would force Batman to change himself by removing his original reason for being.

In *JL:M*'s script, Batman permits life to change him, and shoulders the burden of a second great trauma by becoming a murderer. This effectively laid down the moral parameters that previously defined his life. As a child, destruction and transformation were foisted upon him. He chooses them in this second instance, doubling his own failure and bringing about a dualistic suffering and redemption, as did Prometheus. This demonstrates that failure is itself an attempt to wrest agency from a chaotic universe.⁵¹⁰ This is a kind of redirected gaze,⁵¹¹ or a reorientation of thought resulting from loss of standing in a community and of one's orientation in life.

The Biblical story of Job teaches that some disasters are both sudden and senseless to the point of defying blame.⁵¹² Job's neighbors attempt to divine some hidden sin that he must have committed, as only this could explain his sudden illness, loss of wealth, and the death of his family. Job correctly refuses these assertions in Slavoj Žižek's estimation, as Divine Violence is failure of such an unfathomable scale that it exists outside the realms of reason and explanation.⁵¹³ This is effectively the scale at which Batman has failed, as in *Tower of Babel* and *JL:M*, the consequences of his Protocols are near global annihilation.

Pure ideology behaves as the antithesis of its practice. It is undaunted by catastrophic failure, measured in the bodies of its victims and figured as the nameless horde whose deaths fuel a greater good. Neither is ideology of this type deterred by the collapse of once-functional organizations. Žižek defines Master-Thinkers⁵¹⁴ as those who believe themselves enlightened in comparison to the rabble in the streets, and thus worthy of wielding uncontested central planning of whole populaces. Manifested as a series of predictive failures on the steps toward the Master-Thinker's grand plan, small failures are dismissed and the plan continues unaltered. Pure, fundamental ideology returns to reinvent its own terror again, always, because it views evidence measured in misery and bodies as the mere mewling complaints of those unenlightened.⁵¹⁵

For example, to Max Lord, assimilation or destruction of earth's biological organisms into a biomechanical collective is not an affront toward life itself in his eyes. It is rather the only means available to reach lasting peace and extinguish war. Žižek has stated that the purpose of failure is typically taken to mean that one will learn to fail again, but better. Its lessons must be reconfigured to fit the finitude of life that must inevitably end after a few short decades. It is a battering ram and must be doubled down upon in order to not necessarily succeed, but to proliferate and dominate. Further, pure ideology and its accompanying control mechanisms seek

to change “the value of the modal propositions about the past.”⁵¹⁶ That is, it spies an inevitable future catastrophe and seeks to change the future by projecting into the past. It accepts disaster as inevitable and acts, by any means needed to achieve its end, to avert the apocalyptic outcome by causing what are presumed to be lesser maladies in service of changing the one that would leave nothing behind.

This is reflected in Batman’s preparation for The League’s turn toward villainy. To him, it is a matter of when, not if. He briefly glimpses the monstrosity of his decision, as Ra’s al Ghul digs up his deceased parents and offers to drop their coffins into a Lazarus pit, a rejuvenating bath that would resurrect them after decades interred. In essence, the ideological mechanisms that have escaped Batman’s control now threaten to amend his own past, taking away the very reason he became Batman (the senseless deaths of Thomas and Martha Wayne). Halberstam cautions that failure as a linear continuum refuses to linger with these traumatic moments, and that this refusal devalues the subject. Failure results from opposition to change and compromise, in not allowing one’s seemingly immutable values to be tamed.⁵¹⁷

It may appear that *JL:M*’s version of Batman, with his murder of the film’s main villain, is a clearer violation of the character’s core tenets because he breaks the rule against killing, or his so-called One Rule.⁵¹⁸ After all, the comic book Batman in *Tower of Babel*, for all his borderline villainous behavior and deception, never directly kills anyone in the arc.

Batman has a complicated comic book history with killing. As comic historian E. Paul Zehr points out, Bill Finger and Bob Kane’s original Batman utilized killing in his very first appearance in 1939’s *Detective Comics* #27, titled “The Case of the Chemical Syndicate.”⁵¹⁹ Here, Batman grapples with a random crook on the rooftop of a three-story house, grabbing him in a headlock and hurling him off. The thug is then seen lying motionless on the ground below as

a distant policeman tends to him. Another cop fires a gun and shouts “It’s Batman! Get him!”⁵²⁰ as the hero’s signature cape leaps into the distance. Thus, one finds the early Batman’s typically ill-defined relationship with killing. He does not comment on the possibility that the crook has died, nor seem to give it much thought. For the reader looking back at this issue with the contemporary Batman’s One Rule in mind, there is at least the possibility that the lawbreaker survived (it’s not as if he fell from a skyscraper).

This borderline ambiguous or unintentional killing repeats in many Batman comics of the 1940s. In *Detective Comics #35*, Batman punches a swordsman into his partner’s sword, impaling him through the ribs.⁵²¹ Yet, the position of the blade toward the outside of the crook’s body suggests a potentially non-fatal wound. There are, however, some cases where Batman knowingly took a life. In example, the first issue of his solo series saw Batman using a mounted machine gun to shoot the driver of an armored vehicle. As comics artist and historian Jim Steranko points out, the scene appeared to take a toll on Batman himself, who grits his teeth while saying “Much as I hate to take human life, I’m afraid this time it’s necessary!”⁵²² This drastic measure inadvertently releases one of the evil Doctor Hugo Strange’s monster men from the depths of the van.⁵²³ There is a parallel between Batman’s killing accidentally unleashing a monster and the moment in *JL:M*’s script when Batman kills Max and unintentionally unleashes Brother Eye. While dedicated to doing the right thing as he sees it, Batman exhibits a knack for sidestepping failures. He also has a tendency to throw blame back at his detractors while unflinchingly justifying the manipulation of his friends.

Batman, like Max Lord, needs to be the Foucauldian guard in the tower, surveilling others yet ever ambiguously “there” through his own unseen-ness, inscrutability and inaccessibility.⁵²⁴ He needs to enforce his own set of rules while morally hovering beyond their

restrictions even as he does so from a subterranean hideout. Surveilling crime from above is anathema to him, as something like Superman's x-ray vision is too attached to transparency to be fully panoptic.⁵²⁵ The Foucauldian panopticon, of course, draws power from obfuscation and the both present and non-present gaze. Batman thus finds his home underground and in the labyrinthian alleys of Gotham's underworld. In service of this, he is the only League member who hasn't disclosed his secret identity to the entire team. The League's trust in him facilitates their betrayal, as they mistakenly place faith in his grand authorship. To shortcut one's own perceptions is to accept the claims of an author on faith, which is different from knowing.⁵²⁶

Unproduction itself offers a parallel, as the explanations for failure propagated in industry discourse are inevitably one-sided. It is by believing uncritically that one becomes later blindsided by that which seems to crop up, when in reality this surprise disaster contained hidden mechanisms that could've been understood if only one had cared to see for oneself. The League's perceptions of Batman are thus purposely stagnated and kept at the level of belief, a situation reflected in the semiotics of the Batman Protocols. When the secret files are displayed (as Talia ransacks its archives, no less), they do not appear within the screen of the Watchtower's computer itself, even though this would be how Talia views them. Their only borders are the comic book panels enclosing them, as if they were visually jettisoned from the story's setting and compartmentalized into an abstract, meta-construct of a space.

As Vassilis Kroustalis writes, "What we learn about the subjective is not based on the content of the imagery but on the mode in which is it presented [. . .] animation necessitates the world it depicts – the impaired world it depicts is the only one negotiable."⁵²⁷ The Protocol files on each league member are literally kept in a box separate from the comic's narrative world, representing their sunken status. They are unfiles in the sense that they are neither presumed to

exist nor meant to be looked at, lest ontological narratives crumble. The truth is that this is not a team as understood by most of its members, because Batman is not actually on it, but operating within it.

Batman demonstrates this as he methodically gains each League member's trust. He asks Green Lantern about his artwork and deduces that he must be able to see in order to create his power ring constructs, and so devises a way to render him blind. He spars with Wonder Woman and finds that she has never lost a battle. He reasons that if presented with an unwinnable fight, she would exhaust herself and collapse before surrendering. The unmoored visual status of his Protocol files appears with their advent; there are no panels where they are depicted on a device, on a sheet of paper, or being pondered by a character. They are the Aristotelian non-being, the accident in its purest form, detached from substance. They are simply given to an unknown viewer as they float outside the comic's story, a move with an analogy in cinema. As adaptation scholar, Drew Morton observes, combining the characteristics of media leads to formal failure and a visual abomination.⁵²⁸ In the case of a motion comic, for example, cinema, stop motion and comics are combined and the result is visual failure.⁵²⁹ The Protocol files lead to a moment of pause because they are visually nonsensical, and their nonsense arises from a combining of comic book and filmic conventions.

Additionally, the Protocol files are semiotically askance in another way. Each one depicts an image of its corresponding hero. Yet these are not mugshots, nor body scans or any kind of technical imagery. They depict the characters in action poses, leaping forward and looking back toward the viewer, in what could be mistaken for cover art. Each of these visual depictions breaks the borders of their respective panels which, as noted, are not the traditional comic panel black-and-white borders but instead a black space separating the monochrome backgrounds

behind each character. Aquaman swims upward in water that is not there, a trail of bubbles following his feet downward and off the bottom of the page. Above him, Plastic Man is seen in mid-leap, his elongated limbs curling over the monochrome pink space behind him and sloughing over the void separating his square form Aquaman's blue square below.⁵³⁰ On another page, The Flash runs toward the viewer, the crown of his head escaping the solid orange background as a smaller version of himself runs vertically behind him. Below is a green background, with Martian Manhunter staring outward, his head overlapping into the darkness of the border.

The characters are disconnected in an abstract space and from Batman's procedural-sounding textual descriptions of how to destroy each of them, which floats outside of the hero's awareness yet still inside their designated, monochrome background frames. Each hero looks forward and upward, unknowingly surrounded by textual whispers of their own demise. In this way, the series of awkward schematic panels bastes itself in semiotic failure. As George Toles writes, some visuals leave behind a gap or blotch,⁵³¹ such as the death of a side character or the act of watching a long-deceased actor's flattened-out, chopped up, copied and projected younger self react to a bygone and staged moment as if it is happening now.⁵³² This gapping parallels the aforementioned comic heroes. Characters gaze bracingly upward, about to leap into action, while their teammate's betrayal encloses and saturates them. The floating text itself represents its Protocol file, but there are no semiotic indicators of a physical file present, whether it be the off-white texture of a printed page, .html-style computerized type face or static on a computer screen. Not only does the viewer not know from whose viewpoint they look, but they are also unable to discern the medium upon which they are looking.

The reader is made to notice these visual incongruencies, which come together as a strange feeling in the back of one's mind that something is off. A pause results, and stands in contrast to Batman, who refuses failure's stopgap by insisting on the rectitude of his choices and by at once refusing to forget the lessons of his parents' deaths while willingly consigning them to the past. Their deaths, the snapping of Martha Wayne's necklace, their bodies on the ground, are replicated and re-replicated in comics and movies through the decades. The scattering pearls are perhaps the most frequently repeated object in the sequence of Batman's parents' deaths, and represent the rending of sense in Bruce's universe, sending him into a seemingly endless quest to pry order back from the madness of one moment.⁵³³ The copied mass of Thomas and Martha's bodies, like any copy duplicated to excess, blurs and blotches until all that remains is the dark spot that is The Batman. It is fitting that when the idea to don the cowl comes to him, he announces it as an act of parental obedience: "Yes, father. I shall become a bat."⁵³⁴

Twice in the collected graphic novel of *Tower of Babel*, he has a chance to bring Thomas and Martha Wayne back from the dead. In the Julian September storyline, it is assumed that Oracle robs him of the choice to live peacefully as Bruce alongside his parents, who have been temporarily restored by the causality machine. This is proven false, as Batman is horrified by the idea of Ra's resurrecting his parents with a Lazarus pit. To bring them back would remove the inciting event behind his creation, which is predicated on the traumatic destruction of his childhood and civilian identity. Without this moment of senseless Divine Violence, he cannot exist. As Toles writes, "we forget trauma by forgetting what is lost and avoiding or annihilating ourselves."⁵³⁵ Batman is the annihilated Bruce Wayne. He is the one who, as the Max Lord of *JL:M* says, loads the gun. He has convinced himself that his torment cannot cease because Batman is torment and Batman is necessary, just as his surveillance and contingencies are

necessary to protect Gotham and the world. In a sense he loads and reloads the gun that killed Thomas and Martha in his determination, as the replay of their deaths justifies his continuance and tactics.

Batman v. Wonder Woman

To understand the pivotal execution scene in *JL:M* and Greg Rucka's *Superman: Sacrifice*, it is best to start with Wonder Woman's complex character. As comics historian Mike Madrid writes, Wonder Woman's position in the Trinity is most akin to the Holy Ghost: "everyone has heard of her, but no one understands her."⁵³⁶ As with any Biblical analogy, understanding Wonder Woman begins with her genesis. It is in some ways easier to quantify Batman and Superman, as Wonder Woman was created with a specific, mass psychological goal for the American populace. Understanding how this purpose has guided her through the decades can be an obtuse task. Let Wonder Woman's story, then, begin with DC history itself. The various canonical eras of superhero comics are, after all, reflected in Wonder Woman's different iterations since her first appearance in *All Star Comics #8* (1941). The character has been called an empty icon, as she means different things to different generations of fans. Her meaning changes with the social era of her portrayal while always retaining some of the immutable qualities established in the early days of her publication.⁵³⁷

Generally, superhero comics history is divided into the Golden (1935 – 1956),⁵³⁸ Silver (1956 – 1970)⁵³⁹ and Bronze Ages (1971 – 1986),⁵⁴⁰ with the Dark Age or Modern Age (1986 – 2000)⁵⁴¹ and Multimedia Age (2000 – present)⁵⁴² being more recent additions. The superhero comic itself was a Great Depression invention and saw the morally incorruptible heroes of today such as Batman and Superman killing criminals and Axis goons, with Batman being hounded by

police.⁵⁴³ Thus, introducing a female character who was pacifist was quite a bold stroke for the day.

Any schematic of Wonder Woman's significance and the mechanisms driving her must begin with her Golden Age origins. Among DC's Holy Trinity of flagship characters, Golden Age Wonder Woman stood apart from Batman and Superman as a diplomat who resorted to violence as an unfortunate alternative.⁵⁴⁴ This trait owes to creator and psychologist William Moulton Marston's belief that the world would be a peaceful place if women rose to political power and men willingly submitted to a matriarchal world order.⁵⁴⁵ Marston created the character in 1941 and wrote her adventures until his death in 1947, encompassing the early Golden Age of superhero comics.⁵⁴⁶

Initially named Suprema the Wonder Woman⁵⁴⁷ before All-American Comics editor Sheldon Mayer shortened her moniker,⁵⁴⁸ Marston's Wonder Woman stood apart from her superhero peers due to her emphasis on female companionship instead of typical pop cultural depictions of women jealously vying for a male love interest. Her friends, Etta Candy and the Holliday College girls, often joined her battles.⁵⁴⁹ Further, they spent leisure time on Paradise Island, in a girls' space apart from men, where they could pursue their goals unimpeded.⁵⁵⁰ As with most 1940s-era superheroes, she was at least superficially pro-democratic, patriotic and regularly fought Nazi and Imperial Japanese characters. Carolyn Cocca points out, though, that even her early iteration romanticized violent authoritarianism and militarism, despite pacifist pretensions.⁵⁵¹

Something of this is reflected in her human alter-ego, Diana Prince, who stands in for regular American women as a mousey and submissive personality.⁵⁵² As also evidenced in Golden Age Superman's oafish Clark Kent alias, Wonder Woman views regular humans as

somewhat pitiful, and her human disguise reflects this, as it is designed to blend in. In Umberto Eco's germinal essay on Superman, the author identified the serialized superhero's aversion to time progression. Rather than have characters experience the usual human landmarks of changing careers, ageing, get married, losing loved ones and eventually dying, superheroes are subject to an oneiric space. Events of the past and future are always murky to the point of being amendable, while almost always returning to a baseline, stable status quo, or "the typical."⁵⁵³

Aside from being a metacommentary on comic book seriality and the necessary sameness of long-running characters, "the typical" relates to an activity as synonymous with superheroes as stopping bullets or rescuing falling airplanes: blending in. Superman's Clark Kent is effectively the mask of an alien god, as he is an indictment of the everyday human readers meant to find identification in Clark: "fearful, timid, not overly intelligent, awkward, near-sighted and submissive to his matriarchal colleague, Lois Lane, who in turn despises him since she is in love with Superman."⁵⁵⁴ The Clark disguise is Superman's judgement of the human race's fallibility, and a cynical one at that. The solution to such weakness is protection by an otherworldly being like Superman or the hope that from such earthbound mediocrity a Superman might one day spring.⁵⁵⁵ Wonder Woman was, in some ways, meant to be this equivalent for young women and girls. Bradford Wright even asserts that the character did little to portray women and men as equals, aside from in brief visions of the future world seen in her presidential run.⁵⁵⁶

Though patriotic with regard to battling Axis soldiers, the Golden Age Wonder Woman comics framed power as a battle between the sexes. Marston drew his picture of feminism from the 19th century women's movement, much of which suggested that women were more virtuous than men. Jill Lepore also points to Margaret Sanger's statements on women's moral superiority and their similarity to Marston's views.⁵⁵⁷ On the surface, Marston situated Diana and her allies

as pacifists, although there exists a dissonance between what Marston tells the reader about women's benevolence and the way he depicts women's authority. The irony of Diana upholding pacifism while resorting to violence as an answer to men's violent natures has already been noted in Paul Levitz's work.⁵⁵⁸ Far from being Wonder Woman's only set of dueling character traits, she also embodied aspects that would have been considered feminine and masculine in the 1940s, such as performing an upper class, beautiful, heterosexual white woman while possessing martial prowess, a contrast that Cocca has addressed.⁵⁵⁹

The end of World War II and its existential threats saw The Silver Age of superhero comics become less violent and more fantasy and romance driven. This trend became augmented by McCarthy-Era fears of pro-Communist messaging, psychologist Friedrich Wertham's public targeting of comics as proliferators of gay imagery and criminality among the nation's youth, and the Comics Code Authority's adoption in 1954. The Code was an agreement between major publishers to avoid outright government censorship of their print products, effectively an attempt at self-regulation. It sought to eliminate depictions of criminal behavior, drug use, homosexuality and anti-government messaging while promoting marriage and women's domestic lives.⁵⁶⁰

During this time, Wonder Woman seemingly left behind her progressivism, feminism and her superpowers,⁵⁶¹ worrying over whether or not to marry longtime sidekick Steve Trevor or Mer-Man.⁵⁶² President Nixon brought The Code to an informal end when he asked Stan Lee to produce a series of anti-drug Spider-Man comics in 1971. This involved breaking the Code's restrictions on drug use portrayals. From here, comic pros largely ignored The Code, and although it was not officially dissolved until 2011, it's weakening preceded Wonder Woman's return as a feminist icon on the cover of *Miss Magazine* in 1972.⁵⁶³

It is generally accepted that The Bronze Age resulted from The Code's weakening. At the same time, a loss of faith in government due to economic decline, the Vietnam War's failure and the Watergate scandal permeated society. Heroes and villains alike began a turn toward grim and gritty deconstructionism.⁵⁶⁴ This trend was greatly magnified in the Modern Age, when economic recession and rising violent crime provided the backdrop for some of DC's bleakest stories.⁵⁶⁵ Among these were Superman's brutal death at the hands of a monstrous alien creature, Batgirl's sexual assault and paralysis, the death of Batman's sidekick, Robin, Batman's own crippling in *Knightfall*, and the transformation of Paradise Island into a war-like state where Diana Prince battled her sister for the Wonder Woman title.⁵⁶⁶

Shortly after this time period, Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Strikes Again!* (2001 - 2002) became the first comic to portray Wonder Woman as a truly violent Greek goddess with little affection for the affairs of man.⁵⁶⁷ Diana continued her gradual drift toward militancy under writer Greg Rucka, who depicted her twisting Max Lord's head backward in 2005's *Wonder Woman* #219. This is the climactic issue of *Superman: Sacrifice* and one of the main moments of adaptive inspiration in *JL:M*'s script.⁵⁶⁸

Comics scholar Marc DiPaolo once predicted that Wonder Woman's newfound martial brutality would prove only to be a temporary product of the Bush Administration and an ephemeral, mass desire to see a new brand of justice wrought against America's enemies during the War on Terror. However, Wonder Woman's character continues to be an Amazon in the classical sense. In other words, she is today part of a "society of relentless dictators" in the comics.⁵⁶⁹ At the same time, she is known and loved among fans for her diplomatic face. In response to Rucka's 2005 story arc, IGN wrote an article called "Defending Wonder Woman," arguing that her Amazonian warrior background demanded that she execute a foe who could not

otherwise be stopped. However, fans responded with hundreds of letters expressing their distaste for a Wonder Woman who resorted to violence instead of using peaceful negotiations.⁵⁷⁰ Aside from increasing her violent tendencies, Rucka made her U.N. Ambassador for Themiscyra, saying: “She’s an entirely political figure. She has a political office, and she’s the only superhero who does. She has a political title; she has a place in the world in a way Superman doesn’t.”⁵⁷¹

This assessment of Wonder Woman’s evolution into a violent pagan⁵⁷² reaches back to the Ancient Greek conception of Amazons. Elizabeth Danna highlights the many different locations of the Amazons’ homeland. Homer’s *Illiad* placed the Amazons in Lycia and Phrygia on the Sangarius River. The Playwright Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* located the Amazons in the place that has stuck in present day Wonder Woman comics: the North Shore of the Black Sea, or where Themiscyra/Paradise Island is located in the comics. Other traditions placed the Amazons on the Ionian Coast, African Libya and the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. The commonality in all these places, according to Danna, is that these were locations on the edge of Greek civilization. To the Greeks, the Amazons were only half-civilized.⁵⁷³ Their nature was dualistic, as they were daughters of the god of war, Ares, and the nymph Harmony. Further, Amazons’ “dress, religion and warfare” were all different from that of the Greeks. Consequently, this peripheral Amazonian culture was considered a sphere where “the patriarchal order of things ran in reverse.”⁵⁷⁴

Wonder Woman’s role in the Trinity of herself, Batman and Superman is, therefore, to invert Bruce and Clark’s destructive tendencies by operating outside of their presumptions. This has especially been the case with Batman, in *Superman: Sacrifice*. In the comic, Wonder Woman cuts the Gordian knot of Batman’s moral mess by shouldering responsibility for the situation and killing Max Lord. This forever alters the relationship between Superman and Wonder Woman.

Her character demands this course of action as a reckoning and reversal for Batman's moral hypocrisy in refusing to kill even mass murderers like Lord and Joker. In his refusal, Batman risks transforming into the Derridean beast, rather than remain the sovereign arbiter of justice. Derridean conception of sovereignty refers to the public's willingness to surrender their right to enact direct justice on criminals. Instead, they give this right to a ruler who uses intercessory legal mechanisms to punish wrongdoing, thereby forestalling a state of anarchic nature between those governed.⁵⁷⁵ Man is a wolf to man, and the human lycanthrope is more similar to the sovereign ruler than a polite society might care to admit. However, the dichotomy between beast and sovereign is a false one to Derrida. Accordingly, a beast who takes revenge into his own hands is always close to the ruler who claims to enact violence in the name of a higher, state sanctioned justice.

The line between arbiter of justice and vigilante, between superhero and supervillain is ever threatened with erasure. Batman believes himself morally better than the villains he fights because of his One Rule against killing. Wonder Woman's evolution from authoritarian pacifist to sword-swinging Greek goddess provides a roadmap for how the One Rule's idealism fails. It is certain that she exists in a space apart and has a knack for causing the guilty to face uncomfortable truths with her magic lasso. Her inherent deconstructivism has been noted in previous scholarship, as Lilian S. Robinson sees her as an up-ender who flips or inverts expected power dynamics. Marston inverted the classical Greek portrayal of Amazons. He did so by turning the Greeks and their gods Ares and Hercules into subjugating villains who cruelly enslaved the Amazons. This allowed the Amazons to take center stage as heroes, where before they were considered barely-human, barbarians and adversaries to a civilized Greek polis.⁵⁷⁶

In *Superman: Sacrifice*, Rucka's Batman casts Wonder Woman out of the Batcave when he learns that she killed Max to free Superman, saying in response to her confession: "Get out."⁵⁷⁷ This is not an authentic expression of a mercy that would have been, had only Batman been on the scene to prevent Max's death. This Batman protests too much when it comes to the sacredness of life. In *Tower of Babel*, the scene where Talia reads Batman's secret files on the JL is telling. In each file, Batman's notes describe how to incapacitate, traumatize and maim his teammates, yet stop short of killing.⁵⁷⁸ Superman is the only League member who isn't depicted in a digital file. Instead, the comic implies his presence in Batman's Protocols. As Talia's mesmerized gaze falls on a block of red Kryptonite, the final panel cuts away from the flashback of her Watchtower heist to Superman in the present. This nonlethal Kryptonite has done its work. Superman's sinew shows through transparent skin as he screams skyward.

Batman's neurotic repetition of how nonlethal, how considerate he is being while plotting to deconstruct his friends makes a show of his perceived mercy both to himself and to anyone who might discover his handiwork. It is the facsimile of mercy for the sake of enshrining Batman's commitment to a greater good and thus his superior moral character. Žižek emphasizes that this brand of false, posturing mercy is not only hypocritical and inauthentic, but is often used to dodge culpability for a catastrophe its purveyor has engineered. He uses the ideological purges of the Soviet Union as an example. Stalin's terrors sometimes resulted in young Communist Party members shouting for the blood of accused counter revolutionaries, yet Stalin himself would intervene on the grounds that guilt had not yet been determined. As Žižek writes, "Stalin was well aware that he himself generated the destructive fervor – but it is the appearance of mercy that is necessary."⁵⁷⁹

Wonder Woman's role in killing Max Lord and Batman's rejection of her choice speaks volumes about both characters. Wonder Woman herself implies that Batman's mercy is disingenuous and self-serving in *Wonder Woman* #39 (2015).⁵⁸⁰ In retaliation to Batman's accusations that her killing crosses a moral line, Wonder woman asserts that repeatedly sparing mass murderers is tantamount to sacrificing innocent people to criminals' bloodlust.⁵⁸¹ If Batman's mercy is disingenuous and narcissistic, its lack of authenticity mirrors his own status as the only human sitting at a table of metahuman gods in the JL. A god supersedes humanity and, from this elevated position, acts as guarantor that there is some common sense to tragedy, even if it is only the realization that things are as they are.

As previously mentioned, Žižek considers this paradigm analogous with the suffering of Job, whose friends insist that he must have sinned and thus deserved his life's unusual hardships. In this figuration, punishment for crime is the path to resolution. Capital punishment enacts the revenge sought by a perpetrator's victims. When the criminal is properly punished, those left in his wake can move on. However, when encouraged to forgive but not forget instead of enacting punishment, both victims and criminal remain haunted by the crime. This paves the way for the human mind to foster resentment when faced with the impossibility of forgiveness, forgetting or punishment. Batman's refusal to commit murder, even to prevent mass genocide, plays into his attitude toward his team. In his mind, they should not speak against him, but should be thankful that he possessed the foresight to invent contingency plans to check them.

The Batman of the comic books will never kill the manifestation of his own failures (in the form of Max) or any other criminal he enables. Who among mortals has the right to absolve another's crime and to refuse immediate justice for the victims? Žižek declares that only God can do this.⁵⁸² In the comics, it is therefore up to Wonder Woman to do what Batman will not, being

a god herself. Her killing of Max relieves the League (and the world at large) of the indebtedness that Batman attempted to force onto them, putting an end to his failure and disallowing it from further haunting. Her choice also permits Batman to continue performing the moral figure that fans have come to expect since 1939.

Fans Discuss *JL:M*'s Fidelity

Fans sought to portray the image that the Mulroneys must know nothing about comic book lore. In one case, fans inaccurately claim that Common was cast to play the Green Lantern Hal Jordan, who is white in the comics.⁵⁸³ The idea that bumbling Hollywood non-fans had miscast a Black actor to play a white comic character while ignorantly overlooking John Stewart, another Green Lantern who is Black and a U.S. Marine in the comics, did not seem implausible to fans.⁵⁸⁴ Whether accurate or not, Miller's casting left fans feeling sure that other decisions would be inauthentic and disrespectful to the source material. If Miller had ignored pre-established DC film lore by not bringing together Brandon Routh's Superman and Christian Bale's Batman for the Justice League film, then comic book canon was also likely to be ignored, fan discourse seemed to say. Others suggested that WB only hired Miller to leverage his Australian citizenship into a tax break.⁵⁸⁵

"I can remember reading the script and just saying WTF out loud like 20 times before finishing it and trying to erase it from my memory forever." This fan post encapsulates the general sentiment of one of the largest *Justice League: Mortal* subreddits *r/DC_Cinematic* contains one discussion thread on Justice League: Mortal. It appeared in 2016, the year after Armie Hammer leaked the Mulroneys's script as an online .pdf. Fans complained that the *Tower of Babel* comic storyline was too complex to introduce the Justice League characters.⁵⁸⁶ One poster declared that *JL:M* would've ruined the *Tower of Babel* comic with its changes to the

comic storyline. Another created a list of plot points that were not present in the comics, such as the Flash's death, as well as villains Talia al Ghul and Max Lord merging into the Brother Eye robot.⁵⁸⁷ Another condemned the script, writing "their [WB's] fanfiction is the stuff of nightmares."⁵⁸⁸ Another commented that *JL:M* would have worked better as a direct to Blu-Ray animated film, "but no way would it have been successful as a live action movie that started off a shared universe."⁵⁸⁹ Fan podcaster Jeremy Meyer encapsulated fans' problems with the script's divergences from comics in Batman's characterization, saying "I had a huge problem with this, as anyone could imagine. Batman doesn't kill, I don't care what the circumstance is, it's never even something that occurs to him. So, I never liked the idea that Batman would kill anybody."⁵⁹⁰

That Which Crops Up No More

In his framing of *JL:M*'s collapse and the bright future foregone in its passing, George Miller presented himself and his superhero blockbuster as distillations of the industrial practices necessary to lift the country out of Hollywood backlot status and into its rightful place as an innovative exporter of films and culture. The exuberant investor mentality characterized by the 10BA Era, birthed Miller's directorial stardom and the speculative boom. This mentality influenced the notion where WB and Miller promoted *JL:M* as the god-particle of a coalescing DC universe. Given the FFC's power to strike down any film it deemed unworthy of co-production status, it seems that Miller approached *JL:M* with a false sense of optimism or 10BA mentality. Miller embraced international filmmaking at a time when Australia's domestic market was well in the grip of a more nationalistic, regulatory impulse.

As Chapter 2 has suggested, another part of the reason Miller's project failed to rise again from the ashes was for lack of a dedicated fanbase. Miller failed to recognize the importance of

fans' viewpoints and the significance of having a strong fanbase. DC filmgoers' online comments often ridicule the presumptuousness of recasting Batman and Superman. Batman's violation of his longstanding moral code resulted in a departure from fans' views of a Batman who does not kill. This also contributed to the negative backlash from fans. However, ten years after JL:M began its fateful production, a second Justice League film found its niche among a devoted set of superfans and endured a lengthy battle to restore it. Enter the Snyder Cut.

CHAPTER 3: THE SNYDER CUT OF JUSTICE LEAGUE

Have you ever had an experience in life that didn't go the way you wanted, that dragged you, that made you rethink everything?

I have.

--David Ayer⁵⁹¹

Kneel Before Zack

On October 26, 2017, a mustache destroyed the world's greatest superheroes. Intended to be Warner/DC's answer to Marvel Studio's *Avengers* (2012), Joss Whedon's *Justice League* (2017) immediately generated scathing critical reviews. At long last, WB/DC had released a film featuring comic fandom's fabled Trinity of Batman, Wonder Woman and Superman together on the big screen, and fans and critics hated it.⁵⁹² Much of the vitriol was aimed at the Man of Steel himself. The actor who played him, Henry Cavill, appeared quite human in some scenes. In other scenes, his face turned disturbingly wooden and robotic. When it became apparent that Cavill's upper lip was a digital fake, audiences mercilessly jeered this uncanny Superman. Warner could not have been happy, either. After all, the company spent over \$25M to digitally remove Cavill's mustache for their ill-fated *Justice League* reshoots.⁵⁹³ While this seems like both a minor issue and an example of ridiculous Hollywood excess, it demonstrates how the last-minute dismissal of fan-favorite director Zack Snyder⁵⁹⁴ led to slapdash editing, over-saturated colors, a throwaway villain⁵⁹⁵ and a failed project that prominent cast members later condemned.⁵⁹⁶

Snyder would remain undeterred by his ousting, posting teasers of his unproduced *Justice League* cut online in the form of concept art, storyboards, teaser trailers, brief descriptions and

other paratexts. Together, these scattered materials would stand in for what came to be known as The Snyder Cut, or a half-imagined “true” version of the film that *JL* should have been. Unlike other unmade, unseen, or unreleased films, though, Snyder’s cut would eventually be completed and released on WB’s streaming platform, HBO Max. This was primarily thanks to the efforts of an international and doggedly motivated fan movement that unified under the Twitter monikers #ReleaseTheSnyderCut (#RTSC) and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse. Through an extended campaign of incessant Twitter requests, real-world agitation, and fan art envisioning Snyder’s unmade SnyderVerse films, #RTSC fans resuscitated their favourite director’s vision as an unmade, shadow cinematic world, and their extended campaign to restore Snyder’s full filmic universe is still ongoing at the time of this writing.

The Snyder Cut’s official HBO Max release is called *Zack Snyder’s Justice League*, or *ZSJJL* (2021) for short. The film’s long unproduction and eventual release have led to an odd situation wherein two films of the same name are competing for an authentic claim to DC’s canonical franchise. Snyder’s unproduction has eclipsed the 2017 *Justice League* theatrical release as a better regarded film among fans and media outlets. This has occurred even as WB management maintains that Joss Whedon’s *Justice League* (or *Josstice League*, as fans have derisively called it)⁵⁹⁷ is the canonical version while *ZSJJL* resides in a parallel Elseworlds universe.⁵⁹⁸ Snyder fans have adopted *ZSJJL* as their preferred version despite the fact that Joss Whedon was hired to turn Snyder’s vision, often derided as narratively dystopian and aesthetically dark, into a traditional, inspiring depiction of idealistic heroism complete with light-hearted jokes and bright colors.

In Chapter 3, I compare the differing aesthetics and narratives in *Justice League* (2017) and the Snyder Cut during its existence as a fragmented unfilm on Vero and Twitter from 2017

to *ZSJL*'s release in 2021. I will explain how Snyder Cut fans constructed these films as a battle of auteurs and a battle between Snyder and Warner Brothers. Ultimately, I argue that fans situated their favorite director as a wounded outsider who needed their help to wrest concessions from WB.

Since the Snyder Cut spent the years between *Justice League*'s release and *ZSJL*'s streaming release as an unproduced idea, it is worth considering how Snyder and his fans teamed up to bring all of the Cut's disparate parts together into an imagined ideal. Snyder would supply screen shots and vague indications of his ideas on Vero and Twitter for fans to discuss. Fans also created their own conceptual artwork for some unmade scenes, in addition to mounting Twitter campaigns for the film's release. They organized and protested both online and in real life.

Unlike Miller's *JL:M*, which alienated DC fans from the outset, Snyder was able to draw on a base of committed followers. These fans watched as Snyder was metaphorically struck down by WB, only to return on a surge of popular support and with reified, undead authorial status. This cemented fan dedication to his filmic vision and *ZSJL*'s victory over the theatrical release.

Unproduction Studies' Role in *Justice League*

Current scholarship on unproduction has primarily looked to cancelled epic films of the distant past. Though these are far from superhero genre films, it is nonetheless instructive to revisit them, and to study their contours as potential models for evaluating the unmade. Orson Welles' 4-part epic, *It's All True*, remains one of the most famous failed films and established his unfortunate reputation as a director who couldn't finish a project.⁵⁹⁹ However, Harry Waldman highlights that *Don Quixote*'s sheer breadth as an undeveloped project is staggering even in comparison to *It's All True*, highlighting that the more protracted and tormented an unproduced

work, the greater the intrigue and mystique behind it. Initially begun in 1955,⁶⁰⁰ Welles continued to declare his intent to finish *Don Quixote* well into 1975, even after the actors he'd cast in the lead roles had died.⁶⁰¹ According to Waldman, less than 3 years before Welles himself died in 1985, he publicly claimed one final time that he would complete the film by 1982.⁶⁰²

Stanley Kubrick's *Napoleon* occupies a similar mythic space in the world of unproduction. The director began researching this biographical film in 1967 but was distracted from the project by his work on *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).⁶⁰³ The box office failure of *Waterloo* (1970) dissuaded Warner Brothers from producing the film,⁶⁰⁴ a historical tidbit which emphasizes the influence of similar genre films on films in development and studio heads' perceptions of their ability to succeed financially. That Kubrick attempted to secure BBC funding for *Napoleon* as a 20-hour TV series after the success of *The Shining* in 1980 also speaks to unproduction's tendency to seek out other formats as a means toward resurrection,⁶⁰⁵ a trend that Matthew Harle has also noted.⁶⁰⁶ Yet, the longstanding project had left a stain on the director's reputation. When Kubrick offered himself up to direct a BBC series based on John le Carré's 1986 novel, *A Perfect Spy*, the BBC remained squeamish upon examining how long it typically took the director to finish a film and were likely put off by *Napoleon*'s legendarily long development.⁶⁰⁷

In her founding discussions of endotext, Catharine Benamou does not include jotted ideas the director discarded, which is a mistake in Matthew Harle's figuration. He views discarded script elements as part of the primary, developing text's natural tendency to jettison creative castoffs on the way to formulating a more ideal creative vision; completeness should not be the point.⁶⁰⁸ Perhaps the contemporary antecedent might be expanded to include a director's social media postings, as Snyder has done on Vero.

Unfinished work is often met with inadequate reception from critics and the general public, as opposed to a smaller set of aficionados and film historians with vested interest in unproductions. First, the unproduction's inadequate reception is tied to feelings of nostalgia and melancholic reflections upon unrealized projects. Second, there tends to be an air of distrust or a wary attitude toward unproduction in regard to whether it legitimately counts as a culturally valuable object. Since unproduced films cannot be fully known, there is something that is also intimidating within them. They are near-infinite, their potentialities limited mostly by the imagination of the researcher or fan. There is thus a built-in distance between reader and text in this sense. A third reason for unfinished works' disinterested reception, then, stems from the reader/viewer's ability to run away with the text, meaning there is, potentially, too little control on the part of the author and executive producer. It is also somewhat unfair to constrain the unfinished work by turning it only in the direction of a finished work and judging against such a standard.

Development Hell has been aptly described as a realm of "writer killers."⁶⁰⁹ As a concept, it is the production of artistic excess. Screenplays and concepts are frequently lost in a long string of rewrites demanded by studio heads and producers. Screenwriter William Goldman describes producers' demands in this way: "What writer killers do is they work with you on a project, and they ask for apples and you try to give them apples, then they say no, pomegranates [. . .] rewrite follows rewrite, until your mind is fucked around."⁶¹⁰ The film idea and any draft scripts aren't usually discarded wholesale, though; they are saved by the studio for their potential marketing value.

While Snyder fans have railed against a list of specific WB executives who killed the writing in the theatrical *Justice League*, it is worth noting that Warner Brothers has established a

writer killing tradition for superhero fare. In example, Simon Braund's work focuses on one specific writer killer, John Peters, the producer who found initial success with *Batman* (1989). Peter's approach to superhero films was to seek uncomplicated stories with the most "merchandising potential."⁶¹¹ When Peters was tasked with producing a sequel to *Superman: The Quest for Peace* (1987), a film known to fans as *Superman Lives*, he brought in the young Kevin Smith as scriptwriter.⁶¹² However, Peters quickly overwhelmed the film with frivolous and oddball demands, suggesting that Superman wear a corduroy suit emblazoned with flame decals and battle a giant spider.⁶¹³ Tim Burton, who was briefly attached to direct, commented that Peters was terrified of accusations that WB had mismanaged the Batman franchise by handing it to Joel Schumacher.⁶¹⁴ Schumacher had supposedly wanted to make a grim and gritty Batman akin to Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), the comic that has inspired all 20th century Batman films to some degree. WB would pressure Schumacher to make a more light-hearted and colorful version.⁶¹⁵

It is then relevant to note the film industry's dependence on monetizing creative processes and the industrial strategies of overdevelopment which Hollywood film studios began to adopt in the 1950s, and which still hold true over seventy years on. James Fenwick's piece on Kirk Douglas' studio, Bryna Productions, illustrates how independent production companies' projects were largely financed and distributed by the Hollywood majors in this era. As a result, the indie studios were run with the idea that a greater number of the pending projects could provide some insurance against the failure of other projects.⁶¹⁶ Often the only records of unused, pitched projects exist in Production Code Administration archives.⁶¹⁷ WB is hardly a small indie studio. However, decades-long development of films like *Batman Beyond* would suggest that, at the very least, the company uses unfilms to generate interest in what the studio is doing.⁶¹⁸

There is a similar strategy of over development in the studio's announcements of SnyderVerse solo projects that never materialized, like a rumored Cyborg film, Ben Affleck's solo Batman film, and *Justice League 2* and 3. Of the unproduced films in his canon, Snyder said at a suicide prevention fundraiser that he had to avoid spoilers for these unproductions: "a spoiler for maybe a thing that will never need to be spoiled, but we should wait to see, don't you think, a little bit?"⁶¹⁹ Thus, hype over SnyderVerse films with little more than a tentative title and general plot points is leveraged into the potential to restore the franchise at some future point.

Despite the lofty position Snyder's fans afford him, unproduction studies touts the importance of a balanced approach to how industry imperatives shape and derail films. This should be put into conversation with romantic notions of authorship, which does not truly exist in quite the singular way that it is often portrayed. Alfred Hitchcock's last screenwriter, David Freeman, notes that no self-respecting writer would subscribe to auteur theory, as it takes credit away from the writer and imbues it onto the director as editor of ideas. Yet, Freeman admits that regardless of who the scriptwriter, cinematographer, art director or composer was, one could always identify the look and narrative feel of a Hitchcock film. Certain directors are able to take a scriptwriter's essence and transform it into something with an identifiable semiotic and narrative stamp. A "Hitchcock film," "Kubrick film," or in the present study's case, a "Snyder film" are clearly recognized as such.

In this observation sits something of Benamou's idea that to evaluate an unproduced text is to set it in comparison with other texts. The unproduced must be compared to both finished and non-finished films, within a director's own catalogue and those of their contemporaries. Thus, I compare the two different versions of the DCEU *Justice League* to discern what the

shadow version can reveal about the theatrical version, as well as the historical moments in which each were being discussed by fans and media outlets.

Film is a fundamentally adaptive form, as any production is adapted from a script. Films adapted from other media industries, such as comics, bring together “authorship across various media, and therefore, production cultures.”⁶²⁰ Certainly relevant to modern superhero franchising, Kunze observes a shift that occurred in the 1980s-1990s Hollywood scene, where creative control moved away from the auteur and toward collective or “brand” idea of creative ownership. In settings where executives like current DC Studios CEO James Gunn or Marvel Studios’ President Kevin Feige exert their own stylistic, uniform imprint over a film’s creative direction, production and development, the notion of a singular auteur begins to break down. Films begin to look like they have no author, in terms of studio interference with an original creative vision. Failure to meet a director or production studio’s brand standards can be read as maintaining “real” artistic integrity. Snyder Cut fans have made this same argument about their idol’s firing from WB, as well as WB’s criticisms that his grim DCEU should be more like the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

In the case of *ZSJL*’s long unproduction, the attempt was made to manifest the film through projecting the perception of widespread interest. This was done even when that interest was partly supported by bots on various social media platforms, as I will discuss. Further, fans expect some degree of comic book fidelity in their superhero films, as well as continuity in their film franchise. If a producer meddles excessively, as John Peter’s did by requiring Neil Gaiman’s typically morose and gothic *Sandman* (1988-1996) series to feature a protagonist in colorful superhero tights who would brawl with his enemies,⁶²¹ comic book fans are likely to react negatively.

Perhaps one reason the Snyder Cut's movement from unproduced text to feature film seems unusual is the predilection of Western audiences to view a failed and unproduced film as a misadventure or a curse, as Catherine Benamou describes. An unproduced film, especially one that is unproduced because of some publicly known failure, becomes viewed as damaging to the careers of those involved while simultaneously being denied as either a text or a legitimate occurrence.⁶²² Other scholars have written that terms like unmade, unfinished and unseen suggest creations that "remain in a rudimentary and embryonic form."⁶²³ These scholars suggest that histories are best viewed in the ephemera attached to them, as opposed to limiting the concept of unmade film to scripts alone.⁶²⁴ An unmade film continues to exist as a "meta-textual corpus,"⁶²⁵ which trawls aspects of itself that are phenomenally available. In the case of *The Snyder Cut*, these "endotexts," or envisioned texts-in-the-making,⁶²⁶ found continued life support among Snyder Cut fans and within their oppositional protests and online fan works.

Fans sought corporate recognition and production of the many phantom films composing the larger SnyderVerse, which they viewed as consisting of three produced films—*Man of Steel* (2013), *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) and *Zach Snyder's Justice League* (2021)—plus the unmade *Justice League* part 2 and 3 sequels. This includes any potential spinoff films that could arise from their production, such as a Cyborg film and a Flash film.⁶²⁷ The SnyderVerse movies therefore fall into the category of phantom films, or those that "never achieved existence" and "must be reconstructed imaginatively."⁶²⁸ It is necessary for interested viewers to "push against the drift of the film's material erosion and historical erasure."⁶²⁹

Fans and film historians might also situate an unmade-yet-envisioned endotext alongside its made counterparts in time. By doing so, it is possible to conceive an exotext,⁶³⁰ or to see the cookie-cutter outlines of the unmade film's 'structuring absence' in the larger material body of a

given socio-cultural moment.⁶³¹ In the years leading up to The Snyder Cut's streaming release, fans had Joss Whedon's *Justice League* as a literal, highly disappointing counterpart to their idealized phantom Snyder Cut. As Benamou writes: "It is mainly through a comparison with other texts that films derive their historicity, not to mention their aesthetic valuation and political profile – either within the scope of the director's work, of the movement or style, or within film history."⁶³² This is what it means to consider the mark of the author in an unmade film. Certainly, Snyder (re)inscribed, in a very literal way, his authorial approval upon fans' ideas of what his SnyderVerse would and should be. He created an exchange between his ideas and fan theories on social media, with followers setting him up as validator of fan theories about the unfilm, and thereby reinscribing his auteur status.

Before delving into #ReleaseTheSnyderCut movement's many fan works and conversations with Snyder, it is important to first understand the impact of the theatrically released *Justice League*. Despite the initial hype leading up to its release, *Justice League*'s production showed early signs of turmoil. Star Ben Affleck was finalizing a divorce and struggling with alcoholism, and his rehabilitation stints made headlines during the production of *Justice League* and *Batman v. Superman*.⁶³³ Further, both Affleck and co-writer Joss Whedon faced press criticism and #MeToo backlash over alleged abuse earlier in their careers,⁶³⁴ with Whedon's ex-wife denouncing him as an anti-feminist.⁶³⁵ Warner Brothers's counterpoint to the Marvel Cinematic Universe was already imperilled. This would not be the end of it.

Further controversy involved *Aquaman* (2018) star Jason Momoa, who publicly apologized for joking about rape while working on *Game of Thrones* (2011-19).⁶³⁶ And weeks before *Justice League*'s release, Warner Bros. dissolved its business ties with its partner studio, RatPack-Dune. Co-founder Brett Ratner had been accused of sexual assault, and actress Gal

Gadot threatened to boycott future *Wonder Woman* films if Ratner remained connected to *Justice League*.⁶³⁷ Meanwhile, news outlets speculated that Warner Bros. would recast a solo *Batman* film that Affleck was supposed to direct and star in. This was to prevent large portions of *Justice League 2* and *Batman* budgets from being spent on Affleck's rehab-associated insurance costs.⁶³⁸ Further, Warner Bros. removed Superman from all *Justice League* promotional materials so as not to spoil his resurrection scene.⁶³⁹ This was described as "faintly ridiculous" by Henry Cavill.⁶⁴⁰

Then, in March 2017, Zack Snyder's daughter, Autumn, committed suicide.⁶⁴¹ This led both the director and his wife, *Justice League* producer Deborah Snyder, to step down from the film's production. Zack Snyder told *The Hollywood Reporter*, "I know fans will be worried about the film, but there are seven other kids that need me. In the end, it's just a movie."⁶⁴² Warner Bros. hired Snyder's long-time associate Joss Whedon, who had directed Marvel Studios' first two *Avengers* films, to finish *Justice League*.⁶⁴³ The resulting conflict between Snyder and Whedon's visions highlights the fraught nature of single authorship in Hollywood. This attests to Kunze's assertion that when two directors with tremendous star power are involved in the same project, there is a resultant magnetism emanating from combining legendary auteurs and imagined works.⁶⁴⁴ Critical and fan expectations tend toward the colossal when these directing greats willingly team up. However, Snyder later confirmed fan suspicions that Whedon had not been his choice successor, stating at Justice Con 2020 that the decision was made "by committee."⁶⁴⁵ These circumstances undergird another of Kunze's points: not only can authorship be defined by industrial entities, but definitions of authorship are "often bargained out rather than firmly established."⁶⁴⁶

Although Snyder maintains that he left production willingly, Whedon's attachment fed fan suspicion that WB had already chosen their replacement and that only a pretext was needed to replace Snyder with a commercially viable Marvel Studios veteran. Warner Bros. president, Toby Emmerich, said that *Justice League* would be released on its originally slated date, and promised that Whedon would not fundamentally change anything about Snyder's vision for the franchise: "The directing is minimal and it has to adhere to the style and tone and the template that Zack set [. . .] He's handing the baton to Joss, but the course has really been set by Zack. I still believe that despite this family tragedy, we'll still end up with a great movie."⁶⁴⁷

The Origins of The Snyder Cut Movement

Toby Emmerich's statement reinforced the official narrative that Snyder's departure was voluntary, and that Joss Whedon would respect his original vision. However, following the release of *Justice League*, it emerged that Snyder may not have stepped down voluntarily after all. Conspiracies about his departure circulated, while no one involved in the film's production was willing to state on record whether Snyder had been fired. Industry reporter Josh Dickey subsequently tweeted his take on the situation, claiming that anonymous sources had told him that Warner Bros. had wanted to fire Snyder as early as January 2017, months before his daughter's death.⁶⁴⁸ Dickey claimed Warner Bros.' reasoning was rooted in *Batman v Superman*'s financial and critical underperformance, along with early test screenings of a pre-Whedon *Justice League* cut that some reviewers had called "unwatchable."⁶⁴⁹ All this suggested to fans that Warner Bros. had used the Snyder family's personal tragedy to explain their departure, rather than admitting to firing them for other reasons. If fans already viewed Snyder as an industry underdog, these revelations thoroughly cemented their perceptions. They also solidified Warner Bros. executives as the fandom's arch-villains.

Following the release of *Batman v Superman*, Warner Bros. CEO, Kevin Tsujihara, had fired the company's Motion Pictures President Greg Silverman, replacing him with Toby Emmerich. Tsujihara had previously removed Silverman as director of DC Entertainment's film slate. This happened because Silverman had ignored Warner Bros. executives' wishes and refused to fire Zack Snyder as *Batman v Superman*'s director. Silverman's departure, then, can be seen as a prelude to Snyder's firing. *Man of Steel* reportedly caused Tsujihara to lose faith in Snyder's ability to direct films that were able to compete with Marvel Studios.⁶⁵⁰ Tsujihara's decisions were informed, in part, by the poor critical reception of *Man of Steel* and *Batman v Superman*. The former grossed \$668 million and the latter \$873 million worldwide, making each a box office success.⁶⁵¹ However, both films were poorly received by critics, particularly *Batman v Superman*, whose runtime was cut back from Snyder's intended three-and-a-half hours to three. A director's cut was later released, featuring thirty minutes of extra footage, and many critics and fans agreed that the home release was superior to the theatrical version. If *Batman v Superman* was the victim of studio imperatives and edited into a shadow of its original self, then could *Justice League* not also be rescued with a director's cut release?⁶⁵²

Outraged by Snyder's apparent firing, fans began retweeting #ReleaseTheSnyderCut. The first hashtags began appearing hours after *Justice Leagues*' first screenings in 2017. A pivotal moment came for Snyder Cut fans on November 17, 2019 when celebrities including Jason Momoa, Gal Gadot and Ben Affleck began posting Twitter messages in support of the Snyder Cut. Snyder personally asked Affleck to express his support, but Momoa had long claimed to be one of the first fans to see The Cut, and repeatedly proclaimed his enthusiasm to fans on social media.⁶⁵³ Just under five months later, Warner Bros. officially announced The Cut's HBO Max release.⁶⁵⁴

This chapter is concerned not with a general audience, but with fan initiates, acolytes and devotees. These are the people who determine the discourse of what an unmade filmic adaptation is. As a result, unmade films are adaptations of scattered artworks held together with fandom as resin. Fans of comics inevitably deride film adaptations as inauthentic or narratively dumbed-down. Ideations drawn from comics and concept art are regarded as practically pseudo-religious texts that tell fans what the unmade should be. The made is upheld as blasphemous when faced with these shards of the ideal unmade. In this sense, the unmade's apocryphal nature is reversed, as fans attempt to transpose its stigmatization as a "failure" onto what they deride as a corporatized, anti-art perversion of the project's original, auteur-driven intent.

Fans thus zealously defended an auteur vision, the full body of which was only imagined and hinted, up until WB announced that they would fund The Snyder Cut's postproduction in 2021. Despite initial uncertainty as to whether HBO's release of *ZSJJL* would take the form of a six-episode serial or a single four-hour film,⁶⁵⁵ Warner CEO Bob Greenblatt claimed the company would allocate well over \$30M to re-hire key members of the original cast and crew, create reshoots and finish visual effects.⁶⁵⁶ Greenblatt added that "It's not as easy as going into a vault and there's a Snyder Cut sitting there to put out. It does not exist [. . .] it's a radical rethinking of that movie and it's complicated and wildly expensive."⁶⁵⁷

Snyder's Vero posts presented his *Justice League* as a murky and liminal object, one that critics believed was an unproduction. Nonetheless, Snyder presented it as being a finished film whose release was tied down with legal red tape. In doing so, he strategically infused hope into a project he would later admit to thinking would take 20 years to release as snippets in a documentary.⁶⁵⁸ His cryptic yet encouraging response to one fan on Vero is telling. The user types "Say something. I'm beginning to lose hope." Snyder replies with a simple "Don't."⁶⁵⁹

Thus, the Snyder Cut was leveraged into public imagination not despite, but *precisely because of* its unverifiable contents. The Snyder Cut, once dismissed as the pipe dream of a niche fandom, gained momentum as its supporters fundraised, marched and protested for the film's release.⁶⁶⁰ Mainstream media outlets pointed to evidence of the movement's toxicity in instances of Snyder Cut fans endlessly retweeting #ReleaseTheSnyderCut in response to any Twitter post made by Warner Media.⁶⁶¹

The SnyderVerse movement has been a positive, community-affirming venture for many fans. It has also given rise to online harassment of studio executives and critics. These toxic behaviors were carried out by a vocal minority of militant-minded fans within the community. Both sides of the Snyder fandom will be evaluated here. After all, media scholar Anastasia Salter is correct when she writes that scholars cannot ignore the demands of acrimonious fans any more than they can dismiss peaceful and supportive fan interactions calling for politeness and inclusion.⁶⁶² The Snyder Movement exhibits both general fan behaviors.

Fan imaginings played a central role in the ongoing aesthetic and philosophical tug-of-war over what *Justice League* should represent. Fan discourse, directed largely by Snyder's social media teases of concept art, storyboard illustrations and unfinished script ideas, morphed into a half-imagined deathmatch between two egoists (Whedon and Snyder). Fans used Twitter as a platform to discuss these unproduced, transmedia materials. Their imaginative process of stitching together these disparate pieces into an ideal whole is what I call transmedia closure.

This is not to idealize the Snyder Cut movement or suggest that the group's activities began and ended with harmless musings about what could have been. Fans also sought to pit Snyder's auteur vision for a "true" *Justice League* against WB and Joss Whedon's perceived studio meddling with the film's stylistic appearance and message. Seeking out a villain for their

story prompted some fans to agitate against not just Whedon and WB, but against fan and professional critics who covered their efforts in a negative way. Some entertainment media outlets have sardonically referred to Snyder Cut fandom as “Snyder Cut bronies.”⁶⁶³ This is in reference to the fanatical male fanbase for the *My Little Pony* cartoon,⁶⁶⁴ which became infamous for harassing critics of the show.⁶⁶⁵

Ultimately, Snyder’s vision represents a critical view of heroes and questions the collateral damage their vigilante escapades cause, resultantly painting a dark and bleak world around them. Whedon’s version (really WB’s version, if Snyder Cut fans are correct in positing that Whedon was merely hired to execute company plans),⁶⁶⁶ was applied haphazardly to Snyder’s unfinished groundwork. Whedon created a theatrical *Justice League* which sewed disparate tones together in Frankensteinian fashion. This produced a film with jarring aesthetic and narrative differences from scene to scene. It also offered a juxtaposition of two directors’ clashing aesthetic, philosophical and political visions. Fans perpetuated these ideas through interpretations of the fannishly sacred yet industrially apocryphal texts which Snyder intermittently revealed on Vero and Twitter from 2017 to 2021.

The Fastest Man Alive, Unmade and Remade

Scholars have pondered over the cover of *Showcase #4* (October 1956). This is The Flash’s first appearance in comics. The cover features Flash leaping forth from a film strip. Dru Jeffries points to the question of whether this image is “A movie that isn’t really a movie, made out of individual images that the eye can see in or out of sequence, or at the same time? Is it something that breaks destructively out of attempts to fix it in place?”⁶⁶⁷ Such questions can also be asked of unproduction, as there is a certain perpetually destructed aura about the imaginings trawling behind these partly-formed ideas. Unfilm, whose inanimate vessels are puppeteered

along by dedicated fans and enthusiasts, looks to other media forms to answer the question: “What if this work had been?” This is doubly true of unfilmed comic book adaptations, as they look not only to static images such as unfinished VFX shots but also to the sequential comic book art that inspired them. Taken as floating pieces of a whole, these disparate image media might come together in fans’ imaginings to form “stages in a single movement.”⁶⁶⁸ As Jeffries explains, Windsor McKay’s early comics can be described in this way and compared to Edward Muybridge’s chronophotography. These are the rapid-fire photos of a kinetic blur which may capture the exact moment all four of a running horse’s feet leave the ground.⁶⁶⁹

This tendency to read adapted works as somehow falling short of film’s motion (i.e. all media would be film-like if it could be) is, as Jeffries writes, highly atypical of comics. Comics do not show micro-motions within a larger motion. Individual panels can be construed as “image events”⁶⁷⁰ which display an exploding chunk of movement and narration. The Flash himself, the foremost of DC’s ever-multiplying speedsters, moves so fast that he appears to us like a stationary lightning bolt frozen in the sky. He also represents the ultimate image event, in that his speed can only be represented through slowed-down moments, much like the panels of a comic. It is worth highlighting that when *The Snyder Cut* was finally released, the scene that won an Oscar for the new “best cheer moment” category featured The Flash running in slow motion to reverse time and prevent the death of the Justice League. In the scene, each footfall produces a distant “boom” sound effect, accentuating the conclusion of Flash’s soaring jaunts through the air. The Flash in Snyder’s universe seems to hearken to a chronophotographic series in which the time elisions between photos are filled in with cinema, yet the comic book process of “closure” is still suggested. This is seen in Flash’s subtly booming footfalls and the jerky, abbreviated twisting of his arms in the instants before boots meet cosmic firmament. The Flash’s running

sequence in *ZSJJ* seems emblematic of the multiple types of media that fans brought together within the Snyder Cut movement to imagine their way to a finished film.

Jason Rothery and Benjamin Woo distinguish blockbuster comic book adaptations from high and middle brow adaptations through four types of fidelity seen in each. The blockbuster adaptation (or low brow comic adaptation, by implication) contains the highest level of “essential fidelity.” It is true to the general spirit of the comic book source material, rather than emphasizing the narrative, authorial and visual fidelity of these films.⁶⁷¹ Films focusing on essential fidelity tend to mythologize superheroes, tying them to ancient depictions of gods, as a way to increase perceived value of the work among general audiences. Anthony Soegito has observed SnyderVerse fan tendencies to connect narrative and visual elements in *BvS* to Ancient Greek mythologies and Biblical parables, thereby excluding critics who gave the film negative reviews. In this figuration, a low review itself demonstrates the critics’ ignorance of *BvS*’s narrative and visual symbology, which only the true Snyder fans can presumably appreciate.⁶⁷²

The main function of this within DCEU fandom is to elevate Snyder’s adaptations from blockbuster (low brow) to cult film status (middle brow). Snyder’s DCEU films do not always display the kind of precise narrative and visual fidelity seen in his *300* (2006) or *Watchmen* (2008) films. These two adaptations copied as closely as possible the visual setups of specific comic panels and remediated them scene-by-scene.⁶⁷³ Snyder probably would have tried authorial fidelity in his *Watchmen* adaptation, which involves the original comic book writer’s participation in the scripting and directorial process, if not for comic writer Alan Moore’s refusal to have anything to do with the project.⁶⁷⁴ As is common for blockbuster comic adaptations, they focus on essential fidelity, and the fans fill in the gaps with mythology and comic book

references that only they can identify due to being immersed in the print lore of the source material.

This perception that Snyder's DCEU adaptations as speaking first to fans and secondarily to critics and casual viewers has been reiterated in Drew Morton's analysis of *300*'s (2006) visual style. He observes how Snyder tries to stay true to comic artist and author Frank Miller's emphasis on anti-realism in comic books as a means to set comics apart from film, or avoid comics becoming the poor man's equivalent of film. Miller believes that exaggeration and caricature are the most unique function of comics. Thus, realism in illustration subordinates the medium to finer arts like painting, drawing and film itself. As Miller commented at San Diego Comic Con 2022, comics are meant to be "rude pictures,"⁶⁷⁵ or over-the-top and oft offensive pieces that are anything but high-brow realism.

Snyder's adaptation of Miller's graphic novel sought to remediate closures that would occur in a comic book multiframe, through rapid editing, as well as strategically slowed down and sped up movement. He also utilized exaggerated blood and dirt spatter in marketing and in the film itself, visually echoing the watercolors used in Miller's work. The precise devotion to visually representing comic book source material that Snyder displayed in his early career helped establish him as a visionary director and a fanboy auteur. In the eyes of his fans, he is a director who is thought of amiably, as just another fellow geek.⁶⁷⁶ If one takes seriously the assertion that comics are inherently crude and often meant to offend, the punk-like, anti-corporate qualities of the Snyder movement make a little more sense.

When comic book adaptations succeed or fail financially, production studios point to style as the explanation, Morton remarks. While WB execs, critical and fan reviews often referenced Snyder's faithful stylistic adaptation in *300*'s success, WB also condemned Snyder's

“slavish devotion to style” and his catering to “fanboys” as the reason *Watchmen* underperformed at the global box office.⁶⁷⁷ When a film makes money, its stylistic remediation is faithful to the original; when a film does not make money, its remediation is visually exclusionary toward the casual viewer, at least in terms of studio discourse. Snyder’s unique use of spatiotemporal remediation is dealt with in similar “make it or break it” fashion. As Morton explains, the spatiotemporal element of comic to film adaptation is challenging to quantify, as there is no standard for how long a scene in a comic frame should last on film. A reader may linger over the details contained in a single frame, or they may quickly pass over it.

Although streamed films would seem to offer a similar temporal control to the viewer, comic remediation is further complexified by panel size. In some cases, Snyder has used slow motion to translate large panels to film, with size remediated into actions stretched out in time. This can be observed in the giant-sized *Watchmen* comic panel where The Comedian is thrown through a window. The big panel is then remediated as a slow-motion sequence in Snyder’s adaptation.⁶⁷⁸

Snyder’s attention to remediation undergirds his appeal as a fanboy auteur, as this status also means an industry person who still speaks geek culture’s visual language.⁶⁷⁹ Even *Batman v. Superman*, loosely inspired by Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns (TDKR)* (1986) comic, utilized moments of almost literally translated visual remediation despite the narrative of the film displaying a generalized, essential fidelity⁶⁸⁰ toward Miller’s plot. For instance, *TDKR*’s graphic novel cover shows Batman’s silhouette leaping through the night sky, hand stretched downward as if to slice through the air as he descends.⁶⁸¹ A blue-tinged lightning bolt falls behind him. The cover is replicated in a brief instance where *BvS* Batman hangs from a building’s edifice, and a similar bolt cracks behind him before he leaps away.⁶⁸² The brevity of the homage contrasts with

Snyder's typical slow-motion handling of iconic comic scenes (especially of large panels), marking it as a wink for fans in the know. Conversely, Snyder depicts the quintessential murder of young Bruce Wayne's parents in a series of slow motion, close-up shots, mirroring the series of small panels where these actions play out in *TDKR*.

Panels that depict a sequence of actions occurring in near-succession invite a sped-up film remediation, as Snyder utilized in *Watchmen*'s opening sequence during The Comedian's fist fight with a disguised Ozymandias.⁶⁸³ Such panels can conversely be addressed with slow motion, as if the filmic version dwells on the moments of closure between rapidly sequential panels.⁶⁸⁴ For instance, one *BvS* panel depicts a close-up of the mugger Joe Chill's gun as he fatefully shoots young Bruce Wayne's parents, supplying the impetus for Batman's eventual rise. The next shows the bullet chamber outlined in orange, and the next a spent shell spiraling forth. The shell is then captured mid-fall, before it hits the ground. Snyder's version of this scene shows the selfsame gun floating into a shallow focus shot, then firing as the shell ejects. The next shot shows the shell striking concrete and bouncing upward with an elongated clinking sound. Therefore, the closures that a comic reader would make between the major action of the gun (pointing, firing, shell ejecting, then falling) are all filled in and transformed into a near-tactile experience as the viewer is invited to pour over every detail of this instrument of death's movements.

While this approach is emblematic of Snyder's comic book adaptation style, Morton highlights WB executives' interest in framing said style as the reason Snyder's films often fail to be true financial blockbusters. As one anonymous exec said of *Watchmen*, "Zack's slavish attention to detail in making this a literal translation is what ultimately doomed the film. He cared more about the appeasement of the fanboy than a cohesive, coherent movie meant for

everyone.”⁶⁸⁵ Nonetheless, there is little doubt that Snyder’s style arises from his status as a comic fan and is meant for other fans.

Anastasia Salter and Mel Stanfill have declared Snyder the ultimate toxic fanboy, marking his “unwillingness to expand beyond a circumscribed approach”⁶⁸⁶ and aesthetic aggrandizement of ultra-violent, masculine heroes. The fandom scholars importantly mention the gulf between critical and fan reception of Snyder’s canon, citing that films like *Batman v Superman* and *Man of Steel*, as well as films listing him as producer like Ayer’s *Suicide Squad* and Whedon’s *Justice League*, all have around 20% higher audience scores than critical scores.⁶⁸⁷ A similar trend appears on *Rotten Tomatoes*, when narrowing focus to only Snyder-directed DCEU films: *Man of Steel* is rated 56% fresh by critics and 75% by audiences.⁶⁸⁸ *BvS* shows a 29% critical rating and 63% audience.⁶⁸⁹ There is no score available for the better-received Ultimate Edition of the film,⁶⁹⁰ however, and the theatrical cut was heavily edited-down due to studio mandates to reduce runtime by 30-minutes according to the film’s screenwriter, Chris Terrio.⁶⁹¹ The Snyder Cut’s streamed manifestation, *Zack Snyder’s Justice League*, has a 72% critical rating and a 93%⁶⁹² audience score as compared to the theatrical *Justice League*’s 39% critical and 63% audience ratio.⁶⁹³ For Snyder Cut fans, these results confirmed their long running assertions that WB’s interference, not Snyder’s style, was responsible for the DCEU’s troubles.

Concept Art of the SnyderVerse

Fabian Wagner, principal photographer on Snyder’s *Justice League*, claimed that Joss Whedon did not consult him on reshoots and discarded all but 10% of Snyder’s footage. Wagner added that the changes were so disappointing for him to watch that he cried throughout the theatrical release.⁶⁹⁴ Despite these well-intentioned changes, the film feels like a patchwork of

two visions slammed together from scene to scene. Whedon himself appeared to sarcastically reference *JL*'s multitudinous problems within the film's diegetic frame, as the opening scene features a homeless man clutching a cardboard sign which reads "I tried." At this moment, Whedon's name appears alongside Chris Terrio in the opening credits; both men were involved in script re-writes. This conspicuous credit placement in addition to Whedon liking a Tweet critical of main villain Steppenwolf's design suggest that, despite his best efforts to Marvel-ize *Justice League*, Whedon felt little pride in the end result.⁶⁹⁵ Further, Snyder had the advantage of establishing two prior films, cementing expectations that the DCEU would be a gritty place. WB's decision to lighten this vision came at the last minute, and Whedon was given only months to reshoot the film.⁶⁹⁶ WB attempted to force *JL* to transform from chapter three of a serialized Snyderverse into a reboot of Snyder's style. This was a task which not even Whedon's Marvel approach could fulfill in such a compressed timeline.

Multiple spliced-together videos have appeared on *YouTube*, juxtaposing similar scenes in the Snyder Cut trailer with Whedon's trailer. One of these scenes was the culmination of Snyder's early Vero teases, which revealed that the villain Darkseid had been cast for Snyder's Cut and totally omitted from the Whedon version. Dangling Darkseid before fans was powerful, as the character occupies a similar place in DC lore as Thanos does in the Marvel Universe; he is the ultimate evil and a means to usher in the typical "third act" CGI battle that superhero movies must contain by fiat. Being able to see Darkseid on screen was one of the major selling points of *ZSJJL*'s HBO Max release.

A short teaser, released months prior to the full trailer, revealed Wonder Woman walking through dimly lit, underground catacombs. Torchlight laps over a wall engraving nearby, and she stops to stare at the carvings, awe and terror creasing her brow. Surrounded by

ancient Greek lettering is a relief of Darkseid's head, with his red eyes staring implacably into the surrounding abyss.⁶⁹⁷ The teaser was released after the actor Ray Porter revealed that Snyder had cast him to play Darkseid in 2017, and that he had both voiced and provided mocap for the character in unused footage.⁶⁹⁸

Snyder also teased concept art of Darkseid throughout the years following *JL*'s theatrical release. In one 2018 post, a digital painting shows the character's origins as Uxas, Darkseid's younger self.⁶⁹⁹ Fan art imagined what the fully-grown character might look like in Snyder's signature color graded style. A digital painting by artist Christ Ave depicts a hulking behemoth with blocky, stone-like proportions to the character comics artist Jack Kirby originally created in 1970.⁷⁰⁰ He lumbers through a volcanic landscape with shavings of ash floating in the background, their red embers matching his glowering eyes. Aside from these few hints of warmth, Darkseid's body is cast in a grey, dark blue and black to match Snyder's distinct aesthetic.⁷⁰¹

Another of the director's Vero posts showcases a sketch of Darkseid's head, again drawn in a style reminiscent of Kirby's thick linework. This time, the character's eyes give off a red energy, which encircles him and wafts into the blank space behind. Snyder showcased the sketch during a Vero livestream by queuing the image on his phone; the image is therefore intentionally conveyed at a small size and through a blurry laptop camera lens,⁷⁰² leaving fans room to speculate and fill in visual information lost in the grain. In displaying images evocative of Kirby's designs, Snyder seeks to reclaim the source material from Whedon, paying tribute to it and adding his own spin once the design is translated into a CGI construct. It is as if these sketches are meant to prove that his wildly divergent vision is, in fact, rooted in and aware of the comic book lore.

Snyder's aesthetic changes are meant to arise from a vision that, while a variation on the comic originals, draws on and magnifies a dark edginess present from the books' inception. Darkseid has always been a menacing character, and to include him means utilizing an appropriately grim aesthetic. Thus, Snyder and Whedon both demonstrate their deeply different interpretation of the source material, showing that their films' aesthetic differences are not just confined to DCEU and MCU; they are different takes on comic book to film adaptation.

Driving at this point, fanmade comparison trailers showcase one scene where the Whedon cut displays Steppenwolf standing at the front of a Parademon army, lava-cracked earth smoldering beneath his feet. He raises an axe and swings it downward, offscreen, before the scene changes. The Snyder version duplicates the same scene, but replaces Steppenwolf with Darkseid performing the same downward strike.⁷⁰³ The two images, one from the past and another from a promised future, create a palimpsestic and polysemous whole wherein the future reenacts the past in order to absorb and replace it. As Baudrillard wrote, hyperreality can be conceptualized as a replica so convincing that it cannot be distinguished from its original.⁷⁰⁴

The fanmade juxtaposition highlights two moments from the Whedon and Snyder trailers which encapsulate the rift between the two directors and their approach to heroes. In the Snyder trailer, Batman stands atop a stone gargoyle, the viewer looking upward from a low angle shot. Batman gazes down, his cape fluttering in the wind with an overcast sky stretching out overhead. At the same time code, the Whedon trailer shows the notoriously panned scene of Batman laying flat on his back and attempting to rite himself after Superman nearly crushed his face. He says "Yeah, something's definitely bleeding," while his Snyderverse counterpart continues to observe from on high, as if regarding his brightly-lit Whedonverse double with contempt.⁷⁰⁵ In this comparison, the Snyder Cut hails a longstanding trope in DC comics: that the

“Trinity” of Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman are depicted in godlike terms. As in most of their classic comic appearances, he often depicts them from a low angle, with the viewer gazing upward.

Batman’s first comic book appearance in *Detective Comics* #27 (1939) features the hero at a distance, swinging from his grappling hook.⁷⁰⁶ His cape flares into the stylized, yellow sky and he holds a mobster in a headlock with his free arm. In the foreground, the viewer peeks over the shoulders of two mobsters who eye this bizarre scene from a distant rooftop, holding their guns at the ready. Batman is an almost otherworldly presence here, suspended midflight with his feet tucked upward and the line of his grappling hook extending off the page, attaching to an unseen edifice.⁷⁰⁷ He is a hero who descends from above to capture Gotham’s miscreants. He looks down upon and judges their foul deeds, and they cannot but gaze upward at him in awe. As rhetorician Brian Snee observes, immortal figures cannot be approached and are best viewed remotely, for their distance preserves our idealization.⁷⁰⁸

Superman’s first appearance in *Action Comics* #1 (1938) offers a similar visual arrangement.⁷⁰⁹ In the distance, his blue-and-red caped figure lifts a car and smashes it into a nearby rockface. Onlookers flee, and one runs into the foreground holding the sides of his head in panic, his red necktie flapping in the breeze. Clearly, the average mortal is meant to fear and respect these printed deities. Wonder Woman’s first appearance on a comic book cover in *Sensation Comics* #1 (1942) saw the character leaping toward a group of three mafia men.⁷¹⁰ Sparks fly from her wrist bracelets as she deflects a hail of bullets. Perhaps more tellingly than in Batman or Superman’s first covers, Diana is encircled by a yellow disc, which stands in as an abstract halo. Here, too, is a hero who stands above the common citizen and who passes judgement on law breakers.

Whedon's attempt to make the League human and relatable through brighter colors and quippier dialogue stands in contrast to the odd traditionalism of Snyder's vision. Snyder's rendition fetishizes not only cinematic shots that replicate comic panels but also distances heroes from the audience by restraining any humor or light heartedness even as it dims color palettes. Another comparison in the Whedon and Snyder trailers sees the camera panning over a post-apocalyptic Metropolis. In Snyder's version, the sky is a white-ish blue, and buildings jut from the horizon like broken teeth. The Whedon version of this scene, which is Batman's nightmare vision of a future ruled by an evil Superman, applied a candied overlay filter. The clouds above are a saturated red and white.⁷¹¹

Whedon's tonally and aesthetically lighter *JL* adheres to pre-established cinematic conventions from the early Marvel Cinematic Universe that he helped to define. This includes expectations that superheroes should be inspiring and recognizably good as in Richard Donner and Brian Singer's respective Superman films. Snyder appears to be the postmodernist, the revolutionary who wants to upset the highly conservative world of superheroes by making the genre's iconic Trinity edgier and darker. However, when considered in terms of Snyder's almost obsessive fetishization of comics as source material, he is the more conservative of the two directors. He seeks to diverge from filmic canon while adhering to comic book canon. His grim take echoes something of the 1930s and 40s, when heroes such as Batman and Superman would sometimes kill evildoers without acknowledgement of the moral weight behind killing. Nonetheless, a Superman who kills directly or through wanton destruction is a fraught notion in modern times.

Superman's Black Suit

While many of the changes offered in Snyder's cut are of interest only to his diehard supporters, those imbued with wider-ranging appeal among comic film fans are undoubtedly connected to Darkseid and Superman. In Superman's case, *BvS* adapted the iconic comic book story, *The Death of Superman*. The arc features the mutated Kryptonian Doomsday, who journeys to earth and forces Superman into a confrontation that results in both characters' deaths. In the follow-up storyline, *Reign of the Supermen*, Kal-el is resurrected and wears a stylized black and silver suit and long hair in a look emblematic of DC's 1990s-era push toward edgy transformations for Golden-Age heroes. Snyder confirmed his plan to introduce the resurrected Superman in The Snyder Cut when he posted a picture of Henry Cavill wearing the black suit in December of 2019, with the caption "My Superman."⁷¹² The image offered a glimpse of what could have been, especially when read as a mournful follow up to a similar Instagram post Cavill made to promote the theatrical *Justice League* in August of 2016. The image was an extreme close-up of the "S" logo on Superman's costume, colored in black.

In typical fashion, Snyder replied to fan posts on Vero and Twitter, remarking that he possessed a slew of comparable images, since "the film is 4 fucking hours."⁷¹³ This statement brushed up against the theatrical cut's scaled-back runtime of two hours, referencing the fact that *Justice League* was originally supposed to be released in three parts, with *Justice League Part II* releasing June 14, 2019.⁷¹⁴ The HBO Max *ZSJJL* was at one time rumored to have a six hour runtime. Fans and media outlets initially speculated that it would either be two theatrical-length films worth of material released in six episodic parts or a single, marathon-like film.⁷¹⁵ Snyder poked fun at this idea in a March 2020 livestream in which he viewed and commented on the *BvS* Director's Cut, saying "I think they should make a sequel to this movie someday, that would be amazing. Yeah, I wanna know what happens to these guys [. . .]."⁷¹⁶

In whimsically failing to acknowledge Whedon's theatrical sequel, Snyder feigned ignorance of *Justice League*'s messy fate, implying that WB's Whedon release simply did not count. Snyder's disdain for Whedon's cut became increasingly apparent after a livestreamed Justice Con panel in 2020. Snyder Cut fans, who had organized the panel themselves, asked their idol if he planned to use any of Whedon's reshoots.⁷¹⁷ Snyder's reply left little room for reconciling the two directors' visions: "I would destroy the movie. I would set it on fire before I use a single frame that I did not photograph. I would literally blow that fucking thing up."⁷¹⁸ He later added in a Vero post that he hoped his cut would simply "wipe that [2017] version out of existence."⁷¹⁹

The Insatiable SnyderVerse

WB CEO Kevin Tsujihara stepped down after a co-worker accused him of sexual harassment, and Ann Sarnoff ascended to leadership in June 2019. Sarnoff summarily experienced the fan phenomenon Tsujihara had attempted to ignore since 2017, as Snyder Cut fans plastered Sarnoff's personal Twitter page with requests. The fans urged new management to recognize the Snyder Cut's worth in a variety of ways. Fans hired a plane to tow a banner reading "WB: #ReleaseTheSnyderCut of Justice League" over San Diego Comic-Con in July 2019. Another airplane circled WB headquarters in Burbank, trailing a banner with the text "ANN SARNOFF, PLEASE #RELEASE THE SNYDER CUT."⁷²⁰ Photos of the SDCC flyover appeared in response to Sarnoff's unrelated Twitter comments, with the Snyder Cut plane towing its banner seemingly ad infinitum in posted succession. Founding Snyder Cut Movement member Fiona Zheng's fan page, ForSnyderCut, claimed that a fan paid \$1,170 for the plane to circle SDCC for two hours.⁷²¹ Project Comic-Con, a collection of Snyder Cut fans who targeted SDCC as a venue to advertise their unfilm, took credit for the stunt. They also set up a booth in

the convention hall to promote both the release and a GoFundMe campaign for suicide prevention in Autumn Snyder's honor.⁷²²

The Snyder Movement takes on a near-religious quality with their various charity walks, protest gatherings, and flyovers. Fans hail from across the globe, bridging oceans with their common devotion. Fandom itself, especially for fans separated from one another by great distance, can foster feelings of what Will Brooker dubs *Heimat*, or the sense of nostalgia and belonging associated with having a homeland. Brooker compare this pseudo-religious experience to the lake Lough Derg pilgrimage in Ireland. This journey involves overseas Irish folk, who are disconnected from their originating country, travelling back to Lough Derg. There they perform devotions for months at a time.⁷²³

Heimat is not just conceptual. It is also spatial. It offers the comparatively rare chance to relocate oneself from the digital online realm and into a physical space. This, in turn, bolsters an inner, personal space and interpersonal connections.⁷²⁴ Group identification is often bolstered by paying homage to a sacred object which serves as a physical anchor for one's unity with likeminded others.⁷²⁵ There exists a feeling of profound unity which comes from being present and standing alongside other fans. This unity is expressed among fans who march for charity, journey to SDCC to put up customized Snyder Cut promotional signs, or remotely gather to watch Snyder's Vero live discussion of *Man of Steel* at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷²⁶ A sense of home is the driving locus that energizes the movement by recognizing and rewarding fans' devotional behavior.

The Snyder Cut was not an existent text, but a textual field of scattered pieces orbiting the same conceptual center. Fans of such porous texts "gain new tools to [. . .] reconcile their object of fandom with their expectations, beliefs and sense of self."⁷²⁷ Fan gatherings supply the

interest necessary to sustain the movement's long march from failure to a far-off, envisioned success, or from unproduction to imagined production. Fandom is, for many people, temporary and exhibits a cyclical nature, moving in and out of fans' lives as time passes.⁷²⁸ The lifelong fan of any media object is likely the exception and not the rule. A unique aspect of the Snyder fandom has been the ability to extend not only their own cyclical interest over a period of years, but to extend their repeated fan protesting and succeed in making their unproduced, transmedia objects into an official release. Their real-world protests and media coverage of these activities provided proof of bodies in this fannish space. Mobilized fans became evidence that "the end of the line is worth the wait."⁷²⁹ With time and dedicated agitation, the movement's initial goal at last materialized.

Ann Sarnoff eventually gave in to fan demands, and she and WB film studio chair Toby Emmerich announced that the Snyder Cut would finally be released during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resultant low theater attendance and The Cut's four-hour run time meant that it would be an HBO Max streaming exclusive.⁷³⁰ This move was in keeping with WB's newfound interest in simultaneously streaming all 2021 theatrical cuts, with streamed versions being removed from HBO Max after one month.⁷³¹ The Snyder Cut's popularity among fans was not the only driver behind the decision.

WB's COO Carolyn Blackwood regarded the company's 2021 film slate as underwhelming with weak earning potential. She believed streaming could spare the company the bad optics of repeated box office flops while assuaging WB parent company AT&T's concerns about low theater traffic. Several high-profile directors panned Blackwood's idea. Christopher Nolan called the strategy financially nonsensical and quipped "Some of our industry's biggest filmmakers and most important movie stars went to bed the night before [the

Dec. 3, 2020 announcement] thinking they were working for the greatest movie studio and woke up to find out they were working for the worst streaming service.”⁷³² Nonetheless, the financial, political and fan impetus to finish the Snyder Cut all seemed to coalesce at once, providing an exigent moment for the project’s completion.

Deborah Snyder revealed that most of the Snyder Cut was previously recorded and required extensive VFX work.⁷³³ WB ultimately furnished a budget of \$70M to complete it.⁷³⁴ Snyder stated that he did not receive director’s pay for The Cut and spent the budget on post-production and brief new scenes.⁷³⁵ The *Rolling Stone*’s report mentioned unnamed WB insiders’ accounts of how Snyder strong-armed the studio into giving him a far larger reshoot and VFX budget than the \$40 million initially offered.⁷³⁶ Snyder supposedly secured the increase by threatening to delete scenes that had already been marketed for the HBO Max release.

Snyder then upset WB’s plans to use Martian Manhunter in future projects by adding the character in a new scene that did not appear in his original *JL* script. Anonymous sources at WB believed the brief chat between Bruce Wayne and Manhunter, toward *ZSJL*’s conclusion, had been hastily shot in Snyder’s back yard. This was probably in response to fan demands to see the character. Expensive reshoots were already part and parcel with the *Justice League* brand, with Whedon’s reshoots of the 2017 version exceeding \$25M, making the theatrical cut the fifth most expensive film of all time during its release. If the budgets of Snyder’s initial *JL* effort, Whedon’s reshoots, and The Snyder Cut reshoots were counted as a single budget, the sum cost would be \$370M (not including marketing costs).

To contextualize what already sounds like a staggering number, the top three most expensive films as of 2022 were the \$422M *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron* at \$386M and *Avengers: Endgame* at \$350M.⁷³⁷ Since WB has refused

to release *ZSJL*'s earnings, how many subscribers it drew or views it garnered, it remains impossible to know whether it was a hit or a flop.⁷³⁸ As fans have opined, it is in WB's interest to keep watch data secret, regardless of the film's viewership. If it performed well, publicizing its success would only reinvigorate SnyderVerse fans, who would pressure WB to work with a problematic director who had yielded executive headaches since 2017. If it underperformed, hiding the data would be the best route to avoid social media humiliation and fans blaming WB's sparse marketing campaign for *ZSJL*'s failure. As a general pattern, media producers move between empowering fans via collaboration and censoring fans when they step out of line. When it comes to collaboration, the unequal power dynamic between producer and fan usually results in attempted corporate cooptation of a fan movement. Once a corporation tries to coopt a fan movement, the company begins lambasting fans for being too entitled and asking for too much.⁷³⁹ There are fewer chances to "make fans punk again,"⁷⁴⁰ as Suzanne Scott writes. Producers attempt to buy fans with promises of access and, for a limited few, employment in the culture industry itself.⁷⁴¹

One year after *ZSJL*'s HBO Max release, WB execs began to air their regrets. Since Sarnoff's exit, it had become clear that calling *ZSJL* the final part in a four-part franchise (preceded by *Man of Steel*, *BvS*, and Whedon's *Justice League*) had failed to stymie fan demands for a full restoration of Snyder's DCEU. Fans still wanted the impossible: for Snyder to return as DC Films' version of Kevin Feige so he could finish *Justice League Part II* and *III*.⁷⁴² The strangely real impossibility of seeing *Zack Snyder's Justice League* stream into their homes against all odds stoked the movement to once again reach for any other unproduced DCEU content that WB framed as forbidden. Sarnoff's conciliatory tone is best understood not as a

categorical misstep. Rather, it was a “limited and deeply conditioned embrace”⁷⁴³ of fan culture designed to secure an audience that WB could monetize during the pandemic’s financial pinch.

In the age of digital fandom, where convergence culture sees increased ties between media creators and consumers, media scholar Suzanne Scott, sees producer responses to fan desires not as uniformly exploitative and one-sided, but as contradictory.⁷⁴⁴ Executives, for all their wealth and influence, are still mortal. They cannot always be master manipulators who are one step ahead of consumer dupes. Sometimes they side with and encourage fan demands. Sometimes their encouragement backfires. In other instances, executives attempt to push back against and corral rebellious fandoms who refuse to respond to corporate olive branches with self-effacing gratitude.⁷⁴⁵ Sometimes, executives appease and resist fans in rapid succession, reversing course in panic and at breakneck speeds. When media producers promote “gestures of dissent”⁷⁴⁶ from fandom, it can be an emergency backup measure to ameliorate dissent by giving away enough to keep fans happy without surrendering so much ground that fan demands threaten industry positions. It can be a “mercenary effort”⁷⁴⁷ to covertly inject production narratives into fan circles, thereby steering formerly troublesome fans in a direction useful for the industry.⁷⁴⁸ In approving the Snyder Cut’s release as *ZSJL*, Warner executives failed to realize how many concessions it would take to satisfy Snyder fans. They bestowed a single film on fans who wanted a whole universe of unmade films.

Sarnoff’s conciliatory tone had seemingly upset the balance of power between the realm of executives and fans. The company now believed its accommodating behavior had led fans to read *ZSJL*’s release as a victory over WB, rather than an offer of goodwill that would be repaid with praise and social media promotion of the company’s fan service. Instead, WB had unintentionally encouraged fans to take ever oppositional attitudes toward the brand. WB

leadership at last understood that, to Snyder's followers, they were seen not as benevolent granters of wishes, but as inhuman, corporate ghouls whose incompetence had mangled beloved DC characters for too long.

Sarnoff and Emmerich's desire to silence fan demands for *Justice League II* and *III* thus became impossible. *ZSJL* had included prolific easter eggs, plot setup and teases for narrative points to be expanded upon in these two films. *ZSJL* added an entire second movie's worth of runtime to the theatrical version, which then-CEO Kevin Tsujihara mandated to be no more than two hours back in 2017.⁷⁴⁹ Releasing *The Cut* was akin to a wider-scale version of a move David Zaslav would make with *Batgirl* in 2022: cancelling the film franchise, but allowing a one-time-only, funerary screening of the scuttled film for production crew only.⁷⁵⁰ After *The Cut*'s release and intermittent fan demands to #RestoreTheSnyderVerse, WB would accuse Snyder of sending an aid to steal hard drives containing *Justice League* footage after his dismissal from *JL* in 2017. WB claimed that representatives asked for the footage's return multiple times and were ignored by the Snyder family.⁷⁵¹

While fans got to see Snyder's *ZSJL*, WB's Sarnoff situated this as a funeral for Snyder's overall franchise, calling it the conclusion to Snyder's universe.⁷⁵² Further, the appeasement spiraled into online requests to produce Snyder's discarded *Justice League 2* and *3*,⁷⁵³ the David Ayer Cut of *Suicide Squad*,⁷⁵⁴ and the defunct *Batman vs. Deathstroke* movie that Ben Affleck briefly signed on to direct.⁷⁵⁵ Snyder would also reject the notion that WB released his cut out of any kind of compassion for the fanbase, saying instead that the company only greenlit his project in the hopes that this would turn his fanbase into HBO Max subscribers.⁷⁵⁶ Reporting in 2021 declared that a sizable number of subscribers likely joined in the wake of *ZSJL*'s appearance. CEO Jason Kilar claimed that HBO Max's revenue had surpassed Disney plus, with over 41

million subscribers according to internal analytics.⁷⁵⁷ At the time, he credited the direct-to-streaming strategy. These claims are doubtful, as direct-to-streaming would be scrapped in 2022 under Discovery CEO David Zaslav's ownership.⁷⁵⁸

AT&T leadership saw a bloodbath of cost cutting at DC comics in 2020, with mass layoffs and title cancellations occurring only two weeks before DC Fandome.⁷⁵⁹ DC was evicted from WB's Burbank headquarters to a hot desk office setting with comic artists, editors and writers crowding around shared desks.⁷⁶⁰ WB itself fared little better. CEO and chair of Warner Media Studios and Networks Group, Ann Sarnoff, was quickly ousted when AT&T sold WB to Discovery in early April 2022.⁷⁶¹ This was perhaps due to HBO Max's lower than expected subscription numbers and the \$77M price tag attached to *The Snyder Cut*'s release on the same platform. Warner Media CEO Jason Kilar and HBO Max General Manager Andy Forssell were also ousted alongside six other Warner executives.⁷⁶²

Discovery's takeover brings a direction drastically different from AT&T's, which sought to dismantle the DCEU and abandon a shared universe in pursuit of disconnected, individual, character-driven films like *Joker* (2019) and *The Batman* (2022). Rather than continue in this vein, CEO David Zaslav voiced interest in reforming an interconnected, DC film universe, suggesting that DC should create its own film content in similar fashion to Marvel Studios. He also echoed something many SnyderCut fans had observed, intimating that Superman should take a central role in the DC film universe as a first step toward unlocking the full potential of DC's character library.⁷⁶³ Whether Snyder will play any role is uncertain, but Zaslav's announcements seem to parallel what SnyderCut fans tried and failed to materialize in comic book form.

CHAPTER 4: DEFENDING THE SNYDERVERSE

LightCast and Negotiating Fan Imaginaries

In 2021, popular *YouTube* fan channel LightCast Podcast took up the task of transcribing Zack Snyder's unproduced plans into comic form.⁷⁶⁴ Called *The Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic*, the fan collaboration sought to use DC artist Jim Lee and writer Geoff Johns's storyboards to create original fan-made comics. Proceeds would be donated to The America Foundation for Suicide Prevention and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse.⁷⁶⁵ The project received no endorsement from WB or Snyder himself. However, it gained legitimacy when Darkseid actor Ray Porter announced that he would narrate the stories. LightCast released a trailer of comic panels.

The sequence opens with The Flash standing before Batman, the pair flanked by softly glowing blue screens. One displays the hooded Desaad (Darkseid's vizier), the other Darkseid's visage. Flash and Batman wear the same tactical gear each sported in The Snyder Cut's post-credits Nightmare sequence. A Gregorian chant builds as the screens pulse and crackle with static.⁷⁶⁶ The artwork itself mimics DC's house style used during DC's New 52 comics (2011 – 2016); even a cursory glance might remind longtime comic geeks of Jim Lee, Doug Mahnke, Jason Fabok, Ivan Reis or Rafael Sandoval's pencil lines.⁷⁶⁷ As fans quickly pointed out, though, Dreamscape's artwork was more than inspired by Lee's style. At best, these comics represented homage without attribution and, at worst, they ventured into the blasphemous realm of tracing.

In Chapter 4, I am concerned with how the Snyder movement reacted differently to their own fans' questionable behavior versus Snyder's own questionable behavior. In cases where fellow fans stepped out of line, Snyder fans mobilized rules which they based on ethics drawn

from the world of comic books. They then transcribed these comic-based regulations onto misbehaving fans' internet activities, shaming and jettisoning them from the fandom. Thus, the typical response to unruly fans within the Snyder Movement has been transmedia regulation imposed by other fans.

I discuss transmedia regulation here as a fannish tactic wherein commonly understood rules and ethics are imported from an entertainment medium and used to justify real-world punishment of misbehaving fans. In the case of LightCast fans who plagiarized DC comic panels for their own fan project, Snyder fans invoked comic industry taboos against copying other illustrators' work. Fans' lack of authenticity was thus censured.

In my second case study, one of the founding members of the Snyder Cut movement attempted to bar women and Muslim fans from participating. Other founding members invoked the ethics of Superman to remove him from the movement. Top fan leadership's racist sentiments were thus censured.

A different story emerges when considering Snyder fans' reaction to their idol's questionable behavior. When *The Rolling Stone* discovered that a significant portion of Snyder's Twitter followers were bots, fans defended Snyder by trying to discredit the reports. Snyder's supposed lack of authenticity was thus defended. Similarly, when Snyder wore a t-shirt with a quotation attributed to Mussolini, fans defended him against media outlets. Snyder's far-right flirtations were thus defended. In both cases, fans supported Snyder despite his provocative behavior, while similar actions from fans were met with punishment. Not only does this demonstrate how the Snyder Cut fandom judged Snyder's controversies differently. It also shows that fans reacted with regulatory fervor when accusations were made internally, by fans against

fans. When media sources levied accusations at Snyder, fans banded together against an outsider/persecutor and defended Snyder as one of their own.

In the world of popular Hollywood blockbusters, there is an ongoing debate among fans as to whether directors and studios should be considered stewards of their works rather than owners with the power to alter a canonical work and release changed versions as they see fit.⁷⁶⁸ The question is, can fans “possess” an imagined singularity of a beloved film? In the SnyderVerse’s case, fans seek to both wrest creative control from WB and deliver it to Snyder and to will his untarnished ideas into being. As Kunze has pointed out, most films are adaptations and as such involve bringing together “authorship across various media and thus production cultures.”⁷⁶⁹ This is certainly the case for comic book films themselves, and there is another level of added complexity regarding adaptation of an unmade film universe’s storyboards back into comic form for the purpose of reimagining them as a film. Perhaps it stands to reason, then, that LightCast’s artists would view the comic book source material for these storyboards as available for communal use. Their fellow fans were less sure.

With a few Reddit and Twitter posts juxtaposing the LightCast project with various Justice League comic panels, the project’s plagiarism was laid bare. Once-lauded LightCast artists were excoriated and shamed before thousands of their peers on one hand. LightCast’s lack of citation or tagging the original artists in their Twitter posts was upheld as their glaring transgression. These views were far from uniform, though, as universal agreement on copyright is nearly impossible to find within any fandom, especially comic fans. As Rebecca Tushnet writes, transformative use of copyrighted material occurs when fan works significantly change an origin source. Transformative use is typically respected as a legitimate endeavor among fan communities, as it offers a unique take on a canonical work.⁷⁷⁰

Others defended LightCast for what some fans believed should be fair use, particularly since the group supposedly intended to donate all proceeds. Fans who viewed this as foremost a charity endeavor believed that copying was forgivable if it was for a good cause. Originality and the idea of unethical stealing is thus de-emphasized in these fan figurations. While tracing photographic and illustrated references common in professional illustration, fanworks struggle to define the barriers between tracing and reference, fair use and plagiarism, as well as profiteering and charity. One post by @IshanSangha features a Jim Lee Superman drawing, with the character seen from waist-up, staring dramatically off-panel and smiling. Then, in a Wolfman-like dissolve, the art slowly fades into a nearly-identical panel from Dreamscapes. The perpetrators have been exposed, and there is perhaps a hint of horror in their exposure.⁷⁷¹

Particularly illustrative of the dueling conversation between fan advocates in the pro-fair use camp versus anti-plagiarists is the Reddit discussion board titled “The Controversy with Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic.”⁷⁷² One user comments that artists shouldn’t mind if amateurs sampled their professional work, comparing it to untrained musicians copying a professional drummer’s beats in order to improve. “I see it as a fan project where anything goes.”⁷⁷³ Along these communal use lines of argumentation, which seek to dissolve copyright’s importance, are claims that LightCast artists were motivated by the genuinely good cause of bolstering in suicide prevention and that this redeems, in some sense, their copying. It is interesting, however, that the act of copying here is still situated as needing rehabilitation. As one user states, “They actually do care about American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and went about it in the wrong way. Two things can be true at once [. . .].”⁷⁷⁴ Others disagree, expressing their moral disgust at LightCast for using fundraising for AFSP to protect themselves from criticism and reducing the organization’s cause to “nothing but a cheap excuse to get a movie

made.”⁷⁷⁵ These users also accuse LightCast of damaging Zack Snyder’s reputation along with that of the greater #RestoreTheSnyderVerse movement.

General consensus on this anti-plagiarism side still argues along moral grounds: “Honesty is an admirable virtue. Lying is not,” one user puts it.⁷⁷⁶ Fans in this camp seek to set boundaries between homage and plagiarism by referring to cases where these two are very obviously separated. DC artists like Todd McFarlane, for example, who re-drew the cover of *Action Comics* #1 with Spawn lifting a car instead of Superman, was creating homage. Zack Snyder’s use of a slow-motion sequence wherein Batman leaps from a building and poses with one arm outstretched just as a lightning bolt crackles behind him, is a filmic homage to Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns* (TDKR) graphic novel cover.

The obvious complication with such framing of how homage can be defined, though, is that these examples are neither amateur productions nor do they draw from material that would be obscure to the point of unrecognizability for fans. *Action Comics* #1 and *TDKR*’s covers are iconic and widely known images, and it might be said that they can thus be homage without need for attribution; the attribution would be made redundant by the image’s sheer proliferation and recognizability. A random Jim Lee panel of Wonder Woman’s face, though, is far from iconic and attribution to the original artist would be appropriate.

LightCast’s first response claimed that the traced pieces were only 1% of the artwork in store, and encouraged fans to reserve judgement until the greater bulk of original works were finished and released. An excerpt from their public statement presents the allegedly plagiarized art as homage: “[. . .] the visual goal of this project is to pay homage to the wonderful artists that are part of the DC World. To give clarity on what that means, there are 12 parts to this motion comic and each part will have a different art flow to show the diversity in the DC World and the

amazing art that is created from passionate fans.”⁷⁷⁷ Although the stated 99% of the remaining fanart was never released, LightCast’s statement indicates that each part of the fan work would have drawn from the visual styles of a different iconic DC artist, not just Jim Lee.

This failed to shake fan criticism, which fixated on the traced pieces and ignored the fact that pro artists like Boss Logic were set to be involved in Dreamscapes. In this view, the amateur artist’s tracing had already tainted the whole endeavor, and attempts to rationalize plagiarism as “inspired, not plagiarized” was merely the tired and oft revisited mantra of lazy hacks.⁷⁷⁸ Still others poked fun at the dubious ethicality behind tying one’s copying to a cause, parodically asking “How can we be bad if we donate to charity?”⁷⁷⁹

Some fans dismissed the hysteria attached to the alleged tracing, suggesting that the project’s decline was not really rooted in tracing per se, but in the fact that Dreamscape’s panels were based on storyboards owned by Warner DC and previously exhibited at a similarly-titled art show in Dallas. Another user points out that the project’s use of professional art, whether plagiarism or homage, likely would not have been as big a deal to fans or to Warner/DC if not for the involvement of industry professionals like Ray Porter (Darkseid). “It’s an entirely different case when you have a legit actor from the SnyderVerse working on your project,” one user comments.⁷⁸⁰

Various YouTube fan accounts poured over the imperiled project, analyzing its potential for success or failure and whether or not LightCast had indeed committed plagiarism. The *YouTube* Podcast “Hollywood After Dark” noted how directors Matthew Miranda and Marouf Husain had debated whether even to use the Justice League name in their fan film’s title because of font similarities with the title card of WB’s theatrical *Justice League*. They also opined that involvement by Ray Porter and other SAG members like stuntman and voice actor Richard

Cetrone were evidence that the SnyderVerse was indeed defunct. Surely Hollywood pros would not be involved in a fan film unless their official contracts with the Justice League franchise were not being renewed. The podcasters then rationalize why this must be the case, even considering that actors can legally participate in public events while dressed as their film characters, as in the case of Chris Evans appearing as Captain America for the Make a Wish Foundation. These appearances do not break contracts because they do not add to or alter the narratives contained in the official franchise form which they stem. This suggests that industry professionals' participation, while exciting to non-industry fans, carries with it a funerary quality; a fan work with industry backing is like a tiny sea bird picking at the carcass of a whale.

The Reddit group r/DC_Cinematic, a page with around 262,000 users at the time of the LightCast controversy, duked out the copyright debate on the discussion board "Many images from 'The Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic' are traced." The forum begins with a splash page of the Green Lantern Corps from *Dreamscapes*. In it, Hal Jordan occupies the center of the page, with fellow Lanterns Kilowog, Jon Stewart and Tomar-Re following behind, each of them blurred out in a shallow focus depiction of Jordan as squad leader.

It was perhaps the conspicuous poses of the supporting cast that led fans to suspect that Dreamscape artists Mariano de Venezia and VFX artist Luis Vedregal had deliberately blurred these characters in order to cover their tracks. Jon Stewart in particular, with his hands balled into fists and shouting face, appeared nearly identical to a Rafa Sandoval drawing of the same character in the Green Lantern Corps comic. A close-up of Wonder Woman wearing gold armor was juxtaposed next to a similarly-posed Ivan Reis Wonder Woman. A close-up of Superman likewise appeared next to a Jim Lee sketch.

Hollywood After Dark comments that none of the drawings were quite similar enough to be considered tracing, but that they were “inspired by” their source material, as LightCast themselves Tweeted in response to fan criticisms. The podcasters also suppose that some drawings, like one of Flash in a running pose, were quintessential action poses for certain characters and therefore could not be accurately compared to the single Jason Fabok drawing that appeared on Twitter as ‘evidence’ of plagiarism. That is, a smoking gun in one fan’s mind may be little other than an archetypal pose used hundreds of times by different artists in different decades.

Some Twitter users, like residentgringo (V2) will #RestoreTheSnyderVerse, claimed that the only thing wrong with the project was the use of “Justice League” in the title. It should be renamed to “The Dreamscapes of Zack Snyder” to avoid a trademark claim at WB. Other fans also tried to give LightCast some benefit of the doubt, but Twitter response to LightCast’s first defensive Tweet were less accommodating. Fans’ ire focused on the fact that LightCast only admitted drawing inspiration from industry pros like Fabok and Lee after members of the Snyder Cut community publicly called them out. They could have absolved themselves of wrongdoing by simply writing “after Jim Lee” on the concept art, thereby marking it as homage, or so one strain of argument went. Others chose to issue ominous warnings: “Y’all were caught in 10k Bruh. You gotta change your nationality after that ain’t no way ya’ll are gonna come back from that.”⁷⁸¹ One user even compared LightCast to Greg Land, a professional Marvel Comics artist who has traced photographs of swimsuit models when drawing female characters.⁷⁸²

The vitriolic response from some fans, citing the division among Snyder Cut fans who attack and cancel personalities who run afoul of their movement versus those who do not. Such a response from the militant wing of #RestoreTheSnyderCut raise questions as to why an amateur

fan project should be held to stricter plagiarism standards than industry pros have been historically. Erik Larsen's uncredited Herb Trimpe covers are one of many instances in which comic pros have copied legacy creators without noting the act. Illustration itself is typically learned by initially copying a refined artist's line work, page setup and kinetic movements of the illustrated body, far more than other art forms such as figure drawing or painting. The idea is to build a personal cache of poses, correct proportions, bodily shapes by following those with developed skills until one at last possesses enough experience to walk on one's own, so to speak.

The fact that major comic publishers like Marvel and DC tout a "house style" modeled after their popular artists incentivizes new talent to take after their forebearers. Illustration is in this sense a fundamentally conservative medium which encourages newcomers to look up to their cartooning idols and learn by example rather than attempting to reinvent the illustrative wheel or veer into an utterly alien style. If copying is, to an extent, part of industry pro culture, why then are fans so much less willing to overlook similar practices from fellow fans?

The simplest answer is that fan artists are not pro artists and are not afforded commensurate respect, even from their own fan supporters. Additionally, much of this copying culture took place prior to social media and the ability to instantly call out an artist for strafing too closely beside the lines of a great predecessor. Artists who have traced or near-copied other art in different mediums have not fared well, as controversy surrounding Greg Land's tracing of swimsuit models exemplifies. If artists of the 1930s through 1990s had plied their trade under the panopticon of Twitter fans that exist in 2022, would they have been able to "get away with" copying aspects of others' work? To what degree can fans reasonably malign copying in a medium like illustration, which is to some extent built on copying? None of these conundrums has a clear answer, yet fans vociferously rejected LightCast's attempts to do so, to the extent that

some fans appeared to take a few obviously copied conceptual pieces as evidence that others were undoubtedly the result of copying.

Whether Dreamscape's Flash concept art was a copy of a Jim Lee pose or the recreation and distillation of an iconic running pose did not matter to certain sets of fans. It is perhaps telling that Twitter commenters would often post a juxtaposition shot accusing LightCast of copying Lee, only to be corrected by another commenter that the artwork being compared was actually David Finch. That commenter was then re-corrected by another claiming that the original art belonged to Jason Fabok. There is a similarity in each of these artist's individual styles, and while they aren't known for outright copying each other's poses, a common stylistic DNA exists.

Lee achieved such tremendous fame in the 1990s with X-Men #1 (a comic that is still the top-selling book of all time, with 8,186,500 copies sold)⁷⁸³ that his influence seems incalculable when considering the thousands of young artists who learned to build and refine their own styles by looking to his work. Ambiguity surrounding tracing's definition was not enough to deter a vocal contingent of Snyder Cut fans from pillorying the project and calling for its discontinuation. Fan pressure continued to build, and LightCast addressed the accusations a second time, posting to Twitter that they would cancel Dreamscapes. Their full statement painted the decision as the result of both fan criticism and unnamed legal wrangling from WB⁷⁸⁴:

"It comes with a heavy heart that we have to announce 'The Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic' has been officially cancelled. As fan of the SnyderVerse, we and a group of fellow fans took it upon ourselves to see a continuation of the cancelled story of Justice League come to life. With the

involvement of actors, artists, musicians and many others, we all agreed to give our talents and time for free achieve this goal and support the AFSP charity at the same time. What we did not foresee was the general uneasiness about the project from general public, some rare targeted harassment towards members of the team, the countless legalities we've dealt with & ultimately our own mistakes on certain parts of the project. We sincerely apologize to those of you who supported us along the way, and we acknowledge our shortcomings as highlighted by others. All work on the project has been ceased with all parties involved agreeing it is for the best. Many thanks to the supporters and those who held us accountable in our faults."⁷⁸⁵

Zack Snyder, Mussolini Fanboy?

“If I advance, follow me. If I retreat, kill me. If I die, avenge me.” This quote appeared on a custom-made promotional poster for *ZSJJL*'s release on streaming services outside of HBO Max. As usual, Snyder posted the image in his Vero feed.⁷⁸⁶ Subsequently, news outlets such as *CBR*,⁷⁸⁷ *Comic Book Movie*,⁷⁸⁸ *Game Rant*⁷⁸⁹ and others noted that the quote, although originally uttered by the anti-government French Revolutionary General Henri de la Rochejaquelein, was nonetheless popularized by Benito Mussolini. Outlets stopped short of directly stating that Snyder must be sympathetic to fascism, but the implication remained. It may seem odd that something like the SnyderVerse would become connected to politics in even a peripheral sense. Neither Justice League nor *ZSJJL* are overtly political, despite their generalized criticism of dictatorial regimes in the form of Darkseid and his empire on Apokalips.

Nearly any influential fandom has the tendency to become pre-political, or to potentially engender social change within a certain set of the populace.⁷⁹⁰ Non-political protest tactics within the SnyderVerse fandom do resemble political protest on the surface, with their fundraisers, advertising, billboards and float plane banners. As Lori Lopez finds, fans appropriate political protest tactics and use them as guides, mimicking the playbooks of viral reform campaigns.⁷⁹¹ Protest itself, as Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport write, is viewed within fandoms as an umbrella method for expressing disaffection with production companies' decisions.⁷⁹² It finds its origins in the late 1960s "Save Star Trek" letter writing campaign, in which series showrunner Gene Roddenberry asked fans to petition NBC to renew *Trek* for its second and third seasons, and unsuccessfully for a fourth season.⁷⁹³ While fan movements of this type would have been numerically smaller than, say, political protest movements in the 1960s, the passage of decades saw a reversal in this trend, with online fan activist fundraising seemingly surpassing the number of online political fundraisers.⁷⁹⁴

Fan movements in the modern era primarily focus on online petitions and fundraisers and skew away from contentious forms of in-person protest like picketing in large groups, holding and flying banners. The SnyderVerse movement has not only delved into physical, real-world protests but have also refused a non-contentious,⁷⁹⁵ standard operating procedure version of online protest. This allowed their extreme elements to troll and threaten WB executives on Twitter, albeit with some objection to these tactics among moderate organizer voices like Fiona Zheng.

Fan movements don't agitate for political change directly, but an intentional or not cultural change which is often rooted in industry practice. Globalization itself means that protests as a whole increasingly target private enterprise rather than the state, and fan movements have

also adopted this directional que from their political counterparts.⁷⁹⁶ Snyder fans seek the restoration of the SnyderVerse, which would require WB to become open to the idea of releasing extended director's cuts on streaming to supplement shorter, theatrical releases. Stripped of artifices like the specific director and film they are attached to, this subset of fans is at its core dedicated to the reification of fanboy auteur authority in comparison to studio-mandated editing.

One can easily imagine that Roland Barthes, who once called for authorial agency to be overthrown and supplanted with the reader's textual interpretations,⁷⁹⁷ might be disappointed with the kind of fan readership following Snyder. Here, fan authority over unmade texts only bolsters the author rather than empowering its own fans to create cultural narratives and subversive fanworks from the unmade work's fragments. Reification of the auteur's authority in fandom's digitally-driven age has parallels elsewhere. Henry Jenkins points out: San Diego Comic-Con, for instance, has re-centered creative professionals (especially from the film industry) at its center, while moving subcultural, fanwork activities like fanzine and fanart creation to the outer edges of the Con.⁷⁹⁸

A difference in the SnyderVerse movement is that it does not seek to uphold industry professionals writ large, but figures their favored creative voices as bastions of authenticity in the face of studio-mandated editing. Their commitment resides within the perception of the auteur's original and unchanged vision. Even Snyder himself is of secondary importance in comparison to the universe he started. As Jenkins puts it, "contrary to what producers may have told themselves, [fandom] knows exactly what it wants from genre entertainment and producers had better deliver it or face our collective scorn."⁷⁹⁹

Given the Snyder fandom's singular focus on their figurehead and his work, as well as their willingness to utilize violent rhetoric in an online setting, it follows that descriptors like

“Snyder Cult,”⁸⁰⁰ “right-wing fascist”⁸⁰¹ and “mob”⁸⁰² are affixed to their movement in online DC fan discourse and mainstream media coverage. Snyder himself is no stranger to accusations of being politically unhinged and a right-wing extremist, with film scholars pointing to proto-fascist themes in *300*. These perceptions have become common enough that the director has attempted to refute readings of himself as well as superheroes in general, insisting in a *Guardian* interview that he votes Democrat and regards his worldview as liberal. Of notions that his take on Batman and Superman endorsed a might makes right mentality, he countered:

“[Screenwriter] Chris Terrio and I talked a lot about how we superimposed Batman and Superman on society. We tried not to be judgmental in our morality, because that’s dangerous. When you strike a position and don’t have another perspective on the same event, it can be a slippery slope. When you’re doing something in which you can find lessons and hide lessons, it’s fundamentally important to be careful to not just have one point of view. Because people go into a movie like Justice League on the side of the Justice League. You tend to feel they’re right. They’re not called the Fascist League.”⁸⁰³

At the same time, Snyder has discussed his pro-Western and Christian themes as recurrent items in his film catalogue, saying that his Superman shares a common lineage with the story of Christ’s death and resurrection.⁸⁰⁴ Making these comments in spoken form in 2021 might be less controversial than making them on film in 2006, when the memory of President Bush’s comparison between the War on Terror and the Crusades was still fresher in the public imaginary.⁸⁰⁵ Leighton Grist opines that Snyder’s *300* was a tacit endorsement of the post-9/11

War on Terror and of a civilized, white West militarily confronting a despotic, Eastern Other in Xerxes' Persian Empire. Writing in 2018, Grist strangely finds evidence of Snyder's fascistic sympathies in former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's condemnation of *300*'s imperialist themes.⁸⁰⁶ It may be worth noting that, according to Human Rights Watch's own tally, Ahmedinejad himself presided over the extrajudicial killing of hundreds of political protesters after his 2009 election win.⁸⁰⁷

Whether or not Snyder's film catalogue does in fact endorse US imperialism, utilizing the words of a leader who murders his own people in the street would seem a poor approach for proving the case. Many other scholars have not just pointed to Snyder but to comic book fans and superheroes as romanticizing fascist themes. Among them, Brendan Bosch helpfully collects a list of factors characterizing populations that support fascistic, authoritarian governance. These begin with a widespread fear that society could crumble at any time, a faith in state-sanctioned leaders over agitators, demagogues and populists, and a strong disgust reaction to criminals who violate social order. In addition, a somewhat contradictory support of law enforcement officers coupled with the belief that the legal and governmental systems under which these officers labor is ineffectual, pusillanimous and corrupt. The belief in the use of violence against criminals is acceptable as long as it is given official sanction.⁸⁰⁸

The tendency to compare characters to Hitler in comics scholarship has been satirized in Chris Yogerst's work, which refutes what he sees as the prevailing presupposition in superhero scholarship broadly: that consumers who enjoy superhero fare on film and in comics are "useful idiots that unknowingly support a dictator disguised as a superhero."⁸⁰⁹ He also chastises critics who "rush to equate Batman with Hitler."⁸¹⁰ Burton adds that typical critiques of Snyder's

superhero and comic adaptations⁸¹¹ overlooks what should be the primary purpose behind any filmic adaptation: to represent as faithfully as possible the original medium on screen.⁸¹²

Perhaps the accusations of fascism surrounding The Snyder Cut relate primarily to the perception that Snyder either encouraged or did not do enough to discourage virulently noisome elements within his own fanbase. Some of the toxic Snyder fans circulated a photoshopped image of Geoff Johns, John Berg, Walter Hamada and Toby Emmerich's decapitated heads and sent the image to their Instagram and Twitter accounts, as well as their families' accounts.⁸¹³

When *Godzilla vs. Kong* released on March 31, 2021, a handful of Snyder fans (a self-identified forty-four) left one-star reviews on *Godzilla vs. Kong*'s IMDB page in response to Ann Sarnoff's decision not to continue the SnyderVerse.⁸¹⁴ Fans posted modified quotes from *BvS*'s Lex Luthor, writing "You don't need to have a silver bullet. But if you forge one, you don't need to depend on the kindness of Warner Bros."⁸¹⁵ Another posted a modified Joker quote: "We live in a society where honor is but a distant memory. Isn't that right, WB?"⁸¹⁶ Others stated simply "#RestoreTheSnyderVerse if you want good reviews on your next movie WB."⁸¹⁷

These negative reviews began on a small scale, with other Snyder Cut fans posting that they were purposely leaving 10-star reviews to counteract trolls within their own movement. According to *Rolling Stone* and other outlets covering the story, the reviews caught director Adam Wingard's attention, prompting him to ask Snyder to call off his fans. Snyder denied that Wingard ever contacted him, telling *Rolling Stone* journalist, Tatiana Siegel: "Furthermore, I do not control my fans. They have their own will and their own opinions. You really give me too much credit."⁸¹⁸ Snyder's laissez faire approach toward his own followers' review bombing only served to encourage further review bombing.

Fans also believed that James Gunn's *Suicide Squad* (2022) reboot would confuse the continuity created by Snyder and Ayer.⁸¹⁹ In some cases, DC stars have blamed Snyder fans' lack of support for the franchise's underperformance after Snyder's exit. Zachary Levi cited lack of support from DCEU fans as the reason *Shazam 2* failed at the box office.⁸²⁰ Fans have discussed this in message boards, arguing that WB has blamed them for the inevitable collapse of their mediocre franchising efforts.⁸²¹ One fan writes "Same way Disney tried to blame 'toxic, male misogynists' for *Star Wars* sucking [. . .] Make good movies, the people will come. End of story."⁸²² Their path toward good movies, naturally, is to give the DCEU back to Snyder in some form.

The movement's review bombing and more militant tactics have become well known enough that Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023) included a Snyder Cut reference. Gerwig announced the joke's inclusion without specifying what it is, which led to mainstream media speculating about backlash from Snyder bronies, upholding one Tweet in particular as evidence of an impending boycott.⁸²³ It stated "Barbie has been classy for decades, yet they have to find a way to make a dick about Zack Snyder/his fans/his cut out of spite as usual. Stay classy, WB."⁸²⁴ Responses to the comment were less than supportive: "Lol cry more, loser,"⁸²⁵ "Snyder cultists deserve to be made fun of,"⁸²⁶ and "Snyder cult unable to take a joke? Shocking"⁸²⁷. These reactions encapsulate a sense that the Twitter going public's support and patience with Snyder fans' oppositional narratives had enervated since the movement began years earlier. The joke itself, like the earlier Harley Quinn joke, connected Snyder fans to misogyny. Ryan Gosling's Ken begins to promote the idea that women should be subservient to men and brainwashes a group of Barbies into serving Kens. Awakening from her mesmerized state, Writer Barbie

declares “it’s like I’ve been in a dream where I was really invested in the Zack Snyder Cut of Justice League.”⁸²⁸

Entertainment journalism outlets, too, have equated SnyderVerse followers with fan movements driven by anti-feminism, white supremacy and Men’s Right’s Activist ideas about bringing back the patriarchal norms of the 1950s through gradual media normalization.⁸²⁹ As Derek Johnson observes, rebooting any legacy franchise is sure to cause some fans to feel threatened by changes wrought. This in turns leads to a nostalgia-driven effort to reclaim the norms of the distant past that can take on toxic forms.⁸³⁰ In particular, this happens because the failure of the new franchise reboot is associated with an inevitable restoration of that which fans have recently lost.⁸³¹ Concurrently, failure of DCEU films is inverted and used as evidence of casual fans’ inability to comprehend Snyder’s pursuing harder-edged rhetoric. Protest is a way of telling media producers to do what these fans want or lose their patronage and good graces.

Regarding *Barbie*’s joke, *Screen Rant* comments “If you have to name a recent movie that toxic men are really invested in, then yeah, Zack Snyder’s Justice League is absolutely it.”⁸³² *Marie Claire* calls *The Cut* “a film that was eventually released due to a toxic online campaign driven by male fans.”⁸³³ The movement’s ire has primarily been directed toward a specific set of all-male WB executives. However, the death threats sent to the female reporter who accused the movement of being driven by chatbots do little to extinguish perceptions of misogyny within the movement, regardless of how widespread these views truly are among DCEU fans.

Undead Auteurs and AI Fans

A tag-team of SnyderVerse fans⁸³⁴ and obscure film news outlets of dubious credibility and questionable grammar trumpeted a staggering trend shortly after *ZSJS* released to international streaming services. Migu Video supposedly displayed over 250 million views for

Snyder's 4-hour cut just 3 days after its May 5th, 2021 release on Chinese streaming platforms, as compared to 240 million views for *Avengers: Endgame*.⁸³⁵ Seven days after release on Migu, views rose to over 330 million,⁸³⁶ and exceeded 400 million by May 18th.⁸³⁷ Some commenters were skeptical of these claims, though, citing that the Migu version of The Cut displaying these astronomical views was only about 9 minutes long, like an extended teaser trailer. Others pointed out that amateur reporting had exaggerated Migu's popularity in China, as it's user base is miniscule compared to giants like Tencent, Youku and iQiYi.⁸³⁸

WB refused to release The Cut in Chinese theaters, despite the fact that Chinese theaters were largely open in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and delayed the film's international releases across the board. Snyder expressed his bafflement with WB's haphazard overseas distribution plan. As if to preempt fan attacks on WB executives over yet another perceived slight against their beloved feature, Snyder stated that he didn't want to "make it seem like there's some sort of conspiracy out there" and opted instead to view the delay as a result of the breakneck, 6-month timeline in which he re-shot and edited The Cut.⁸³⁹ Other industry outlets supported the idea that the delays and lack of theatrical release were not WB's attempt to sabotage The Cut, but rather a financial decision. After all, The Cut was four hours long, meaning that China's already tight restrictions on foreign film screenings could lead to a halved number of *ZSJL* screenings and thereby cut profits by 50%.⁸⁴⁰

Snyder's China saga would not end with unreliable streaming views. A Rolling Stone article released July 18, 2022 (nearly a year after initial debates about inflated China numbers) claimed that the ForSnyderCut webmaster and one of the chief architects of the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut movement, Fiona Zheng, may never have been a real person. The article cited the fact that Zheng had only Tweeted twice since The Cut's release as evidence that she

could either be a bot or the human face of a social media company hired to astroturf the Snyder Cut's social media presence. It also walked through WB's claims that Snyder himself had hired Chinese companies to create pro-Justice League bots on Twitter.

The article also cites an anonymous source at WB who likens Snyder's supposed intimidation of WB executives to Lex Luthor's villainy. Another anonymous source claimed to hear Snyder threatening to destroy DC Comics writer Geoff Johns and Toby Emmerich on social media if they did not remove their names from The Cut's credits. It refers to the toxic fanbase surrounding The Cut, focusing on photoshopped images of a decapitated Kevin Tsujihara, Geoff Johns and Toby Emmerich circulated online, and declares that Snyder and his part bot, part devotee fanbase colluded to "shake down" WB into spending over \$100 million on "releasing a movie that had already bombed years earlier."⁸⁴¹

Tatiana Siegel also claimed that Snyder personally called her, threatening to unleash his fans on her if she did not retract a statement in a prior article saying that he cut Kiersey Clemons' role as Iris West from the theatrical *Justice League* before departing the project. As she quotes him in the alleged phone call, "I'm just telling you what the fans are going to do. Trust me, they are pretty, pretty, pretty rough."⁸⁴² Ray Fischer had alleged back in 2020 that Whedon, not Snyder, pushed for Clemons and Zheng Kai (who was to play The Atom) to be removed, with Whedon's public relations team countering that the decision was made before he began directing. Further, he claimed that Snyder had not handpicked Whedon as successor, saying that these were merely studio talking points and that he still had an email from the studio telling him to "say Zack picked Joss and that Joss was a great guy."⁸⁴³ This, in addition to Fisher's claims of on-set racism and Whedon's attempts to lighten the skin of actors of color in post-production. The

official statement from Whedon's PR team said that this was part of the natural process of reconciling Zack Snyder's scenes with the extensive reshoots:

“As is standard on almost all films, there were numerous people involved with mixing the final product, including the editor, special effects person, composer, etc. with the senior colorist responsible for the final version's tone, colors, and mood. This process was further complicated on this project by the fact that Zack Snyder shot on film, while Joss shot on digital, which required the team, led by the same senior colorist who has worked on previous films for Zack, to reconcile the two.”⁸⁴⁴

Fisher would later recall in a Forbes interview that “race was just one of the issues with the reshoot process [. . .] massive blowups, threats, coercion, taunting, unsafe work conditions, belittling, and gaslighting like you wouldn't believe.”⁸⁴⁵ Snyder's own Vero posts announced his intent to add Clemons back into the film, praising her acting abilities and calling her an essential part of his vision. When the Snyder Cut released, not only did Iris West appear in a scene teased in the original theatrical trailer, but The Atom also made his way into a brief cameo scene set in S.T.A.R. Labs.⁸⁴⁶ Indeed, one of the main things Snyder Cut fans wanted to see was Victor Stone/Cyborg's full character arc. In the 2011 – 2016 DC Comics “New 52” era, which rebooted the Justice League characters' origin stories for a contemporary audience, Victor's introduction is nearly identical to the way the *ZSJL* would later portray him.

Beginning as a star high school football player,⁸⁴⁷ he visits his distant and uncaring father, Silas, at S.T.A.R. Labs. While the two argue about why Silas always misses Victor's

games, a motherbox that the lab has been experimenting on explodes, incinerating Victor's legs and part of his torso and arm.⁸⁴⁸ After Silas infuses his son with mechanical parts to save his life, the remainder of the series revisits Victor's struggles with his loss of identity and humanity. In one instance, he sees an afterimage of his former, fully-human body, which argues that the real Victor died in the explosion and what remains is a machine trying to convince itself that it is still human.⁸⁴⁹ Cyborg represents better than any other Justice League character what it means to live through a catastrophic act of Divine Violence and to be at the mercy of that which senselessly crops up, or the birds that destroy and are still before destroying again.

It is no wonder that Cyborg's tale came to embody fans' efforts to piece back together a shattered project that, for some, became emblematic of personal journeys through life's sometimes devastating trials. The character's *ZSJJL* arc was frequently praised in the Snyder Cut subreddit. Commenters repeatedly noted a moment where, after grieving the loss of his body and his family, Cyborg decides not to shut the world out and speaks to the motherbox apparitions who try to convince him that he became ruined after his accident. Commenters focused on the line of dialogue "I'm not broken, and I'm not alone," with some writing that it "makes me cry every single time,"⁸⁵⁰ "I remember Snyder said Cyborg was the heart of the Justice League and only after watching *ZSJJL* did I understand what he meant,"⁸⁵¹ and "I'm not broken and I'm not alone [. . .] Incredibly hard scene and I really did love him in this movie."⁸⁵² Never ones to let go of the perceived Snyder versus Whedon and WB dichotomy, others took the opportunity to criticize Cyborg's limited role in Whedon's cut,⁸⁵³ observing that his theatrical iteration said little beyond his iconic "Booyah!" one-liner.⁸⁵⁴ That Snyder fans consistently bring up *ZSJJL*'s superiority to the Whedon cut, both while *ZSJJL* was still an unproduction, and long after its

release, further emphasizes the importance of a tangible adversary for their movement's longevity.

Given the semi-militant activities of some Snyder Cut fans, it is reasonable to ask why the movement utilized or gave in to toxic tendencies, even sporadically. Resorting to online bullying and personal attacks would not seem an effective method for motivating a studio to produce the film all Snyder Cut fans, regardless of their tactics, desired to see. Richard Gregg, a rhetorical theorist, observes what he calls the Ego Function of violent messaging as it occurs in social movements. The threat of violence is typically alienating to observers outside the social movement, and even off-putting to moderate voices within the movement itself. Violent rhetoric is also cathartic for a certain set; it is not well-designed to bring about the movement's broader goals, but it makes some members feel better by enacting wish fulfillment fantasies and thus galvanizing the movement to continue agitating for its goal.

One might observe that the brute repetition of a simple message is itself persuasive, and this is what social media rallying cries like #ReleaseTheSnyderCut and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse seek to accomplish. When fans plaster WB executives' Twitter feeds with these hashtags and with hastily-photoshopped decapitations, regardless of context, Gregg's theory would posit that they are proclaiming their own victimization. They are reassuring themselves that their cause is righteous in haranguing their adversary's "ignorance or malicious qualities"⁸⁵⁵ more so than attempting to realize their goal. In so doing, social movements that congregate based on the perception that they have been wronged by an identifiable oppressor establish an in-group identity based on opposing an establishment entity.⁸⁵⁶

The *RS* article's framing of Snyder appears designed to tweak fans' noses. Notably, journalist Tatiana Siegel states that WB brought Joss Whedon onboard to salvage *Justice League*

(2017) because they viewed Snyder's version as too long and convoluted. Yet, she fails to mention Snyder's brutal dismissal after the death of his daughter, or any of WB's questionable tactics that so galvanized Snyder's fans. The point in highlighting this is not to quibble about the accuracy of the article's overall reportage. Rather, it is to highlight that Snyder's perceived poor treatment by WB, which fans saw as kicking their idol while he was down, should be noted. It is a key ingredient in the powerful mortar holding the Snyder fan movement together over multiple years despite factors that would otherwise point to a relatively quick dissolution of the fandom. Some of the most extreme and long-lived fanbases arise from a sense of shared "totemic nostalgia," or the fact that fans grew up with a certain property and seek to protect it from incursion and alteration because it is so deeply tied to their early personal lives.⁸⁵⁷ The SnyderVerse's champions are primarily adults with donation money to spend, and the universe has not existed long enough to be anyone's childhood refuge, yet fans defend it with a determination similar to that arising from totemic nostalgia. If not early childhood imprinting, one must ask what stands in for this motivator in the minds of SnyderVerse followers.

A metaphorical death is the best way for any author to cast away the media professional persona that separates them from fans and rise again. This relatable, undead author then strides hand in hand with former inferiors and collaborates with fans to jointly construct a notion of themselves and their work.⁸⁵⁸ The undead author, though not physically deceased, uses geek status to symbolically enact the notion that, to borrow from Judith Fathallah, "everything is better when dead men do it."⁸⁵⁹ Undead auteurs accomplish this simply by attaching themselves to adaptive works with a proven franchise and built-in following, then portraying themselves as fans of the originating works they are transcribing into film.⁸⁶⁰

Jonathan Gray created the term to describe Joss Whedon's highly-curated persona projected into the homes of his *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) fans via DVD and other media paratexts. He describes the undead auteur construct as something that a studio marketing team jointly creates with the auteur and with the benefit of fan feedback. Gray highlights the nebulous relationship between these three traditional sources of the undead auteur's persona, describing it as a saleable identity crisis: "Whether they are 'really like that' is as much a question for them as it is for Hollywood stars, though, because they and their studios' marketing teams are often able to author them as paratexts, and author some of the paratexts in which they appear, with significant care."⁸⁶¹ Similarly, Alan Wexelblat, media scholar, describes a mode of auteur persona creation with regard to new media platforms. He writes of the triangulation of how the text, authorial postings on social media, and fan interactions conjoin to fashion the author.⁸⁶²

WB attempted to present Whedon's onboarding as a net positive for fans because of his past superhero franchise credentials. Fans instead saw a paratextual construct instead of the authentic voice of someone who had been cast out from the industry. Snyder's ejection from *JL* at a time of personal tragedy served as the director's own destruction by proxy, transforming him from an industry insider to an outsider. Though unintentional on WB's part, attempting to use Whedon as a credible undead author in these circumstances only reinforced the divide between studio narrative and the perceived groundswell of populist fan support for the franchise's true director. If an undead author is a construct created in the threefold efforts of industry, author and fans, what then had Snyder become after his symbolic casting down from the industry and landing in a place where only his voice and the voices of his fans remained to create the construct? To detractors, he became like a vengeful revenant hellbent on revenge. To fans, he

was an underdog who, with proper outpourings of fan support, could recover from his trauma to grasp justice from the claws of WB's executive board.

Instead of acknowledging this nuance, *Rolling Stone* describes WB as a company under siege from fans whose unreasonable demands seemingly originate only from their rabid worship of Snyder as auteur. Rather than attempting to understand why fans viewed themselves as being right, the article portrays them as potentially violent zealots who take marching orders from a few influential social media personalities and bots. Further, any auteur status shift from industry figure to beleaguered outsider and fellow fan will always be tenuous, even in Snyder's case, as no fanbase is completely loyal or perpetually trusting. Auteurs in this position play a tenuous game, as the role of media professional and everyday fan cannot easily coexist. They are destined to collide in situations that call attention to the auteur's performance of industry outsider status.⁸⁶³ As fans accept certain industry pros into their fold, a lingering suspicion remains, at least in some sectors, that they are not who they say they are.

Snyder eventually began to garner inklings of this implicit unease, when he posted a promotional poster for *Blue Beetle* (2023).⁸⁶⁴ This was the film that DC Studios CEO James Gunn called the first in his rebooted DCU, and thus the film that moves past the DCEU.⁸⁶⁵ Some SnyderVerse fans responded by accusing the heretofore center of their movement of angling for work with WB, being paid off to hype up the movie, and betraying his fans. Others praised Snyder for putting aside past conflicts with WB management to support *Blue Beetle*, DC's Latino superhero, and marveled at the 14 million views his tweet drew in a three-day period.⁸⁶⁶

Rolling Stone was not the first mainstream outlet to suggest that the SnyderVerse movement is driven by bots, however. When Snyder's *Justice League* won an Oscar at the 2022 Academy Awards, *The Wrap* questioned how a streaming-only release could have accomplished

such a thing. Some explanation can be found in the nature of the “Cheer Moment” category itself. The Academy Awards added this feature to avoid perceptions of a growing gulf between fan’s elevated opinion of superhero films and the withering views of the genre professed by Hollywood’s elite. The new category asked fans to choose from five different “cheer worthy” scenes among choice films released in 2021: Neo dodging bullets in *The Matrix: Resurrections*, Tom Holland, Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire’s Spider-Men teaming up in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, The Avengers assembling to battle Thanos in *Avengers: Endgame*, Jennifer Hudson’s solo in *Dream Girls*, and Ezra Miller’s time travel scene in Snyder’s *Justice League*. Whichever film gained the most retweets on Twitter would win the category and, surprisingly, Snyder’s *Justice League* left *Spider-Man* in second place.⁸⁶⁷

Snyder Cut fans may be divided as to the true financial results of The Cut on HBO Max and on Chinese platforms, but they are fairly unified in labelling Tasha Siegel’s *Rolling Stone* story a comically biased, mainstream media hit piece against Snyder and his fans. Ray Fischer, whom the article accuses of working with Snyder to coordinate social media attacks on WB executives, was among the first to lash out at Siegel on Twitter. This precipitated a comment war between Fischer and *Rolling Stone* editor Noah Shachtman. Fisher retweeted the piece, denying Siegel’s claim that *Rolling Stone* received no reply after contacting him for comment on the story. He added that “this type of rumor mill reporting is offensive, dangerous and willfully evasive of fact.”

Shachtman replied by posting what he called “one of several emails we sent to your reps,” a semi-redacted document asking for Fischer’s comment on the story: “I’m writing a story that examines the authenticity of SnyderCut/SnyderVerse fan movement and how the fan base attacked, viciously at times, a number of people including Walter Hamada, Geoff Johns, Jon

Berg, Ann Sarnoff, Johanna Fuentes, Diane Nelson, Toby Emmerich, Joss Whedon, Adam Wingard, James Gunn. I would like to request a comment from Ray on the following: Sources say they believe that you worked in tandem with Zack Snyder to weaponize and say that you did so to help him get what he wanted from Warner Bros. How do you respond?”⁸⁶⁸

Schachtman also posted Siegel’s follow up email, in which Siegel notified Fisher that her 5pm deadline passed and that the story would go to print noting that he declined to comment. Fisher fired back by posting his version of Siegel’s first email, with one extra line in which Siegel wrote that her deadline would be 6pm, not 5.⁸⁶⁹ “Nice try, but you cropped out the part where @TatianaSiegel switched deadlines on my team. Trying to spin half-furnished emails into a ‘gotcha’ will get you nowhere” Fisher wrote,⁸⁷⁰ circling the two contradictory deadlines in green and red.

Fans on the r/DC Cinematic forum discussed the *Rolling Stone* article’s timing, as it was published one day before the Snyder Cut’s July 19, 2022 digital purchase release (wherein customers across the globe could buy a digitally downloaded copy instead of merely watching it via a streaming service).⁸⁷¹ Some reddit and Twitter⁸⁷² fans supposed the *Rolling Stone* article was one last attempt to damage The Cut’s image and earnings by former WB executives Geoff Johns and John Berg, both of whom were mentioned in the *Rolling Stone* story. One poster replied to *Rolling Stone* with an image titled “Fake Followers Audit for @RollingStone” which displayed over a million and a half fake followers. This included a definition of the term reading “This tool defines ‘fake followers’ as accounts that are unreachable and will not see the account’s tweets (either because they’re spam, bots, propaganda, etc. or because they’re no longer active on Twitter).”⁸⁷³

Another sarcastically wrote how surprising it was to see a director try to promote their own movie,⁸⁷⁴ and another poster suggests that execs still employed by WB wanted to “cast doubt on the deluge of #RestoreTheSnyderVerse hashtags that will be coming this Saturday during SDCC.”⁸⁷⁵ This post conspiratorially situated the article’s release against the backdrop of San Diego Comic Con. Taken as a whole, fan criticism framed the article’s timing as suspicious and questioned its frequent use of anonymous sources. They suggested that the outlet over exaggerated the Snyder Cut campaign’s bot usage in an age where bot followers attach to any and every social media campaign.⁸⁷⁶

The Snyder Cut movement caught flack for their perceived participation in SDCC, albeit for another reason. During WB’s panel, in which the company promoted their long-awaited Black Adam movie, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson appeared wearing his Black Adam suit. After promoting a fight between Black Adam and Superman in the weeks leading up to the panel, The Rock coyly danced around Superman’s casting. Snyder fans had clambered for Henry Cavill’s official return to the role since the theatrical *Justice League*’s release, and when one fan asked who would win in a fight, The Rock said only “I guess that really depends on who’s playing Superman.” This elicited some mild booing from the audience,⁸⁷⁷ which fan channels and trade publications hyped into headlines like “Hugely popular Dwayne Johnson unexpectedly gets booed by fans.”⁸⁷⁸

Snyder gave comment to Tatiana Siegel as she gathered interviews for the *Rolling Stone* story saying that if she was truly writing a fair piece, it would dwell not on negative aspects of SnyderCut fandom but address their charity work and fundraising for AFSP. After the article published, Snyder posted a picture of a cracked *Justice League* reel spilling out film in black and white, lying amid strewn rubble. Overlaying the image was the Rochejaquelein / Mussolini

quote, ““If I advance, follow me. If I retreat, kill me. If I die, avenge me.” This phrase often appeared on Snyder’s t-shirt while sitting in the director’s chair of *Batman v Superman* (the same film Snyder first began marketing with paid astroturfing, according to Rolling Stone).

Yet, despite the ominous image, Snyder’s following posts in the days before SDCC were light-hearted and refrained from alluding to any epic battles of will between himself and *Rolling Stone* or WB. The next day on July 20, Snyder posted a digital painting spoof of Tom and Jerry titled “Tom v Jerry,” with a low angle of Tom dressed as Batman while standing on a stone, Jerry gargoyle. The art appeared with the text “Can’t wait to bring my dark vision to these iconic characters over a five-movie arc shot entirely in black-and-white anamorphic IMAX. See you in Hall H for the announcement.”⁸⁷⁹

Meanwhile, at SDCC, Snyder’s lack of attendance did little to stymie talk of his future with WB. Aside from The Rock’s brief booing for not announcing Henry Cavill’s hoped-for Superman return, Jim Lee weighed in on the SnyderVerse when fans repeatedly asked him if he thought WB might restore their scuttled universe. Lee expressed his amazement that his work on Snyder’s unproduced films was still being talked about even after the pandemic, saying that he thought his white boards had been erased years prior. He then admitted that, while he was glad to see The Snyder Cut realized, there were no plans to continue Snyder’s work at DC.⁸⁸⁰

Snyder also exuded a presence at the panel for Cartoon Network’s *Teen Titans Go!*, which announced that the director would voice an animated version of himself in a brief cameo.⁸⁸¹ While headlines suggesting that Snyder was “back” at WB proliferated around the appearance, his Vero turned toward promoting *Rebel Moon*, with no new DC material mentioned from late July to September 2022. He stated prior to The Cut’s release that his interest in directing superhero films had disappeared for the time being,⁸⁸² preempting Sarnoff’s comments

that The Cut would conclude a four-part *JL* series. In the same sentence, he expressed interest in directing an adaptation of Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* at some future point, and added that his ideas for an adaptation of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* had been derailed by a divisive political climate.⁸⁸³ Indeed, Snyder's interest in libertarian themes and edgy t-shirt quotes has not helped to dissuade accusations of fascism.

#FionaZhengIsReal

Concurrently, #ReleaseTheSnyderCut and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse garnered suspicion for their ties to China. Self-proclaimed Snyder superfan Fiona Zheng is regarded among Snyder Cut members as the movement's founding mother. Zheng lives in Harbin, the capitol city of China's northernmost province, Heilongjiang. Aside from being an avid moviegoer, she owns and manages a local medical clinic.⁸⁸⁴ Her love of *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* prompted her to begin Tweeting about Snyder's directorial vision, and she claims to have befriended the director himself as a result of her social media engagement. Her November 21, 2017 Tweet, though, is seen as the movement's inception, wherein she speculated that there must be a director's cut of Justice League and implored fellow fans to "fight for it."⁸⁸⁵ Like many Snyder Cut fans who would follow her, Zheng employed anti-mainstream media rhetoric when discussing WB's handling of the DCEU post-BvS. She declared that "biased entertainment journalism" had "misled" WB executives into trying to lighten Snyder's moody vision to make it like the Marvel Cinematic Universe.⁸⁸⁶

Zheng's criticism of Whedon's *JL* cut corresponds with the Snyder fan diaspora's view that the former's directorial style is characterized by witty quips and a lighter, self-deprecating approach to superheroes. These tendencies resulted in a Justice League cut that was "an affront to core DC fans."⁸⁸⁷ Snyder's method is driven by "visual iconography of the religious or

philosophical.”⁸⁸⁸ It was Whedon’s ironic, self-parodying use of superheroes that led to cynical contempt for the characters, reflected in the CGI mangling of Superman’s face. RTSC fans credit Zheng with galvanizing the fanbase in the early days by posting her text messages with Snyder on Vero and Twitter, and is also one of the reasons media outlets and anti-fans suspect that Zheng was a hired gun. The first personal text Zheng shared featured Snyder admitting that he had avoided seeing the theatrical Justice League and lamenting “I only wish I could have finished it for you and the others who love *MOS BvS*.”⁸⁸⁹

O’Connell describes Zheng as the glue holding together Snyder Cut fans across national borders who found herself in a liminal space between directly communicating with Snyder and encouraging throngs of dispirited fans to organize and agitate for The Cut’s release.⁸⁹⁰ She also teamed up with other prominent Snyder Cut fans to regulate early instances of toxic fandom within the movement, such as when Roberto Mata posted a Change.org petition to release The Cut. Initially a simple request for signed support, Mata later amended the petition’s language to reject Muslim and female fans’ signatures,⁸⁹¹ which prompted Zheng, along with Sharaz Farooqi, Justin Lesnewski and Chris Vinaldo, to condemn Mata’s use of racism and misogyny. They attempted to set down general behavioral guidelines for Snyder Cut fans. In the new petition they wrote: “Islamophobia is something no Snyder film, especially his Superman films, condones. Snyder’s films also treat women by the highest standard. The treatment of Lois Lane, Martha Kent, Wonder Woman and more show that these characters have their own agency and are just as impactful, if not more, than the male characters. No bigotry, sexism, or racism is tolerated by myself, the co-signers of this statement, Zack Snyder, or the DCEU Fandom.”⁸⁹²

The Rolling Stone’s Snyder Cut expose mentions that Zheng’s Twitter account became far less active after The Cut’s streaming release. They cast doubt on whether Zheng herself was

truly a grassroots fan, a paid social media manager, or an agent of the Chinese Government dispatched to experiment with steering an international social media movement into conflict with a U.S.-based company. It is also noteworthy that Twitter has been banned in China since 2009, when anti-government riots erupted in Urumqi, the capitol of Xinjiang Province.⁸⁹³ In 2016, Twitter insiders estimated that between 10 to 35 million Chinese users still utilized VPNs to access the site. In this regard, Zheng's tweeting is not unusual. What does stand out, though, is her continued use of the platform despite her growing visibility on the international stage.

For some insight into this, one might turn to DC Fandome, a now defunct virtual promotional event of upcoming film projects. DC Fandome was created as an answer to in-person fan conventions shuttering while COVID-19 swept the globe. Though the event is a short-lived relic of the pandemic era and occurred only twice before being summarily cancelled in 2022, Zheng's appearance at Fandome 2020 deserves remark. The self-styled Snyder superfan appeared as part of a series of guests interviewed by Snyder himself, who spoke to Gadot, Cavill, Momoa, Fisher, as well as prominent fan faces in #ReleaseTheSnyderCut. While Zheng's interaction is unremarkable, the YouTube video was viewed over 500,000 times.⁸⁹⁴

Tatiana Siegel's expose implies that Zheng may not really reside in China. Some fans have suggested that the reason she ceased posting about the Snyder Cut after its release was because she disliked the film. Fans also point to a rumor that administrators of the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut Twitter account privately denounced the film for using lighthearted moments and jokes, claiming that Zheng agreed with her peers' assessments.⁸⁹⁵

CHAPTER 5: SUICIDE SQUAD AND THE AYER CUT

David Ayer's *Suicide Squad*

David Ayer's *Suicide Squad* (2016) earned over \$746 million on a \$175 million budget, and won an Oscar for best makeup and hair. BET nominated Viola Davis for best actor in her portrayal of Amanda Waller, a shadowy government agent who controls the eponymous band of killers. The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Films nominated the film for its Saturn Award for best comic book adaptation, best supporting actress for Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn, and best makeup. The Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards would give Robbie their Critics Choice Award for Best Actress, and the People's Choice Awards nominated *Suicide Squad* for their favorite movie and favorite action movie categories. MTV Movie + TV Awards nominated Jared Leto's Joker for best movie villain. Yet, despite these significant accolades, Warner Brothers management remained unsatisfied. The film's critical and audience ratings were disappointing. Despite a successful box office, it received 26% critical and 58% audience scores on Rotten Tomatoes.⁸⁹⁶ The low ratings were reflected in some of the less-than-flattering awards the film garnered. The Razzies, for example, nominated Ayer for worst screenplay and Leto for worst actor, illustrating the divisive nature of his Joker portrayal. The Hawaii Film Critics Society nominated it for worst film of the year, and the Village Voice Film Poll bestowed it with a Worst Film award.⁸⁹⁷

As I will discuss, Ayer responded to critical complaints by insisting that he possessed a different version of *Suicide Squad* that was superior to the theatrical release. During the still ongoing unproduction of The Ayer Cut, the director has mobilized fans' transmedia closure via social media, encouraging them to put together screen shots, video clips, script pages, concept art

and comics to imagine and promote his cut. In Chapter 5, I argue that Ayer examined Zack Snyder's battle tactics for making *ZSJJL* and transformed them into a strategic playbook. He has mobilized fans' social media engagement to pressure WB into releasing his own unproduction.

Shortly after James Gunn's *The Suicide Squad* (2021) reboot released on HBO Max as part of WB's direct-to-streaming initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic, David Ayer tweeted a three-page letter in response, prefacing it with "My turn."⁸⁹⁸ He praised Gunn's course correction while denouncing the theatrical cut of his own *Suicide Squad* (2016). The letter borrowed from Zack Snyder's strategy in that it reconfirmed previous murmurings of an Ayer Cut's existence, declaring that only a handful of Ayer's personal confidants had seen the piece that was, unlike the Snyder Cut in its infancy, nearly complete through postproduction. In broad strokes, the letter outlined key differences in the cut, promising that it gave attention to developing each Squad member's character arc, provided a coherent third act instead of the heavily criticized CGI battle in the theatrical version, and used "not one radio song"⁸⁹⁹ in favor of an original score.

This comment refers to the theatrical *Suicide Squad*'s overuse of popular songs in general, a trend WB would only exacerbate in Cathy Yan's Harley Quinn solo film, *Birds of Prey* (2020), which features a different hit single in every action scene. Ayer's cut, evidently, even *sounded* more authentic than the studio's mangled version. Ayer concluded his letter by vowing never to publicly speak about the cut again. Prior to foreswearing any further commentary on the cut, though, Ayer had been vocal on social media about how easy it would be to finish his work, particularly after WB announced that it would fund the Snyder Cut's completion. He had also lamented that the studio had given his version "the Edward Scissorhands treatment,"⁹⁰⁰ adding that the edits had beaten him down emotionally. When Ann

Sarnoff attempted to put the issue to rest by stating in an interview “We won’t be developing David Ayer’s cut,”⁹⁰¹ the director retweeted her quote with a sad emoji and a single word: “Why?”⁹⁰²

What is compelling about Ayer’s long form letter involves another cue he may have taken from Snyder: he links the film’s development to his greatest life struggles. Any mention of the cut is prefaced with a tumultuous, smash-and-grab summary of his violent and tragic upbringing, opening with his father’s Christmas morning suicide when Ayer was four years old. He details a young life of drifting between foster homes, selling drugs for gangs, witnessing multiple beatings and murders, and a close friend bleeding to death in his arms. He joined the Navy to escape his gang lifestyle only to fall back into the streets and recreational PCP use once his service ended. His screenplay for *Training Day* (2001) saved his life, he claims. “My Cut is an intricate and emotional journey with some ‘bad people’ who are shit on and discarded (a theme that resonates in my soul). The studio cut is not my movie. Read that again.”⁹⁰³

Ayer would soon forget his vow to leave *Suicide Squad* behind, instead Tweeting at fans who peppered him with questions about the unfilm’s contents. The Tweets appeared in the wake of Warner-Discovery CEO David Zaslav’s cancellation of the *Batgirl* film, as well as axing of various HBO Max series’ like *Stargirl*, *Titans* and *Doom Patrol* in yet another DC Bloodbath. When asked how different his Cut was from Warner’s, he responded simply “Shockingly different. Apples and oranges.”⁹⁰⁴ He also claimed again that the Cut needed no reshoots, but only VFX work, a promise Snyder used only to renege on when he secretly shot scenes for Martian Manhunter’s appearance.⁹⁰⁵ Ayer’s Cut, which had heavy input from Snyder, would have featured the *Justice League* villain Steppenwolf as antagonist. However, WB dismissed the idea, leading to a fundamental reshaping of the film’s narrative for theatrical release with

Enchantress as the main villain.⁹⁰⁶ A cameo from Ezra Miller's Flash was also scrapped, and Jared Leto's Joker was given a drastically reduced role, with Ayer stating that this ruined the actor's otherwise earth-shattering performance.⁹⁰⁷ Ayer would continue to praise Leto's Joker in the face of blistering criticism, later likening Leto's acting to that of Joaquin Phoenix in the Joker solo film.⁹⁰⁸ Fans remained skeptical, with some calling Leto's garishly tattooed and gold chain bedecked version "Hot Topic Joker," in reference to the goth-themed fashion chain.⁹⁰⁹

Unlike Snyder, who effectively went to war with WB in public discourse and behind the scenes to achieve the Snyder Cut's release, Ayer took a comparably diplomatic approach. Rather than directly blame the studio, he made an argument that unproduction scholars have been making for decades. He tweeted about the importance of changing fan expectations for unreleased material, suggesting that WB could become a pioneer in refiguring unmade movies and their overlooked place in history:

"I think the studios see now that there can be canon, there can be non-canon, the fans just want to touch it. They love the characters, they just want to spend more time with it. And people are way more sophisticated about how movies are made and want to be participants in the journey. There's room for different things, different versions, different assets being shared with the audience. I think it just helps strengthen the community. But absolute credit to Warner Bros. for supporting Zack and having the courage to explore that. I get it, it's a business. It's frustrating because I made a really heartfelt drama and it got ripped to pieces and they tried to turn it into *Deadpool*, which it just wasn't supposed to be. And then you take the hit, you're the captain of the ship, my name was on it. Even though it

didn't represent what I actually made, I would take all the bullets and be a good soldier. I made an amazing movie. It's an amazing movie, it just scared the shit out of the executives.”⁹¹⁰

Ayer's approach utilized a trend film scholar Sanghita Sen has observed about the mythologizing of unmade film.⁹¹¹ The director's authentic vision not only clashes with studio imperatives but frightens them, as his authenticity and overwhelming originality is something counter to conventional business interests. The director becomes someone who cannot be bought and whose interests rest in real, artistic expression. In different terms, the auteur's vision is so authentic that it must be destroyed by a studio whose interests lie not in genuine art but in mass appeal and profit. It would be difficult to call the theatrical *Suicide Squad* an art film, avant-garde, an indie film or anything other than a culture industry product of the manner described by Adorno and Horkheimer. Superhero fare is meant for popular appeal, and its generic constraints permit only so much uniqueness. Yet, the fact that no one has seen the Ayer Cut intimates that, in spite of all expectation and likelihood to the contrary, it could be something truly elevated.

Ayer's comparing his cut to Todd Phillip's *Joker* further enforces this notion. In a Tweet, he asked fans to imagine how this film would have looked if executives had decided it was too dark and needed to be edited into lighter fare, stating that this was exactly the fate that befell The Ayer Cut.⁹¹² *Suicide Squad*, however, was far from being a disconnected standalone entry and had the added guard rails of tonal consistency and financial expectations that went with any piece of the DCEU. Executives simply looked at the popularity of Marvel's humor-driven hits and compared this to critical scorn surrounding Snyder's dark and depressing universe, deciding at the last minute to revamp the film into a comedy. That they chose James Gunn to helm the soft

reboot of *Suicide Squad* might explain the *Guardians of the Galaxy* adjacent tone of Ayer's theatrical cut.

One Twitter user responded to Ayer's Tweets by suggesting that he was encouraging toxic fan behavior in a manner similar to Zack Snyder, which led the director to respond by saying that being true to his vision was not the same as stoking toxicity.⁹¹³ Given the Snyder Cut fandom's notoriety, another DCEU director with a contiguous fanbase agitating for an unreleased cut struck a nerve with fan critics of the Snyder Cut fandom's high-pressure tactics, leading some to view Ayer's shadowing of #ReleaseTheSnyderCut as evidence of support for the use of online bullying and threats against Warner executives previously carried out by some Snyder followers. For his part, Ayer Tweeted back that his sole intent was to stay true to his original vision. Yet, the director utilized a Snyder blueprint when discussing his unfinished work. He would echo the language Snyder originally used to confirm fan theories about his Justice League's existence, this time in a Spanish-language post: "Claro que existe,"⁹¹⁴ or "Of course it exists." He would post a black-and-white shot of Jared Leto's Joker that was excised from the theatrical cut, and a scattering of production photos and stills. Among these were a shot of Joker sitting in his grimy headquarters, surrounded by bullets, knives, and beer bottles. "Ha! Ha!" is spraypainted over the walls, as Joker grimaces and presses the muzzle of a revolver under his chin. Another black-and-white photo shows a goat-headed priest holding a machine gun, presumably a scene from an attack on Arkham Asylum.⁹¹⁵ He would mention other lost story elements, declaring that Harley Quinn's character had been "eviscerated" and that his version paid greater attention to the exploitative relationship between her and Joker. Of all these leaks and teases, though, snippets of a leaked script ignited the most attention and fan engagement.

The Twitter headquarters for the #ReleaseTheAyerCut movement is @RTAyerCutSS, and this selfsame page posted what they claimed to be legitimate albeit scattered script pages from Ayer's original cut. Ayer soon assented to their authenticity, leading to a firestorm of fan speculation.⁹¹⁶ If a single takeaway arises from the pages, many of which are out of sequence, it is that Joker's role was much more prominent. Ayer commented that he wished he'd made Joker the film's main antagonist,⁹¹⁷ and the director has attempted to promote Leto's full performance as a tour de force that would rival Heath Ledger and Joaquin Phoenix, if only the entire film could be seen.⁹¹⁸ The script leaks show Joker having taken over Amanda Waller's headquarters and seizing control of the interface she uses to detonate the Suicide Squad members' heads for disobeying her. With this technology in his hands, Joker pontificates about the army of assassins now at his disposal and makes plans to take over Gotham and install The Batman as his vice-president: "We're very close friends, you see. It's complex."⁹¹⁹

Concurrently, the Joker-focused script snippets suggest that WB may have chosen to excise them due to their portrayal of intimate partner violence between Joker and Harley. This aspect of the characters' relationship was depicted in Bruce Timm and Paul Dini's 1992 *Batman: The Animated Series*, a Saturday morning cartoon show produced for children. Warner sought a PG-13 rating, though, which clashes with bits of script where Joker "Pimp slaps the blue out of her eyes," while threatening to scar Harley's face to match his own rictus grin. Ayer released raw footage of the backhand, with Margot Robbie falling to the ground. In the script, Harley seems to enjoy this exchange. Fans on the DCFilm subreddit voiced their disappointment with this portrayal, with some opining that reading this sequence made them glad the film was never released.⁹²⁰ Others likened the scene to a "terrible romance novel," "atrocious fan-fiction,"⁹²¹ and

wrote that the unproduced, live action Powerpuff Girls series script from 2023 was a work of genius by comparison.⁹²²

It is likely that ultraviolent and misogynistic scenes of this kind account for Ayer's claim that the studio found his initial vision to be excessively dark and in need of revision. Ayer would continue to post screenshots and concept art from his completed cut, bookending these by tweeting "What you prayed about is coming." The sum total of leaked screenshots shows a suited Joker with Harley in her traditional *Batman: The Animated Series* red and black diamond patterned harlequin costume, smiling at the camera in a clear homage to Alex Ross's famed oil paint versions of the characters from the cover of *Batman: Harley Quinn* (1999).⁹²³ Concept art depicts alternative designs for El Diablo, who appears to have the skin burnt from his body. A horned figure dressed in rags also appears in concept art, its face and neck an indistinct, cancerous mass of jutting appendages and eyeballs, much like the eye-headed creatures seen in the theatrical version.

Demonstrating that he had fully left behind any pretense of never mentioning the Cut again, Ayer invited the administrators of the @RTAyerCutSS to visit his home and watch the intended version on his personal laptop. As a result, the page's administrators disclosed that the finished film was nearly 2 ½ hours long and did not feature Steppenwolf as the main villain despite concept art that Ayer released depicting this.⁹²⁴ The limited details the admins were permitted to disclose are less impactful than Ayer's repeated strategy of feigning permanent silence on the Cut and subsequently breaking from this. Silence must be maintained and takes work. In this case, silence is profane as its declaration violates itself and becomes cover for the real work that must be done beneath its cover in a fannish undercommons⁹²⁵ facilitated by a Silicon Valley megacorporation.

Zack Snyder stole into the studio to steal what he could,⁹²⁶ to borrow Moten and Harney's phrase. Ayer's social media leaks fashion a knowledge object⁹²⁷ that is for fans a partway imagined future project. Where Snyder's last dealings with WB were revolutionary and perhaps borderline criminal, Ayer appropriates some of this extralegal thunder to amplify what is a softer approach to the making of the unmade. Like his predecessor, he and his fans approach unproduction from the lowdown downlow, playing at the subversion of the #ReleaseThe_____Cut moniker. The implied interchangeability of the creator of the cut manifests a textual gap⁹²⁸ where indeterminacy springs into action in the form of a sweeping new approach to fan activism. Into the Cut cascade names without end, any names of a director whose unproduced work the audience may want to see; after all, they just want to touch what is being withheld from them, to paraphrase Ayer. While subversive in a sense, neither director fully takes a Halberstamian Low Theory approach, eschewing the celebration of failure as an outsider's sunken shadow realm. Twitter pages are the ground wherein these directorial failures are redoubled, replicated and reposted in endless walls of screen shots and minute analysis, building in momentum and touting studio-perceived shortcomings with the idea that one day failure amplifies and reinvents its own faults and builds into success as a released film. It is not failure for the sake of it, no longer an obscure unproduction to be appreciated by only a few connoisseurs, but a failure animated by its own inert success.

Fan identities in agitating on behalf of a director exhibit the liquid modernity that SnyderVerse devotees feel, so that community victories bolster individuals' sense of self.⁹²⁹ At the same time, unproduction movements of this sort seem to stand in contrast to what Cornell Sandvoss has described as a minimization of the author in a larger, interconnected push and pull of fan and producer relations.⁹³⁰ In cases where fan use of paratexts and fanworks supersede the

creator's original urtext, the authorial role looks less important. The success of some texts, especially serialized ones, is determined by their subject rather than the particular author, who is often unknown to fans of a serialized property. That both SnyderVerse movements (The Snyder Cut and Ayer Cut) coalesced around auteurs contrarily reifies the authorial position. While not necessarily deifying them, this social media-driven, transmedia closure certainly elevates auteurs. The director becomes something akin to a digital pro-wrestler entering the internet arena to do battle with the soulless moneymen whose stylized and gigantic names adorn the ring.

It is also important to note the immense respect Snyder and Ayer fans pay online. Fans may have their own theories as to the content of these Cuts, but ultimately only the director can verify these, which leads to fans prostrating themselves in tweet form, hands upheld and petitioning to know which rumors are true, which trade publication whispers are canonical and which are apocryphal in a nearly religious but certainly ritualistic⁹³¹ interaction. This top-down process limits fan imaginaries to a support role; fans cannot be co-authors on equal footing with their favorite industry experts and may not want to be in these cases.

Part of what makes fandom special, as Couldry has noted, is that fannish intrigue resides in the allure of a professional who stands above their followers, or the distinction between ordinary person and media person as well as ordinary world and media world.⁹³² Unproduction fans find appeal in a rebellious industry voice, someone who knows the corruption on the inside because he has lived it and is willing to risk his place within its walls in order to expose its vicissitudes to the fans. Figures like this can give fans the feeling that someone on the inside has their interests at heart, and likewise the fans buoy their hero toward a shared goal even if the creation process is not shared. That it also motivates Snyder fans to take to the streets and protest on behalf of their fan objects shows that their relationship with the director is both affirmational

and transformative in different contexts.⁹³³ Online, fans behave appears as affirmational obeisance, sharing Snyder's pronouncements about the DCEU's unproduced contents. Offline, whether at SDCC, WB headquarters, Times Square or other sites, fan protests are transformational in that they shape the tactics of the movement itself, lend hope to other fans and encourage a director who, without viral fan support, would not have had a chance to see his full vision realized. Further, fans who affirm Snyder are not affirmational in the usual sense, which situates fans as promoters of industry or perhaps shills. To shill for Snyder is to rebel against WB and to treat the company as little more than a dream dispensing tool that, given a chance, would take advantage of the fandom for its own ends and therefore deserves to be manipulated back.

Meanwhile, the phantom details of Ayer's Cut continue to rise, ethereally born 140 characters at a time. Like Harley Quinn, Scott Eastwood's Rick Flag would have received a more detailed character arc, centered on his romance with Dr. June Moon, who becomes possessed by an ancient Aztec spirit called The Enchantress. The film would have foregrounded this character's manipulation of Karen Fukuhara's Katana, as suggested in one unused promotional poster featuring a close-up of the Katana's masked face, the blade of her sword drawn diagonally across the poster. Reflected in its metal are the faces of each Suicide Squad member. Behind her mask, whose predominantly white visage features a sun disk on its forehead, her eyes glow red. A gnarled hand clutches Katana's shoulder, with Enchantress's face looming up from behind. The spirit's eyes also glow red, duplicating Katana's and suggesting possession. Leaked on-set footage of the movie's final scenes depicts Rick Flag reluctantly killing June Moon in order to stop Enchantress. With greater attention to Harley, Enchantress and Katana, Ayer's cut would have also developed Amanda Waller into a serious villain on par with Superman's archnemesis, Lex Luthor. While James Gunn's *The Suicide Squad* and following HBO Max series,

Peacemaker, often undercut Waller's villainy with comedic gags, Ayer intended to make her frightening. This shift is hinted at in the original trailer, in which a caged Harley looks up at Waller in awe, deliriously murmuring "Are you the devil?"

Though only 3 minutes and 6 seconds long, the original *Suicide Squad* SDCC trailer from 2015 gives the clearest indication as to the tone of Ayer's cut. The relatively unknown singer Becky Hanson⁹³⁴ sings a haunting, gothic cover of the Bee Gee's "I Started a Joke" throughout. The song plays in tandem with Amanda Waller's narration, in which she explains the Squad's expendability and the ease with which she can use and discard them to accomplish clandestine paramilitary operations.⁹³⁵ WB's decision to re-cut the trailer and substitute the Bee Gees cover with Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" initially paid off, with the second trailer drawing double the views of the first. Instead of Waller's foreboding speech, Rick Flag now flips through a dossier on the Squad members, flatly reading off their abilities in a nonplussed manner, as the footage cycles through quick images of Deadshot, Killer Croc, El Diablo, Enchantress and Harley Quinn: "Shoots people. This one's a crocodile. Eats people. Burns people. Possessed by a witch. And she's just crazy."⁹³⁶ Trailer 2 also featured comic book-style lettering, which appears after Rick Flag's voice-over introduction of each character to spell out "Worst heroes ever."⁹³⁷ The SDCC trailer's top *YouTube* comment is "When I paid to see this, I realized the joke was on me."⁹³⁸ The Official trailer's top comment is "Everyone's talking about how Margot Robbie carried this movie, but the role of Bohemian Rhapsody is fairly huge."⁹³⁹

The expanded roles intended for of *Suicide Squad*'s female characters might have been a welcome change for some fans, as Ayer's representational style in the theatrical cut would be drawn into question. The Alliance of Women Film Journalists nominated Robbie and Ayer for their Hall of Shame, and Robbie for "Actress Most in Need of a New Agent"⁹⁴⁰ due to sexually

objectifying portrayals of her throughout the film. The Golden Schmoes Awards gifted Margot Robbie's portrayal "Best T&A of the Year."⁹⁴¹ Press accusations of sexism became pronounced enough for Robbie to issue a statement at the at the film's European Premiere in Leicester, in which she thanked Ayer for writing a gritty part for a female character, saying "It's so rare that chicks get to play this role."⁹⁴² Ayer engaged in a brief yet highly reported-on argument with a Twitter fan, who accused him of sexism. The exchange followed press announcements that Ayer would direct a Netflix adaptation of Harlan Corben's novel, *Six Years*, with the fan writing: "I wonder if David Ayer will have the women in the movie in super booty shorts and give us gratuitous tits and ass shots?"⁹⁴³ Ayer responded, writing that he supported feminism and wouldn't take such an approach,⁹⁴⁴ with the fan firing back that he did it in *Suicide Squad*. Ayer's final response was "Should male directors only direct women in overalls? What if an actor wants to be depicted as a sexual being? Am I allowed to do that? What are the rules? Help!"⁹⁴⁵

Like The Snyder Cut, Ayer's Cut gradually drew actor endorsements, which were solicited through the social media app Cameo and posted to Twitter by the fan page @CutAyer. Support originated from professionals not directly connected to *Suicide Squad*, with Darkseid actor Ray Porter tagging Ayer, HBO Max, Warner Bros. and then-parent company AT&T in his cameo video. Porter held up his Darkseid Funko Pop doll, emulating a gruff voice to say "Hey! Release The Ayer Cut!" He then lowered the Funko to reveal himself, sitting in front of a framed Darkseid fanart poster for The Snyder Cut. He punctuated the message with a sly smile and a "You know it's a good idea."⁹⁴⁶ When @CutAyer posted the video to Twitter, fans peppered it with "Hail Darkseid"⁹⁴⁷ and "Darkseid Is"⁹⁴⁸ messages, both common fealty phrases shouted by the character's minions in DC Comics. Others posted comic panels of Darkseid's baby iteration

in reference to the Funko doll.⁹⁴⁹ While galvanizing to fans, these comic buzzwords also suggest that the Ayer Cut fandom began as a niche campaign for comic geeks, whereas Snyder's fans based their support primarily on their admiration of Snyder as an auteur and in pre-existing film lore in *Man of Steel*, *Batman v. Superman* and *Justice League*.

That is not to suggest that firm dividing lines exist between DC comic and film fandoms, though. Nearly all fans are multimedia fans to varying degrees. Responses to Porter's Funko video also included .gif clips from the *Justice League* animated series of Darkseid slapping Superman on endless loop,⁹⁵⁰ the *Injustice* video game's Darkseid raising his head with fiery eyes,⁹⁵¹ a screenshot of Leto's Joker and Robbie's Harley dancing in an unused Suicide Squad scene,⁹⁵² a shot of a Darkseid mural from The Snyder Cut,⁹⁵³ and Steppenwolf concept art from *Zack Snyder's Justice League*.⁹⁵⁴ That is, fans showed support for Porter's message by drawing on a multiplicity of DC media artifacts across time, displaying that being a film franchise fan in the modern era implies that one will be inundated with and possess some mastery of a medium agnostic DC lore. Television and media scholar Nick Marx first used the term "screen agnostic"⁹⁵⁵ to describe consumer viewing habits that skipped seamlessly across iPads, phones, television and other screens. Fans display an analogous agnosticism when making sense of the fractured character representations existing in various media forms. Though different, these forms funnel together, forming a semi-unified, visual pastiche that fans use to converse with others who are similarly steeped in this commonly understood symbology. This, again, is what I call transmedia closure.

The CW is itself an abbreviation of the two corporate entities that created a DC television universe, CBS Entertainment Group and Warner Bros. It is in some way appropriate, then, that CW actors began addressing WB's DC Films division on social media, effectively crossing

media types to promote a distant section of the DC media multiverse. *The Flash* CW actor Bethany Brown, who plays the villain Null, tweeted her support for the Ayer Cut during DC Fandome 2020. In her video message, she called on AT&T and WB to release the cut “otherwise The Flash and Zack Snyder are gonna come get you.”⁹⁵⁶ She ended the clip with a knowing wink, softening the playful threat. That she referenced Zack Snyder’s high-pressure tactics and targeting of studio executives well before *Rolling Stone* compiled these efforts into their viral article demonstrates how widely known Snyder’s campaign, and its intimidation of executives, had become by this time. Shortly after Fandome, Batman voice actor Troy Baker tweeted a video wherein he addressed HBO Max and AT&T in a self-deprecating monologue. Framing himself as one of the least known Batmen in comparison to Val Kilmer, Michael Keaton, George Clooney, Christian Bale, Robert Pattinson and Kevin Conroy, Baker demanded the Ayer cut’s release.⁹⁵⁷ As with Porter’s Cameo, fans posted .gifs of Baker’s other voice roles in *The Last of Us* and *Batman: Arkham Origins* video games.⁹⁵⁸ Others mocked the idea of begging celebrities to endorse an unreleased film that few DC fans truly cared about, calling it a sad move.⁹⁵⁹

On November 18, 2020, Margot Robbie voiced her interest in seeing the cut during a podcast interview.⁹⁶⁰ One year later, and shortly after Porter and Brown spoke on the Ayer Cut, Jared Leto became the second *Suicide Squad* cast member to support its release due to the larger role afforded to his Joker. While promoting *House of Gucci* (2021), Leto remarked that streaming platforms were uniquely suited to showcase unfinished material, asking “Why wouldn’t they?”⁹⁶¹ in regard to the Ayer Cut’s release. Ayer retweeted Leto’s interview with the addition: “Exactly what streaming is for. If you own IP and you have a mandate to monetize it from your shareholders, that’s exactly what you should do.”⁹⁶² The following year, Will Smith followed suit⁹⁶³ and said during a promotional tour for his *Bel-Air* reboot that he would love to

see the unreleased version.⁹⁶⁴ With anonymous WB executives telling *Variety* that they regretted ever releasing the Snyder Cut and viewed caving in to fan demands for more unproductions as encouraging fan disrespect and online harassment toward themselves, the prospect of releasing any additional fabled cuts seemed grim.⁹⁶⁵

David Zaslav's search for a DC equivalent of Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige and VP Victoria Alonzo began to take shape during the same time period, with the company soliciting and being rebuffed by Dan Lin, who once called SnyderVerse fans "bots."⁹⁶⁶ Former Paramount and 20th Century Fox executive director Emma Watts turned down the role next. This search was ongoing when a *YouTube* fan channel called ComicBookCast2 reported that Ayer would meet with WB executives in November 2022 to discuss his cut's potential release. While this news came from anonymous sources, fans excitedly discussed it on Twitter. Two days later, Zaslav hired James Gunn and Peter Saffron as co-owners and showrunners for DC Studios, a new combination of DC Films and TV. Gunn had previously expressed support for both the Snyder and Ayer cuts, but quickly stated that he had no interest in continuing Snyder's vision for *Man of Steel 2*.

Ayer's approach to promoting his unreleased version follows Zack Snyder's footsteps, to the extent that a kind of playbook appears to take shape. In both cases, an aggrieved director finds himself set against the towering machinations of money hungry executives who care nothing for the art they butcher in service of profit. Fans coalesce around the promise of an untainted, true vision caught in these billionaire media tycoons' clutches, forming what the director eagerly frames as a kind of unproduction undercommons. In the auteur's telling, this enables the director to become an apparent subversive within the studio ranks, using production mechanisms to further their own ends and fulfill fan desires. Actors involved with the project

begin to speak publicly in support of the unfilm's production and release. These steps are well-trodden. What is more interesting, though, is discourse around these fans' toxicity, misogyny, and general incivility, both from mainstream media sources and other fans. If the narrative simply stopped at a Robin Hood-like director bravely battling media giants on behalf of average fans as a true man of the people, without much added outrage generated by the occasional puerile shitpost, one wonders if such fan movements might burn brightly in headlines and tweets for a brief time, only to sputter into obscurity.

These fan movements are made of sterner stuff, however, and surely their inevitable attachment to the language of culture war discourse is at least somewhat responsible. While Snyder did not directly wade into debates with any one political bent, Ayer did so by criticizing cancel culture and the many politically correct protocols his Harley Quinn had run afoul of. Motions like this invigorate fans as they create media condemnations and coverage of toxic fans, which at the very least keeps the fan movement in press circulation. The more noisome fans' online taunts become and the more visible their real-world activism becomes, the more media narratives shift to present these fans not as underdogs slinging stones upward at a multibillion-dollar corporation and its vastly powerful executives, but as a hive of internet-anonymous, cultish bullies unfairly harassing undeserving business owners. Succinctly put, in mainstream media coverage, bad fan behavior supersedes any clout a fan movement may receive from punching up.

Further, the idea of punching up is not always clearly delineated. According to fan scholar Emma A. Jane, the de-subjectified fan uses their anonymity and averageness to justify racism and sexism toward producers, directors, and other above-the-line personnel on the grounds that the vast power difference between fan and industry voices excuses the behavior.⁹⁶⁷

The Snyder fandom's criticisms of WB executives are not based on racism and often accuse the company's management of being racist toward the few Black actors who were a part of Justice League, pointing out that Ray Fischer and Kiersey Clemons's screen time was drastically reduced for the theatrical *JL*. Further, despite Snyder's provocative use of the Mussolini quote, his later support of WB's *Blue Beetle* was predicated on the show's Latino star and included a RepresentationMatters hashtag.⁹⁶⁸

For their part, the anonymous Admin-1 and Admin-2 of @RTAyerCutSS promised an unspecified event that would occur on November 5th or 6th, 2022, asking followers to retweet #ReleaseTheAyerCut on that date. Fans took this to heart, with multiple reposts of two female fans standing over Ayer's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and holding a "Release The Ayer Cut" banner.⁹⁶⁹ Another shared a storyboard of Joker walking down a burning hallway, with shot lengths and numbers of cuts attached, which Admin-2 confirmed as authentic.⁹⁷⁰ If the Snyder Cut parallels in these moves were not readily apparent, video of a float plane towing a "HBO: Release The Ayer Cut and Restore The SnyderVerse" banner flew over the WB Water Tower and the Walk of Fame.⁹⁷¹ This duplicated a similar stunt earlier that year on March 18, when a "SnyderVerse & Ayer Cut" plane flew over the same area.⁹⁷² While the liveness of such events dissipates quickly, its ephemeral trace is reposted on social media and archived through news reports,⁹⁷³ and the events themselves hearken to a work in progress (WIP)⁹⁷⁴ that will remain incomplete until the Cut sees release and perhaps even beyond its release.

The Snyder Cut's release did little to curb demands for the restoration of its entire filmic universe. In the aftermath of the excitement stirred by the float planes, WB @RTAyerCutSS shared an earnings chart of all DC films released. From *Man of Steel* to *Black Adam* (2022), the revenue decline was pointed out between films greenlit by Greg Silverman and those approved

by Toby Emmerich. Emmerich took Silverman's position as president and chief content officer in 2016, shortly after Silverman had allegedly refused to fire Snyder for BvS's poor performance.⁹⁷⁵ The post avoided any mention of the fact that low-earning films were released during the COVID-19 pandemic and instead focused on Emmerich's presumed incompetence.⁹⁷⁶

@RTAyerCutSS called on fans to mass retweet #ReleaseTheAyerCut, beginning the morning of November 6.⁹⁷⁷ The day before this loosely organized event, the admins set down a list of rules in an attempt to regulate any toxic behaviors, which was similar to Fiona Zheng's early attempts to reign-in racist comments within the Snyder Cut movement. The list reads like a reaction to the Snyder Movement's online trolling and death threats toward WB management, as well as their trolling of other Snyder fans who criticized the movement's toxic elements. The first rule states that the fans must be cordial, as they are representing Ayer. It also advises fans to ignore anyone being "nasty to any exec, person or even trolls."⁹⁷⁸ @RTAyerCutSS's attempt to mitigate incivility preempts voices who might try to split the movement into the clear-cut simplicity of victimized hero versus executive villain⁹⁷⁹ that emboldened some Snyder fans to resort to threats. In example, the rules also advised users on how to make the hashtag trend without being censored, reminding that negative comments would cause Twitter's algorithm to delete posts. Civility is therefore framed in utilitarian terms, upheld as a way to circumvent the all-seeing eye of Twitter's censorious artificial intelligence. The advice is a roadmap for fans to navigate this digital panopticon and in so doing, rig the great machine into promoting their movement. Only a gargantuan, coordinated flood of hashtags at the agreed to hour of 9AM would manifest these goals.

This relatively cautious, if not at times obsequious approach to creating a trending topic speaks both to the movement's awareness of Twitter's presumed algorithm behavior (whether

wholly accurate or not) as it does to the relative obscurity of the movement itself. Compared to the Snyder Cut fandom's aggressive tactics and hashtag spamming, the Ayer Cut's online presence seeks to avoid becoming negatively stigmatized while still upholding the same cancelled DCEU as the correct path forward for WB. This latter observation is supported by reposting of producer and Snyder collaborator Charles Roven's comments on the conceptual DCEU, in which he described the film universe as a sandbox divided between different key directors. He mentions Ayer as someone who is expected to push the boundaries of his allotted area in the box, and who would be given latitude to do so.⁹⁸⁰ The idealized model of the DCEU as a space supportive of directorial autonomy, rather than a top-down, film by executive committee model, is the one championed by Ayer Cut fans who initially came to believe that James Gunn would respect this notion.

The idea is further represented in a reposted Snyder quotation: "I want all the directors of the other films to be able to stretch their legs and do what they want, but at the same time there is this big, interconnected universe. I have given everyone amazing access to our story, to me, and what we are doing. All the films have like-minded conceptual jumping-on points."⁹⁸¹ Snyder's description of the DCEU hierarchy does not sound greatly different from Marvel Studios' film by committee approach, which foregrounds executive oversight in order to produce tonally and narratively consistent, episodic films. Fan imaginations generated a hypothetical film universe where Snyder *would have* permitted his directors unmatched creative control, with the DCEU serving as an auteur factory of sorts. Evidently, fans at first saw the same potential to create this lost environment under Gunn's tenure; he too was a director who understood other creatives, not just a Kevin Feige-like producer, the logic suggested. As such, @RTAyerCutSS administrators

sought to avoid Warner’s ire, too, telling followers to tag James Gunn without overwhelming him.

The call to action garnered #ReleaseTheAyerCut over 250,000 retweets in a 24-hour window.⁹⁸² Ayer tweeted the hashtag himself, generating over 7,000 retweets, 2,000 quotes and 25,000 likes. Jay Hernandez (El Diablo) added his support shortly after.⁹⁸³ Fans responded with black and white fanart of the original cast,⁹⁸⁴ a fake HBO Max poster featuring a grinning Joker,⁹⁸⁵ and calls for Ayer to take over the unproduced Batman and Justice League sequels.⁹⁸⁶

Fans attached their hopes to James Gunn’s working relationship with Ayer. When WB announced that Gunn would direct *The Suicide Squad* reboot in 2020, the two directors briefly exchanged tweets, with Gunn responding to fans’ reposting of #ReleaseTheAyerCut by writing that he would be “ok with whatever @DavidAyerMovies and Warners wanted to release with that, no problem.”⁹⁸⁷ Ayer simply thanked Gunn and added that he couldn’t wait to see his updated version of the characters, in a rare sunbeam of civility between an axed director and his franchise replacement. Fans upheld this as evidence that Gunn might help Ayer’s cut toward completion and eventual screening on HBO Max. Gunn’s 2022 Twitter announcement that he would lead DC Studios alongside Peter Safran drew a milieu of fan requests and suggestions, such as rebooting *Green Lantern*, bringing back Zack Snyder and Ben Affleck, restoring the cancelled CW television universe, releasing the Ayer Cut, restoring the SnyderVerse, releasing *Batgirl* and countless others. Gunn would acknowledge only two of these requests in his own November 6 tweet:

“Opened up Twitter at the end of a long, creative weekend to see the many tweets to #SaveLegendsofTomorrow and #ReleaseTheAyerCut and fan support for other

DC projects over the years. The majority of these requests were enthusiastic and respectful. As the new (and first ever) CEOs of DC Studios, Peter and I think it's important we acknowledge you, the fans, and let you know we hear your different desires for the pathways forward for DC [. . .] we are listening and open to everything as we embark on this journey and will continue to do so for the next few years.”⁹⁸⁸

Gunn's gestures toward creating a fan-centric studio did not mollify everyone. Fan responses to *Deadline's* story announcing Gunn's DC Studios expressed a greater disdain for Gunn's tenure and the idea of resurrecting past unproductions than responses found on the director's Twitter announcement. One poster called WB a morally bankrupt studio more focused on re-releasing billion-dollar flops than creating new content. Others added that the worst thing would be to bring Zack Snyder back, and the mocked twitter handle #ReleaseTheSnyderStranglehold pops up several times.⁹⁸⁹ Fans on *The Mary Sue's* coverage of the story debated the theatrical *Suicide Squad's* status as a failure, with some arguing that its financial success did not prevent it from being deemed a failure in the public imagination. The same *Mary Sue* poster goes on to describe how franchise films can cast a shadow over subsequent titles, as those who paid to see a first installment may skip even better-quality sequels as a result of their negative experiences with the product they did pay to see. If failed creative work thus casts a pall across its own offspring, does continuously revisiting the unproduced threaten to mire a studio in its past, never allowing it to fully mature beyond and collectively learn from these mistakes? Such a perspective necessitates the view that the failed is virulently contagious in its brokenness, repeatedly shattering dreams and aspirations in a neurotic time loop if allowed.

Snyder fans saw a glimpse of what could've been when Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson pushed for Henry Cavill's Superman return. Although this was later revealed to be only a verbal agreement between Johnson and Cavill, the latter said in a live filming of the *Happy Sad Confused Podcast*, "I want to make it official: I am back as Superman" in advance of Black Adam's opening.⁹⁹⁰ Snyder sent a video to the podcast interviewers in which he asked Cavill to reflect on donning the Superman suit in 2013 and concluded with "I can't wait to work with you again."⁹⁹¹ Zaslav fired DC Films president Walter Hamada, who had nearly quit after *Batgirl*'s cancellation. Hamada was said to have resisted assigning further Superman roles to Henry Cavill and avoided communication with Zack Snyder, instead seeking to advance the DCEU beyond the Snyder-era cast.⁹⁹² The morning after reports on Hamada's exit, Gal Gadot encapsulated how many SnyderVerse hopefuls were feeling, tweeting "starting my day off with a smile."⁹⁹³ All this suggested that barriers to the SnyderVerse's resurrection had fallen. Such appeared to be the case until James Gunn began to get involved.

Some pro-Ayer Cut fans expected an antagonistic relationship between Ayer and Gunn, and were confused when they could neither find nor concoct it. One Twitter post responded to Ayer retweeting Gunn's listing of favorite musicians by asking "What is with the bromance, David?" and wondering whether the movement should stop reposting #ReleaseTheAyerCut.⁹⁹⁴ Ayer responded that there would be a "real shot" at releasing his cut, but that it wouldn't occur immediately.⁹⁹⁵ Gunn then retweeted these comments, saying that he seconded them.⁹⁹⁶ Further igniting hopes of a restored SnyderVerse were Warner Bros. pictures co-Chairs Pamela Abdy and Michael DeLuca being rumored to want "one more go around" with Zack Snyder's superhero cast and intended to develop *Man of Steel 2*, *Wonder Woman 3* and *Justice League 2* before transitioning into a rebooted universe.⁹⁹⁷

Fans tried again to read conflict into Gunn and Ayer's relationship after Gunn tweeted a lengthy statement on "a certain minority of people online that could be, well, uproarious and unkind, to say the least."⁹⁹⁸ His comments came in the wake of a decision to fire Henry Cavill from his Superman role,⁹⁹⁹ when only a month-and-a-half earlier Cavill had tweeted that he'd been re-hired to play the character¹⁰⁰⁰ and had appeared in *Black Adam's* (2022) post-credits sequence. The Rock, too, was out after the film he'd tried to produce for thirteen years barely made a profit for Warner Bros. These moves ended Snyder fans' honeymoon with Gunn and appeared to alienate casuals. #FireJamesGunn and #BringBackZackSnyder trended¹⁰⁰¹ after Cavill announced that he'd lost the role.¹⁰⁰² Fans even circulated art hearkening to earlier fanworks of the infamous decapitated Walter Hamada, Geoff Johns and Toby Emmerich, this time with a digital painting of Cavill's evil Superman holding Gunn's severed, zombified head.¹⁰⁰³ Reddit posters criticized the image as presenting the psychopathic Superman that "Snyder cultists"¹⁰⁰⁴ mistook for a hero, compared the DCEU Superman to the super-powered villain Homelander from *The Boys* series.¹⁰⁰⁵

The same thread featured multiple comments condemning the SnyderVerse fans in a variety of other ways, writing "Guys, you don't understand, we need Superman to murder James Gunn because it's part of his character development to become a symbol of hope,"¹⁰⁰⁶ "Don't worry, he'll act like Superman 15 movies later, just give it time"¹⁰⁰⁷ and "But don't forget, they raised money for suicide prevention."¹⁰⁰⁸ Thus, DC fans who looked forward to Gunn's rebooted universe began to separate themselves from DCEU fans, focusing on the old regime's two instances of gory fanart and their attempts to offset the movement's online harassment by pointing to the movement's altruistic moments. The DC fandom's rapidly splitting factions prompted *Comic Book Resources* to name infighting as one of the worst aspects of the broader

DC film fandom,¹⁰⁰⁹ as anti-fans began to multiply with “wave upon wave of anti-fan groups”¹⁰¹⁰ become anti-fans of one another, a veritable Russian nesting doll of DC anti-fandom.

Another meme featured Gunn’s face photoshopped onto Marvel’s Thanos, as he dons his helmet to justify wiping out half the universe in *Avengers: Infinity War*. The text modifies the film’s monologue: “I will shred this DC Extended Universe down to its last atom. Then I will create a new one, teeming with multiverses and timelines. Where the fanbase remembers not what I have taken from it, but only what I have given it. A grateful DC Universe.”¹⁰¹¹ These two memes demonstrate lines being drawn between pro-SnyderVerse, DCEU fans and Snyder-critical DC Fans (called DCU fans in the aftermath of Gunn’s hiring). However, the Ayer Cut stands out as the only DCEU film that both sides want to see released. Gunn attempted to shift blame for the backlash onto a few vocal fans (by implication, Snyder fans). He stated that the “fractitious nature of what came before”¹⁰¹² required a comprehensive reboot from failed DCEU into a revamped DCU. He also declared that disrespectful fans would never influence his production decisions,¹⁰¹³ effectively invalidating those fans who were upset about Cavill.

Ayer responded to Gunn’s comments by writing that negativity was best viewed as a kind of fan enthusiasm for superhero mythologies. Twitter respondents would view this as Ayer criticizing Gunn’s treatment of fans. As one fan tweeted, “Being criticized for doing a Young Superman movie nobody is interested in, especially when Henry Cavill is right there, is fully justified.”¹⁰¹⁴ Another added that Gunn was throwing money away by forsaking a star with a built-in audience. Yet, not everyone was as reasoned, as fans retweeted old 2010 Twitter screenshots of Gunn’s infamous pedophile jokes which had caused public outcry, particularly from right-leaning social media personalities, and temporarily cost him his job as *Guardians of the Galaxy 3* (2023) director. Although Warner Bros. hired Gunn to direct *The Suicide Squad*

shortly thereafter, Disney would rehire him to finish *Guardians of the Galaxy 3 (GoTG3)* and the Disney+ *GoTG Holiday Special (2022)*. When dredging up Gunn's old tweets failed to elicit any reaction from Warner, Snyder fans launched a petition for WB to sell the SnyderVerse to Netflix, for whom Snyder had recently directed *Rebel Moon (2023)*. Supporters of a #SellZSJLToNetflix and #SellSnyderVerseToNetflix claimed that each rocketed past 100,000 tweets in a single day's time¹⁰¹⁵ and encouraged supporters to retweet the hashtags.

The Cut That Doesn't End

In its nearly seven-year tenure, The Snyder Cut movement waged a metaphorical war of attrition against any who sought to alter Zack Snyder's original DCEU vision. Warner Brothers executives caught the brunt of the movement's ire, and the studio's perceived degrading treatment of a bereaved director galvanized the fanbase into their extended online campaign. Media coverage both marveled at their ability to raise massive amounts of money for charity and alternatively condemned them as a cult-like group of potentially violent extremists being riled up by a numerically unknown phalanx of Twitter bots supplied by Snyder himself. Whether trying to reign in their own movement's online lambasting and review bombing of "rival" WB films or making digital paintings of decapitated executives and giving *Godzilla* a one-star review, the SnyderVerse fandom's methodologically divergent actors all held a common goal of restoration and of refusing unproduction and failure.

CONCLUSION: SUPERHERO UNPRODUCTION AND BEYOND

George Miller's *Justice League: Mortal*, Zack Snyder's *Snyder Cut* and *SnyderVerse*, and David Ayer's *Ayer Cut* are all adventures into failure to some degree. While Miller's project fell apart due to a combination of geopolitical, industrial and directorial decisions, Snyder was able to partially recover his vision for *Justice League*. Thanks to social media engagement and the availability of an extremely devoted, international, and online fanbase, Snyder weathered a series of obstacles that might have otherwise ruined his cut's chances of being produced. Seeing the success of the *Snyder Movement*, Ayer took up similar tactics and mobilized his own fans online to pressure WB and promote the presumed greatness of his phantom film.

The present project has posed five major research questions. First, I studied the historical exigencies that caused George Miller's *JL:M* to fail, as well as those that led to the *Snyder Cut*'s initial failure and eventual return to production. I considered how the issue of fidelity to comic source material affected an unproduction's fan support, as well the effects of directors' communication with fans on an unproduction potential to become produced. Lastly, I considered how fans use discourse to sustain their movements and push for superhero unproductions to be made.

As I have argued, fandoms surrounding Warner Brothers' unproduced *Justice League* properties demonstrated the use of transmedia closure, or the fannish act of assembling disparate shards of unfinished films to create an imagined work. The degree to which directors are able to take advantage of this process varies with the available social media technologies, geopolitical exigencies and industrial limitations of their projects' respective eras. However, those who

manage to utilize this process have a greater chance of successfully pressuring studios into releasing unproduced work.

Recent events have only increased the relevance of superhero unproduction studies. WB is planning a reboot of their filmic universe in the form of James Gunn's DCU, and it is not inconceivable that this new vision will yield its own superhero unproductions. Snyder fans still advocate for the DCEU to be sold to Netflix. Also of interest are the multiple cancelled Marvel Studios projects in 2023 and 2024. At one time, Jonathan Majors was to play Kang the Conqueror, the character who would have been the new arch-villain for Marvel's Phase 5 film slate. Majors was fired after a public scandal, forcing Marvel to fundamentally reimagine *The Kang Dynasty* movie¹⁰¹⁶ and reevaluate the main villain and plot of their upcoming *Secret Wars* film.¹⁰¹⁷ Further, the poor box office and critical performance of *Ant Man 3* and *The Marvels* led to the cancellation of planned sequels and a pivot away from their eponymous characters in future projects.¹⁰¹⁸ The opportunities for fans to wonder about Elseworlds and What If scenarios will only continue to expand. The rise of Marvel Studios as a major creator of unproduced films all but guarantees greater legitimacy and public focus on unproduction of this genre and in general.

As an unfilmic relic whose inert status is unlikely to change, *Justice League: Mortal's* textual corpus contains the shards of an incomplete story that may never be fully revealed. A rushed casting process disregarded fan favorites Christian Bale and Brandon Routh for complete unknowns in the superhero film world. In addition, a fundamental misreading of what it would take to gain co-production status amid the anti-Hollywood sentiments still rippling through Australia's cultural bureaucracy since the 10BA era of rampant investment speculation, and the added complication of a Hollywood writer's strike delayed the film further. Consequently,

Warner Brothers' superhero mega-franchise was lost, ceding ground to Marvel Studios instead. George Miller placed responsibility for the film's undoing on government agencies created to curtail another film boom like the one that Miller himself experienced in his early career. Miller railed against these censorious forces. He suggested that hesitation to award co-production's perks to Hollywood ventures was a regressive move that would hold back his homeland's filmmakers from keeping pace with other rising Hollywood partners like New Zealand and Canada.

Miller's take, though still the most detailed available, appears to ignore the systemic failures that made both taxpayers and the government skeptical of Australian film partnerships with Hollywood in the name of mutually beneficial cooperation. From this approach emerges a specific view of failure. It situates small cracks in a project's firmament as negligible, as they are in service of a plotted success. Such single-minded authorship makes a project's eventual implosion likely. However, by examining *JL:M*'s script as an adaptation of three different comic book arcs and their character portrayals, it is apparent that the film would have shown an out of character Batman who, in order to halt the building moral failures that his comic book counterpart refuses to recognize, resorts to killing and thus disrupts and deconstructs his own identity and moral code, taking this role from the comics' Wonder Woman. Though horrific and alienating to fans, Kieran and Michele Mulroney's Batman acknowledges the horror of his failure, stops to sit with its magnitude, and allows it to fundamentally change him in an attempt to reconcile with it. He takes a Halberstamian and Heideggerian approach, both stopping at his moment of moral breakdown and adjusting to the darkness of it by changing his code, recognizing the falsehood of his morally pristine past self and leaving it behind. He rejects a version of failure that would ignore its inner fault lines, thereby perpetuating a larger catastrophe.

Ultimately the *JL:M* Batman's response to his plan's breakdown demonstrates a general path toward embracing one's failure before it can rupture into the realm of the catastrophic; he is unable to stop Max Lord directly, but his actions save his friends and his relationship with them. Mark Waid's Batman in *Tower of Babel* brushes aside his failings and rebuffs any chances to stop. He continues to invest in the bubble that is his intellectual infallibility and power to plan for any contingency. While the script redeems Batman's character in a way that the comics do not, the use of killing to accomplish this was not accepted among fans.

It would be too easy to say that Miller simply overlooked the wants of fans and did not adequately communicate that his film represented an alternate dimension or an Elseworld adjacent to the Christopher Nolan and Brian Singer film continuities. At the same time, the lack of exigent technologies in 2007/08 would have made a direct, online dialogue between director and fans both non-normative and unlikely. Had he possessed the means to gather fans in a concentrated platform, they might have supported his project rather than ridiculing it, thereby demonstrating its financial viability as Snyder's fans would do nearly a decade afterward.

In the case of a comic book movie, Miller lacked the fannish authorial stance to immerse himself among DC film fans, though it would be admittedly unfair to hold him to a standard like this. Snyder's fandom and its unique, dogged determination could only result from fan loyalty built up over a long series of DCEU films plus the deus ex machina tragedies and traumas that befell the director and went viral on social media. These factors, in addition to the already oppositional unification among DCEU advocates as the cinephile answer to unsophisticated Marvel fandom, helped to lock their movement onto a common adversary. At first, this took the form of Joss Whedon and his tonally erratic, theatrical edit of *Justice League*, as fans produced

and posted artwork of missing characters that Snyder's social media accounts had teased, such as series villain Darkseid.

Zack Snyder purposely enacted the role of a symbolically cast down and newly arisen undead author / fanboy auteur for the DCEU. One way he accomplished this was through his views of the ridiculousness of framing superheroes as morally innocent. In addition, he used screenshots of unfinished scenes and a physical reel of the Snyder Cut to prove its existence, his cryptic messages encouraging fans to keep up their non-political protesting and marching. Illicit tactics were part of the movement early on, as Snyder allegedly stole the Snyder Cut footage from WB and purchased Twitter bots to help boost the #ReleaseTheSnyderCut message. Using these tactics, Zack Snyder was able to turn the Snyder Cut movement into a social media phenomenon, giving continued life to the failed SnyderVerse.

Meanwhile, fans situated Whedon as a mere imposter peddling WB's profit-driven lobotomization of the authentic Snyder Justice League. Despite repeated harassment and threats on Twitter, Warner Brothers' management finally sought to monetize the Snyder fanbase and funded The Snyder Cut's post-production. This move led to further demands to #RestoreTheSnyderVerse, rather than pacifying toxic elements within the movement. #ReleaseTheSnyderCut has since been used to poke fun at the idea of an upswelling of fans who demand to see the authentic version of an underwhelming theatrical release. After Ann Sarnoff's departure and the WB-Discovery merger and its resulting layoffs, the company looked to reboot its DCEU after initial assurances that Henry Cavill's Superman would return to fight Duane Johnson's Black Adam. For some of the Snyder fandom, James Gunn became the new arch-villain, and #RestoreTheSnyderVerse took up a new mission in its call to sell the DCEU to Snyder's new employer, Netflix.

Once Snyder's Justice League was announced for HBO Max, Josh Trank jokingly asked if there was a Trank Cut, in reference to his widely panned *Fantastic Four* (2015).¹⁰¹⁹ Fans of the animated *Cats* (2020) began tweeting #ReleaseTheButtholeCut when it was revealed that the theatrical version had removed certain anatomical details from its CGI characters.¹⁰²⁰ That is, the Snyder Cut movement became a cultural touchstone, and other auteurs took notice. David Ayer began to follow Snyder's playbook by teasing images and script sections from his full cut of *Suicide Squad*, gathering a smaller and more well-behaved fanbase to advocate for its release. Rather than stand aside as his fans flooded WB's socials with threats and demands, as Snyder had done, Ayer showcased his working relationship with Gunn and discussed him not as a rival or a WB shill, but as a fellow DC fan. The hashtag's chief organizers also repeatedly cautioned their members against toxic behaviors. They softened their Snyder Cut predecessors' tactics by refraining from criticizing Gunn's *The Suicide Squad* reboot as a lesser version of the property. In this offshoot of the original Snyder Cut movement can be traced the dialing down of an initial fan revolutionary movement. In this movement, the hard-edged elements that led to backlash from other DC fans, media outlets and the general public are massaged into an acceptable form so that the movement's failings, as perceived by outsiders, do not derail the movement. The Ayer Cut represents the Snyder Cut strategy learning, gradually, to fail better. It is a vastly different approach to failure than the strategy of willful forgetting of the 10BA period's problems seen in the buildup to *JL:M*'s collapse.

The futures of both *Justice League: Mortal* and the SnyderVerse remain uncertain. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Ryan Unicomb had originally begun production on a documentary chronicling the film's failure in 2015.¹⁰²¹ He likened its tone to Frank Pavich's *Jodorowsky's Dune* (2013) and John Schnepf's *The Death of Superman Lives: What Happened?* (2015).¹⁰²²

Both of these films portrayed failure reverently, interviewed remaining cast and crew and included original concept art and test footage pieces to paint a picture of what might have been. Unicom's production stagnated, only to tentatively resume in 2020.¹⁰²³ He has been silent on the matter since then, but Cadence McCoy, a graphic artist working on the documentary posted concepts of Batman's *JL:M* suit in 2021.¹⁰²⁴ Occasional fan tributes appear sporadically, such as a rendition of the script scene where Batman stands before his Batcomputer, the words "You Don't Control It Anymore" looming before him.¹⁰²⁵ Another fan artist, Luis Bajo Callados, created an illustrated version of the *JL:M* cast in 2023. Followers on his Deviant Art webpage speculated about what *JL:M* would look like as an animated cartoon.¹⁰²⁶ However, fandom for this unfilm remains confined to small corners of Reddit and DeviantArt and there are no serious calls for George Miller to revisit it. If Unicom's documentary is released, a tributary funeral bell will have been the best possible production outcome for *JL:M*. The SnyderVerse's prospects, on the other hand, are optimistic still, at least among fans.

When Snyder announced SnyderCon 2022 would feature screenings and audience Q&A of his DCEU trilogy in collaboration with Warner Brothers, fans were intrigued by the fact that Snyder still had support at WB despite past bad blood. They began speculating that he would announce the SnyderVerse's restoration sometime during the three-day event. No announcement materialized. Fans quickly took note of David Zaslav's previous statements that, under his new business model, WB was compiling an IP package of around half of their total film and TV soundtracks, including DC characters and soundtracks. This was to be sold to rival companies as part of Zaslav's larger efforts to rein in the company's debt. While these were mostly film themes and cues, not full songs,¹⁰²⁷ Sony became the forerunner in the bid to acquire them, demonstrating a wider interest in buying any assets WB might wish to part with.¹⁰²⁸ Snyder's

fans shaped this possibility toward their own ends,¹⁰²⁹ especially after an article in *Forbes* advocated for the business sense in leasing the DCEU, and thus the push to sell the SnyderVerse to Netflix was born. One fan posted a Vero video explaining this as the latest iteration of the Snyder fan movement, which Snyder himself liked.¹⁰³⁰ Fans continue to carry on the #SellTheSnyderVerseToNetflix Twitter campaign, and one of the movement's figureheads, a fan calling himself Skiiwalker Tha Jedi, attended a charity event organized by the Snyder family and their fans, with Chris Terrio, Ben Affleck and Ray Fischer appearing in-person as well. Dubbed Full Circle, the event was yet another screening of the SnyderVerse trilogy, with proceeds going to AFSP once again. Skiiwalker presented Snyder with a Darkseid poster,¹⁰³¹ which the director signed "#SnyderVerse, Sell It!"¹⁰³² When Skiiwalker asked whether he would take the opportunity to restore the DCEU outside of WB-Discovery, Snyder answered "of course I would."¹⁰³³

Aside from this quick endorsement, Snyder has commented on #SellZSJLtoNetflix and #SellSnyderVerseToNetflix, telling the YouTube channel Film Junkee¹⁰³⁴ that IP sales were above his paygrade but "it would be amazing if . . .".¹⁰³⁵ The movement gained enough social media traction for James Gunn to take notice, calling it "the wackiest hashtag ever" and tweeting that "Netflix has never asked" to buy the DCEU.¹⁰³⁶ Gunn responded to a Snyder Cut fan's tweet by writing that Snyder had already wished him well with his new DCU and seemed happy with directing Netflix's *Rebel Moon* franchise. Despite a desire among some fans to read a Whedon-like clash of directorial vision into the dynamic between Snyder and Gunn, Snyder has supported *The Flash* (2023) and *Blue Beetle* (2023) on social media, and Gunn has reiterated his initial support for #ReleaseTheAyerCut, apparently telling Ayer that the film would have its time, eventually.¹⁰³⁷ Fans nonetheless repeated their intent to mass tweet #SellSnyderVerseToNetflix

at pre-set dates and in response to Gunn’s tweets. One poster explained their rationale: “Zack told us once before to never give up hope. It’s not an us vs. you thing. It’s about not giving up hope for what we love.”¹⁰³⁸

Aside from the more contemporary unproductions associated with WB and Disney/Marvel, scholars interested in these unfilms have at their disposal a library of liminal ideas stretching back decades. Although I have focused on two recent DC unfilms in the current project, possibilities for studying the distant past are numerous. Of the Trinity characters, Batman has accrued the greatest number of unmade projects. To give a brief cross-section of the character’s unmade history, longtime DC producer Michael E. Uslan has pointed out that Fleischer Studios, famed for their animated *Superman* (1941-1943), had plans for what he believes to be a live-action Batman film in 1942,¹⁰³⁹ although project details remain scant.¹⁰⁴⁰ With nothing beyond a cost estimate available, Uslan wrote a short comic in *Batman: Black and White #2* which depicted what the Fleischer film could have looked like, adapting comic book text into intertitle panels with an Art Deco motif.¹⁰⁴¹

Batman’s next unproduced film took the form of a 1965 script submitted to Japan’s Toho Studios by script writer Shinichi Sekizawa, who had written a series of Godzilla movies, such as *Mothra* (1961), *Mothra vs. Godzilla* (1964) and *Ghidorah, The Three-Headed Monster* (1964). Sekizawa’s idea was *Batman vs. Godzilla*, an attempt to revisit the success of his previous Japanese-American crossover in *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (1962). The details on whether or not the script was ever submitted to Warner Brothers remain uncertain, but it was adapted into a web comic book by superfan Eric Elliot and a collection of artists working on “Project Batzilla.”¹⁰⁴² These two early projects alone demonstrate the vast, untapped research potential within unmade superhero films.

More recent times also offer a tremendous amount of thus-far unexamined projects, even while considering the DC oeuvre in isolation. Prior to James Gunn's ascent and the creating of DC Studios, Warner's post-ZSJL DCEU was rapidly expanding, and the company was negotiating with Michael Keaton in an effort to reprise his Batman role in *The Flash* and *Batgirl*. Initial reports guessed that Keaton might play the Flashpoint comic series' Thomas Wayne, Bruce Wayne's morally ambivalent father.¹⁰⁴³ Rumors also suggest that Keaton would portray the ageing Bruce Wayne seen in Alex Ross's acclaimed *Kingdom Come* series, another alternate timeline following a future where superheroes are worshipped like gods.¹⁰⁴⁴ Still others claimed he would be a retired Bruce Wayne in a *Batman Beyond* movie. These plans dissolved once Zaslav cancelled *Batgirl* as part of a cost cutting strategy¹⁰⁴⁵ and *The Flash* became Warner's worst-performing superhero film of all time, despite Keaton's return.¹⁰⁴⁶ Regardless of which of these fan imaginings will materialize and which are mere speculative ether, Keaton's return to DC Films reignited interest in Tim Burton's version of *Batman Forever*, also referred to as *Batman Continues*. Descriptions of Burton's original script were sufficiently detailed that comics artist Joe Quinones drew sketches of key scenes and pitched them to DC Comics as a continuation of the "Burton-verse," which would begin after the conclusion of *Batman Returns* (1992).¹⁰⁴⁷ DC initially rejected the idea only to later recant and publish it as a comic series that offered a look into Batman's pre-DCEU history.¹⁰⁴⁸

Any number of DC unfilms offer opportunities for interested scholars, to say nothing of the many Marvel unfilms whose details can only be found in news clippings and occasional fan commentaries on social media. For instance, Roger Corman's *Fantastic Four* (1994) is a partly completed, low budget, never officially released internet legend.¹⁰⁴⁹ Years before Keaton was considered for *Batman Beyond*, Clint Eastwood was WB's first choice to play Bruce Wayne.¹⁰⁵⁰

Canon Films nearly made a Spider-Man movie where Peter Parker would have transformed into a giant spider.¹⁰⁵¹ The list goes on. If stories like these are not enough to prompt a turn toward superhero unfilm among film scholars, then nothing is.

Beyond the niche realm of unproduction studies, though, unmade superhero films contain the idea that universal experiences such as failure, trauma and disaster can be understood in beneficial ways. The unfilms themselves, as well as the heroes who inhabit them, suggest that something terrible can be reappropriated, reimagined, and transformed into a symbol of hope. This change is exemplified in Superman's first *Action Comics* #1 appearance in 1938. It has been a quality present in many superheroes since. Superman's creators, Joe Schuster and Jerry Siegel, sought to reappropriate the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, or small-s superman that had become synonymous with the German war machine in both World War I and World War II. As Chris Gavalier notes, Superman represents a knowing inversion of this destructive concept.¹⁰⁵² Further, he was a response to the urgencies of the depression era and the global tumult that had been building. Siegel summarized the intent behind Superman and superheroes in a 1975 press release, writing that "being unemployed and worrying about the depression and knowing hopelessness and fear [. . .] seeing movies depicting the horrors of privation suffered by the downtrodden . . . I had the great urge to help . . . help the downtrodden masses somehow. How could I help them when I could barely help myself? Superman was the answer."¹⁰⁵³

Though pushing to make a destroyed film is a different matter, the small victories found within discarded material generate meaning for fans. They read their own failures, traumas and struggles into the failure of their beloved superheroes and the directors who fell short of bringing them fully to life. Superheroes are an answer to "a distressful human condition"¹⁰⁵⁴ and to feelings of chaos and meaninglessness. They are meant to provide order and purpose, and indeed

the act of looking at an unmade film is a process of re-ordering that which has been torn asunder in failure. This same act of looking, when directed at the gaps in studied history, seeks to reclaim that which is marked meaningless and without value. Superhero movies are not the only kind of unmade film, but they are perhaps best suited to soar upward from the subsumed realm of the forgotten past, reminding us that the overlooked can still become the extraordinary.

ENDNOTES

-
- ¹ Megan Peters, “Jay Baruchel describes Wonder Woman’s intro in Justice League: Mortal,” Comicbook.com, Sept. 5, 2017 <https://comicbook.com/dc/2017/08/31/justice-league-mortal-wonder-woman-first-scene>
- ² Ken Shepherd, “Abandoned Justice League concept included brutal Superman-Wonder Woman fight,” The Washington Times, Aug. 31, 2017 <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/aug/31/justice-league-originally-was-to-have-wonder-woman/>
- ³ Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, Polity, 2007 (79)
- ⁴ Eric D. Smith, “Feeling the ‘60s in the Age of Reagan: Failure, Repetition and History in ‘Eddie and the Cruisers,’” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 43(1), 2015, 46-63 (48)
- ⁵ Sanghita Sen, “Ghatak in the Shadows: Films That Struggled,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster and David Eldridge [Eds.], New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (110)
- ⁶ James Fenwick, “Introduction,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster and David Eldridge [Eds.], New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (2)
- ⁷ Barina, Ben, “The Extremely Bumpy Journey of Justice League to the Big Screen,” *Nylon*, Nov. 14, 2017 <https://www.nylon.com/articles/timeline-of-justice-league-trip-to-theaters>
- ⁸ Barina, Ben, “The Extremely Bumpy Journey of Justice League to the Big Screen,” *Nylon*, Nov. 14, 2017 <https://www.nylon.com/articles/timeline-of-justice-league-trip-to-theaters>
- ⁹ “Justice League Mortal,” *Superman Super Site*, 1998 - 2021 <https://www.supermansupersite.com/jlamovie.html>
- ¹⁰ “George Miller’s Justice League: Mortal Script Has Leaked Online!” *Comic Book Movie*, Oct. 7, 2013 <https://comicbookmovie.com/justice-league/george-millers-justice-league-mortal-script-has-leaked-online-a88176#gs.6jxr0f>
- ¹¹ Dayani, Ayhil, “Why George Miller’s Justice League: Mortal Didn’t Get Made,” *Heroic Hollywood*, April 13, 2020 <https://heroichollywood.com/george-miller-justice-league-mortal-cancellation-explained/>

¹² Seijas, Casey, “Warner Announces Darker Superman Reboot, Other Comic Movies in the Works,” MTV, August 22, 2008 <https://www.mtv.com/news/1kk8wd/warner-announces-darker-superman-reboot-other-comic-movies-in-the-works>

¹³ Begley, Chris, “George Miller’s 2007 Justice League: Mortal Script Leaks Online,” Batman News, Oct. 8, 2013 <https://batman-news.com/2013/10/08/george-millers-2007-justice-league-mortal-script-leaks/>

¹⁴ Behbakht, Andy, “Director Ryan Unicomb: Justice League Mortal Documentary Interview,” ScreenRant, April 30, 2020 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-mortal-documentary-ryan-unicomb-interview/>

¹⁵ Boone, John, ‘Justice League’ Review: How Many Superheroes Does It Take to Save a Cinematic Universe, ET, November 14, 2017, [‘Justice League’ Review: How Many Superheroes Does It Take to Save a Cinematic Universe | Entertainment Tonight \(etonline.com\)](https://www.etonline.com/entertainment/justice-league-review-how-many-superheroes-does-it-take-to-save-a-cinematic-universe)

¹⁶ Stedman, Alex, Zack Snyder to Direct ‘Justice League’ Movie, April 27 2014, [Justice League Movie: Zack Snyder Set to Direct \(variety.com\)](https://www.variety.com/2014/film/news/zack-snyder-to-direct-justice-league-movie)

¹⁷ “Film / Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice”, TVTropes, [Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice \(Film\) - TV Tropes](https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Film/Batman_v_Superman:_Dawn_of_Justice)

¹⁸ Fleming, Mike, No. 13 ‘Batman V. Superman’ Box Office Profits – 2016 Most Valuable Movie Blockbuster Tournament, March 17, 2017, [‘Batman V Superman’ Box Office Profits 2016: Missed Opportunity To Gross \\$1B? \(deadline.com\)](https://www.deadline.com/2017/03/batman-v-superman-box-office-profits-2016-missed-opportunity-to-gross-1b/)

¹⁹ Masters, Kim, April 6, 2016, [Warner Bros. Mulls Releasing Fewer Films as ‘Batman v. Superman’ Stalls \(hollywoodreporter.com\)](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/warner-bros-mulls-releasing-fewer-films-as-batman-v-superman-stalls)

²⁰ Scott, Katie, “Director Zack Snyder steps down from ‘Justice League’ after daughter’s suicide”, Global News, May 23, 2017, [Director Zack Snyder steps down from ‘Justice League’ after daughter’s suicide - National | Globalnews.ca](https://www.globalnews.ca/story/entertainment/2017/05/23/zack-snyder-justice-league-daughter-suicide)

-
- ²¹ Brown, Tracy, “Timeline: How ‘Zack Snyder’s Justice League’ happened” Los Angeles Times, March 19, 2021, [How the 'Justice League' Snyder cut happened: A timeline - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2021-03-19/justice-league-snyder-cut-timeline)
- ²² Colbert, Stephan M., “Justice League: The Snyder Cut Movement Explained”, ScreenRant, July 8, 2018, [Justice League: The Snyder Cut Movement Explained \(screenrant.com\)](https://www.screenrant.com/justice-league-snyder-cut-movement-explained/)
- ²³ Sacks, Ethan, “How the Snyder cut of 'Justice League' was powered by fans”, NBC News, Culture Matters, March 17, 2021, [How the Snyder cut of 'Justice League' was powered by fans \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/entertainment/justice-league-snyder-cut-powered-fans-culture-matters-ncna111820)
- ²⁴ Sharf, Zack, “#ReleaseTheSnyderCut Billboards Invade San Diego Ahead of Comic-Con Weekend”, Indie Wire, July 16, 2019, [#ReleaseTheSnyderCut Billboards Invade Comic-Con Weekend \(indiewire.com\)](https://www.indiewire.com/2019/07/16/release-the-snyder-cut-billboards-invade-comic-con-weekend/)
- ²⁵ Hardawar, Devindra, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League’ was made possible by fans, for fans” Engadget, March 26, 2021, [‘Zack Snyder’s Justice League’ was made possible by fans, for fans \(engadget.com\)](https://www.engadget.com/zack-snyder-justice-league-was-made-possible-by-fans-for-fans-153000263.html)
- ²⁶ Robinson, Joanna, “Is Releasing the Snyder Cut of *Justice League* a Victory for Toxic Fandoms?”, Vanity Fair, May 22, 2020, [Is Releasing the Snyder Cut of Justice League a Victory for Toxic Fandoms? | Vanity Fair](https://www.vanityfair.com/entertainment/2020/05/justice-league-snyder-cut-toxic-fandoms)
- ²⁷ Curran, Brad, “Justice League Cast & More React To Official Snyder Cut Announcement”, Screen Rant, May 21, 2020, [Justice League Cast & More React To Official Snyder Cut Announcement \(screenrant.com\)](https://www.screenrant.com/justice-league-cast-more-react-to-official-snyder-cut-announcement/)
- ²⁸ Clark, Travis, “Zack Snyder's 'Justice League' cut will premiere March 18 on HBO Max”, Business Insider, Jan. 29, 2021, [Zack Snyder's 'Justice League' Release Date, Details: HBO Max \(businessinsider.com\)](https://www.businessinsider.com/zack-snyder-justice-league-release-date-details-hbo-max-2021-1)

²⁹ Perez, Lexy, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League’: What the Critics Are Saying”, The Hollywood Reporter, March 15, 2021, [Zack Snyder’s ‘Justice League’ Review Roundup: What the Critics Are Saying \(hollywoodreporter.com\)](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/zack-snyders-justice-league-review-roundup-what-the-critics-are-saying-1234567890)

³⁰ Tharpe, Frazier, “Zack Snyder Reveals What Would Have Happened In the Movies After His *Justice League*”, GQ, March 19, 2021, [Zack Snyder Reveals What Would Have Happened In the Movies After His ‘Justice League’ | GQ](https://www.gq.com/story/zack-snyder-reveals-what-would-have-happened-in-the-movies-after-his-justice-league)

³¹ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 20, 2:45pm
[https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1263179025238773760?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1263179025238773760%7Ctwgr%5E1add6a504fa348ab08a626c984a42a7f73dde934%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nme.com%2Fnews%2Ffilm%2Fsuicide-squad-fans-call-for-release-of-ayer-cut-following-justice-league-announcement-2673454](https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1263179025238773760?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1263179025238773760%7Ctwgr%5E1add6a504fa348ab08a626c984a42a7f73dde934%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nme.com%2Fnews%2Ffilm%2Fsuicide-squad-fans-call-for-release-of-ayer-cut-following-justice-league-announcement-2673454)

³² Beeston, Alix (Cardiff University), “Unfinished: Women Filmmakers in Process,” *imageworkscardiff*, November 1, [Unfinished: Women Filmmakers in Process by imageworkscardiff - Issuu](https://www.imageworkscardiff.com/issue/unfinished-women-filmmakers-in-process)

³³ Fingeroth, Danny, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society*, Continuum: New York and London, 2004 (14).

³⁴ Fingeroth, Danny, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society*, Continuum: New York and London, 2004 (19).

³⁵ Fingeroth, Danny, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society*, Continuum: New York and London, 2004 (18).

³⁶ Fingeroth, Danny, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society*, Continuum: New York and London, 2004 (19).

-
- ³⁷ Murray, Christopher, “Superman vs. Imago: Superheroes, Lacan and Mediated Identity,” *International Journal of Comic Art* 4(2), Fall 2002, 186 – 208 (189)
- ³⁸ Savage, William, *Comic Books and America, 1945 – 1954*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990 (157)
- ³⁹ Eric D. Smith, “Feeling the 60s in the Age of Reagan: Failure, Repetition and History in Eddie and the Cruisers,” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 43(1), 2015, 46-63 (49)
- ⁴⁰ Eric D. Smith, *ibid* (50)
- ⁴¹ Salamon, Julie, *The Devil’s Candy: The Anatomy of a Hollywood Fiasco*, Hachette Books: New York, 1991 (165)
- ⁴² Hunt, James, “Marvel’s Inhumans Movie Was Going to Release Today; Here’s Why It Was Cancelled,” *Screen Rant*, July 12, 2019 <https://screenrant.com/marvel-inhumans-movie-release-today-cancelled-reason/>
- ⁴³ Adlakha, Siddhant, “A Brief History of Nicholas Cage Almost Playing Superman and Battling a Giant Spider,” *Vulture*, June 16, 2023 <https://www.vulture.com/2023/06/the-flashes-nicholas-cage-superman-cameo-explained.html>
- ⁴⁴ Luca Peretti, “Unfinished projects, unmade films, unfilmed objects: The difficult relationship between cinema and the Italian anni di piombo,” *The Italianist* 38(2), 189-203 (p. 189)
- ⁴⁵ Luca Peretti, *ibid* (p. 190)
- ⁴⁶ Filippo Ulivieri, “Waiting for a miracle: A survey of Stanley Kubrick’s unrealized projects,” *Cinergie – il cinema e le altre arti* (12), Dec. 4, 2017, 95-115 (p. 96)
- ⁴⁷ Filippo Ulivieri. “Waiting for a Miracle,” *ibid* (102)
- ⁴⁸ Peter C. Kunz, “Herding Cats, or the possibility of Unproduction Studies,” *Velvet Light Trap* (80) Fall 2017, 18-31 (p. 19)

-
- ⁴⁹ John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2015 (p. 318)
- ⁵⁰ Bitzer, Lloyd, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 1, no. 1, January 1968 (3)
- ⁵¹ Bruno, Giuliana, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the Films of Elvira Notari*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993 (3)
- ⁵² Peter C. Kunz, "Herding Cats, or the possibility of Unproduction Studies," *Velvet Light Trap* (80) Fall 2017, 18-31 (p. 28)
- ⁵³ Peter C. Kunz, "Herding Cats, or the possibility of Unproduction Studies," *Velvet Light Trap* (80) Fall 2017, 18-31 (p. 20)
- ⁵⁴ Sebastian Paris, "Google thinks Zack Snyder is directing a Justice League sequel," *Heroic Hollywood*, Feb. 4, 2019 <https://heroichollywood.com/google-justice-league-2-zack-snyder/>
- ⁵⁵ Bernard Steigler and Daniel Ross, *The Neganthropocene*, Open Humanities Press: London, 2018 (84)
- ⁵⁶ John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2015 (p. 319)
- ⁵⁷ McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Harper, 1994 (67)
- ⁵⁸ McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics* (67)
- ⁵⁹ Jeevendrampillaai , et. al, *The Material Culture of Failure* (2)
- ⁶⁰ Jeevendrampillaai, *ibid* (1)
- ⁶¹ O'Brien, Richard. "'I Will Never Play the Dane': Shakespeare and the Performer's Failure." *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (3)
- ⁶² Žižek, Slavoj, *Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008 (178)
- ⁶³ Žižek, *Violence* (179)
- ⁶⁴ Žižek, *Violence* (179)

⁶⁵ Freeman, David. *The Last Days of Alfred Hitchcock*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1999.

(36)

⁶⁶ Toles, George. "Film Death and the Failure to Signify: The Curious Case of Warni Hazard." *New review of film and television studies* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 211–230 (218)

⁶⁷ Puchko, Kristy, "Superman Writer Hates Man of Steel, and Here's Why," Cinemablend, June 17, 2013 [Superman Comic Writer Hates Man Of Steel, And Here's Why - CINEMABLEND](#)

⁶⁸ Jacobson, Brian. "Fire and Failure: Studio Technology, Environmental Control, and the Politics of Progress." *JCMS : Journal of cinema and media studies* 57, no. 2 (2018): 22–43 (37)

⁶⁹ Virilio, Paul. *The Original Accident*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007 (6)

⁷⁰ Jacobson, Brian. "Fire and Failure: Studio Technology, Environmental Control, and the Politics of Progress." *JCMS : Journal of cinema and media studies* 57, no. 2 (2018): 22–43 (36)

⁷¹ Tannenbaum, Julie. "Mere Moral Failure." *Canadian journal of philosophy* 45, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 58–84 (68)

⁷² Appadurai, Arjun. *Failure*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020 (4)

⁷³ Appadurai, *Failure* (13)

⁷⁴ Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011 (3)

⁷⁵ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (3)

⁷⁶ Halberstam, *Ibid* (1)

⁷⁷ Keil, Charlie. "Losers," in "Dossier: Perspectives on failure." *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 64 (September 22, 2009) 76-109 (80)

⁷⁸ Benamou, Catherine. *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (8)

⁷⁹ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (15)

-
- ⁸⁰ Clack, Beverley. *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (177)
- ⁸¹ O'Brien, Richard. "'I Will Never Play the Dane': Shakespeare and the Performer's Failure." *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (3)
- ⁸² Bowker, Matthew H. *Ideologies of Experience: Trauma, Failure, Deprivation, and the Abandonment of the Self*. Vol. 67. London: Routledge, 2016 (56)
- ⁸³ Bowker, *Ideologies of Experience* (56-57)
- ⁸⁴ Stevens, Rex Patrick. *Kant on Moral Practice: A Study of Moral Success and Failure*. Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1981 (40)
- ⁸⁵ Stevens, *Kant on Moral Practice* (40)
- ⁸⁶ Kunze, Peter C., "Herding Cats, or The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies," in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, edited by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge . New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (131)
- ⁸⁷ Smith, Eric D. "Feeling the '60s in the Age of Reagan: Failure, Repetition and History in 'Eddie and the Cruisers.'" *Literature/Film Quarterly* 43(1), 2015, 46-63 (48)
- ⁸⁸ Smith, "Feeling the '60s" (48)
- ⁸⁹ Smith, *Ibid*
- ⁹⁰ Mackoff, Spencer. "The Hysteric's Wound: Productive Failure in Narrative Film." *Symploke (Bloomington, Ind.)* 24, no. 1-2 (2016): 327–344 (333)
- ⁹¹ Mackoff, "The Hysteric's Wound" (336)
- ⁹² Kroustallis, Vassilis. "Failure to Think, Failure to Move: Handicapped Reasoning in Waltz with Bashir." *Jewish Film & New Media*, 2(2), 2014 (132-152) (143)

-
- ⁹³ Burke, Liam. *The Comic Book Film Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015 (139)
- ⁹⁴ Kroustallis, "Failure to Think, Failure to Move" (143)
- ⁹⁵ Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006 (9)
- ⁹⁶ Leitch, Thomas. "Adaptation, the Genre." *Adaptation: the journal of literature on screen studies* 1, no. 2 (September 2008): 106–120 (111)
- ⁹⁷ Leitch, "Adaptation, the Genre" (112)
- ⁹⁸ Leitch (113)
- ⁹⁹ Burke, Liam. *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (228)
- ¹⁰⁰ Burke, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (230)
- ¹⁰¹ Burke, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (231)
- ¹⁰² Burke, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (234)
- ¹⁰³ Burke, *Ibid* (230)
- ¹⁰⁴ Burke, *Ibid* (231)
- ¹⁰⁵ Matthew McAllister, Ian Gordon & Mark Jancovich. "Block Buster Art House: Meets Superhero Comic, or Meets Graphic Novel? The Contradictory Relationship Between Film and Comic Art." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 34, no. 3, (2006): 108-115 (112)
- ¹⁰⁶ Tuzi, Marino. "Individualism and Marginality: From Comic Book to Film: Marvel Comics Superheroes." *College Quarterly* 8.2 (2005): Web (2)
- ¹⁰⁷ Wandtke, Terrence R. *The Amazing Transforming Superhero! : Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film and Television* Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co., 2007 (9)
- ¹⁰⁸ Weiner, Robert G., Robert Moses Peaslee, and Matthew J. McEniry, "Introduction," in *Marvel Comics into Film: Essays on Adaptations Since the 1940s*, edited by Matthew J.

McEniry, Robert Moses Peaslee and Robert G. Weiner, Jefferson: McFarland and Company
2016(18)

¹⁰⁹ Weiner, Robert G., Robert Moses Peaslee, and Matthew J. McEniry, "Introduction," (18)

¹¹⁰ Burke, Ibid (237)

¹¹¹ Burke, Ibid (243)

¹¹² Cohen, Michael, "Dick Tracy: In Pursuit of a Comic Book Aesthetic," in *Film and Comic Books*, edited by Gordon, Ian, Mark. Jancovich, and Matthew P. McAllister. 1st ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007 (32)

¹¹³ Burke, *The Comic Book Film Adaptation* (177)

¹¹⁴ Roche, David, Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot, and Benoit Mitaine, "Introduction" (9)

¹¹⁵ Roche, David, Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot, and Benoit Mitaine, "Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies," in *Comics and Adaptation*, edited by Roche, David, Isabelle. Schmitt-Pitiot, Aarnoud. Rommens, and Benoît. Mitaine. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018 (9)

¹¹⁶ Roche, David, Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot, and Benoit Mitaine, "Introduction" (9)

¹¹⁷ Boillat, Alain, "The Comic Book Effect in the Age of CGI: When Film Adaptations of Comic Books Evoke the Fixity of their Model," in *Comics and Adaptation*, edited by Roche, David, Isabelle. Schmitt-Pitiot, Aarnoud. Rommens, and Benoît. Mitaine. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018 (140)

¹¹⁸ Boillat, "The Comic Book Effect" (140)

¹¹⁹ Boillat, Ibid (139)

¹²⁰ Boillat, Ibid (138)

¹²¹ Boillat, Ibid (138)

¹²² Boillat, Ibid (138)

¹²³ Floquet, Pierre, “Sin City (Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, 2005): Improbable Encounters between Embodied and Drawn Characters,” in *Comics and Adaptation*, edited by Roche, David, Isabelle. Schmitt-Pitiot, Aarnoud. Rommens, and Benoît. Mitaine. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018 (201)

¹²⁴ Hutcheon, Linda. “On the Art of Adaptation.” *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 108–111 (111)

¹²⁵ Bortolotti, Gary R., and Linda Hutcheon. “On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and "Success"—Biologically.” *New literary history* 38, no. 3 (2007): 443–458 (452)

¹²⁶ Meikle, Kyle. “Rematerializing Adaptation Theory.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 41.3 (2013): 174-183 (177)

¹²⁷ Floquet, “Sin City” (201)

¹²⁸ Floquet , Ibid (202)

¹²⁹ Floquet, Ibid (203)

¹³⁰ Floquet, Ibid (207)

¹³¹ Floquet, Ibid (207)

¹³² Floquet, Ibid (208)

¹³³ Murray, Simone. Phantom Adaptations: Eucalyptus, the Adaptation Industry and the Film that Never Was.” *Adaptation* 1:1, (2008): 5-23 (6)

¹³⁴ Murray, Simone. Phantom Adaptations: Eucalyptus, the Adaptation Industry and the Film that Never Was.” *Adaptation* 1:1, (2008): 5-23

-
- ¹³⁵ Peretti, Luca. “Unfinished Projects, Unmade Films, Unfilmed Objects: The Difficult Relationship Between Cinema and the Italian Anni Di Piombo.” *The Italianist* 38, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 189–203 (197)
- ¹³⁶ Fenwick, James, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge [Eds]. *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (1)
- ¹³⁷ Waldman, Harry. *Scenes Unseen: Unreleased and Uncompleted Films from the World’s Master Filmmakers, 1912-1990*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1991 (60)
- ¹³⁸ Fenwick, James, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge [Eds]. *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (2)
- ¹³⁹ Wells, Ira. “Films You’ll Never See: Reckoning with the Cinema That Might Have Been. (Critical Essay).” *Queen’s Quarterly* 127, no. 1 (March 22, 2020): 21–39 (38).
- ¹⁴⁰ Harle, Matthew. *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019 (8)
- ¹⁴¹ Keller, Sarah. “Frustrated Climaxes: On Maya Deren’s Meshes of the Afternoon and Witch’s Cradle.(Critical Essay).” *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 3 (March 22, 2013): 75–98 (76).
- ¹⁴² Keller, “Frustrated Climaxes” (76)
- ¹⁴³ Keller, *Ibid* (77)
- ¹⁴⁴ Keller, *Ibid*
- ¹⁴⁵ Wells, Ira. “Films You’ll Never See: Reckoning with the Cinema That Might Have Been.” *Queen’s Quarterly* 127, no. 1 (March 22, 2020): 21–39 (23)
- ¹⁴⁶ Harle, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work* (9)

-
- ¹⁴⁷ Diffrient, David Scott. “Tweaking Art, The Art of Tweek: Aesthetic Desecration and the Politics of Possession in South Park,” in *Deconstructing South Park: Critical Examinations of Animated Transgression*, [Ed.] Brian Cogan. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012 (207).
- ¹⁴⁸ Diffrient, “Tweaking Art, The Art of Tweek” (206)
- ¹⁴⁹ Filippo Ulivieri. “Waiting for a Miracle: A Survey of Stanley Kubrick’s Unrealized Projects.” *Cinergie* 6, no. 12 (December 1, 2017): 95–115 (102).
- ¹⁵⁰ Fenwick et. al, *Shadow Cinema* (18)
- ¹⁵¹ Sen, Sanghita, Ghatak in the Shadows: Films that Struggled, in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, edited by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster and David Eldridge, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (110)
- ¹⁵² Benamou, Catherine. *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (134)
- ¹⁵³ Benamou, *It’s All True* (141)
- ¹⁵⁴ Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See: Unseen Masterpieces by the World’s Greatest Directors*. London: Hachette Group, 2013 (182)
- ¹⁵⁵ Hughes, David. *Tales from Development Hell: The Greatest Movies Never Made*. London: Titan Books, 2012 (153)
- ¹⁵⁶ Harle *Afterlives of Abandoned Work* (10)
- ¹⁵⁷ Harle, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work* (11)
- ¹⁵⁸ Harle, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work* (175)
- ¹⁵⁹ Harle, *Ibid*
- ¹⁶⁰ Fenwick, James, “A Production Strategy of Over-Development: Kirk Douglas in Bryna Productions and The Unproduced Viva Gringo,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and*

Production Contexts of Unmade Films, edited by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (22)

¹⁶¹ Fenwick, James, “A Production Strategy of Over-Development (23)

¹⁶² Solomon, Charles. *The Disney That Never Was: The Stories and Art from Five Decades of Unproduced Animation*. New York: Hyperion, 1995 (57)

¹⁶³ Solomon, The Disney That Never Was (1)

¹⁶⁴ Kendrick, James. “Phantom Cinema: Illuminating the Structuring Absences of Film History.”

Quarterly Review of Film and Video 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 62–73 (64).

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509208.2010.544976>.

¹⁶⁵ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema,” *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema,” (65)

¹⁶⁷ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema,” *ibid*

¹⁶⁸ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema,” (71)

¹⁶⁹ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema,” (65)

¹⁷⁰ Whitney Strub. “The Baraka Film Archive: The Lost, Unmade, and Unseen Film Work of

LeRoi Jones / Amiri Baraka.” *Black Camera: The Newsletter of the Black Film*

Center/Archives 7, no. 1 (2015): 273–287 (275)

¹⁷¹ Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See: Unseen Masterpieces by the*

World’s Greatest Directors. London: Hachette Group, 2013 (182)

¹⁷² Braund, *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See*, (185)

¹⁷³ Hunter, I.Q. “Jaws: The Revenge and the Production of Failure.” *Continuum (Mount Lawley,*

W.A.) 33, no. 6 (November 2, 2019): 677–691 (678)

¹⁷⁴ Hunter, “Jaws,” (678)

-
- ¹⁷⁵ Kendrick, “Phantom Cinema” (71)
- ¹⁷⁶ Hamad, Hannah, “The Non-Filming of the Yorkshire Ripper Murders,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, edited by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (244)
- ¹⁷⁷ Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, C. Lee Harrington [Eds]. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York University Press, 2007 (3)
- ¹⁷⁸ Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992 (12)
- ¹⁷⁹ Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers* (1)
- ¹⁸⁰ Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991 (18)
- ¹⁸¹ Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, C. Lee Harrington [Eds]. *Fandom* (4)
- ¹⁸² Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, *Fandom* (5)
- ¹⁸³ Hills, Matthew. *Fan Cultures*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002 (41-42)
- ¹⁸⁴ Hills, *Fan Cultures* (112)
- ¹⁸⁵ Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, *Fandom* (5)
- ¹⁸⁶ Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, *Fandom* (5)
- ¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Earl, and Katrina Kimport. “Movement Societies and Digital Protest: Fan Activism and Other Nonpolitical Protest Online.” *Sociological theory* 27, no. 3 (2009): 220–243 (222)
- ¹⁸⁸ Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, *Fandom* (11)
- ¹⁸⁹ Radway, *Reading the Romance* (112)
- ¹⁹⁰ Radway, *Reading the Romance* (112)

-
- ¹⁹¹ Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992 (23)
- ¹⁹² Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (23)
- ¹⁹³ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (111)
- ¹⁹⁴ Scott, Suzanne. *Fake Geek Girls: Fandom, Gender and the Convergence Culture Industry*. NYU Press, 2019 (8)
- ¹⁹⁵ Hanna, Erin. *Only at Comic-Con: Hollywood, Fans, and the Limits of Exclusivity. Only at Comic-Con*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019 (31)
- ¹⁹⁶ Stanfill, Mel. *Exploiting Fandom: How the Media Industry Seeks to Manipulate Fans*. University of Iowa Press, 2019 (6)
- ¹⁹⁷ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (9)
- ¹⁹⁸ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (10)
- ¹⁹⁹ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (36)
- ²⁰⁰ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (134)
- ²⁰¹ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (102)
- ²⁰² Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (37)
- ²⁰³ Hanna, *Only at Comic-Con* (20)
- ²⁰⁴ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (37)
- ²⁰⁵ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (90)
- ²⁰⁶ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (20)
- ²⁰⁷ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (169)

-
- ²⁰⁸ Johnson, Derek. "From the Ruins: Neomascularity, Media Franchising, and Struggles Over Industrial Reproduction of Culture." *Communication, culture & critique* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 85–99 (89)
- ²⁰⁹ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (27)
- ²¹⁰ Scott, Fake Geek Girls (66)
- ²¹¹ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (21)
- ²¹² Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (33)
- ²¹³ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (48)
- ²¹⁴ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (52)
- ²¹⁵ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (73)
- ²¹⁶ Stanfill, Exploiting Fandom (53)
- ²¹⁷ Jenkins, Henry. "Superpowered Fans: The Many Worlds of San Diego's Comic-Con." *Boom* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 22–36 (23)
- ²¹⁸ Hanna, *Only at Comic-Con* (33)
- ²¹⁹ Brown, Jeffrey. "Comic Book Fandom and Cultural Capital." *Journal of popular culture* 30, no. 4 (1997): 13–31 (18)
- ²²⁰ Hanna, *Only at Comic-Con* (35)
- ²²¹ Soegito, Anthony. "Fans Vs. Critics: Challenging Critical Authority through Memes." *Journal of fandom studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 279–301 (281)
- ²²² Hall, Stuart, "Encoding, decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During, London and New York: Routledge, 1993 (101)
- ²²³ Pustz, Matthew. *Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000 (56)

-
- ²²⁴ Pustz, *Comic Book Culture* (44)
- ²²⁵ Hanna, *Only at Comic-Con* (40)
- ²²⁶ Kunze, Peter C. “Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies.” *The Velvet light trap* 80, no. 1 (2017): 18–31 (20)
- ²²⁷ Kunze, Peter C. “Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies.” *The Velvet light trap* 80, no. 1 (2017): 18–31 (20)
- ²²⁸ Trouillot, Michele-Rolph, *Silencing The Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (55)
- ²²⁹ Kunze, Peter C. “Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies.” *The Velvet light trap* 80, no. 1 (2017): 18–31 (21)
- ²³⁰ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (15)
- ²³¹ r/DC_Cinematic, “OTHER: Zack Snyder’s Vero profile now available on the web (no app needed), Reddit, July 10, 2019
- https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/cbi00z/other_zack_snyders_vero_profile_now_available_on/
- ²³² Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (195)
- ²³³ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (129)
- ²³⁴ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (15)

-
- ²³⁵ Benamou, Catherine L., *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (15)
- ²³⁶ Benamou, Catherine L., *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007 (15)
- ²³⁷ Bathurst, Matilda, "What Remains: Paper Architecture and the World of the Unmade," *Australian Antique Collector* Vol. 8, 2012, 54 – 57 (54)
- ²³⁸ Norman, Brian, "Reading a 'Closet Screenplay': Hollywood, James Baldwin's Malcoms and The Threat of Historical Irrelevance," *African American Review*, Vol. 39, No. ½, 103 – 118 (104)
- ²³⁹ Kendrick, James. "Phantom Cinema: Illuminating the Structuring Absences of Film History." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 62–73 (62).
- ²⁴⁰ Kendrick, James, "Phantom Cinema" (64)
- ²⁴¹ Kedrick, James, "Phantom Cinema" (62)
- ²⁴² Kendrick, James, "Phantom Cinema" (69)
- ²⁴³ Kendrick, James, "Phantom Cinema" (69)
- ²⁴⁴ Foucault, Michele, *A History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 (19)
- ²⁴⁵ Lobato, Ramon and Julian Thomas, "An Introduction to Informal Media Economies," *Television & New Media* 13, no. 5, 2012, 379 – 382 (380)
- ²⁴⁶ De Certeau, Michel, "On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life," *Social Text*, No. 3, 1980, 3 – 43 (3)
- ²⁴⁶ Kunze, Peter C. "Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies." *The Velvet light trap* 80, no. 1 (2017): 18–31 (20)

²⁴⁷ Rickels, Lawrence and Friedrich Kittler, “Spooky Electricity,” Artforum, 1992 [SPOOKY ELECTRICITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH FRIEDRICH KITTLER \(artforum.com\)](#)

²⁴⁸ Rickels, Lawrence and Friedrich Kittler, “Spooky Electricity,” Artforum, 1992 [SPOOKY ELECTRICITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH FRIEDRICH KITTLER \(artforum.com\)](#)

²⁴⁹ Pang, Laikwan, “Mediating the Ethics of Technology: Hollywood and Movie Piracy,” *Culture, Theory and Critique*, Vol. 45:1, 19-32 (30).

²⁵⁰ Pang, Laikwan, “Mediating the Ethics of Technology: Hollywood and Movie Piracy,” *Culture, Theory and Critique*, Vol. 45:1, 19-32 (31).

²⁵¹ De Certeau, Michel, “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life,” *Social Text*, No. 3, 1980, 3 – 43 (4)

²⁵² De Certeau, Michel, “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life,” *Social Text*, No. 3, 1980, 3 – 43 (4)

²⁵³ Kitada, Akihiro. “Pre-Constructionism as Post-Constructionism: On the Methodological Investigation of History.” *Shakaigaku hyōron* 55, no. 3 (2004): 281–297 (297).

²⁵⁴ Trouillot, Michele-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (5)

²⁵⁵ Trouillot, Michele-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (5)

²⁵⁶ Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 (95)

²⁵⁷ Trouillot, Michele-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (161)

²⁵⁸ De Certeau, Michel, “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life,” *Social Text*, No. 3, 1980, 3 – 43 (4)

-
- ²⁵⁹ Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (14)
- ²⁶⁰ Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (15)
- ²⁶¹ Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (27)
- ²⁶² Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (25)
- ²⁶³ Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (21)
- ²⁶⁴ Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (21)
- ²⁶⁵ De Certeau, Michel, “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life,” *Social Text*, No. 3, 1980, 3 – 43 (4)
- ²⁶⁵ Kunze, Peter C. “Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies.” *The Velvet light trap* 80, no. 1 (2017): 18–31 (20)
- ²⁶⁶ u/equinshadox, “Script for George Miller’s Justice League Mortal: A Look Into What Could Have Been,” r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, Dec. 3, 2016
https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/5gclli/script_for_george_millers_justice_league_mortal_a/
- ²⁶⁷ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979 (29)
- ²⁶⁸ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (24)
- ²⁶⁹ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (32)
- ²⁷⁰ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (32)
- ²⁷¹ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (35)
- ²⁷² Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (36)
- ²⁷³ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (73)
- ²⁷⁴ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish* (97)

-
- ²⁷⁵ Foucault, Michele, *A History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 (18)
- ²⁷⁶ Foucault, Michele, *A History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 (25)
- ²⁷⁷ Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957 (2)
- ²⁷⁸ Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957 (48)
- ²⁷⁹ Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film* (1)
- ²⁸⁰ Bluestone, George, *Novels into Film* (48)
- ²⁸¹ Leitch, Thomas, "Adaptation, the Genre," *Adaptation: The Journal of Literature On Screen Studies* 1, no. 2, September 2008, 106 (120-106).
- ²⁸² Hutcheon, Linda. "On the Art of Adaptation." *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (April 1, 2004): 108–111 (111)
- ²⁸³ Peter C. Kunz, "Herding Cats, or the possibility of Unproduction Studies," *Velvet Light Trap* (80) Fall 2017, 18-31 (p. 28)
- ²⁸⁴ Tatiana Siegel, "Henry Cavill out as Superman amid Warner's DC Universe shakeup," *The Hollywood Reporter*, Sept. 12, 2018 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/henry-cavill-as-superman-warner-bros-dc-universe-shake-up-1142306>
- ²⁸⁵ John Gallati, "Essential DC Comics Elseworlds and Alternate Realities!," *Comic Book Herald*, Feb. 26, 2019 <https://www.comicbookherald.com/dc-elseworlds/>
- ²⁸⁶ Mark Millar, *Superman: Red Son* #1-3, DC Comics, June – August 2003
- ²⁸⁷ Vampire Batman appeared in three Elseworld graphic novels by Doug Moench and Kelley Jones, those being *Batman and Dracula: Red Rain* (February 1992), *Batman: Bloodstorm* (January 1994), and *Batman: Crimson Mist* (February 1999).

²⁸⁸ Alexander, Julia, “The ‘Snyder Cut’ of Justice League is coming to HBO Max in 2021,” The Verge, May 20, 2020 <https://www.theverge.com/2020/5/20/21263044/justice-league-snyder-cut-warnermedia-hbo-max-zack-ben-affleck-henry-cavill-gal-gaot-streaming>

²⁸⁹ Joseph, Eric, “Justice League Mortal Doc Dies As New Images of Superman And The Team Emerge,” We Got This Covered, July 6, 2018 <https://wegotthiscovered.com/movies/justice-league-mortal-doc-dies-images-superman-team-emerge/>

²⁹⁰ Joseph, Eric, “Unearthed Justice League Mortal Concept Art Reveals Superman, Batman and Much More,” July 6, 2018

²⁹¹ Behbakht, Andy, “Justice League: Mortal Documentary Is Resuming Production,” Screen Rant, , We Got This Covered, March 27, 2020 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-mortal-documenatry-george-miller-production-title/>

²⁹² Erao, Matthew, “DC Heads Explain How the DCEU Will Approach Continuity,” Screen Rant, September 29, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/dc-dceu-movies-continuity/>

²⁹³ Olivieri, Joshua, “Whole New Worlds of DC: 5 Projects Confirmed to Hit Screens, 5 Rumored (and 5 That Are Impossible),” Comic Book Resources, November 2, 2018 <https://www.cbr.com/dc-stories-confirmed-rumored-impossible-for-the-screen/>

²⁹⁴ Truskett, Ibid

²⁹⁵ Hickson, Colin, “Justice League: Mortal – New Photos of the Team in Costume Surface,” Comic Book Resoures, March 23, 2020 <https://www.cbr.com/justice-league-mortal-new-photos-of-the-team-in-costume-surface/>

²⁹⁶ Milheim, Russ, “Disney Confirms 4 Marvel Movies Still Slated for Release in 2024 Releases Amid MCU Delays,” The Direct, January 30, 2024 <https://thedirect.com/article/disney-marvel-movies-2025-releases-slate-mcu-delays>

²⁹⁷ Wilding, Josh, “Warner Bros Has Now Released Seven DC Extended Universe Box Office Flops in a Row,” Comic Book Movie, Aug. 21, 2023 <https://comicbookmovie.com/dc-studios/warner-bros-has-now-released-seven-dc-extended-universe-box-office-flops-in-a-row-a205161#gs.5w8kbu>

²⁹⁸ Ramey, Bill “Jett,” “Armie Hammer Talks Justice League: Mortal Demise,” Batman on Film, January 22, 2018 <https://batman-on-film.com/942/armie-hammer-talks-justice-league-mortal-demise/>

²⁹⁹ u/NakedGoose, “Script for George Miller’s Justice League Mortal: A Look Into What Could’ve Been,” in r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, Dec. 4, 2016 https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/5gclli/comment/dars1bt/?utm_source=reddit&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

³⁰⁰ Quint, Eric, “Quint Chats With Armie Hammer About David Fincher’s The Social Network and George Miller’s Dead Justice League Film,” Ain’t It Cool News, Oct. 1, 2010 <http://legacy.aintitcool.com/node/46833>

³⁰¹ Quint, Eric, “Quint Chats With Armie Hammer About David Fincher’s The Social Network and George Miller’s Dead Justice League Film,” Ain’t It Cool News, Oct. 1, 2010 <http://legacy.aintitcool.com/node/46833>

³⁰² Quint, Eric, “Quint Chats With Armie Hammer About David Fincher’s The Social Network and George Miller’s Dead Justice League Film,” Ain’t It Cool News, Oct. 1, 2010 <http://legacy.aintitcool.com/node/46833>

³⁰³ Quint, Eric, “Quint Chats With Armie Hammer About David Fincher’s The Social Network and George Miller’s Dead Justice League Film,” Ain’t It Cool News, Oct. 1, 2010 <http://legacy.aintitcool.com/node/46833>

-
- ³⁰⁴ Appadurai, *Failure*, Polity: New York, 2019 (72)
- ³⁰⁵ Ray, Robert B., *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, Harvard University Press, 1995 (181)
- ³⁰⁶ Denzin, Norman K., *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur's Gaze*, Sage Publications, 1995 (165 – 166)
- ³⁰⁷ Ray, Robert B., *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, Harvard University Press, 1995 (26)
- ³⁰⁸ Jenna Anderson, “New Justice League Mortal Images Land Online,” Comic Book.com, March 23, 2020 <https://comicbook.com/dc/news/justice-league-mortal-movie-spoilers-photos-cast/>
- ³⁰⁹ Wilds, Stephen, “Examining Wes Craven’s Swamp Thing 40 Years Later,” Coming Soon, February 19, 2022 <https://www.comingsoon.net/movies/features/1212252-wes-craven-swamp-thing-retrospective>
- ³¹⁰ “Supergirl (1984),” AFI Catalogue of Feature Films <https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/57219>
- ³¹¹ Hamman, Cody, “Return of Swamp Thing (1989) Revisited – Horror Movie Review,” JoBlo, April 20, 2023 <https://www.joblo.com/the-return-of-swamp-thing-revisited/>
- ³¹² Austin, Rick, “Shaq’s Steel Movie: One of the Worst Superhero Movies,” Fortress of Solitude, September 8, 2022 <https://www.fortressofsolitude.co.za/shaq-steel-movie/>
- ³¹³ Tibbs, Ros, “The Ten Highest Grossing Gangster Movies Ranked From Worst To Best,” *Far Out*, March 1, 2023 <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/the-10-highest-grossing-gangster-movies-ranked/>
- ³¹⁴ Time Staff, “Top 10 Disappointing Blockbusters,” *Time*, August 27, 2009 <https://entertainment.time.com/2009/08/28/top-10-disappointing-blockbusters/slide/catwoman/>

³¹⁵ Motamayor, Rafael, “15 Years Later, We Owe Constantine An Apology,” Rotten Tomatoes, February 18, 2020 <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/article/15-years-later-we-owe-constantine-an-apology/>

³¹⁶ Laman, Lisa, “Ranking DC Comics Movies By How Much They Made At The Box Office,” Looper, March 29, 2022 <https://www.looper.com/815459/ranking-dc-comics-movies-by-how-much-they-made-at-the-box-office/>

³¹⁷ Appadurai, Arjun, *Failure*, (7)

³¹⁸ Tannenbaum, Julie. “Mere Moral Failure.” *Canadian journal of philosophy* 45, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 58–84 (60)

³¹⁹ Mike Secchini, “George Miller’s almost-made Justice League film from 2007, Justice League: Mortal, could have been one of the greats,” Den of Geek, Nov 17, 2017 <https://www.denofgeek.com/us/movies/justice-league/246346/the-justice-league-movie-you-never-saw>

³²⁰ Maddox, Garry, “Mega Movie Refused Rebate,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 19, 2008 <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/mega-movie-refused-rebate-20080319-gds5vh.html>

³²¹ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, Routledge: New York, 1996 (213)

³²² O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (213)

³²³ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (214)

³²⁴ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (214)

³²⁵ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (214)

³²⁶ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (214)

-
- ³²⁷ Barlow, Helen, "The Australian Film Finance Corporation," *Cinema Papers*, Iss. 84, 1991, 34-39 (35)
- ³²⁸ Jacka, Elizabeth, "Financing Australian Films: The Industry," *Media Information Australia*, Iss. 50, 1988, 7-21 (9)
- ³²⁹ Jacka, Elizabeth, "Financing Australian Films: The Industry," (9)
- ³³⁰ O'Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (226)
- ³³¹ Morimoto, Lori and Bertha Chin, "Reimagining the Imagined Community – Online Media Fandoms in the Age of Global Convergence," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (178)
- ³³² Newman, David, "Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South," in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* Victoria and London: Blackwell Publishing, 295-305 (296)
- ³³³ Nicoll, John, "The Agony and the FCC," *Cinema Papers*, 1989 (19)
- ³³⁴ Nicoll, John, "The Agony and the FCC," *Cinema Papers*, 1989 (19)
- ³³⁵ Morris, Meaghan, "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Crocodile Dundee," in *Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading and Postmodernism*, London: Verso, 1988, 241 – 269 (245)
- ³³⁶ Morris, Meaghan, "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Crocodile Dundee," (247)
- ³³⁷ Newman, David, "Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South," in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Victoria and London: Blackwell Publishing, 295-305 (296)
- ³³⁸ Morris, Meaghan, "Tooth and Claw," *ibid* (247)
- ³³⁹ Morris, Meaghan, "Tooth and Claw," *ibid* (247)
- ³⁴⁰ O'Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (222)

³⁴¹ Newman, David, “Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South,” in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Victoria and London: Blackwell Publishing, 295-305 (297)

³⁴² O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (219)

³⁴³ Maddox, Garry. “A History of the Australian Film Finance Corporation.” *Media international Australia* 80, no. 1 (1996): 75–83 (76)

³⁴⁴ Maddox, Garry, “Mega Movie Refused Rebate,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 19, 2008 <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/mega-movie-refused-rebate-20080319-gds5vh.html>

³⁴⁵ O’Regan, Tom, *Australian National Cinema*, *ibid* (214)

³⁴⁶ Newman, David, “Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South,” in Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko [Eds], *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Blackwell: Oxford, 2008, 295–305 (303)

³⁴⁷ Maddox, Garry, “Mega Movie Refused Rebate,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 19, 2008 <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/mega-movie-refused-rebate-20080319-gds5vh.html>

³⁴⁸ Wasko, Janet, “Financing and Production: Creating the Hollywood Film Commodity,” in Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko [Eds], *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Victoria and London: Blackwell, , 43–62 (58)

³⁴⁹ Newman, David, “Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South,” in Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko [Eds], *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Victoria and London: Blackwell, 2008, 295–305 (295)

-
- ³⁵⁰ Newman, David (2008), "Australia and New Zealand: Expats in Hollywood and Hollywood South," in Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko [Eds], *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, Blackwell: Oxford, 295–305 (296)
- ³⁵¹ David Stratton, *The Avocado Plantation: Boom and Bust in the Australian Film Industry*, Sydney: Pan Macmillan Publishers Australia, 1990 (81)
- ³⁵² David Stratton, *The Avocado Plantation: Boom and Bust in the Australian Film Industry*, Sydney: Pan Macmillan Publishers Australia, 1990 (80)
- ³⁵³ David Stratton, *The Avocado Plantation* (84)
- ³⁵⁴ Staff, "Iraq, then the World, Bush hoped," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 17, 2004
<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/iraq-then-the-world-bush-hoped-20040417-gdir58.html>
- ³⁵⁵ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. "Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy: 10BA: The Film Finance Corporation and Hollywood's 'Race to the Bottom.'" *Media international Australia incorporating Culture & policy* 136, no. 136, 2010, 103–118 (104)
- ³⁵⁶ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. "Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy," *ibid* (104)
- ³⁵⁷ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. "Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy," *ibid* (110)
- ³⁵⁸ Wasko, Janet, "Financing and Production: Creating The Hollywood Film Commodity," in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, by Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko [Eds.], Victoria and London: Blackwell, 43–62 (58)
- ³⁵⁹ "Australian Film Finance Corporation," *The Hollywood Reporter*, Vol. 365, Iss. 31, November 10, 2000 (1)
- ³⁶⁰ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. "Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy," *ibid*, (104)
- ³⁶¹ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. "Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy," *ibid* (106)

³⁶² Maddox, Garry. “A History of the Australian Film Finance Corporation.” *Media international Australia* 80, no. 1 (1996): 75–83 (76)

³⁶³ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. “Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy,” *ibid* (104)

³⁶⁴ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. “Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy,” *ibid* (110)

³⁶⁵ Burns, Alex, and Ben Eltham. “Boom and Bust in Australian Screen Policy,” *ibid* (107)

³⁶⁶ Crowley, Ben, Brian Dollery, and Lin Crase. “A Comparative Analysis of Australian Film Assistance, 1997-2001.” *Media international Australia incorporating Culture & policy*, no. 113 (2004): 124–139 (135)

³⁶⁷ Grant Hermanns, “George Miller Reflects on His Cancelled Justice League Movie,” *Screen Rant*, May 20, 2022 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-movie-george-miller-cancelled-comments/>

³⁶⁸ Mansoor Mithaiwala, “15 things you didn’t know about George Miller’s cancelled Justice League movie,” *Screen Rant*, Aug. 3, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/george-millers-canceled-justice-league-movie/>

³⁶⁹ Mike Cecchini, “The Justice League Movie that never was,” *Den of Geek*, May 30, 2015 <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/justice-league/35568/the-justice-league-movie-that-never-was>

³⁷⁰ Eric Joseph, “Justice League: Mortal doc dies as new images of Superman and the team emerge,” *WeGotThisCovered*, Dec. 19, 2017 <https://wegotthiscovered.com/movies/justice-league-mortal-doc-dies-images-superman-team-emerge/>

³⁷¹ Stephen Galloway, “George Miller on ‘Mad Max’ Sequels, His Secret Talks With Stanley Kubrick,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 2, 2016

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/george-miller-mad-max-sequels-861549/>

³⁷² O'Brien, Richard. "I Will Never Play the Dane': Shakespeare and the Performer's Failure." *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (4)

³⁷³ Stephen Galloway, "George Miller on 'Mad Max' Sequels, His Secret Talks With Stanley Kubrick," *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 2, 2016

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/george-miller-mad-max-sequels-861549/>

³⁷⁴ Schiller, Robert J., *Irrational Exuberance*, Scribe: Melbourne, 2000

³⁷⁵ Greenspan, Alan, "Remarks by Chairman Alan Greenspan At the Annual Dinner and Francis Boyer Lecture of The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research," The Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C., December 5, 1996

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/speeches/1996/19961205.htm>

³⁷⁶ Anthony Lund, "George Miller Reflects on the Lessons He Learned From His Cancelled Justice League Movie," *MovieWeb*, May 21, 2022 <https://movieweb.com/george-miller-reminisces-canceled-justice-league-movie/>

³⁷⁷ Hunter, I.Q. "Jaws: The Revenge and the Production of Failure." *Continuum (Mount Lawley, W.A.)* 33, no. 6 (November 2, 2019): 677–691 (688)

³⁷⁸ David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Timothy Carroll, "Introduction: Towards a General Theory of Failure," in *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong* by David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Timothy Carroll [Eds.], Routledge, 2017 (2)

³⁷⁹ Gary Collinson, *Holy Franchise, Batman: Bringing the Caped Crusader to the Screen*, Robert Hale Limited: London, 2012 (172)

³⁸⁰ “David Goyer to Direct DC’s ‘The Flash,’” Comic Book Movie, Dec. 20, 2004

https://comicbookmovie.com/fantastic_four/david-goyer-to-direct-dcs-the-flash-a1713#gs.09gsjz

³⁸¹ Deepak Bisht, “Despite Being A Box Office Failure, 2006 DC Movie Still Beat Christopher Nolan’s Batman Begins With Mammoth \$195 Million Profit,” Fandom Wire, May 7, 2023

<https://fandomwire.com/despite-being-a-box-office-failure-2006-dc-movie-superman-returns-still-beat-christopher-nolans-batman-begins-with-mammoth-195-million-profit/>

³⁸² Richard Fink, “Justice League Mortal: The DC Epic That Never Happened,” MovieWeb, September 9, 2022 <https://movieweb.com/justice-league-mortal-dc-cancelled/>

³⁸³ Fenwick, James, “A Production Strategy of Over Development: Kirk Douglas’s Bryna Productions and the Unproduced Viva Gringo,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, in James Fenwick, Kieran Foster and David Eldridge [Eds.], New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (28)

³⁸⁴ Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Bright Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*, Picador, 2010 (185).

³⁸⁵ Douglas Laman, “Why George Miller’s ‘Justice League’ Movie Never Happened,” Collider, May 6, 2022 <https://collider.com/george-miller-justice-league-never-happen-history-explained/>

³⁸⁶ Pamela McClintock, “Justice Prevails for Warner Bros: Studio Eyeing DC Superhero Team Feature,” *Variety*, February 22, 2007 <https://variety.com/2007/film/markets-festivals/justice-prevails-for-warner-bros-1117960018/>

³⁸⁷ MW Staff, “Juno Director Turned Down Justice League: Mortal,” MovieWeb, April 11, 2008 <https://movieweb.com/juno-director-turned-down-justice-league-mortal/>

³⁸⁸ Russ Burlingame, “Justice League: Mortal Script Leaks Online,” *ComicBook.com*, Oct. 7, 2013 <https://comicbook.com/movies/news/justice-league-mortal-script-leaks-online/>

³⁸⁹ Russ Burlingame, “George Miller Explains Why His Justice League Movie Fell Through,” ComicBook.com, February 4, 2016 <https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/george-miller-explains-why-justice-073033538.html?guccounter=1>

³⁹⁰ Kieran Mulroney and Michele Mulroney, Justice League Mortal Draft Script (5)

³⁹¹ Mike Cecchini, “The Justice League Movie You Never Saw,” Den of Geek, November 13, 2017 <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/the-justice-league-movie-you-never-saw/>

³⁹² John Orquiola, “What Justice League 2017 Borrowed From George Miller’s Failed JL: Mortal,” Screen Rant, Nov. 21, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-movie-2017-george-miller-mortal-differences/>

³⁹³ Mike Cecchini, “The Justice League Movie You Never Saw,” *ibid*

³⁹⁴ DC, “Blue Beetle – Official Trailer,” *YouTube*, April 3, 2023 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS3_72Gb-bI

³⁹⁵ Doug Moench and Norm Breyfogle, Batman #492: “Crossed Eyes and Dotty Teas,” DC Comics, May 1993

³⁹⁶ Alan Grant and Mike Vosburg, Showcase ’94 #10: “Azrael: Aftermath,” DC Comics, September 1994

³⁹⁷ Doug Moench and Jim Aparo, Batman #491: “The Freedom of Madness,” DC Comics, April 1993

³⁹⁸ Doug Moench and Jim Aparo, Batman #497: “The Broken Bat,” DC Comics, July 1993

³⁹⁹ Doug Moench and Jim Aparo, Batman #498: “Knights in the Darkness,” DC Comics, August 1993

⁴⁰⁰ Andrew Farago and Gina McIntyre, Batman: The Definitive History of the Dark Knight in Comics, Film and Beyond, Insight Editions: San Rafael, CA, 2021 (260)

⁴⁰¹ *Contagion* begins with Alan Grant and Vince Giarrano's *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #48, "Contagion Part One: The Apocalypse Plague," DC Comics, March 1996. The 2-month arc played out in *Detective Comics* #695, *Robin Vol 2* #27, *Catwoman Vol 2*, #31, *Azrael* #15, *Batman* #529, *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #49, *Detective Comics* #696, *Batman Chronicles* #4, *Catwoman Vol. 2*, #32, *Azrael* #16, *Robin Vol 2*, #28-30, *Batman* #530-532, and *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #50-52

⁴⁰² *Legacy* begins with Alan Grant and Dave Taylor's *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #53, "Legacy, Prelude: Hobson's Choice," DC Comics, August 1996. It encompasses *Batman* #533, *Detective Comics* #700, *Catwoman* #36, *Robin* #32, *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #54, *Batman* #534, *Detective Comics* #701, *Robin* #33 and *Detective Comics* #702

⁴⁰³ Andrew Farago and Gina McIntyre, *Batman: The Definitive History of the Dark Knight in Comics, Film and Beyond*, Insight Editions: San Rafael, CA, 2021 (265)

⁴⁰⁴ Andrew Farago and Gina McIntyre, *Batman: The Definitive History of the Dark Knight in Comics, Film and Beyond*, Insight Editions: San Rafael, CA, 2021 (277)

⁴⁰⁵ Hilary Goldstein, "Defending Wonder Woman," *IGN*, Aug. 1, 2005

<https://www.ign.com/articles/2005/08/01/defending-wonder-woman>

⁴⁰⁶ Max Farrow, "Zack Snyder's Explanation for the DCEU's Batman Killing Is All Wrong," *ScreenRant*, March 27, 2019 <https://screenrant.com/zack-snyder-batman-killing-explanation-wrong/>

⁴⁰⁷ Zack Sharf, "Zack Snyder fires back at fans upset Batman killed someone," *Salon*, March 25, 2019 https://www.salon.com/2019/03/25/zack-snyder-fires-back-at-fans-upset-batman-killed-someone_partner/

-
- ⁴⁰⁸ Kane, Bob, and Tom Andrae, *Batman & Me: An Autobiography by Bob Kane*, Forestville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1989 (45)
- ⁴⁰⁹ Kieran Mulroney and Michele Mulroney, Justice League Mortal Draft Script (7)
- ⁴¹⁰ Kieran Mulroney and Michele Mulroney, Justice League Mortal Draft Script (8)
- ⁴¹¹ Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011 (88)
- ⁴¹² “Ryan Unicomb,” IMDB, 2024 <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm4565046/>
- ⁴¹³ “George Miller’s Justice League: Mortal,” IGN <https://www.ign.com/movies/documentary-on-george-millers-justice-league-mortal>
- ⁴¹⁴ Jack Halberstam, *ibid*
- ⁴¹⁵ Toles, George. “Film Death and the Failure to Signify: The Curious Case of Warni Hazard.” *New review of film and television studies* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 211–230 (229).
- ⁴¹⁶ Toles, George. “Film Death and the Failure to Signify: The Curious Case of Warni Hazard.” *New review of film and television studies* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 211–230 (229)
- ⁴¹⁷ Chand, Neeraj, “George Miller’s Justice League Documentary Won’t Get Any Support From Warner Bros.,” MovieWeb, April 29, 2020 <https://movieweb.com/justice-league-mortal-documentary-warner-bros-2/>
- ⁴¹⁸ O’Brien, Richard. “‘I Will Never Play the Dane’: Shakespeare and the Performer’s Failure.” *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (3)
- ⁴¹⁹ O’Brien, Richard, “‘I Will Never Play the Dane,’” *ibid* (3)
- ⁴²⁰ Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, Polity, 2007 (16)
- ⁴²¹ Paul Virilio, *ibid* (13)
- ⁴²² Franklin, Garth, “Justice League Doco Seeks Warners Blessing,” Dark Horizons, August 19, 2015 <https://www.darkhorizons.com/-justice-league-doco-seeks-warners-blessing/>

-
- ⁴²³ Behbakht, Andy, “Why Warner Bros., Aren’t Involved In Justice League Mortal Documentary,” Screen Rant, April 28, 2020 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-mortal-documentary-warner-bros-no-involvement/>
- ⁴²⁴ Shermer, Michael, “The Fallacy of Excluded Exceptions,” Scientific American, November 2018, Vol. 319, Iss. 5
- ⁴²⁵ Jewell, Richard B., “Orson Welles, George Shaefer, and ‘It’s All True’: A ‘Cursed’ Production, Film History, Nov. – Dec. 1988, Vol2, No. 4, pp. 325-335 (334).
- ⁴²⁶ Agel, Henri, “What Is A Cursed Film?” Hollywood Quarterly, Spring 1950, No. 3, pp. 293-297 (293)
- ⁴²⁷ Levitz, Paul, The Golden Age of DC Comics: 1935 – 1956, Taschen, 2013 (27)
- ⁴²⁸ Levitz, Paul, The Golden Age of DC Comics, *ibid* (31)
- ⁴²⁹ Levitz, Paul, *ibid* (31)
- ⁴³⁰ Bukatman, Scott, Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Superman in the 20th Century, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003 (205)
- ⁴³¹ Steranko, James and Federico Fellini, The Steranko History of Comics Volume 1, Reading, PA: Supergraphics, 1972 (43)
- ⁴³² Steranko, James and Federico Fellini, The Steranko History of Comics Volume 1, *ibid* (44)
- ⁴³³ Agel, Henri, “What Is A Cursed Film?” Hollywood Quarterly, Spring 1950, No. 3, pp. 293-297 (295)
- ⁴³⁴ Agel, Henri, “What Is A Cursed Film?” Hollywood Quarterly, Spring 1950, No. 3, pp. 293-297 (296)
- ⁴³⁵ Agel, Henri, “What Is A Cursed Film?” Hollywood Quarterly, Spring 1950, No. 3, pp. 293-297 (297)

⁴³⁶ Abbate, Jake, “Adam Brody Recalls Almost Being The Flash in ‘Justice League: Mortal,’” Super Hero Hype, March 4, 2023 <https://www.superherohype.com/movies/528013-adam-brody-recalls-almost-being-flash-in-justice-league-mortal>

⁴³⁷ El Juancis @El_Juancis, Twitter 10:47am, June 23, 2023
https://twitter.com/El_Juancis/status/1672285162304839680

⁴³⁸ Jesse White @Jesse_T_White, Twitter, 10:46am, June 27, 2023
https://twitter.com/Jesse_T_White/status/1673734433382318089

⁴³⁹ Don @GuyGOATner, Twitter, 12:06pm, June 2023
<https://twitter.com/GuyGOATner/status/1672305246800953344>

⁴⁴⁰ Gray, Jonathan, *Dislike Minded: Media, Audiences and the Dynamics of Taste*, New York: New York University Press, 2021 (108)

⁴⁴¹ Gray, Jonathan, *Dislike Minded*, *ibid* (107)

⁴⁴² “Who’s Afraid of a Justice League Movie?” Sci-Fi Movie Page,
http://www.scifimoviepage.com/upcoming/previews/justice_league_mortal-1.html

⁴⁴³ Billington, Alex, “Justice League: Mortal Leaving Australia – Even More Troubles,” First Showing, March 18, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/justice-league-mortal-leaving-australia-even-more-trouble/>

⁴⁴⁴ Billington, Alex, “Justice League: Mortal Leaving Australia,” *ibid*

⁴⁴⁵ Comment by Harrison on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁴⁶ Comment by woohoo! On March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁴⁷ Comment by Curtis on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁴⁸ Comment by Harrison on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁴⁹ Comment by Jamison on March 30, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁵⁰ Comment by Trent on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁵¹ Comment by Jake on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008

<https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁵² Comment by Trent on March 29, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁴⁵³ O’Connell, Sean, “Why Steven Spielberg Thinks Superhero Movies Will Go The Way Of The Western,” Cinema Blend, September 2, 2015 <https://www.cinemablend.com/new/Why-Steven-Spielberg-Thinks-Superhero-Movies-Go-Way-Western-80577.html>

⁴⁵⁴ Nicole, Jessica, “Multiverse Fatigue Threatens Marvel and DC Amid Claims of Superhero Fatigue,” Inside The Magic, June 24, 2023 <https://insidethemagic.net/2023/06/multiverse-fatigue-threatens-marvel-and-dc-amid-claims-of-superhero-fatigue-jnw1mmb/>

⁴⁵⁵ Hunt, Benjamin, “James Gunn Says The Bar Will Be Higher For Elseworlds Stories Than The DCU,” Game Rant, February 25, 2023 <https://gamerant.com/james-gunn-elseworlds-stories-dcu-differences-explained/>

⁴⁵⁶ Borys Kit, Aaron Couch, DC Shocker: James Gunn, Peter Safran to Lead Film, TV and Animation Division,” The Hollywood Reporter, October 25, 2022 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/dc-movies-james-gunn-peter-safran-to-lead-film-tv-division-1235248438/>

⁴⁵⁷ McGloin, Matt, “Armie Hammer Talks Stealing Justice League Mortal Script & Batman,” Cosmic Book News, January 21, 2018 <https://cosmicbook.news/armie-hammer-talks-stealing-justice-league-mortal-script-batman>

-
- ⁴⁵⁸ Chapman, Tom, “Armie Hammer: Justice League Mortal Art Doesn’t Include Final Batsuit,” Screen Rant, March 24, 2018 <https://screenrant.com/armie-hammer-justice-league-mortal-batsuit/>
- ⁴⁵⁹ Cotter, Padraig, “Armie Hammer’s Batman Was Deranged,” Screen Rant, December 1, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/armie-hammer-batman-justice-league-mortal/>
- ⁴⁶⁰ McGloin, Matt, “Armie Hammer Talks Stealing Justice League: Mortal Script & Batman,” Cosmic Book News, January 21, 2018 <https://cosmicbook.news/armie-hammer-talks-stealing-justice-league-mortal-script-batman>
- ⁴⁶¹ Cotter, Padraig, “Armie Hammer ‘Relieved’ Justice League Mortal Never Happened,” Screen Rant, November 15, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/armie-hammer-justice-league-mortal-batman/>
- ⁴⁶² O’Brien, Richard. “‘I Will Never Play the Dane’: Shakespeare and the Performer’s Failure.” *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (2)
- ⁴⁶³ Hagley, Annika and Harrison, Michael, *Reborn of Crisis: 9/11 and the Resurgent Superhero*, London and New York: Routledge, 2021 (10)
- ⁴⁶⁴ Hagley, Annika and Harrison, Michael, *Reborn of Crisis*, ibid (11)
- ⁴⁶⁵ Bukatman, Scott, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003 (185)
- ⁴⁶⁶ David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Timothy Carroll, “Introduction: Towards a General Theory of Failure,” in *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong* by David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Timothy Carroll [Eds.], Routledge, 2017 (3)
- ⁴⁶⁷ Jeevendrampillai, Parkhurst and Carroll, ibid (6)
- ⁴⁶⁸ Jeevendrampillai, Parkhurst and Carroll, ibid (15)

⁴⁶⁹ u/PowerRangersLOL, “I Just Read George Miller’s Aborted Justice League Mortal Script,” in r/DCcomics, Reddit, May 27, 2015 [I just read George Miller's aborted Justice League: Mortal script \[Um..Spoilers I guess?\] : DCcomics \(reddit.com\)](#)

⁴⁷⁰ Mulroney, Kieran and Michele Mulroney, *Justice League Mortal* (104)

⁴⁷¹ u/PowerRangersLOL, “I Just Read George Miller’s Aborted Justice League Mortal Script,” in r/DCcomics, Reddit, *ibid*

⁴⁷² Rowland, Robert C. and Robert Strain, “Social Function, Polysemy and Narrative-Dramatic Form: A Case Study of Do The Right Thing,” *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1994 (214)

⁴⁷³ Thompson, Kristin. “Franchise Failures,” in *Dossier: Perspectives on failure. (THE EDITORS)(Editorial).* *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 64 (September 22, 2009) 76-109 (108).

⁴⁷⁴ Raw, Laurence. “The Wings of The Dove: An Unproduced Film Script (1949).” *The Henry James Review* 28, no. 2 (2007): 174–181 (174). <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/215247>.

⁴⁷⁵ Thompson, *Ibid* (109)

⁴⁷⁶ Roche, Schmitt-Pitot, & Mitaine, “Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies,” in *Comics and Adaptation* by Benoit Mitaine, David Roche, and Isabelle Schmitt-Pitot [eds.], University of Mississippi Press, 2018 (5)

⁴⁷⁷ Roche, Schmitt-Pitot, & Mitaine, “Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies,” (5)

⁴⁷⁸ Roche, Schmitt-Pitot, & Mitaine, “Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies,” (5)

⁴⁷⁹ Roche, Schmitt-Pitot, & Mitaine, “Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies,” (8)

⁴⁸⁰ Roche, Schmitt-Pitot, & Mitaine, “Introduction: Adapting Adaptation Studies to Comics Studies,” (8)

⁴⁸¹ Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth & George Collins, Stanford University Press: Palo Alto, CA, 1998 (233-234)

⁴⁸² Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth & George Collins, Stanford University Press: Palo Alto, CA, 1998 (233-234)

⁴⁸³ Mulroney, Kieran and Michele Mulroney, *Justice League Mortal* (28)

⁴⁸⁴ Pollard, Tom, *Hollywood 9/11: Superheroes, Supervillains and Super Disasters*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011 (117)

⁴⁸⁵ Pollard, Tom *Hollywood 9/11*, *ibid*

⁴⁸⁶ Mulroney, *ibid* (104)

⁴⁸⁷ Mulroney, *ibid* (37)

⁴⁸⁸ Mulroney, *ibid* (37)

⁴⁸⁹ Mulroney, *ibid* (45)

⁴⁹⁰ Mulroney, *ibid* (58)

⁴⁹¹ Mark Waid and Howard Porter, *Justice League of America #44*: “Tower of Babel Part 2: Seven Little Indians,” DC Comics, August 2000

⁴⁹² Mark Waid and Howard Porter, *Justice League of America #45*: “Tower of Babel Part 3 Protected by the Cold,” DC Comics, September 2000

⁴⁹³ Mark Waid and Howard Porter, *Justice League of America #45*, *ibid*

⁴⁹⁴ Mark Waid and Steve Scott, *Justice League of America #46*: “Tower of Babel Part 4: Harsh Words,” DC Comics, October 2000

⁴⁹⁵ Mark Waid and Steve Scott, *Justice League of America #46*, *ibid*

-
- ⁴⁹⁶ Mark Waid and Steve Scott, *Justice League of America #46*, *ibid*
- ⁴⁹⁷ Mulroney, *Justice League Mortal* (59-60)
- ⁴⁹⁸ Pollard, Tom, *Hollywood 9/11: Superheroes, Supervillains and Super Disasters*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011 (131)
- ⁴⁹⁹ Pollard, Tom, *Hollywood 9/11*, *ibid* (131)
- ⁵⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics Book VII: Substance*, St. Isidore eBook Library (562)
<https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/Metaphysics7.htm#4>
- ⁵⁰¹ Stifn, Pwyll ap, “Assembling Absence of Sound and Memory of 9/11,” in *The Material Culture of Failure: When Things Do Wrong* by David Jeevendrampillai, Aaron Parkhurst and Timothy Carroll [Eds.], Routledge, 2017 (180)
- ⁵⁰² Pollard, Hollwyood 9/11, *ibid* (132)
- ⁵⁰³ Pollard, Tom Hollywood 9/11, *ibid* (148)
- ⁵⁰⁴ Mulroney, *Justice League Mortal* (66)
- ⁵⁰⁵ Mulroney, *Justice League Mortal* (71)
- ⁵⁰⁶ Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020 (11)
- ⁵⁰⁷ Appadurai, *Failure*, Polity: New York, 2019 (27)
- ⁵⁰⁸ Appadurai, *ibid*
- ⁵⁰⁹ Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure*, *ibid* (44)
- ⁵¹⁰ Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure*, *ibid* (106)
- ⁵¹¹ Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure*, *ibid* (179)
- ⁵¹² Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure*, *ibid* (85)
- ⁵¹³ Slavoj Zizek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Picador, 2008 (179)

-
- ⁵¹⁴ Slavoj Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, London and New York: Verso, 2008 (4)
- ⁵¹⁵ Slavoj Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, *ibid* (461)
- ⁵¹⁶ Slavoj Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, *ibid* (459)
- ⁵¹⁷ O'Brien, Richard. "“I Will Never Play the Dane”: Shakespeare and the Performer’s Failure.” *Literature compass* 15, no. 8 (2018): 1 – 10 (4)
- ⁵¹⁸ Zehr, E. Paul, *Becoming Batman: The Possibility of a Superhero*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2008, (150)
- ⁵¹⁹ Zehr, E. Paul, *Becoming Batman: The Possibility of a Superhero*, *ibid* (151)
- ⁵²⁰ Kane, Bob and Bill Finger, *Detective Comics #27*: “The Case of the Chemical Syndicate,” DC Comics, May 1939
- ⁵²¹ Finger, Bill and Bob Kane, *Detective Comics #35*: “The Case of the Ruby Idol,” January 1940, DC Comics
- ⁵²² Steranko, James and Federico Fellini, *The Steranko History of Comics Volume 1*, *ibid* (47)
- ⁵²³ Finger, Bill and Bob Kane, *Batman #1*: “The Giants of Hugo Strange,” DC Comics, March 1940
- ⁵²⁴ Foucault, Michele, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books: New York, 1979 (215)
- ⁵²⁵ Bukatman, Scott, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003 (203)
- ⁵²⁶ Kroustallis, Vassilis. “Failure to Think, Failure to Move: Handicapped Reasoning in Waltz with Bashir.” *Jewish Film & New Media*, 2(2), 2014, 132-152 (141)
- ⁵²⁷ Kroustallis, Vassilis. “Failure to Think, Failure to Move, *ibid* (147)

-
- ⁵²⁸ Morton, Drew. “‘Watched Any Good Books Lately?’: The Formal Failure of the ‘Watchmen’ Motion Comic.” *Cinema journal* 56, no. 2 (January 1, 2017): 132–137 (132)
- ⁵²⁹ Morton, Drew, “‘Watched Any Good Books Lately?’” *ibid* (136)
- ⁵³⁰ Kurtis Johnson, Dan and Pablo Raimondi, *JLA Secret Files and Origins #3: “Blame,”* DC Comics, December 2000
- ⁵³¹ Toles, George, “Film Death and the Failure to Signify: The Curious Case of Warni Hazard.” *New review of film and television studies* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 211–230 (215)
- ⁵³² Toles, George, “Film, Death and the Failure to Signify,” *ibid* (216)
- ⁵³³ Curtis, Neal, *Sovereignty and Superheroes*, Manchester University Press, 2016 (63)
- ⁵³⁴ Miller, Frank and Dave Mazzuchelli, “Batman Year One, Chapter One: Who I am – How I Came to Be,” *Batman #404*, DC Comics, February 1987
- ⁵³⁵ Toles, George, “Film, Death and the Failure to Signify,” *ibid* (228)
- ⁵³⁶ Madrid, Mike, *The Supergirls: Fashion, Feminism, Fantasy and the History of Comic Book Heroines*, Exterminating Angel Pres, 2009 (185)
- ⁵³⁷ Knopf, Kristina M., *Politics in the Gutter: American Politicians and Elections in Comic Book Media*, University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, 2021 (142)
- ⁵³⁸ Levitz, Paul, *The Golden Age of DC Comics*, Taschen, 2013 (54)
- ⁵³⁹ Levitz, Paul, *The Silver Age of DC Comics*, Taschen, 2013 (50)
- ⁵⁴⁰ Levitz, Paul, *The Bronze Age of DC Comics*, Taschen, 2015 (46)
- ⁵⁴¹ “American Comic Book History,” Arizona State University Library Guides, Jan. 2, 2024
<https://libguides.asu.edu/c.php?g=613607&p=4263347>
- ⁵⁴² “American Comic Book History,” Arizona State University Library Guides, *ibid*

⁵⁴³ Bosch, “Why So Serious? Threat, Authoritarianism, and Depictions of Crime, Law and Order in Batman Films,” (41)

⁵⁴⁴ DiPaolo, Marc Edward, “Wonder Woman as a WWII Veteran Camp Feminist Icon and Male Sex Fantasy,” in *The Amazing Transforming Superhero! Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film and Television*, by Terrence R. Wandtke [ed.], N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007 (152).

⁵⁴⁵ Knight, Gladys L., *Female Action Heroes: A Guide to Women in Comics, Video Games, Film and Television*, Greenwood: Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford, 2010 (305).

⁵⁴⁶ Cocca, Carolyn, “Negotiating the Third Wave of Feminism in ‘Wonder Woman,’” *Political Science and Politics*, January 2014, Vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 98-103 (102).

⁵⁴⁷ Dahabny-Miraglia, Dina. “Wonder Woman, a True ‘Woman of Valor?’ It’s a Man’s World.” *Women in Judaism* 9, no. 1, 2012 (1).

⁵⁴⁸ Tim Hanley, *Wonder Woman Unbound: The Curious History of the World’s Most Famous Heroine*, Chicago Review Press Incorporated, 2014 (13)

⁵⁴⁹ Jones, Pete, “Diana in the World of Men: a character network approach to analysing gendered vocal representation in ‘Wonder Woman,’” *Feminist Media Studies*, 20:1, pp. 18-34 (30)

⁵⁵⁰ Robbins, Trina, “Wonder Woman: Lesbian or Dyke? Paradise Island as a Woman’s Community,” in *Heroines of Comic Books and Literature: Portrayals in Popular Culture* by Maja Bajac-Carter, Norma Jones and Bob Batchelor [Eds], Rowman & Littlefield: Maryland, 2014 (150).

⁵⁵¹ Cocca, Carolyn, *Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel: Militarism and Feminism in Comics and Film*, Routledge: London and New York, 2021 (24-25).

-
- ⁵⁵² Reynolds, Richard, "Tarpe Mills's Miss Fury," in *Super Sex: Sexuality, Fantasy and the Superhero*, by Anna F. Peppard [ed], University of Texas Press: Austin, 2020 (41)
- ⁵⁵³ Eco, Umberto. "The Myth of Superman." *Diacritics* 2, no. 1 (1972): 14-22 (14)
- ⁵⁵⁴ Eco, Umberto. "The Myth of Superman." *Diacritics* 2, no. 1 (1972): 14-22 (14, 15).
- ⁵⁵⁵ Eco, Umberto. "The Myth of Superman" (15).
- ⁵⁵⁶ Wright, Bradford, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 2001 (21)
- ⁵⁵⁷ Lepore, Jill, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2014 (170-171)
- ⁵⁵⁸ Levitz, Paul, *The Golden Age of DC Comics: 1935-1956*, Taschen, 2013 (209)
- ⁵⁵⁹ Cocca, Carolyn, "Negotiating the Third Wave of Feminism in 'Wonder Woman,'" *Political Science and Politics*, January 2014, Vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 98-103 (98).
- ⁵⁶⁰ Sharon Zechowski and Caryn E. Neumann, "The Mother of All Superheroes: Idealizations of Femininity in Wonder Woman," in *Heroines of Comic Books and Literature: Portrayals in Popular Culture* by Maja Bajac-Carter, Norma Jones and Bob Batchelor [Eds], Rowman & Littlefield: Maryland, 2014 (136)
- ⁵⁶¹ Dipaolo, Ibid (161)
- ⁵⁶² Sharon Zechowski and Caryn E. Neumann, "The Mother of All Superheroes: Idealizations of Femininity in Wonder Woman (140).
- ⁵⁶³ Knopf, Kristina M., *Politics in the Gutter: American Politicians and Elections in Comic Book Media*, University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, 2021 (142)
- ⁵⁶⁴ Young, Paul, *Frank Miller's Daredevil and the Ends of Heroism*, Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2016 (6).

-
- ⁵⁶⁵ Bosch, Ibid (40-41)
- ⁵⁶⁶ Robbins, Trina, “Wonder Woman: Lesbian or Dyke? Paradise Island as a Woman’s Community,” in *Heroines of Comic Books and Literature: Portrayals in Popular Culture* by Maja Bajac-Carter, Norma Jones and Bob Batchelor [Eds], Rowman & Littlefield: Maryland, 2014 (150).
- ⁵⁶⁷ Young, Paul, Frank Miller’s *Daredevil and the Ends of Heroism*, (234).
- ⁵⁶⁸ DiPaolo, Marc Edward, “Wonder Woman as a WWII Veteran Camp Feminist Icon and Male Sex Fantasy,” (166, 169).
- ⁵⁶⁹ DiPaolo, Ibid (170).
- ⁵⁷⁰ Jackie D. Phillips and Staci Strobl, *Comic Book Crime: Truth, Justice and the American Way*, New York University Press, New York and London, 2013 (136)
- ⁵⁷¹ Thom Parham, “Superheroes in Crisis: Postmodern Deconstruction and Reconstruction in Comic Books and Graphic Novels,” in *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religions and Popular Culture*, edited by B.J. Oropeza, Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2005 (210)
- ⁵⁷² DiPaolo
- ⁵⁷³ Elizabeth Danna, “Wonder Woman Mythology: Heroes from the Ancient World and their Progeny,” in *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religions and Popular Culture*, edited by B.J. Oropeza, Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2005 (72)
- ⁵⁷⁴ Danna, ibid (72)
- ⁵⁷⁵ Curtis, Neal, *Sovereignty and Superheroes*, Manchester University Press, 2016 (68)
- ⁵⁷⁶ Robinson, Lilian S., *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes*, Routledge, 2004 (30 – 31)
- ⁵⁷⁷ Greg Rucka and David Lopez, *Wonder Woman #220: “Affirmative Defense,”* DC Comics, October 2005

⁵⁷⁸ Kurtis Johnson, Dan and Pablo Raimondi, *JLA Secret Files and Origins* #3: “Blame,” DC Comics, December 2000

⁵⁷⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Violence*, ibid (190)

⁵⁸⁰ McGuire, Liam, “Wonder Woman’s Takedown of Batman’s ‘One Rule’ is Absolutely Brutal,” January 14, 2023 <https://screenrant.com/batman-wonder-woman-no-kill-rule-dc-takedown/>

⁵⁸¹ Finch, Meredith and David Finch, *Wonder Woman* #39: “War-Torn, Chapter 4,” April 2015, DC Comics

⁵⁸² Zizek, *Violence*, ibid

⁵⁸³ Comment by EDA on March 18, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁵⁸⁴ Comment by Logan on March 19, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁵⁸⁵ Comment by Alfredo on March 18, 2008, in “Rumor: Hayden Christensen is Superman in Justice League: Mortal?! Updated – Not True!,” by Alex Billington, First Showing.net, March 29, 2008 <https://www.firstshowing.net/2008/rumor-hayden-christensen-is-superman-in-justice-league-mortal/>

⁵⁸⁶ u/the_black_panther, r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, May 23, 2016

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/4ko9ow/george_millers_justice_league_mortal_an/

⁵⁸⁷ u/TheAdventurousWriter, r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, May 23, 2016

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/4ko9ow/george_millers_justice_league_mortal_an/

⁵⁸⁸ u/TheAdventurousWriter, r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, May 23, 2016

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/4ko9ow/george_millers_justice_league_mortal_an/

⁵⁸⁹ u/soulxhawk, r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, May 23, 2016

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/4ko9ow/george_millers_justice_league_mortal_an/

⁵⁹⁰ Meyer, Jeremy, “Defending Your Movie Podcast,” Episode 33: Justice League Mortal, Nov.

20, 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/TCUhcRv8rHPpxSQz/?mibextid=oFDknk>

⁵⁹¹ @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter/X, Aug. 6, 2023

<https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1688419559827726336?s=20>

⁵⁹² Lawson, Richard, “Justice League is a Big, Ugly Mess,” Vanity Fair, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/11/justice-league-review>

⁵⁹³ Santiago, Amanda Luz Henning, “How much work it will take to digitally remove Henry Cavill’s mustache for ‘Justice League,’ according to visual effects artists,” Business Insider, July

28, 2017 <https://www.businessinsider.com/henry-cavills-mustache-for-superman-in-justice-league-how-hard-it-is-to-remove-2017-7>

⁵⁹⁴ Kit, Borys, “Zack Snyder Steps Down From ‘Justice League’ to Deal With Family Tragedy,” Hollywood Reporter, May 22, 2017 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/zack-snyder-steps-down-justice-league-deal-family-tragedy-1006455>

⁵⁹⁵ McGlynn, Anthony, “The DCEU is Repeating Marvel’s Villain Problem,” Screen Rant, November 24, 2017 <https://screenrant.com/dceu-villain-problem-marvel-copy-justice-league-steppenwolf/>

⁵⁹⁶ Sharf, Zack, “‘Justice League’ Actor Ray Fischer Alleges Joss Whedon was ‘Abusive’ and ‘Gross’ on Set,” Indie Wire, July 1, 2020 <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/07/ray-fisher-joss-whedon-abusive-justice-league-set-1234570870/>

⁵⁹⁷ u/DocterDemocracy in r/DC_Cinematic, February 17, 2023 https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/114hpj7/whats_everyones_thoughts_on_justice_league/

⁵⁹⁸ Miller, David, “WB Making Snyder’s Justice League Non-Canon Is A Huge Mistake,” Screen Rant, August 10, 2022 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-snyder-cut-not-dceu-canon-mistake/>

⁵⁹⁹ Benamou, Catherline L., *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, University of California Press, 2007 (1)

⁶⁰⁰ Waldman, Harry, *Scenes Unseen: Unreleased and Uncompleted Films from the World’s Master Filmmakers, 1912 – 1990*, McFarland and Company, 1991 (65)

⁶⁰¹ Waldman, Harry, *Scenes Unseen* (66)

⁶⁰² Waldman, Harry, *Scenes Unseen* (66)

⁶⁰³ Ulivieri, Filippo, “Waiting for a Miracle: A Survey of Stanley Kubrick’s Unrealized Projects.” *Cinergie* 6, no. 12 (December 1, 2017): 95–115 (102).

⁶⁰⁴ Ulivieri, Filippo, “Waiting for a Miracle,” *ibid* (102)

-
- ⁶⁰⁵ Ulivieri, Filippo, “Waiting for a Miracle,” *ibid* (103)
- ⁶⁰⁶ Harle, Matthew, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019 (111)
- ⁶⁰⁷ Ulivieri, Filippo, “Waiting for a Miracle,” *ibid* (104)
- ⁶⁰⁸ Harle, Matthew, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019 (10)
- ⁶⁰⁹ Harle, Matthew, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive* (109)
- ⁶¹⁰ Goldman, William, *Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting*, London: Macdonald, 1984 (212), cited in Matthew Harle’s *Afterlives of Abandoned Work* (109)
- ⁶¹¹ Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See: Unseen Masterpieces by the World’s Greatest Directors*. London: Hachette Group, 2013 (182)
- ⁶¹² Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See* (182)
- ⁶¹³ Williams, Joe, “Everything That Went Wrong With Tim Burton’s Superman Movie,” *Far Out Magazine*, May 30, 2023 <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/everything-that-went-wrong-with-tim-burtons-superman-movie/>
- ⁶¹⁴ Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See* (185)
- ⁶¹⁵ Braund, Simon [Ed]. *The Greatest Films You’ll Never See* (189)
- ⁶¹⁶ Fenwick, James, “A production strategy of over developments: Kirk Douglas’s Bryna productions and the unproduced *Viva gringo*,” in Fenwick, James, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge [Eds]. *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (23)
- ⁶¹⁷ Fenwick, James, “A production strategy of over developments,” *ibid* (29)

⁶¹⁸ Greenberg, James, “Rescuing Batman,” *LA Times*, May 8, 2005

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-may-08-ca-batman8-story.html>

⁶¹⁹ Curran, Brad, “The DCEU’s Unmade Movie Reveals Make The DCU’s Reboot Confusion Even More Complicated,” *Screen Rant*, Aug. 9, 2023 <https://screenrant.com/dceu-unmade-movie-reveals-dcu-reboot-complicated/>

⁶²⁰ Kunze, Peter C. “Herding Cats; or, The Possibilities of Unproduction Studies.” *The Velvet Light Trap* 80.1 (2017): 18–31. Web. (21)

⁶²¹ David Hughes

⁶²² Benamou, Catherine L. (2007), *It’s All True : Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (1)

⁶²³ Fenwick, James, Foster, Kieran and Eldridge, David (2020), ‘Introduction’, in J. Fenwick, K. Foster and D. Eldridge (eds), *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 1-14 (6)

⁶²⁴ Fenwick, James, Foster, Kieran and Eldridge, David (2020), ‘Introduction’, *ibid* (6)

⁶²⁵ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True* (3)

⁶²⁶ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True* (15)

⁶²⁷ Labonte, Rachel (2021), ‘Zack Snyder says his DC movies aren’t Snyderverse’, *Screen Rant*, 27 October, <https://screenrant.com/zack-snyder-dceu-movies-snyderverse-response/>. Accessed: 28 April 2022.

⁶²⁸ Kendrick, James (2013), ‘Phantom cinema: Illuminating the structuring absences of film history’, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 30:1, pp. 62–73 (65)

⁶²⁹ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True* (2)

⁶³⁰ Benamou, Catherine L., *It’s All True* (129)

⁶³¹ Kendrick, James (2013), “Phantom cinema” (64)

⁶³² Benamou, Catherine L., *It's All True* (128-129)

⁶³³ Schmidt, Joe (2018), ‘Batman star Ben Affleck releases statement on addiction’, *ComicBook.com*, 5 October, <https://comicbook.com/dc/2018/10/04/ben-affleck-finishes-rehab-the-batman-matt-reeves-justice-league/>.

⁶³⁴ Vary, Adam B., “Ray Fischer accuses Joss Whedon of ‘Abusive, Unprofessional’ Behavior on the set of ‘Justice League,’ *Variety*, July 1, 2020 <https://variety.com/2020/film/news/ray-fisher-joss-whedon-justice-league-1234695831/>

⁶³⁵ Keifer, Halle, “Joss Whedon’s Ex-Wife Writes Essay Accusing Him of Feminist ‘Hypocrisy:’ ‘He Is Not Who He Pretends to Be,” *Vulture*, August 20, 2017 <https://www.vulture.com/2017/08/joss-whedons-ex-wife-calls-him-a-feminist-hypocrite.html>

⁶³⁶ Guardian Staff, “Game of Thrones Star Jason Momoa joked about raping ‘beautiful women’ on show,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 13, 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/oct/12/jason-momoa-game-of-thrones-aping-beautiful-women>

⁶³⁷ Coyle, Jake (2017), ‘In 2017, DC looks beyond Batman and Superman’, *The Washington Times*, 13 November, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/nov/13/in-justice-league-dc-looks-beyond-batman-and-super/>.

⁶³⁸ Gonzalez, Umberto (2018), ‘Ben Affleck could lose his “Batman” role due to post-rehab insurance costs, experts say,’ *The Wrap*, 27 August, <https://www.thewrap.com/ben-affleck-batman-insurance-costs/>.

⁶³⁹ Gallagher, Brian, “Justice League Posters Are Missing Superman Once Again,” *Movie Web*, Aug. 13, 2017

⁶⁴⁰ Sharf, Zack, “Henry Cavill: ‘Justice League’ Marketing Was ‘Faintly Ridiculous’ In How It Handled Superman,” May 15, 2018 <https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/henry-cavill-justice-league-marketing-superman-ridiculous-1201964793/>

⁶⁴¹ Kit, Borys, “Zack Snyder Steps Down From ‘Justice League’ to Deal With Family Tragedy,” The Hollywood Reporter, May 22, 2017 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/zack-snyder-steps-down-justice-league-deal-family-tragedy-1006455/>

⁶⁴² Kit, Borys, “Zack Snyder Steps Down From ‘Justice League’ to Deal With Family Tragedy,”
ibid

⁶⁴³ Robinson, Johanna, “Justice League Was Apparently Micromanaged Even More Than We Thought,” Vanity Fair, November 24, 2017,
<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/11/justice-league-edits-joss-whedon-micromanaged-zack-snyder>

⁶⁴⁴ Kunze, Peter. C. (2017), ‘Herding cats: or, the possibilities of unproduction studies’, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 80:80, pp. 18–31 (18-19)

⁶⁴⁵ Ross, Diandra, “Justice League: Snyder Confirms He Didn’t Choose Whedon to Direct Reshoots,” Screen Rant, July 27, 2020 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-zack-snyder-joss-whedon-director-choice/>

⁶⁴⁶ Kunze, Peter. C. (2017), ‘Herding cats’ (25)

⁶⁴⁷ Rothman, Michael and Lesley Messer, “Zack Snyder Takes A Break From Directing To Cope With Family Tragedy,” ABC News, May 22, 2017 <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/zack-snyder-takes-break-directing-cope-family-tragedy/story?id=47568972>

⁶⁴⁸ Kuchera, Ben (2018), ‘Zack Snyder was fired from Justice League’, *Polygon*, 13 February, <https://www.polygon.com/2018/2/13/17007872/zack-snyder-justice-league-fired>. Accessed 28 April 2022.

⁶⁴⁹ Kuchera, Ben (2018), ‘Zack Snyder was fired from Justice League’, *ibid*

⁶⁵⁰ Donnelly, Matt, Umberto Gonzalez and Matt Pressberg (2016), ‘The Warner Bros shuffle: studio needs a DC superhero in Toby Emmerich’, *The Wrap*, 15 December, <https://www.thewrap.com/warner-bros-shuffle-ailing-studio-needs-dc-superhero-toby-emmerich-say-insiders/>.

⁶⁵¹ Buchanan, Kyle, (2019), ‘Why Ben Affleck and Gal Gadot are tweeting #ReleaseTheSnyderCut’, *The New York Times*, 19 November, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/19/movies/snyder-cut-gadot-affleck.html>. Accessed 28 April 2022.

⁶⁵² Alexander, Julia (2018), ‘DC Universe’s biggest conspiracy involves Zack Snyder and the Justice League’, *Polygon*, 10 January, <https://www.polygon.com/2018/1/10/16873696/justice-league-zack-snyder-directors-cut-conspiracy-theory>

⁶⁵³ O’Connell, Sean, Release The Snyder Cut: The Crazy True Story Behind the Fight That Saved Zack Snyder’s Justice League, *Applause*, 2021 (155)

⁶⁵⁴ Curran, Brad (2021), ‘The real reason fans won’t let go of restoring the Snyderverse’, *Screenrant*, 17 November, <https://screenrant.com/zack-snyderverse-justice-league-future-fans-campaign-reasons/>

⁶⁵⁵ Freitag, Lee, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Was Almost a Six-Part Series,” *CBR*, April 18, 2023 <https://www.cbr.com/zack-snyder-justice-league-six-part-series/>

⁶⁵⁶ Kafka, Peter, “HBO Max is here!” Recode Media <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hbo-max-is-here/id1080467174?i=1000475781603>

⁶⁵⁷ Sharf, Zack, “HBO Max Boss Projects ‘Wildly Expensive’ Snyder Cut Will Cost Over \$30 Million,” Indie Wire, May 26, 2020 <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/05/hbo-max-boss-snyder-cut-expensive-unfinished-1202233545/>

⁶⁵⁸ Davies, Megan, “Justice League Director Zack Snyder Admits he thought it’d take ’20 Years’ for Snyder Cut Footage Release,” Digital Spy, May 21, 2020 <https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a32630934/justice-league-zack-snyder-footage-20-years/>

⁶⁵⁹ Lewis, Evan, “Zack Snyder Tells Fans Not to Lose Hope For His Cut of Justice League,” We Got This Covered, January 4, 2020 <https://wegotthiscovered.com/movies/zack-snyder-tells-fans-lose-hope-cut-justice-league/>

⁶⁶⁰ Bonomolo, Cameron, “‘Justice League’ Snyder Cut Fans Launch Fundraiser for Suicide Prevention,” Comic Book, July 14, 2018 <https://comicbook.com/dc/news/justice-league-zack-snyder-cut-fans-suicide-prevention-fundraiser/>

⁶⁶¹ Trumbore, Dave, “HBO Max Exec Says #TheSnyderCut Doesn’t Set a Precedent, Despite Toxic Fan Activity,” Collider, June 4, 2020 <https://collider.com/hbo-max-snyder-cut-precedent-toxic-fandom/>

⁶⁶² Salter, Anastasia. “RelationshipGoals? Suicide Squad and Fandom’s Love of ‘Problematic’ Men.” *Television & new media* 21, no. 2, 2020, 135–150 (137)

⁶⁶³ Terror, Jude, “5 Things for Snyderbronies to do after winning the Snyder Cut,” Bleeding Cool, June 3, 2020 [5 Things for Snyderbronies to Do After Winning the Snyder Cut \(bleedingcool.com\)](https://bleedingcool.com/5-things-for-snyderbronies-to-do-after-winning-the-snyder-cut/)

-
- ⁶⁶⁴ Palmer, Zachary D. “‘I Don’t Like to Separate Myself by Gender’: How Women Navigate Hybrid Masculinities in the Brony Community.” *Journal of gender studies* 32, no. 3 (2023): 296–307 (297)
- ⁶⁶⁵ Palmer, Zachary D. “‘I Don’t Like to Separate Myself by Gender,’” *ibid* (300)
- ⁶⁶⁶ Church, Ricky, “Justice League: What the hell was Warner Bros. thinking?” Flickering Myth, Feb. 15, 2018 [Justice League: What the hell was Warner Bros. thinking? \(flickeringmyth.com\)](https://www.flickeringmyth.com/justice-league-what-the-hell-was-warner-bros-thinking/)
- ⁶⁶⁷ Dru Jeffries, *Comic Book Film Style: Cinema at 24 Panels Per Second*, University of Texas Press, 2017 (119)
- ⁶⁶⁸ Dru Jeffries, *Comic Book Film Style*, *ibid* (120)
- ⁶⁶⁹ Dru Jeffries, *Comic Book Film Style*, *ibid* (120)
- ⁶⁷⁰ Dru Jeffries, *Comic Book Film Style*, *ibid* (122)
- ⁶⁷¹ Jason Rothery and Benjamin Woo, “Mutatis Mutandis: Constructing Fidelity In the Comic Book Film Adaptation,” (134)
- ⁶⁷² Anthony Soegito. “Fans Vs. Critics: Challenging Critical Authority through Memes.” *Journal of fandom studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 279–301 (292)
- ⁶⁷³ Jason Rothery and Benjamin Woo, “Mutatis Mutandis,” *ibid* (132)
- ⁶⁷⁴ Epstein, Adam, “HBO’s ‘Watchmen’ is Great. Its Comic Creator Alan Moore Wants Nothing To Do With It,” Quartz, Oct. 21, 2019 <https://qz.com/quartz/1732050/why-alan-moore-wants-nothing-to-do-with-hbos-watchmen>
- ⁶⁷⁵ Miller, Frank, remarks at the “Spotlight on Frank Miller” Panel, Friday, San Diego Comic-Con, July 22, 11:45 – 12:45PM, Sails Pavilion, Room6A <https://www.comic-con.org/cci/2022/complete-schedule>
- ⁶⁷⁶ Scott, Suzanne, *Fake Geek Girls* (163)

-
- ⁶⁷⁷ Drew Morton, Panel to Screen, *ibid* (100)
- ⁶⁷⁸ Drew Morton, Panel to Screen, *ibid* (96-98)
- ⁶⁷⁹ Scott, Suzanne, *Fake Geek Girls* (163)
- ⁶⁸⁰ Anastasia Salter and Mel Stanfill, *A Portrait of the Auteur as Fanboy: The Construction of Authorship in Transmedia Franchises*, University of Mississippi Press: Jackson, 2020 (108)
- ⁶⁸¹ Miller, Frank and Klaus Jansen, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns Anniversary Edition*, DC Comics, 2016
- ⁶⁸² Bryce Reif, “Batman v Superman & Dark Knight Returns: Frame to Panel Comparison,” YouTube, Dec 19, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBcttqBn9NI>
- ⁶⁸³ Drew Morton, Panel to Screen, *ibid* (97)
- ⁶⁸⁴ Drew Morton, Panel to Screen, *ibid* (99)
- ⁶⁸⁵ Drew Morton, Panel to Screen, *ibid* (100)
- ⁶⁸⁶ Anastasia Salter and Mel Stanfill, *A Portrait of the Auteur as Fanboy: The Construction of Authorship in Transmedia Franchises*, University of Mississippi Press: Jackson, 2020 (108)
- ⁶⁸⁷ Anastasia Salter and Mel Stanfill, *A Portrait of the Auteur as Fanboy* (108)
- ⁶⁸⁸ “Man of Steel,” *Rotten Tomatoes*
https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/superman_man_of_steel
- ⁶⁸⁹ “Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice,” *Rotten Tomatoes*
https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/batman_v_superman_dawn_of_justice
- ⁶⁹⁰ Dave Trumbore, “‘Batman v Superman’ Ultimate Edition Review: Why I Skipped the Theatrical Cut,” July 4, 2016 <https://collider.com/batman-v-superman-ultimate-edition-review/>

⁶⁹¹ Graeme Guttamn, “Batman v Superman Theatrical Release Was Sabotaged by WB Cuts Says Writer,” Screen Rant, April 09, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/batman-v-superman-theatrical-cut-wb-chris-terrio/>

⁶⁹² “Zack Snyder’s Justice League,” Rotten Tomatoes https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/zack_snyders_justice_league

⁶⁹³ “Justice League,” Rotten Tomatoes https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/justice_league_2017

⁶⁹⁴ Sharf, Zack, “Justice League’ Cinematographer Says Theatrical Cut Threw Out 90% of Zack Snyder’s Footage,” Indie Wire, Dec. 5, 2019 [‘Justice League’: Joss Whedon Used 10% of Zack Snyder’s Footage | IndieWire](#)

⁶⁹⁵ Wood, Zack, “Did Joss Whedon sneak a secret message for DC fans into Justice League?” Cinemablend, Nov. 24, 2017 [Did Joss Whedon Sneak A Secret Message For DC Fans Into Justice League? - CINEMABLEND](#)

⁶⁹⁶ Kroll, Justin and Brent Lang, “Justice League ‘Extensive Reshoots’ Causing Headaches for Star Schedules,” Variety, July 24, 2017 [Inside 'Justice League's' Extensive Reshoots - Variety](#)

⁶⁹⁷ “Justice League Snyder Cut Official Teaser Trailer – Darkseid Revealed!” YouTube, June 18, 2020 [Justice League Snyder Cut Official Teaser Trailer - Darkseid Revealed! - YouTube](#)

⁶⁹⁸ Trent, John F., “Actor Ray Porter Confirms Darkseid Role – Here’s What We Can Expect From the Character,” Bounding Into Comics, May 22, 2020 [Actor Ray Porter Confirms Darkseid Role - Here's What We Can Expect From The Character - Bounding Into Comics](#)

⁶⁹⁹ [Zack Snyder comments on 'Justice League' concept art of Darkseid | Batman News \(batman-news.com\)](#) Begley, Chris, “Zack Snyder comments on ‘Justice League’ concept art of Darkseid,” Batman-News.com, Oct. 18, 2018

⁷⁰⁰ Kirby, Jack and Vince Coletta, “The Mountain of Judgement!”, Superman’s Pal Jimmy Olsen #134, November 1970

https://dc.fandom.com/wiki/Superman%27s_Pal,_Jimmy_Olsen_Vol_1_134

⁷⁰¹ Chichizola, Corey, “Snyder Cut fan art reveals terrifying glimpse at Darkseid in Justice League,” CinemaBlend, 9, 2020 [Snyder Cut Fan Art Reveals Terrifying Glimpse At Darkseid In Justice League - CINEMABLEND](#)

⁷⁰² Augustine, JB, “Zack Snyder reveals new teases of Darkseid and Martian Manhunter for his cut of Justice League,” Bounding Into Comics, Nov. 13, 2020 [Zack Snyder Reveals New Teases of Darkseid And Martian Manhunter For His Cut Of Justice League - Bounding Into Comics](#)

⁷⁰³ “Justice League (2017) vs. Justice League Snyder Cut (2021) Trailer Comparison,” YouTube Aug. 22, 2020 [Justice League \(2017\) vs. Justice League: Snyder Cut \(2021\) Trailer Comparison - YouTube](#)

⁷⁰⁴ Baudrillard, Jean, “The Precession of Simulacra,” in Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, 2009, ed. John Storey (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2009) (409)

⁷⁰⁵ “Justice League (2017) vs. Justice League Snyder Cut (2021) Trailer Comparison,” YouTube Aug. 22, 2020 [Justice League \(2017\) vs. Justice League: Snyder Cut \(2021\) Trailer Comparison - YouTube](#)

⁷⁰⁶ Finger, Bill, “The Case of the Chemical Syndicate,” Detective Comics Vol. 1, Issue #27, May 1939 [Detective Comics Vol 1 27 - DC Comics Database \(fandom.com\)](#)

⁷⁰⁷ Finger, Bill, “The Batman: The Case of the Chemical Syndicate,” Detective Comics Vol. 1, Issue #27, May 1939 [Detective Comics Vol 1 27 - DC Comics Database \(fandom.com\)](#)

⁷⁰⁸ Snee, Brian, “Saving the Emancipator,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2015 (141-146)

⁷⁰⁹ Siegel, Jerry, “Superman, Champion of the Oppressed,” Action Comics Vol. 1, Issue #1, June 1938 [Action Comics Vol 1 1 - DC Comics Database \(fandom.com\)](#)

⁷¹⁰ Marston, William Moulton, “Wonder Woman Arrives in Man’s World,” Sensation Comics Vol. 1, Issue #1, January 1942 [Sensation Comics Vol 1 1 - DC Comics Database \(fandom.com\)](#)

⁷¹¹ Justice League (2017) vs. Justice League Snyder Cut (2021) Trailer Comparison,” YouTube Aug. 22, 2020 [Justice League \(2017\) vs. Justice League: Snyder Cut \(2021\) Trailer Comparison - YouTube](#)

⁷¹² Pearson, Ben, “Snyder Cut Alert: Zack Snyder shares photo of Henry Cavill’s Superman,” SlashFilm, December 12, 2019 [Zack Snyder Shares Pic of Henry Cavill in Superman's Black Suit – /Film \(slashfilm.com\)](#)

⁷¹³ Pearson, Ibid

⁷¹⁴ Armitage, Hugh and Gabriella Geisinger, “Will Justice League 2 ever happen? Here’s what we know,” Digital Spy, June 11, 2020 [Is Justice League 2 cancelled? Will it get a release date? \(digitalspy.com\)](#)

⁷¹⁵ Alexander, Julia, “‘The Snyder Cut’ of Justice League is coming to HBO Max in 2021,” The Verge, May 20, 2020 [The ‘Snyder Cut’ of Justice League is coming to HBO Max in 2021 - The Verge](#)

⁷¹⁶ Armitage and Geisinger, Ibid

⁷¹⁷ “Spotlight on Zack Snyder Panel,” YouTube, July 25, 2020 [Spotlight on Zack Snyder Panel - YouTube](#)

⁷¹⁸ Neale, Matthew, “Zack Snyder says he would “destroy” his ‘Justice League’ cut before using Joss Whedon’s footage,” NME, July 26, 2020 [Zack Snyder would "destroy" his 'Justice League' cut before using Joss Whedon's footage \(nme.com\)](#)

⁷¹⁹ O’Connell, Sean, “Zack Snyder Seemingly Confirms When Justice League Will Hit HBO Max?” Cinema Blend, Dec. 17, 2020 <https://www.cinemablend.com/news/2560305/justice-league-zack-snyder-seemingly-confirms-when-the-snyder-cut-will-hit-hbo-max>

⁷²⁰ Kirscht, Daryn (2021), *The SnyderVerse Saga: The Culture-Shattering Phenomena Behind Zack Snyder’s DC Multiverse*, Denver, CO: Paper Raven Books (280)

⁷²¹ Fiona Zheng, Matt Zhong, “For Snyder Cut,” <https://www.forsnydercut.com/announcement/airplane-with-release-the-snyder-cut-banner-flies-over-comic-con/>

⁷²² Kevin Burwick, “#ReleaseTheSny9derCut Justice League Banners Fly High Over Comic-Con,” Movieweb, July 19, 2019 <https://movieweb.com/justice-league-release-the-snyder-cut-comic-con/>

⁷²³ Brooker, Will, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (170)

⁷²⁴ Brooker, Will, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (172)

⁷²⁵ Soukup, Charles. “Hitching a Ride on a Star: Celebrity, Fandom, and Identification on the World Wide Web.” *The Southern communication journal* 71, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 319–337 (321)

⁷²⁶ Hickson, Haydn, “Here’s How To Watch ‘Man of Steel’ Along With Zack Snyder This Week,” GOAT, May 19, 2020 <https://goat.com.au/entertainment/heres-how-to-watch-man-of-steel-along-with-zack-snyder-this-week/>

⁷²⁷ Sandvoss, Cornell, “The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and Study of Texts in Popular Culture,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (40)

⁷²⁸ Melissa Click, “Do All Good Things Come To An End? Revisiting Martha Stewart Fans After ImClone,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington (196)

⁷²⁹ Hannah, Erin, *Only At Comic Con: Hollywood, Fans and the Limits of Exclusivity* (82)

⁷³⁰ Lyles, Taylor “The ‘Snyder Cut’ of Justice League is coming to HBO Max on March 18th,” *The Verge*, Jan. 29, 2021 <https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/29/22255990/justice-league-snyder-cut-hbo-max-release-date>

⁷³¹ Alexander, Julia “Warner Bros. will release all of its new 2021 movies simultaneously on HBO Max,” *The Verge*, Dec 3, 2021 <https://www.theverge.com/2020/12/3/22150605/hbo-max-warner-bros-movies-2021-simultaneous-release-matrix-godzilla-suicide-squad-space-jam>

⁷³² Masters, Kim “Christopher Nolan Rips HBO Max as ‘Worst Streaming Service,’ Denounces Warner Bros. Plan,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, Dec. 7, 2020 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/christopher-nolan-rips-hbo-max-as-worst-streaming-service-denounces-warner-bros-plan-4101408/>

⁷³³ Matt Singer, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League: What was actually reshot for the new film,” *Screen Crush*, March 18, 2021 <https://screencrush.com/zack-snyders-justice-league-what-was-reshot/>

⁷³⁴ Adam Chitwood, “The Snyder Cut Cost Warner Bros. at least \$70 million, but it may be Zack Snyder’s final DC project,” *Collider*, Dec. 28, 2020 <https://collider.com/the-snyder-cut-cost-zack-snyder-future-dc-movies/>

⁷³⁵ Rafael Motamayor, “How Zack Snyder’s Justice League went from Myth to Mandate,” Observer, March 13, 2021 <https://observer.com/2021/03/zack-snyders-justice-league-changes-releasethesnydercut/>

⁷³⁶ Craig Elvy, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Budget Explained: How Much It Cost,” March 17, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-snyder-cut-budget-reshoots-how-much/>

⁷³⁷ Timea Betakova, “Here Are the Most Expensive Movies Ever Made,” Movie Web, July 19, 2022 <https://movieweb.com/most-expensive-movies-ever/>

⁷³⁸ Stephen Colbert, “Why WB Hasn’t Released Any Official Snyder Cut Numbers,” Screen Rant, July 12, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-snyder-cut-numbers-not-released-why/>

⁷³⁹ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls: Fandom, Gender and the Convergence Culture Industry (58)

⁷⁴⁰ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (57)

⁷⁴¹ Chess, Shira and Jessica Maddox, “Kim Kardashian is my new BFF: Video Games and the Looking Glass Celebrity, Popular Communication, 2018, Vol. 16, no. 3, 196 – 210 (202)

⁷⁴² Paul Tassi, “WB Execs Reportedly Regret Greenlighting Zack Snyder’s Justice League Cut,” Forbes, Aug. 30, 2022 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2022/08/30/wb-execs-reportedly-regret-greenlighting-zack-snyders-justice-league-cut/?sh=4b163361e8f6>

⁷⁴³ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls: Fandom, Gender and the Convergence Culture Industry (22)

⁷⁴⁴ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (7)

⁷⁴⁵ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (8)

⁷⁴⁶ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (33)

⁷⁴⁷ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (139)

⁷⁴⁸ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (139)

⁷⁴⁹ Rafael Motamayor, “How Zack Snyder’s Justice League went from Myth to Mandate,” Observer, March 13, 2021 <https://observer.com/2021/03/zack-snyders-justice-league-changes-releasethe Snyder-cut/>

⁷⁵⁰ Aaron Couch, Borys Kit, “Secret ‘Batgirl’ Screenings Hit the Warner Bros Lot (Exclusive),” The Hollywood Reporter, Aug. 24, 2022 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/batgirl-canceled-hbo-max-film-gets-secret-screenings-1235205323/>

⁷⁵¹ Lewis White, “Zack Snyder Stole WB Materials, Egged on Bot-Filled Campaign and More Claims Report,” July 19, 2022 <https://stealthoptional.com/warner-bros/zack-snyder-stole-wb-materials-egged-on-bot-filled-campaign-and-more-claims-report/>

⁷⁵² “Warner Media’s Ann Sarnoff on the Future of DC Movies,” Superman Homepage, March 22, 2021, <https://www.supermanhomepage.com/warnermedias-ann-sarnoff-on-the-future-of-dc-movies/>

⁷⁵³ Legacy, Spencer, “Justice League 2 & 3 Are Zack Snyder’s Dream Story,” Super Hero Hype, May 12, 2023 <https://www.superherohype.com/movies/533842-justice-league-2-3-are-zack-snyders-dream-story>

⁷⁵⁴ Moore, Sam, “The ‘Ayer Cut’ Of Suicide Squad Exists, And Fans Won’t Stop Until It’s Released,” GQ Magazine, November 9, 2022 <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/culture/article/suicide-squad-ayer-cut>

⁷⁵⁵ Perine, Aaron, “DC Fans Demand Batman Vs Deathstroke After Seeing Justice League,” Comic Book, March 18, 2021 <https://comicbook.com/dc/news/justice-league-snyder-cut-batman-deathstroke-dc-fans-demand/>

⁷⁵⁶ Lindahl, Chris, “Why ‘Zack Snyder’s Justice League,’ Is Key to HBO Max’s Path to 150 Million Subscribers,” Indie Wire, March 17, 2021 <https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/zack-snyders-justice-league-hbo-max-subscribers-1234623883/>

⁷⁵⁷ Frankel, Daniel, “Jason Kilar: HBO Max Generates More Revenue Than Disney Plus,” Next TV, March 12, 2021 <https://www.nexttv.com/news/jason-kilar-hbo-max-generates-more-revenue-than-disney-plus>

⁷⁵⁸ D’Alessandro, Anthony, “Warner Bros Discovery CEO David Zaslav: ‘We Fully Embrace Theatrical,’” Deadline, Aug. 4, 2022 <https://deadline.com/2022/08/warner-bros-discovery-ceo-david-zaslav-theatrical-windows-1235085460/>

⁷⁵⁹ Heidi MacDonald, “DC Layoffs Reportedly a ‘Bloodbath,’” Comics Beat, August 10, 2020

<https://www.comicsbeat.com/dc-layoffs-reportedly-a-bloodbath/>

⁷⁶⁰ Johnston, Rich, “DC Comics Moving Offices Yet Again, To A “Hot Desk” Model, Bleeding

Cool, Feb. 28, 2022 <https://bleedingcool.com/comics/dc-comics-moving-office-hot-desk-model-superman-batman-justice-league-wonder-woman/>

⁷⁶¹ Jennifer Maas, “Discovery Closes Acquisitions of AT&T’s Warner Media,” Variety, April 8,

2022 <https://variety.com/2022/tv/news/discovery-warnermedia-merger-close-warner-bros-discovery-1235200983/>

⁷⁶² Matt McGloin, “Discovery Cleaning House as WarnerMedia Execs Depart in Bloodbath,”

Cosmic Book News, April 5, 2022 <https://cosmicbook.news/discovery-cleaning-house-wb-execs-kicked-curb>

⁷⁶³ Brent Lang, Matt Donnelly, “Warner Bros. Discovery Exploring Overhaul of DC

Entertainment,” April 14, 2022, <https://variety.com/2022/film/news/dc-warner-bros-discovery-zaslav-hbo-max-1235232185/>

⁷⁶⁴ Pierre Chanliau, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Sequel will be brought to Life as a Motion

Comic,” The Direct, July 9, 2021 <https://thedirect.com/article/justice-league-zack-snyder-sequels-comic>

⁷⁶⁵ Sean Gribbin, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Storyboards Turned into Motion Comic,”

CBR.com, July 10, 2021 <https://www.cbr.com/zack-snyders-justice-league-storyboards-motion-comic/>

⁷⁶⁶ “The Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic,” YouTube, July 20, 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxdeIISEjIw>

⁷⁶⁷ Nico Marrone, “Justice League 2 Motion Comic Fan Project Caught Tracing Art From Other Artists,” Screen Rant, July 18, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-2-motion-comic-art-stealing-accusation/>

⁷⁶⁸ Diffrient, David Scott. “Tweaking Art: The Art of Tweek: Aesthetic Desecration and the Politics of Possession in South Park,” in *Deconstructing South Park: Critical Examinations of Animated Transgression*, [Ed.] Brian Cogan. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012 (217)

⁷⁶⁹ Kunze, Peter. C. (2017), ‘Herding cats: or, the possibilities of unproduction studies’, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 80:80, pp. 18–31 (21)

⁷⁷⁰ Tushnet, Rebecca, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, C. Lee Harrington [Eds]. New York University Press, 2007 (78-79)

⁷⁷¹ Nico Marrone, “Justice League 2 Motion Comic Fan Project Caught Tracing Art From Other Artists,” Screen Rant, July 18, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/justice-league-2-motion-comic-art-stealing-accusation/>

⁷⁷² u/AldenbaranTauro, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic,” Reddit, July 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷³ Artur_ditu, Reddit, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic,” July 2021 https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁴ Dreyfussy15, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic,”
Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁵ Soft_appropriate, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion
Comic,” Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁶ DoctorBeatMaker, , “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion
Comic,” Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁷ u/AldenbaranTauro, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion
Comic,” Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁸ Rohithbobby, , “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion
Comic,” Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁷⁹ Mildoptimism, , “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion
Comic,” Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁸⁰ Ghusu123, “The Controversy with the Dreamscapes of Justice League: A Motion Comic,”
Reddit, July 2021,

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/on4lxx/discussion_the_controversy_with_the_dreamscapes/

⁷⁸¹ Franklin Clinton is back from the dead @theF_Clinton33, Twitter, July 17, 2021

⁷⁸² Brian Costello @BrianCostello, Twitter, July 17, 2021

⁷⁸³ Sergio Pereira, “The Bestselling Comic Book of All Time Isn’t Batman or Spider-Man,”

Fortress of Solitude, July 20, 2022 <https://www.fortressofsolitude.co.za/the-bestselling-comic-book-of-all-time-isnt-batman-or-spider-man/>

⁷⁸⁴ “Justice League Motion Comic CANCELLED,” PPF Weekly News, July 19, 2021

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_PZEgPZhqg

⁷⁸⁵ Josh Wilding, “JUSTICE LEAGUE Unofficial Unofficial Motion Comic Adapting Sequel Storyboards CANCELLED after Plagiarism Concerns,” Comic Book Movie.com, July 19, 2021

https://comicbookmovie.com/justice_league/justice-league-unofficial-motion-comic-adapting-sequel-storyboards-canceled-after-plagiarism-claims-a186550#gs.razagf

⁷⁸⁶ Russ Milheim, “Zack Snyder Responds to Justice League ‘Hit Piece;’ ‘If I Die, Avenge Me,’

The Direct, July 19, 2022 <https://thedirect.com/article/zack-snyder-justice-league-hit-piece>

⁷⁸⁷ Ryan Woods, “Zack Snyder Reacts to Justice League Bot Report With an Inflammatory

Image,” CBR, July 22, 2022 <https://www.cbr.com/zack-snyder-reacts-justice-league-bot-report-mussolini-quote/>

⁷⁸⁸ RorMachine, “Zack Snyder Under Fire for Quoting Mussolini While Promoting JUSTICE LEAGUE Digital Release,” *Comic Book Movie*, July 20, 2022

https://comicbookmovie.com/justice_league/zack-snyder-under-fire-for-quoting-mussolini-while-promoting-justice-league-digital-release-a194872#gs.a7j3rs

⁷⁸⁹ Olivia Storey, “Zack Snyder Uses Quote Popularized by Mussolini in Justice League Promotional Post,” *Game Rant*, July 21, 2022 <https://gamerant.com/zack-snyder-justice-league-benito-mussolini-quote-promo/>

⁷⁹⁰ Yang, Hsin-Yen., “The Pop Culture?: Online Fan Discourse and Youth Consciousness in Post-Authoritarian Taiwan.” *Critical discourse studies* 12, no. 1 (2015): 97–113 (108)

⁷⁹¹ Lopez, Lori. “Fan Activists and the Politics of Race in *The Last Airbender*.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 15.5 (2011): 431-445 (437)

⁷⁹² Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport , “Movement Societies and Digital Protest: Fan Activism and Other Nonpolitical Protest Online,” *Sociological theory* 27, no. 3 (2009): 220–243 (234)

⁷⁹³ Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport , “Movement Societies and Digital Protest” (220)

⁷⁹⁴ Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport , “Movement Societies and Digital Protest” (220)

⁷⁹⁵ Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport , “Movement Societies and Digital Protest” (222)

⁷⁹⁶ Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport , “Movement Societies and Digital Protest” (225)

⁷⁹⁷ Barthes, Roland, “The Death of the Author,” *Image, Music, Text*, 1977 142 – 148 (148)

⁷⁹⁸ Jenkins, Henry. “Superpowered Fans: The Many Worlds of San Diego’s Comic-Con.” *Boom* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 22–36 (25)

⁷⁹⁹ Jenkins, Henry. “Superpowered Fans,” *ibid* (28)

⁸⁰⁰ u/Marvin_Feigesese in r/CharacterRant subreddit, Feb. 17, 2022, 8:46AM

https://www.reddit.com/r/CharacterRant/comments/sursug/the_snyder_cult_has_got_to_be_the_worst_fandom_of/

⁸⁰¹ u/LeMoineSpectre in r/movies subreddit March 0 , 2021, 9:14AM

https://www.reddit.com/r/movies/comments/m19sk7/can_someone_please_explain_to_me_why_so_many/

⁸⁰² Pereira, Sergio, “The Restore the Snyderverse Movement Might’ve Ended the DCEU

Entirely,” Fortress of Solitude, Aug. 11, 2021 <https://www.fortressofsolitude.co.za/the-restore-the-snyderverse-movement-mightve-ended-the-dceu-entirely/>

⁸⁰³ Shoard, Catherine, “Zack Snyder: ‘I don’t have a rightwing political agenda. People see what they want to see,’” The Guardian, May 20, 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/may/20/zack-snyder-i-dont-have-a-rightwing-political-agenda-people-see-what-they-want-to-see>

⁸⁰⁴ Shoard, Catherine, “Zack Snyder,” ibid

⁸⁰⁵ Bush, George W., “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival – The South Lawn,” September 16, 2001, White House Archives.gov <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>

⁸⁰⁶ Leighton Grist, Fascism and Millennial American Cinema, Palgrave MacMillan: Winchester, UK, 2018 (218).

⁸⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, “The Islamic Republic at 31: Post-election Abuses Show Serious Human Rights Crisis,” February 10, 2010, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/02/11/islamic-republic-31/post-election-abuses-show-serious-human-rights-crisis>

⁸⁰⁸ Bosch, “‘Why So Serious?’ Threat, Authoritarianism, and Depictions of Crime, Law and Order in Batman Films,” *Ibid* (39).

⁸⁰⁹ Chris Yogerst. “Superhero Films: A Fascist National Complex or Exemplars of Moral Virtue?” *The Journal of Religion and Film* 21, no. 1 (2017): 1-34 (2).

⁸¹⁰ Chris Yogerst. “Superhero Films” (2).

⁸¹¹ SnyderCutBR, “Trecha da entrevista exclusive com Zack Snyder,” YouTube, Feb. 13, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORPUdEqoKBw>

⁸¹² Burton, Paul, “Eugenics, Infant Exposure, and the Enemy Within: A Pessimistic Reading of Zack Snyder’s 300,” in *Full: International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 24 (3), 2017 (309)

⁸¹³ Siegel, Tatiana “Exclusive: Fake Accounts Fueled the ‘Snyder Cut’ Online Army,” *Rolling Stone*, July 18, 2022 <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-features/justice-league-the-snyder-cut-bots-fans-1384231/>

⁸¹⁴ Cooper Hood, “Godzilla vs Kong gets review bombed by SnyderVerse fans angry with WB,” *Screen Rant*, March 28, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/godzilla-vs-kong-restore-snyderverse-wb-review-bomb/>

⁸¹⁵ Cooper Hood, “Godzilla vs Kong gets review bombed,” *ibid*

⁸¹⁶ Cooper Hood, “Godzilla vs Kong gets review bombed,” *ibid*

⁸¹⁷ Cooper Hood, “Godzilla vs Kong gets review bombed,” *ibid*

⁸¹⁸ Grant Hermanns, “Zack Snyder Addresses Godzilla vs. Kong Review Bombing Accusations,” *Screen Rant*, July 19, 2022 <https://screenrant.com/godzilla-vs-kong-review-bombing-zack-snyder-response/>

⁸¹⁹ Brian Cronin, “James Gunn Responds to Snyder Cut Fans Review-Bombing The Suicide Squad: ‘I’ll Live,’” CBR, Aug. 4, 2021 <https://www.cbr.com/james-gunn-suicide-squad-snyder-cut-review-bombing/>

⁸²⁰ Sharf, Zack, “Zachary Levi Agrees Many Zack Snyder Fans Are Happy Shazam 2 Failed, Says the Sequel’s Marketing Was ‘The Biggest Issue,’” Variety, March 21, 2023 <https://variety.com/2023/film/news/zachary-levi-shazam-2-box-office-bomb-marketing-zack-snyder-fans-1235560449/>

⁸²¹ u/Responsible_Neck_728 in r/SnyderCut, March 21, 2023, 3:37AM https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/11xc390/so_already_were_being_blamed_for_s_hazam_2s_box/

⁸²² u/boxingjazz in r/SnyderCut, March 21, 2023, 5:50AM https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/11xc390/so_already_were_being_blamed_for_s_hazam_2s_box/

⁸²³ Tassi, Paul, “There’s A Snyder Cut Joke In ‘Barbie’ And Fans Are Pre-Mad About It,” Forbes, July 17, 2023 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2023/07/17/theres-a-snyder-cut-joke-in-barbie-and-fans-are-pre-mad-about-it/?sh=468a0aa847c3>

⁸²⁴ Rebel Moon Ryan@Snyder_Cut_240, Twitter, July 16, 2023, 12:06PM https://twitter.com/Snyder_Cut_240/status/1680640015922089984?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1680640015922089984%7Ctwgr%5Eabf37f5ba633e5afc2abfd96980009391ebfad33%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fembedly.forbes.com%2Fwidgets%2Fmedia.html%3Ftype%3Dtext2Fhtmlkey%3D3ce26dc7e3454db5820ba084d28b4935schema%3Dtwitterurl%3Dhttps3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FSnyder_Cut_240%2Fstatus%2F1680640015922089984image%3Dhttps3A%2F%2Fi.embed.ly%2F1%2Fimage3Furl3Dhttps25

3A252F252Fabs.twimg.com252Ferrors252Flogo46x38.png26key3D3ce26dc7e3454db5820ba084d28b4935

⁸²⁵ CrypticMoogle@CrypticMoogle, Twitter, July 16, 2023, 10:17PM

<https://twitter.com/CrypticMoogle/status/1680793807791484929>

⁸²⁶ m@m83183161, Twitter, July 16, 2023, 11:08PM

<https://twitter.com/m83183161/status/1680806774541090817>

⁸²⁷ Denim chicken@pigeonboy88, Twitter, July 17, 2023, 8:49AM

<https://twitter.com/pigeonboy88/status/1680952795896184836>

⁸²⁸ Hunt, James, “Barbie’s Snyder Cut Joke Revealed – Why WB Mocks Its Own Movie,”

Screen Rant, July 21, 2023 <https://screenrant.com/barbie-movie-zack-snyder-justice-league-joke-explained/>

⁸²⁹ Johnson, Derek. “From the Ruins: Neomascularity, Media Franchising, and Struggles Over Industrial Reproduction of Culture.” *Communication, culture & critique* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 85–99 (93)

⁸³⁰ Johnson, Derek. “From the Ruins,” *ibid* (90)

⁸³¹ Johnson, Derek. “From the Ruins,” *ibid* (94)

⁸³² Hunt, James, “Barbie’s Snyder Cut Joke,” *ibid*

⁸³³ LeGardye, Quinci, “Every Reference and Easter Egg in the Barbie Movie, Explained,” Marie Claire, July 26, 2023 <https://www.marieclaire.com/culture/barbie-movie-references-easter-eggs/>

⁸³⁴ TheFilmJunkee, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League China Numbers are HUGE,” Youtube, May 13, 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VlgcNA-Mc8>

⁸³⁵ Show Flik Staff, “Justice League Snyder Cut Viewed over 250M Times in China, beating Avengers: Endgame,” May 8, 2021 <https://showflik.com/2021/05/snyder-cut-viewed-over-250m-times-in-china-beating-endgame-record/>

⁸³⁶ “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Gets 330M Views In China In 7 Days,” Viral Hare, May 13, 2021 <https://viralhare.com/zack-snyders-justice-league-gets-330m-view-in-china/>

⁸³⁷ Edward Lauder, “The Snyder Cut Crosses 400M views in China,” Small-Screen UK, May 18, 2021 <https://www.small-screen.co.uk/the-snyder-cut-crosses-400-million-views-in-china/>

⁸³⁸ George G.Q. Quitoriano, Quora “<https://www.quora.com/Did-the-Snyder-Cut-really-had-250M-views-in-China-if-thats-the-case-then-the-movie-has-earned-over-3-7B-at-the-least-making-it-the-highest-grossing-movie-of-all-time-then-why-is-in-not-on-the-list>

⁸³⁹ Tom Power, “Zack Snyder Criticizes International Distribution of Justice League,” IGN, Feb. 17, 2021 <https://www.ign.com/articles/zack-snyder-criticises-international-distribution-for-justice-league>

⁸⁴⁰ Campbell, Scott, “WB Reportedly Prevented Zack Snyder’s Justice League From Releasing In China,” April 12, 2021 <https://wegotthiscovered.com/movies/wb-reportedly-prevented-zack-snyders-justice-league-releasing-china/>

⁸⁴¹ Siegel, Tatiana “Exclusive: Fake Accounts Fueled the ‘Snyder Cut’ Online Army,” Rolling Stone, July 18, 2022 <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-features/justice-league-the-snyder-cut-bots-fans-1384231/>

⁸⁴² Tatiana Siegel, “Exclusive: Fake Accounts,” *ibid.*

⁸⁴³ Nick Romano, “Joss Whedon denies Ray Fisher’s claim that he digitally altered a Justice League actor’s skin tone,” Entertainment Weekly, July 2020 [Justice League: Joss Whedon denies Ray Fisher claim that he digitally altered actor's skin tone | EW.com](https://www.ew.com/joss-whedon-denies-ray-fisher-claim-digital-skin-tone/)

⁸⁴⁴ Sheraz Farooqi, “Ray Fisher Speaks Out on Toxic Set and Warner Media Investigation into Justice League Production,” Forbes, Oct 29, 2020 [Interview: Ray Fisher Speaks Out On “Toxic” Set And WarnerMedia Investigation Into Justice League Production \(forbes.com\)](#)

⁸⁴⁵ Sheraz Farooqi, “Ray Fisher Speaks Out on Toxic Set,” *ibid.*

⁸⁴⁶ Chris Begley, “Zack Snyder confirms Ryan Choi, aka Atom, was cut from ‘Justice League,’” Batman-News, Sept. 18, 2020 [Zack Snyder confirms Ryan Choi, aka Atom, was cut from 'Justice League' | Batman News \(batman-news.com\)](#)

⁸⁴⁷ Johns, Geoff and Jim Lee, Justice League #1: “Justice League: Part One,” November, 2011, DC Comics

⁸⁴⁸ Johns, Geoff and Jim Lee, Justice League #2: “Justice League: Part Two,” December 2011, DC Comics

⁸⁴⁹ Johns, Geoff and Tony S. Daniel, Justice League #13: “The Secret of the Cheetah, Part One,” December 2012, DC Comics

⁸⁵⁰ u/wet_bread3 in r/SnyderCut, Reddit, July 28, 3:34PM, 2023
https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/15bxxb5/cyborgs_arc_is_my_favorite_in_the_movies/

⁸⁵¹ u/dundai in r/SnyderCut, Reddit, July 28, 2:17PM, 2023
https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/15bxxb5/cyborgs_arc_is_my_favorite_in_the_movies/

⁸⁵² u/willpearson001 in r/SnyderCut, Reddit, July 28, 8:37AM, 2023
https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/15bxxb5/cyborgs_arc_is_my_favorite_in_the_movies/

⁸⁵³ u/[deleted] in in r/SnyderCut, Reddit, July 28, 10:51AM, 2023

https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/15bxxb5/cyborgs_arc_is_my_favorite_in_the_movies/

⁸⁵⁴ u/Infinite-Revenue97 in r/SnyderCut, Reddit, July 28, 10:16AM, 2023

https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/15bxxb5/cyborgs_arc_is_my_favorite_in_the_movies/

⁸⁵⁵ Richard B. Gregg, “The Ego Function of the Rhetoric of Protest,” in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest* by Charles E. Morris III and Stephen H. Browne [Eds.], Strata Publishing Inc., State College, Pennsylvania, 2001 (49)

⁸⁵⁶ Richard B. Gregg, “The Ego Function,” *ibid* (57).

⁸⁵⁷ Proctor, William. “‘Bitches Ain’t Gonna Hunt No Ghosts’: Totemic Nostalgia, Toxic Fandom and the Ghostbusters Platonic.” *Palabra-Clave* 20, no. 4 (2017): 1105–1141 (1120)

⁸⁵⁸ Scott, Suzanne, “Dawn of the Undead Author,” In *A Companion to Media Authorship* by Derek Johnson and Jonathan Gray [Eds.], Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 440–462 (443)

⁸⁵⁹ Fathallah, Judith. “‘Except That Joss Whedon Is God’: Fannish Attitudes to Statements of Author/ity.” *International journal of cultural studies* 19, no. 4 (2016): 459–476 (464)

⁸⁶⁰ Scott, Suzanne, “Dawn of the Undead Author,” In *A Companion to Media Authorship* by Derek Johnson and Jonathan Gray [Eds.], Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 440–462 (444)

⁸⁶¹ Gray, Jonathan, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and Other Media Paratexts*, New York: New York University Press, 2010 (113)

⁸⁶² Wexelblat, Alan, “An Auteur in the Age of the Internet: JMS, Babylon 5 and the Net,” in *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture* by Tara McPherson, Jane Shattuc, and Henry Jenkins III [Eds.], Duke University Press, 2003 (209)

⁸⁶³ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (57)

⁸⁶⁴ Swann, Eric, “How Zack Snyder Showed Support for DC’s Blue Beetle Movie,”

CinemaBlend, July 31, 2023 <https://www.cinemablend.com/superheroes/zack-snyder-showed-support-dcs-blue-beetle>

⁸⁶⁵ Leonte, Tudor, “Blue Beetle DC Universe: Is It Part of the New DCU?” ComingSoon.net,

August 1, 2023 <https://www.comingsoon.net/guides/news/1312948-blue-beetle-dc-universe-is-it-part-of-the-new-dcu>

⁸⁶⁶ Prasad, R.A. Karthik, “‘Supporting People I Care About’: Zack Snyder & David Ayer

Promote Blue Beetle, ZSJL Fans and Ayer Cut Followers Clash With Detractors for Reaction to

DC Studios’ First Film, Angel Manuel Soto Says He Is A Snyder Fan,” Pursue News, July 31,

2023 [https://pursuenews.com/supporting-people-zack-snyder-david-ayer-promote-blue-beetle-](https://pursuenews.com/supporting-people-zack-snyder-david-ayer-promote-blue-beetle-zsjl-fans-ayer-cut-react-clash-with-detractors-for-reaction-to-dc-studios-first-film-angel-manuel-soto/)

[zsjl-fans-ayer-cut-react-clash-with-detractors-for-reaction-to-dc-studios-first-film-angel-manuel-soto/](https://pursuenews.com/supporting-people-zack-snyder-david-ayer-promote-blue-beetle-zsjl-fans-ayer-cut-react-clash-with-detractors-for-reaction-to-dc-studios-first-film-angel-manuel-soto/)

⁸⁶⁷ Chitwood, Adam “Zack Snyder Fans Victorious (Again) With Oscars Cheer-Worthy Moment

for ‘Justice League’ The Wrap, March 27, 2022 [https://www.thewrap.com/zack-snyders-justice-](https://www.thewrap.com/zack-snyders-justice-league-oscars-cheer-worthy-moment/)

[league-oscars-cheer-worthy-moment/](https://www.thewrap.com/zack-snyders-justice-league-oscars-cheer-worthy-moment/)

⁸⁶⁸ r/DC Cinematic, Reddit, July 19, 2022

[https://preview.redd.it/mk7emacgkkc91.jpg?width=1040&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=acc0afb](https://preview.redd.it/mk7emacgkkc91.jpg?width=1040&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=acc0afbcc74ffd53e4ba30d3dd4b7f71368beb60)
[cc74ffd53e4ba30d3dd4b7f71368beb60](https://preview.redd.it/mk7emacgkkc91.jpg?width=1040&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=acc0afbcc74ffd53e4ba30d3dd4b7f71368beb60)

⁸⁶⁹ r/DC Cinematic, Reddit, July 19, 2022

[https://preview.redd.it/agaul25hkcc91.jpg?width=1493&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=fd67f7bb6](https://preview.redd.it/agaul25hkcc91.jpg?width=1493&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=fd67f7bb66e9c3fe7d7c15e690d821f1bf0ca986)
[6e9c3fe7d7c15e690d821f1bf0ca986](https://preview.redd.it/agaul25hkcc91.jpg?width=1493&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=fd67f7bb66e9c3fe7d7c15e690d821f1bf0ca986)

⁸⁷⁰ r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, July 19, 2022

<https://preview.redd.it/panzkjtgkkc91.jpg?width=1080&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=95b939f1d0a6e753af28eed23d24b1432dfbf3b4>

⁸⁷¹ Nebens, Richard “Zack Snyder’s Justice League Announces Surprising Digital Release,” *The Direct* June 29, 2022 <https://thedirect.com/article/justice-league-zack-snyder-digital-release>

⁸⁷² Cleg @Cleg82917068, Twitter, July 18, 2022

⁸⁷³ Kidkryptonite #ZackSnyderJusticeLeague @KIDKRYPTONITE, Twitter, July 18, 2022

<https://twitter.com/KIDKRYPTONITE/status/1549258451007770624/photo/1>

⁸⁷⁴ Smith, Chris @cmsdrums, Twitter, July 18, 2022

<https://twitter.com/cmsdrums/status/1549268701651898368>

⁸⁷⁵ Baramos_, r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, July 19, 2022

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/w2zyn2/comment/igupk16/

⁸⁷⁶ Jaime Aguilas @jaimeaguilas, Twitter, July 18, 2022

<https://twitter.com/jaimeaguilas/status/1549295992230510593>

⁸⁷⁷ Films that Rock, “Black Adam: Comic Con 2022 Full Panel,” YouTube, July 24, 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzEkRbyEMo4>

⁸⁷⁸ Rebekah Barton, “Wildly Popular Dwayne Johnson Unexpectedly Gets Booed by Fans,”

Inside The Magic, July 23, 2022 <https://insidethemagic.net/2022/07/dwayne-johnson-booed-by-fans-san-diego-comic-con-rwb1/>

⁸⁷⁹ Zack Snyder, Vero, July 20, 2022 <https://vero.co/zacksnyder/b-DfC4xpvKcB34hdJxB4cDWj>

⁸⁸⁰ One Take News @OneTakeNews, Twitter, July 21, 2022 [https://www.themarysue.com/dcs-](https://www.themarysue.com/dcs-jim-lee-says-no-more-snyderverse-at-sdcc-2022-following-rolling-stone-report/)

[jim-lee-says-no-more-snyderverse-at-sdcc-2022-following-rolling-stone-report/](https://www.themarysue.com/dcs-jim-lee-says-no-more-snyderverse-at-sdcc-2022-following-rolling-stone-report/)

⁸⁸¹ Ryan Parker, “Zack Snyder to Guest Star on ‘Teen Titans Go!’” *The Hollywood Reporter*, July 23, 2020 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/teen-titans-go-zack-snyder-guest-star-1235184953/>

⁸⁸² Graeme Guttamn, “Zack Snyder Doesn’t Want to Make Another Comic Book Movie,” *Screen Rant*, March 18, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/zack-snyder-comic-book-movie-future-plans-response/>

⁸⁸³ Graeme Guttamn, “Zack Snyder Doesn’t Want to Make Another Comic Book Movie,” *Screen Rant*, March 18, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/zack-snyder-comic-book-movie-future-plans-response/>

⁸⁸⁴ Sean O’Connell, *Release the Snyder Cut: The Crazy True Story Behind The Fight That Saved Zack Snyder’s Justice League*, Applause Theater & Cinema Books, Guilford: CT, 2021 (20)

⁸⁸⁵ Fukujang0627, Twitter, Nov. 21, 2017
<https://twitter.com/fukujang0627/status/933087365832118272?s=11>

⁸⁸⁶ Sean O’Connell, *Release the Snyder Cut: The Crazy True Story Behind The Fight That Saved Zack Snyder’s Justice League*, Applause Theater & Cinema Books, Guilford: CT, 2021 (58)

⁸⁸⁷ Sean O’Connell, *Ibid* (105)

⁸⁸⁸ Sean O’Connell, *Ibid* (82)

⁸⁸⁹ Sean O’Connell, *Ibid* (110)

⁸⁹⁰ Sean O’Connell, *Ibid* (118)

⁸⁹¹ “Warner Bros Zack Snyder Director and Tom Holkenborg Score for Home Release,” *Change.org* <https://www.change.org/p/warner-bros-zack-snyder-s-director-s-and-tom-olkenborg-s-score-for-home-release-e90fef07-11c6-4a9a-9ae8-375c7717dafa>

⁸⁹² “Joint Statement on Behalf of DC Fandom,” *Comic Book Debate*

<https://comicbookdebate.com/2018/05/09/joint-statement-on-behalf-of-the-dc-fandom/>

⁸⁹³ Aaron Mamitt, “Twitter is Banned in China, so how does it have 10 million users there?”

Tech Times Magazine, July 16, 2016

<https://www.techtimes.com/articles/168607/20160706/twitter-is-banned-in-china-so-how-does-it-have-10-million-users-there.htm>

⁸⁹⁴ HBO Max, “Zack Snyder’s Justice League – DC Fandome Panel,” YouTube, August 23,

2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNErN6Kry4k>

⁸⁹⁵ Kousik_K, “r/Snyder Cut – What Happened to Fiona Zheng?” May 23, 2021, Reddit,

https://www.reddit.com/r/SnyderCut/comments/njlimy/what_happened_to_fiona_zheng/

⁸⁹⁶ “Suicide Squad,” Rotten Tomatoes, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/suicide_squad_2016

⁸⁹⁷ “Suicide Squad Awards,” IMDB https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1386697/awards/?ref_=tt_awd

⁸⁹⁸ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, July 29, 2021

https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1420826069939023882?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1420826069939023882%7Ctwgr%5E1b865dbe2b245fe50968a759d3fefac7899c7acb%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vanityfair.com%2Fhollywood%2F2021%2F08%2Fsuicide-squad-actors-support-theoretical-release-of-david-ayers-directors-cut

⁸⁹⁹ Shanfeld, Ethan, “David Ayer Slams Studio Cut of ‘Suicide Squad,’ Praises James Gunn’s

New Movie,” Variety, July 19, 2021 <https://variety.com/2021/film/news/david-ayer-suicide-squad-directors-cut-1235030787/>

⁹⁰⁰ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, March 25, 2020

https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1264976357718515719?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ct

[wcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1264976357718515719%7Ctwgr%5E7555330a0cb7f454ccf0125207b9a50ba4ec3fff%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fcomicbookmovie.com%2Fsuicide-squad%2Fsuicide-squad-david-ayer-says-his-cut-would-be-easy-to-complete-after-edward-scissorhands-treatment-a175606](https://www.fox.com/entertainment/2021/10/22/warner-bros-says-no-to-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad/)

⁹⁰¹ White, David, “Warner Bros. Says No To The Ayer Cut of Suicide Squad,” Empire, Oct. 22, 2021 <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/news/warner-bros-says-no-to-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad/>

⁹⁰² Hibberd, James, “David Ayer Blasts ‘Suicide Squad’: ‘The Studio Cut Is Not My Movie,’” Hollywood Reporter, July 29, 2021 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/suicide-squad-david-ayer-warner-bros-1234990360/>

⁹⁰³ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter July 29, 2021 https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1420826069939023882?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1420826069939023882%7Ctwgr%5Ef880a446eb7655a309bc19a2f70559222db7ae53%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fvariety.com%2F2021%2Ffilm%2Fnews%2Fdavid-ayer-suicide-squad-directors-cut-1235030787%2F

⁹⁰⁴ David Ayer@DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 20, 2022 https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1527722900303843330?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1527722900303843330%7Ctwgr%5Eca2ba4e4a48cb8e07f857ceb90e4c72cf892650%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fdavid-ayer-says-his-suicide-squad-cut-needs-no-reshoots%2F

⁹⁰⁵ David Ayer@DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 20, 2022 https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1527723063885938688?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1527723063885938688%7Ctwgr%5Eca2ba4e4a48cb8e

[07f857cebf90e4c72cf892650%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2F](https://www.movieweb.com/david-ayer-says-his-suicide-squad-cut-needs-no-reshoots/)
[david-ayer-says-his-suicide-squad-cut-needs-no-reshoots%2F](https://www.movieweb.com/david-ayer-says-his-suicide-squad-cut-needs-no-reshoots/)

⁹⁰⁶ Sharma, Abishek, “David Ayer Says his Suicide Squad needs no reshoots,” *MovieWeb*, May 21, 2022 <https://www.movieweb.com/david-ayer-says-his-suicide-squad-cut-needs-no-reshoots/>

⁹⁰⁷ Dick, Jeremy, “Suicide Squad Director’s Cut Isn’t Happening, Director Asks Warner Media ‘Why?’” *MovieWeb*, March 22, 2021 <https://www.movieweb.com/suicide-squad-ayer-cut-not-happening-director-response/>

⁹⁰⁸ Dick, Jeremy, “Suicide Squad Director’s Cut Isn’t Happening, Director Asks Warner Media ‘Why?’” *ibid*

⁹⁰⁹ Salter, Anastasia. “RelationshipGoals? Suicide Squad and Fandom’s Love of ‘Problematic’ Men.” *Television & new media* 21, no. 2 (2020): 135–150 (142)

⁹¹⁰ Dick, Jeremy, “Suicide Squad Director Keeps Ayer Cut Hope Alive: I Made an Amazing Movie,” *MovieWeb*, March 30, 2021

⁹¹¹ Sen, Sanghita, “Ghatak in the Shadows: Films that Struggled,” in *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* by James Fenwick, Kieran Foster and David Eldridge, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (110)

⁹¹² Ayer, David @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 30, 2020
https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1266741929464614913?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1266741929464614913%7Ctwgr%5E4a56cf03fbd571186a0a5fb04686629ba6ccd1e1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fsuicide-squad-david-ayer-cut-joker-comparison%2F

⁹¹³ Ayer, David @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 30, 2020

[https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1266804402112786432?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1266804402112786432%7Ctwgr%5E4a56cf03fbd571186a0a5fb04686629ba6ccd1e1%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fsuicide-squad-david-ayer-cut-joker-comparison%2F](https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1266804402112786432?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1266804402112786432%7Ctwgr%5E4a56cf03fbd571186a0a5fb04686629ba6ccd1e1%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fsuicide-squad-david-ayer-cut-joker-comparison%2F)

⁹¹⁴ Ayer, David @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 24, 2020

[https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1264614967535218693?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1264614967535218693%7Ctwgr%5E95802e7b9d04b42e1ad71a2b0a9d12bcaff981f6%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fsuicide-squad-ayer-cut%2F](https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1264614967535218693?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1264614967535218693%7Ctwgr%5E95802e7b9d04b42e1ad71a2b0a9d12bcaff981f6%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmovieweb.com%2Fsuicide-squad-ayer-cut%2F)

⁹¹⁵ Kim, Brendan, “David Ayer Teases Cut Joker Scene in New Suicide Squad Movie Photos,” September 20, 2021 <https://screenrant.com/suicide-squad-david-ayer-cut-joker-scene-photos/>

⁹¹⁶ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, Aug. 14, 4:44pm

<https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1426645929814224897>

⁹¹⁷ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, Jan 21, 2017

https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/822948443110842369?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

⁹¹⁸ Tinoco, Armando, “Suicide Squad Director David Ayer on Joker Differences Between His Vision & Studio’s Cut,” Deadline, Dec. 17, 2023 <https://deadline.com/2023/12/suicide-squad-director-david-ayer-joker-differences-studio-cut-1235671058/>

⁹¹⁹ u/Blu_Soldier001, “Other: Joker Strikes a Deal with Enchantress in the Ayer Cut,” in r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/p4avwv/other_joker_strikes_a_deal_with_enchantress_in/

⁹²⁰ u/FuckingMidnighter, r/DCFilm, Reddit, Friday, Aug. 14, 2021

https://www.reddit.com/r/DCFilm/comments/p3w4fb/some_scripts_and_image_leaks_for_the_a_yer_cut/

⁹²¹ u/razorspades, r/DCFilm, Reddit, Friday, Aug. 14, 2021

https://www.reddit.com/r/DCFilm/comments/p3w4fb/some_scripts_and_image_leaks_for_the_a_yer_cut/

⁹²² u/Comics-and-video-game, r/DCFilm, Reddit, Friday, Aug. 13, 2021

https://www.reddit.com/r/DCFilm/comments/p3w4fb/some_scripts_and_image_leaks_for_the_a_yer_cut/

⁹²³ Dini, Paul, Yvel Guichet and Alex Ross, Batman: Harley Quinn #1, DC Comics, Aug. 11,

1999 <https://www.dcuniverseinfinite.com/comics/book/batman-harley-quinn-1/2ed9ce22-a82c-4a77-ad16-77158984ab65>

⁹²⁴ u/SunnyHFR, “Discussion: Steppenwolf Arrives at the End of David Ayer’s Suicide Squad, For Real???” r/DC_Cinematic, Reddit, May 17, 2021

https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/ne73gj/discussion_steppenwolf_arrives_at_the_end_of/

⁹²⁵ Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney, The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses, *Social Text* 79, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 2004 101-115 (102)

⁹²⁶ Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney, The University and the Undercommons, *ibid* (101)

⁹²⁷ Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney, The University and the Undercommons, *ibid* (102)

⁹²⁸ Sandvoss, Cornell, “The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and Study of Texts in Popular Culture,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornell Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (39)

-
- ⁹²⁹ Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington - Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (11)
- ⁹³⁰ Sandvoss, Cornell, "The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and Study of Texts in Popular Culture," *ibid* (34)
- ⁹³¹ Gilbert, Ann, "Live From Hall H: Fan/Producer Symbiosis at San Diego Comic-Con," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (368)
- ⁹³² Couldry, The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age, New York: Routledge, 2000 (20)
- ⁹³³ Scott, Suzanne, Fake Geek Girls (36)
- ⁹³⁴ Parisi, Paula, "Suicide Squad Trailer Music Hits High Note," *Max the Trax: Music for Film, Television and Games*, Aug. 27, 2015 <https://maxthetrax.com/2015/08/27/suicide-squad-trailer-music-hits-high-note/>
- ⁹³⁵ Rotten Tomatoes Trailers, "Suicide Squad Comic-Con Trailer (2016) – Jared Leto, Will Smith – DC Comics Movie," July 13, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WI3hecGO_04
- ⁹³⁶ Warner Bros Pictures, "Suicide Squad Official Trailer 1 [HD]," YouTube, Jan 19, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmRih_VtVAs
- ⁹³⁷ Warner Bros Pictures, "Suicide Squad Official Trailer 1 [HD]," YouTube, Jan 19, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmRih_VtVAs
- ⁹³⁸ [@gmsthisvilekingdom3390](#), "Suicide Squad Comic-Con Trailer (2016) – Jared Leto, Will Smith – DC Comics Movie," July 13, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WI3hecGO_04

⁹³⁹ @tarunjangir8460, “Suicide Squad Official Trailer 1 [HD],” YouTube Warner Bros Pictures, “Suicide Squad Official Trailer 1 [HD],” YouTube, Jan 19, 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmRih_VtVAs

⁹⁴⁰ Alliance of Women Film Journalists, “2022 EDA Awards Nominees,” <https://awfj.org/eda-awards-2/2022-eda-awards-categories/2022-eda-awards-nominees/>

⁹⁴¹ “Golden Schmoes Awards,” IMDB, <https://www.imdb.com/event/ev0003023/2016/1/>

⁹⁴² DNA India, “Margot Robbie defends David Ayer amid controversy over ‘sexist’ portrayal of Harley Quinn,” DNA India, Aug. 4, 2016 <https://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-margot-robbie-defends-david-ayer-amid-controversy-over-sexist-portrayal-of-harley-quinn-2241091>

⁹⁴³ Stolworthy, Jacob “Suicide Squad director David Ayer defends himself from claims he sexualized Harley Quinn,” The Independent, May 11, 2020 <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/suicide-squad-david-ayer-harley-quinn-sexualised-birds-of-prey-twitter-a9508626.html>

⁹⁴⁴ David Ayer @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, May 7, 2020 <https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1258507981043322880>

⁹⁴⁵ Stolworthy, Jacob “Suicide Squad director David Ayer defends himself from claims he sexualized Harley Quinn,” The Independent, May 11, 2020 <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/suicide-squad-david-ayer-harley-quinn-sexualised-birds-of-prey-twitter-a9508626.html>

⁹⁴⁶ @CutAyer, July 28, 2020, 7:29pm, Twitter https://twitter.com/CutAyer/status/1288285449023193088?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1288285449023193088%7Ctwgr%5E0a3fdbf9517d6e5819c6dd8

[ca025332882cb1c33%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheculturednerd.org%2F20%2F09%2Fdc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad%2F](https://ca025332882cb1c33%7Ctwcon%5Es1%20%2F09%2Fdc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad%2F)

⁹⁴⁷ @DarkKnightsFan, July 28, 2020, 10:16pm, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/DarkKnightsFan/status/1288327559285891075>

⁹⁴⁸ @EngrMSSQ, July 29, 2020, 3:06am, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/EngrMSSQ/status/1288400619007610881>

⁹⁴⁹ @Rocket2424, March 10, 2021, 5:15pm, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/Rockett2424/status/1369804106689249282>

⁹⁵⁰ @Ericmeisn, January 18, 2021, 9:54pm, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/Ericmeisn/status/1351392644249780226>

⁹⁵¹ @Shreya34613319, July 29, 2020, 1:26pm

<https://twitter.com/Shreya24613319/status/1288375203702005760>

⁹⁵² @_JessicaBlake, July 28, 2020, 9:05pm

<https://twitter.com/JessicaBlake/status/1288309640858673153>

⁹⁵³ @ItsDylanMegaw, July 29, 2020, 6:26pm

<https://twitter.com/JessicaBlake/status/1288309640858673153>

⁹⁵⁴ @veerumech, July 28, 8:07pm, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/veerumech/status/1288294968230998016>

⁹⁵⁵ Marx, Nick, "Expanding The Brand: Race, Gender, and the Post-politics of Representation on Comedy Central," *Television & New Media*, 17 (3), 2016, 272-287 (277)

⁹⁵⁶ @CutAyer, August 17, 2020, 4:55pm, Twitter

https://twitter.com/CutAyer/status/1295494457677066240?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1295494457677066240%7Ctwgr%5E0a3fdb9517d6e5819c6dd8

[ca025332882cb1c33%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheculturednerd.org%2F2020%2F09%2Fdc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad%2F](https://www.theculturednerd.org/2020/09/25/dc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad/)

⁹⁵⁷ @CutAyer, September 27, 2020, 5:04pm, Twitter

https://twitter.com/CutAyer/status/1303106835751157760?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1303106835751157760%7Ctwgr%5E0a3fdb9517d6e5819c6dd8

[ca025332882cb1c33%7Ctwcon%5Es1 &ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheculturednerd.org%2F2020%2F09%2Fdc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad%2F](https://www.theculturednerd.org/2020/09/25/dc-actors-voice-their-support-for-the-release-of-the-ayer-cut-of-suicide-squad/)

⁹⁵⁸ @DCJustice5, September 7, 2020, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/DCJustice5/status/1303126676885237761>

⁹⁵⁹ @Damaged_Joker, September 10, 2020, 12:31pm, Twitter,

https://twitter.com/Damaged_Joker/status/1304125277988061185

⁹⁶⁰ Happy Sad Confused Podcast, “Margot Robbie & Finn Cole & Miles Joris-Peyrafitte,” Megaphone.com, November 18, 2020

<https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/happysadconfused?page=2&selected=VIA2386213791>

⁹⁶¹ @Variety, “Jared Leto Says Release the Ayer Cut,” Twitter, November 18, 2021

<https://twitter.com/variety/status/1461568198764072961>

⁹⁶² Dick, Jeremy, “Suicide Squad Star Jared Leto wants ‘The Ayer Cut’ Released,” *MovieWeb*, November 20, 2021, <https://movieweb.com/suicide-squad-jared-letto-ayer-cut-released/>

⁹⁶³ Lund, Anthony, “Suicide Squad’s Will Smith Endorses The Release of the Ayer Cut,” *MovieWeb*, February 12, 2022

⁹⁶⁴ @Variety, “Will Smith wants to #ReleaseTheAyerCut,” Twitter, February 9, 2022

<https://twitter.com/Variety/status/1491634395400179720>

⁹⁶⁵ Vary, Adam B. and Brent Lang, “From ‘Batgirl’ Fallout to Rebooting ‘Superman’: All the Landmines Facing the Next DC Chief, *Variety*, August 29, 2022

<https://variety.com/2022/film/news/batgirl-ezra-miller-superman-next-dc-head-warner-bros-discovery-1235353666/>

⁹⁶⁶ Augustine, JB, “Heir Apparent to DC Films Calls SnyderVerse Fans ‘bots,’” *Bounding Into Comics*, Sept. 6, 2022, <https://boundingintocomics.com/2022/09/06/heir-apparent-to-dc-films-dan-lin-calls-snyderverse-fans-bots/>

⁹⁶⁷ Jane, Emma A. (2019). Hating 3.0: Should Anti-Fan Studies Be Renewed for Another Season? In *Anti-Fandom: Dislike and Hate in the Digital Age* by Melissa Click [Ed., New York: New York University Press, 42-61 (57)

⁹⁶⁸ Snyder, Zack, @ZackSnyder, July 30, 9:52AM, Twitter/X
<https://twitter.com/ZackSnyder/status/1685679745617539074>

⁹⁶⁹ @sarebstare, November 5, 2022, 3: 28pm, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/sarebstare/status/1589006875139637249/photo/1>

⁹⁷⁰ ScottDC27, November 5, 7:30am, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/ScottDC27/status/1588886410307801090/photo/1>

⁹⁷¹ @sarebstare, November 5, 2022, 1:14pm, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/sarebstare/status/1588973009427390464>

⁹⁷² @DavidAyerMovies, March 18, 2022, 8:53pm, Twitter
https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1505014461995790340?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1505014461995790340%7Ctwgr%5Eed97a23f2bae4a87729f164f5ff08cf539f81e25%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%26ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbr.com%2Ffans-commission-airplane-restore-snyderverse-ayer-cut-message%2F

⁹⁷³ Busse, Kristina, “Intimate Intertextuality and Performative Fragments in Media Fiction,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (53)

⁹⁷⁴ Busse, Kristina, “Intimate Intertextuality and Performative Fragments in Media Fiction,” (50)

⁹⁷⁵ Lang, Brent, “Toby Emmerich Named Warner Bros. Chief Content Officer, Greg Silverman Ousted,” *Variety*, December 14, 2016 <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/toby-emmerich-named-warner-bros-chief-content-officer-greg-silverman-ousted-1201942510/>

⁹⁷⁶ @RTAyerCutSS, October 31, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/RTSnyderCut/status/1587116264723554306/photo/1>

⁹⁷⁷ @RTAyerCutSS, November 5, 6:00am, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/RTAyerCutSS/status/1588863729143525377>

⁹⁷⁸ @RTSnyderCutSS, November 4, 2022, 9:36pm, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/RTAyerCutSS/status/1588736907025915906>

⁹⁷⁹ Hills, Matt, “Media Academics and Media Audiences: Aesthetic Judgements in Media and Cultural Studies,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and Lee Harrington [Eds.] (73)

⁹⁸⁰ @RTSnyderCut, November 5, 12:09pm, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/RTSnyderCut/status/1588948068572925953/photo/2>

⁹⁸¹ @RTSnyderCut, November 5, 2022, 11:35am, Twitter
<https://twitter.com/RTSnyderCut/status/1588948068572925953/photo/1>

⁹⁸² @dara_solano, November 6, 2022, Twitter
https://twitter.com/dara_solano/status/1589227144345169921/photo/1

⁹⁸³ @jay_hernandez, November 6, 2022, 7:22pm, Twitter

https://twitter.com/jay_hernandez/status/1589443267065942024

⁹⁸⁴ @Alii_772, November 6, 2022, 6:03am, Twitter

https://twitter.com/Alii_772/status/1589241996623110146/photo/1

⁹⁸⁵ @owen89ZZ, November 6, 2022, 6:01am

<https://twitter.com/owen89ZZ/status/1589241534310150144/photo/1>

⁹⁸⁶ @ShawnOfTheBat, November 6, 2022, 6:02am

<https://twitter.com/ShawnOfTheBat/status/1589241773179965441>

⁹⁸⁷ @treystar679, November 6, 2022, 6:03am, Twitter

<https://twitter.com/treystar679/status/1589242117939163136/photo/1>

⁹⁸⁸ Haring, Bruce, “James Gunn Tells DC Fans Clamoring for ‘Legends of Tomorrow’ and ‘Suicide Squad’ David Ayer Cut: “We Are Listening And Open To Everything,” Deadline, November 6, 2022 <https://deadline.com/2022/11/james-gunn-tells-dc-fans-we-are-listening-and-open-to-everything-1235165024/>

⁹⁸⁹ Anonymous, November 7, 2022, 3:36am, in Haring, Bruce, “James Gunn Tells DC Fans Clamoring for ‘Legends of Tomorrow’ and ‘Suicide Squad’ David Ayer Cut: “We Are Listening And Open To Everything,” Deadline, November 6, 2022 <https://deadline.com/2022/11/james-gunn-tells-dc-fans-we-are-listening-and-open-to-everything-1235165024/>

⁹⁹⁰ Couch, Aaron and Borys Kit, “Henry Cavill Confirms He Is ‘Back as Superman,’ for Future DC Movies,” The Hollywood Reporter, Oct. 24, 2022 <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/superman-henry-cavill-back-black-adam-1235185234/>

⁹⁹¹ Couch, Aaron, “Henry Cavill Looking Forward to Story With an ‘Enormously Joyful’ Superman,” The Hollywood Reporter, Oct. 26, 2022

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/henry-cavill-talks-superman-return-black-adam-cameo-1235249444/>

⁹⁹² D’Alessandro, Anthony, “DC Films Boss Walter Hamada Has Departed Studio As Warner Bros Discovery Finalizes Exit: The Dish, Deadline, Oct. 19, 2022

<https://deadline.com/2022/10/dc-films-boss-walter-hamada-warner-discovery-david-zaslav-1235149111/>

⁹⁹³ Sheikh, Shamsullaqa, “‘Starting my day with a smile,’ : After Walter Hamada’s Exit and Henry Cavill’s Return, Gal Gadot Drops Cryptic Post Slyly Celebrating Return of SnyderVerse,”

Fandom Wire, Oct. 19, 2022 <https://fandomwire.com/starting-my-day-with-a-smile-after-walter-hamadas-exit-and-henry-cavills-return-gal-gadot-drops-cryptic-post-slyly-celebrating-return-of-snyderverse/>

⁹⁹⁴ @miroslavmilokov, Twitter, 6:26AM, Nov 22, 2022

<https://twitter.com/miroslavmilakov/status/1595061162223312904>

⁹⁹⁵ @DavidAyerMovies, Twitter, 7:21AM, Nov 22, 2022

<https://twitter.com/DavidAyerMovies/status/1595075090487525376>

⁹⁹⁶ @JamesGunn, Twitter, 8:43AM, Nov 22, 2022

<https://twitter.com/JamesGunn/status/1595095609094340608>

⁹⁹⁷ Kit, Borys, “Patty Jenkins’ ‘Wonder Woman 3’ Not Moving Forward as DC Movies Hit Turning Point,” The Hollywood Reporter, Dec. 7, 2022

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-features/wonder-woman-3-not-moving-forward-dc-movies-1235276804/>

⁹⁹⁸ @JamesGunn, Twitter, Dec. 19, 2022, 11:57AM

<https://twitter.com/JamesGunn/status/1604929008319070208>

⁹⁹⁹ Taylor, Chloe, “Henry Cavill sacked as Superman by new DC Studios chiefs – just weeks after being told to announce his return,” Fortune, Dec. 15, 2022

<https://fortune.com/2022/12/15/henry-cavill-sacked-as-superman-by-new-dc-studios-chiefs-james-gunn-peter-safran/>

¹⁰⁰⁰ Tassi, Paul, “Henry Cavill’s ‘Deal’ To Return to DC as Superman was reportedly just a verbal agreement,” Forbes, Dec. 18, 2022

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/paultassi/2022/12/18/henry-cavills-deal-to-return-to-dc-as-superman-was-reportedly-just-a-verbal-agreement/?sh=7868733ffe7b>

¹⁰⁰¹ Anderson, Julia, “#FireJamesGunn trends following Henry Cavill’s Superman cancellation,” CBR, Dec. 15, 2022 <https://www.cbr.com/firejamesgunn-trends-henry-cavill-superman-cancellation/>

¹⁰⁰² Vera, Amir, “Henry Cavill says he will not return as Superman,” CNN, Dec. 15, 2022

¹⁰⁰³ u/lallba in r/moviefanclub, “Normal Fan Reaction,” RedditDec. 23, 2022, 10:14AM

https://www.reddit.com/r/moviefanclub/comments/ztmrp6/normal_fan_reaction/

¹⁰⁰⁴ u/Player2LightWater in r/dccomicscirclejerk, Reddit, Dec. 23, 2022, 2:41 AM

https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most_mentally_stable_snyder_fan/

¹⁰⁰⁵ u/Alive-Ad-4164 in r/dccomicscirclejerk, Reddit, Dec. 23, 2022, 8:56AM

https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most_mentally_stable_snyder_fan/

¹⁰⁰⁶ u/xenogamer4351 in r/dccomicscirclejerk, Reddit, Dec. 23, 2022, 8:52AM

[https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most mentally stable snyder fan](https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most_mentally_stable_snyder_fan)

/

¹⁰⁰⁷ u/T-MONZ_GCU in r/dccomicscirclejerk, Reddit, Dec. 23, 2022, 1:16PM

[https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most mentally stable snyder fan](https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most_mentally_stable_snyder_fan)

/

¹⁰⁰⁸ u/Sob_Rock in in r/dccomicscirclejerk, Reddit, Dec. 23, 2022, 9:34AM

[https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most mentally stable snyder fan](https://www.reddit.com/r/dccomicscirclejerk/comments/ztjffo/most_mentally_stable_snyder_fan)

/

¹⁰⁰⁹ Chrysostomou, George, “10 Worst Things About The DC Fandom,” CBR, June 10, 2023

<https://www.cbr.com/dc-fandom-worst-things/#not-acknowledging-tv-shows>

¹⁰¹⁰ Jane, Emma A. (2019). Hating 3.0: Should Anti-Fan Studies Be Renewed for Another Season? In *Anti-Fandom: Dislike and Hate in the Digital Age* by Melissa Click [Ed., New York: New York University Press, 42-61 (52)

¹⁰¹¹ u/_H3LLF1R3 in r/marvelmemes, Reddit, Dec. 23, 5:19AM

[https://www.reddit.com/r/marvelmemes/comments/ztdxgj/only james gunn can do it/](https://www.reddit.com/r/marvelmemes/comments/ztdxgj/only_james_gunn_can_do_it/)

¹⁰¹² @JamesGunn, Dec. 19, 2022, 11:57AM

<https://twitter.com/JamesGunn/status/1604929012790239232>

¹⁰¹³ @JamesGunn, Dec. 19, 2022, 11:57AM

<https://twitter.com/JamesGunn/status/1604929011280252928>

¹⁰¹⁴ @JamesRaxs, Dec 19, 2022, 7:16PM

<https://twitter.com/JamesRaxz/status/1604982576401485824>

¹⁰¹⁵ @gioursoberke, January 16, 2022, 11:38AM, <https://mobile.twitter.com/snyderqueen>

¹⁰¹⁶ Ollie, Bradley, “What’s Going On With Avengers 5: Is the Kang Dynasty Cancelled?”

Screen Rant, Nov 18, 2023 <https://screenrant.com/avengers-5-problems-kang-dynasty-cancelled-explained/>

¹⁰¹⁷ “Marvel Has Reportedly Found Its New Villain For Avengers: Secret Wars After Jonaathan

Majors’ Firing,” Fandom Wire, Dec. 26, 2023 [https://fandomwire.com/marvel-has-reportedly-](https://fandomwire.com/marvel-has-reportedly-found-its-new-villain-for-avengers-secret-wars-after-jonathan-majors-firing/)

[found-its-new-villain-for-avengers-secret-wars-after-jonathan-majors-firing/](https://fandomwire.com/marvel-has-reportedly-found-its-new-villain-for-avengers-secret-wars-after-jonathan-majors-firing/)

¹⁰¹⁸ Mehra, Vasha, “Canceled Marvel Movies: List of MCU Films That Were Never Released,”

Coming Soon.net, March 15, 2024 [https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/canceled-marvel-](https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/canceled-marvel-movies-list-mcu-165251524.html)

[movies-list-mcu-165251524.html](https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/canceled-marvel-movies-list-mcu-165251524.html)

¹⁰¹⁹ Chapman, Tom, “Fantastic Four Director Josh Trank Reviews His Film: ‘I’m Not Zack

Snyder,” CBR, Nov. 24, 2019 [https://www.cbr.com/fantastic-four-director-josh-trank-not-zack-](https://www.cbr.com/fantastic-four-director-josh-trank-not-zack-snyder/)

[snyder/](https://www.cbr.com/fantastic-four-director-josh-trank-not-zack-snyder/)

¹⁰²⁰ Desta, Yohana, “‘Cats’ VFX Director Confirms ‘The Butthole Cut’ Is Very Real, Very

Terrible,” Vanity Fair, April 7, 2020 [https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2020/04/cats-](https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2020/04/cats-butthole-cut-vfx-editor)

[butthole-cut-vfx-editor](https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2020/04/cats-butthole-cut-vfx-editor)

¹⁰²¹ Tyr-El, Shaun, “‘Seven Friends: George Miller’s Justice League’ Documentary is Back In

Production,” The Cultured Nerd, March 26, 2020 [https://theculturednerd.org/2020/03/7-friends-](https://theculturednerd.org/2020/03/7-friends-george-millers-justice-league-documentary-is-back-in-production/)

[george-millers-justice-league-documentary-is-back-in-production/](https://theculturednerd.org/2020/03/7-friends-george-millers-justice-league-documentary-is-back-in-production/)

¹⁰²² Reilly, Luke, “Documentary in Works About Mad Max Director’s Aborted Justice League

Movie,” May 2, 2017, [https://www.ign.com/articles/2015/05/26/documentary-in-works-about-](https://www.ign.com/articles/2015/05/26/documentary-in-works-about-mad-max-directors-aborted-justice-league-movie)

[mad-max-directors-aborted-justice-league-movie](https://www.ign.com/articles/2015/05/26/documentary-in-works-about-mad-max-directors-aborted-justice-league-movie)

¹⁰²³ Tudor, Leonte, “Documentary Director Shares More Justice League: Mortal Costumes, “
March 24, 2020 <https://www.superherohype.com/movies/479557-director-shares-wonder-woman-look-justice-league-mortal-costumes>

¹⁰²⁴ McCoy, Caiden, “Justice League Mortal Batsuit Concept Reveal,” Art Station, May 16, 2021
<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/eaLYaY>

¹⁰²⁵ u/A-I-E-K, “Fanart from the cancelled Justice League Mortal Project (more in the
comments),” in r/DC_Cinematic, January 7, 2022, 7:01AM
https://www.reddit.com/r/DC_Cinematic/comments/ry81gw/fanart_from_the_cancelled_justice_league_mortal/

¹⁰²⁶ Callados, Luis Bajo, “Justice League Mortal,” Deviant Art, June 9, 2023
<https://www.deviantart.com/luisbajocollados/art/JUSTICE-LEAGUE-MORTAL-966381431>

¹⁰²⁷ Aswad, Jem, “Warner Bros. Discovery Negotiating \$500 Million Deal to Sell Film and TV
Music Publishing Assets,” Variety, June 22, 2023 <https://variety.com/2023/music/news/warner-bros-discovery-500-million-deal-sell-film-tv-music-publishing-assets-1235652398/>

¹⁰²⁸ Shirwadkar, Siddharth, “Report Claims Sony Preparing a \$500 Million Deal to Acquire
Warner Bros. Discovery Film and TV Asets,” June 23, 2023
<https://www.essentiallysports.com/esports-news-report-claims-sony-preparing-a-500-million-deal-to-acquire-warner-bros-discovery-film-and-tv-music-assets/>

¹⁰²⁹ Hughes, Mark, “WBD Selling DCEU Snyderverse To Netflix Is Surprisingly The Best
Option,” Forbes, January 12, 2023 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2023/01/12/wbd-selling-dceu-snyderverse-to-netflix-is-surprisingly-the-best-option/?sh=7c4db3234b9c>

¹⁰³⁰ Chanliau, Pierre, “Zack Snyder Just Acknowledged Fans Demanding Justice League 2 on Netflix,” The Direct, Jan. 9, 2023 <https://thedirect.com/article/zack-snyder-justice-league-2-netflix-fan-demand>

¹⁰³¹ Hunt, Benjamin, “Zack Snyder Shares Thoughts on the ‘Sell SnyderVerse to Netflix’ Initiative,” Game Rant, May 12, 2023 <https://gamerant.com/zack-snyder-sell-snyderverse-to-netflix-initiative-reaction/>

¹⁰³² @ZSJLtoNetflix, Twitter, May 3, 2023, 11:57am
<https://twitter.com/ZSJLtoNetflix/status/1653821174306963457/photo/4>

¹⁰³³ Hunt, Benjamin, “Zack Snyder Shares Thoughts on the ‘Sell SnyderVerse to Netflix’ Initiative,” *ibid*

¹⁰³⁴ TheFilmJunkee, “Full Circle – w/Zack Snyder – Film Junkee Vodka Stream,” YouTube, March 24, 2023 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEiTUa63Pd4>

¹⁰³⁵ Milheim, Russ, “Zack Snyder Breaks Silence on Warner Bros. SnyderVerse Sale Claims,” The Direct, March 28, 2023 <https://thedirect.com/article/zack-snyder-warner-bros-snyderverse-sale-claims>

¹⁰³⁶ Brown, Jodee, “James Gunn Responds to Bizarre ‘Sell the SnyderVerse to Netflix’ Campaign,” CBR, June 10, 2023 <https://www.cbr.com/james-gunn-sell-snyderverse-to-netflix-campaign-reaction/>

¹⁰³⁷ Tinoco, Armando, “David Ayer Says James Gunn Told Him His ‘Suicide Squad’ Cut Will ‘Have Its Time To Be Share,’” Deadline, August 7, 2023 <https://deadline.com/2023/08/david-ayer-james-gunn-suicide-squad-cut-1235457059/>

¹⁰³⁸ @ChrisValentino0, Twitter, Feb. 9, 2023, 3:33PM
<https://twitter.com/ChrisValentino0/status/1623812321909800960>

¹⁰³⁹ Uslan, Michael E., *The Boy Who Loved Batman: A Memoir*, Indiana University Press, 2019
(104)

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cronin, Brian, “Comics Legends: Was There Almost a Fleischer Studios Batman Series?”
CBR, April 27, 2019 <https://www.cbr.com/batman-fleischer-studios-almost-superman/>

¹⁰⁴¹ Uslan, Michael E. and Dave Bullock, “The Batman in: Silent Knight, Unholy Knight!” in
Batman: Black and White #2, Oct. 2, 2013, DC Comics

¹⁰⁴² Greenfield, Dan, “Batman ’66 Meets Godzilla: Now You Can Finally Check Out The Lost
Project,” *13th Dimension*, Feb. 29, 2020 [https://13thdimension.com/batman-66-meets-godzilla-
now-you-can-finally-check-out-the-lost-project/](https://13thdimension.com/batman-66-meets-godzilla-now-you-can-finally-check-out-the-lost-project/)

¹⁰⁴³ Kaye, Ben, “Michael Keaton in Talks to Reprise Role of Batman for Upcoming DC Films,”
Consequence of Sound, June 22, 2020 [https://consequenceofsound.net/2020/06/michael-keaton-
batman-reprisal/](https://consequenceofsound.net/2020/06/michael-keaton-batman-reprisal/)

¹⁰⁴⁴ Campbell, Jacob, “Michael Keaton’s Batsuit in ‘The Flash’ Inspired by ‘Kingdom Come,’”
Full Circle Cinema, June 29, 2020 [https://fullcirclecinema.com/2020/06/29/michael-keaton-
batsuit-the-flash-kingdom-come/](https://fullcirclecinema.com/2020/06/29/michael-keaton-batsuit-the-flash-kingdom-come/)

¹⁰⁴⁵ Nolan, Emma, “Warner Bros. ‘Cut Its Losses’ By Axing \$90 Million ‘Batgirl’ Movie:
Lawyer,” *Newsweek*, Aug. 11, 2022 [https://www.newsweek.com/warner-bros-hbo-max-batgirl-
movie-cancelled-tax-1732963](https://www.newsweek.com/warner-bros-hbo-max-batgirl-movie-cancelled-tax-1732963)

¹⁰⁴⁶ Felt, Klein, “The Flash Becomes Worst Box Office Flop in Superhero Movie History,” *The
Direct*, July 6, 2023 [https://thedirect.com/article/the-flash-box-office-flop-superhero-movie-
history](https://thedirect.com/article/the-flash-box-office-flop-superhero-movie-history)

¹⁰⁴⁷ “Tim Burton’s *Batman 3* Almost Got the Comic Book Treatment,” *Bold Entrance*, December
18, 2018 <https://boldentrance.com/tim-burtons-batman-3-almost-got-the-comic-book-treatment/>

¹⁰⁴⁸ Tyler, Adrienne, “What Tim Burton’s Batman Forever Would’ve Looked Like (And Why It Didn’t Happen),” ScreenRant, February 8, 2020 <https://screenrant.com/batman-3-movie-tim-burton-sequel-riddler-catwoman-cancelled-reason/>

¹⁰⁴⁹ Evry, Max, “Why 1994’s Unreleased Fantastic Four Movie Was Such A Disaster – By Design,” Slash Film, Sept. 22, 2021 <https://www.slashfilm.com/612858/why-1994s-unreleased-fantastic-four-movie-was-such-a-disaster-by-design/>

¹⁰⁵⁰ Gaughan, Liam, “Clint Eastwood Almost Played Batman in This Unmade Film,” April 14, 2023 <https://collider.com/clint-eastwood-batman-beyond/>

¹⁰⁵¹ Fink, Richard, “Spider-Man: The Cancelled Movies That Never Got Made,” Movie Web, April 10, 2022 <https://movieweb.com/spider-man-canceled-movies/>

¹⁰⁵² Chris Gavalier and Derek Parker Royal, *Superhero Comics* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 106.

¹⁰⁵³ Fingerioth, Danny, *Disguised As Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*, New York: Continuum, 2007 (44)

¹⁰⁵⁴ Žižek, Jela Krečič, *Superheroes: The Making and Unmaking of a Genre in a Stupid Culture*, TEORIJA IN PRAKSA (53) 4, 2016 (859)