



Aurora Shooting: Why Was a “Batman” Showing Targeted?

As I write this, the news is a buzz with the massacre that occurred in Aurora, Colorado, during the midnight opening show of *The Dark Knight Rises* — the third and (allegedly) final installment of Christopher Nolan’s Batman trilogy.

Reportedly, approximately 20 minutes into the film, a man who, donned as he was with a gas mask, was eerily reminiscent of the film’s arch villain, entered the theater and began to wreak unimaginable havoc with explosives and a gun.

When it was all said and done, 12 innocent people had been murdered and dozens more injured.

Already, just hours after this chaos erupted, “experts” of one sort or the other were making their rounds on the television circuit offering their insights into how and why the mass murderer did what he did. The usual suspects on the political left wasted not a second to exploit this horror to advance their agenda of erasing out of America’s DNA the Second Amendment — as well as to discredit the Tea Party.

Now, I don’t proclaim to be an expert on anything, much less psychology. And, frankly, I don’t care in the least to know the causes that may or may not have lurked in the deep, dark recesses of this killer’s psyche. For that matter, I don’t even care to know the reasons that he may give for his actions.

I am, however, interested in supplying an account of why anyone may think to unleash an orgy of violence at the opening of this film.

Anyone who pays any attention to contemporary politics knows that this movie has assumed some measure of political significance this past week as some, such as Rush Limbaugh, have contended that inasmuch as the main villain is named Bane, it is an instrument that President Obama and his supporters will use to further demonize Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney — i.e. former director of Bain Capital.

Rush is mistaken.

First, it isn’t just that Bane is a fiend with whom Batman has had to contend for nearly 20 years; Bane is arguably the most fearsome of such fiends. Though he hasn’t been around for nearly as long as some other villains have been, Bane is the one — and only — evildoer in Batman’s universe who can claim credit for having forced the Dark Knight into sabbatical when the former broke the latter’s back.





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That is to say, he is an especially distinguished bad guy.

Second, most of the stock of Batman villains, unfortunately, simply would not have been a good fit with the darker and more somber tone of Nolan's reboot of the Dark Knight. The last franchise of the '90s could afford to have its Batman battle "the Riddler," "Mr. Freeze," "The Penguin," etc. Not this Batman. Bane is the perfect choice for the climactic finale of this series.

There is yet another reason why Rush is wrong about his assessment of the political significance of this film.

Other Republicans have retorted that, if anything, *The Dark Knight Rises* can be read as legitimizing — not demonizing — Romney. After all, the reasoning went, insofar as Batman's alter ego is multi-billionaire Bruce Wayne, it is the hero, not the villain, who is not all that different, in this respect, from Romney. Rush read these remarks on the air but, apparently, remained unconvinced.

This line of reasoning misses the point. What is crucial to recognize is not which politician may or may not be portrayed in the characters of the villains and heroes. Rather, as far as understanding why someone would choose the occasion of the grand opening of this particular film to go on a killing spree, we should bear in mind that Bane represents, and is intended to represent, "the 99 percent."

More accurately, Bane is symbolic of the Occupy Wall Street movement. He gives expression to the rage that ostensibly motivated the "occupiers" as well as the destruction to which the logic of that rage can all too easily lead.

This is why the film cannot credibly be used to the advantage of Obama and his ilk.

It was during the OWS demonstrations, recall, that the class envy rhetoric of "the one percent" and "the 99 percent" reached a fever pitch and became the stuff of bumper sticker slogans. It was during these events that violence in the form of physical confrontations with police and blatant violations of private property were on full display.

May not this killer in Colorado who, like Bane, unleashed terror upon crowds of innocents, have been influenced by the constant barrage of class envy rhetoric with which this President and his party constantly bombard us? Is it possible that he believes, as do "the occupiers" of Wall Street and cities throughout the country — and, of course, President Obama himself — that "the one percent" is exploitative, oppressive, greedy, and, thus, deserving of harsh treatment?

Is this hypothesis of mine all that hard to buy?

A correspondent of mine remarked that in writing this, I render myself vulnerable to "politicizing" this tragedy. Though he is a reasonably intelligent individual, he has thus far failed to recognize that the Aurora shootings, like the Columbine, and the Virginia Tech campus shootings, have *already* been politicized. There is, in fact, an entire anti-gun political lobby perpetuity waiting on hold for just such events to occur, so that they can activate their preset political agenda at a moment's notice. In so doing, the anti-gun lobby goes beyond the area of political discussion, however, and moves into the realm of political *exploitation*.

If there is any significance in the fact that this troubled young man chose the venue of a Batman movie to unleash his volley of bullets, it is reflective only of his own personal demons and psychoses. It makes no difference to those who would use such events to demonize the weapons rather than the shooters if the location is a movie theater, a high school, or a college campus.

There is nothing in the least bit illegitimate or morally dubious about the enterprise of exploring local



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events — particularly exceptional events, such as this shooting — against a larger — i.e. less local — political or cultural backdrop. This is a matter of striving to avoid missing the proverbial forest for the trees. It is the mark of an inquisitive mind, a mind aching for understanding and, hence, some measure of consolation, to search for a framework or “bigger picture” within which to situate an apparently anomalous phenomenon.

The typical — and all too predictable — left-wing framework of “gun control” isn’t objectionable because it is “political”; it is objectionable because it is stupid: criminals such as this mass murderer/terrorist in Colorado are not going to be deterred by even more restrictions on the Second Amendment. If we weren’t already so habituated to hearing this line about so-called “gun control” and if we didn’t know that so many seemingly otherwise intelligent people subscribe to it, we would be shocked to learn that anyone with an IQ over two could possibly believe this drivel.

What does it mean to “politicize” anything? Is there something intrinsically unseemly about political life? Is it more noble, more in keeping with good taste, to talk about events of the sort under discussion in the light of “culture” rather than politics? If so, why is it so? Is there a hard and fast distinction between culture and politics and, if so, in what does that distinction consist?

Thinking people will address questions of this kind before they rule out of hand that it is immoral to “politicize” tragedies. The only immorality is in the dishonest exploitation of tragedies by limiting the free and honest discussion required to ascertain, and advance, the truth.



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