



PAST AS MULTIPLE CHOICE – TEXTUAL ANARCHY AND THE PROBLEMS OF CONTINUITY IN *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the graphic novel *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, focusing on the way the text comments on the problematic construction of superheroic continuities through a careful and considered application of so-called “textual anarchy”, a denial of hierarchy or order that challenges the entire concept of continuity. This is done on a number of levels, from the visual shattering of panels to the “past as multiple choice” as proclaimed by the Joker. This article discusses the role and relevance of continuity and audience expectations in superhero comics in general, and analyses the way *Batman: The Killing Joke* actively goes against tradition by exposing an anarchistic diversity in the superhero narrative that clearly states the impossibility of a single linear narrative. Instead, the text comes to highlight the endlessly open-ended nature of the superhero universe, both textually and visually.