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Hunting the Dark Knight: Books on the  
Batman

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2013 Book Collection Contest

### **Hunting the Dark Knight: Books on the Batman**

It began as a joke; a novelty that I thought would go nowhere. One warm summer's night browsing the internet for no good reason, I stumbled across some book called *Batman and Philosophy*. I'd just written a paper on the film *The Dark Knight* but I'd never considered actually investing any time or money in the topic of Batman. Just for the novelty, though, I ordered it. But after reading it I did another basic Google search; I found another Batman book. And then another. And then another.

But let's go back to the beginning. In 2008 I, like millions of others, wandered into a dark cubical room with my father and sister to see *The Dark Knight*. The 16 year old boy in me thought it was awesome, but thought little more about it until one day when I stumbled upon a blog post by a screenwriter in North Carolina analyzing the film. I even remember the last line to this day; Batman "tried to make Gotham a better place, and *failed, in every conceivable way*. *The Joker wins* at the end of *The Dark Knight* and now it's Gordon's dogs who chase him." Once I read that last line, I was hooked.

Fast forward three years to my Law and Society class at University. On the first day, once I found out that we would be asked to analyze a piece of media for its portrayal of law, I knew that my paper would be on *The Dark Knight*. For five months I read political theory and cultural analysis through the lens of this one film; a film that drove me with an inexplicably burning passion. Just after I submitted a hastily compiled and unsatisfactory 13 page paper (fashioned from nearly 50 pages of notes) I felt like I had failed the Batman. So two weeks later when I found *Batman and Philosophy* I was looking for redemption. And so it began.

I describe my book collection not as a compilation but as a journey; my journey, which the Batman facilitates, to an unknown end of knowledge. To me the Batman (AKA the Dark Knight, Batman, or, affectionately, the Bat) serves the same function as all good literature; it is an exercise in the functionalism of a theory (in this case, my attempts to understand political theory and, to some extent, ethics) and as a mechanism to understanding any given field. I have grown spiritually, intellectually, and personally on this journey. I have found communities and areas of academia that were previously unknown. And perhaps most apparent, I have found a renewed love of books as an art form. Whether it's a comic book found in an Oreo cookie box, a hardcover classic with its original dust jacket, or a paperback book by a small publishing house, knowledge is knowledge but books are an art.

Because of its content, my collection is both relatively new and purely American. Bruce Wayne, and his alter-ego Batman, has only existed since May of 1939 and serious analysis of both the comic form and the character itself didn't begin seriously until the 1980s. At each point along the way I purchased first editions of each book in the best condition possible (although, to be quite honest, I really enjoy when a book feels like it's been loved and worn). Nearly all of my books are first editions and while I bought hardcover copies when available, many of my texts are from small academic publishing houses and, as such, were printed only in paperback.

To find my books I spent days in comic stores (previously uncharted territory for me), hours upon hours digging through blogs and bibliographies for new additions, and countless afternoons in used book stores. As such, this collection has truly spanned the gamut of modern book collecting. Many of the books, since they are published by small publishing houses on obscure topics, are available exclusively online. That being said, I still bought my books many "traditionally." I scoured everywhere from my frequented used/rare bookstores, both in Tacoma

and Minneapolis/St. Paul, to the pinnacle of higher-ed overstimulation: the campus bookstore. Not to mention, of course, the book that I made—which, I suppose, is not entirely “traditional.”

In the beginning my collection, I intended on gathering only analysis-driven books. However I soon found that doing so I merely limited myself, separating me from topics like comic theory, comics history, Batman history, and even texts that influenced Batman. Knowledge and understanding can be found in the most unexpected places, whether seemingly relevant or not. At some point on my journey, though, my intent became clear; to own one of the most conclusive collections of Batman texts in the world. And while I have no idea if I’ve succeeded, I do think I’ve done a pretty good job.

The crux of my collection, for me, is a book called *Hunting the Dark Knight*, which both helped me scholastically and in my understanding of the Batman. Not only does it include close readings of Batman texts, it incorporated the cultural and literary theory by which I’d always been fascinated. This book was revolutionary for me so I did something I never thought I would do; I contacted the author, Will Brooker. He graciously responded to me, a random University student 4,800 miles away, and thus the second phase of my collection was born; those that I purchased pre-Brooker and post-Brooker. He gave me a detailed and annotated list of references and books to explore, and with that he also gave something unprompted; affirmation. In him I saw the manifestation of what I had only been previously told; do what you love and the rest will fall into place. Knowledge, I now realize, is not the end; knowledge is a means in the relentless hunt for fulfillment. This is a theme that resonated throughout my collection. Whether it’s Michael Uslan and his unrelenting desire to make a “dark and serious Batman movie” or the Batman and his unrelenting fervor for saving Gotham, the binding factor is passion.

I live and breathe my book collection. It has revitalized my passion for academia, shaping my academic pursuits—both in my class schedule and in my free time—and it has shaped my understanding of myself. It has literally permeated every page of my life, with little bat-symbols littered throughout my textbooks and notebooks near to Bat-relevant ideas/themes. Book collecting never leaves my mind; I love my collection and am very proud of the work and care I put in to it. I hope that the annotations, included below, indicate my passion and my knowledge of the subject.

When I talk about my collection (which is often) I am inevitably asked: “why Batman?” I’ve never been able to give an answer as to why I’m specifically passionate about the Batman, but I do know one thing. Batman has changed me for better or for worse. As the Joker put it, “I know the truth: there’s no going back. You’ve changed things. Forever.” Batman enriches my life, both in terms of knowledge and feeling fulfilled. And after all, isn’t finding fulfillment what life is all about? For a while when people would ask “why Batman?” I would try to answer, but at some point I learned better. Now I just grin and ask “Why not Batman?”

## Annotated Bibliography

*I assembled my collection very deliberately and, as such, have determined three varieties of books within it: Batman-Specific Analysis, Non-Batman Specific Analysis, and Others. My annotations, of course, will demonstrate each book's relevance to the Batman, but organizationally this makes the most sense. Also worth noting, entries are ordered chronologically as opposed alphabetically.*

### BATMAN ANALYSIS

1. White, Mark D., and Robert Arp. *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008. Print.

My first analytical book added to the collection, the first chapter (in which Batman and the Joker are used to illustrate utilitarian and deontological philosophies) blew my mind so thoroughly that I talked about it for weeks. Unfortunately for me the first three chapters were the best in the book, but as a whole it raises interesting points regarding the morality of Batman (for example, is it okay for Bruce Wayne to run around beating people to a pulp, even if they are criminals? Or maybe, what changes when Bruce puts on the Batman mask?) and the different lenses through which Bruce Wayne's actions can be viewed. That being said, a philosophy professor that I met on the sub-Reddit for Batman told me to "Ditch" it because it "adds nothing to Batman or Philosophy"—so maybe the book isn't the richest philosophically, but it was certainly illuminating and engaging for me in the beginning. I purchased it from the publisher, first edition, softcover.

2. Langley, Travis. *Batman and Psychology: A Dark and Stormy Knight*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Print.

First edition, softcover. At times this book felt a bit contrived and a little forced, but the forward by Michael Uslan (whose autobiography is included in this collection) frames the analysis well. Madness—the topic of my book collection last year—has always been of great interest to me, particularly when considering the subjectivity of the label. Indeed, the book proposes many psychological interpretations of the various characters, some of them obvious (The Joker is a sociopath) and some of them fascinating (Does Bruce Wayne have PTSD? Why

does he refuse to kill?). Oddly, this book allowed me to process the character better from a political theory perspective; in removing the positive and negative connotations of “good” and “bad,” the book let me look at each character and each villain without the monikers tainting my view of them.

3. Brooker, Will. *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-first Century Batman*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012. Print.

First edition, softcover. The pinnacle of my whole collection, this is Will Brooker’s masterpiece; a mixture of close reading and cultural studies, Brooker uses a healthy dose of theory to usher the Christopher Nolan (the title of Nolan, not the director himself, Brooker would argue) into the world of academia. *Hunting* is the book I wanted to find when I began my collection. Each chapter, which discusses topics like authorship theory and adaptation theory, is incredibly well researched, crisply written, and very detailed. As I mentioned above in my essay, this book inspired me so much that it prompted me to contact Brooker himself. Whether or not he knows it (I was too shy to tell him this outright in an email), Brooker has become my default academic mentor from afar.

4. Asay, Paul. *God on the Streets of Gotham: What the Big Screen Batman Can Teach Us about God and Ourselves*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012. Print.

As an Interfaith Coordinator at my University and as someone generally fascinated by religion, I was beyond excited to find a book that tied the two worlds I cared about. Alas, it turned out to be more of a self help book than a critical analysis and was fairly disappointing. But if I were to write a book, it would probably in the same vein as *God on the Streets of Gotham*, although from a purely academic perspective; Batman as a Christ figure, Gotham as Babylon, ethics in Batman through a religious lens, etc. While there are certain articles on the topic of religion in Batman’s world, none are completely satisfying, and neither was this book. Still, though, it is a worthy addition to my collection.

5. Brooker, Will. *Batman Unmasked: Analysing a Cultural Icon*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Continuum, 2000. Print.

This is the extension of Will Brooker's PhD thesis and is, to my knowledge, on the tail end of first wave academic interpretations of the Dark Knight (the beginning being *The Many Lives of the Batman*). While this book certainly did wonders for Brooker as an academic and for the Batman as a cultural mechanism, it is still my second favorite book by Brooker behind *Hunting the Dark Knight*.

6. Uslan, Michael. *The Boy Who Loved Batman: A Memoir : The True Story of How a Comics-obsessed Kid Conquered Hollywood to Bring the Dark Knight to the Silver Screen*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle, 2011. Print.

Even though Uslan is a terrible writer (the title: sub-title: sub-sub-title of the book gives a pretty good hint at his writing style), his autobiography provides a great narrative of the history of comics and the mechanics behind the comic and film industries. However much I learned about the ins and outs of the comic world, his book also wrapped me up in the goings on of the bustling comics industry at its peak. Emerging from my basement armchair after finishing this book left me invigorated and feeling oddly enlightened about Batman's history in the comic world as opposed to the film world—an unexpected, but not unwelcome, reaction. First edition, hard cover with original dust jacket, the book is in perfect condition except for a slight cut on the front of the dust jacket.

7. Collinson, Gary. *Holy Franchise, Batman!: Bringing the Caped Crusader to the Screen*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Robert Hale, 2012. Print.

Very much an informational addition to the collection, this book walks through every single incarnation of Batman in film and television media to give a greater sense as to what exactly the name "Batman" has come to entail. It was also a bit jarring when I first read it, as it informed me of exactly the fanatical world I was attempting to infiltrate. Additionally, it's a

curious book physically, longer in width than in height and with an unsettlingly sturdy-ish soft cover.

8. Vaz, Mark Cotta. *Tales of the Dark Knight: Batman's First Fifty Years, 1939-1989*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

New York: Ballantine, 1989. Print.

A personal recommendation from Will Brooker, this book explores the more fun aspects of Batman's journey (specifically 1939-1989). While it's certainly dated, both in information and in analysis, it gives a really interesting perspective on the various iterations of Batman I hadn't thought about (for example, Pop Art Batman and international interpretations of the story). Also, as opposed to presenting different points in the timeline, this book uniquely frames the evolution of Batman's themes and characters through various authors and even in parallel with literary movements.

9. Pearson, Roberta E., and William Uricchio. *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical*

*Approaches to a Superhero and His Media*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.

This book is widely accepted as the first academic treatment for the Dark Knight. I was lucky enough to come across a first edition copy of the book and while it is a little bent, it was very a exciting buy.

10. Fox, Ian, et. al. *Why Do We Fall?* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 21 March. 2013. Print.

This is, perhaps unsurprisingly, my baby. As my collection's form emerged I realized that many of my personal influences in the Bat-field were not in books: they were in journals, they were on blogs, they were in newspapers. And however hard I tried I couldn't find hard copies of them. Until one day I had the thought; "why don't I make a book?" So I spent a few weeks compiling my most influential unpublished pieces and edited them into a coherent book. I then took advantage of my campus's Print and Copy services and had them make me a book. It's not the most elegant looking book, but it is quite literally one of a kind and I am deeply proud of it.

Compiling the book was an intensely emotional experience which caused me to deeply reflect on my growth and on what I value in the character.

My curation on this book is heavy handed; each article in the book shaped both my view of the Batman and my view of the world, but I would like point out only three articles within it. I frame the book by beginning with my original (and, I now see, poorly written) May, 2012 paper from which I got my inspiration for the collection entitled “Anarchy’s Advocates.” I then present the original blog post by Todd Abbott which exposed me to the absurd level of thematic relevance *The Dark Knight* has in itself, as a film, and from that its relevance to the world of academia as a whole. Last to be mentioned here is the brief article “Why Do We Fall?.” Synthesizing the Dark Knight Trilogy as a whole, I found this article to not only be intensely rich, but indicative of what I see to be the Dark Knight’s purpose literarily. Yes, one can gain insight into political theory and the role of self; yes, one can more seriously appreciate the ethics involved in violence, even if it’s against villains; and yes, one can more deeply understand the psychological torment of a man whose face becomes but a mask, and the world but an unrelenting game of Russian Roulette. But there is more. The Dark Knight is about growth and about advocating for what you believe in. As Thomas Wayne says in *Batman Begins*, “Why Do We Fall? So we can pick ourselves back up.” We do not grow from falling. The great value comes from rising.

I would like to add that this book is for personal use only. To my knowledge I have not violated any copyright laws in place. I greatly thank the authors of each article for enriching my life.

11. McKee, Alan. *Beautiful Things in Popular Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007. Print.

Specifically Will Brooker’s chapter which advocates *The Dark Knight Returns* as the best comic of all time. The moment I bought this book I realized what a strong influence Will Brooker’s work has had on me. Despite the fact that I disagree (hypocritically, possibly) and advocate that *Watchmen* is the best comic of all time, Brooker’s exploration of the overlooked artistic and literary merit of *The Dark Knight Returns* is enlightening and enjoyable.

## NON-BATMAN SPECIFIC

12. Jesser, Jody Duncan., and Janine Pourroy. *The Art and Making of the Dark Knight Trilogy*.

1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Abrams, 2012. Print.

The first moment I realized that I was assembling a real book collection was when I cracked the spine of this fine piece. Its detailed and beautifully written exploration of the Dark Knight Trilogy's production quickly became my way of grounding myself after a long or bad day. Even when I was sick of cultural analysis of the Bat, I would take a break by reading this book. Fun and informative, it quite simply invigorates me with every read through. Including an introduction by Christopher Nolan himself and a forward by Michael Caine, its gorgeous photos and production notes ground the films as works of art and ties every minute detail—from the architectural invocations within the Trilogy to the score's themes and textures—together on a thematic level.

13. Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

New York: Basic, 2004. Print.

An interesting cultural and historical lens with which to view comics as an art form. First edition, hard cover, with original dust jacket.

14. Hassler-Forest, Dan. *Capitalist Superheroes: Caped Crusaders in the Neoliberal Age*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

Winchester, UK: Zero, 2012. Print.

A phenomenal (and remarkably new) book that explores the use of superheroes in post-September 11th America as mechanisms promoting the neo-liberal “liberator” mindset. Purchased on the recommendation of Will Brooker, this certainly speaks to the political theory aspect of the collection. I love everything about this book from its Communist-Red cover to its rich close reading of the Batman films through a frame of triumphant domination. After all, as the book asserts, even a mere man can become godlike if one fight's for “good”; whether it's an orphan or a President, whether it's Gotham or Iraq.

15. Reynolds, Richard. *Super Heroes: A Modern Mythology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1994. Print.

The only book that I read in one sitting, this book does a great job of framing superheroes as contemporary lore. Split between mythological situation and graphic novel close reading (including a chapter on *The Dark Knight Returns*), this book is littered with my notes and tabs, each indicative of another “ah-ha!” moment.

16. Kaveney, Roz. *Superheroes!: Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Films*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008. Print.

Its cartoony/silly cover is deceiving; not only is it a serious meditation and exploration of the narrative form of superheroes, but this book is illuminating for its analysis of Batman. In the chapter entitled “Sustaining the Superhero Narrative,” Kaveney looks at the evolution and interpretations of the Dark Knight over time in a more thematic context. First edition, soft cover.

17. Singer, Marc. *Grant Morrison: Combining the Worlds of Contemporary Comics*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2012. Print.

Until I acquired this book (again, on the recommendation of Will Brooker), I saw Morrison as a mere comic book author. Singer, however, does a marvelous job advocating for Morrison as a unique force in comic history. Part comic criticism, part biography, the book melds various ways of seeing Morrison’s work into an exploration of a topic I’m particularly interested in; a text’s form. Morrison works within the loosely “traditional” comic structure to critique language, to critique the superhero genre, and to truly reinvent the constant dialogue that is “art.” As a side note, Grant Morrison wrote, among many other titles, *Arkham Asylum* (included below), *Batman & Robin*, and *Batman Incorporated*.

18. Morrison, Grant. *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us about Being Human*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2011. Print.

While the book is marketed as almost a self-help book, there's no way to interpret this masterpiece by one of the prolific graphic novelists of our time in a way other than his method of processing superheroes as storytelling form. In it he delves into topics ranging from the function of the "damsel in distress" to the need of capes and everything in between. The book is revealing and enlightening. Additionally, the book just looks awesome. Its dust jacket covers only two thirds of the book and, when shifted around, it reveals different cover images from Morrison's works.

## OTHER

19. Kane, Bob. *Detective Comics #27*. 1980. Print. Nabisco Reprint.

One late night browsing the internet in the early stage of my collection led to the discovery of a woman who found a box of unopened, mint condition copies of Detective Comics #27 who evidently didn't know their true worth. Even though I didn't know it at the time, they were really a 1984 reprint that came in boxes of Oreo Cookies. This edition is 32 pages long, as opposed to the original 1939 version which had 68, and includes three separate stories (the other two were pulled from Detective comics #38, which introduced Robin, and Batman #1, which introduced the Joker). Also, as opposed to a glossy original cover, this reprint has a rough paper cover which says "free" in place of "10 cents" and also says "collector's edition."

To preserve its condition (or maybe just out of paranoia) I've only read it once; but what a glorious read. I love the traditional comic style and the story (especially because I read it after Michael Uslan's comic history/autobiography), which, while less nuanced than later iterations, transplanted me firmly into the roots of the comic world.

20. Miller, Frank, Klaus Janson, Lynn Varley, John Costanza, and Bob Kane. *The Dark Knight Returns*. New York, NY: DC Comics, 2002. Print.

Certainly my favorite Batman comic, this was the first Batman comic book I ever read. Not only personally, though, this comic book shook the very foundations of comics and graphic novels at the time it was printed, exploring in gritty detail themes of superheroes' old age, relevance of "heroes," and even their power. One of my favorite moments in *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology*, mentioned above, was the analysis of *Returns*, which discussed how the book grappled with media as a form—in it, televisions and talk shows play out in the book as a means of deception; veiled portrayals of how the world is while knowing nothing at all. It's a great read and my copy is new and shiny.

21. Morrison, Grant, and Dave McKean. *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*.

New York, NY: DC Comics, 2004. Print.

A memento of my first visit to a comic store, the comic's frenetic, free form images shifted my perception of Batman entirely. This book forces the reader to look at the character of Batman as a psychopath; no different from the villains that he himself imprisoned, other than a forced narrative designation of "the good guy." This book also fits exceptionally well with *Batman and Psychology*, *Asylum* of course serving as a narrative base while *Psychology* complementing it analytically.

22. Doyle, Arthur Conan, and Christopher Morley. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*. 1st ed.

Garden City, NY: Doubleday &, 1930. Print.

I have loved *Sherlock Holmes* ever since my Dad gave me *The Hounds of Baskerville* as a kid. And while I've never made it through all 56 short stories and four novels (all of which are in this edition), I can clearly see its influence on the Batman as a Detective. Indeed, to the untrained eye it may seem out of place in this collection, but it is worth pointing out that historically Batman was less of a crime fighter and more of an investigator (hence his premier in Detective Comics #27). In fact, the Batman character was partially inspired by Holmes and is frequently discussed by name in Batman comics (in the fifty-year anniversary edition for Detective Comics a Holmes 130 year old even shows up to help Batman solve a mystery). Sherlock and Bruce Wayne share many characteristics; each are observant and resourceful, each are self driven and, in more ways than one, each are psychologically complex.

23. Ward, Barbara. *Faith and Freedom*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Norton, 1954. Print.

First edition, hardcover, with original dust jacket. Found in the back of a my favorite small used bookstore in St. Paul, MN, this serves as the scholastic crux for my collection, both for political theory and political ethics. This book grapples with the function of self in the greater society (a question that I've struggled to seize since beginning my collection). While her argument is at times flawed, it is a rich addition to the collection, both for its content and because of its physical beauty. Also, it never once mentions superheroes.

24. Moore, Alan, David Lloyd, Steve Whitaker, Siobhan Dodds, Jeannie O'Connor, Steve Craddock, Elitta Fell, and Tony Weare. *V for Vendetta*. New York: Vertigo/DC Comics, 2005. Print.

I see *V for Vendetta* as a thematic brother to Batman where everything is reversed. Combine the Joker's philosophy with the Batman's actions and you get V. Instead of Gotham, you have a 1984-esque London. It is truly a brilliant piece of art, both in its visuals and in its storytelling.

25. Clark, Walter Van Tilberg. *The Ox-Bow Incident*. 1 ed. Cleveland and New York: Tower, 1945. Print.

When I asked the owner of my frequented used book store in Tacoma for suggestions about vigilantism, this was his sole recommendation. It's a beautiful story that grapples with the morality of deviating from the norm when the norm advocates immorality (in this case, murder). Its setting, the Wild West, is also reminiscent of Gotham's chaotic social order. This is a beautiful edition of the book, which includes its original dust jacket and a protective sleeve.

26. Turner, Graeme. *Film as Social Practice (Studies in Culture and Communication)*. 1st ed. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Yes, this book mentions Batman three times, but I bought this in order to inform my understanding of film studies—a topic that I know nothing about. It helped me look at the Nolan trilogy through a technical and academic lens disconnected from themes and story. This book is from my campus bookstore and I snatched the last copy. First edition, softcover, although it is a little bent up since I bought it used.

## WISH LIST

1. Di, Paolo Marc. *War, Politics and Superheroes: Ethics and Propaganda in Comics and Film*.

1<sup>st</sup> ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. Print.

I first read this book in aisle sitting on a step stool between the stacks of my University's library (a section I've gotten to know quite well). It fits perfectly with my collection with its use of superheroes as mechanisms and allegories for political theories and political parties. It asks fun questions like "Is Superman Republican?" and "Are superheroes propaganda?" There has only been one printing of the book, which was published in 2011, and I would love to own a copy.

2. Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*.

1<sup>st</sup> ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001. Print.

The book, which looks more at the form of comics rather than its content, gives a great on-the-ground perspective of how comics changed American culture. I've only seen it in a bookstore once (of course it would be the day I forgot my wallet) and would love to own a copy.

3. Kane, Bob, and Tom Andrae. *Batman & Me: An Autobiography*. 1st ed. Forestville, CA:

Eclipse, 1989. Print.

I discovered this book's existence simply too late in my collection to include it, but this autobiography would complement the collection as a whole. Bob Kane, of course, was the creator of the Batman (among many other characters for DC in the 1930s and 1940s) and this is his autobiography published in 1989. Specifically for my collection, it would work well in tandem with Michael Uslan's book (*The Boy Who Loved Batman*). While Uslan illuminates the beginnings of Batman's film career, nothing can beat Batman's beginnings as a character himself. I've heard from speaking with other Batman collectors that the book is worth adding to a collection.

4. Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 1st ed. N.p.: Pantheon, 1953. Print.

I began studying Campbell in high school (originally in relation to the epic *Gilgamesh*), but came across this book when researching the Batman. His seminal work, *Hero With a Thousand Faces* explores the commonalities and distinctions among various mythological heroes and stories. While I believe it does not discuss superheroes, it would truly ground me in history and in the theory behind storytelling and heroes as a whole. Also, a friend who worked in Campbell's personal library collection tells me that the first edition is a beautiful book, its cover simple and its pages hardy (a texture I particularly enjoy when reading books).

5. Moore, Alan, and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*. 1st ed. New York: DC Comics, 1987. Print.

The first comic book I ever read. To say it shook my view of the world would sound dramatic, but in reality it did just that. Its interwoven narratives of morally complex and potentially corrupt "heroes" led me to question the nature of protagonists, the function of vigilantism, and even (in one of the best oratories I've read in a book, given by Dr. Manhattan on the surface of Mars) led me to question the worth of humans as a species. Note that these are the same qualities for which I love Batman; forcing critical self reflection on things that we take as "assumed." Who's to say any sort of social order is best? Who's to say that people shouldn't violate law? To own a first edition of the book would truly be an honor.