



# PANIC AT THE DISCOURSE

An Interdisciplinary Journal

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Panic at the Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Volume 1, Issue 2, July 2019, pp.90-92  
(Forum/Review).

Published by Panic at the Discourse.  
ISSN 2562-542X(Online)

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# Deadpool is Normal(ly Terrible): A Queer Critique of *Deadpool 2*

*Ky Pearce*

In a twitter argument with a fan concerned about 2SLGBTQ+ erasure in the *Deadpool* comics, one of the comics' writers, Fabian Nicieza, wrote "[Deadpool's] brain cells [are] in CONSTANT FLUX so he is hetero one minute, gay the next, etc..."<sup>1</sup> This representation of non-heterosexuality is, however, not without its issues. I want to question the politics of *Deadpool*'s particular variant of non-heterosexuality as presented in *Deadpool 2* (2018). *Deadpool* is currently the only 2SLGBTQ+ main character in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU),<sup>2</sup> and his film debut was excitedly awaited by 2SLGBTQ+ audiences.

The *Deadpool* films focus on Wade Wilson (*Deadpool*), a former special-forces operative who is soon diagnosed with terminal cancer early in the first film. A mysterious organization recruits *Deadpool*, promising to cure his cancer; but they do so by torturing him and turning him into a super-soldier. The remainder of the first film sees *Deadpool* hunt Ajax, a lead scientist from the organization, seeking revenge and a way to reverse the transformation.

*Deadpool 2* begins two years later with a failed suicide. We learn that *Deadpool* is trying to kill himself because his love interest, Vanessa, was shot and killed by a group of criminals *Deadpool* was pursuing.<sup>3</sup> After *Deadpool*'s suicide attempt, Colossus reassembles him, he recovers, and then joins the X-Men. On his first mission, *Deadpool* discovers the abuse of a young mutant, Firefist, and attempts to take revenge against Firefist's tormentors. As a result, both *Deadpool* and Firefist are arrested and sent to a mutant prison. *Deadpool* soon escapes and then makes plans to free Firefist. The plan is complicated by a time-traveller named Cable who wants to kill Firefist. Firefist escapes and turns against *Deadpool*. Near the end of the film, *Deadpool* and Cable unite to save Firefist from becoming the supervillain that eventually destroys Cable's family.

Throughout *Deadpool 2*, *Deadpool*'s non-heterosexuality is used for comedy, and to excuse bad behaviour. The most significant example of this use of comedy is *Deadpool*'s sexual assault of Colossus, a large and hyper-masculine character. *Deadpool* gropes Colossus's ass when the other character embraces him in a hug. When Colossus angrily removes *Deadpool*'s hand, *Deadpool* immediately returns it. Here, *Deadpool*'s non-heterosexuality is a comedic tool. His behaviour is within the realm of expectation for toxic masculinity; but because the recipient is another man, we laugh at Colossus for not expecting such behaviour. Another example is the monologue where *Deadpool* announces he has "gone international" fighting "mass murderers, gangsters, unspeakable monsters. People nobody would touch."<sup>4</sup> *Deadpool* is delighted to add,

“Except me. I’m gonna’ touch them all over.”<sup>5</sup> This last sentence—said in a sexual tone—relies on the motif of 2SLGBTQ+ people as hyper-sexed predators and makes light of sexual assault. All of this also normalizes sexual assault within comedy, standing in frightening contrast against the #MeToo movement.

Beyond comedic depictions of Deadpool’s sexuality, the film also comments on sexism. Deadpool forms a team of superheroes that he names “X-Force.” He says this name is “forward thinking” and “gender neutral” as compared to “the blatant sexism in the [X-Men’s] name.”<sup>6</sup> While the film may have these ‘woke moments’ speaking to sexism on a surface level, it completely lacks awareness of trans identities. Most gallingly, when Deadpool’s partner Vanessa announces that she wants to have a child, Deadpool responds by saying: “I want a boy! Or a little girl! Definitely one or the other.”<sup>7</sup> This joke relies on a binary model of gender, erasing the experiences and legitimacy of those outside of the socially constructed sex and gender binaries.

The politics of Deadpool’s sexuality are a reflection of our society’s cis-heteronormativity. Scholars like Jasbir Puar and E. De Dauw discuss how people gain access to privilege through participation in white, middle class, and cis-heteronormative ideologies.<sup>8</sup> Deadpool, a non-heterosexual subject, is granted access to privilege through his participation in cis-heteronormativity. As such, Deadpool’s potential queerness is easily dismissed as comedy and he gains access to personhood through his toxic-masculine gender performance, heterosexual relationship, and cis-heterosexist behaviour. He may be in “constant flux” as Niciza writes, but it is significant that Deadpool’s non-heterosexuality only emerges as comedic ploys—as a queer clown.

If any element of Deadpool is relatable to a queerness, it is the way that Deadpool is refused a happy ending. Heather Love and Sarah Ahmed have noted how queers are often disallowed happy endings,<sup>9</sup> and that queer lives must be understood within narratives of loss and misery.<sup>10</sup> Deadpool’s life is the same. When Deadpool finds love he is diagnosed with cancer. Later, when Vanessa says she wants to start a family, she is promptly murdered. However, near the end of *Deadpool 2*, Deadpool’s life is saved by the only thing he has to remember Vanessa by: a metal token that stops a bullet from piercing his heart. I interpret this as Deadpool’s heterosexual connections saving him from queerness and death, so that he can go on living with his new family of fellow superheroes.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Fabian Niecieza, Twitter Post, August 12, 2015, 8:09 AM, [twitter.com/FabianNiecieza/status/632361488615759872](https://twitter.com/FabianNiecieza/status/632361488615759872).

<sup>2</sup> Marvel does include other 2SLGBTQ+ as secondary characters in their films. For example, it is heavily hinted that Valkyrie—a character in *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017)—is 2SLGBTQ+. The Marvel Comic Universe has a long list of LGBTQ+ characters.

<sup>3</sup> The blatant use and abuse of women in this film as a tool for plot development should be noted and explored in future work.

<sup>4</sup> *Deadpool 2*, directed by David Leitch (Century City: 20th Century Fox, 2018), DVD.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jasbir Paur, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 19; E. De Dauw, “Homonormativity in Marvel’s Young Avengers: Wiccan and Hulkling’s gender performance,” *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 9, no. 1 (2018): 64.

<sup>9</sup> Heather Love, “Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence,” *New Formations* 63 (2008): 58.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 195.