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Research Paper

Superheroes enjoy a significant status in the fiction because of their heroic and humble portrayal in the comics and movies. They can be seen fighting with the evil forces and they serve humanity amidst various calamities and chaos. They symbolize the win of virtue over greed, theft and biased power structures. Moreover, superheroes are famous universally because of their high morals and manners. However, in recent times, superheroes can be seen battling with their inner self or conscience because, in their personal lives, they deal with the memory of traumatic events. One such superhero is Batman from the city of Gotham, he is one of the most famous superheroes because of his intellectual abilities and swiftness. However, he cannot be seen maintaining a high social and public profile, outside of the mask because of his secluded nature. His behavior endorses crime and vigilantism because of his traumatic past, his psychotic nature and his free will in addition to exigency.

Batman is a superhero that has to deal with a lot of emotional baggage because of his traumatic memories. He can be seen engaging in a lot of fights with villains but he cannot seem to maintain a friendly relation with the masses. Similarly, he destructs and smashes everything that comes in his way to mercilessly deal with his enemies. Due to this behavior, he is known as a silent protector but he is not known as a hero, instead, his heroic acts turn into vigilantism. His past dominates his present actions and he has a pessimist take on life and society in general. He chooses not to turn into a villain because he loses his family but he at the same time, cannot maintain a humble figure of a typical superhero. Michaud, in his book, *Batman, Superman, and Philosophy: Badass or Boyscout?* , asserts that although Batman is a hero he cannot take the position of Superman because his nature and vibes originate from what he is at a surface level (Michaud 80). Likewise, his actions should be judged based on what heroic qualities he cannot have instead of what qualities he should have to be like any other hero. Gotham city remains under constant threat from inside turbulence as compared to the outer world, for instance, joker, his archrival is a product of injustice done in the Gotham city. According to Michaud, Batman and Joker cannot be separated because they both share some similarities regarding their traumatic past but one decides to take revenge while the other serves the good cause. Moreover, he often seems powerless in front of Joker and his tricks because the former knows about the latter’s battle with his identity issues and social system of justice (Michaud 90). Michaud’s analysis misses a point here that is had it been not for his past, Wayne and Batman would have shared one personality but quite the contrary, Wayne seems to take over the expected goodness when he is masked. In Gotham City, no one can know about the other person's ulterior motives for instance, Harvey Dent appears as a motivated young man who believes in justice and equality even in chaos. Later, his bad experiences turn him into a bad person and the idea of revenge controls his mind.

Batman has a psychotic nature, where although he can be seen fighting for justice but he, on the other hand has personal issues with his biggest archrival Joker. Popper in her book, *Rethinking Superhero and Weapon Play*, asserts that his (Batman’s) fight with villains is more on a personal level because he grows up viewing Gotham city, jam-packed with crime, injustice and mass murders (Popper). Unlike other superheroes, he does not have a guiding figure in his life after his parents' murder and he lacks special powers. His mask and his intellectual abilities are his only powers but he possesses a vision or a drive to protect Gotham city from crime. He is a self-made man and he overcomes the traps set by Joker by believing in himself and his strong reasoning abilities. However, he can be seen trapped in a lot of psychological deceptions set by Joker to overpower his confidence and goodwill. He cannot defeat Joker and his ideas because his ideas have their strings attached to either Batman’s past or city’s twofold legal authorities. The villains create more psychological problems for him through fear and trying to unmask him in front of the society. Likewise, the villains cannot be seen killing the masses rather they inculcate fear in them through emotional blackmail, in such cases, Batman seems helpless in avoiding collateral damage and maintain law and order at the same time. Popper, in her close analysis of this character, analyzes the psychotic nature of Batman and states that the innocent blood of his parents is his both his driving force and his weakness (Popper). However, this analysis can be further built by focusing on the social atmosphere of Gotham city. Due to the social hierarchy and common attitude of people, both villains and heroes can be seen battling with anxiety issues or PTSD. Every villain that Batman encounters ruthlessly beats and almost strangle to death end up in Arkham Asylum because they all are sociopaths and justify their crimes through their tragedies.

The free will and exigency of Batman's actions, go side by side and Michaud has used the term "Dark Deontologist" for him (Michaud 120). He does not think twice before avenging the citizens or fighting against his villains. His actions are dominated by his free will as he does not like to work within the legal jurisdictions and morals. The villains that he encounters fall in the grey category where they cannot be declared as fully evil or fully innocent. However, this term does not go well with Batman’s ideology as he never contemplates his situation or the percussions. He has a sense of duty but at the same time, he shows no mercy to the villains. For instance, he drops Joker when the latter is loosely hanging upside in the air because of his bad memories. Moreover, the delayed law and order situation in the city demands urgent actions as the law-enforcing authorities cannot be seen taking promising actions. They are helpless in front of the villains and people like Harvey Dent, create breaches within the system. Batman, on a personal level, knows about the lack of legal justice within the city and takes it in his hands to deliver social justice. Nonetheless, his morals, code of conduct and actions openly violate the laws and rules, but this behavior results from the legal chaos prevalent in the city. He is a pessimist and does not have any faith left in the law-enforcing authorities. The corruption also serves as a motivation for him to take prompt actions and take law in his hands. He does not have a choice in this matter and due to this state of exigency, people of the city perceive him as an anti-hero. Moreover, he is always at odds with the legal authorities and calls out their legal system of justice because they refuse to treat sociopaths through corporal punishments. All the villains are kept in Arkham Asylum, where they are given behavioral therapy and ethical lessons. In such a scenario, Batman has to deal with similar situations a lot, where sociopaths such as Joker or Bane although subsides but their ideology never dies. People frustrated with the social atmosphere of Gotham, either turn into robbers or sociopaths and he deals with them all the same.

Batman's superhero profile carries a mixed reception because of his dark past and traumatic childhood memories. His psychotic nature makes his battle between the ideas of self-vengeance and morality. He is a superhero nonetheless but his human side overpowers his heroic abilities and he seems helpless in treating villains such as Joker as human. Lastly, justice is not served in the city of Gotham because of the legal flaws and the sociopath nature of villains. All these factors establish him as a superhero endorsing crime or vigilantism however, unlike other superheroes, he is more human. He defies law and order but the social atmosphere of the city and personal trauma leaves no choice for him. Besides, his dark personality stems from all of the above factors and in the light of these very factors, he cannot be called an anti-hero altogether. Moreover, Batman’s characterization, emphasizes that a superhero cannot always be perfect and he can have flaws too.

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# Works Cited

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