EXPLORING COMICS AS A LITERARY GENRE THROUGH THE ANTIHERO CHARACTERS OF BATMAN AND HAMLET

SUVARNA JHA[1], Dr. SUMITRA HUIDROM[2]

[1]MA English Student, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, UP.
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of English & Modern European Languages, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, UP-201308

ABSTRACT

With the emergence of cultural studies, the word culture has to be reinterpreted with the inclusion of culture of the masses in its definition. The culture of the masses or popular culture among the public, seen and manifested in various forms such as song, music, books, movie etc. are to be taken seriously in the life of human beings. In the academia, popular fiction such the comic books or detective fiction and their significance in academic studies cannot be ignored for long. This paper aims to analyses comics as a literary genre through the comparative analysis of Batman from *Detective Comics* and Hamlet from Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*. It will also shed light on comics as a genre of literature, the emergence of comics, and their prevalence in the contemporary era.

Keywords: comics, canonical literature, cultural studies, antihero, tragedy.

Introduction

The development and growth of comics as a new literary genre has been witnessed towards the end of the thirties. For almost a century, comic book has existed as a literary and popular subculture. The first 'superhero comics' were produced in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the periods that followed, comic book business reached key milestones as it evolved alongside people's ideas and perspectives (Guffey 1).

Despite being a significant component of popular culture and mainstream reading, comics have never gained enough praise to be regarded as literature. When compared to canonical literature, comic writers have been criticised for not being able to deal with subjects seriously. Comic books have not received much attention in academic writing because of the stigma surrounding them and the criticisms of their content and format. The problem was that comic books were defined as crude, semiliterate, cheap, and disposable. This was the basic understanding of people and what they meant by 'comic books.' But this was just a narrow and flimsy definition of comics. If one could define comics, it would break the stereotypical definition and emerge as limitless and exciting.

A comic critic tries to define comics as "sequential art" (McCloud 6). It is further asserted that "the art form-the medium-known as comics is a vessel that can hold any number of ideas and images" (McCloud 6). The content depends on the artist and creator of those ideas and images, as everyone has varied tastes and interests. So, there are various schools of thought; some support the idea that comics are part of literature. While others think that it is a mistake to treat comics as literature. However, this distinct genre has always provided a unique

viewpoint into the beliefs and values of the common citizen. In addition to popular culture, comic books have developed their own subculture. Following the development of classical 'superheroes,' comic books gained popularity during World War II, and these books provided an alternative mode of media consumption (Guffey 1).

Comic books delivered captivating graphics that were less expensive than other types of reading at a time when the world was experiencing worldwide financial and economic difficulties due to the war's impacts. They became an exciting new product for readers as well as a distinctive platform for authors to promote cultural beliefs because they blended art, sketches, and text, which are enjoyable for everyone. But even after retaining so many qualities and effectiveness, comic books are considered a low and shallow form of reading. But the reach and influence of comic books around the globe cannot be overlooked. Comic books are a subculture of the popular culture of literature, if not less. Therefore, in this research paper, the significance and position of comic books have been analysed and explored. In order to prove the hypothesis that comics are a literary genre, the concept of the antihero is explored in comics as well as in canonical literature.

Concept of Antihero

To understand the antihero in a better light, it is important to concentrate on the then indispensable--now dispensable archetypal hero. What are the characteristics that bestow him the exalted position? The archetypal figure of the hero appears in works of art from all periods and cultural backgrounds. He typically stands for traditional virtues like integrity, honesty, bravery, and courage. The multiple facets of the hero are highlighted by Campbell, who describes the hero as a fighter, a lover, an emperor, a leader, a world redeemer, and a saint. (Campbell 1949). Naturally, when one comes across the anti-hero, there will be a total inversion of the roles mentioned above.

The characteristics and qualifications of the antihero are apparently the opposite of that of the hero's features, spiritual aridity, mundane lives, failure, and attraction towards evil and chaos; thus, we have an indecisive and bumbling ineffectual and clumsy protagonist in literature today. Antiheroic figures in dramatic literature and comic books can operate as catalysts for social change by challenging the nature of the societal structures that produce the real-life adversarial forces they fight.

The word 'antihero' is commonly found to have a hazy and changeable definition, with its meaning and application reflecting and reacting to modern social practices. The term appears to characterise the character in exactly the same way that one might imagine a character who is the polar opposite of 'heroic,' in whatever shape that may take for a given time and place. The antihero is a figure that rejects typical heroic selflessness in favour of highly unheroic selfishness if we simply scratch the surface of this character type.

The Characters of Batman and Hamlet

From his debut appearance in Bob Kane's drawn *Detective Comics* #27 in May of 1939, Bill Finger's Batman was a grim character with his dark and shady attire, portraying one of the deadliest nocturnal beings. He was known as an outcast and a vigilante the establishment did not support. Bob Kane initially envisioned his superhero as more grounded than DC's most well-known character, Superman, and appearing in the *Detective Comics* series.

Batman's origins are unknown in the first issue. In *Detective Comics #33*, Bruce Wayne's iconic origin story is introduced: while Bruce was still a young child, his parents were murdered by a thief who wanted Mrs. Wayne's necklace: "Two shots killed my father. I was ten years old./The third bullet left a smoking hole in my mother's new fur coat./ It left a hole in me"(*Batman*, Inc.#13).

Shortly after that, we see that Bruce has grown to the pinnacle of human potential in terms of both body and mind. He must impersonate a persona as the last step. As he states, "criminals are a superstitious, cowardly lot, so my disguise must be able to strike terror into their hearts," and then a bat flies into his room (*Detective Comics #* 33, 4). Bruce is inspired to adopt the Batman persona after a bat jumps through the window, seemingly showcasing his ambitions. Later Batman comics would republish this passage, which brought back memories of

the Dark Knight's beginnings for the readers. In addition, it appears from the account that Wayne is a journalist despite having inherited wealth.

By blending into the night, Batman integrates himself into the crime syndicate. He appears out of the darkness and then vanishes into it just as fast. He is not, however, from the dim streets because of the social divide between him and the folks he defends on the streets. Finally, there is always the option of returning to his hilltop estate. His connection to Gotham's streets is a way for him to cope up with deprivation of his family. He fights against corruption and offence not for his survival or for fame. He appears to be a gloomy, dark and frightening character to both his enemies and friends. Batman is perceived as an outcast by the socioeconomically oppressed in Gotham because of his separation from the lower classes, and despite his attempts to help them by fighting crime, he is unable to empathise with them fully. In reality, he purposefully wanders through the night of the city, pretending to be a beast to lawbreakers and innocent bystanders. According to Hebda,

Indeed, in the first year and a half of his activity, Batman killed his opponents, not showing any regret, like in his first comic, or showing it, but nevertheless killing, like in *Batman #1*: 'As much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary!' (24). Since issue #3 (Fall 1940), Batman got a killing restriction from Whitney Ellsworth, DC's editorial director (Daniels, 42, Brooker, 60). A year later, Batman loses his outlaw status, as in *Batman #7* (October November 1941), he receives the title of an honorary policeman from Commissioner Gordon. In issue #12 of the series (August-September 1942) the Dark Knight is a celebrated member of the Gotham community: there is a Batman Day with a parade, and Batman also receives a statue.(6)

As a result, the modifications in Batman's persona were motivated by both the rapidly rising popularity of comic books as well as the authors' and editors' notions of what Batman ought to be (Hebda 6).

In conclusion, Batman's early years were spent cultivating his reputation among the large readership that he had the potential to reach. To do that, the character's creators had to alter their original conception because parents and the media were against the violent vigilante who mercilessly murdered his enemies. Some of those modifications have become the norm for the entire series, which has been running for seven decades. Despite the pressure from the constant war propaganda, the editors opted not to change Batman.

Batman as an Antihero

Superheroes and antiheroes emerge from catastrophe; they forge a new identity after their old one is shattered by suffering and are compelled to confront the absurd. The experience of the ludicrous is closely related to grief. Suffering reawakens the human desire to find a reason to live in this world. But Batman has not always been an antihero. Many people overlook the fact that Batman's 'no killing' rule was created because DC did not want to see popular villains killed off (*Batman #4*). If Batman did, the writers would have trouble coming up with fresh characters on a regular basis, and the comic's entire marketing appeal would be ruined. In the comic strip, Batman stated that while he does not enjoy killing people, he would not hesitate to kill a criminal if necessary.

However, Batman's credibility was hampered by this "no killing rule"(*Batman #4*). Many people considered Batman a fairly ineffective hero—what good is a hero who does not stop the bad guys? As a result, DC made Batman a very unscrupulous character. As Batman says, "I won't kill you, but I don't have to save you" (qtd. in *The Dark Knight Trilogy*).This quote highly depicts Batman's modus operandi.

When Batman first emerged, he was a pragmatic hero who had no qualms about shooting criminals. The 'no-kill' rule was later adopted, but it did not stop Batman from breaking bones, dangling criminals from roofs and balconies, electrocuting thugs, and even abusing his own Bat Family(*Batman #4*)).If it is not possible to avoid it, it must be justified. Making sense of the chaos is vital. The will to build meaning despite loss and affliction is symbolised by forming a new identity. It is a reaction to the absurd, which has ripped the meaning of the hero's existence to shreds up to that moment.

The superhero's new identity is based on the goal to which he commits in his life, and on this foundation, he is ready to reveal new meaning and understanding of the universe, as is Batman's identity. We can clearly observe the huge effort made by the freedom to develop new meaning in the symbol of the mask. Superheroes, villains, and antiheroes are born on a 'bad day,' a day when the known universe ceases to exist in the conventional sense and must be rebuilt from the ground up (Favaro 5). The difference is in how people react to the ludicrous when it enters their lives.

Like in *Batman*, when he witnessed the horrific murder of his parents on open streets, Batman was obliged to develop a new feeling of identity, but he was also partially bound to his previous existence. Batman continues to believe that the world before he wears the mask somehow makes sense of the chaotic reality of the world in general. Batman's dual identities underscore his ambiguous and conflicted character.

Antiheroes forgo their "normal" persona in favour of the new one that they have chosen (Favaro 6). Their identity is the mask, and the world's only potential meaning is the one they impose on it. In several of Batman's more antiheroic versions, he is a character who alternates between being a superhero and an antihero and identifies himself totally with the mask. Batman is frequently pitted against the cops and the unscrupulous and corrupt status quo. He is always balancing his roles as a Superhero and an Antihero. The depiction of his character in comics is commendable. Wayne and Batman are torn between the conscious and the unconscious, a duality that together presents the possibility of psychic totality. Thus, the superhero is no longer viable in a society devoid of certainty.

In Shakespearean tragedy *Hamle*t, written in 1603, Prince of Denmark by birth, Hamlet, is the slain King Hamlet's and Queen Gertrude's son. He is usually called a man who cannot decide. He is often associated with terms like indecisive, procrastinator, and hesitant person. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a poet and critic, believes that Hamlet's greatest flaw is his indecision and notes that he (Hamlet) exhibits "an almost enormous intellectual activity and a corresponding aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities" ("Notes on Hamlet" 137).

Hamlet as an Antihero

Many writers and readers have been captivated by the idea of an imperfect, weak hero with humane insecurities rather than epic qualities. The Antihero character is the flavour of a story and is the aspect that elevates it above a plain tale of heroes and villains. The Antihero is a character who possesses some of the traits of a villain, such as cruelty, cynicism, and ruthlessness, but also has the soul and goals of a more traditional Hero. He most likely existed in times before organised religion, possibly even before the sanctifying impact of organised religion.

Many characters in Western and Eastern classical and mythological texts, especially those with turbulent, violent origins and conflicting goals, fit into the broad Antihero pattern. Therefore, many of Shakespeare's plays have an antihero or a tragic hero, which makes them distinguishable from the typical protagonist. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is regarded as a rich work of English literature. Shakespeare's play perfectly fits the norms of antiheroic play. The tragic play explores issues such as vengeance, appearance v. reality, action v. inaction, and the nature of death and the afterlife as Prince Hamlet considers whether to avenge his father's death by murdering his uncle.

Hamlet fits into the tradition of revenge tragedy, which dates back far deeper to both classical Greek drama (such as Aeschylus' *Oresteia*) and Seneca's plays. However, what distinguishes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from other famous revenge dramas of the period is its extent of characterisation, mental insights, intricacies of concepts and situations, and verse.

Given its themes of greed, deceit, retribution, and death, *Hamlet* is seen as a revenge tragedy. It is the result of people's temperament, emotions, and feelings. Although they also cast some doubt and raise some questions, these elements reflect the greater significance. They delve further to look for the understanding of socially relevant human behaviour. There are no authorities to direct Hamlet in the play because either the villain (Claudius) is too strong (he has become a king) or those who should be directing him do not know about or

accept the villain's criminality. So, in *Hamlet*, if there is to be justice, the prince must act independently. Hence, he has to opt for violent methods and take matters into his own hand to fulfil his quest for revenge, thus making him an antihero.

Hamlet is destined to act in this way. He has intolerable psychological stress due to the revenge for his father's murder. As a result, he keeps putting off the responsibilities that his father's ghost has given him, causing him to suffer more and more. His overwhelming propensity for reflection and speculation is the reason for the delay in exacting revenge for his father's murder. The classic example of Renaissance humanism is Hamlet. He possesses the admirable traits of an intelligent thinker with a sceptic mentality. He has the capacity to think out all alternatives, issues, and potential courses of action. Such self-reflective traits have made exacting revenge for his father's murder more difficult.

For an antihero like Hamlet, taking revenge could seem like a straightforward way to bring order back to Denmark, but he illustrates the difficulties with the morality of taking revenge. He struggles with moral and emotional issues. In order to demonstrate his affection for his deceased father and his duty as a son, Hamlet is eager to exact revenge. But other times, he views getting even as a harsh, irrational act that will ruin everyone's life. When faced with chaos, Hamlet tries to put his ideas into action but cannot do so. In his famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be, that is the question", Hamlet muses over his options, including whether to live through his problems and struggle to overcome them or commit suicide (Shakespeare 55). However, an alternative interpretation of the soliloquy contends that Prince Hamlet considers killing Claudius rather than committing suicide.

As a result, several soliloquies in the play show the complexity of a character. Nevertheless, the play shows the readers that Claudius, who ought to be the centre of justice, is actually corrupt. Therefore, there seems to be no other option except to exact revenge in the play. Although retribution is seen as a sacred and ethically required act, as observed in the instance of Prince Hamlet, it is still an act of violence and bloodshed that would amount to questioning the current order of affairs and disrupting the entire societal structure. As a result, Hamlet's need for vengeance is crushed by his moral principles, which makes him the perfect antihero.

Relationship between Canonical literature, Comics, and Antiheroism

Cultural studies examine the connections between culture, power, and communication. Popular culture frequently serves to sustain oppressive systems of power, but it can also be created by the general public, creating a space for possible political resistance (Clancy 1).Studies on media and culture of the masses, thus, tries to examine how institutions, practices, and discourses that constitute popular culture—media aimed at the 'people' or the 'masses'—reinforce prevailing power structures such as those based on sex, race, gender, class, and ability (ibid).

Critical and cultural researchers are also interested in how popular media might challenge these repressive power structures. As Nayar asserts,

The cultural study is a field which looks at popular or mass culture and everyday life. Popular culture is the culture of common people. It consists of comic books, graffiti, mass movies (as opposed to 'art movies'), popular music (as opposed to 'classical music,' open public areas in cities (as opposed to museums), and sports. It is the culture that a greater population follows in their daily lives (5).

Such a popular art was considered inferior for a very long time. The term mass culture was used derogatorily. The elite class of society was the only group with a 'true' culture. The culture of the few affluent people was presented as the 'true' culture. As a result, academic researchers ignored the reality that many people never saw or read these classical texts and instead concentrated on 'great works of art' or 'canonical authors.'

Norms of judgement and conceptions of taste were developed using the aristocratic types of art. The word 'culture' came to be identified with a lesser population of people and their preferences, giving dignity to authors, literary styles, and genres. This also implied that particular artefacts were given legitimacy as 'culture'

by the higher strata in a community. Comic books, children's books, and other forms of popular literature were dismissed by critics as 'low literary' and were not discussed. However, cultural analysis changed its emphasis in the 20th century. As stated by a critic, "In 1969, the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green University (USA) launched the *Journal of Popular Culture.* The journal carried essays on Spiderman comics, rock music, amusement parks, the detective film and other forms of popular culture. It in popular culture that Cultural Studies finds its first moments"(Nayar 5).

In spite of their popularity among the masses, comics are still not considered significant as literary texts. At the same time, a comic text may have the essential qualities of good literature. As we know, when it comes to literature, different authors enjoy the opportunity to express themselves in any language and with any stylistic features they believe will best bring their story to life. Literature is about delivering a fascinating story to keep the reader or listener interested. With this in mind, it is crucial to remember that there are still a number of literary principles that writers must follow for their literary works to be considered good. Like a canonical text, a comic strip has a specific theme which contributes to the broad meaning.

In the golden era of both literature and comics, the concept of a hero was more prevalent. But with time, the line between good and evil is blurred, although there is a silver lining to it. But with the changing and ever-evolving definition of good and evil, there was also the emergence of a new archetype of character: the Antihero. The antiheroic archetype is a metaphor for how the modern world has fallen apart—a time when values like morality and religion have been abandoned. He came to represent the postwar disillusionment in which humans lost their feeling of independence and blended into mass culture and in which ancient order and traditions were misfits amid chaos. The antihero represents a life of failure, alienation, and battle for survival in the wasteland of post-war society.

As stated previously, the antihero is a character capable of providing justice who is willing to mould or defy the laws – usually by employing diabolical techniques – in order to protect the present world from effective justice. An antihero is a highly flawed, conflicted figure with a questionable moral compass, which makes them realistic, nuanced, and often likelier. Apart from being a tool of entertainment, these antiheroes trigger the audience to question the ways and process of justice. The changing scenarios of crime and evil in narratives needed an unconventional new form of the protagonist. That is why characters like Batman and Hamlet gained prominence. Both of these face similar issues and have similar characteristics to a protagonist who is an antihero.

To begin with the analysis of Batman and Hamlet, it is important to know their background, which has already been discussed earlier in the paper. To elaborate on the similarities of both the characters, a detailed analysis of both becomes essential. An analysis of both characters in their respective texts reveals that the tragic hero and antihero characteristics overlap in Hamlet and Batman. Both the chosen texts exhibit qualities of tragedy and are debatable in nature; the tragic hero is, more or less, one of the prototypes of an antihero. As stated by Aristotle (1974: 82) that there are some of the main characteristics of a tragedy, such as Hamartia, Hubris, Peripeteia, Anagnorisis, and Catharsis (1974: 76). The analysis will further focus on these parameters.

Comparative analysis of Batman and Hamlet

To begin with, the analysis, as universally known, *Hamlet* is one of the greatest tragedies written by Shakespeare, and so is *Batman* by Bill Finger. Shakespeare was influenced by Aristotle's notion of tragedy in his works. According to Aristotle, "tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language; in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incident arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions" (*Poetics* Chapter 06). The previous statement provides some of the qualities of a tragic text. Hamlet and Batman, both the protagonists possess these traits, making them ideal for a tragic text. Further, Aristotle says,

The tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions (*Poetic*s 10).

Noble Birth

Batman was born into an aristocratic family, a noble birth. Bruce Wayne, often known as Batman, is the son of Martha and Dr. Thomas Wayne. Thomas Wayne is a surgeon and philanthropist who inherited the Wayne family's money and business. Nobility is a social class that has more benefits than the majority of other groups in a society, usually due to heredity. Wealth offers additional privileges in our culture because it can provide higher education and other comforts, making Bruce and the Wayne family a modernised noble family. His back story is initially revealed in *Detective Comics #33,* November 1939, which establishes Batman's melancholic attitude, a man driven by the feeling of revenge for his parent's murder. The comic text starts with a young Bruce Wayne who witnesses his parents' murder by a thief. It was written by Batman co-creator Bill Finger. A few days later, he swears at their grave: "by the spirits of my parents [I will] avenge their deaths by spending the rest of my life warring on all criminals" (*Detective Comics #33,* 1939).

In *Detective Comics #27*, the origin of Batman is further explored. Bruce Wayne is the son of his parents who are two incredibly affluent and philanthropic Gotham City well-known people. He is raised at Wayne Manor. He lives a prosperous life until his parents are murdered by a criminal named Joe Chill as they return from the movies when he is eight years old. That evening, Bruce Wayne swears to fight crime for the rest of his life. He exerts a lot of mental and physical effort, but he is aware that his skills by themselves are insufficient. As he says, "Criminals are a superstitious, cowardly lot. So my disguise must be able to strike terror into their hearts. I must be a creature of the night, black, terrible … "(*Detective Comics #33,* 1939*).* Bruce is inspired by a bat that jumps through the window, seemingly showcasing his ambitions and leading to the creation of his identity.

Hamlet, the play's protagonist, was born of noble birth, the prince of Denmark, the son of the murdered King Hamlet and the Queen, Gertrude. Hamlet is born a nobleman and has moral characteristics from an early age. However, with the passing of time, he encounters numerous difficulties, eventually leading to his death. There are no authorities to direct Hamlet in the play because either the villain (Claudius) is too strong (he has become a king), or those who should be directing do not know about or accept the villain's criminality. So, in *Hamlet*, if there is to be justice, the prince must act independently. But as Prince of Denmark is more than just an ordinary person, he has the authority to intervene. Thus, he has to opt for violent methods and fulfil his quest for revenge, thus making him an antihero.

Hubris or Excessive Pride

'Hubris' or hybris is "the Greek word for insolence or affront, applied to the arrogance or pride of the protagonist in a tragedy in which he or she defies moral laws or the prohibitions of the Gods"(Baldick 101). In the case of Batman, his hubris lies in his excess inflexibility and pride. Simply put, he has an issue holding everyone to an exceptionally high level. In the process, he loses important allies or makes new enemies. Of course, as a child, Bruce Wayne witnessed his parents being murdered in front of him, teaching him an uncomfortable lesson about how peace can be disrupted and the rule of law may be broken. He is left alone by this incident and likes to function alone. Batman is a lone wolf and likes to work alone without getting aid or support from anyone. Because of excessive pride and lack of trust, he does not seek others' help, ultimately leading to his fall in *The Dark Knight Returns* when Bane breaks his back.

In a similar way, Hamlet also appears to be hubristic, which causes his tragedy by straying outside the bounds of both his and humanity's fates. Reading the play with an eye towards how Hamlet's hubris shows itself sheds light on why he behaves in particular ways and warns the audience against testing the limits of humanity. Traditionally interpreted as hesitation, inactivity, or delay, Hamlet's hubris is an excess issue-- excessive hesitation and inaction. When used in moderation, hesitation and inaction would not have been problematic; Hamlet's deliberateness enables him to prove Claudius' guilt and the necessity of retaliation. However, when used excessively, Hamlet turns these qualities into vices.

Hamartia or Tragic flaw

'Hamartia' is "the Greek word for error or failure, used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (4th century BC) to designate the false step that leads the protagonist in a tragedy to his or her downfall. The termhas often been

translated as tragic flaw, but this misleadingly confines the cause of the reversal of fortunes to some personal defect of character, whereas Aristotle's emphasis was rather upon the protagonist's action, which could be brought about by misjudgement, ignorance, or some other cause"(Baldick 95-96). Thus, a 'tragic flaw' is a literary phrase that refers to a protagonist's weakness/flaw in his/ her character that leads to his or her downfall as seen in Batman and Hamlet's plot story.

Batman's rule that he will not kill another person and his dilemma are two flaws in Batman's character. These are his weaknesses, which cause him to make poor decisions and cause more death and destruction. In the *Dark Knight*, for example, Batman had the chance to kill the Joker in the interrogation room, but he chose to save both Rachel and Dent, resulting in far more bloodbath afterwards. He is always balancing his roles as a Superhero and an Anti-hero. Wayne and Batman are torn between the conscious and the unconscious, a duality that together presents the possibility of psychic totality. Thus, the superhero is no longer a viable figure in a society devoid of certainty. Another of Batman's flaws is his inflexibility. Simply put, he has an issue with holding everyone to an exceptionally high level. In the process, you may lose important allies or make new enemies. Anything that deviates too much from his ideals, someone who loses control too quickly, usually goes through hamartia.

The fatal weakness in Shakespeare's hero Hamlet lies in his falure to execute Claudius, his uncle and the murderer of his father. Procrastination is his deadly weakness. He cannot finish the task at hand because of his ongoing alertness and scepticism. Hamlet eventually kills Claudius, but only after realising that he has been poisoned. His tragic flaw, procrastination, results in his and the other people he targets dying. Hamlet is often associated with traits like indecisive, procrastinator, and doubtful, with 'inaction' being the most dominant trait of what Hamlet actually accomplishes in the play. He exhibits noble qualities and once had the opportunity to kill Claudius while he was praying. However, he could not do so due to his moral and religious convictions.

As a result of his indecisiveness, he has a tragic flaw. He develops pity for his father's killer but cannot assassinate him. As a result, a reader has no fear in their minds. Hamlet is a discreet individual. He thinks a lot but just acts a little. His indecisiveness afflicts him. We know he is hesitant when he delivers a soliloquy in the play's Act III: Scene 1:

 To be, or not to be, that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep

No more; and by a sleep, to say we end

The heartache and the thousand natural shocks

That Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wished (Shakespeare).

The soliloquy mentioned above is one of the examples of Hamlet's hamartia; his indecisiveness and procrastination make him weak and contribute to his major downfall.

Peripeteia and anagnorisis

Peripeteia is "a sudden reversal of a character's circumstances and fortunes, usually involving the downfall of the protagonist in a tragedy, and often coinciding with the recognition. . . . " (Baldick 165). In *Batman*, the citizens of Gotham wanted Batman to surrender because they believed he was not making any progress in finding the Joker and was instead spreading more havoc. This was the peripeteia in Batman when even after fighting criminals and risking his life for the citizens does not do any good but only leads to chaos and terror. At this point, Batman decides to resign. Bruce liberates Harvey from the responsibility of being Batman. This is a

mistake since it allows the Joker to kidnap Harvey. It also gives the impression that Batman is imprisoned and that they are free to commit whatever crimes they desire.

Being a tragedy, *Hamlet* also has elements of peripeteia. It happens when Hamlet finds King Claudius praying alone in Act III, Scene 3. It is the ideal time for him to avenge his father and assassinate Claudius. Hamlet prepares to draw his sword but pauses. He sees that Claudius is in prayer and that if he kills him, Claudius will go to paradise, leaving Hamlet without vengeance for his father. Hamlet decides not to "take him [Claudius] in the purging of his soul,/ When he is fit and seasoned for passage" (Shakespeare 73). He decides to "know thou a more horrid hent"or delay his revenge for a more dreadful occasion (Shakespeare 73).

In Act III, Scene II, the irony of the scenario is that Claudius, unknown to Hamlet, is unable to apologise for the murder of his brother as he is "still possessed/ Of those effects for which I [Claudius] did the murder./ My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen" (Shakespeare 72). Because of Hamlet's hesitancy, Claudius is able to stay one step ahead of him at this crucial moment in his quest to exact revenge on his father. Hamlet, his mother, Laertes, and Ophelia ultimately perish due to Hamlet's reluctance. Hegel's theory of the tragic states that tragedy is "set in train by a peripatetic act that rebounds upon the agent as a conflict between ethical powers" (Finlayson 500). The character is accountable, at least in part, for the hero's downfall since it stems from an action made in error rather than from a character's fault (Finlayson, 501). In Hamlet's case, the lack of action causes his downfall and eventual death.

'Anagnorisis' may refer to "the Greek word for recognition or discovery used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* to denote the turning point in a drama at which a character (usually the protagonist) recognises the true state of affairs, having previously been in error or ignorance"(Baldick 8).

When Batman finally decides to move on from his parent's death, he establishes that he is no longer an aimless hooligan intent on finding his parents' killer by ripping down the city's walls. He discovers that he is not a murderer but has caused great havoc. This realisation of his mistakes and turning into despair is his moment of anagnorisis.

Hamlet's anagnorisis occurs during the play inside the play when Hamlet understands that King Claudius is responsible for the death of his brother (Hamlet's father). This is an anagnorisis since, at this point, Hamlet recognises he must now kill his uncle to get revenge for his father's death. Aristotle's criterion for a successful tragedy, which is anagnorisis-- is satisfied by that moment of realisation.

Catharsis

After an overpowering vicarious experience, catharsis is an emotional cleansing or purification in which emotional tension is released. Shakespeare's tragedies are excellent instances of catharsis in action. In the case of Batman, he has some elements of catharsis in comics. Through the use of theatricality, duplicity, and vigilante justice, Batman depicted a man's path of catharsis. When Batman decides not to kill The Joker in the battle, he finally recognises that he must move on from his parents' deaths, demonstrating that he is no longer an aimless thug intent on finding his parents' killer by himself, tearing down the city's walls. He discovers that he is not a murderer at all, but rather a protector and a savior; whereas in the play, there are at least two instances, where a reader can experience catharsis or emotional fulfilment.

In Shakespeare's play, when Polonius died at Hamlet's hands, it was a therapeutic moment. Second, at the end of the play, all of the important characters have died due to 'hamartia'—both internal flaws and external errors. When Hamlet ultimately commits a clean sweep on his terms, the play's ending is only made sweeter. After exposing grave injustice, the reader is satisfied that Hamlet died with his character intact. In Act V, Scene 2, catharsis happens when Hamlet engages in a sword fight with Laertes because the audience is well aware that Laertes and Claudius conspired against Hamlet by agreeing to have him drink from a poisonous cup and to poison the sword as another protective measure to ensure Hamlet's death. This helps generate sympathy for Hamlet since, unlike his competitors, Laertes and Claudius, he has agreed to play by the rules and does not deserve to die in such a dishonest way.

Conclusion

Both the chosen texts follow Aristotle's description of a tragedy in the study. It is established through the analysis that Batman, who is a comic character, proves to be a worthy character and equally good as a classical character like Hamlet. Batman entertained youngsters and teenagers and let them forget about the bleak world outside for a while. Batman is unlike other superheroes in that he is neither a result of a mutation, a medical experiment, or an extraterrestrial. He possesses no extraordinary abilities beyond human power and brilliance. This, paired with Wayne's money, enables him to use sophisticated technology, making Batman a formidable criminal. So, Batman is a character who is relatable to the common mass. In a contemporary socio-political and economic setting, complicated ideology and influence are created by portraying the antihero as a defender of the disadvantaged, as is Batman. Therefore, if a comic text can exhibit elements of classical literature, it tends to become a part of its subculture. Comics are no less than a subculture of cultural studies and literature. Although there are always different schools of thought, keeping in mind the style, form, nature and characteristics of a comic book, it is no less than a part of the subculture of literature.

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