Poster

📅 Sat. Sep 27, 2025 3:00 PM - 4:10 PM JST | Sat. Sep 27, 2025 6:00 AM - 7:10 AM UTC 🏛 Poster Session (Foyer 1)

Poster 20

[P-20-04] A Psychiatric Analysis of Batman and the Public Perception of Mental Illness

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Keywords：Cultural Psychiatry、Psychiatry、Media、Social perceptions、Comic books

Background

Batman, or Bruce Wayne, is one of the most psychologically complex figures in popular culture. Originating from the traumatic loss of his parents, his subsequent behaviour demonstrates a range of features aligning with diagnosable psychiatric conditions. This abstract applies a clinical lens, using ICD-11 criteria, to analyse Batman's character as depicted in major comic arcs, such as Batman: Year One, Hush, The Court of Owls, and Batman RIP.

Clinical Features

Batman meets the core features of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (ICD-11: 6B40), including persistent re-experiencing, hypervigilance, and emotional numbing, particularly evident in Year One and The Long Halloween. He also exhibits traits consistent with Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (ICD-11: 6D10), such as perfectionism, moral rigidity, and overcontrol, especially in Hush. His enduring identification with his parents' death aligns with Prolonged Grief Disorder (ICD-11: 6B42), as explored in Batman RIP. In Batman of Zur-En-Arrh, elements of Dissociative Identity Disorder (ICD-11: 6B64) emerge, with fragmented identity and altered states of consciousness.

Public Perception

Despite these features, Batman is not portrayed as mentally ill but rather as heroic. His pathology is romanticised as moral clarity and emotional discipline. This idealisation may obscure the disabling nature of psychiatric conditions, reinforce gendered stigma around emotional expression, and promote maladaptive coping as strength. However, Batman also presents a unique opportunity to engage the public with narratives of trauma, grief, and identity when framed through a psychiatric lens.

Conclusion

This analysis highlights the importance of critically examining portrayals of mental illness in media. Batman exemplifies how fictional heroes can reflect real psychopathology, and how their portrayals shape cultural narratives about mental health, particularly trauma and masculinity.