

## Bruce Wayne: A Modern Odysseus

This paper will explore the intertextuality between *Batman: The Return of Bruce Wayne* and the *Odyssey*. It seeks to explore the themes of the mythology that inspired the limited series, as well as the inherent mythology of the character of Batman himself. The connection between modern superheroes such as Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, and the Ancient Greek mythological tradition is not insignificant. Through continued relevance to modern audiences over several decades, superheroes, such as the ones listed above, have become American mythological character types. Much like the Trojan heroes to the ancient tragedians, superheroes are readily moldable into dramatic (and sometimes contradicting) plotlines.

Batman, the subject of this paper, is perhaps the superhero who has become the most mythologized in modern memory. No character has been evolved and reinterpreted more in comic book history than Batman. Since being created by Bob Kane in 1939, the character has had hundreds of different writers and artists, undergone several reboots and total makeovers, and been reintroduced in different media types. Similarly, Greek mythology is often talked about in relation to its dynamic ability to be reinterpreted. But that is not where the connection to Greek mythology ends, especially for Batman.

Grant Morrison's *Batman: The Return of Bruce Wayne* is a six-volume limited series published by DC Comics from May to November 2010, which chronicles Bruce Wayne, aka Batman, on an Odyssean journey through time colored by his strong sense of *nostos*. It follows Bruce Wayne as he finds himself thrown back to the beginning of time by Darkseid after the events of *Final Crisis*. In each period he finds himself in, he is continuously 're-made' into a hero. Thus, through his experience, he becomes mythical even in his own universe.

Much like Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, Bruce Wayne shows time and time again that humanity can defeat gods through personal determination. The determination is his personal need to return home to Gotham, much like Odysseus' desire to return to Ithaca. Each of the six issues of *Batman: The Return of Bruce Wayne* has a direct parallel to Odysseus' journey in the *Odyssey*. For example, Batman's experience with the cavemen in issue #1 is parallel to Odysseus' experience with the Cyclopes and the Lotus Eaters. Both episodes show the hero being returned to a baser existence and confronting their own instincts.

In conclusion, Morrison's Batman is reinvented (once again) through these time-trials into a modern Odysseus. This paper will explore the intertextualities with attention to the thematic points that are being displayed in each episode. This analysis will show that the influence of Greek mythology bleeds into every aspect of the limited series, and how it colorfully displays that mythology remains culturally relevant today.

## Works Cited

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