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The Pleasure of Fear; The Scarecrow as an Extremely Immoral, Vicious and Pro-Passion Character According to Stoicism.

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Batman's Villains and Villainesses

Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Arkham's Souls



Edited by MARCO FAVARO *and* JUSTIN F. MARTIN

“For serious readers of Batman comics and graphic novels, this book offers something for everyone. Many of the villains in Batman’s world are described and dissected, including corrupt politicians and police.”
—**Robin S. Rosenberg**, editor of *Our Superheroes, Ourselves*

“*Batman’s Villains and Villainesses* is a fascinating collection of essays that explores the Caped Crusader’s rogues gallery from a number of scholarly perspectives, challenging you to think about these familiar characters in new ways—definitely not a book for the cowardly or superstitious.”
—**Mark D. White**, author of *Batman and Ethics*

“This amazing collection starts at the beginning before Batman had supervillains, with the Dark Knight’s pulp roots and pulp villains. Then it moves forward, covering every type of villain—the madams, the monsters, the madmen, and the made men. I want to build my superhero class around this book because Batman has the best villains and this book has the best essays on those best villains.”
—**Peter Coogan**, author of *Superhero: The Secret Origins of a Genre*.

While much of the scholarship on superhero narratives has focused on the heroes themselves, *Batman’s Villains and Villainesses: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Arkham’s Souls* takes into view the depiction of the villains and their lives, arguing that they often function as proxies for larger societal and philosophical themes. Approaching Gotham’s villains from a number of disciplinary fields the essays in this collection highlight how the villains’ multifaceted backgrounds, experiences, motivations, and behaviors allow for in-depth character analysis across varying levels of social life. Through investigating their cultural and scholarly relevance across the humanities and social sciences, the volume encourages both thoughtful reflection on the relationship between individuals and their social contexts and the use of villains (inside and outside of Gotham) as subjects of pedagogical and scholarly inquiry.

Contributors

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Batman’s Villains and Villainesses



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Chapter 19

The Pleasure of Fear

The Scarecrow as an Extremely Immoral, Vicious and Pro-Passion Character According to Stoicism

Francisco Miguel Ortiz

The present chapter employs ancient philosophy to shed novel light on a classic DC Comics character, Scarecrow (aka Dr. Jonathan Crane). The lens of ancient philosophy provides a diverse epistemological and moral perspective on Scarecrow. Specifically, from the perspective of Stoic philosophy.¹

Ancient Stoicism establishes that only virtue (*aretē*) leads to happiness (*eudaimonia*), and that virtue consists of acting in a rationally correct way, that is, consists in acting wisely.² Whoever is virtuous, therefore, is a sage. The Stoics, especially the founder Zeno of Citium, established that there are correct emotions (*eupátheia*) and incorrect emotions, the latter they call “passions” (*pátheia*) or excessive forces that disturb the mind preventing it from reasoning correctly.³ This disturbance, in turn, prevents humans from becoming virtuous. Ergo, humans must avoid passions.

The Stoics recognize four basic passions: anguish or grief (*lupē*), desire or craving (*epithumia*), pleasure (*hēdonē*), and fear (*phobos*).⁴ In line with this idea, the Scarecrow is an “ideal” character to analyze through the lens of Stoicism because of his fascination with the *passion* of fear. I propose that the Scarecrow is a non-sage or non-virtuous person who acts in a very non-Stoic way because he believes that the only thing that will lead him to happiness is not to act virtuously but to provoke fear in others. By manipulating fear, Crane forces others to fall into vice, the exact opposite of virtue-*eudaimonia*. This coercion, according to Stoicism, is a direct attack against morality.