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Final Analysis on Dr. Manhattan

In this paper, the comic book “Watchmen” by Gibbons and Moore, two scholarly articles “*The Human Stain: Chaos and the Rage for Order in Watchmen*” by Bryan D. Dietrich and “*Moore and Gibbons’s Watchmen: Exact Personifications of Science*” by Brent Fishbraugh, and “*Abraham’s Enchanted Forest*” by Straub are the source materials for this essay. The mighty god, Dr. Manhattan, familiarly known as Jon, is a victim of social selection, which can be demonstrated through his career transition from a watch-maker into a nuclear physicist, his relationship with United State, and his recognition of unchangeable history and future.

The definition of social selection according to Merriam-Webster dictionary is “the differential action of social conditions or agencies on the longevity and reproductive rates of individuals and strains in the population.” which can be understood as the situation that occurs when a society defines the value of certain characteristic traits.

Dr. Manhattan familiarly known as Jon developed his social selection at an early age. At first Jon’s passion was to be a watch maker just like his father, but due to his father’s discovery of Einstein’s theory about time and space, and his involvement in the development of the atomic bomb, Jon had to give up his early hood’s passion in order to pursue the nuclear physicist’s industry under his father’s influence, “My father was a watch maker; he abandoned it when Einstein discovered time is relative. I would only agree that a symbolic clock is as nourishing to

the intellect as photograph of oxygen to a drowning man.”(Gibbon Moore), “He begins his life wanting to be a watchmaker like his father; however, while Jon is in his late teen years, the first atomic bomb is dropped, and Jon’s father sees no future in watch-making”(Fishbraugh 194)

During the late 1940s and the early 1950s, being a nuclear physicist was highly praised position. The increased demand for nuclear physicists during this period not only compelled Jon to become a nuclear physicist but also his father’s research of Einstein’s discoveries contributed to Jon’s career change, and thus transformed him into a victim of social selection.

Jon’s career change can be understood as going from normal into abnormal, due to his social condition. In comparison Jon’s situation, the main character from “*Abraham’s Enchanted Forest*”, Greta, had to dress in a fairy suit as a mascot inside of her father’s forest theme park, while she was living inside the theme park with her parent. Essentially Greta was living illustriously, but because of her abnormal life style; it often left Greta wondering the possibilities of living a normal life. Straub argues: “Her favorite movies were the ones where people just did normal stuff: go to school dances, eat dinner with their parents, take walks and talk to each other about their problems. The point was, no one in the movies ever seemed to realize how good they had it.” Which reveals the story that Greta desperately wanted – a normal life; Therefore the similarities of the living differences between Dr. Manhattan and Greta exemplifies the impact of social selection, Jon was forced into the scientific world based on a highly praised career of nuclear physicists, and Greta was born into the fairy tale environment and was forced to live the lifestyle of which other people dreamed. These characters both defined by the societal roles were augmented the societal conditions. Additionally, the characters’ conditions relate to the daily lives of nonfictional characters, where people are forced to become what the society demands, limiting personal freedom. For instance, in the movie “*Moonlight*”, repeatedly asked the

audience and the main character “Chiron” to find life’s purpose. However throughout the movie, “Chiron” was force into a lifestyle that he disliked. These examples demonstrate the way in which a person can be forced to make decisions, not because it is a person’s desire, but rather because he or she is influenced by the society.

Jon’s life spiraled out of control based on other’s influences, when he decided to be a nuclear physicist. Jon trapped himself inside the laboratory tube, where his body got disintegrated. “Jon becomes a nuclear physicist and, one day in the laboratory, is caught on the wrong side of an experiment that removes the intrinsic field from objects. Months later, Jon manages to reintegrate his body, but he now has great control over matter and energy. The government immediately capitalize on this and names him ‘Dr. Manhattan’”(Fishbraugh 194) Jon’s life were forced to change from being a nuclear physicist to the United State’s profits, which “Watchmen” showed once again, that Jon did not have the freedom to become his desired social role, instead he had to obey United States’ government, joining wars, doing researches for United States, and Acting as a fire-wall from the other countries’ invasions. Gibbon and Moore used the example of Jon’s life to demonstrate that life’s choices are made by incidents or the society, human cannot always be free to express his or her opinions. Gibbon and Moore also tried to instill the concept “determinism”, where the future outcome is determined by the actions that human made. However, the authors hinted that free will does not exist, which ultimately relating it back to the fact that society dictates a person’s decisions.

“Dr. Manhattan (a.k.a. Jon Osterman), on the other hand, breaks all the other laws, those of the universe. He sees space-time synchronically, across the layers of events, all things and places simultaneously. And he is able to do pretty much anything he wills with matter. Yet, even with all this power, he at first chooses only to act according to one government’s whims and,

later only according to his own.”(Dietrich 122), Dr. Manhattan regarded as the unstoppable weapon during cold-war. The United States won the Vietnam War because Dr. Manhattan could single handedly disintegrate the enemies on the battlefield. First, Jon was forced to study nuclear physics, because his dad discovered the weapon - atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, then ironically he was forced to take on the role as the weapon against his enemy. Dietrich described him to be the unstoppable monster, whose will was to help his country. Due to his service for the country, Jon was viewed as benevolent, along with the comedian, who also served during Vietnam War with the motivation that he enjoyed killing. However, the other heroes who were named the “Minutemen” in the story regarded as the vigilantes of the country, and eventually “Minutemen” were disbanded, because the society viewed Minutemen’s actions disturbed. Immersive killing was regarded as the morally well-standing action according to Gibbon and Moore, but crime fighting or any inner city heroic activities were viewed as destructive. The ending of “Watchmen” demonstrated evil actions are categorized as socially acceptable. The story viewed morality was only sculpted by the society.

As the story “Watchmen” progress, Dr. Manhattan was accused of “spreading cancer” to anyone who he had contacted. The reason was, the media assumed, being highly radio-active. Dr. Manhattan snapped under the highly influence of the pressed, and transported a room full of press reporters outside of the interview stadium, during the transportation he accidentally killed several people by inducing heart attack. Eventually, Dr. Manhattan left for Mars, because he saw minimal connection with humanity. During his exile, flash backs of the past and the future were simultaneously connected. “After his transformation, Jon, like God, experiences every minute of time simultaneously. In 1959, he knows that will happen in 1969 because he is already there; he knows about JFK’s assassination at his rebirth because he was already experiencing it, unable to

change the course of history.”(Fishbaugh 195) Therefore, determinism is used to exemplify that it was terrified that such godly character would not change the course of future or history because he recognized the principle of determinism. Every actions or decisions of Jon were predetermined, where he has no freedom to change or manipulate his life; he knew his role was to be the “Dr. Manhattan” that United States’ needed. Dr. Manhattan could be anyone, but the role Dr. Manhattan chose Jon.

Jon is the ultimate victim of social selection, because society sculpted him into the character Dr. Manhattan, ever since the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima; the society continually forced decisions onto Jon to ensure that he would eventually take on the Dr. Manhattan’s role. Dr. Manhattan’s relates to human’s daily life, in which decisions are made, not because a person’s desire, but because the society has already paved a predetermined path for that person.