

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, everything in this world seems to be divided into binaries, such as man/woman, white/black, good/evil et cetera. Inside good and evil binaries there is also a similar idea as those two, they are hero and villain. A hero is often represented as a good figure, while villains are depicted as the bad ones. The term of hero was first coined during the age of pre-historic Greek *ἥρως* (*hērōs*) which literally means “protector” or “defender” (Fry 2018, 21). In that same era, Greek has a notable example in the form of Perseus, an Olympian knight who slays Medusa, a snake enchantress, in order to protect Greek citizens as per order from Zeus, King of the Gods. Hero is a concept about someone, either male and female who strives for military conquest and are often admired for his/her brave acts or fine qualities (Campbell 2008, 42). Examples of heroes or heroines range from a mythical figure, such as Perseus which has been explained before; a real person, such as Nelson Mandela, who is often hailed as the liberator by the people of color; or even fictional figures in popular culture, such as Superman.

Popular culture enthusiasts, especially comic book fans may often hear the terms hero and villain. However, not all of them understood that there are characters who do not belong to the hero nor villain categories, who called anti-heroes. Today's pop culture has many examples of anti-heroes. For instance, it can be seen from two major publishers in the United States, DC Comics and Marvel comics. DC has Batman as their anti-hero icon, while Marvel

has Deadpool as their anti-hero icon. Batman considered as an anti-hero because he tends to use physical violence and intimidation to defeat his enemies (Comerford 2016, 4).

As argued by David Simmons in his book entitled *The Anti-Hero in the American Novel*, an anti-hero is generally a rebel with a cause, who has strong desire to change the social conditions, in which the driving motives usually comes within the individual's state of mind (2008, 22). There might be reasons why someone decides to be an anti-hero. One of the reasons is believed to be rooted from trauma, whether physical or psychological. In the beginning, these anti-hero characters become pitiable victims of society whom the readers are able to empathize with, but not admire. This explanation has something to do with the origin story, it is a comic book terminology which refers to a recount or flashback revealing how a character gained their superpowers (Fick 1995, 3).

To understand further about the concept of an anti-hero, it is best to discuss from the perspective of two prominent anti-hero figures, namely Batman and Deadpool. Batman's origin story comes from a psychological trauma during his childhood where he saw his parents were murdered by some lowlife criminals after he and his parents finished watching theatre. During that time, Batman may not realize that society already mistreated him, but the painful experience eventually leads him to train himself in order to achieve physical and intellectual perfection (Comerford 2016, 5-6). Another origin story we can relate to is Deadpool's. His origin story comes from physical trauma, he was assigned to conduct experiments for ex mercenaries. However, the experiment itself failed miserably, resulting in Deadpool to receive superpowers after that malpractice. Despite having superpowers, which usually a thing that everyone can be grateful upon, Deadpool pursues Ajax, his assigned scientist during the experiment, because he does not like becoming a responsible

person as he is granted with superpowers now (Fick 1995, 6). Furthermore, Batman's objective is to avenge his parents as well as eradicate crimes around Gotham City, while Deadpool's objective is to pursue Ajax only. Both of these figures has a similarity with The Punisher, which is all of them are not afraid to utilize elements of chaos to complete their objective.

Based on their approach or objectives, both Batman and Deadpool can be considered as an anti-hero. It is important to remember that anti-hero is merely an identity. The phenomenon where a person has second or multiple identities is called *persona*. Persona is the individual's system of adaptation to, or the manner he assumes in dealing with the world. Every calling of profession, for example, has its own characteristic persona (Jung 1975). The persona serves as a substitution of one's self in the society, they could not bear to show their true demeanors to the world. In this case, the persona is Batman and Deadpool. In real life, Deadpool is known as Wade Wilson, an ex-mercenary who spent most of his time relaxing because he had enough about how life treats him. Meanwhile, Batman in real life is a respectable wealthy businessman named Bruce Wayne. Although Batman has no superhuman powers, he is considered as one of the world's smartest men.

Sometimes, it is quite confusing to distinguish between shadow archetype and persona archetype. As Jung stated, a shadow is simply the dark side of someone's personality, and one discovers his/her dark side through others, such as: friends, family, and fictious characters (1969). The dark side/shadow has its own relation to the concept of personal unconscious, which includes everything repressed such as trauma or sexual desires. In this case, Batman's shadow is his parent's murderer and Deadpool's shadow is Ajax, the scientist who made him angry. On the other hand, persona archetype is simply a mask, a mask

someone anointed to deal with society, which is usually forced on by the world. Moreover, Jung also mentioned the phenomenon of individuation, it is a condition where a psyche accepts their persona and shadow to achieve their true identity. Batman learned his true purpose is to protect Gotham citizens, while Deadpool is still on the search of his identity.

The object chosen to be the focus of analysis in this study is a graphic novel entitled *Welcome Back, Frank* published by Marvel comics in 2011. This graphic novel is actually a compilation from the first 12 issues of The Punisher franchise, which mainly revolves in the beginning period of The Punisher. This graphic novel is written by Garth Ennis and illustrated by Steve Dillon. It is intriguing to know that this graphic novel is one of a few titles which features an anti-hero as its central figure that gained wide recognition from critics and comic book enthusiasts. The recognition itself is caused by the influence of the author, which can be found further below and also its contents that tells the readers about how The Punisher struggles against both himself and his enemies. Hence, making *Welcome Back, Frank* as an interesting title to analyze.

The author of *Welcome Back Frank*, Garth Ennis, has won several Eisner awards, the most prestigious award among the comic book or graphic novel authors. He won Eisner awards, back in 1998 and 1999 for his work entitled *Hitman, Preacher, Unknown Soldier* and *Bloody Mary: Lady Liberty* published in DC comics (*comic book database website*). He may have yet to win awards for his work in Marvel comics or Vertigo, but it does not mean Ennis should be underestimated. Another achievement he made is the adaptation for his works. For instance, *The Boys*, Amazon Prime's recent addition of television series which was adapted from the Ennis's work with the same title which was written in 2005. Despite its lack of awards or nominations, The Punisher has its own charms

for the readers. It has been adapted into two feature films (*The Punisher and The Punisher: War Zone*) which released by Lionsgate entertainment in 2004 and 2008 respectively. Also, The Punisher managed to obtain its own television series which aired from 2017 to early 2019 in Netflix streaming platform.

The writer thinks it is best to discuss this issue based on contemporary ideas because graphic novels and comics are considered as a contemporary literature form. There is only one literary criticism theory used throughout this study, which is *archetypal criticism* coined by Carl Jung. Archetypal criticism is a type of critical theory that interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes presented in the form of narrative, symbols, and images (Dobie 2015). It is possible for some mythologies to have similar characteristics, themes, and images, in which it can produce the same common meanings. This phenomenon is referred to as *collective unconsciousness* or *archetypes* by Jung.

Throughout this study, the writer only focuses on one character depicted in *Welcome Back Frank*. The character itself is the protagonist, whose name is Frank Castle. Frank Castle was a member of the United States Marine Corps who served two tours in Vietnam. He is a good man with a good family, until one day he lost them in the hands of Gnucci mafia family. Those incidents shattered Frank to pieces. However, instead of giving up on injustice, Frank gave birth to another persona known as The Punisher. He wages on war vice, judge, jury, and executioner wherever it lurks. The Punisher possesses no superhuman abilities, unlike any other superheroes. However, he is capable of handling any kind of weapons and eliminating thugs only with his bare hands, courtesy of his military training. Punisher dislikes cooperating with others because he feels that his mission is completely personal. Moreover,

Punisher does not hesitate to murder his enemies, as he believed that those kinds of people only deserve death, not absolution (Worcester 2012, 10).

There are several reasons why the writer chose *Welcome Back Frank* as the object for his thesis project. First, he believes only a few of English department students of Universitas Airlangga, especially from literature major who decides to use graphic novel or comic as their object. Hence the writer tries to contribute in promoting the use of graphic novel as an object. The second reason is the writer's intention to contribute in analyzing Marvel character as the object for undergraduate thesis. The third and final reason is the realization of persona and shadow phenomena can be encountered in our daily lives. Aforementioned, persona is a mask that someone uses to deal with the society around him/her. For instance, the way we organize or utilize our social media can be categorized as persona. On the other hand, the phenomenon of shadow can be seen within ourselves, as Jung (1975) stated in his book about *collective unconsciousness* that shadow is basically every human's dark part which is often avoided.

Numerous researches have been carried out regarding the anti-hero issue, among them are studies from Thomas Fick (1995) and Christopher Comerford (2016). In his article, Fick discussed the traits that distinguish heroes and anti-heroes based on his observation using the archetype theory, throughout the article he compares Superman and Daredevil as his examples. He argues from the perspective of *rebel* archetype, one of the 12 sub archetypes identified in literature. Another research was carried out by Christopher Comerford, who argues from the perspective of deconstruction. He believes that an anti-hero is only a step closer to become a villain, thanks to his/her villainous acts. These related studies show that in order to analyze anti-hero, one must focus on his/her characterization. Based on the

aforementioned studies, this study aims to elaborate on different perspectives regarding anti-hero issues as its results. Using the clear portrayals of an anti-hero, this study attempts to discuss both persona and shadow of the protagonist.

Unfortunately, there is only a handful of studies in Universitas Airlangga which focuses on anti-hero persona. Hence, makes it important for the writer to conduct a study about Frank Castle or The Punisher as one of many examples regarding anti-heroes. Therefore, this study may become the newest addition of archetypal criticism which focuses on persona and shadow archetypes.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

1. How does the persona and the shadow of The Punisher as an anti-hero portrayed in Ennis's *Welcome Back Frank*?
2. How do the shadow and the persona of The Punisher affect his progress in achieving the individuation?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research statements above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To provide clearer understandings regarding the characteristics and the villains of The Punisher as an anti-hero.
2. To elaborate the influence from both persona and shadow archetype in helping Frank Castle to discover his true purpose of living.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to offer an additional breakthrough in the archetypal study in undergraduate thesis conducted by the students of English Department. Archetypal approach

is actually a rather fascinating theory as it deals with collective unconsciousness which shares similar characteristics among humans. The additional breakthrough is the application of archetypal theory for an anti-hero character, instead of a hero. Previous studies about archetype in Universitas Airlangga mainly focused on heroes as it is much convenient to analyze a hero archetype because of the availability of various supporting studies, such as Joseph Campbell's theory about the hero's journey. Hence, it is quite challenging to analyze anti-heroes because of the lack of supporting studies. In addition, this study also analyzes a graphic novel as its object; which is one of the objects that is still few to be discussed as a thesis material among Universitas Airlangga's English Department students.

The writer chose to analyze a graphic novel because the elements in graphic novel have exceeding amounts of narrative elements compared to other literary works. In addition to plot, characterization, and settings analysis, there are non-narrative elements found inside a graphic novel such as layout, frame, color scheme, and captions which makes the analysis more variative. Therefore, this study hopefully can also contribute in giving opinions about anti-hero, as this issue might become another archetypal studies regarding hero, anti-hero, and villain spectrum. Thus, the writer hopes this study can become a reference for the forthcoming study using a similar issue or theory.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Anti-Hero: A rebel with a cause or a hero who walks outside the path of constructed justice (Simmons 2008, 22).

The Punisher: A fictional character, an anti-hero that appears in comic books published by Marvel Comics (definitions.net)

Rebel: A person who does not like to obey rules or who does not accept normal standards of behaviour, dress, etc (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries n.d.).