

# Brian k. vaughans ex- machina: mitchell hundred is a re- imagined superhero essay

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## **Brian K Vaughan's hero in Ex-Machina, Mitchell Hundred, is a reimagined hero.**

While the hero as a literary figure exists in a variety of literary contexts, comics are the literary medium where a hero feels most at home. Though comics can be written to explore any theme that can be explored in any branch of writing, comics are most commonly associated as having a hero. An example of the traditional archetype of the super-hero would be Superman or Batman. Comic scholar Christopher Gonzalez defines this as America's idealization of the individual. (Gonzalez, 2011). He breaks the mold of the traditional hero. What is the political and social significance of this story?

The creator of Hundred uses this reimagined hero in order to argue against the need for heroes, since superheroes lead to a helpless population. The importance of this is that the hero here is an argument against superheroes. In the context of the story, this is affective. Vaughan uses literary techniques in developed this character and it's comparison to formal features of the superhero comic. Vaughan brings this question to the table and vigilantism plays an important role in the story and what it means to be a "hero" operating outside the legal system in place to fight crime.

Ex Machina was picked up by DC Comic's Wildstorm imprint and ran fifty issues from 2004-2010 when the series formerly ended. According to the author of the comic, there are political implications within the story. Ex Machina comes from the Latin sentence "deus ex machine" and Mitchel says that it cam from a quote about society that Thomas Jefferson had said.

Deus ex machine is when a problem is solved in an innovative, often unexpected way. (Coats, 2014).

### **How has Vaughan used the superhero genre/characteristics and why is this important?**

Vaughan uses super powers like the genre superhero, but he also instills doubt in the Hundred about whether he is actually a cause for good. The comic explores libertarian themes. The common conflicts found throughout the series is the government creating helpless citizens by providing too much for them. The government in the world created by Mitchell creates helpless welfare states of helpless citizens who then need the government to save them since they are unable to do this on their own. Mitchell is open that he uses his comic to explore current political themes. He was dissatisfied with current leadership in the United States and so he wanted to create a comic where the issues of the day were able to be seen in an exaggerated form in order to shed a light on current political problems plaguing the country.

(Olawo, 2014).

### **What is the significance of a failed superhero? What is the significance of vigilantism in this story?**

Mitchel Hundred is a new take on a hero. By the traditional definition put forth by Gonzales, he is a failed superhero. Yet as the protagonist fighting for good, there must be some heroic, redeeming qualities to him. In his dialogue he often wishes that he was not in the position he was. In this sense, he is a reluctant hero. He does what he needs to do, but at times he would prefer to go back to being an engineer. When he is speaking with fine arts major he tells her that he misses being an engineer. He wonders why a person misses

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whatever you were doing the thing before they were currently doing. His personal background is in engineering and he is purported to know more about the Brooklyn Bridge than anyone in New York. His mother formed his political views. Throughout the series there is mystique in connection to his sexuality. Throughout the series he is asked if he is gay he refuses to respond directly to these questions. Rather than being a cut-up, the main character has facial scars, which diminish his physical appearance. His "super-power" is his ability to control mechanical objects such as guns or cell phones. But he is not so much able to control them, as he is able to talk to them. He can communicate to them, but they do not always obey him. This is part of what makes him a failed hero, his super power sometimes controls him instead of the other way around. There is an assassination of Hundred shortly after his inauguration and he was dismayed to find that his powers prevented him from controlling a bow and arrow.

Heroes change with the times. Hundred can also be seen as a hero by more contemporary understandings since a hero, must "invent the new self . . . in this new world" (Gonzales, 49). In the Finale, issue #50 of the series, Hundred shares his view that real heroes do not exist. If real heroes do not exist, then he clearly is not one., But this leads to the question of, what is he then? Is he a vigilante breaking the laws of the government that he is at the head of as mayor? His explanation not only provides a good explanation for what a hero is in the Ex Machina in this world view but also the frustration with government that leads a person to vigilantism. "People blame me for Bush in his flight suit and Arnold getting elected governor. But this is Those things would have happened with or without me. . . Everyone was

scared back then, and when folks are scared, they want to be surrounded by heroes. But real heroes are just a fiction we create. They don't exist outside of comic books" This is an interesting indictment to appear inside a comic book. It makes the argument that even if heroes don't exist in the real world, then Hundred could still be a hero since he exists in a comic book. But this is not the message that the author is trying to relate in this scene. The message of Hundred is that there are no heroes. There are people who are trying to make the world a better policed and they do different things to achieve this. They are also human and are subject to their own insecurities and regrets. Throughout the series Hundred is a reluctant hero, doing his "heroic" actions as a result of his sense of personal duty and ethics. Part of the conflict of the series is not the external conflict of crimes happening to citizens, instead it is the internal conflict of Hundred. He has had to go through a number of difficult things that leave him psychologically worse for the where. He often reminds himself that he is not a hero, for a hero would have at least been able to protect his wife who was killed in year 2005 of the series. Yet even though his is uncomfortable with the title of "hero," the message of the series is that people need not look outside of themselves for a hero to solve their problems. IF they do, then they their solutions come from outside of themselves rather than within side themselves collectively. When people rely on something outside of themselves, such as government, then their problems will not be solved. In this understanding a hero might do some good in the short term, but in the long term it creates a society of helpless people.

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