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## AGE OF ULTRON

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*Age of Ultron* is a series of graphic novels, written by Brian Michael Bendis in 2013. The story arc tells about a dystopian world, in which artificial intelligence, Ultron, wishes to destroy humankind. Various superheroes, such as Spiderman, Iron Man, Red Hulk, Captain America, Wolverine, etc., try to fight against Ultron, returning to the past and changing history. The story may seem too intricate and obscure. Besides, when reading it from the feminist perspective, one can notice that female characters are depicted in not the best way. They are mostly shown as sexual objects and are in a minority. Among heroines are Emma Frost, Valkyrie, Monica Rambeau, Storm and Sue Storm, Black Widow, Captain Marvel, Spider-Woman, Angela, etc. These characters have no personal story lines but they just further male heroes' development. Analyzing the novel through feminist lens, one can notice that, although the number of female characters is not low, the role of those women is minor, which is illustrated in *Age of Ultron*.

While reading the first book, the readers can see the ruined city and a



fight between several men. In the beginning, one can observe sexual bodies of women, their low-necked tank tops, and extra-short skirts. Some men want to rape them, and the others defend them. The readers can distinguish positive and negative characters. Some men serve Ultron, an artificial intelligence, who rules in the city. The superheroes, such as Spider-Man, Iron Man, She-Hulk, Wolverine, Captain America, etc., are hidden underground. Their aim is to destroy Ultron. First, they decide to go back to the past and kill Ultron's creator, Henry Pym, but when they return to the present time, the situation becomes even worse. Thus, they go back again and tell Henry Pym about his creature and its consequences. As a result, the scientists becomes insane and wants to kill himself, but then he changes his mind, remembering that the world could have been worse without him. The story ends when Henry Pym takes the head of Ultron and wants to modify the world for the best.

The graphic novel *Age of Ultron* is intended for adults. The illustrations are cruel and rude. There are too much blood and crashes; however, the pictures are appropriate to the plot. For example, in the book 5, the readers can see the burning city and flying robots so that there is "no phone, no internet, no power" (Bendis 10-11). The illustrations look fantastic, which is fine for such genre. I like the illustrations and the content; however, I would like to see more text. Some pages have no texts at all, and it makes the readers turn over the pages without observing the pictures. It would be better if at least several sentences were present on such pages. Besides, the dialogs are disconnected so that it is sometimes difficult to understand whose turn is to say



something. Probably, if there were numbers, showing the order of the dialogs, it would be easier to read the book. I also like the characters. They are interesting since they have different superpowers. Each character is special, and those readers who are fond of comics have for sure met them in other series. The story has a thrilling plot, and the readers are waiting forward for each issue. Thus, *Age of Ultron* is interesting for real connoisseurs of comics who like superheroes, fights between good and bad, and different fantastic elements in the story.

I will analyze the comic novel *Age of Ultron* using the feminist lens. Feminism is “theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially” (“Feminist Theory”). In literature, it means that men and women should be depicted as equal characters, without gender and sex discrimination. The feminist movement appeared in the 1970s when women-writers began to recognize their power and equality and expressed their thoughts in their writings (Lee). Women wanted to be treated equally in the male dominated society. Thus, more and more women started to fight for their rights and achieved some progress and success in their efforts. Today, there are several branches of feminist theory, such as cultural feminism, ecofeminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, social feminism, postmodern feminism, libertarian feminism, etc. One of the founders of the modern feminist theory is Sandra Harding, a philosopher of science and UCLA Education Professor (Harmon). She is sure that women have the right to participate in “good science” and to seek answers to their questions instead of studying only those



issues, which are imposed by the West (Harmon). Although her feminist theory refers to science, it can also be applied to art and literature and can explain women's wishes to be depicted as equal with men people.

*Age of Ultron* can be analyzed from the feminist perspective since all female characters are shown as minor personages. Besides, they are illustrated as sexual objects. Their clothes are too open and tight-fitting, and the readers can observe their shapes in details. On the one hand, women-heroes do not lose their sexuality and are still women. However, their role is still secondary. For instance, when Wolverine returns to the past, Mrs. Richards follows him, and he is not very happy to know that she tries to stop him from killing Henry Pym (Bendis Issue 6 4). Nevertheless, Wolverine protects her from danger, and this fact proves that he considers women weak.

On the contrary, a super-heroine Quake is shown as a strong and male-like woman with female body (Bendis Issue 6 15). One can notice that those women who have long hair are shown as weaker characters than women with short hair. Thus, feminists can be unsatisfied with such illustration of women characters. According to the feminist theory, women and men should be treated equally, which means that there is no need to defend women and consider them weaker than men. However, in *Age of Ultron*, some heroines are not as strong as men are. Besides, there is no female protagonist-villain, except Morgana Le Fay, who appears in issue 8 and fights against the Defenders. However, her role is too short.



After reading the series of comics *Age of Ultron*, one can notice that the protagonists and antagonists are mostly men, and women rarely participate in important actions. When analyzing the novel from the feminist perspective, it is necessary to say that female characters are visually depicted as sexual objects. They have beautiful half-naked bodies, tight-fitting clothes, and are perceived as appendixes to men. On the contrary, the main heroes, both positive and negative, are men. Even the robots are males. This fact makes the comics unacceptable for feminists who want women to be treated equally with men. Thus, *Age of Ultron* is a series of graphic novels for young men who wish to look like superheroes and dominate over women. Those defenders of women's rights would consider this series too sexist and hyper-masculine.

In conclusion, *Age of Ultron* can be analyzed from different perspective and lenses. However, when speaking about the feminist lens, it seems that women are minor characters, who are shown as objects of sexual desires and men's addenda. Although several super-heroines are strong and volitional, they are still less powerful than men. Thus, according to the feminist theory, graphic novel *Age of Ultron* can be called a little bit gender discriminating work of art.

