Twitter Thread by Conor Reads Claremont ⊗



Conor Reads Claremont ⊗
@ConorReadsXMen

Happy Monday readers, it's Dark Phoenix week! Over the next ten issues, we'll explore what is perhaps Claremont's most celebrated story that depicts the ascension of Jean Grey to the role of Dark Phoenix.

It's UXM #129-130, in which we are introduced to multiple X-mainstays!

I warned late last week that these threads will include heavy topics, because I find it difficult to adequately discuss the D.P.S. without acknowledging its commentary on agency, sexual violence, & how privilege corrupts.

Please stay safe & mute me until Sunday if you need to!

Our first issue starts off where we left off on the shores of Muir Island following the team's defeat of Proteus!

It's incredible to think that just last issue, the team met their most dangerous opponent yet, but Proteus was only but a primer for what the team will face next.

Our team officially drops from 7 to 6, with Banshee, after many issues depowered following an injury, officially leaving the team to remain with Moira on Muir Island.

Scott's attempts to make up his membership losses are rebuffed not once- but 3 times by Jamie, Alex, & Lorna!

It's almost like Claremont was clearing the decks to make room for some new members on the team...

What feels like a throwaway bubble about Piotr's anguish over killing Proteus, actually sets an important thematic point ahead of the DPS in full.

The X-Men don't kill. Even when faced with a violence, death is not cause for celebration. What would happen if innocents died?

...and speaking of corruption, here's Wyngarde, still pulling Jean's strings and manipulating her already further into darkness.

Many of Wyngarde's manipulations center on reverse-sublimating Jean's dark desires in exchange of her adherence to social norms...

...signaling the inverse of what Freud would have called a mature defense mechanism.

After discovering that widespread sexual abuse of women was behind the trauma response then known as "hysteria", Freud quickly buried his findings and rejected its implications for society...

...all of which is pretty appropriately manifested in the ethos of the Hellfire Club, an group built on patriarchy, privilege, and the depiction of women as tools rather than individuals of agency.

Even Emma (hey queen!) is depicted as subservient, despite the power she wields.

Back on the Blackbird, we're given a moment addressing Scott's recent "just friends" dalliance with Colleen, where a sympathetic and compassionate Jean understands the extent of his trauma and the role it's played in the repression of his emotion.

Sorry, lots of Freud today...

Hey, Chuck is back from space and we're still only on #129!

I think more than any creative team at the time, the X-Office was really interested in the psychology of its characters... which as a social worker has been pretty hard to ignore.

Keeping with today's theme, it's clear here that after spending several months uncomfortably playing second fiddle and consort to his royal lover, Charles is acting, as Kitty might describe, like a jerk.

It's obvious he's projecting his own sense of inadequacy onto Scott...

...making Scott the avatar of his weakness, allowing him to say everything he wants to say to himself to another.

There's also reaction formation. I feel useless, thus I must loudly demonstrate my use to everyone.

You'd hope a psychic might have a better handle on psychology.

And now, the moment anyone familiar with #129 has been waiting for: the introduction of one Ms. Katherine Pryde, already finding ways to be iconic:

1. KISS poster
2. Kermit poster
3. Adolescent existential dread

We love to see it. Welcome Kitty, hope you survive the experience.

Over the next several years, Kitty will become *the* POV character for the book and there will be lots to unpack as we get to know her.

Rereading this reminded me of @GerryDuggan's current Marauders run- and the relationships Kitty will share with these two for years to come.

Two important facets of her identity that will play a major role in her characterization are quickly established:

Kitty is distinctly Jewish- something the team wants us to know as it places visual focus on her Star of David.

And she is a courageous, fierce hero in the making.

Ah yes, safety pins as piercings, what a way to clearly interpret this disco as ~one of those bad places~. Stop being such a square, Scott. Gosh.

(Safety pins are to Manhattan night clubs as smut shops are to Calgary neighborhoods, or something, I guess.)

Hey, it's an overtly Freudian concept again!

Thanks to Wyngarde's psychic interference, the walls of Jean's sublimation are beginning to crumble... forcing her to confront a reality, which frowned upon at the time, is true nonetheless...

...women are also... horny.

Jeez this thread is getting really long.

I mentioned earlier that the Hellfire Club is thematically built on the power of men and the objectification of women, and this exchange between Wyngarde & Shaw really captured that for me...

...Shaw is so privileged that he hasn't even considered others might be more powerful than him.

It's a level of arrogance- and an expectation subverted masterfully by Claremont & co.- that will become his undoing.

Also, this, unrelated to the above point, for your pleasure:

This is the 1st of many disgusting moments where Wyngarde psychically and literally assaults Jean.

The creation of the Black Queen is a really profound moment in looking at dissociation as a trauma response. Victimized, she builds a personality whose sexuality belongs to no man.

Which compared to these panel... is something a vulnerable Jean has done to protect herself as others have failed to do so.

It's subtle, but I noticed this parallel about the idea of using Jean as a tool. Despite his love, Scott still sees Jean as a weapon to be wielded in war.

For a final set of stray thoughts, I wanted to welcome Dazzler to the book and view her as a symbol for the privilege of passing in the mutant metaphor, which stands out against this moment with Kurt, where he describes the professor's anger about his decision to live "out".

It's one of the earliest indicators of the flaws in Xavier's dream. Assimilation requires the abandonment of identity, which for any oppressed people, is a form of erasure and genocide.

Kurt's panel is an argument for the existence of Krakoa, in case you still can't get it.

Did you know there's a max limit to the number of tweets you can post in a thread at once? Evidently it's this many.

In any case, here's another hint toward the true identity of Jason Wyngarde, and a terrible omen of what's to come for the team.