

## Supersex: Sexuality, Fantasy, and the Superhero

**Anna Peppard**

University of Texas Press (Dec 8, 2020)

Hardcover \$60.00 (400pp)

978-1-4773-2160-7

The insightful essays of *Supersex* comment on the omnipresence—and official absence—of superheroes' sexuality.

This collection acknowledges that comics have been a site of moral panic for generations. The superhero genre, in particular, “enables rebellions that are at once obvious and elusive, subversive and conservative,” it says. Because of superhero bodies' hypervisibility and the graphic visuality of superhero media, “superhero sexuality is flagrantly present even when it is officially absent.” These essays excel at demonstrating the depth to which comic book heroes have penetrated culture, both in history and today. They range from explorations of Silver and Golden Age superhero comics to the Marvel Cinematic Universe and superhero television series.

Peppard's introduction sets the tone, underpinning the collection and also contributing to it as a whole. It establishes an artistic and scholastic timeline for the development of modern comics and demonstrates the collections' parameters, establishing both a core set of definitions and the scholarly lenses that are used to guide subsequent inquiries. The contributor list features a healthy balance of men and women, both straight and LGBTQ+ identified. Their work is enlightening and prioritizes intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches to grapple with the subtextual, explicit importance of superheroes' sexuality. The essays are accompanied by useful illustrative materials and reproductions of rare source materials.

The rhetorical styles of these writers vary: some essayists use memoir as framework for their interrogations, while others stick to a more classical expository approach. On balance, Peppard's assemblage shows just how varied and multivalent superhero media is, as well as highlighting the diversity of experiences and interpretations of it.

*Supersex* is a broad cultural survey of superheroes, with insights that are beguiling fuel for the critical imagination.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November / December 2020)

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