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Superheroes and Identities

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Superheroes have been the major genre to emerge from comics and graphic novels, saturating popular culture with images of muscular men and sexy women. A major aspect of this genre is identity in the roles played by individuals, the development of identities through extended stories and in the ways the characters inspire audiences. This collection analyses stories from popular comics franchises such as *Batman, Captain America, Ms Marvel* and *X-Men,* alongside less well known comics such as *Kabuki* and *Flex Mentallo.* It explores what superhero narratives can reveal about our attitudes towards femininity, race, maternity, masculinity and queer culture. Using this approach, the volume asks questions such as why there are no black supervillains in mainstream comics, how second wave feminism and feminist film theory may help us to understand female comic book characters, the ways in which *Flex Mentallo* transcends the boundaries of straightness and gayness and how both fans and industry appropriate the sexual identity of superheroes.

The book was originally published in a special issue of the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*.

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