



INTRODUCTION

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Since their inception, superheroes have represented a fundamental element of the US American imaginary. When we go back and look at their history, we found their origin in comics publications of the early nineteenth century but we can easily notice how their impact on readers quickly brought them to other forms of media. Today, superheroes in general—but in particular US American superheroes and superheroes inspired by them—have conquered mainstream film productions, cartoons, video-games and much more. Other than being an exceptional tool of entertainment, superheroes have always been an expression of national identity, beliefs, and values. This is particularly evident if we think of some of the most famous heroes of the past who made it to more recent transpositions and adaptations. Superman is perceived as a champion of the oppressed always ready to sacrifice himself for his people, Captain America proudly wears the US American flag as his costume and risks his life fighting the Nazis, Batman uses his financial resources to protect the people of Gotham City, Wonder Woman deeply believes in peace and justice for the vulnerable strata of the population. At this point, they are cornerstones of the US American superhero range but, accompanied by a plethora of major and minor superheroic figures, they are still capable of engaging the public's attention and to embody most of the dominant US American values.

In fact, they are not the only ones capturing the scene anymore. New heroes and heroines are born every day, and thanks to the outburst of Hollywood movies about them in the 2000s they have reached an even wider diffusion. The Marvel Cinematic Universe has seen the release of more than twenty superhero movies and tv-series between 2008 and 2019, and DC has followed with a project of relaunch of some of its most loved characters, paving the way for a new superhero renaissance. Today, old values coexist with new popular culture topics and new social themes that need their own superheroes to be embodied and represented. These new heroes and heroines come with old and new medias, believe in equality, freely express their sexuality, fight for political correctness and defend diversity. This dossier aims to discuss the nostalgia of old narratives and the innovation of the new ones that help us deal with the struggle inherent of our current times.

In “Looking for the Arab Superheroine: Layla El-Faouly, Marvel’s *Moon Knight*, and the Imperial Gaze,” Zvonimir Prtenjača examines the stereotype of the Arab woman perpetrated by Hollywood and how in the past this resulted in a lack of interesting and well

developed Arab female characters in cinematic and tv productions. The article aims at showing how Arab women are starting to reject the western gaze by analyzing one of Marvel's most recent tv-series, *Moon Knight*, and its fierce female protagonist: Layla El-Faouly.

Troy Bordun in his article “Wonder Woman’s Deleuzian Ethics in Grant Morrison and Yanick Paquette’s Wonder Woman: Earth One” uses Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s claims about the limitations of the use of violence as the only form of problem solving in superhero narrations to analyze Wonder Woman's character. With particular reference to Grant Morrison and Yanick Paquette’s *Wonder Woman: Earth One*, Volume 1 (2016), the article highlights Wonder Woman's alternative ways of communication which lead her to be a different kind of superheroine.

In “The Politics of Antihero Aesthetics: Andy Warhol’s *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* at the 1964 World’s Fair,” Elena Sidorova studies the famous series of portraits made by Andy Warhol and the economic-political context in which the project was developed. The ambiguous theme of the antihero is explored together with the roles of Philip Johnson, architect of the pavilion in which the piece was exposed, and Ileana Sonnabend, art dealer and responsible of the international circulation of Warhol's work.

The article “WandaVision through the Sitcoms: A Study of the Series’ Narrative Construction” by Ana Sánchez-Asenjo examines the Marvel tv-series *WandaVision* and its peculiar structure. Making the characters travel through several famous sitcoms of different ages, the series is an homage to the genre. This analysis deeply inspects every episode to find the connections between the sitcom genre development through the history and how it is used to enact the characters' story.

In her article “The Chivalric Romance in the Age of its Neoliberal Reproducibility,” Alice Balestrino presents the hypothesis that the Avengers adventures and the ones of Iron Man in particular are a modern translation of chivalric romance and knights’ quests. To prove this thesis, the article examines the Iron Man and the Avengers’ movies in continuity with literary tradition.

Leonor Acosta Bustamante provides her reflections in “Twenty-First-Century Avengers: Exploration of War, Globalization, and Identity Politics,” an analysis of how the Marvel Cinematic Universe has, with the four movies of The Avengers saga between 2012 and 2019, explored the topic of war and its implications. The article aims to give an analysis of the movies and how they succeed in offering to the public an interesting deconstruction of stereotypes and simplistic concepts such as good and evil.

“Feminist Quest Heroine: Female Superheroines and Deconstruction of Male Heroism” by Thanong Aupitak discusses how the concept of heroism evolved through time, leaving the stereotype of the white muscular male hero behind to enclose a more inclusive and wide range of possibilities. Grounded in gender studies, the text develops its

thesis through the analysis of past and present superhero popular products of entertainment.

The last article is “*V for Vendetta* (2005) and the Sociopolitical Impact of a Shakespearean Dystopian Avenger” by Xelo Forés Rossell and it is an analysis of James McTeigue and the Wachowski sisters’ film adaptation (2005) of Alan Moore and David Lloyd’s cult graphic novel *V for Vendetta* (1982–1989). This examination is particularly focused on the representations of activism, political control, and the capacity of the film to draw on Shakespearean themes while concerning itself with contemporary issues.