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The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics (Postmillennial Pop)

By Ramzi Fawaz



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The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics (Postmillennial Pop) By Ramzi Fawaz

How fantasy meets reality as popular culture evolves and ignites postwar gender,sexual, and race revolutions.

Winner of the 2012 CLAGS Fellowship Award for Best First Book Project in LGBT Studies

In 1964, noted literary critic Leslie Fiedler described American youth as “new mutants,” social rebels severing their attachments to American culture to remake themselves in their own image. 1960s comic book creators, anticipating Fiedler, began to morph American superheroes from icons of nationalism and white masculinity into actual mutant outcasts, defined by their genetic difference from ordinary humanity. These powerful misfits and “freaks” soon came to embody the social and political aspirations of America’s most marginalized groups, including women, racial and sexual minorities, and the working classes.

In *The New Mutants*, Ramzi Fawaz draws upon queer theory to tell the story of these monstrous fantasy figures and how they grapple with radical politics from Civil Rights and The New Left to Women’s and Gay Liberation Movements. Through a series of comic book case studies – including The Justice League of America, The Fantastic Four, The X-Men, and The New Mutants –alongside late 20th century fan writing, cultural criticism, and political documents, Fawaz reveals how the American superhero modeled new forms of social belonging that counterculture youth would embrace in the 1960s and after. *The New Mutants* provides the first full-length study to consider the relationship between comic book fantasy and radical politics in the modern United States.



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Editorial Review

Review

"A powerhouse one-of-a-kind book! By charting the radical transformations of the comic book superhero in the post-war period, Fawaz brings to light the extraordinary secret history of American Otherness. Truly fantastic." -Junot Díaz, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

"Fawaz draws on close readings and sharp analysis." -*Pacific Standard*

"Much that's previously been crackling and exciting in the burgeoning field of comics studies has investigated the innovations of comic book form, or engaged with narratives of autobiography and realism that most closely mimic the prestigious kinds of storytelling recognized in literary novels. Now comes the sharp, smart, theoretically savvy exploration of the bombastic content of superhero comics, which Ramzi Fawaz's exuberant tour de force reveals that we trivialize to the detriment of our understanding of sexuality and race in postwar America, and of the ways we use fantasy to make and re-make the meanings of both. Among hypertrophic giants and mutations that grant world-conquering powers, Fawaz finds world-making that embraces universal difference as the basis for affiliative politics and puts the cosmic back into cosmopolitan—and queerness galore." -Darieck Scott, author of *Extravagant Abjection*

"*The New Mutants* is an eye-opening read, and Fawaz offers a way of reading superhero comics that is rooted both in scholarship and in the rich history of superhero narratives. It's clear that Fawaz is both a scholar and a fan, a dynamic that results in a book that should be appreciated by academics and true believers alike." -*PopMatters*

"This will go a long way towards making comics an acceptable medium of study in academia." -*San Francisco Book Review*

"Fawaz takes a hard look at the politics behind superhero comics in this...satisfying debut. [A]n enjoyable and perceptive study." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Fawaz takes readers into the wondrous world of American comic books, where we encounter an array of outcasts: the mutant, the cyborg, the alien, and the superhuman. This band of visionaries, Fawaz persuasively shows, pushed back against the constraints of postwar liberal citizenship, conjured new, emancipatory forms of social belonging, and called into question the meaning of the human being. A model of interdisciplinary scholarship, *The New Mutants* is a must-read, not only for comic book fans, but for anyone interested in understanding how popular culture fueled the gender, sexual, and race revolutions of the late twentieth century." -Natasha Zaretsky, author of *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980*

"*The New Mutant* is not only one of the smartest critiques I've ever read, it's one of the most brilliant academic engagements with pop culture, period." -*Patheos*

"[A] well-documented study of the political and cultural evolution of American comic books, from the first appearance of Superman in *Action Comics* in 1938 to the present day. A strong piece of interdisciplinary research..well-argued, clearly written." -*Library Journal*

"I have never encountered anyone--not Art Spiegelman, R. Crumb, Douglas Wolk, Stephen Burt, or even Michael Chabon--who has addressed himself to superheroes with Ramzi Fawaz's generosity of spirit and unsatisfiable critical fervor. In this book, one is caught up in the way in which we and the likes of Superman, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, and the Silver Surfer share a common terrain of both history and imagination. All sorts of people will bring a long-nurtured, even fetishized familiarity to Fawaz's pages, and it won't survive--the most familiar stories are, here, radically, thrillingly new."-Greil Marcus,author of *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*

"Ramzi Fawaz's marvelous new book, *The New Mutants*, digs deep into the long history of superheroes and unearths a radical political tradition that has mostly gone unnoticed until now."-*Popmatters*

About the Author

Ramzi Fawaz is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Helen Perez:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As you may know that book is very important for all of us. The book *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics (Postmillennial Pop)* ended up being making you to know about other know-how and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The reserve *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics (Postmillennial Pop)* is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to become your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your e-book. Try to make relationship together with the book *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics (Postmillennial Pop)*. You never experience lose out for everything if you read some books.

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Margaret Pace:

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