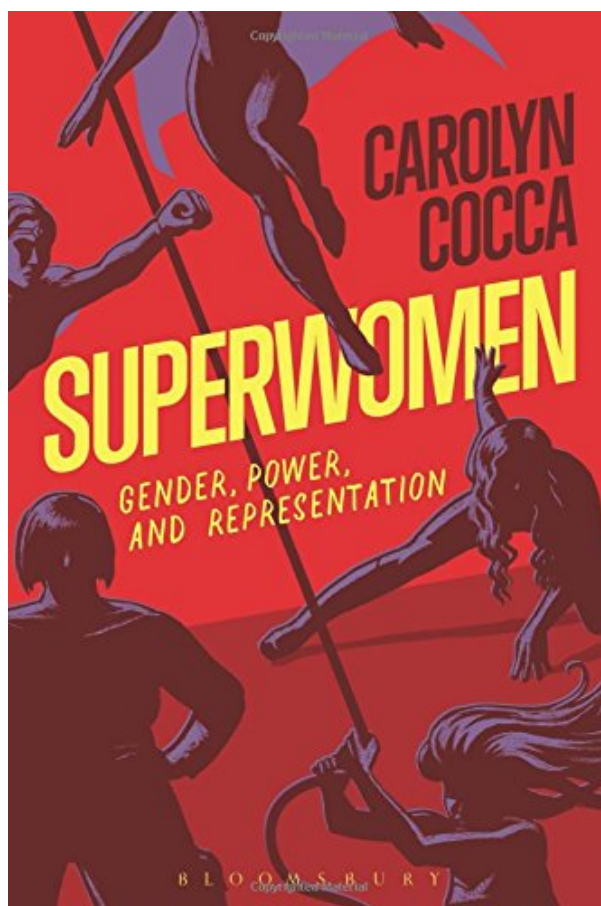
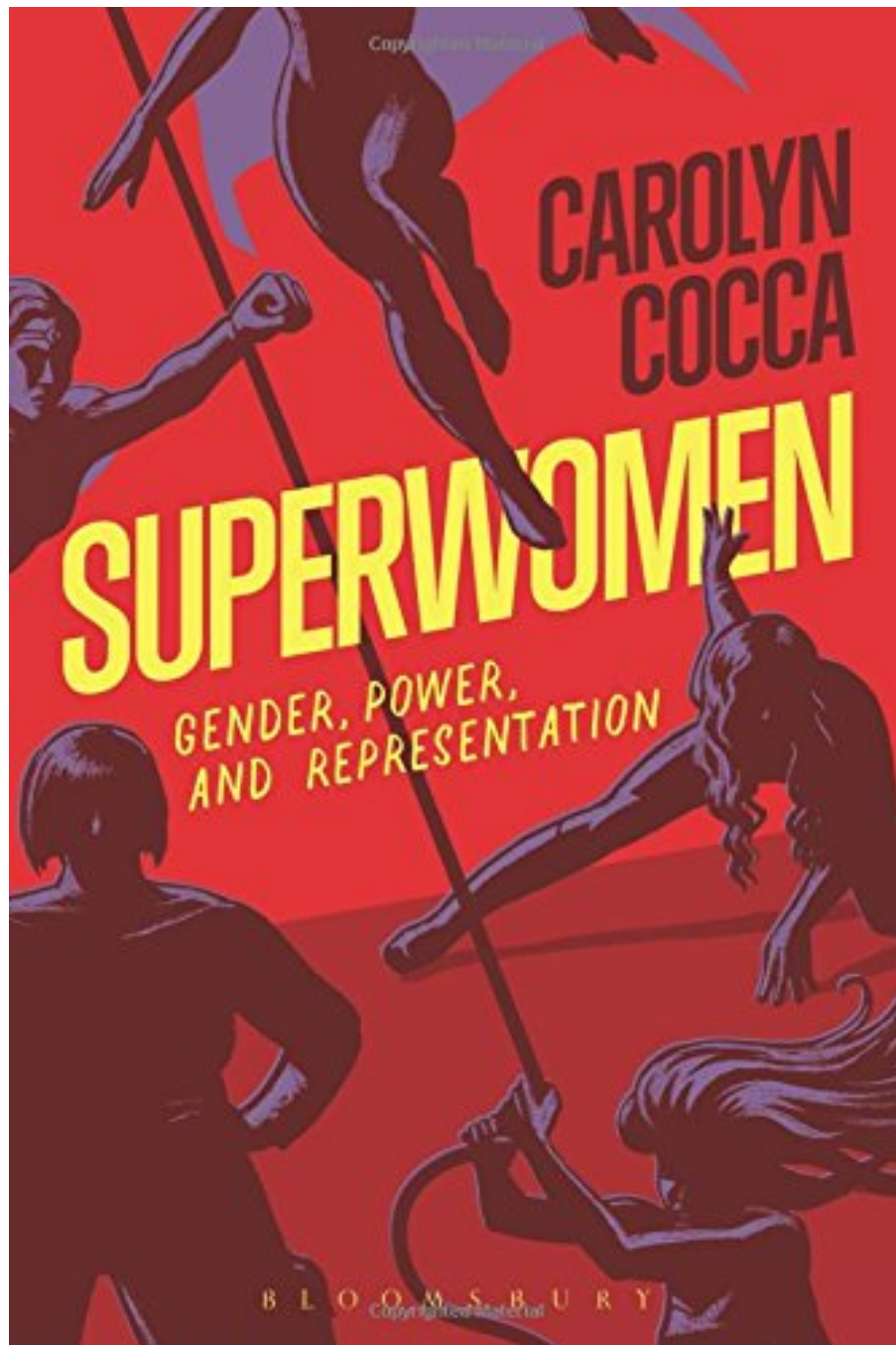


# **SUPERWOMEN: GENDER, POWER, AND REPRESENTATION BY CAROLYN COCCA**



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## **Review**

"Brava, Carolyn Cocca! In *Superwomen*, she delivers a comprehensive (and fascinating) overview of comics and pop culture women heroes, from Wonder Woman and the women of X-Men to Buffy and Princess Leia. Brava again for detailing the worst and the best treatment these characters have received in the hands of writers, artists, and film studios. And a final brava for showing how today, fans' reaction and feedback has influenced the positive representation of their beloved women heroes." - Trina Robbins, author of *Pretty in Ink*, and editor of *Babes in Arms*

"One of the greatest strengths of this work is its nesting of the portrayal of superwomen in multiple contexts to explore how and why female superheroes are portrayed. Not content with textual analysis, Cocca explores the ideology of creators, fan reception as seen through letters columns and later message boards, the effect of the movement from one medium to another on the portrayal of characters, and most significantly how the changing methods of distribution (from mass market to direct market to digital downloads and trade paperback republication) has affected who are the readers of these books, how the industry has perceived those readers, and how this has affected the portrayal of female superheroes. ... This is a very important book for comic and gender studies. It will take its place beside the work of Trina Robbins and Lilian Robinson as canonical analyses of female superheroes, and will, no doubt, be the text against which future gender and superhero studies are measured." - Matthew J. Costello, Professor of Political Science, Saint Xavier University, USA

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"This is the book pop culture scholarship needs now. The genre of the hyper-masculine, straight, white superhero has evolved radically since Wonder Woman first challenged it in the 1940s, and Carolyn Cocca has amassed a definitive history through the high-powered lens of intersectional feminism. Drawing from comics, television, and film, *Superwomen* spotlights a cast of the most influential female superheroes of the 20th and 21st centuries, revealing the power of female bodies to shape and shift cultural attitudes. Batgirl and

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#### About the Author

Carolyn Cocca is the author of *Superwomen: Gender, Power, and Representation*, articles and book chapters about gender and superheroes, and books and articles about gender and law. She is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics, Economics, and Law at the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury, USA.

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Over the last 75 years, superheroes have been portrayed most often as male, heterosexual, white, and able-bodied. Today, a time when many of these characters are billion-dollar global commodities, there are more female superheroes, more queer superheroes, more superheroes of color, and more disabled superheroes--but not many more.

*Superwomen* investigates how and why female superhero characters have become more numerous but are still not-at-all close to parity with their male counterparts; how and why they have become a flashpoint for struggles over gender, sexuality, race, and disability; what has changed over time and why in terms of how these characters have been written, drawn, marketed, purchased, read, and reacted to; and how and why representations of superheroes matter, particularly to historically underrepresented and stereotyped groups.

Specifically, the book explores the production, representations, and receptions of prominent transmedia female superheroes from their creation to the present: Wonder Woman; Batgirl and Oracle; Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel; Buffy the Vampire Slayer; Star Wars' Padmé Amidala, Leia Organa, Jaina Solo, and Rey; and X-Men's Jean Grey, Storm, Kitty Pryde, Rogue, and Mystique. It analyzes their changing portrayals in comics, novels, television shows, and films, as well as how cultural narratives of gender have been negotiated through female superheroes by creators, consumers, and parent companies over the last several decades.

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