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## Qu(e)rying Comic Book Culture and Representations of Sexuality in Wonder Woman

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### Abstract

In his paper, "Qu(e)rying Comic Book Culture and Representations of Sexuality in Wonder Woman," Brian Mitchell Peters proposes that youth culture is responsible for an arbitrary yet highly structured appropriation of what we can call high-contemporary culture. Hence, notions of pop-culture take from the past and use the present to create a highly fluid now, capable of transcending its present moment in a stereotypical fifteen minutes of fame. Part of twentieth-century pop-culture phenomena is the evolution of the comic book. The comic, in its habitual split of binaries, creates a space where young people have tapped consistently into queer themes. Queer is defined as a category that houses an option to traditional heteronormative representations for young people. An analysis of the history of Wonder Woman comics that traces her creation, her transition in the late-1960s, and a revolutionary series of comics in the mid-1990s reveals a consistent duo of queer subtexts. In his paper, Peters examines the subtextual and textual representations of gay masquerade (or drag) and lesbian jouissance in comics. The theoretical background of the paper is semiotics, queer, and psychoanalytic criticism to explore these three stages in Wonder Woman comics to present an argument that reveals the identification of queer themes by the comic's reading public as well as the cultural homophobia that creates a standard storyline and that, in turn, extinguishes habitually the detectable areas of queer text over and over again.

### Recommended Citation

Peters, Brian Mitchell. "Qu(e)rying Comic Book Culture and Representations of Sexuality in Wonder Woman." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.3 (2003): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1195>>

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How do comic book representations of questionable queerness contribute to the way young people consider their own sexualities? The response and its realities lie in a comic series which exemplifies the crystallization of queer themes in Wonder Woman. In 1995, *The Challenge of Artemis* depicts a series of comics which create an evolution in the split between heterosexual/homosexual, marked through shifting texts of two heroes. In this series there are two Wonder Women: Princess Diana, the original Wonder Woman, reinvents herself, and this reinvention marks a highly visible gay text of masquerade Wonder Woman raised a few eyebrows since her backstory involved being raised on an island inhabited only by women, some of whom playfully engaged in bondage, either as part of a game or an exercise in personal power. "Tijuana bibles" also depicted popular characters in sexual situations, sometimes including same-sex contact, without having the licenses or permission to do so. Whenever sexual themes in Golden Age comics are discussed, two cross-dressing heroes often come up. In 1940, *Crack Comics #1* introduced Richard Stanton, who disguised himself as an old woman named Madame Fatal to fight crime. In 1954 Wertham published his arguments and conclusions in the now infamous book *Seduction of the Innocent*. In his paper, "Qu(e)rying Comic Book Culture and Representations of Sexuality in Wonder Woman," Brian Mitchell Peters proposes that youth culture is responsible for an arbitrary yet highly structured appropriation of what we can call high-contemporary culture. Hence, notions of pop-culture take from the past and use the present to create a highly fluid now, capable of transcending its present moment in a stereotypical fifteen minutes of fame. Part of twentieth-century pop-culture phenomena is the evolution of the comic book. The comic, in its habitual split of binaries, creates a sp... In his paper, Peters examines the subtextual and textual representations of gay masquerade (or drag) and lesbian jouissance in comics.