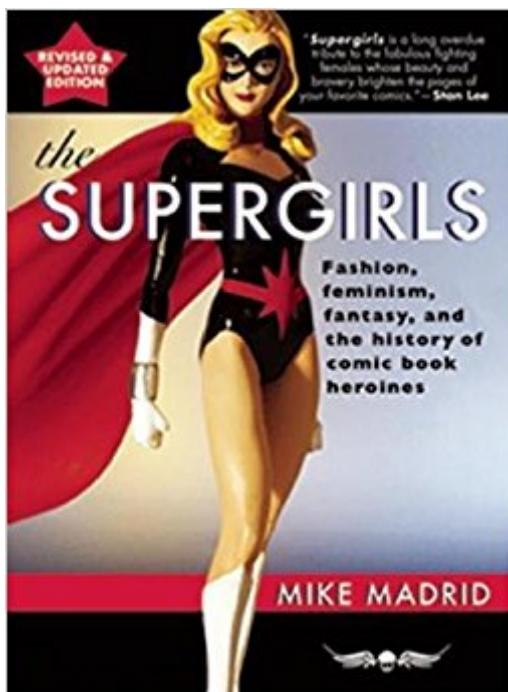


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# The Supergirls: Feminism, Fantasy, And The History Of Comic Book Heroines (Revised And Updated)



## Synopsis

"Mike Madrid is doing God's work. . . . mak[ing] accessible a lost, heady land of female adventure." &#151;ComicsAlliance"Sharp and lively . . . [Madrid] clearly loves this stuff. And he's enough of a historian to be able to trace the ways in which the portrayal of sirens and supergirls has echoed society's ever-changing feelings about women and sex."&#151;Entertainment Weekly"A long overdue tribute to [those] fabulous fighting females." &#151;Stan LeeMike Madrid has become known as a champion of women in comics and as the expert in Golden Age female characters. And now here is where it all began, as informative and entertaining as ever, in a revised and updated edition, including new illustrations and a new introduction, as well as an afterword bringing us up-to-date on what's happening with women in comics now.Mike Madrid is the author of Divas, Dames & Daredevils: Lost Heroines of Golden Age Comics; Vixens, Vamps & Vipers: Lost Villainesses of Golden Age Comics; and the original The Supergirls: Fashion, Feminism, Fantasy, and the History of Comic Book Heroines, an NPR "Best Book To Share With Your Friends" and American Library Association Amelia Bloomer Project Notable Book. A San Francisco native and lifelong fan of comic books and popular culture, Madrid also appears in the documentary Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines and is the illustrator of two of The History of Arcadia books: Lily the Silent and The Lizard Princess.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢â€žâ€œWith the explosion of breakout new female heroes, huge changes for fan favorites, and

major icons heading from page to screen, there's never been a better time to soar with this expanded version of *The Supergirls* by Mike Madrid. Codenames and styles change, new characters rise but Madrid remains the coolest Professor of comics history with a pulse on the past, present and where these heroes are flying next. "The affection the author holds for these characters is infectious . . . An essential read for pop-culture enthusiasts, feminists, comic-book readers, and social justice warriors." "Mike Madrid is doing God's work. . . . mak[ing] accessible a lost, heady land of female adventure." "ComicsAlliance" "[Madrid's] engaging, conversational language is as readable as the truly dazzling comics. He has endeavored to unearth the forgotten, and what he found is ultimately unforgettable." "BUST Magazine" "Sharp and lively . . . [Madrid] clearly loves this stuff. And he's enough of a historian to be able to trace the ways in which the portrayal of sirens and supergirls has echoed society's ever-changing feelings about women and sex." "Entertainment Weekly" "These lost [characters] are now found to the delight of comic book lovers everywhere." "STAN LEE" "Lovers of comics and strong women everywhere thank you, Mike Madrid!" "TRINA ROBBINS, author of *Pretty in Ink: North American Women Cartoonists 1896-2013*" "Madrid's meticulous and passionate research provides a window into a seemingly lost herstory of patriotism, bravery, and progressive ways of thinking about female agency and adventure." "JENNIFER K. STULLER, author of *Ink-Stained s* and *Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology*

Comic book superheroines bend steel, travel across time and space, and wield the mighty forces of nature. These powerful females do everything that male heroes do. But they have to work their wonders in skirts and high heels. *The Supergirls*, a cultural history of comic book heroines, asks whether their world of fantasy is that different from our own. Are the stories of Wonder Woman's search for an identity or Batwoman's battle for equality also an alternative saga of modern American women?

Fantastic book. A must have and must read for any collector or Comic geek

My 12 yr old loves this book

In "The Supergirls: Fashion, Feminism, Fantasy, and the History of Comic Book Heroines", Mike Madrid presents a cultural history of female superheroes. Madrid begins with a quick description of the origins of comic books before delving into the Golden Age and the various archetypes it introduced to the new medium. Madrid progresses chronologically through comics history with the occasional breakout chapter to focus on a character or topic in more detail. He spends most of him time on Wonder Woman, Supergirl, and Batgirl as they are the longest-lived female superheroes. In each chapter, Madrid examines artifacts from the time in which the characters appear, often in the form of music or film, thereby situating these characters in the gender portrayals of their time. This "Revised & Updated Edition" furthers Madrid's discussion up to March 2016, when "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice" entered theaters and Wonder Woman made her first big-screen debut. Madrid's exploration of these characters and how they reflect ideas of feminism and femininity would greatly benefit from more panels or pages from the comics themselves. As it is, his Golden Age sections have the largest collection of images to support the text, but this is likely due to the trouble of licensing the copyrighted works and the fact that many of the comics that did not last long into the 1950s have entered the public domain. Despite this minor criticism, Madrid's work offers a new perspective on comics, one not dominated by Superman or Iron Man, but by characters that have struggled to remain relevant (Madrid's account of DC's reboots of Wonder Woman is a perfect example of this) and only now receive serious attention from their publishers. Both comics fans and comics scholars will find this a valuable addition to their bookshelves.

"After THE SUPERGIRLS came out, something interesting happened. I got emails from readers who had no idea that there had been female superheroes in the 1960s, much less in the 1940s. This is a difficult book for me to review. I'm rather new to the world of comic books, having only gotten into them in the past five years or so. With the exception of Brian Azzarello's New 52 Wonder Woman, I've mostly avoided the long-running superhero titles; the sheer volume is just overwhelming! Like, where to start? (Incidentally, THE SUPERGIRLS has convinced me to avoid anything not published in this millennium – again with the exception of Wonder Woman, or at least Wonder Woman as written by William Moulton Marston. The early stuff is almost comically sexist and not worth my time. Well, except for the occasionally bizarro plotline, like when Supergirl falls for her horse Comet. Tina Belcher would approve.) Instead I mostly gravitate toward more recently

created series (SAGA, SEX CRIMINALS, PRETTY DEADLY, B\*\*\*\* PLANET, MONSTRESS) and those based on stories I know and love from other mediums (FIREFLY/SERENITY, ORPHAN BLACK, BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, Stephen King’s THE STAND and THE DARK TOWER; I’m damn near jumping out of my skin waiting for Octavia Butler’s KINDRED!). My knowledge of most superheroes and villains stems primarily from the big and little screen adaptations; Fox’s animated X-Men series is a childhood favorite. That said, from my neophyte perspective, THE SUPERGIRLS seems thorough, meticulously researched, and well-thought out. Madrid’s writing is fun and engaging, though THE SUPERGIRLS is best digested in small bites: the scope of the topic can be overwhelming at times. While Madrid organizes his discussion by decade, exploring changes made to established characters and linking these to larger trends in politics and pop culture, life defies neat categorization and there is some bleed-through. Sometimes he’ll focus on a single character (Wonder Woman, Jean Grey, Storm, Batgirl, Ms. Marvel, Lois Lane, and Supergirl are discussed at length) which propels him forward in time, well beyond the bounds of the chapter, and then we’re forced to backpedal to a slightly more regressive past.

It’s enough to give a girl whiplash. Especially enjoyable is when Madrid zeroes in on a certain character, tying trends in her portrayal to popular contemporaneous celebrities: Lois Lane and Lucille Ball, Supergirl and Leslie Gore, Miley Cyrus and the New 52. I also loved the “The Queen and the Princess,” which is a compare/contrast of Sheena and Wonder Woman. Madrid primarily focuses on the Big Two, DC and Marvel, with a brief mention of Image Comics toward the end. Other publishers, most notably Dark Horse, are omitted entirely, which is kind of a bummer. Buffy in particular seems perfectly suited to the topic of feminism in comic books. (Though there’s certainly no shortage of books in this area.) This is in keeping with Madrid’s focus on the more distant past; he only spends 15 pages on 2000 to the present day, or less than half that allocated to other decades. I would’ve liked to see a lengthier discussion of more recent trends, such as “fridging,” which isn’t mentioned at all. Additionally, THE SUPERGIRLS concentrates mostly on gender, though Madrid occasionally injects race and sexuality into the mix. It’s usually in the form of snarky comments about early comics’ racist dialogue and plot lines. Still, I found myself wishing for a more overtly intersectional approach; after all, “the female experience” is not universal. Women of color experience sexism differently than white women, and LGBTQ women deal with different manifestations of misogyny than do their

straight, cisgender sisters. By necessity, and with the sole exception of Catwoman (love!), Madrid mostly limits his discussion to superheroines. This should come as no surprise, given the book's title; but perhaps we'll get a sequel dedicated to some of our favorite bad girls? The villains are usually more interesting, imho. I wasn't really sure what format would suit this book best. I usually prefer ebooks, but if a book has a strong graphic element (like comic books), I might opt to go the old-fashioned route, with a physical book. THE SUPERGIRLS does include some artwork, but not nearly as much as I wanted/expected. On the pro side, this makes it well-suited for a Kindle.

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