

WHY ARE SUPERHEROES SO POPULAR?

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"I'M PETER COOGAN, A COORDINATOR AT THE BROWN SCHOOL AND AUTHOR OF SUPERHERO: THE SECRET ORIGIN OF A GENRE. THERE'S MORE TO COMICS THAN YOU THINK..."

SUPERHERO COMICS ARE SPECIFIC TO THE AMERICAN CULTURE THAT PRODUCED THEM IN THE LATE 1930S. THEY GREW OUT OF A STRUGGLE WITH MODERNISM: THE LOSS OF FRONTIER AND RUGGED INDIVIDUALITY. THE SUPERHERO MYTH HELPED US PROCESS THAT.

I'M A RUGGED INDIVIDUAL, BUT IN AN URBAN SETTING. I'M ALSO SELFLESS AND AN ARCHETYPE OF AMERICAN VALUES.



SUPERHERO FILMS AND COMICS ALSO EXPRESS THE LARGER GEOPOLITICS OF OUR AGE. NOW, WE DON'T GO TO WAR WITH A COUNTRY. WE FIGHT A SUPERVILLAIN.

UNLIMITED WEALTH, AN ARMY OF SOLDIERS READY TO DIE FOR ME AND A HIDEOUT IN THE REMOTE MOUNTAINS. I SOUND LIKE OSAMA BIN LADEN, BUT I'M REALLY DR. DEADLY.



THEY SAY THIS WILL BE OVER IN 21 DAYS.

WE TALK ABOUT FIGHTING SADDAM HUSSEIN OR MANUEL NORIEGA WITH OVERWHELMING FORCE, OR AS I LIKE TO CALL IT, "EFFORTLESS EFFICACY" LIKE A SUPERHERO.



THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE COLD WAR WAS THE WESTERN. THAT'S WHY THEY WERE SO POPULAR.

NEED ANY HELP HERE?

I'VE GOT IT, THANKS.



WESTERNS FEATURE TWO OPPOSING SOCIETIES IN AN APOCALYPTIC, TWILIGHT STRUGGLE: COWBOYS AND NATIVE AMERICANS. IT RESEMBLED HOW AMERICANS FELT ABOUT FIGHTING THE COMMUNISTS.



I ALSO HELP PEOPLE WRESTLE WITH THE POSTHUMAN-- THE TECHNOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL ADVANCES THAT ARE CHANGING HUMAN CAPABILITIES AND LIVES.

ON TOP OF THAT, MARVEL CONNECTS ALL OF ITS CHARACTERS AND UNIVERSES. IT'S A SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIAL STRATEGY FROM THE COMICS THAT THEY'VE TRANSLATED INTO FILMS.



AND THE GENRE SHOWS NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN.