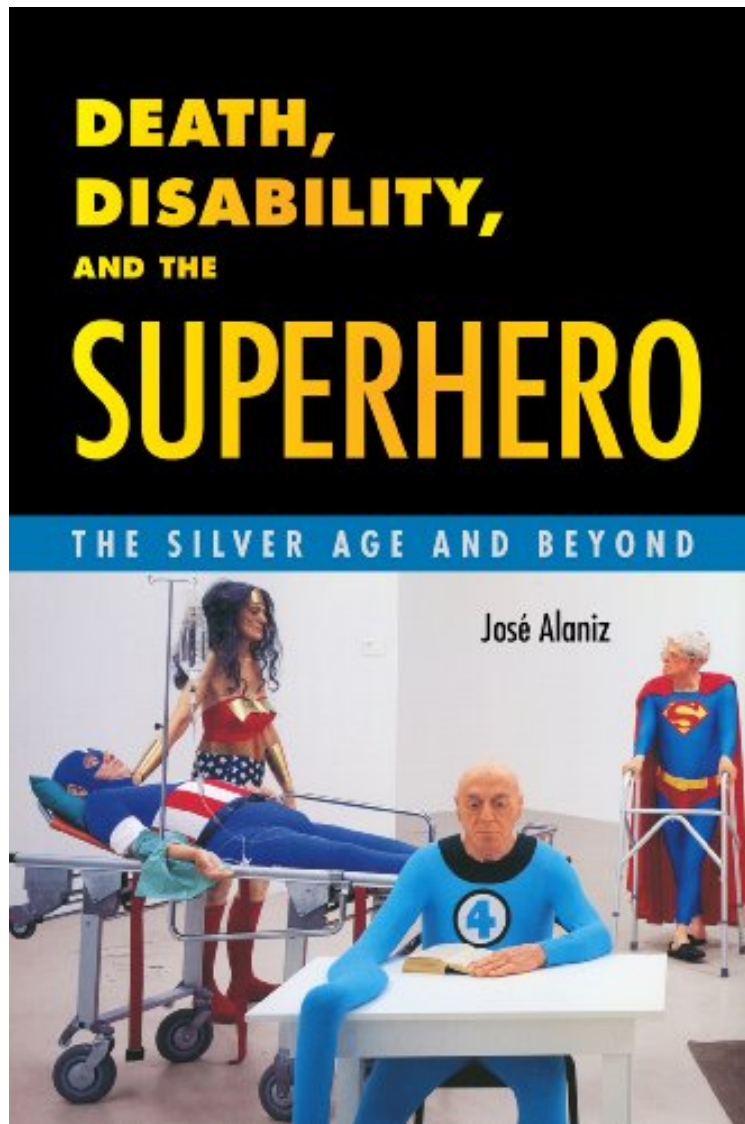


# Death, Disability, and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond

*Jos Alaniz*

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**Jos Alaniz : Death, Disability, and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Death, Disability, and the Superhero: The Silver Age and Beyond:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Maria Ibeth Chaburthis book is amazing!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Broad death and disability study of superheroesBy EarlJose Alaniz has written an extremely ambitious work in Death, Disability, and the Superhero. The first part of the book focuses primarily on disability and the superhero while, from chapter seven on death and the superhero takes center stage. As with any

work that encompasses such a broad range of thought, there is a need for some basic assumptions to be made explicit from the beginning so that readers will understand how the writer will use and interpret some concepts. Unfortunately it is precisely in this introductory area where it seemed the scope of the study prevented Alaniz from clearly linking his premises and thus set up the rest of the book. This is unfortunate because the following chapters are very well researched and presented. While I was initially more interested in the disability studies sections rather than those addressing death and mortality, I felt the latter chapters were better organized and presented. Often in the early chapters there were analyses which were quite effective as far as they went but tended to overlook intersections where additional factors also come into play. For instance the contrast between disabled and super-abled bodies could benefit from also addressing racial and gender issues. Let me say, however, that I don't consider this a particularly significant negative since the book touches on so many aspects of death and disability studies. One of the most valuable aspects of this work will be the future scholarship it will help to launch, furthering analyses begun here as well as filling gaps between what is and is not addressed here. I anticipate revisiting most if not all of this book again in the future and expect to find it referenced widely in future research. This may not appeal to every casual comic fan, which is understandable, but I think many will also find new avenues into their favorite comics through the act of wrestling with some of this material. Scholars in the death and disability fields as well as popular culture and comics/graphic novels studies will find many useful points to ponder and address in future work. Reviewed from a copy made available by the publisher via NetGalley. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended because of the rarity of such studies on superheroes ...By Michele Lee Death, Disability and the Superhero by Jose Alaniz University Press of Missouri, 2014 ISBN: 1628461179 Available: Print and ebook This book is a beast. A heavy brick of text with a massive amount of research behind it, it's not for casual comic book fans. But if you're passionate about comic books and superheroes as a serious art form, a reflection of culture as much as any other fiction genre, this is a book for you. Alaniz starts out compiling themes and commentary on Golden Age superheroes and the ideals of culture they represented at the time. But the real meat is in his own research and take on the Silver Age of comics, the rise of Marvel and the expansion of superheroes from Ubermench to complicated characters. Highly recommended because of the rarity of such studies on superheroes and disability culture. Contains: discussion of violence, rape, and war

The Thing. Daredevil. Captain Marvel. The Human Fly. Drawing on DC and Marvel comics from the 1950s to the 1990s and marshaling insights from three burgeoning fields of inquiry in the humanities—disability studies, death and dying studies, and comics studies—Jos Alaniz seeks to redefine the contemporary understanding of the superhero. Beginning in the Silver Age, the genre increasingly challenged and complicated its hypermasculine, quasi-eugenicist biases through such disabled figures as Ben Grimm/The Thing, Matt Murdock/Daredevil, and the Doom Patrol. Alaniz traces how the superhero became increasingly vulnerable, ill, and mortal in this era. He then proceeds to a reinterpretation of characters and series—some familiar (Superman), some obscure (She-Thing). These genre changes reflected a wider awareness of related body issues in the postwar U.S. as represented by hospice, death with dignity, and disability rights movements. The persistent highlighting of the body's imperfection comes to forge a predominant aspect of the superheroic self. Such moves, originally part of the Silver Age strategy to stimulate sympathy, enhance psychological depth, and raise the dramatic stakes, developed further in such later series as *The Human Fly*, *Strikeforce: Morituri*, and the landmark graphic novel *The Death of Captain Marvel*, all examined in this volume. Death and disability, presumed routinely absent or denied in the superhero genre, emerge to form a core theme and defining function of the Silver Age and beyond.

Alaniz does things with the superhero that no other critic has done and yet does them so well, so piercingly, that superhero studies will have to reckon with him before it can go forward. *Death, Disability, and the Superhero* proves that a work can be breathtakingly original and yet persuade us that it is absolutely necessary that it fills a gap that until now we had not recognized, and redefines the subject for us in ways that reverberate backwards through history. Not just superhero studies but also the very ways we think about ability, difference, and mortality—what's up for grabs here. In fact Alaniz has gifted us with a field-redefining work. Charles Hatfield, author of *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* and *Hand of Fire: The Comics Art of Jack Kirby*. From the sensitive, close reading of the opening pages to the urgent arguments of the conclusion, *Death, Disability and the Superhero* compels attention. Intellectually alert, politically engaged, and often emotionally moving, this is a major work of cultural criticism. Ben Saunders, author of *Do the Gods Wear Capes? Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes*. About the Author: Jos Alaniz, Seattle, Washington, is associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Washington Seattle. He is the author of *Komiks: Comic Art in Russia* (published by University Press of Mississippi).