

# Negotiating the Third Wave of Feminism in *Wonder Woman*

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Created by lawyer and psychologist William Moulton Marston, *Wonder Woman* first appeared more than 70 years ago, “as lovely as Aphrodite, as wise as Athena, with the speed of Mercury, and the strength of Hercules” (Marston and Peter 1941). While she conforms to traditional articulations of gender in the way she performs an attractive, female, white, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class woman, she also unsettles gendered boundaries through performing a determined, astute, formidable warrior at the same time. This has led to a number of writers exploring whether *Wonder Woman* can or should be viewed as feminist.<sup>1</sup>

The seeming contradictions within the character can be embraced as productive, as creators and consumers engage with the texts and with one another over this issue. In this way, comics are akin to interactive public spheres through which norms, categories, and relations of power are negotiated between editorial boards, writers and artists, parent companies, and audiences of competing constituencies.<sup>2</sup> This article explores the politics of gender in *Wonder Woman* by examining the ways in which these different groups have worked through the ideals of feminism’s “Third Wave”—equality, diversity, complexity, inclusivity, individualism, and cultural critique—both enabling the reinscription of traditional articulations of gender as well as creating space for the production of new gender possibilities.

## THIRD WAVE FEMINISM IN *WONDER WOMAN* IN THE 1980s AND 1990s

Since the late 1980s, *Wonder Woman* has been engaged in a variety of ways with the ideas and aesthetics of the Third Wave of feminism. Those who adopt the Third Wave label or sensibility continue from the Second Wave in that they have as central tenets liberation and equality, and build on internal critiques of the Second Wave as having a predominantly white, heterosexual standpoint (see, e.g., hooks 1981; Lorde 1984; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981). Grounded in protest to the conservative politics of the 1980s and 1990s, the Third Wave strives to be antiessentialist and nonjudgmental, welcoming a variety of identities both across and within people. This embrace of the messiness and complexities of lived experience includes not only openness to continua of race, gender, and sexuality but also the reclamation of signs of femininity as empowering. Cultural critique and cultural production, often laced with irony, are important aspects of the Third Wave as well (see, e.g., Baumgartner and Richards 2000; Heywood and Drake 1997; Purvis 2004; Walker 1995).<sup>3</sup>

These elements of the Third Wave—diversity and individual complexity, feminism and femininity, and cultural cri-

tique through narrative and irony—as well as concerns about such ideas have been particularly visible in *Wonder Woman* during the last 25 years as producers and consumers negotiated their meanings. This began when DC Comics rebooted all of its superhero titles in 1987.

The new *Wonder Woman* was helmed by writer/artist George Pérez and the title’s first female editor Karen Berger (*WW* Vol. 2 #1–62, 1987–1992). Berger summed up their approach to Princess Diana of the Amazons in the second issue, “*Wonder Woman* [is] a great role model to young women, but also contains many elements that appeal to males as well. *Wonder Woman* crosses the gender line.” Harkening back to creator Marston’s first stories from the 1940s, Pérez’s Diana works with friends and allies to teach “lessons of peace and equality” (Pérez and Wein 2005, *WW* Vol. 2 #17 [1988]), while also being a decisive superpowered warrior ready to fight humans, monsters, and gods if compassion and diplomacy fail. This performance of traits and actions constructed traditionally as “feminine” and “masculine” highlights the instability of the categories and creates space for gender hybridization (Brown 2004, 2011; Inness 2004; Robinson 2004; Stuller 2010; see also Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998).<sup>4</sup>

Pérez has said that he had great freedom because no one else wanted the title, so he drew Diana as more “ethnic” to show that “she is not American,” drew the Amazons as more racially diverse, and introduced the character Phillipus, who was black, as Diana’s mother’s trusted companion (“George Pérez’s Second Melbourne Podcast,” 2010). He also implied that some Amazons were in romantic and/or sexual relationships with each other (see, e.g., Pérez, Newell, Marrinan and Machlan 1990, *WW* Vol. 2 #38). All of these elements exhibited Third Wave sensibilities and appear to have been read as such. Most of the first letters from readers after the reboot specifically praised the new Diana as a strong feminine and feminist woman.<sup>5</sup> Sales were high and fan letters were enthusiastic about the title’s politics. Negative letters argued for more diversity across and tolerance by the characters (see, e.g., Bill Campbell in *WW* Vol. 2 #5, Matt Gersper and Ernest Black in *WW* Vol. 2 #35).

As conservative politics clashed with liberal identity politics in the early to mid-1990s, the more postmodern and post-structural sensibilities of Third Wave feminism and queer theory began to gain resonance for some on the left. But as star comic writer Grant Morrison observed, superhero comics at the time still leaned in a conservative direction, “The gender confusions and reorganizations of masculine-feminine boundaries that marked the eighties had outgrown their welcome, so men became lads and women were babes” (2011, 235).

Comic art began to display a hypergendered backlash to the gains of the feminist movements: hypermuscular men and hypersexualized women.

After George Pérez left, the next writer, William Messner-Loebs, worked with a number of artists on the title from 1992 to 1995 (*WW* Vol. 2 #63–100). But it was the last one, Mike Deodato, who garnered the most attention for the way he sexually objectified Diana and the Amazons. Wearing little, they were often posed in what has come to be criticized as “broke back” fashion—a twisted, impossible posture allowing the reader to see all of a woman’s curves in the front and back at the same time (Messner-Loebs and Deodato 1996a, 1996b).<sup>6</sup> He later remarked, “They gave me freedom to do whatever I want. . . . I kept making her more . . . um . . . hot? Wearing thongs. I talked to Bill Loebs at a convention, and he said his friends call his run on *Wonder Woman* with me ‘porn Wonder Woman’ [laughter]. . . . Every time the bikini was smaller, the sales got higher” (*Newsarama* staff 2006). He drew more and bloodier violence as well. In the mid-1990s, superhero comic sales had begun to crash and its active fan base became more homogenous: mostly male, white, heterosexual, and adult.<sup>7</sup> These readers as well as many others clearly liked Diana’s “Bad Girl” portrayal; sales did rise for the title.

*Jimenez made Diana’s politics explicitly feminist and queer through her founding the Wonder Woman Foundation to help women be “economically self-sufficient and in control of their bodies and reproductive lives” and to promote “the liberation of men, women, and children from the terrible problems that stem from antiquated religious philosophies and patriarchal fear. . . .”*

Two letters in particular represent the different ways in which readers received the art. One embraced the simultaneity of traits that had historically been constructed as conflicting, “Deodato drew at once a beautiful princess and a fierce warrior” (Eric Gerbershagen in *WW* Vol. 2 #104). A second wrote at length about the female characters’ sexualization, and summed up, “Give them some rear coverage and some dignity” (Kate Payne in *WW* Vol. 2 #95). Both readers represent Third Wave ideas, but their contrast highlights a fault line in the Third Wave’s celebration of a person’s individual choices and of sexy images of women (as represented by the first letter writer) and its push for cultural critique of the objectification of women (as represented by the second). Supporting the first could mean financially bolstering further objectifying images; supporting the second could mean alienating potential feminists by criticizing what they find attractive and implying that they are not sufficiently politically conscious. Both paths could lead to a lack of collective political action about such portrayals of women.

A further complication was that these two letter writers (along with many others) praised the storyline that was illustrated by these images. The plot concerned Artemis, an Amazon like Diana but raised in poverty and violence. Artemis becomes “Wonder Woman,” but is less respected in the role

because she is less diplomatic, less clothed, and quicker to fight than Diana. She is defeated, and her dying words to Diana are that she (Artemis) had not deserved the title of Wonder Woman. Artemis’ portrayal can be read as condemning a female character who performs a less “feminine” enactment of heroism, and as showing that Diana is able to transgress gendered boundaries because her “class privilege allows for such fluidity” (Cohen 1997, 450; Inness 2004; Peters 2003). But even if the characterization of Artemis did shore up Diana’s “proper” portrayal of the female hero, fans loved both characters and embraced the Third Wave idea that there’s more than one way to enact woman warrior, or superhero, unbound by traditional norms.<sup>8</sup> Writers and editors listened. Artemis was brought back to life, chosen as one of the Amazon rulers and allied with Diana through the 2000s.

#### RACE, SEXUALITY, AND POLITICS IN WONDER WOMAN IN THE EARLY 2000s

Writer and artist Phil Jimenez (*WW* Vol. 2 #164–188, 2000–2003) had the Amazons choose Artemis and Phillipus, the impoverished, rough warrior and the black military leader, to replace their queen (Diana’s mother). Jimenez made Diana’s politics explicitly feminist and queer through her founding

the Wonder Woman Foundation to help women be “economically self-sufficient and in control of their bodies and reproductive lives” and to promote “the liberation of men, women, and children from the terrible problems that stem from antiquated religious philosophies and patriarchal fear. . . . All human beings deserve to live on this planet without threat of violation, physical or spiritual, simply because of the body they were born in [or] the gender they were born to” (Jimenez 2002, *WW* Vol. 2 #170).<sup>9</sup> This received mostly encouraging fan responses; a few were negative, such as “Little did I expect to find Diana on a neo-fascist diatribe about [Christianity] or sub-Marxist gibberish about ‘valuing each other simply because we exist’” (Chris Jackson in *WW* Vol. 2 #173). Another wrote about a scene of two female Amazons (talking), “Should you continue to advance the homosexual agenda . . . you will be able to include me along with Chris Jackson as an ex-longtime reader” (Seth Richard in *WW* Vol. 2 #177). The editor described the scene as “people in love,” scolded the writer for being intolerant, and wrote, “For the record, Phil is working on giving Diana a boyfriend.”

The boyfriend was Trevor Barnes, who worked with Diana at the United Nations. The spoiler leaked that Diana might have sex with Trevor. There was largely positive fan feedback to the idea, said Jimenez, but also very “negative and often

racist reactions” as well, that “undermined my goals” (quoted in Singh 2002). Trevor was black. The very negative feedback was not printed. Instead, a typical letter would be “The most attractive part of Jimenez’s latest storyline is the African American love interest. . . . Speaking as an African American reader, I hope that this becomes a very strong storyline for Diana” (Terry Hagan in *WW* Vol. 2 #180). On the other side were letters such as, “One thing has me troubled, this whole losing the virginity thing . . . I just don’t like this Trevor guy . . . I don’t know if I’m supposed to like him or not, but I don’t . . . I just don’t like him, sorry” (Tim Holl in *WW* Vol. 2 #181). What finally appeared was a panel in which Trevor’s parents find them on the couch, mostly clothed—a multivalent image that takes into account that negotiation between producers and consumers.

Jimenez’ writing and art pushed for the fluidity of gender and sexuality, portrayed diversity, drew Diana as a strong woman not gratuitously sexualized, and used the genre to comment on cultural norms. Many, but not all, readers were on board with those ideals and the ideals remained despite criticism. Many, but not all, readers were willing to see a (hetero)-sexually active Diana, but were not given the opportunity due to other readers’ criticism. Marc DiPaolo has asserted that “often when great writers . . . tackle Wonder Woman’s liberal political beliefs . . . conservatives complain and respond by not buying the comic. DC Comics responds in kind by minimizing the political content” (2011, 86).

### THIRD WAVE AESTHETICS IN WONDER WOMAN IN THE LATE 2000s

In 1999, just before Jimenez began his run, hairdresser and comics fan Gail Simone compiled a list of female superheroes subject to repeated violence, often sexualized, in ways that their male counterparts had not been (<http://www.lby3.com/wir/index.html>). She sent it to dozens of comic creators, whose reactions ranged from defensive to neutral to agreement. This list exploded online such that Simone began to write a weekly column for the *Comic Book Resources* website. Several years later, she was writing *Wonder Woman* (*WW* Vol. 3 #14–44, 2008–2010).

While Simone’s politics seem similar to Jimenez’s, the tone of her work was not as openly earnest, as she has said, “If a character has to preach, then you’re doing it wrong” (*AfterEllen.com* staff 2009). Within the Third Wave, pop culture is critical, not just for deconstruction but also for production, which tonally is often playful, campy, and ironic. Simone had Diana and Dinah Lance (Black Canary) team up. Dinah informs Diana that they have to go undercover, and “the sexier the outfit, the fewer questions asked.” When dressed in her revealing undercover garb, Diana looks down at herself awkwardly and asks, “Do we need to expose quite so much of . . . [my breasts]? And these boots seem completely impractical in a combat situation! I can’t believe women are expected to wear these every day. The damage to the legs and spine!” (Simone and Lopresti 2010, *WW* Vol. 3 #34).

This moment draws attention to the performativity of the female superhero: the sexy uniform on the strong body can be disarming in its familiarity, but it can also be burlesque

and in that way can disrupt gendered assumptions (Brown 2004; Madrid 2009; Pender 2002; Peters 2003; Taylor 2007). The embodiment of the attractive female warrior noting her own objectification both adheres to the familiar form of the superhero genre while delivering a feminist message about that form, couched in humor. As Anne Marie Smith notes, “the effectiveness of new articulations [of gender] depends on two basic factors: the extent to which traditional articulations have become increasingly weakened . . . and the extent to which new articulations borrow from and rework various traditional frameworks so that they already appear somewhat familiar” (1994, 6). But at the same time, the self-reflexive comment on the exposed breasts includes the visual objectification of those breasts. So the comment, for some, would be in tension with the image and could serve to reinscribe the normalcy of the sexualized portrayal of women in the superhero genre.<sup>10</sup>

There were no letter columns in this run. But writer Simone launched a Wonder Woman thread the same month that the referenced issue came out (September 2009) on (<http://forums.comicbookresources.com/forumdisplay.php?69-Wonder-Woman>) that now has more than 6,000 subthreads. Several posters addressed the character’s juxtaposition of strength and beauty, “As long as they portray WW as being strong and smart, the eye candy is just a bonus” (Wonder Watcher 9/15/09, 1:25 pm). “Wonder Woman is supposed to be feminine. That’s what’s so amazing about her. She is “girly.” And can kick your ass when diplomacy fails (Meek, 9/16/09, 12:15pm). Simone responded to many posts, some of which were pointed and negative, to enter into conversation with readers. Former writer Jimenez posted as well.

Simone wrote in that space about her biggest regret: that she had intended for Diana’s mother, Hippolyta, to propose marriage to Phillipus, but that tentative editorial approval was rescinded (Simone 2010). This may have been about gender and sexuality if editors feared receiving more letters accusing them of being anti-Christian, as in the letters to Jimenez. It may have also been about race, in an echo of, again, letters to Jimenez about Trevor Barnes.

The result was similar—almost all fans who expressed an opinion expressed a positive one, but they would not get to see the story. In the cases of Diana having sex with Trevor Barnes and Hippolyta proposing to Phillipus, the subtext can (and according to fans, has been) read as supporting such stories. In the text itself and online, *Wonder Woman* has continued to forge a space for negotiating feminist politics. But while both Jimenez and Simone were able to disrupt traditional boundaries of gender in certain ways, it is clear that at least twice, struggles over feminist ideas at the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality led to nonfeminist outcomes.

### NEW ORIGIN AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR WONDER WOMAN IN THE 2010s

In 2011, as they had in 1987, DC Comics rebooted their superhero titles. “New 52” *Wonder Woman* was initially roundly praised for the quality of its spare, suspenseful writing, its plot about Diana dealing with the politics of the Greek gods to protect a young pregnant woman, and its art. Initial sales



were sufficiently high that DC was considering launching a second *Wonder Woman* title (Siuntres 2012).

But the new portrayal of Diana has also been criticized for its revision of her origin story and its violence. After 70 years, Diana is no longer born of clay in a nonaggressive matriarchal society; rather, she is the product of her mother's affair with King of the Gods Zeus. The Amazons are no longer peace-loving and immortal; rather, they reproduce by having sex with (and then killing) passing sailors, selling any resultant male offspring into slavery in exchange for weapons. Diana has shown herself to be quicker to violence as well, and has killed her long-standing arch-enemy Ares to become the Goddess of War herself (Azzarello and Chiang 2012a, 2012b, 2013). With such different foundations, her decades-old unique mission to teach Amazonian "lessons of peace and equality" seems to have fallen away. Former writer Phil Jimenez is concerned that this new version of the character "plays into the fantasies and culturally sanctioned fears of anything overtly feminine of the predominantly straight male audience the comic industry serves instead of reshaping them. She ... buttresses the conventional wisdom as opposed to bucking it. Her otherness, her queerness, is all but erased. And money is made" (2013).<sup>11</sup>

Who she *is* may be more important than where she comes from, and she is also clearly honorable, compassionate, and strong. Writer Brian Azzarello has said, "We've made her a very powerful woman" and "we've definitely de-sexualized her" (Kennedy 2013). These are feminist moves. Diana's nonobjectified performance of "male" and "female" qualities in and of itself opens up new gender possibilities for some readers. But some feminist critics of the Third Wave's embrace of individual narrative would note that if such a story is unaccompanied by broader structural critique, it may not work to move us toward acceptance of more equality, diversity, or fluidity of identities.<sup>12</sup>

Fans are on both sides of this. Nine podcasts discussed the new comic at least once; some, several times. On seven of them, 17 men and four women described the book as one of the best of all 52 reboots. Some noted that they had never until now bought the title. Overall, they found her a strong character, surrounded by an interesting supporting cast.<sup>13</sup> The 3 Chicks Review Comics and Comic Book Queers (CBQs), however, liked only the first issue. Three Chicks disliked the new backstory and found Diana to be a weaker and more violent character, with a mostly male supporting cast leading her around (Thompson 2012). One of the CBQs summed up, "I'm happy it's selling, but this character is *not* Wonder Woman." (Comic Book Queers 2012). The *Wonder Woman* boards online reflect a similar split, with partisans on both sides using the same arguments as the podcasters. Unlike Jimenez or Simone, writer Azzarello has said that he does not read or post to such sites, and there are no letter columns. This cuts off two avenues of negotiation with readers, who will of course continue to make their own meanings of his work, alone or with each other.

## CONCLUSION

Superhero comics serve as sites of cultural, social, and political negotiation as "media producers and the audience strug-

gle with changing notions of race, gender, and heroism" (Brown 2000, 13). As writings and rewritings of superheroes continue, and as the genre's reach grows through television and multi-million dollar films, so too will struggles over their meanings. Reception is uneven and contingent as cultural narratives are "read, reworked, or reinvented in quite unpredictable ways" (Duggan 2000, 155).

In the case of *Wonder Woman*, different audiences have pushed for more binary readings of gender as well as more fluid and hybridized ones, sometimes in concert with authors and editors, sometimes in conflict with them and with each other. It is clear that audiences do have power—with their pocketbooks, with letter columns and blogs and podcasts, and with their readings, reworkings, and reinventions—but this does not mean we should assume that there are not power differentials between those audiences, between producers and consumers, and between writers and editors as well. Analyzing the push and pull is critical to our efforts to map traditional articulations of gender as well as challenges to those articulations as they occur in particular historical moments.

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## NOTES

1. See, e.g., Brown 2011; Daniels 2000; Emad 2006; Fleisher 1976; Greenberger 2010; Madrid 2009; Peters 2003; Robinson 2004; Stanley 2005; Taylor 2007.
2. The phrase "interactive public spheres" draws from Lisa Duggan's (2000) analysis of mass circulation newspapers; the reference to the production/reception binary as being more of a collaboration and negotiation draws from Jeffrey Brown's (2000) analysis of Clark superheroes and Milestone Comics, and the phrase "competing constituent audiences" draws from Jennifer Reed's analysis of gender in *The L Word* (2009).  
This article does not assert that producers and consumers are equal in the interactive public spheres that are comics, but that there is a mutually productive relationship between producers and consumers and that both are constraining the other in different ways (see Brooker 2000; Duggan 2000; Smith 1994 on reception, resistance, and constraints). So, it examines comics, interviews with writers and artists, and writers' websites and blogs, as well as fan letter columns, websites, blogs, and podcasts to have a fuller picture of the politics of gender and feminism in *Wonder Woman*.
3. Along with conservative criticisms of such ideas, there are feminist ones as well. First, that embracing an individuality that affirms all women's choices can foster nonfeminist ideals. Second, that taking pleasure in dressing sexily or in images of sexiness to reclaim portrayals of women can lead to a lack of interrogation of the social inequalities manifest in such dress and such images and how different audiences may receive them. Third, that some of the cultural work reliant on individual storytelling fails to contextualize those stories with critiques of social structures (see, e.g., Kelly 2005; Kinser 2004; Snyder 2008; Showden 2009). A fourth feminist criticism is about the term "third wave" itself. This article employs the term because of its common usage, but as Springer 2002 and Snyder 2008 among others have pointed out, the metaphor is problematic. The word "wave" makes it sound like the ideas of the different time periods are distinct and separate from one another without commonalities that carry through. Also, the usual dates placed on the first two "waves" (1848–1920, 1965–80s) are centered on white women's activism and thereby marginalize the activities of women of color.
4. This gender hybridization ebbed and flowed from the character's creation in 1941 to this reboot in 1987. Marston created *Wonder Woman* in 1941 and wrote it until his death in 1947. He had the character come to the United States with American Steve Trevor so she could fight alongside him and a group of college women to subdue Axis spies, common

criminals, and mythical characters, as well as to teach “Man’s World” the peaceful and equal ways of the Amazons. She and her friends often had to rescue Steve as well. Such fluid portrayals of gender were resonant at the time, particularly as women were exhorted into “men’s” work for the war effort. But after the War, things changed (see Costello 2009; DiPaolo 2011; Gabilliet 2010; Hajdu 2008; Krensky 2008; Wright 2001). Robert Kanigher, writer and editor of the title for the next 20 years, produced much more traditional depictions of gender. Diana’s costume shrank, her hair and eyes grew larger, and laced sandals replaced her boots. Steve’s (and others’) marriage proposals became constant. Instead of battling fascism and crime with other women, she battled fantastic monsters alone. Many stories focused on her adventures as a “Wonder Girl” and a “Wonder Tot.” Then in 1968, Diana gave up her powers so as not to lose Steve’s attention (O’Neil and Sekowsky 1968, *WW* #178). While the creative team saw this big change as feminist in that she would be a self-reliant character not dependent on superpowers (interviews in Daniels 2000, 126), some fans and some feminists didn’t see it that way. After lobbying by these groups, her powers were restored in 1973. But under editor Julius Schwartz, who said he “never cared for Wonder Woman” (Daniels 2000, 134), many of the 1970s and early 1980s stories showed Diana in a smaller costume and more suggestive poses as she fought curvy women. Other stories stereotyped feminism as antimale rather than proequality. Such portrayals were not uncommon at the time, indicative of misunderstandings of and backlash against the civil rights movements. Many letter writers liked her new look and new stories. But Marston’s original mission was almost lost: only six fan letters across 90 issues at this time referred to Diana as feminist or as a role model (Hollon 2012, 106).

5. “Feminism has been Wonder Woman’s credo since 1942 . . . she should go on promoting equality for women” (Jeff Turner in *WW* Vol. 2 #4). “I fully agree with your perception of Wonder Woman as a positive and strong model for girls/women. It also, hopefully, will take some of the chauvinism out of the male readers brought up on macho men and weak women” (Malcolm Bourne in *WW* Vol. 2 #5). “She is a tribute to her sex, a genuine wonder of a woman” (Tonya Falls in *WW* Vol. 2 #8).
6. See also Brown 2000; Daniels 2000; Madrid 2009; Morrison 2011; Stanley 2005. Only the end of Messner-Loebs’ run was drawn by Deodato. His portrayal was more in line with many other superhero comics, mainstream movies, and video games at the time. Male characters in 1990s comics were drawn in a very exaggeratedly muscular way as well. They were not, however, drawn with excessive attention to their sexuality, nor were they posed in “broke back” fashion or in sexually submissive poses as their female counterparts often were.
7. See Brooker 2000; Emad 2006; Gabilliet 2010; Krensky 2008; Lopes 2009; Wright 2001 for a more detailed recounting of the following, but in short, higher fuel and paper costs and increasing comic sticker prices, darker and increasingly hypermasculinized stories, the growth of speculation and of comic shops followed by the decline of both, distributor wars, and a royalty system that led to a focus on high sales of superhero comics, as well as other causes, were leading to this more concentrated comic fan base for mainstream superhero stories.
8. For instance, “Artemis is rough but noble” (Dominic Sheehan in *WW* Vol. 2 #95), “Thanks for giving Artemis an honorable death . . . She could have been the true Wonder Woman” (Kati Lovegrove in *WW* Vol. 2 #104). In reference to talk of resurrecting Artemis, one fan wrote, “I agree with many other Wonder Woman fans that [Artemis] deserves even more exposure” (Terry Haney in *WW* Vol. 2 #114). Online, see sites such as the thread started by former *WW* writer Gail Simone, <http://forums.comicbookresources.com/showthread.php?304623-Favorite-Artemis-Moments>.
9. Subversions of narratives of gender and power are not just about women but are more broadly antiessentialist. A number of gay male *Wonder Woman* fans, writer Phil Jimenez among them, have said that they found in her a strong role model without her strength being linked to being macho, that she was nonjudgmental, and that she didn’t bow to cultural expectations or stereotypes of gender but broke them (Robbins 2008; Simone 2008; *Comic Book Queers* 2007, 2010; see also Peters 2003 on the resonance to gay youth of a secret identity).
10. Jeffrey Brown should be credited with this observation. He pointed out a similar situation with the superhero Power Girl and her famous breasts. There is a panel in which she comments on them in a funny and post-modern way, but by showing the breasts that she’s commenting on, the artist and writer “get to have their cake and eat it too.” Keynote address at 10th Annual University of Florida/ImageText Comics Conference, Gainesville, FL, 3/16/13.
11. Former *Wonder Woman* writers Trina Robbins and Greg Rucka have expressed similar sentiments about the new portrayal of the character. See, e.g., *Talking Comics* 2013.
12. In the new *Justice League* comic, which outsells the *Wonder Woman* comic three to one, Diana’s face is drawn younger and sexier, her body is spilling out of her top and bottom, and that top and bottom are often emphasized in panels. The male superheroes are drawn with huge, chiseled biceps, chests, and thighs—but are not sexually objectified in the same way.
13. New 52 *Wonder Woman* was discussed on 24 episodes of nine podcasts: *Comic Book Queers* (6 episodes), *Comic Geek Speak* (3), *Crazy Sexy Geeks* (1), *IFanboy* (2), *Matt and Brett Love Comics* (1), *Modern Myth Media* (2), *The Stack* (1), *Talking Comics* (6, one of which included this author), and *Three Chicks Review Comics* (2). An additional nine episodes of these podcasts and six episodes of five other podcasts (*Comic Conversations*, *Fatman on Batman*, *Fredcast*, *Supanova*, and *Word Balloon*) interviewed writers Brian Azzarello, Phil Jimenez, Greg Rucka, and George Perez, artist Cliff Chiang, and DC Comics co-publisher Dan DiDio.

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