

Rethinking the world of a female superhero. *Marvel's Jessica Jones* as an example of a gender-sensitive Marvel adaptation

Juliane Blank (Saarbrücken)

When the first season of *Marvel's Jessica Jones* was released on Netflix in 2015, it was hailed by many critics as a »feminist« show. It has been widely acknowledged that the show addresses issues that are crucial to recent feminist discourses. With respect to its treatment of harassment and abuse, victim agency, and power hierarchy in relation to gender, it may even be discussed as a precursor of the #MeToo debate.

The focus on issues of gender-related power issues in the Netflix show is mainly a result of the adaptation process. The comic books on which the show is based could hardly be described as »feminist«. Instead, they are unmistakably influenced by traditional and inherently heteronormative ideas of what it means to be a »female« superhero. Throughout the comic books, Jessica Jones is defined both by her relationship to Luke Cage and her role as his lover, girlfriend and wife and by her history as a »victim« of super villain Killgrave.

Showrunner and screenwriter Melissa Rosenberg has suggested that her adaptation of the character Jessica Jones as a contribution to the Marvel Cinematic Universe was aiming for a »grounded« depiction and exploration of the world of a female superhero, and that this world naturally entails experiences of harassment and abuse. In my paper I would like to discuss how *Marvel's Jessica Jones* works as a gender-sensitive adaptation and modernisation of the comic books. Furthermore, I would like to analyse how the »grounded« perspective on gender-specific experiences of a female superhero fits in with recent developments in Marvel adaptation. In light of the recent »boom« in superhero movies, the Netflix show can be discussed as an example of rethinking the Marvel story world and the central theme of power and control that is inherent to the superhero genre.

Kurzbiografie

Juliane Blank is an assistant lecturer at the University of Saarland (Saarbrücken) in the department of German Literature. Her dissertation *Literaturadaptionen im Comic. Ein modulares Analysemodell* (2015) provides a basic model for analysing graphic adaptations, but also examines recurring techniques and strategies of adaptation. She is currently working on a study on chance and coincidence in catastrophic discourses. Since 2010, Juliane Blank has been the managing



Gesellschaft für Comicforschung

editor of the journal *KulturPoetik* (www.kulturpoetik.de) which publishes papers from the field of Cultural Literary Studies twice a year.