

X-Men as J Men: The Jewish subtext of a comic book movie.

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## X-Men as J Men: The Jewish Subtext of a Comic Book Movie

Lawrence Baron

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### Abstract

The recent movie X-Men (2000) reflects the assimilationist aims, ethnic anxieties, and liberal idealism of the first-generation Jewish Americans who created the original superheroes featured in Marvel Comic Books. Their rejection of Nazi racism, abhorrence of the Holocaust, and support of the Civil Rights Movement motivated them to make Magneto, the antagonist of the X-Men, a Jewish Holocaust survivor who reasonably fears that a new race of mutants like himself may face persecution and eventual extermination if they do not mount a preemptive strike against paranoid humans intent on suppressing the threat posed by beings with special powers. The X-Men follow a mutant who advocates acculturation and the channeling of their superhuman abilities to defend humankind. Bryan Singer, the Jewish director of the movie, has retained the encounter with the Holocaust and the struggle against bigotry as key themes in his film. He also has

associated these themes with other instances of past or present manifestations of mass hysteria and discrimination in American politics. Thus, the movie can be understood on two levels: superficially, it is a special effects, action adventure, science fiction movie that appeals to teenagers; substantively, it is an allegory about the continuing debate over whether the United States should promote ethnic, racial, and religious equality and diversity or whether it should become a more homogeneous and less multicultural society.



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