

Superhero Comics and Everyday Heroics —Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay**

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Abstract

In his Pulitzer prize-winning novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, Michael Chabon uses superhero comics as a structuring principle to question what conditions lead to redemption from the biopolitical seizure of life by the logic of exception. Set in World War II, the novel dramatizes how the logic of exception places Jews in a double bind in the face of the Holocaust; it locates the possibility of redemption, and freedom from the double bind, in neither submitting to the power of the

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State, nor in resistance of it, but in “living in the midst of life” and in practicing “everyday heroics.” This essay brings together a diverse set of discourses about escapism—or lines of flight—including Eric L. Santner’s notions of the “deanimation of the undead” and the “blessings of more life,” to propose that Chabon’s novel celebrates neither escapism nor nihilism; instead, the essay suggests that only in Joe and Sam’s circuitous and tango-like movement around the tensions between the repetitive cycle of life constituted by their efforts both to “escape from” the contingencies of everyday life and to “escape to” the surety of teleology can they be “shocked” by love, by the miracles of the unexpected, and by the magic of what Chabon calls in the novel our “everyday heroics.”

Key Words: escapism, superhero narrative, everyday heroics, logic of exception