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Homelander and the Ambiguity of Morality in the Television Series the Boys

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ABSTRACT

Morality, as a dynamic component of culture, constantly shifts in response to social and ideological transformations. In the landscape of popular culture, the superhero figure has long served as a manifestation of moral values and an ethical compass for society. However, the series *The Boys* (2019) presents a deconstruction of this traditional representation through the character of Homelander, who symbolises moral ambiguity and corruption resulting from absolute power—standing in stark contrast to the idealised image of Superman. This study employed a qualitative method grounded in critical theory and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction framework to examine how morality is represented and destabilised within the narrative of the series. Primary data were collected from selected episodes across three seasons of *The Boys*, focusing on three key scenes: the airplane incident in Season 1, Episode 4; the confrontation with Blindspot; and Homelander's public speech in Season 3. Analysis was conducted on dialogue, character interactions, and visual aesthetic elements such as costume symbolism, lighting, and camera composition. Secondary data consisted of scholarly articles, books, and theoretical texts discussing superhero morality, Derrida's deconstruction, and media representation politics. The analytical process involved three interrelated approaches: (1) narrative analysis to explore story structure and character development; (2) visual analysis to interpret symbolic and aesthetic elements that construct Homelander's moral image; and (3) deconstructive analysis to apply the concepts of *différance*, trace, and critique of grand narratives and binary oppositions within discourses of heroism. The findings indicate that Homelander is not merely a symbol of moral decadence, but also a critique of capitalist institutions that exploit the superhero image for power and economic gain. From a deconstructive perspective, Homelander is not a fixed signifier, but a trace whose meaning is continually deferred and shaped by the forces of capitalism, media, and corporate spectacle. Thus, *The Boys* functions not only as entertainment but also as a reflective space for reexamining discourses on morality, heroism, and power in contemporary popular culture.

Keywords: morality, superhero, deconstruction, *The Boys* (2019), Homelander

Introduction

Morality is not a static trait but rather a fluid and evolving construct. What societies deem as right or wrong, good or bad, emerges from complex social frameworks shaped by collective interests, cultural beliefs, and shifting societal needs (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017). This view departs from traditional notions of morality as an inherent and unchanging characteristic, instead emphasising how both individual motivations and prevailing social norms contribute to the formation of moral judgment and behaviour (Rook et al., 2021). Morality within society demonstrates a pattern of continuous transformation, where aspects such as justice, authority, social harmony, and moral purity fluctuate over time (Wheeler et al., 2019). These changes illustrate that morality is not only subjective but also an arena where values from various ideologies, cultures, beliefs, and others compete to shape the moral framework deemed most ideal.

In the context of pop culture, morality is often interpreted through fictional characters in a film. Films serve as a medium not only for delivering messages and reinforcing historical facts but also for introducing diverse cultures and promoting lifestyles (Surur, 2024)—including the interpretation of morality with superheroes standing out as some of the most striking symbols of morality. Superheroes embody the grand ideas that reflect the moral values of an era, such as justice, sacrifice, and courage (Koole et al., 2013). The image of the superhero in mass culture has become a fundamental image of the 20th and 21st centuries, expanding into cinema, computer games, and other areas (Aliev & Tembo, 2020).

Furthermore, superheroes serve as a vital medium for conveying ideological messages that subtly shape society's perceptions of truth, power, and social responsibility. Superheroes are depicted in media as a mirror of the evolution of morality in society, encompassing broader moral circles over time (Leach, Kitchin, & Sutton, 2023).

The superhero genre, originated from comics emerged in the late 1930s, marked by the debut of Superman in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. The emergence of Superman became a pivotal moment in American pop culture (Caeners, 2023). This character, inspired by classical and mythological heroes, reflects the archetypal hero's journey in ancient Greek and Rome. Thus, Superman was designed as a representation of Western ideal morality. Representation can be understood as the interpretation of concepts through language, which are then translated in the mind (Haqu & Pramonojati, 2022).

Superman first appeared on the big screen in 1978, which explicitly represented universal moral values such as courage, justice, and truth. Superman became a symbol of hope amid uncertainty, particularly during the Cold War era when the United States (USA) sought to reinforce its position as the guardian of global freedom (Wright, 2025). With a blue-and-red costume resembling the USA flag, Superman became not only a patriotic icon of boundless power but also a symbol of universal moral authority.

Superman represents the figure of the “Big Other,” acting as the guardian of the symbolic order (Hassler-Forest, 2015). His actions and powers are always subject to absolute moral principles rooted in Kantian philosophy, yet manifested through a more humanistic and nationalistic image, resembling the figure of Uncle Sam. Over time, however, the representation of superheroes began to change. Narratives that once centred on absolute morality have been replaced by more realistic complexities, reflecting the moral ambiguities of modern society. Superheroes such as Batman, Wolverine, and Iron Man introduce characters with internal conflicts, portraying figures operating outside the law but still maintaining the legal order in society (Hassler-Forest, 2015).

The pinnacle of the evolution of superhero morality narratives is evident in the television series *The Boys* (2019), where traditional superhero concepts are deconstructed. Homelander, one of the central characters in the series, becomes the antithesis of Superman. Homelander symbolises absolute corrupted power. Although he is revered as a hero, audiences in the real world see how this character represents decadent power (Korte & Falkenhayner, 2021). Thus, Homelander is more than just a fictional character; he reflects modern society's increasing scepticism and doubt regarding the legitimacy of institutions and figures of authority.

Research related to *The Boys* has been conducted by several scholars offering different perspectives. Radošinská & Magalová (2022) discussed antiheroes, presenting characters with

complex morality far removed from traditional superhero ethics. Their study identifies three forms of antiheroes: fundamental (Homelander), latent (Billy Butcher, Starlight), and pragmatic (Madelyn Stillwell). Meanwhile, Wang (2024) explores the intersection of superhero fiction and social issues, depicting a world where superheroes are commodified and manipulated by large corporations like Vought. Wang argues that Vought exploits superheroes for profit, blurring the lines between heroism and villainy. Wang's research critiques the impact of corporate power on morality, societal norms, ethical values, and individual autonomy.

Although previous studies have examined *The Boys* from the perspectives of antiheroes and critiques of corporations and social issues, a gap for sharper readings remains to be analysed. To date, no study has specifically delved into the moral ambiguity of superheroes by focusing on Homelander as the narrative's centrepiece. Furthermore, discourse on how *The Boys* dismantles traditional moral foundations through Homelander's representation still receives less attention in academia. This research aims not only to fill that gap but also to bridge understanding of how morality, as a social construct, continually shifts—challenged, contested, and restructured—within the pulse of popular media.

Homelander provides the perfect stage to dissect how morality is no longer viewed as absolute but as a fluid field, full of ambiguity and negotiation. To this end, this research will employ Derrida's lens of deconstruction. This approach offers a deeper, more open, and more flexible reading of how *The Boys*—through the figure of Homelander—straddles moral orders once deemed unshakable. Derrida views texts as never complete; meaning is a conversation without an endpoint. By exploring gaps, cracks, and contradictions in the narrative, Derrida's deconstruction enables us to see morality not as absolute but as something continuously negotiated.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research method because rather than seeking to measure and quantify variables, qualitative research endeavors to uncover the underlying meanings, patterns, and contexts that shape human actions and beliefs (Lim, 2025) Which is particularly effective in understanding how social realities—such as morality, heroism, and power—are constructed and represented in film. Qualitative research is open for the interpretation of reality at multiple levels of meaning, making it well-suited to the analysis of cultural texts like *The Boys*. The focus of this research is the character Homelander, whose portrayal both embodies and deconstructs the morality of traditional superhero. The study integrates textual analysis, visual analysis, and a literature review, grounded in critical theory, specifically Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. Thus, this research is designed as a descriptive-analytical inquiry situated within critical cultural studies and poststructuralist theory. Primary data were drawn from selected episodes of *The Boys* (Seasons 1–3), with particular emphasis on three scenes: the aeroplane incident in Season 1, Episode 4, the Blindspot confrontation, and Homelander's rally speech in Season 3. Key dialogues, character interactions, and visual aesthetics—including costume symbolism, lighting, and camera composition. Secondary data comprised scholarly articles, books, and theoretical texts that explore superhero morality, Derridean theory, and the politics of media representation. The data were analyzed using three interrelated methods: narrative analysis to examine plot structure and character development; visual analysis to interpret the

symbolic and aesthetic elements contributing to Homelander's moral image; and theoretical analysis through deconstruction, applying Derrida's concepts of *différance*, trace, and the critique of binary oppositions to destabilize essentialist understandings of heroism. This deconstructive lens enables a critical rethinking of morality in popular culture, illustrating how modern superheroes can function as tools of manipulation rather than symbols of justice.

Finding and Discussion

Finding

The Origins of Homelander

Homelander is one of the main characters in The Boys TV series. He is designated as the leader of the superhero group, The Seven, managed by Vought. Homelander is portrayed as the ideal hero—a perfect icon embodying strength, bravery, and justice in the vein of classical Greek and Roman heroes. His name, “Homelander,” is derived from the combination of “home” and “land,” with the suffix “-er” suggesting someone associated with a particular place. This name evokes a sense of patriotism and national identity, aligning with his depiction as a symbol of America's ideal values.

Physically, Homelander embodies the stereotypical superhero, akin to Superman, with a tall, athletic build showcasing well-defined muscles—a nod to Greek aesthetics. His imposing appearance conveys dominant physical strength. His costume is designed to resemble the American flag, with predominant hues of blue, red, and gold, adorned with star motifs, reflecting his role as a symbol of American nationalism. Unlike Superman, who hails from the planet Krypton, Homelander is the product of genetic experiments using Compound V, which created him as a nearly invincible superhuman. Raised in isolation and devoid of love or empathy, he grew up to become manipulative and lacking compassion. He possesses Superman-like abilities such as flight, laser vision, immense physical strength, and super hearing.

Through the character of Homelander, The Boys deconstructs superhero morality. Instead of being a savior, Homelander becomes a harbinger of disaster for humanity. Rather than serving as a paragon of morality, he transforms into a catastrophe that undermines foundational moral values. For instance, in Season 1, Episode 4, Homelander's decision to let an entire airplane full of passengers crash is a pivotal moment revealing his moral collapse—and by extension, the moral ambiguity of superheroes themselves.

The scene begins with Homelander and Queen Maeve arriving on the plane, initially appearing as saviors. Their arrival is marked by the confident demeanor typical of superheroes on a mission, with Homelander's opening line, “It's all safe! We're all going to be fine.” The passengers' initial reactions—a mix of relief and admiration—reflect their trust in superheroes as their saviors. However, as the scene unfolds, it becomes clear that Homelander prioritizes his image and reputation over the lives of those he is supposed to protect. This moment starkly illustrates the crumbling moral foundation of both Homelander as a character and the concept of superhero morality in a broader sense as seen from Figure 1.

However, what happens next is something painful. Upon discovering that the pilot has died,

Homelander's attitude changes sharply, "Lift the plane? How? There's nothing to stand on. It's fuckin' air!" he snaps at Maeve, rejecting her suggestion to at least save some of the passengers. His frustration reveals his inability to cope with a situation where he cannot maintain complete control. Homelander's reluctance to try is not due to physical limitations, but because of his unwillingness to jeopardize the image he has carefully crafted. The dialogue here is crucial, "Maeve. Think. We're done here." This shows that his concern is not for the people but for how the situation will appear as seen from Figure 2.

Visually, this scene reinforces the situation as seen from Figure 1 and 2. The dim and claustrophobic lighting of the airplane contrasts sharply with Homelander's bright and pristine costume, which symbolizes the manufactured superhero. His presence is supposed to bring hope, but instead, it does the opposite. A close-up on Homelander's face reveals fleeting moments of the superhero's nihilistic lack of empathy as in Figure 1. The camera's focus on Maeve's horrified expression further highlights the collapse of superhero morality embodied in Homelander.

When the passengers plead to be saved, Homelander responds to Maeve as seen in figure 1, "I said, I'm saving you!". This moment shatters traditional superhero morality, where saving even a few lives would be depicted as the right thing to do. For Homelander, there is no middle ground—either he saves everyone perfectly or does nothing at all. This black-and-white mentality is not merely a personal weakness but also a reflection of the corporate machine he serves. His actions are driven by Vought's need to maintain the perfect image of their superheroes. Saving some passengers and leaving witnesses would tarnish that image, and Homelander prioritizes this over any moral obligation.

The horror of this scene is amplified by Homelander's refusal to engage emotionally. As passengers cry and reach out to Maeve in desperation, Homelander pulls her away, commanding, "What? So, they can tell the world that we left the rest of them to fucking die?". Maeve's resistance, as seen from Figure 2, "We can't leave them here!" is met with indifference, her humanity rendered



Figure 1 Homelander In the Plane (Season 1, Episode 4, 28:04)



Figure 2 Homelander Arguing with Maeve (Season 1, Episode 4, 31:15)

irrelevant in the face of Homelander's apathy. The scene concludes with Homelander and Maeve leaving the plane, abandoning the passengers whose screams gradually fade away.

Homelander's actions dismantle the binary opposition between superheroes and villains. Traditionally, superheroes are defined by their commitment to protecting others, but Homelander's indifference highlights how this commitment is often performative, serving external agendas rather than genuine morality. It implies that superheroes, as a concept, are inherently flawed and susceptible to easy manipulation.

This scene exemplifies the moral ambiguity in *The Boys*, forcing the audience to confront the uncomfortable reality that power and authority, even when cloaked in the guise of a superhero, often serve self-interest rather than a greater good.

In Season 1, Episode 4, the episode opens with the introduction of Blindspot as seen in figure 3, a recruit for The Seven, showcasing his abilities as a deaf superhero with exceptionally sharp senses. Ashley, Vought's PR representative, proudly presents him, emphasizing how Blindspot represents inclusivity and progress for The Seven. Initially, Homelander seems agreeable, smiling and nodding as Blindspot demonstrates his skills. However, the tension begins to build as Homelander's cold demeanor gradually surfaces.

In a horrifying turn, Homelander interrupts Ashley's explanation and approaches Blindspot, "So, what happens if I do this?" he remarks with calculated calm before suddenly clapping loudly near Blindspot's ears with brutal force. The impact is immediate—Blindspot collapses in pain, blood streaming from his ears, his heightened senses irreparably destroyed. Homelander towers over him, utterly unfazed, and coldly comments as seen from Figure 4, "And now you're just another useless fucking blind guy." His tone is icy, devoid of empathy.

The visual composition of this scene reinforces the ongoing power dynamics. Homelander's towering presence dominates, while Blindspot lies in pain on the floor, vulnerable and broken as seen from figure 4. The sterile corporate meeting room contrasts starkly with the violence unfolding, emphasizing how Vought's clean image conceals the brutality beneath. The camera lingers on



Figure 3 Homelander and Ashley Meet Blindspot (Season 2, Episode 1, 25:36)

Homelander's face as he delivers his final remark to Ashley, "And now you're just another useless fucking blind guy." His expression exudes satisfaction and menace, showcasing his absolute control over The Seven and Vought.

This scene is a brutal deconstruction of the superhero ideal in *The Boys*. Homelander's actions reject the values Vought claims to uphold—diversity, justice, and collective good. His violent dismissal of Blindspot exposes his belief that strength and power are the only qualities that matter, rendering anyone who fails to meet these standards worthless. The irony lies in the fact that Homelander himself is entirely a construct; his powers are the result of advanced laboratory engineering backed by Vought's marketing machine. Yet, he refuses to tolerate even the slightest imperfection in others.

Through Derrida's lens, this scene dismantles the binary opposition between superhero and villain, highlighting the hypocrisy inherent in Vought's operations. Homelander's outward persona as a savior is shattered, replaced by a figure of unrestrained cruelty and domination. The corporate boardroom, a space typically associated with order and professionalism, becomes a site of violence and tyranny, further unraveling the illusion of moral integrity in the superhero industry.

Crippling Blindspot is not merely an act of personal cruelty but also a critique of performative inclusivity within systems of power. Homelander's actions reveal the emptiness of Vought's attempts to present themselves as progressive, demonstrating how such efforts are often meaningless and self-serving. By stripping Blindspot of his abilities, Homelander delivers a chilling message: power and control, not morality or justice, are the true currency of The Seven.

Homelander's rally speech in *The Boys* Season 3 is a quintessential example of how he leverages rhetoric to manipulate the crowd and solidify his grip over them. Standing under the spotlight, he begins with a voice that is firm yet calming, "You people should be thanking Christ that I am the way I am!" His words, though framed as reassurance, carry an undertone of coercion, reinforcing the public's dependency on him. Homelander packages his speech as a declaration of protection, but each sentence is crafted to underscore that without him, society would collapse. He doesn't merely address the crowd; he positions himself as the center of their world.



Figure 4. Homelander After Destroying Blindspot (Season 1, Episode 4, 25:45)

Homelander deftly manipulates the crowd's emotions, exploiting their collective fear of fabricated threats, "If they can control me, you bet your ass they can control you. They already do; you just don't realize it." he proclaims with conviction. Behind this message, he subtly implants fear and dependency. The crowd responds with enthusiastic cheers, unaware that they are not just spectators, but tools used to elevate his image. Homelander knows precisely how to stir mass hysteria, making them believe that his presence is an absolute necessity, not a choice. He manipulates them with the narrative that a world without him is not only dangerous but unmanageable.

The visual elements of this scene heighten Homelander's manipulation as seen from Figure 5. A bright spotlight focuses solely on him, separating him from the crowd, which is shrouded in darkness and rendered indistinct. This stark contrast emphasizes the hierarchical divide, with Homelander positioned as the "savior" above the ordinary people below. His vibrant costume—dominated by blue, red, and gold hues symbolizing patriotism—creates the image of a near-divine figure. Yet this visual arrangement also builds a paradox: he appears as a beacon of hope amidst the darkness while simultaneously holding the masses in his shadow. Every element of his presentation, from his costume to his confident expressions, serves to reinforce the illusion of his moral authority.

Homelander's speech is laden with calculated linguistic choices. When he declares, "You need me to save you! You do. I am the only one who possibly can. You're not the real heroes. I am." he not only manipulates the crowd but also reinforces his image as a martyr. His words make him appear as someone willing to sacrifice for others, even though, he is only feeding his ego. Homelander reframes the concept of heroism as something entirely transactional—he offers protection but demands absolute devotion in return. As the crowd's cheers grow louder, the satisfaction on Homelander's face is unmistakable, revealing how he exploits their admiration for his own benefit.

This scene exemplifies the fragility of public trust in authority cloaked in heroism. The rally is not about protecting the public but about cementing Homelander's position as an unassailable figure. His dialogue, explicitly aimed at convincing the crowd of their dependence on him, unveils the depth of his manipulation. Yet every word he utters carries a hidden agenda: to ensure he remains the center



Figure 5 Homelander Speech at the Rally (Season 3, Episode 2, 55:42)

of power, with no one daring to question his motives. The cheers from the crowd are evidence of how rhetoric can blur the line between hero and tyrant.

Through this speech, Homelander delivers a near-perfect deconstruction of heroism. Viewed through Derrida's lens, the scene dismantles the binary opposition between savior and oppressor. Homelander is neither fully hero nor villain but both simultaneously, depending on how he chooses to be perceived. He constructs a version of heroism that is entirely performative, derived not from moral actions but from perceptions he shapes through emotional manipulation and visual symbolism. His speech underscores how power is often rooted in illusion and how a mesmerized crowd can easily become instruments of tyranny veiled in heroism.

Thus, Homelander is not a fixed symbol of good or evil, but in deconstruction reading is a trace—a fluid signifier whose meaning is shaped by capitalism, media, and ideology. The deconstructive method reveals how *The Boys* dismantles the binary oppositions that traditionally uphold superhero morality. Instead of offering moral certainty, the series through Homelander presents a world where power corrupts, and morality becomes a performance shaped by institutional interests.

Discussion

The Birth of Superheroes and Their Moral Foundation

Superheroes were born as symbols of hope during the turbulent times, particularly in the United States (US) in the early 20th century. During this period, the US faced major challenges such as the Great Depression, the threat of World War II, and social instability. The emergence of superheroes like Superman responded to society's need for saviours who could imaginatively provide a sense of security. Superman, first introduced in 1938 by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, not only became the pioneer of the superhero genre but also established moral standards that served as a reference for other superhero characters for decades.

As a character, Superman was depicted as upholding absolute moral principles, such as courage, truth, and justice. He used his superpowers to protect society from various threats but adhered to a

strict ethical code, making him an ideal symbol of morality and hope during times of crisis. Superman avoided killing his enemies, choosing instead to capture them and hand them over to the authorities. This approach reflects a moral idealism aligned with Kantian principles, where actions must be based on universal values that cannot be compromised (Woo, 2023)

Captain America also emerged as a symbol of patriotism and morality. During World War II, Captain America was introduced to represent the US spirit in fighting the Nazis (Stanley et al., 2021). Donning a costume resembling the American flag, his battle with enemies is often depicted as a threat to freedom and democracy. Captain America became a form of cultural propaganda that reinforced the moral narrative of good versus evil—the United States versus the German Nazis, freedom versus tyranny.

Superheroes of this era represented a dichotomous morality, where the distinction between good and evil was stark. Villains were often portrayed as the personification of absolute evil, with incomprehensible motives. This reflected a more black-and-white worldview, where moral conflicts could be resolved through decisive heroic actions. Over time, this narrative began to shift, especially as society started to question morality itself.

The Evolution of Superhero Morality

In the second half of the 20th century, the morality of superheroes began to transform. This change was largely driven by shifts in social and cultural values, as well as the increasing complexity of global issues such as the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and civil rights movements. Superheroes were no longer depicted as flawless figures but as individuals with internal conflicts that mirrored the moral ambiguities of their societies (Del Campo, 2020). Batman serves as one of the earliest examples of this evolution. In *The Dark Knight Returns*, Batman was portrayed as a darker hero, operating outside the law (a vigilante) and often using violent methods to achieve his goals. This narrative introduced a moral gray area, where the line between good and evil blurred, making morality appear ambiguous.

This evolution reached its peak in contemporary superhero narratives, as seen in *The Boys*. The character Homelander exemplifies the moral ambiguity of superheroes. Homelander is almost a mirror image of Superman: powerful, handsome, and charismatic. However, he is narcissistic, manipulative, and devoid of empathy. Across seasons 1 to 3 of *The Boys*, Homelander embodies Lord Acton's famous statement, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Dalberg-Acton, 1997).

When power resides in the hands of individuals without moral boundaries or external control, it inevitably intersects with morality. Homelander uses his power and authority as tools of exploitation rather than protection. Homelander leverages his heroic image to conceal his crimes, a phenomenon also observed in the real world when institutions or powerful individuals use propaganda to maintain their dominance (Del Campo, 2020). Furthermore, the interplay between power and morality is evident in Homelander's interactions with society in *The Boys*. The public adores Homelander because of his image, not his moral actions. This image is a construct by the Vought Corporation, which commodifies power and morality into marketable products (Korte & Falkenhayner, 2021). Yet, there is a compelling aspect to Homelander that keeps him relevant: he is not entirely disconnected from his humanity. Beneath his moral ambiguity, Homelander exhibits emotional vulnerability, particularly in

his quest for validation and affection—sometimes in absurd and repulsive ways.

This vulnerability underscores the complex relationship between humanity, power, authority, and morality. As someone endowed with power and authority from birth, Homelander was never taught moral boundaries or responsibility. This demonstrates how power, when unaccompanied by moral development, can create monsters rather than heroes.

The Deconstruction of Superheroes in *The Boys*

Deconstruction is a theory that offers a method of closely reading texts to reveal inconsistencies and paradoxes within their foundational concepts. It posits that texts possess multiple meanings due to varied interpretations, thereby it can enhance the probabilities of uncovering inconsistencies and gaps in meaning (Umar, 2024; Nayak, 2017). Derrida's deconstruction is not only to understand language and text, but also aims to understand the postmodern universe, which replaces the modern one (Yegen & Abukan, 2014). In deconstruction, signs in a text always refer to other signs, creating an endless relationship where one sign can interchangeably serve as the signifier or the signified. As Derrida (1982) explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not fixed but deferred, it allows the creation of new meanings. Meaning, therefore, is not born in a single context but is shaped by different times and situations.

In deconstructive reading, meaning is not understood as something fixed and final but as an ongoing process of interpretation. This process involves the concept of "trace," indicating that a concept never fully presents "being" in its entirety. Trace does not have its own substance or meaning but always points to something else. Trace can only be understood in relation to other things it references.

The trace precedes the object; it is not an effect but a cause. As such, presence is no longer considered original or fundamental but derived from the trace (Derrida, 1982). deconstructs meaning through the concept of *différance*, involving both difference and deferral. This approach rejects the idea of origins or essences that assume a fundamental truth. From this perspective, truth is merely a construction created by certain groups in power.

Another issue raised by Derrida is the critique of grand narratives. Deconstruction, challenges established and well-structured systems, creating space for new ideas that fundamentally oppose previously unshakable beliefs. This critique extends to various fields, including social, political, religious, cultural, and artistic institutions, often considered stable and unchanging.

The traditional superhero myth is rooted in the concept of heroism as seen in classical Greek and Roman heroes: figures who are not only physically strong but also possess unwavering moral integrity. Superman, Captain America, and Wonder Woman exemplify this archetype, acting as society's protectors with untarnished morals. In this view, superheroes are the embodiment of truth and justice. However, *The Boys*, deconstructs this by dismantling traditional heroism and presenting superheroes as deeply ambivalent and even destructive figures (Stanley et al., 2021).

Through the character Homelander, *The Boys* portrays the moral ambiguity of superheroes. In the context of deconstruction, Homelander represents the trace, demonstrating that the meaning of a superhero cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the surrounding darkness. Homelander shows that traditional superhero morality is not only idealistic but it is also a paradoxical act of

concealment and the potential abuse of power. Moreover, in *The Boys*, the Vought Corporation symbolizes unrestrained capitalism, exploiting superheroes for economic and political gain. Grand narratives often serve as constructions leveraged by those in power to maintain their dominance.

In the series, according to Vought, the use of heroic narratives is to control public opinion, influence policies, and maximise profits. Vought not only controls superheroes but also dictates how society perceives them, proving that the superhero myth is more a tool of manipulation than a moral portrait. This aligns with Derrida's view that meaning is fluid, depending on context and power relations. In this sense, superheroes become products of capitalism rather than society's protectors.

The deconstruction of superheroes in *The Boys* also reflects society's shifting views of authority figures. As modern society grows increasingly sceptical of public figures such as politicians and celebrities, the series presents a narrative that challenges blind trust in authority. The traditional heroes with absolute morals have been replaced by more realistic figures: individuals with flaws, ambiguities, and internal conflicts.

Conclusion

Homelander in the series *The Boys* symbolizes the complexity of morality in contemporary superhero narratives. This character challenges traditional notions of superheroes by combining the paradox of a perfectly heroic image with actions that reflect moral ambiguity. Within the framework of Derrida's deconstruction theory, Homelander represents the dismantling of absolute morality, which serves as the moral foundation for classic superheroes like Superman and Captain America. Homelander illustrates how superhero morality is no longer seen as utopian but rather as a social construct shaped by power, capitalism, and manipulation. Key scenes, such as Homelander's decision not to save the passengers of a plane, highlight how his heroism is more performative than grounded in moral integrity. He uses imagery and rhetoric to manipulate society, maintain control, and reinforce his ego. In this context, superheroes are no longer about sacrifice for the greater good but about how authority figures create and sustain public perceptions to perpetuate their power.

The series also critiques institutions such as Vought, a capitalist corporation that commodifies morality and power for economic profit. Homelander, as a product of capitalism, reflects how morality is often sacrificed to serve economic and political interests. With his cruelty and manipulation hidden behind a flawless image, Homelander becomes a representation of corrupt authority figures who wield power destructively. Overall, *The Boys* not only deconstructs superhero morality but also challenges the grand narratives that shape societal perceptions of morality, power, and superheroes. Homelander serves as a reminder of the dangers of unchecked power and the importance of skepticism toward claims of absolute morality. Ultimately, the series emphasizes that morality is a dynamic construct, constantly evolving in response to the social and ideological contexts surrounding it.

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