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**Modernism Unmasked: Analyzing
disillusionment and fragmented narrative in the
contemporary tv series The Boys**

Case Study: The Tv series The Boys

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Dedication

In the name of almighty Allah, whose guidance and blessings made its achievement possible.

We dedicate this work:

To our parents who are our role models of perseverance, strength and compassion. Thank you for your unconditional love, support and sacrifices which have shaped us into who we are today.

To our friends and close ones who have been a constant source of joy, laughter and encouragement throughout this journey. We are grateful for our bond and for always being there for us during both good and challenging times.

May this dedication serve as a testament to the collective effort that brought us here.

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Abstract:

The literary and artistic movement of Modernism fundamentally reshaped the landscape of storytelling, moving decisively away from rigid Victorian conventions to embrace fragmented narratives, delve into deep psychological exploration, and introduce thorough, often challenging, perceptions on identity. This dissertation undertakes a comprehensive investigation into how these pivotal modernist techniques are not merely echoes of the past but continue to actively inform and mold contemporary narratives. Specifically, it employs a rigorous qualitative and content analysis methodology, focusing on the critically acclaimed television series *The Boys*, to illuminate the intricate ways in which modernist principles are applied to construct deeply complex and morally ambiguous characters, simultaneously challenging and deconstructing traditional archetypes of heroism. The central premise of this research is that the aesthetic and thematic innovations of Modernism provide a powerful lens through which to interpret and critique the complex challenges of the 21st century. Through a meticulous textual analysis of *The Boys*, this study demonstrates how the series' narrative structure, character development, and thematic concerns directly draw from and expand upon modernist approaches. This analysis reveals a consistent pattern wherein contemporary stories, by adopting modernist sensibilities, become potent reflections of both personal anxieties and broader societal struggles. The pervasive sense of disillusionment, the questioning of established authorities, and the internal conflicts faced by individuals navigating a complex world, all resonate strongly with the concerns that preoccupied modernist artists and writers.

المخلص :

لقد أعادت الحركة الأدبية والفنية للحدثاثة تشكيل مشهد السرد القصصي بشكل جذري، مبتعدة بشكل حاسم عن تقاليد العصر الفيكتوري الصارمة لتتبنى السرديات المجزأة، والغوص في الاستكشاف النفسي العميق، وتقديم تصورات شاملة وغالبًا ما تكون تحديًا حول الهوية. تقوم هذه الرسالة بإجراء تحقيق شامل في كيفية أن هذه التقنيات الحدثاثة المحورية ليست مجرد أصداء من الماضي، بل تستمر في تشكيل وصياغة السرديات المعاصرة بنشاط. على وجه التحديد، تستخدم منهجية تحليل نوعي وتحليل محتوى دقيقة، مع التركيز على المسلسل التلفزيوني الحائز على إشادة نقدية "The Boys"، لتسليط الضوء على الطرق المعقدة التي تُطبق بها المبادئ الحدثاثة لبناء شخصيات عميقة التعقيد وذات غموض أخلاقي، مع تحدي وتفكيك الأنماط التقليدية للبطولة.

المبدأ المركزي لهذا البحث هو أن الابتكارات الجمالية والموضوعية للحدثاثة توفر عدسة قوية يمكن من خلالها تفسير وانتقاد التحديات المعقدة في القرن الحادي والعشرين. من خلال تحليل نصي دقيق لمسلسل "The Boys"، يبرهن هذا الدراسة كيف أن هيكل السرد، وتطور الشخصيات، والاهتمامات الموضوعية في المسلسل تستمد مباشرة من الأساليب الحدثاثة وتتوسع فيها. يكشف هذا التحليل عن نمط متنسق حيث تصبح القصص المعاصرة، من خلال تبني الحساسيات الحدثاثة، انعكاسات قوية لكل من القلق الشخصي والصراعات المجتمعية الأوسع. إن الشعور السائد بالخيبة، والتشكيك في السلطات القائمة، والصراعات الداخلية التي يواجهها الأفراد في عالم معقد، كلها تتناغم بقوة مع الاهتمامات التي شغلت الفنانين والكتاب الحدثائيين

list of figures ;

Figure 1. Comparative scene: Trump's shooting remark and Homelander killing a protestor
(The Boys, Season 3, Episode 8)

Figure 2. Comparative scene: Anton Chigurh and Homelander drinking milk (No Country for
Old Men, 2007 / The Boys, Season 2, Episode 1)

Figure 3. Billy Butcher shows his soft side by helping Hughie (The Boys, Season 3, Episode
7)

Figure 4. Homelander fights Soldier Boy (The Boys, Season 3, Episode 6)

Figure 5. Billy Butcher hallucinates his dead wife Becca (The Boys, Season 4, Episode 6)

Figure 6. Black Noir hallucinates cartoon figures to cope with trauma (The Boys, Season 3,
Episode 7)

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General Introduction:

Contemporary media storytelling has evolved from traditional clear morals narrative to another that is more on the fragmented and ambiguous end. This transformation represents roots of modernist literature, a movement that was highlighted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a response to war, disillusionment with institutions, and identity crises in the middle of rapid modernization. Modernist authors like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot broke away from linear storytelling and clear cut one directional morality, to employ different techniques that would help explore alienation and psychological depth such as fragmented narrative and stream of consciousness.

Recently, these modernist themes and techniques emerged again in genres like superhero fiction. Appearing in television series such as *The Boys*, which was adapted by Eric Kripke from Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson's comics, to challenge traditional superhero stories by portraying the main element of them (superheroes) as flawed, conflicted and manipulated by corporations to exploit their powers, integrating themes of disillusionment, identity crisis and authoritarian control which align closely with modernist concerns.

The Boys has been widely analyzed for its political and cultural critiques, but its thematic and narrative connections to modernism is extremely understudied and discussed in academia. This research focuses on fulfilling that gap by presenting and highlighting these connections and examining modernist themes that are existent in the show. This approach positions *The Boys* as a complex literary work that extends modernist themes onto contemporary visual media.

Statement of the Problem:

By moving away from a unidirectional good versus evil towards morally complex, fragmented and psychologically rich stories, the superhero genre is undergoing a major narrative shift. A shift that mirrors modernist literature's response to societal upheavals. Yet this is rarely acknowledged by the scholarly work frames that connect *The Boys* to a

Modernist literature context. This oversight leaves a critical gap in understanding how modernism influenced modern contemporary visualized media.

Research questions:

The present research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How does *The Boys* TV series incorporate modernist themes (such as disillusionment, fragmented identity, and societal mistrust) and narrative techniques (like polyphony, stream of consciousness, and non-linear temporality) to deconstruct traditional superhero narratives?
- 2) In what ways does *The Boys'* use of these modernist elements highlight the enduring relevance of themes like identity crisis and societal disillusionment in contemporary media?

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To examine how *The Boys* incorporates contemporary artistic currents (specifically themes of widespread disillusionment and fractured selfhood) and storytelling approaches (such as multiple viewpoints and asynchronous timelines) to dismantle conventional superhero narratives.
- 2) To investigate how *The Boys'* utilization of these modernistic traits emphasizes the ongoing significance of concepts like personal uncertainty and public distrust in today's entertainment landscape.

Ultimately, the study aims to show that *The Boys* is not only a critique of corporate and media celebrity culture but also a continuation of modernist literature exploration.

Significance of the Study:

This research endeavors to bridge the gap between Modernism and popular visual culture by applying modernist theory to a contemporary television series. It demonstrates how

modernism's relevance is still ongoing even beyond 20th century texts, examining how *The Boys* reflect current cultural anxieties resonating with modern audiences. Furthermore, it elevates superhero genre within the literary discourse by revealing how it takes advantage of complex narrative strategies.

Research Methodology:

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary, and analytical methodology, combining literary criticism along with philosophy and cultural analysis, given the nature of *The Boys* this study bases on textual analysis and narrative critique to evaluate the presence of modernist themes and techniques, particularly disillusionment and fragmented narrative. Which is managed through a critical lens in modernist theory, supported by psychoanalytic theory, narratology, and critical media studies.

Research Design:

This dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter, titled *Theoretical Framework*, introduces modernist concepts such as fragmentation, disillusionment, stream of consciousness, polyphony, and identity crisis, supported by theoretical and scholarly sources. In the second chapter, to analyze the series narrative structure, characters and themes, to illustrate modernist concerns.

Chapter 1: Echoes of a Fractured Age: Modernism's Enduring Grasp

Modernism as a definition is a massive cultural movement that approached different fields like art, literature, architecture, music, this movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century as a way to revolutionize and break away from the traditional forms of art by approaching different methods and ideas. “Modernist literature emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, representing a break from traditional practices and a quest for new forms of expression. This movement was characterized by a profound sense of disillusionment with established norms and a desire to explore alternative perspectives, often through experimental techniques, fragmented narratives, and introspective subject matter.” (Kumar 1)

the world changed in rapid way due to different industrial growth also the spread of capitalism all over the world with different scientific ideas and theories of the psychological part of the human being this led people to shift from the old ways of thinking where the old ages does not fulfill the human process of development anymore, The growth of modernism in the early 20th century was mainly influenced by the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud where they both challenged the traditional concept of reality, self-identity and morality in order to have a new experience of understanding the human being nature through out the modernist literature and philosophical ideas, Nietzsche philosophy was based on the concept of atheism and such traditional values as religions and metaphysical ideas should be left out by individuals and every one should create its own values and meaning to his life, Dobrowolski explains that

- " Nietzsche's philosophy, in the first place as regards his stance towards the first issue (and his own interpretation thereof), and, more generally, as this interpretation is rooted in his broader thinking about life as such " (Dobrowolski)

Nietzsche's biggest concerns was morality where he argued that people that follow religions are just slaves to morality because according to him they were created by the weak to control the strong this type of ideas were highly adapted by the modernist artists and writers who took these ideas and implemented them in their works as a way of leaving the traditional values, for Sigmund Freud who was highly influenced by Nietzsche's intelligence where he also introduced the idea of the unconscious desires and previous life experiences are the one to shape the human behaviors, his studies about ego and superego helped him to reveal the real complexities of the human beings different writers like James Joyce and Franz Kafka used this techniques such as stream of consciousness and the fragmented narratives to give a

picture of the modern life complexities , Freud theories that inspired the modern artists to reflect the world chaotic picture and how unstable it actually that led every artist sees his world and react to it in a total different matter instead of depicting their picture of reality , modern literature was defined by four different pillars that represented the author modern ideas starting with fragmentation which refers to brake the traditional structure of storytelling leaving the coherent narrative style to highlight different and perspectives , and for our example for the modern artist that were influenced by modernists theories is T.S. Eliot the author of the famous novel called *The Waste Land* where the author implemented fragmentation disillusionment alienation and her way of rejecting reality .

" In the midst of the ruins of both his personal life and Europe, Eliot expresses the loss of a universal understanding delineated in the fragmentation of language and a disassociation of sensibility. " (Saeedi 4)

, the fragmented storytelling was seen in the novel as multiple voices and different point of views during the storytelling to give a literary allusion for the readers and unstable storytelling and overall reading experience Eliot also introduced the theme of disillusionment after the horrible event and the devastation of the World War 1 and how does it effected the traditional beliefs in progress religion and the human identity leaving different artists to paint the world in their point of view according to the events that happened in that era like social collapse and overall the disappointment in humanity most of the artist like Eliot felt like life is meaningless and it lost its purpose and values this type of emptiness , sadness or even absurd was clearly implemented in her novels and short stories as a way to reflect her sense of life that no longer doesn't deserve to be lived , another theme that modernists used in the art of literature is alienation which is the feeling of separation and isolation from other people in the society or from yourself modernists used this theme after many people lost trust in the old values like family and religion and nationality to the point where people lost their purpose in life so they started to develop the feeling of loneliness a great example of this theme is Gregor Samsa from the novel made by Franz Kafka's called *The Metamorphosis* (1915) where Gregor woke up on a random day to find himself transformed into a giant insect out of the blue and no reason why the author meant to not give a valid reason as a way to reflect the world that

they lived in and the events from that era where the world these events does not follow the traditional logic anymore , another example from the modernists authors is James Joyce's Ulysses (1922) which is a great example of how modernists writers shifted their way of storytelling in order to get rid of the traditional methods Joyce was one of the first authors who managed to use a famous modernist technique which is stream of consciousness to give the reader a deep understanding of what the characters in the novel are constantly thinking and to give us an accurate image of its emotions and feelings , "James Joyce published one of the most influential and difficult novels of modern times, Ulysses. He used a relatively new narrative technique known as stream of consciousness: going inside the characters' minds to reveal their innermost thoughts, feelings, and sensations." (Roberts)

. James published Ulysses that is know to be one of the most Important and challenging novels in the modern literature where he made it a unique piece after he used stream of consciousness technique where he tries to read and mimic how people think and act shifting from and idea to another without any logical order James avoided to give an answer to the reader directly instead he let them to dive into the characters mind and make them think the same way the character thinks so they can experience their emotions memories . modernism as all played a huge role into shifting point of views of different modernists artist especially literature after the events that happened like world war 1 was enough to make a fast changes in society and the huge loss of the old values and beliefs , different philosophers like Nietzsche and Freud was the main root and source for modernists writers that dropped the traditional style and changed to deliver more complex and themes for the readers themes that enhanced the overall the picture of the writers towards the events at that era and tried to make sense of a world where it is no longer simple and clear .

1 Defining Modernism

Modernist thoughts was characterized and informed by different techniques that often focus on feelings of confusion and broken storytelling order and questioning the authority that played a massive role in shaping nowadays movies, TV shows and visual graphic novels where this modernists theme have been transformed to help us understand how different fictional characters can be very complex and as a way to transform their emotions to the audience , in the early start of cinema German expressionism abstracted the modernists aesthetics particularly in a film made by Robert Wiene called *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) the film tend to deliver twisted perspective mirroring the psychological turmoil and societal disillusionment of post world war 1 in Germany , its narrative style involved different themes like manipulation people to commit murders and kidnapping actions in a horror disturbing and grooms form

“film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* exposes psychological guilt and insanity through the main character's fantasies and delusions. This character, Francis, brings the viewer into a nightmarish world through his story-telling. He recounts the story of the mad Dr. Caligari and the somnambulist Cesare who is under his control. The doctor's arrival in Francis' hometown results in a string of murders “ (B. R. Freeman) the film presented a main villain called Dr. Caligari the controls other people that are considered as sleepwalkers and makes him murder people , this gives us representation of what could happened if people followed leaders in a blindly and how easily the mind can get to the state to be broken under pressure , the movie tend to use disturbing flashy effects and dark visuals to show what the characters feels and thinks about as a way to embrace the modernist techniques in the new era . modern televisions series like *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013) and *Mad Men* (2007–2015) are great examples of shows that continued in this modernist tradition by presenting complex narratives centered to build antiheroes , these two shows embraced themes of moral ambiguity and identity crises also social disillusionment, as an example *breaking bad* portrays a normal chemistry teacher

that was not satisfied with his life and his income who transformed into a drug dealer that uses his skills in order to sell a drug called Meth ,

“Walter is initially clumsy in his criminality; he managed to find himself at the top of greater New Mexico’s drug trade. He used his expertise in chemistry to manufacture nearly pure crystal methamphetamine with the goal of leaving his family enough money to live on after he dies of lung cancer “ (Matthew.) his resists simplistic judgments of what is right and wrong that led him to make dangerous interaction with different new Mexico drug dealers in order to save a solid amount of money for his family after his death these build events tend to be more engaging for the viewers to consider the psychological and the social forces that made Walter white transform, Madmen also as a show reflects the modernist where this show presented a character Don Draper as a deeply fractured character who assumed identity and emotional detachment reflects all modernists themes like alienation giving us a full representation of the capitalist image that was driven by the society Don Darper hides his true identity in order to escape his troubled past during the Korean war , this act of self-reinvention reflects the modernist theme of alienation

“ Don Draper is a case study in the kind of reinvention that Freedman is concerned about. Draper grew up motherless and in poverty during the depression. Along the way he has the chance to escape his past and he grabs it with both fists. He finds his “sweet spot” distilling desire and selling the American dream. “ (Houtz) his background that showed us non exited motherhood and its figure explains why don has This act of self-reinvention where individuals feel disconnected from their true selves and the society even though all of the money he got and his success in advertising Don struggles with deep emotional issues since his childhood where he was neglected and abused , he often uses alcohol and relationships with women to fill his gap and to avoid his pain , Don had a very lonely life that is filled with dissatisfaction where his story reflects the emptiness that he has in his heart where he was mainly focused on the outside and I mean by that his appearance in success rather than find

his true self by doing a genuine connection and self-understanding, Don's storyline shows the struggle and the challenges that Don's found through out his storytelling where one's true identity in a world that often values the image of human over authenticity, narrative wise these two shows implemented modernists techniques like nonlinear storytelling, flashback and parallel timelines in a non-chronological order this mirrors the modernists authors like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce who embraced the fragmented narratives to reflect the disorientation of the modern life and as our previous examples MadMen frequently uses flashbacks to reveal for the viewers Don Draper's traumatic past in order to complicate the understanding of the audience of his actions and motivations.

2 Culture's Canvas: Modernism's Footprint in Popular Media

Superheroes have long captivated audiences, but their origins reach far from our modern day comic books, ancient myths and epics often featured figures who had superhuman qualities as the ancient epic story of Gilgamesh serves as an example, where it tells a story of a king that's half divine and half human, along with the untamed Enkidu, and these two form a companionship familiar to one of a hero and his side kick (Robb 24). However, moving forward to modern day, Superhero genre did come a long way in development, starting from the early pulp comics in 1938 during the Great Depression, where people needed a form of hope and an escape from their harsh reality. The first to ever exist being "Action Comic #1" (Robb 13) that handed us this hero we all know. Superman became a symbol of strength and justice, with him standing for the weak and never asking for anything in return. In that time, Superman was the hero that people needed. His stories gave a clear view of right and wrong in a time where the world felt confusing and unfair, providing a linear narrative with Superman consistently depicted as a figure of charity whose actions are guided solely by a commitment to justice, devoid of any malevolent intent or morally ambiguous behavior. This image of heroism and narrative continued to shape the moral compass and actions of

superheroes in further comics such as “Captain America” and “Wonder Woman,” with not much depth to the hero’s morality or any internal conflicts. Comics then made heroes use bold colors, clear lines, and dramatic poses to look noble and project an image of perfectionism.

The heroic figures were not the only one-directional characters, since also villains were pure evil with no complexity or ambiguity, no trauma. They were evil just for the sake of being evil and one-sided, often with no backstory or reasons for their moral decay. Their plans were always wrong, and their defeat by the heroes was for certain, causing a repetitive narrative where they behave badly and are put to shame later by the main character. Peter Coogan notes in his book, “Just as a hero represents the virtues and values of a society or culture, a villain represents an inversion of those values. But more than that, a supervillain has the ability to enact that inversion, to bring the normal activities of a society to a halt and force a hero to arise to defend those virtues” (Coogan 63) This form of narration worked for long, since children at the time loved it, and so did we, but that formula gets dull and rejected by adults who seek deeper stories with meaning to them, marking them as “expected.”

However, this pattern of story had a positive influence on youth at the time. Children found them easy to follow with clear lessons to learn about good and evil. Heroes mentioned previously became role models for kids, where they are taught values like honesty, bravery, and helping others (Singh 36). Since the heroes always did the right thing, children saw the world in black and white. With these stories being cheap and widely available, this made them popular among kids from all backgrounds, shaping their view on good and bad. Additionally, one can’t deny the ultimate commercial success of this pattern. With its popularity among kids, publishers rushed into copying that formula, which led to the creation of similar characters, “Captain America” and many others, which also saw large success, leading that period to be called “the Golden Age of Comics.”

This traditional narrative began to extinguish with the emergence of Modernism in the early 20th century as a response to the upheaval caused by World War I, which pushed the rise of

morally ambiguous heroes, the questioning of traditional values, and clear-cut morality, where the superhero comics moved towards moral complexity. By the 1980s, and exactly in 1986, with the release of two comics that altered the ambiguity of heroes, with them being “The Dark Knight Returns” by Frank Miller and “Watchmen” by Alan Moore, which provided a new formula of moral ambiguity for heroes. The acclaimed author of *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen*, declared that the modern obsession with superheroes, figures originally created for children, reveals a societal tendency to avoid the complex realities of contemporary life, a trend he believes may stall cultural development (Moore) Characters of these two comics faced personal crises and struggle, and more often disillusionment and alienation, reflecting the modernist focus on individual subjectivity and the disintegration of traditional values and existential uncertainty.

Batman, for instance, signaled a radical departure from the traditional representation and, more broadly, from the established norms of this fiction, where he is no longer the straightforward crusader for justice. Miller’s Batman is reimagined as an aging, psychologically complex individual operating in a society plagued by crime, political corruption, and public apathy. The comic’s dystopian setting mirrors the sociopolitical tensions of the 1980s. Batman is driven not by noble idealism but by a sense of personal duty and unresolved trauma. His methods are brutal, his motivations are ambiguous, and his actions raise ethical questions about vigilantism and power. Coogan in his book says that “In Miller’s story, Batman is portrayed as a social disease, as Dr. Wolper puts it, his actions not curing but causing the very disease he claims to fight. Wolper’s psychological perspective challenges Batman’s moral certainty, suggesting that he is not a hero but a disturbed individual whose vigilantism perpetuates violence” (66), which furthermore enhances the point of a shift from one-sided morality and lack of complexity to multi-layered characters with questionable actions and, more often, certain philosophical dilemmas.

Watchmen by Alan Moore is another turning point that helped in shifting the evolution of comic books into what it is now. It introduces characters like Dr. Manhattan, who found struggle in his feelings of detachment from humanity. This shift reflected broader societal concerns of the time, particularly about power, authority, and the consequences of individual actions in a world that often feels morally uncertain, with nuanced explorations of human nature.

This show Watchmen introduced a heightened sense of realism to the superhero genre, grounding its narrative in a world that closely mirrors real political, social, and psychological conditions. The story takes place in an alternate 1980s America, shaped by Cold War tensions, nuclear anxiety, and political unrest. Unlike traditional superhero settings, Watchmen presents a society where heroes are affected by real-world pressures, including government control and media influence. The characters do not possess idealized bodies or flawless morals. Instead, they reflect human vulnerability. This realistic portrayal takes away the fantasy element often associated with superhero narratives and replaces it with a sense of reasoning (Thomason 8,9). By doing that, Moore challenged the readers to not view heroes as flawless figures to escape reality but as lost individuals navigating a complex world.

These pulp magazines and comics, along with many others, built the foundation upon which the modern forms of media are laid, from TV series to shows and films. They had a massive impact on audience perception of morality, proving that morality can be situational, encouraging critical thinking about ethical behavior rather than blind admiration, and also influencing cultural expectations of justice.

Because of modernist elements' effect on comics, we are now presented with superhero shows that act as a critique of media, propaganda, and image manipulation. By engaging with these themes, readers (especially teenagers) now develop a view of politics, media control, and social criticism, which encourages them to question public figures and narratives. It pushes them to ask: Who controls the story? Whose voice is missing? What is being sold as truth?

This dynamic fosters media literacy, the skill of critically analyzing and understanding media messages. By exposing how narratives can be manipulated for power or profit, modern comics train readers to be skeptical of surface appearances, whether in fiction or in real life. In this way, superhero fiction becomes a tool, equipping audiences to navigate the complexities of modern information systems. This was agreed upon by Steutre “The inclusion of comics and graphic narratives is one innovation that may be effective. Many critical media literacy scholars are defining media literacy texts as those that rely on both print and image literacies” (11). Aiming on highlighting the importance of such works in developing critical media literacy just as an example of what the consumer of such materials would gain from them.

3 From Capes to Complexity: The Evolution of the Superhero Narrative

The boys is a superhero narratives TV series and comic book, known for its dark tone of events, political undertones and a critical approach to power and morality. the comic series was first published in 2006 and later adapted into a popular television show by Eric Kripke in 2019, where both versions offer a variety of criticisms to different subjects while including morally layered characters, the boys depicts a world where superheroes aren't the symbols of justice and hope but rather exposes their corrupted and egotistical behaviors. This part explores the origins and development of the series, highlighting it's ideas and narrative framework, in addition to it's engagement with the audience, by doing so, this part will set the stage for a deeper understanding of the series.

The boy's began as a comic book series Created by writer Garth Ennis and artist Darick Robertson, it was first published in 2006 by Wildstorm, an imprint of DC comics, but unfortunately was cancelled due to its highly explicit content besides it's critique of the superhero genre, however, the series was then taken by Dynamite Entertainment (Eaton) , which allowed Ennis and Robertson to continue their work with any censorship until the

series was finished in 2012, after 72 issues. The comic gained attention for its graphic violence and dark humor, with heroes that aren't the noble defenders, but the flawed individuals corrupted by fame.

In 2019 the boys was adapted into a live action television series by Eric Kripke, with two main supporting production companies being Sony Picture Television and Amazon studios (Eaton), the show followed the same tone and themes but also introduced new storylines and characters to suit more modern audiences, while the comic focused on post 9/11 political anxiety (Eaton), the television version included more modern issues, such as the Influence of media. The adaptation also benefited from high production cost and strong acting performances such as Antony Star as the main villain, to reach a broad international audience.

The development of both the Tv series and the comics was mainly shaped by cultural and political climates, in which each of them emerged, the comic responded to growing criticism towards traditional heroism and government accountability during the 2000s, while the Tv show turned into more concerns of the 21th century, such as corporate control, celebrity culture and the manipulation of truth,

The narrative of the boy's centers on a group of ordinary people aiming to expose corrupt superheroes backed by powerful corporations, where the main conflict revolves around The Seven which is a group of superheroes under the sponsorship of the government, and The Boys, a group of vigilantes that's secretly determined to hold these so called heroes accountable for their actions. The series reversed the roles where superheroes become the villains, a concept that forms the core of the series, satire and extreme violence are constantly used to show how power can corrupt individuals and institutions. With many central themes being unchecked authority and the commercialization of heroism explored by the plot and the characters.

The series created a mixture of realism and exaggerated comic book elements, in a world where superheroes are celebrities managed by a corrupted corporate called Vought International. These “heroes” engage in many criminal and unethical behaviors behind the scenes, yet through media manipulation and public relations they are able to maintain a public image of perfection (Smolić 8) . A narrative that emphasizes on surveillance, propaganda and the blurring of truth in a society driven by no more than image. The use of multiple perspectives, non-linear storytelling, and character backstories enriches the world of The Boys deepens it’s critique to contemporary power dynamics. Through it’s unique structure and bold themes, the series redefined it’s own genre while maintaining a large engagement with real world concerns.

The boy’s through it’s subversion of the superhero genre and reflection of real world cultural anxieties has gain a large global audience. Unlike the usual traditional narratives that rely on clear distinctions between good and evil, the boys engages viewers with morally complex characters, this fresh perspective attracts audiences who are disillusioned with the familiar mainstream superhero franchises. The series encourages their critical thinking by exposing the gap between the public image and private behaviors, especially in a world where celebrities, politicians and corporations shape the reality through consumed media. The show managed to draw in “fans” by using twisted heroes, its popularity reflects a shift in audience preferences towards more grounded, cynical and socially aware storytelling, the show engages directly with contemporary issues, allowing viewers to compare them to their own societal parallels. It also effectively uses satire and shock to maintain discussion and relevance. through streaming platforms such as Amazon Prime, the boys has reached international audiences, proving its place as a culturally significant work that critiques not only superhero fiction but also the deeper social structures in today’s world.

A thing that this series does the best is creating characters with multiple layers to them, some of them acquire superpowers and others are just normal civilians, anyone who has powers is

referred to a “supe” which is a shortcut of “superhero”, the supes are mostly under the control of Vought International, but the strongest and most important are gathered in one group called “The Seven” which is lead by “homelander”, however, another team called “The Boys” is aiming to cause their fall while being led by “Billy Butcher”, The Boys are consisted of six members that only two of them have powers.

Billy Butcher is introduced as a former member of the British special forces who now leads the secret group that is “The Boys”, Butcher’s hatred for the seven is rooted in a personal tragedy, he believes that “homelander” caused his wife “Becca” disappearance, driving his obsession of taking down the supes at any cost, Butcher is known for his aggressive tactics, moral flexibility and sharp tongue while also acting as the unofficial commander of the group, he constantly pushes the limits of what is considered ethical for the sake of his own revenge, his team includes Hughie Campbell’s a quiet casual civilian who had his life turned upside down after a supe with super speed named A-Train murder a girl he knows in an accident, but before this tragedy Hughie worked at an electronics shop and had no involvement in politics or crime. however, after Robin’s death, he is approached by Butcher and slowly becomes involved in The Boys’ mission, he starts off hesitant and morally uncertain but eventually grows more confident and determined after he knows about the dark side of Vought corporation and it’s superheroes. However, at the heart of all this conflict is homelander, the most powerful superhero and the leader of the seven, he was created by Vought in a lab experiment and was deprived from any human affection which made him a narcissistic psychopath who is always seeking validation. Homelander was shaped to be the symbol of American strength and heroism, in public he is a fearless protector, but in reality, he is emotionally unstable, narcissistic and increasingly dangerous. His powers place him above all others, making his actions pass without any consequences, while his growing need for control and recognition turns him into a central threat to both Vought’s enemies and to it’s own leadership. Within all these agendas and public manipulation, Victoria Neuman emerges as a

rising political figure. She first appears as a congresswoman leading public hearings on superhero accountability, gaining popularity for her bold statements about heroes and Vought's corporation, Victoria seen as a symbol of hope she becomes the head of the Bureau of Superhuman affairs. However, her character takes a really sharp turn when she is revealed as a "supe" and secretly works for Vought while positioning herself as a public enemy of their agendas. These characters stand in the middle of the series events along with many others, each with their complexities and morality that shape the direction of the story.

4 Shattered Visions: Fragmented Narrative Techniques in Literature

As a detention it is a literature technique that stands for breaking the narrative into smaller non-linear pieces instead of taking the typical straightforward storytelling path , in a chronological manner , this technique is used to reflect the complexity of the human thoughts, memory and the previous experiences it also evokes the sense of disorientation by mirroring the fragmented nature of the modern life.

Memory is rarely linear. It comes to us in flashes moments disconnected from time, fragments that surface without warning. A sound, a scent, a flicker of light can unlock a memory long forgotten, yet it arrives incomplete, fractured, like pieces of a puzzle we no longer know how to solve. In life, we do not recall events in perfect sequence; instead, our minds leap from one moment to another, weaving connections between the past and the present in ways that defy logic where Traumatic memories are not easily integrated into the individual's life narrative; instead, they manifest as involuntary and often fragmentary recollections , This is why fragmented narratives in literature feel so familiar they reflect the way memory works, the way life works, in all its broken, beautiful complexity as an explanation this outlines the structural aspects and the main purpose of fragmented narratives highlighting its main role depicting our human experiences in life , where fragmented narratives historical context and

evolution started in the late 19th century into early 20th century different famous modernist novelists like Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner sought to experience a new narrative that is unique for abandoning the usual linear order and have the freedom to produce more complex and unusual storylines and shift towards fragmented structures, stream of consciousness and different multiple modernist perspectives in order to reflect the complexities of human thoughts and experience. Later on the mid-late century the fragmented narrative continued to evolve within the postmodern literary movement as authors kept challenging traditional storytelling by mixing both reality and fiction to deliver many genres with modern meta,

fragmented storytelling played a huge role with its significance in modern storytelling where it reshaped the modernist whole writing process. " In modern literature, fragmentation is often used to challenge linear storytelling and traditional narrative structures. Modernist writers sought to depict the fragmented nature of reality and the subjective experiences of their characters. One notable example is Virginia Woolf's novel "Mrs. Dalloway" (1925) " (Almaarof 3)

The importance of the fragmented narratives to change the linear-story telling became the turning point for modernist writers in order to reflect the fragmented realities for example Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway in 1925 that used stream of consciousness technique by shifting the perspectives to represent the inner thoughts and perception of the character, and by challenging the traditional structure, the modern literature managed to settle new norms, unique plots and character development and massive depth through the storyline. Implementing all kinds of modern techniques that encourage the readers to reconstruct the narrative by themselves and to deal with a better reading experience, this kind of modern techniques highlighted the true complexity of the character and gave a chance for new aspects of literature to be accepted and being used in all kinds of modern projects.

another point that showed the need of fragmentation in our modern narrative is the freedom of exploring in a subjective matter through different perspectives, we can see in the modern novels the author seek to cast different character and their own point of view instead of focusing on only one point of view giving example, in the series *The Boys* we don't really have a main character to the story but rather the author took his time to develop every exited character in the series individually by showing us its background, complexity, flashbacks, and themes overall.

5 The Unraveling Thread: Disillusionment

Through the evolution of modern literature different narrative techniques that emerged to help modernists authors like polyphony, stream of consciousness, and non-linear temporality that played the tools for representing fragmented realities and complexities of human experience and its depth while building the story for different characters, these techniques challenge the convention of the linear storytelling and monologic narration to engage the readers to deal with multiple voices inside the novels, among these narratives techniques we are going start with emphasizing polyphony as a narrative technique which is introduced to be a concept introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin that refers to the presence of multiple independent voices withing the narrative where each voice has its own perspective and consciousness, unlike monologic narratives where the author's voice is being dominated in the storytelling because polyphony allows the characters to express themselves in their full image, "polyphony is to portray the development of characters' identity and subjectivity, multivoiced narration is in many ways particularly applicable to young adult literature, a genre defined by its protagonists' maturation, increasing awareness of their subjectivity, and expanding worldview" (Sarah. 1) polyphony narrative style often highlights the complexity of the characters and their true identity and enhance character writing depth.

Bakhtin introduction of this concept started with his famous work *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* that was published in 1929 and it was revised in 1963 where he declared that Dostoevsky's novels were not monologic where only one voice dominated the novels and driven by a single ideological voice , on the other hand polyphonic method allows each character has a fully formed consciousness and a worldview . before these technique author's perspective overrides all others where the novel becomes a space where the author ,narrator, and characters existed as an equal participant during the dialog process , According to Bakhtin, "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (Bakhtin. 6) where this quote explain the narrative structure where each character got his ideological autonomy and their independence on the author's voice.

Another fragmented narrative technique that modernists used which is called Stream of Consciousness that is defined as a narrative technique that tends to replicate the natural flow of a character's thoughts, feelings and perceptions, " the stream of consciousness allows for a more intimate exploration of characters' interior lives and the intricacies of human thought processes " (Imad 1) This method avoids using a fixed narrative structure and instead presents the character's mind and how it really works , random, unfiltered, and often jumping from one idea to another without clear order.

One of the main features of stream of consciousness which is lack of a linear structure. In traditional storytelling, where the events usually follow a clear linear timeline, progressing from one point to another in a logical order. However, with stream of consciousness, as readers we cant notice a clear path of storytelling . Thoughts can, twist and loop around, to go on an offside path . It is more like a maze of thoughts than a straight line. Another important aspect is the fluidity of stream of consciousness. Thoughts can blend seamlessly, mixing past, present, and future like It is as if time does not have a fixed order, different Memories can be randomly presented in any point of where the character mind is constantly shifting from an idea to another without informing, This technique reveals the conflict that each characters has

inside their brains , that not being delivered in a linear progression instead it is shaped through out the story in the character thoughts , a great example that represents this technique is Ulysses, written by the author James Joyce that implemented this technique that helped him to deliver a complex structure and creative narrative style where to James storytelling was mainly around the lives of the main characters , Leonard Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Stephen Dedalus , the author used this technique in order to give a chance for the readers to delve into these different characters minds to acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a continuous flow . for instance, Leopold Bloom is a great example of the use of stream of consciousness

“ Joyce intimately connects readers with his inner thoughts and experiences. It deeply explains Bloom’s multifaceted personality, insecurities, and yearnings. Readers gain insights into his complex emotions, observations of the world around him, “ (Imad 3)

the use of this technique engaged the audience to feel , a connection to Leopold’s thoughts and feelings through the experiences he has like the death of his son after a short amount time after his birth and finding out that his wife is cheating on him with another character , this event shattered his emotions and world in a whole where he was stained his relationship with his wife molly , Leopold was built as a character that keeps his grief inside him in quiet way and hide it , but its always present for the readers these events makes his isolation and inner loneliness all the more visible at different sections of the story .

Another fragmented technique that modernists literature authors implement in their novels is non-linear temporality which is a narrative technique that is known for not following the sequences in of the story events in a straight chronological order , instead of unfolding from beginning to the end the timeline can shift and jump forward or backwards in any point of the story by using flashbacks and flashforwards or foreshadowing , this method tend to enhance the complexity and the memory and the emotional human experience for the characters .

A great modern example that implemented this narrative technique which is a classic movie called Pulp fiction, The director and the author embraced the nonlinear narrative style and avoided the traditional chronological storytelling in order to enhance the complexity of the characters and to add depth and development to each character individually, the show presented the story of different characters their development throughout the events, “ Films with non-linear narration originated from European and American modernist literature. There are important differences between them and the usual films with linear narration. They have introduced important innovations in narrative structure.” (Wang 42)

The film implemented several stories and focused on each character that cross in different paths as an example we have Vincent Vega and Jules Winnfield that were introduced as partners to be a professional hitmen, that seeks to serve their master's orders, Vincent was introduced at the beginning of the show to be the main character who is built to be a cold hearted character that only do his job which is assassination commands, only after to see Jules perspective and how he sees the world in a deeper way than the others this enhanced his complex as a character and made of him a very interesting figure in the movie, this technique played a huge role of making pulp fiction a great example of how non-linear temporality would enhance the complexity of stories and tend to make more depth by using different methods like flashbacks, flashforwards and foreshadowing which were well implemented in this movie.

5.1 The Unraveling Thread: Disillusionment

Disillusionment, a central theme in modernist literature, refers to the emotional and intellectual process of losing faith in ideals, institutions, or values previously accepted as true, causing a painful shift from hope to doubt (Adair), often lightened by discovering betrayal, corruption, or failure. Therefore, an overhaul rethinking in one's beliefs and becoming

cynical. Disillusionment shows a distrust of old ideas, as individuals confront the gap between their expectations and the flawed world,

Disillusionment manifests its self as a Modernist theme through characters and narratives that exposes the hollowness of beliefs, often highlighting the fragility of human aspirations. An example of that is F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), where Gatsby's American Dream is demolished when he couldn't attain his idealized love that he shared with Daisy (Amat 77) although he believed that his mansion and extravagant lifestyle would achieve an image he was deeply seeking, such thing was never accomplished and ended tragically, similarly, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), as its character "Marlow" covers the brutality behind "civilized" progress (Boutouchent 54) in a story where layers of presumed civilization was hiding folds of brutality and monstrosities that the author covered, yet its Symbolism might obscure its critique to some individuals, these works illustrate disillusionment's abilities to unravel personal and societal myths, providing characters who had to face the unfortunate emptiness of their beliefs. The exploration of disillusionment's manifestation provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing its role in modernist literature, preparing for further study of contemporary works without assuming their effectiveness.

5.2 The Iron Fist: Authoritarianism and its Shadows

Authoritarianism is a political and social system characterized by concentrated power in a single leader or small group, limited political freedom and the suppression of any opposition in order to maintain control (Eide 23). Unlike a similar concept that is totalitarianism which wraps around all aspects of life, authoritarianism only seeks to restrict political pluralism, often using propaganda, censorship, and force to enforce obedience, fostering a cultural compliance through fear or loyalty to authority, authoritarianism is depicted in literature as a dehumanizing force that eradicate personal free thoughts. Reflecting modernist concerns

about power, conformity, and the loss of individual voice in the face of oppressive systems (Eide 25)

The origin of authoritarianism can be traced back to the early hierarchical societies, but its modern form emerged in the 19th century with the rise of industrialization, nationalism, and imperialistic thinking, concepts that demand a strong control that is centralized, the term only saw clear light in 20th century, through the political scientist Juan Linz's 1964 definition, which highlighted limited political pluralism (Domper Lasús), emotional appeals to legitimacy, while controlling public participation as a key trait. During World War I (1914–1918), authoritarianism was evident in the militarized regimes of imperial powers like Germany, for example, the German empire Kaiser Wilhelm II used strict press controls and nationalism to unify its population. World War I literature reflects these authoritarian tendencies, such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) portrays soldiers dehumanized by rigid military hierarchies (Ghorai 595), where soldiers realized their enemy is the authority that send them to war while they are in safety from the catastrophic battlefields, although it focuses on sentimental suffering, Siegfried Sassoon's poems, like "The General" (1918), depict officers' blind authority leading to senseless deaths, offering intense emotions that shadows systemic critique. But yet the novel that did a overwhelming work at criticizing such regimes, is a controversial book called *1984* written by George Orwell (1949) "no novel of American authoritarianism rises to the level of a masterwork on The order of George Orwell's *1984* (1948)" (Phelps) that explores propaganda and truth manipulation in a dystopian setting, where individualism is forbidden and only few people left who still remember the world before these regimes where applied, although this novel serves as a totalitarianism example, but themes of authoritarianism are strongly present.

5.2 Shifting North Stars: Moral Absolutes and the Pursuit of Justice

Moral absolute and justice are themes in the modernist literature, referring to the belief in fixed universal principles of right and wrong, and chasing certain outcomes based on these

principles, moral absolute believes in standards or morality that surpasses personal or societal differences, while justice involves in the application of these principles to ensure fairness, often through actions that are done by society overall or individuals, in modernist literature, these concepts are usually aligned with disillusionment (Adair), as writers question the validation of these moral standards along with the possibility of achieving justice in a fragmented and chaotic world, modernism challenges these concepts by portraying them as unattainable or corrupted by human flaws or institutional failures, using characters who grapple with moral ambiguity and the illusions of seeking absolute fairness,

The origins of moral absolutes and justice as literary themes came from ancient philosophical traditions, exactly in Plato's Republic (c. 380 BCE), that defines justice as harmony in society "Plato says that justice is not mere strength, but it is a harmonious strength. Justice is not the right of the stronger but the effective harmony of the whole" (Bhandari) . Ideas that solidified during the 17th and 18th centuries with thinkers like Immanuel Kant advocating universal moral rules, rooted to his broader moral philosophy, for Kant, justice is part in the external actions of individuals and the laws that governs over them, where they coexist under universal rules that protects their freedom (Johnson) , however, with the industrial revolution and world War 1, exposed contradictions in these ideals, as economic exploitation and mass slaughter buried in morality and fair systems, Modernist literature responded by interrogating these concepts, reflecting disillusionment with absolute truths and institutional justice. Allowing writers to explore moral ambiguity and the failure of justice, in a world marked by power imbalances, this shift challenged traditional narratives, reinforcing modernism's rejection of fixed morals, In literature, these themes reshaped storytelling as in Franz Kafka's The Trial (1925) who depicted justice as an inaccessible and absurd system, by raising questions about their ability to fully cover systemic injustices (Ghosh 153) . Themes such as this, enriched modernist literature, inspiring later works to critique such limits of morality and justice in an imbalanced world.

5.3 The Self in the Shard: Personal Identity and Self-Worth

Personal identity and self-worth explores an individual's sense of self and how they value themselves and define who they are in the environment they exist in. Modernist literature often reflect psychological disintegration in a rapidly changing world, personal identity is the visualization an individual see himself as, including values, beliefs and the very sense of self (Terentowicz-Fotyga vol. 61).identity in literature becomes a mark of instability especially in modernist narratives where the self is not only fragmented but also conflicted. Self worth on the other hand, is shaped upon how an individual's self perception of their own value and significance, often measured with internal ideas of idealism or external societal norms, two concepts that are deeply interconnected "Any claim of identity faces three dilemmas: (a) sameness of a sense of self over time in the face of constant change; (b) uniqueness of the individual vis-à-vis others faced with being the same as everyone else; and (c) the construction of agency as constituted by self (with a self-to-world direction of fit) and world (with a world-to-self direction of fit" (Bamberg). As characters often go through essentially developmental crises that question who they are and whether they matter in a world that is absurd or different than their perceptions. The collapse of traditional social structures and the trauma of industrialization (Q. Wang) contribute to literature that is highlighted by self-isolation. Narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness, unreliable narration, and disjointed timelines mirror this internal dislocation, focuses on the tension between a desire to achieving a stabilized self and the inability to do such thing in a fragmented reality.

It shifted from external social commentaries to internal psychological exploration, for example, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) delves into the evolving consciousness of Stephen Dedalus, whose artistic awakening is marked by a deep questioning of his religious, national, and familial identities (Deepak 2247) , similarly, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) focuses on the inner disruption of both Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, who are fighting with feelings of insignificance, alienation,

and the meaning of their lives in post war England, Woolf's portrayal of Clarissa and Septimus "offers a nuanced view of psychological distress and societal neglect," showing how Clarissa's existential anxiety and Septimus's post-war trauma reflect the difficulties of finding meaning and belonging in post-war England (Khan and Khattak 581). These texts show how modernist literature have laid the foreground for the fractured self, with characters who's self sense is broken and unsure, they are no longer confident about the beliefs that once gave their life meaning, instead, they turn inside to question who they are and whether they matter, This struggle to find personal identity and self-worth reflects the deeper loss of shared beliefs in the modern world, making these themes central to modernist writing.

Chapter 2: Deconstructing Heroism Through a Modernist Lens

6 The truth beneath a cape :

6.1 Smiling Tyrants and Manufactured Idols: The Spectacle of Authoritarianism in The Boys

Authoritarianism in the boys is depicted throughout the whole series, since it provided well written power dynamics, where it took advantages of certain corporation and characters to represent this type of unchecked authority that is centralized in very small group in the show. In a world where superheroes are marketed as saviors, The Boys switches the viewers expectations by exposing the dangers of unchecked power and authoritarian control.

Vought International a corporation that serves in the show as a parallel government that own more authority than the government itself, Vought is the depiction of centralized power in the show, with it's control extended on a large scale gathering media, commercialization and especially politics. It does not share power or authority with any other parties, and seeks everyone and everything to be under it's own control while reducing or eliminating any opposition that may threaten its authoritarian regime.

This corporation focuses on politics, ensuring full control upon politicians with the use of it's corrupted superheroes, treating government officials as pawns instead of partners, and through manipulation and the help of "supes" they gathered enough public support to extend it's authority to the military. Vought doesn't acknowledge human life when it comes to pushing their agendas and benefits. for example, on one episode they allowed a whole plain full of travelers fall causing mass murders , just to later on complain about that event and calling it tragic on to public so they can blame the government for not including them in the deputy system of the country saying if the government did that, they wouldn't allow such unfortunate similar situation to happen again. Which worked for them and eventually had extended control over military affairs. However, causing disasters to aquire more control isn't their only

method but only one out of many, since they also install their own puppet leaders into the political representation of the country, such examples can be seen in a character named Victoria Neuman who is the political front of an anti-superhero campaign and a charismatic one in that matter, leading a campaign to eliminate superhero control over several societal aspects and exposing Vought's corruption to put herself in the image of transparency and accountability gaining public trust, but the truth is that she is herself a "supe" that is capable of killing anyone with just looking at them, using her powers to assassinate any opposition by exploding their heads, Victoria works all the way up in the political ladder into becoming the new vice president after killing the original one. After that she only kept introducing Vought authoritarian agendas to the public in the form of politics being the semi-Pacifist path of Vought to power, Victoria in the show embodies a form of authoritarian regime, which means that underneath a social performance of ideology and politics, is a desire to gain power and control over institutions.

However, in addition to politics, what Vought is best at is its ability to manipulate social media platforms, having total media domination in their hands, Vought not only controls news but also produces its own entertainment content-films, TV shows, and even a streaming service centered around The Seven, which ensures them that their version of events and heroes dominate the consequences of public civilians, an act that is really important for pushing agendas since the image of their heroes, makes them seen as flawless while masking their true violent and corrupt nature, a narrative that convinces the public, therefore causing them to idolise heroes and trust Vought despite all evidence against them. A system that is made to suppress truth with maintaining public image preventing accountability while also hiding secret informations such as the origins of superheroes which is "compound V" a product that gives anyone super powers although it is extremely dangerous if fallen into the wrong hand. In season one this corporation did everything at hand to cover on their supes crime, most notable one is the death of Robin who was close to a member of The Boys named

Hughie Campbell, Robin was killed in an accident by A-Train, a superhero working for Vought and a part of The Seven. However instead of taking responsibility, the corporation tried to bribe Hughie with a large payment that he did not accept, Hughie tried exposing them but he could not because of their media coverage, so ended up joining the boys for revenge.

Season 2 is when media started to really be in use, with the introduction of Stormfront, a controversial female superhero with access to Vought media platforms where she uses them to spread nationalism and extremist white supremacy views, crafting her own online relatable persona, posting memes and video that are appealing to younger audiences, as an approach that mirrors modern real world tactics where dangerous ideologies are in other appealing forms. She also uses her social media influence to cover over corporate unethical doing, as in an episode where Homelander killed a young boy from an African poor village, he was then exposed throughout social media and lost his popularity and people's admiration, just for Stormfront to come in and use her wide media audience to say that did not happen and the spread video of Homelander killing the kid is "photoshopped", which led to people believing her and gaining back faith in the idealistic version of Homelander. She also resembles Vought's non lethal method along with Victoria Neuman to manipulate both public perceptions and political discourse. Making them dangerous figures even without their physical powers. However, she had a pretty rapid downfall when her true identity was brought to the public since she turned out to be literally a Nazi which justifies her authoritarian and totalitarian methods.

Vought does not only target audience of old age, but she also has its eyes on young kids as a future consumer, they create movies of their superheroes depicting them as perfect idols, kids in the show are brainwashed since childhood to grow while looking up to their favourite "supes" since they see them everywhere from toys, cereal boxes to even vitamins with advertisements that heroes tell them to consume, Vought blurs lines of entertainment, consumerism and propaganda while shaping public opinions from an early young age by

inserting messages into their daily life. which is all managed by a character named Ashley Barrett who serves as the senior vice president of hero management who is responsible to cover for supes and advertise their well crafted public representation.

However, the real facade of authoritarianism in the show is the main villain “Homelander”, known as the strongest superhero in the show and the leader of The Seven, he’s a narcissistic, unstable and charismatic supe who sees everyone as a lesser being than him, he is the central hero for Vought’s empire, he’s shown as an untouchable American figure, Homelander being the only hero the corporation can’t fully control, his actions are totally unexpected which caused a significant amount of stress to everyone everytime he is on screen weather being for the characters inside the series or the viewer. He is a tyrant who does not take a “No” for an answer since he sees it as questioning his authority. Homelander only concern is to install himself as the apex power of the world, so he does not care in the slightest for anyone in his way to achieve that goal. His team “the seven” extremely fear him since he constantly threatens them either physically or verbally, he practices excessive authority upon Vought’s employees with no instant backlash. We see him do atrocities, one of them is creating foreign terrorists all over the globe and especially in the Middle East just to extend his authority to these countries after they feel the need for a savior that is him, which really worked and he gained control over the country’s military power as a result. He does not mind creating war for the profit of selling peace, giving the world a super powered terrorist to enable a super power military with him in control of both. Which mimics the real world paradoxical belief that an arms race is the only way to be safe.

The show portrays how an authoritarian regime like this can lead to a form of worshipping even under mistreatment or abuse from the authority side. Since in the show, normal civilians started worshipping heroes thinking they’re flawless saviors that fell from heaven or a god’s gift to earth. Resulting in some of the superhero victims gathering in therapy sessions instead of revolting against them or hating them at the very least. A concept that reflects modern

America's Donald Trump, for his voters are like the worshippers of superheroes that appeal to a more powerful individual to lead them in our modern day. The show does not shy away from this resemblance. Since in season 3 finale, Homelander in the middle of a gathering of his "Fans" he literally lasers a protestor's head off, however, the people around him kept quiet for a second just before they start cheering for him again, even homelander did not believe that at first but then he started smiling since he knew that anything he does will be accepted with open arms for the people who already worship him. The reason this is a resemblance of Donald Trump, is because Donald said something similar in a speech to his voters, on January 23, 2016, during a campaign rally in Sioux Center, Iowa. He claimed "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, okay?"



(CNN.)

6.2 mirrors without face, the crisis of personal identity ;

The boy's series is filled with characters that resemble depth and Fragmentation in a disillusioned world, many of them have previous trauma that translates into unexpected behaviors, serving a rich story telling and layered narrative. Characters such as, Hughie Campbell or Billy Butcher and most interestingly homelander, have provided viewers with an image of a fragmented self in a chaotic world.

Hughie Campbell a character who is casted by Jack Quaid was put in the show to reflect the viewers who expect superheroes to act according to a narrative we are all used to, where they save the day and are nearly depicted as angelic figures with no flaws, since he grew up with his father watching heroes save lives and constantly fighting evil. However, in the very first episode both him and the people watching the show were shocked by the realistic brutality of the world with such figures roaming, when a girl that was really close to him got ran over by a super speed hero named A-Train causing her instant death in front of his eyes. Hughie as well as the viewer both stood in shock at the scene since it broke the expected image of how a superhero show would be, having a hard time disillusionment since all what he believed in since he was a kid turned out to be a lie in an unfortunate “accident” along with his loss to a close person. Hughie while having a hard time throwing away what he believed met a guy named Billy Butcher who is supposed to introduce him and the viewer to the reality of how superheroes would really act in a world of celebrity and corporations where no values are existent. Hughie needed a slight push forward towards forgetting his beliefs which he found when he saw the hero who killed the girl laughing and bragging about what he did to another hero, and being the first time he sees this side of the so called “heroes”, he switched from his naive, idealistic and non-confrontational traits to other traits that would be more helpful in managing such chaos, which caused him to join a team of vigilantes named “THE BOYS”.

Throughout the show he is portrayed as the moral compass and the voice of reason within The Boys embodying a less violent perspective to deal with problems the team has. His hesitations, fears and struggle mirror the viewer’s own potential reactions to such a corrupt and brutal environment, since his journey from innocence to a hardened and more complex individual was focused upon reflecting the viewers own path with disillusionment since we are often used to the traditional image of flawless superheroes. Additionally, Hughie identity crisis is sparked by trauma and his entry to a violent world where his ideals are constantly challenged, he is continually struggling with his capacity for violence while dealing with the

loss of his previous self ,due to events that reshaped his life, while confronting a reality behind the perfected superhero facade. His desire to maintain his humanity in such a corrupt world highlights the crisis of maintaining personal identity in the middle of external pressures.

On the other hand, the show focuses on parallels so villains are as complex and layered as the protagonists, an example of this is the one who traumatized Hughie, a hero named A-Train. His story covers how someone's worth is tied to his significance in an industrialized society. He grew up in a poor neighborhood for black people, and as soon as he figured his super speed he got into a race (literally and socially) to escape poverty and help his family, which led him to become famous via speed and public image but not his personal values.

A-Train is the reflection of social pressure where a person's worth equates with his performance and usefulness among other competitors, we can see him pushing his limits all along the show to maintain his place in Vought with The Seven as a "speedster" leading him to extreme limits like taking performance enhancing drugs (Compound V) to win racing competitions and secure his position even though it almost killed him with a heart attack multiple times. Where he started having issues with his public image and his true identity, realizing that he is not a true hero but just a puppet for Vought to treat as a token for his African American background while constantly tormenting him with threatens of replacements because he sees Vought International as his savior from poverty and being a "nobody".

After his heart started failing, we started seeing different layers of this character where he started seeking redemption, he started doing real heroic acts instead of the usual acting performances that are directed by Vought to make him appear as a hero where in fact he is just an actor in a large theatre. first thing he did was confronting a racist hero named "blue hawk" who was over patrolling neighborhoods where black people live, A-Train delt with him by murder after blue hawk paralyzed A-train's brother in a scene mixed with heroism and vengeance. However, by doing such actions he is not helping others but rather actually

helping himself get over the evil and hero acting he previously did, so instead of a fake facade built for others, he is now focusing on a real one that heals his personal conflict, even going to the extent of saving Hughie's life after he killed someone close to him and getting him into the "rabbit hole" of corrupt heroes.

A-Train personal conflict in the show addressed a lot of societal and personal issues with themes of social pressure and redemption, focusing on how a person's personal worth is determined by external means that may cause a breakdown if not managed properly, which enriched his narrative as a character.

The boys offered viewer many characters with identity crises. However, Homelander is the one with extreme amount of depth when compared to the rest or any character from any other show, casted by Antony Star who did an extraordinary job at translating emotions of such a complex character.

Homelander is known as a deeply narcissistic person, wanting control over everything and everyone leading to him having completely unexpected reactions or decisions, he is constantly doing unspeakable things to everyone around him as much as he wants. Homelander is not a normal character, he was born in a lab with no parents love nor socializing, with an identity that was engineered to be later on manipulated by the corporation that will adopt him (Vought), doctors in the lab he grew up in brought psychologists to make his character rely heavily on people's admiration and can't live without external validation to the extent that he could have escaped from the lab at any moment using his powers but he did not because he was afraid of disappointing the doctors raising him, a thing which they admitted to him, he was also mentally brainwashed to be extremely patriotic with unmatched loyalty to America through a carefully put program. Although they gave him a normal name (John) through his childhood he have seen unstoppable torment in the form of physical training, he was put in a human sized oven to test his skin durability and had to fight other superheroes while still he

still just a kid. Which made the job of Vought CEO easier to maintain control over Homelander even though he can easily destroy the whole country at will.

After Homelander grew up he became the leader of the Seven, and with a childhood like his, he was constantly seeking applause and validation wherever he went whether it was from public people or from the ones running the corporation. Vought hired a woman named Madelyne Stillwell to exploit this side of him by speaking in a motherly and parental tone to him which worked because Homelander was still deprived of these emotions even as a grown adult, but this did not last for long since Homelander got jealous over her own infant child after she prioritized him instead of Homelander which led him to kill her because he saw that child as competition.

Homelander does not shy away from both of his psychopathic and sociopathic behaviours, mental issues are what made this character stand out, that even the directors made one special trait about him as “drinking milk” which is often portrayed in cinema as the behaviour of psychopathic characters such as in the movie “No Country for Old Men” the main psychopath villain was shown drinking milk in a scene where it was intended to symbolize his psychopathic traits. These traits mix with his duality of persona between his public confident image and his private inner insecure self to shape a completely unstable figure with an insecure god complex. For example, in season 3 there was this scene of him where he was talking to himself in the mirror, the mirror took the role of his narcissistic self, speaking highly and strongly calling himself a tiger, while the real version of him was speaking softly and in short sentences saying “I want them to love me” showing a vulnerable side no one knows about.



(E. Kripke)

Homelander complexity becomes even deeper as soon as he knows that he has a son, who he sees as an opportunity of unconditional love and the only family he would ever have, he treats his son in a different manner than everyone else, constantly being kind to him which is unlike his aggressive narcissistic nature. However, despite being the loving father his unstable traits started to emerge again with his son as soon as he finds out that his son likes his step dad Billy Butcher more than he like his real dad which is homelander, so homelander jealousy, attention seeking and love craving nature appears against his own son since he thought he is not enough for his own son. Forcing his son to follow him out of fear rather than pure father – son loving relationship.

The show is constantly depicting modernist identity crisis through this complex character that is forged without human emotions with his fragmented psyche and deep need for validation. Revealing the devastating effects of disillusionment with a self that is never truly formed. Homelander’s character does not just reflect the loss of identity but also that there was never a real identity to begin with.

6.3 The broken compasses ,Moral Ambiguity ;

What is highly interesting about this show, It's continuity to dismantle traditional narratives especially in the superhero hero Genre, it changed our image from what would superheroes be in a chaotic disillusioned world, as well as changing our perceptions of how a protagonist should be to stand against such figures.

Moral ambiguity is not exactly being good or bad, in some cases such as the ones in this show, it could mean doing questionable actions but for the sake of a greater good. The Boys protagonists are the exact embodiment of this concept, doing actions that would seem psychopathic or extremely brutal they represent the question of :”does the end ever justifies the means? “.

Billy Butcher, is the main unofficial leader of The Boys casted by “Karl Urban”. Butcher is a former SAS (Special Air Service) and a Royal Marines veteran, his background left a touch of brutality in his character. After his wife was thought to be killed by Homelander, his methods of achieving justice for himself and others became slightly extreme. Billy throughout the show is seen constantly using manipulation, violence and twisted behavior even on his own team. His obsession with vengeance against Homelander blurred his lines of morality. to him, every act is justified as long as it brings him closer to end Homelander's tyranny.

Butcher's deeds although they are seen as an issue most of the time, but the viewers of the show are agreeing with them since we know his motivations and that if he wants to take down such a powerful entity (Homelander) he must become something as dangerous. Unlike usual show protagonists who believe in second chances to their villains and having moral codes that prevents them from crossing certain lines such as Superman who does not murder. We see Butcher on the other half exploding the first superhero gets his hands on, he also abandoned his step son after knowing that his wife is actually alive.

However, Butcher's ambiguity is revealed in his motives, him seeking to end these heroes who terrorize and manipulate the public, we can see him in multiple events sacrificing himself in order to protect his team or plotting dangerous missions by himself to not put them at risk. Additionally, his relationship with Hughie shows Butcher's soft side and kind hearted nature, since he sees Hughie as his brother who died from suicide long ago, which made him unconsciously aiming to protect Hughie whatever happens.

Butcher's journey in *The Boys* serves as a brutal exploration of trauma and vengeance can erase moral clarity. Though he often positions himself as a necessary force against unchecked power, his actions reveal that he is consumed by the very darkness he is fighting against, he cannot tell the difference between justice and personal vendetta. His character embodies the modernist view of morality as fractured and subjective shaped not by universal truths, but mostly by pain and fear.



(p. b. Eric Kripke)

7 Fragmented techniques in the boys: Polyphony, Stream of Consciousness, and Non-Linear Temporality:

7.1 A Symphony of voices, Polyphony :

The Boys by Eric Kripke is a great representation of the use of fragmented narratives in the series and graphic novels choosing the superhero genera but instead Eric tends to critique them giving us a clear image of what superheroes might really be like if they existed in real life the author employs different methods like Polyphony, Stream of Consciousness, and Non-Linear Temporality to enhance complexity of the show by weaponizing its structure to critique modern media, power systems, and identity crises , the use of these technique is not only used only for style and the aesthetics of superheroes, they also play the key role of shaping the story and to challenge the traditional ideas about these superheroes .

Starting with polyphony in The Boys The series as a piece of fiction presented the Contrasting the Public and Private Personas of Superheroes by showing them as the true saviors who are willing to sacrifice themselves for sake of saving normal people , especially homelander who was seen as a symbol of hope and noble figure who protected the united states from any form of danger , manipulating people led them to treat these fake hero's as literal celebrities , this kind of fame let them build a dilutional thoughts of accepting them-selves as the true superheroes of the world contrasting between perception and reality , the show also presented different voices and perspectives and the biggest example is The Boys vs. The Seven perspective where

The anti-hero group known as The Boys who each has an awful background event with the group of the fake superheroes The SEVEN that made them have different perspective on their heroism, this was shown in the show

after "Hughie" a new member of the boys who where a big fan of SUPES joined them seeking revenge after the death of his beloved one who was brutally murdered by one of the fake

superheroes , this event made Hughie change his perspective on the them by leading him to have an eternal conflict that made him finally accept the true corruption of the seven and to do whatever it takes to have revenge from them . For a "Billy Butcher" perspective Billy's view point since he was introduced in the beginning of the show as a complex characters who is driven by vengeance against the superheroes and his hatred towards the homelander as a reaction of personal trauma from previous experience with the this fake organization , this led Billy to be the tactical leader of the boys and in order to eliminate the supes and bring the real truth about Vought and justice to people .

Another perspective from seven group a new member of the superheroes called "Annie January" that is referred as (Starlight) this character that has superpowers always was treated as freak among the society only to be accepted to the place that she belongs to which is the Seven , starlight was the traditional super hero who dreams of making the world a better place by helping the poor and over all people in need , and believing that the seven are true heroes of the world little she didn't know that the company reflecting the capitalism corruption system that is full of lies, which brake to her the traditional Image of the heroes , through the events of the series starlight struggled to keep her morals while she is forced to follow orders and stay quiet in this corrupt organization , or choose to standup against them knowing the upcoming risks , her story shows the complexity of the character and the eternal conflict that she went through to choose between being a good person in a world full of lies .

We also the perspective of the **Homelander** since this character was introduced as a super hero who was idolized by the public , this build the character to have egotistical and narcissistic ideas since he was the most powerful superhero and the face of Vought , who acts like the perfect leader who protects the world while on the other hand he is a psychopathic individual who doesn't care about helping people instead homelander only seeks power, fame, and control , going back to background of this complex character and the way he was raised in a lab without any form of love and parenting by family excluded human emotions ,

Homelander tends to see himself better and above everyone and the rest are just a burden, useless figures that he enjoys manipulating, showing the reflection and the dark side of having the authority and power. The boys executed the multi-perspective storytelling and showed us the real complexity for each character in the series and show the dark reality behind how the corrupted system shaped the world, revealing characters like Hughie, Butcher, Starlight, and Homelander and their different sides of power.

In the climax event of Season 3 Episode 6 from the show, finally our characters tend to find themselves in the same room: Homelander, Butcher, Mother's Milk, and Soldier Boy, which serves a great example of polyphony in the show. This scene is more than just a battle of brute force; it is a moment of pure polyphony where different perspectives and voices with their ideologies are present. Having Homelander arriving to the mansion where supers meet, he started by breaking a deal with Butcher where they both previously made a deal to fight alone until death, but Butcher's hatred towards him and his lack of power made Soldier Boy his only way to kill him. Homelander instantly thought that "this is cheating" and tried to get rid of Butcher using his laser beam. Homelander's egotistical nature was strongly present in that scene where he was standing face to face with Soldier Boy and told him that he was his hero growing up and how many times he watched his movies as his best figure. Soldier Boy's perspective on Homelander is somehow simple to the point where he called him "You really are just a cheap knockoff," thinking he is still the strongest in the world. On the other hand, Homelander responds according to his nature that he is actually the upgrade, dismissing Soldier Boy as outdated and irrelevant, following with an aggressive fight between them to become a dialogic battlefield where Butcher also joined that fight after Compound V worked on him. Homelander's rage isn't just fear of losing a fight; it is fear of losing his place at the top of the pyramid. At that moment, his mask of invincibility cracks when Soldier Boy and Butcher overpower him physically. In panic, Homelander screams, "What have you done?" a very rare moment where his egotistical godlike character gets challenged by weaker entities.



(by Eric Kripke)

This fight becomes more symbolically presented where Butcher and Soldier Boy are strong but brutal representing the people and system Homelander has spent years oppressing and mocking yet none of them went through this fight and emerge to be a hero. Butcher's willingness to use violence made of him a blinded person to the things he is doing, and Soldier Boy's psychopathy, strip away any pretense of moral clarity. Instead of good versus evil.

(Ennis, uploaded by George Flores, Flores, 27 June 2022)

In Season 2 of the show digs deep into the ethical and ideological rift between Butcher and Hughie, especially around the use of the compound V that Vought is using it to make the fake superheroes to grant him temporary superpowers where This conflict is a textbook example of polyphony because it puts two opposing moral voices in direct tension without a clear winner.

Butcher's voice during the season 2 is raw driven by vengeance and pragmatism, For him the results justify the means in other words he was forced to use the compound V-24 in order to gain powers he will take down the supes and his biggest enemy which is Homelander, butcher is willing to sacrifice his humanity and a high risk of addiction knowing its consequences, He is represented to be the embodiment of "fight fire with fire," reflecting a

world where justice is brutal and personal pain fuels violent and retribution. Butcher says and acts like someone who's lost hope in any peaceful resolution and believes power, even corrupted, is necessary to beat the higher systems

On the other hand, Hughie represents the voice of conscience and caution. He struggles with the idea of using the drug because it threatens to turn him into what he despises just another violent and reckless supe. Hughie's perspective is about holding onto morality and humanity in the face of overwhelming darkness while he questions whether sacrificing your values, even for a good cause, is worth it. His voice argues and represents for restraint, empathy, and the belief that not all battles justify the loss of your soul , When they argue the scene captures this ideological clash between them where each one is driven by different ideology and neither perspective is portrayed as simply right or wrong. The show uses their conflict to explore the their confused chaotic nature and complicated choices people make when fighting evil. The polyphony here means the audience hears fully realized, competing viewpoints knowing that Butcher's bitterness and ruthlessness vs. Hughie's hope and doubt and the tension between them drives much of season 2 emotional journey , the fight is not just a fight for power, it is a fight for what kind of person each is willing to become in the process That's why this scene is considered a pure polyphony representation it's multi-voiced ethical debate dressed as a conversation between two friends and allies in the same time .

7.2 Inner Turmoil, Outer World: Stream of Consciousness

The Boys' narrative style is deliberately unpredictable, relying on a range of modernist techniques such as stream of consciousness, nonlinear storytelling, multiple perspectives, and temporal dislocation through flashbacks and flashforwards. These methods heighten the complexity of the series and actively subvert the audience's expectations, immersing viewers in the chaotic psychological states of its characters. Among these techniques, the show

occasionally approximates stream of consciousness not in the traditional literary sense defined by Joyce or Woolf, but through its deep exploration of inner monologue, emotional fragmentation, and psychologically charged moments where characters' thoughts bleed into the narrative structure.

For example, Billy Butcher's fragmented moral code and personal trauma are slowly revealed through erratic flashbacks and emotionally loaded scenes that mirror the mental disarray typical of stream of consciousness. His obsession with revenge following the presumed death of his wife Becca is not immediately explained but rather implied through his behavior and explosive decisions. This allows viewers to infer his psychological state full of suppressed grief, anger, and confusion before it is fully clarified in later episodes. The show invites the audience into Butcher's mind without direct narration, mimicking the effect of stream of consciousness by blurring the lines between internal motivations and external actions , in season 4 The Boys Episode 6 butcher also had another experience from the side effects of the over use of the compound V led him to have hallucinations of his dead wife Becca ,



(Eric Kripke)

a manifestation of his inner guilt and his moral conflict , while his sickness progresses due to his use of the compound V , Butcher's mental state began to decline it caused him to have

realistic vision from his background in this specific scene butcher found his wife Becca confronting about the his brutal and destructive path he decided to take and to remind him about the consequences of him using the compound V knowing exactly that it is the supes killing virus , butchers interaction with his wife Becca is a symbolic projection of his conscience providing an illustrations of stream of consciousness moment where all of his suppressed fear and regrets from his older experiences was delivered as a dialog with the dead , this type of hallucination represents his fractured psychopathic nature and his deep internal conflict between vengeance and redemption (Ennis)

another hallucination sequence in The Boys Season 3, Episode 7 was experienced by a mysterious character from supes group names Black Noir that represents one of the shows expressive psychological explorations serving to the viewers a cinematic adaptation the stream of consciousness technique in a comic style after black noir ran away from solider boy he found a place to hide , at that point Noir enters a mental breakdown , which the series give an old animated style sequence featuring anthropomorphic cratonic animals , each one of these animals fragmented aspects of his inner psychological nature presenting different past events Noir has mentally forced himself to bury , the whole scene feels like we are inside his had , there is no clear story no talking with other characters and no real-world theme was going on , it was a chaotic mix of his inner thoughts and what he fears the most according to his past trauma . this type of hallucination is triggered by psychological stress that Noir went through



(The Boys. created by Eric Kripke)

this scene rejects chronological order and logic in favor of raw emotional resonance. The cartoon characters act as Noir's inner voice, guiding him through a nonverbal evaluation with his past. They replay the moment when Noir was betrayed and mutilated by Soldier Boy, suggesting that his silence in the physical world is not due to lack of thought, but due to overwhelming psychological damage. The use of animation, childlike in style yet loaded with violence and pain, underlines the cognitive dissonance between Noir's external composure and internal collapse.

Another character whose arc reflects this psychological depth is Soldier Boy. Introduced in the third season, he initially appears to be a heroic figure a relic of a more noble era of superheroes. However, his behavior and speech patterns reveal a fractured mental state shaped by decades of trauma, betrayal, and torture. His instability is often externalized in bursts of anger and disoriented reasoning, offering a window into his inner turmoil. While not expressed through a flowing internal monologue, these moments reflect a kind of *visual stream of consciousness*, where trauma disrupts linear thought and causes fragmented, emotionally raw reactions. In a key scene, Soldier Boy's memories of Cold War-era torture

surface abruptly, unprompted, collapsing the boundary between past and present in a way that mirrors how the human mind processes trauma.

The show's plot twists also support this narrative structure. The revelation that Vought created the Supes using Compound V destabilizes the audience's understanding of the story's moral framework. The shift is not just plot-based but psychological forcing characters and viewers alike to reframe earlier beliefs. Similarly, the arc surrounding Becca's reappearance and ultimate death reflects Ryan's unprocessed emotions and his struggle to understand his powers and identity. His inability to control his actions during a traumatic outburst indirectly causes her death, again highlighting how mental states drive plot developments in a way akin to stream of consciousness storytelling.

The Boys also eschews linear character development. Rather than showing growth in a straightforward arc, it presents characters as composites of memories, traumas, and conflicting impulses. This fractured development echoes the modernist approach, where internal conflict and disjointed thought processes are foregrounded. Butcher, in particular, is not defined by a single moment or motive but by a complex network of flashbacks, moral ambiguity, and emotional repression his story unraveling as if we are piecing together his consciousness in real time.

In sum, while The Boys may not use traditional stream of consciousness narration, it integrates aspects of this modernist technique through its psychological depth, emotional fragmentation, and nonlinear structure. The audience is not given straightforward exposition but must navigate the characters' minds through disjointed memories, raw emotions, and unpredictable reactions much like the experience of living within one's own chaotic thoughts.

7.3 Echoes Through Time: Non-Linear Temporality

The Boys employs a bold and subversive approach to linear storytelling by embedding nonlinear character arcs, unfiltered socio-political commentary, and modernist narrative

techniques that distinguish it from traditional superhero fiction. Unlike Marvel's Spider-Man, whose origin and moral trajectory follow a familiar arc, *The Boys* intentionally fractures narrative predictability through nonlinear timelines, frequent flashbacks, unreliable character perspectives, and morally ambiguous protagonists, crafting a layered viewing experience that challenges audience expectations. This is evident from the outset: while Spider-Man evolves linearly from teen to hero, *The Boys* throws its audience into chaos, withholding vital information such as the truth behind Compound V until Season 1, Episode 6 ("The Innocents"), when it is revealed that the Supes were manufactured by Vought through experimentation on infants. This revelation flips the viewer's understanding of heroism on its head, exposing the corporate corruption and control that fuels the show's world. The series thrives on moral ambiguity, where figures typically revered as saviors are instead exposed as reflections of capitalist greed and power. Homelander, who outwardly performs the role of America's savior, is repeatedly shown as narcissistic, violent, and emotionally hollow. One of the most harrowing examples of this is in Season 1, Episode 4 ("The Female of the Species"), where Homelander allows a hijacked plane to crash instead of saving the civilians aboard, later lying to the public during a press conference to maintain his heroic façade. This duplicity becomes a pattern, cementing the theme that power corrupts, especially when commodified. Similarly, A-Train represents another morally bankrupt Supe. Marketed as "the fastest man alive," A-Train's addiction to Compound V escalates to fatal consequences, most notably in Season 1, Episode 1 ("The Name of the Game"), when he runs through Robin, Hughie's girlfriend, in a moment of reckless disregard, reducing her to a splatter of blood. This casual atrocity, executed without remorse, serves to immediately establish the tone of the show and its deconstruction of heroic myth. A-Train's downfall continues in Season 1, Episode 7 ("The Self-Preservation Society"), where his overuse of Compound V results in heart problems that threaten his life, illustrating the physical and moral degradation brought on by unearned power. In contrast to the glorified resilience of characters like Superman or Captain America,

The Boys subverts the hero myth by presenting Supes as products of a corporation, not protectors of the public. Homelander, often compared to Superman, is not a symbol of hope but a lab experiment shaped by Vought into a weapon of influence and terror, stripping away the idealistic identity of heroism. This critique deepens with the introduction of Soldier Boy in Season 3, a character modeled after Captain America, who is first believed to be a lost war hero but is revealed to be unstable, misogynistic, and emotionally damaged. Soldier Boy's flashbacks in Season 3, Episode 7 ("Here Comes a Candle to Light You to Bed"), expose his betrayal by his former team Payback and his subsequent capture and torture by Russian forces, providing a nonlinear development that contradicts the clean-cut origin stories of traditional heroes. This mirrors the development of Billy Butcher, who at first appears as an aggressive antihero but whose motivations are slowly unveiled through a nonlinear path. In Season 2, Episode 5 ("We Gotta Go Now"), we see flashbacks that reveal his wife Becca was raped by Homelander and later presumed dead, which contextualizes Butcher's hatred toward Supes not as blind vengeance but as a deeply personal mission rooted in grief and betrayal. The depth of this character arc is further explored in Season 2, Episode 8 ("What I Know"), when Butcher finds Becca alive, raising Homelander's son Ryan, which forces him into morally grey decisions about revenge and responsibility. The Boys amplifies these subversions with its refusal to follow predictable arcs; shocking plot twists, like Becca's real death at the hands of Ryan in Season 2's finale, challenge viewer assumptions and add complexity to the show's universe. This unpredictability is a narrative strength. For example, the revelation in Season 3, Episode 2 ("The Only Man in the Sky"), that Vought intentionally manipulated public perception for decades, aligns with real-world critiques of corporate media, underlining the show's political edge. The Boys does not just deconstruct superheroism; it also critiques celebrity culture and military-industrial propaganda. The Supes are marketed like pop stars, filmed constantly, and managed by PR teams, with their images curated more than their actions. This is clear in Season 1, Episode 2 ("Cherry"), where

Starlight's costume is redesigned against her will to be more sexualized for branding purposes, symbolizing the exploitation of female power for profit. The show's use of media satire becomes explicit in Season 3, Episode 4 ("Glorious Five Year Plan"), which shows Vought using social media analytics and focus groups to determine the Supes' public actions, parodying real-world influencer culture. Such scenes highlight how superficial metrics now dictate morality and justice in the show's world. Even character development avoids linear resolution. No figure in *The Boys* "overcomes" their trauma in a typical arc; instead, their pasts linger, shape, and haunt them. Butcher does not redeem himself he becomes more ruthless. Homelander, instead of learning empathy, spirals deeper into megalomania, culminating in (Kripke)

where he murders a protester in broad daylight and receives public cheers instead of condemnation, marking the terrifying normalization of authoritarianism. This chilling moment underscores the show's ultimate commentary: that modern society not only tolerates corruption but often applauds it when it's cloaked in patriotism and spectacle. *The Boys'* fragmented structure flashbacks, shifts in perspectives, unreliable narrators creates a stream-of-consciousness storytelling that blurs the lines between villain and victim, hero and monster. Each episode recontextualizes prior ones, forcing audiences to reassess their judgments. When Soldier Boy joins the Boys to hunt Supes, viewers initially cheer, but as more of his past emerges particularly in Season 3, Episode 6 where his motivations become just as questionable as those he hunts. He is not a savior they expected him to be but instead he is just another product of a broken system, clinging to outdated ideals with violent outcomes. The same applies to Hughie, who begins as a passive everyman but gradually embraces power and manipulation, showing how proximity to power corrupts. This erosion of innocence reflects one of the show's core themes: no one is immune to the system's rot. By consistently disrupting narrative flow, revealing key character details out of order, and reversing viewer expectations, *The Boys* achieves a masterclass in modernist storytelling one where meaning is

found not in moral clarity, but in discomfort, contradiction, and chaos. The show doesn't just depict violence and corruption it implicates the viewer in it, making them question what they celebrate when they cheer for a hero. In doing so, The Boys transforms from a superhero satire into a brutal mirror of our own world, where power is sold, justice is scripted, and truth is a casualty of entertainment.

8 General Conclusion :

This dissertation has looked into how modernism emerged and evolved to impact literature, visual storytelling and popular culture. Where the contemporary series *The Boys* was used as a case study for this research. Through a structured analysis, the study has shown how modernist principles continue to shape and influence how stories are told and how characters are presented in modern day narratives. Each chapter has fairly contributed to a comprehensive understanding of modernism's enduring relevance, particularly in how it treats fragmented narrative , disillusionment and moral ambiguity.

The first chapter has set the theoretical groundwork of the thesis. It began by outlining the historical emergence of modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Demonstrating that ideas of thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud played a significant role in shaping modernist perspectives on identity, reality, and morality. Their critiques and views has a significant effect on a generation of writers and artist who wanted to break from traditional forms.

It has also examined how such philosophical foundations helped modernist literature themes rise, including alienation, disillusionment and fragmentation. Key literary works by T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka were referenced to demonstrate how modernist authors represented a fractured worldview through techniques like stream of consciousness and nonlinear narratives. Writers who rejected absolute truth and instead focused on giving us characters that delves into uncertainty and psychological conflict.

Another part of this chapter investigated how modernism ideas has translated into popular culture, it has been proven that fields of cinema, graphic novels and television have notably adopted modernist themes and styles, early movements such as German Expressionism relied on visual techniques to depict the psychological turmoil, while more recent television series such as *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men* have continued modernism's legacy by depicting

characters in moral and identity crises. Indicating that modernist thoughts has not disappeared but rather evolved.

The second chapter however has departed to set the applications of the theoretical by offering a careful in depth analysis of the boys, a contemporary television series that provided evidence of the extended modernist expressions, the chapter has been divided into two parts, each highlighted a Modernist theme which are : disillusionment and fragmented narrative. And together have indicated the engagement of The Boys with modernist concerns in both content and form.

Disillusionment was the focus of the first part in that second chapter, it revealed how this series dismantled the traditional superhero narratives by replacing idealized images of justice and morality with representations of corruption, violence, and manipulation. Through characters as Homelander and Billy Butcher who embodies a deep sense of personal and societal disillusionment, which reflected the breakdown of institutional trust and heroism. The series critique systems of power, propaganda and corporate dominance over life aspects. This analysis has shown how in a consumer driven world, existential doubt and lose of meaning can appear.

The second part has demonstrated The Boys employment of fragmented narrative to reflect complexities of modern identity through an analytical process. The series uses nonlinear storytelling, shifting perspectives and flashbacks to challenge viewers expectations and to exemplify the disordered nature of modern world. Techniques such as polyphony, stream of consciousness and nonlinear temporarily were present in this show's structure, which allowed writers to voice the inner conflicts of characters. These narrative choices align with the modernist objective of portraying subjective reality and fragmented consciousness. With this analysis it was discovered how the boys utilized such strategies not only to entertain but also to present a message.

This dissertation has shown that *The Boys* is not just a show with modernist elements, it is a modernist story wrapped in a postmodern world. It dives deep into the critical questions modernist thinkers and writers wrestled with, such as challenging mainstream narratives, questioning what makes us who we are, and taking a hard look at institutions that claim to hold moral authority. By doing this, *The Boys* proves that modernist ideas still sufficient today, giving us a way to explore both personal struggles and society's growing sense of disillusionment.

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