

Our Gods Wear Capes: Religion or the Lack of it and the Rise of Superheroes

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Abstract—In many ways, modern pervasive culture has a huge impact on how our community thinks, and like all written material, comic books are a big part of this cultural environment. Since the 1960s, we've been fed a steady diet of made-up superheroes from comic books and movies. Their characters have become part of our everyday lives, yet it's vital to think about the role superheroes play in our culture and how they've taken God's place as a source of motivation and hope. In this paper, I will look at how superheroes have taken the position of God in contemporary culture, as well as the causes and effects of this trend.

Index Terms—Characters, comic books, god, movies, superheroes

I. INTRODUCTION

The superheroes are incredibly well-known and well-liked, and they not only have a cult following but also a mythic level of popularity. Since 1938 and 1939, respectively, Captain America and Batman have appeared in stories by Marvel Comics and DC Comics, and since the release of Captain America: The First Avenger (2011) and Marvel's The Avengers (2012), as well as Batman's Dark Knight trilogy movies, these two characters have only grown in popularity. My aim here is to explain how and why the superhero syndrome has managed to endure in our literature, society, and popular imagination. The comic book market saw a collapse in the late 1990s and early 2000s, leaving the booklets unsold on the shelves. In addition to the market depression, even ardent collectors shied away from making the financial commitment. Nonetheless, monthly publications of Batman and Captain America stories continued, this goes on to show, we need superheroes because these two characters were not only able to maintain but even increase their audiences over time. What becomes clear is that people instinctively need to worship heroes. We require saviours, wonderworkers, and compass points. People have always been afraid of the mysterious and the unexplainable, and they find solace in fictional characters who can make the mysteries of the unknown seem believable. In a similar vein, superheroes like Batman and Captain America attracted fans, survived the market crash, and are today worth billions of dollars. With time, these characters have not only remained relevant but are strengthened.

II. THE EMERGENCE OF SUPERHUMANS

Despite being around for almost a century, superheroes are

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more popular than ever. Since 1938, when Superman, the first superhero, was established, many other characters have been produced to explain this fascination with these superheroes. Wikipedia says the "Superman complex is an unhealthy sense of responsibility or the belief that everyone else lacks the capacity to successfully perform one or more tasks. Such a person may feel a constant need to "save" others and, in the process, take on more work on their own" [1]. These superhumans have, according to Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou, twelve central traits that consist of moral integrity, bravery, conviction, courage, self-sacrifice, selflessness, determination, inspiration, helpfulness, protectiveness, honesty, and strength [2]. Staats et al. suggest that heroes would concern themselves with others' well-being and have higher levels of empathy. These heroes believe that compassion makes people do heroic acts by rushing to help people in danger without hesitation. They also need to understand others from their perspective to understand the suffering of others in need. All three studies may have different views of the principles of being a hero, but they all suggest that being a hero is about committing to a quest and helping others even when they may put themselves in danger [3]. Stan Lee, the legendary comic book writer, editor, publisher, and producer, stated that a superhero is "a person who does heroic deeds and can do them in a way that a normal person couldn't" [4]. As a superhero, you must possess an extraordinary power and use it for a good cause. Franco et al. also added that heroes normally had their own rules or beliefs. These beliefs are at the core of their heroism, and they would sacrifice themselves to maintain those principles [5]. These superheroes experienced a comeback in the 1960s thanks to Marvel Comics, which debuted Spider-Man, the X-Men, and the Avengers. The popularity of these heroes has skyrocketed in the twenty-first century. Based on *The Odyssey*, these superhero stories follow the never-ending adventures of half-human, half-machine characters and, if the producers and directors are feeling especially benevolent, breath-taking female characters who save the world and sometimes the whole universe from melodramatic bad guys.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), with movies making billions of dollars globally, has grown to be one of the most lucrative film franchises in history. Along with being profitable, the DC Extended Universe (DCEU) has produced blockbusters like Wonder Woman and Aquaman. In addition to becoming well-liked, streaming services like Netflix have also produced superhero TV shows like The Flash, Arrow, and Daredevil. Whether we like it or not, we live in a time when we are under the control of various media. The introduction of "Marvel Mania," animation, technology, computer-generated pictures, and the idea that "anything humans can do, robots can do better" have all contributed to

the evolution of cinema during the past two decades. I do not, however, promote this idea, but Gen Z and the millennial generation appear to think otherwise.

Our generation has grown up with comic books and has seen how these classic heroes have grown and changed. We see a symptom of the world-redemptive impulse in American comic books. A sense of mission that continues long after people have lost touch with their religious roots. This sense of mission calls upon superheroes to nothing short of redeeming the entire world. Since 1941, they have been jumping from the pages of comic books to the big screen. *Superman* (1978), a movie about a superhero based on a character from DC Comics, was the start of it all. Based on a story by Mario Puzo, Pierre Spengler, their partner, and Alexander and Ilya Salkind oversaw its production. Christopher Reeve, Gene Hackman, and Marlon Brando are among the many actors in the film's large ensemble cast, which Richard Donner directed. At first, they competed with action stars or huge science fiction films for supremacy; today, they rule. They are contemporary gods rather than merely heroes, at least that's what the younger generation of moviegoers would have us think. The heavenly exceptional is ordinary in a parallel universe. In this world, the heroes appear to be a mythologized group of warriors engaged in an ongoing conflict with a dominant foe. This ongoing attempt to normalise godhood appears to be flirting with the idea of inhuman, all-knowing, selfless hero worship amid a disordered global order and an unquenchable thirst for miracles. The term "superhero" has come to refer to all fictitious characters who don masks or costumes and may or may not have superhuman powers; even robots and aliens have joined this organisation. Despite having widely different characteristics and skills, each of these characters fights for justice because they are all fundamentally good.

For a thorough investigation, it is important to look at the physical and spiritual conditions that led to this complex, largely supported by what C.S. Lewis wrote, "In the same way the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, and even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time." [6]. This concept of creating "little Christs" leads to an unhealthy obsession with filling shoes that don't belong to us. Again, it is pertinent to understand that superheroes are based on archetypes; according to Jung, archetypes are "ancient or archaic images that derive from the collective unconscious" [7]. Jung described these archetypes as primordial images. This means that they would be similar among all people, making them universal ideas. One of the more popular archetypes and one that appears in multiple guises is the 'hero archetype'. It seems that humans have a compulsion to bring these archetypal heroes to life. There is an innate need in us collectively to create imaginary idols to worship. Some enduring images still require an explanation; for example, what are the shortcomings—if there are any—that create a spiritual emptiness in modern society and how that void must be filled since humanity requires miracles? To satisfy an inbuilt urge to shield humans from responsibility for all that happens in this universe that is outside of our comprehension or control, we need a man walking on water, hence the 'hero archetype'. One reason why superheroes are becoming more

popular is that people aren't as religious as they used to be. Mark Bowden, in his article published in the *New York Times*, writes: Our contemporary obsession with superheroes goes down to the deepest longings of the human heart. "Firstly, our modern fascination with superheroes reveals our longing for a saviour." We all know that the world is a messed-up place. It's broken, evil, and not the way it is supposed to be. We long for someone powerful and, at the same time, good and compassionate—to rescue us, save us, and make things right again" [8]. The superhero phenomenon in our world today echoes our longing for the true saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, and corresponds to Jung's theory of archetypes and myth.

The complex then emerged fully into view with the release of Zack Snyder's incredibly contentious remake of the *Superman* origin story, *Man of Steel*. *Superman* was portrayed by Donner as a hero whose inherent humanity enabled him to save those around him and fall in love; Bryan Singer modernised this idea but largely replicated it in *Superman Returns*. Snyder's *Superman* is distant, all-powerful, and ultimately feared by the very people he stayed on Earth to protect. This idea that superheroes fail, and maybe as a result, that heroes fail and that ideas of heroism fail, leads to more failures. In the 19th and 20th centuries, God was probably the biggest hero who failed. In a forceful argument, the violence and despair that define our world—a world that has been through numerous wars and is still plagued by frequent conflicts—are used as both cause and effect: the world is so violent, it becomes impossible to believe in God, and it becomes possible to believe that God does not exist or can coexist because people have given up on God. The second argument says that violence, both real and imagined, becomes more nihilistic in a world where people don't believe in God and don't have the comfort that God or another grand story gives them. Since the first *Superman* comic debuted in 1938, *Superman* can be placed against the backdrop of these arguments. In a similar vein, I would contend that one of the circumstances that permit a superhero to materialise in the common cultural imagination is the "death of God" [9]. The moral universe of the superhero world is comprised of this crisis and the ensuing failure of heroism. In a secular society where (and after) God has failed, a superhero is required. Ultimately, the hero of this parallel reality is a superhero with enormous strength, superhuman powers, and an unblemished moral compass. Whether he is the true God or not, he performs miracles that are witnessed by the hapless public. These miracles are not stories from the Scriptures but are demonstrated on the silver screen for all to appreciate. These heroes bypass the restraints of law to redeem the nation, rife with crusading idealism. They follow a moral and technological pattern that is continually repeated. This is fully demonstrated by how significantly *Superman's* resurrection plays a role in the salvation of the Justice League; like Christ incarnate, this hero has power, authority, and integrity.

Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice, the real starting point for the "DCEU," aggressively engages with the idea that *Superman* is a godly figure that humanity should dread. *Man of Steel* only hinted at such a notion. After his violent takedown of evil Kryptonian Zod throughout Metropolis, Lex Luthor (Jesse Eisenberg), whose character is key to

attempts to portray Superman among the American public as an unbridled force of cosmic might, portrays the fight between Superman and Batman as “Man vs. God.” It’s not at all wrong to consider a superhero like Superman as a Christ or godlike figure. In this vein, by their very nature, superheroes protect certain groups of people and have skill sets as vigilante crime fighters or defenders of justice, but Clark Kent works on a scale that is almost unmatched by any other fictional “superhero.” The Justice League is based on the premise that an extremely potent extraterrestrial danger from space targets Earth after Superman’s death, knowing that no one even comes close to the “man of steel” in terms of offering a sufficient defense. This threat is said to be coming from space. Who will defend Heaven from the dogs of Hell if God deserts it? [10].

In many regions of the world, religious affiliation has decreased over the last few decades. The likelihood of people going to church or practicing conventional religion is declining. Superheroes have filled the hole left by this in people’s lives; they provide a sense of inspiration and hope that the modern world sometimes lacks. They are frequently shown as representations of morality, justice, and truth, and they stand up to evil and defend the defenseless, which can be considered a modern application of religious principles. Superheroes provide many individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose that is comparable to what religion offers. The sense of community that superheroes provide is another benefit that many people value. People seem to have developed an almost mythological dependence on stories of human vulnerability and superhero redemption.

Also, the makers of these movies capitalise on our collective need for a community; superhero fans frequently get together to talk about their favorite characters and plots. They go to conventions and other gatherings where they can connect with others who share their enthusiasm for these characters. The sense of belonging and shared values that religious societies provide can be compared to this sense of community. Superheroes also provide a sense of security during difficult times. People could look to superheroes for motivation and hope when dealing with real-world issues like political unrest, social injustice, or natural calamities. In addition to offering an escape from the harsh realities of the world, they also inspire hope that things will improve. Furthermore, they give people a sense of agency and empowerment. Many superheroes are regular individuals who either get superhuman abilities or use their intellect and talents to battle for the moral high ground. People may be motivated by this to act in their own lives and contribute to positive change in their communities.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF USING SUPERHEROES AS SUBSTITUTES FOR GODS

There is more to the superhero obsession than just high-energy excitement and lavish spectacles. Superheroes appeal to our most fundamental desires and our redeemed inclination to participate in God’s plan for the salvation of others. While many people may find solace and inspiration in the rise of superheroes as a substitute for God, this trend has repercussions. The likelihood of these heroes being idolised or worshipped is one of the main worries. When individuals

think of superheroes as being heavenly or godlike, they could give them an excessive amount of attention and overlook other facets of their lives. A society that prioritises entertainment and consumerism over morality and spirituality can also be evident in the assumption that superheroes can take on the role of God. Superheroes are frequently sold as products, and with millions of dollars in revenue coming from merchandising and media tie-ins, they are becoming increasingly commercialised, which reflects a culture that places a higher value on worldly items than on spiritual fulfilment. Furthermore, it can be hard to depict superheroes as flawless and infallible; they are frequently used as representations of morality and justice, yet they are still made-up beings with their own shortcomings, as a result, people may develop irrational expectations. Perhaps as we become a more secular, science-driven society, gods and legendary heroes will appear in more and more fiction. It appears that artists like Snyder are searching for a saviour—a means of transforming the conventional superhero plot into a symbol of archetypal, all-encompassing, and epic proportions. In Tim Burton’s 1989 film *Batman*, the superhero was portrayed as a tormented, gloomy, animal spirit defender of a lawless Gotham City under the control of a rambunctious Joker. Now that he has experienced loss and is confronting his own dread of a larger, cosmic universe around him, Bruce Wayne is a guy who has grown beyond the confines of his city or his own vocation. To a certain extent, Batman has felt as though this was inevitable. After Burton’s early 1990s dark fantasy crime epics and the throwback 1960s cartoonish style of the Joel Schumacher-led sequels, Christopher Nolan’s excellent *Dark Knight* trilogy examined Bruce Wayne, the man behind the mask, from the start to the end of his career as a hero. Even though Nolan’s strategy was grounded, earthy, and focused more on social change than stargazing in the face of crime and terrorism, it brought Batman to an impasse. Any subsequent movie telling the Bat story would simply feel like it was rehashing old ground. Batman has nowhere else to go but join the larger narrative presently being explored in comic book adaptations. With Bruce Wayne, played by Ben Affleck in *Justice League*, these same concerns are expressed. Together with his dependable butler, Alfred Pennyworth (Jeremy Irons), he regrets his ignorance of Superman’s abilities and longs for the simpler times when all he had to worry about were “exploding penguins.” Bruce responds, “I don’t need to understand it.” Alfred acknowledges that he no longer comprehends this universe; “all I have to do is save it.”

Whether Joss Whedon or Snyder, all the writers were concerned about Batman’s role as the archetypal superhero in a comic-book lexicon where riddlers and jokers are in the past and cosmic, alien warlords with their demonic armies are in the future.

Marvel Studios’ MCU appears to be wrestling with the evolution of the superhero in cinema in a completely different way than DC Comics, which appears to be having trouble figuring out how to deal with this issue and make it work for their classic superheroes. Unfortunately, their recent film, *Thor: Ragnarok*, brings the issue into sharp relief. About three weeks after *Justice League*’s debut, *Thor: Ragnarok* dealt directly with the title character, Thor, the “God of Thunder,” and his personal efforts to defend his heavenly

realm Asgard from Hela, the “Goddess of Death.” Although the ideals are identical to those that Earth and the early JLA faced against the banished extraterrestrial warlord Steppenwolf, the methods used could not be more dissimilar. This is evident even in Ragnarok’s opening scene. As the demonic Surtur, who is a chained-up ball of flashing fire with diabolical horns, Thor is continuously interrupting Surtur as he speaks in big, theatrical, hackneyed words about the impending downfall of Asgardian civilization. The differences in tone may be caused by the fact that the MCU tends to show mythological gods in a more polytheistic way than the DCEU does. Marvel depicts a larger cosmos in which the gods of human mythology are merely aliens with super-powered weapons and powers, such as Thor with his magical hammer and control over lightning. Marvel has no Christ figure or “one” God to be kept at respectful arm’s length. With characters like Odin the wise, old magician and Loki the trickster playing relatable roles based on their mythological, historical Norse ancestors, whom Stan Lee and Jack Kirby incorporated into the Marvel comic legend, the Thor movies have in fact been the most focused on portraying the idea of the plurality of gods in the Marvel universe.

The Biblical allegory of God or the rising Christ through Superman has taken over recent DCEU films, and it’s curiously a lot more constricting. Especially when the message is unclear, as was the case with Wonder Woman’s solo debut. Gal Gadot’s passionate, heartfelt performance helped immensely. Still, Diana Prince’s origin story is not only supremely mythological but also rooted in the same polytheism the Marvel universe has seemed far more comfortable with from the get-go. Diana Prince was first introduced theatrically in the climax of *Batman v. Superman*. She has since become the soul of the formative JLA. Ancient human monarchs alluded to a pre-existing historical universe with many sources of deities and beings of devotion; in fact, Ares, the God of War, turns out to be the enemy in *Wonder Woman*. Hence, if the DCEU is unable to decide whether to embrace monotheism or polytheism, Marvel seems to have wisely picked the latter and determined that the entire idea of godhood is one to both mock and embrace. The Gods of *Thor: Ragnarok* are incredibly strong, yet throughout the entire film, Thor spends much of his time acting like a complete buffoon. In a funny scene, the focused and serious sorcerer Dr. Stephen Strange helps a clumsy Thor by running space-distorting rings around him. In contrast to how Snyder plays with people fearing Superman, these gods are not ones to be feared. There are gods that we can enjoy as superhuman versions of ourselves, complete with peculiarities and frailties.

When Thor got lost on Earth and started drinking beer and fumbling around like an idiot, Kenneth Branagh did inject that movie with self-deprecating humour, but much of the Asgardian drama was handled like a Shakespearian court with theatrical dialogue and a sense of its own self-importance. By the time Taika Waititi takes control of the Thor mini-franchise, Loki is posing as Odin in his Asgard and relaxing like a fey Roman Emperor, observing courtiers making fun of what transpired at the climax of the much-maligned previous movie, *Thor: The Dark World*. The message is crystal clear: Neither we nor you should take these characters seriously any longer. We can still relate to them,

even though they are gods. Augmenting this thought process, the Hulk has historically been a terrifying image of the beast within, a comic book adaptation of Robert Louis Stephenson’s “*Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*,” even though he is not considered a God in the same manner that Thor and the Asgardian retinue would be in mythological terms. By *Ragnarok*, we’ve come a long way from Ang Lee’s torturous independent drama *Hulk*, which in 2003 tried to pass as a big-budget action film. The enormous, green figure in this movie is purely for comic effect, bouncing off Thor’s sincere conviction in a Riggs and Murtaugh manner rather than a Jekyll Hyde, Ang Lee’s *The Hulk* should be feared, but he shouldn’t be avoided, and he’s never been seen as wholly foreign and incomprehensible. To some measure, the beast has been subdued and brought back to earth. By the end of *Thor: Ragnarok*, the Asgardian people are looking to Earth for rescue, which is telling because the Gods are no longer in the stars when it comes to Marvel’s destiny. The Justice League deliberately works to attempt and humanise this conception of godhood, and Joss Whedon’s contribution undoubtedly plays a part in that. He was a good fit for Marvel because he never fully accepted the idea that heroes should be held aloft in mythological terms. His *Avengers Assemble*, one of the best comic book movies ever produced, has the team fighting among the populace in New York by the film’s conclusion, much like Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* does in the film’s revolutionary climax. However, despite being interested in the idea, we get the impression that Snyder doesn’t believe in God either because he portrays Superman in the role of the deity as a flawed, challenging, and dangerous person. Superman, who resembles God, does, after all, murder. Even though Superman is an allegory for the risen Christ in *Justice League*, we get the impression Whedon’s tweaks to the production could have changed Superman’s restoration to something far more manufactured by man than by God.

The matter is up for debate. According to press interviews with cast members, at the conclusion of *Justice League*, Superman is the Superman we remember from earlier films, TV episodes, comic books, *The Justice League* makes a concerted effort to maintain some intertextual consistency with classic films featuring characters like Superman and Batman, right down to Danny Elfman’s music, which incorporates his own legendary theme for Burton’s first two films with John Williams’ iconic Superman theme. In a reactionary manner, the DCEU is now aggressively attempting to satisfy all the fans who were turned off by Snyder’s millennial approach, one in which he wanted to darken the world with the phrase “What is the modern superhero?” in particular. How would a person with superhuman strength, the ability to fly, and the ability to move at the speed of light be perceived by the average person? The steadfast response from many seems to be that they want superheroes to be fun and escapist. Yet with all their flaws, the later Christopher Reeve films were ultimately that. Most serious issues in the MCU arise from well-established character beats, thus the series never focuses too extensively on melancholy reflection (such as in *Captain America: Civil War*, a film that came out roughly at the same time as *Batman v. Superman* and portrayed a similar conflict in much more successful terms).

Coming back to the previous argument, the very act of humanising superheroes has led to more balanced perspectives. The new breed is different from its predecessors because they have flaws and are easy to identify with. They experience personal difficulties and deal with actual challenges, which lets readers identify with them more. Regardless of which angle we choose to participate in this debate, what is clear is that all endeavors that humans undertake are market-driven. Economic validity, consumerism, commercialism, capitalism, and revenue generation are some of the factors that direct our projects. Having said this, it is also imperative that all plans of action be directed by current trends, market and cultural influences, and the politics of the time. We live in a capitalist society where it is difficult to wrestle control from the economically and technologically powerful. To keep up with the times, the release of *The Boys* by Eric Kripke in the year 2019 on Amazon Prime Video takes on a bold stance and critiques the capitalist system. This series is particularly noteworthy in the superhero genre and comprises two seasons. The exhibition of morality or power by the superhero is typically a topic for serious superhero movies. For instance, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) and *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) both discuss the scope and bounds of superhero obligations, while *The Dark Knight Trilogy* (2016) examines the issue of morality. Some of them may discuss capitalism, but they only do so briefly and not as their main subject. *The Boys* is not only a portrayal of the ethics and power of the superhero, as have been previous movies, but it is also the first superhero movie to have capitalism as its central topic. Within two weeks after its debut, the series, which is well-liked among comic book fans, was named one of the most-watched Amazon Prime Video original series ever. *The Boys* has a 94% audience score and an 84% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. According to the website, Bojalad says, “Anecdotally, the boys seem to be the subject of a lot of internet chatter” [11]. The way the series mixes the notion of the hero into a recognisably capitalist society has received a great deal of positive feedback. Determining corporate capitalism, commercialization, and the concept of heroes and superheroes in the series are the series’ main objectives. The examination of all the episodes of the series reveals how capitalism is shown in the series and how the commercialization of superheroes in a capitalist world changes the idea of a hero, which can lead to the exploitation of people in society.

The Boys, illustrates the concept of corporate capitalism by focusing on the multibillion-dollar American company Vought International and its subsidiaries. It is a fictional story that takes place in a world where some people have superhuman skills and how they are developed into superheroes, defending ordinary people without special abilities. These “supes” work for Vought International as paid employees rather than as non-profit heroes. *The Boys’* invented society is based on the hero culture that their heroic agency has helped to spread. Vought International is a key player in society as a megacorporation; as the series progresses, Vought emerges as the strongest superhero of all the businesses and satisfies the criteria of corporate capitalism. By controlling the sources of production and the level of profits they produce, hierarchical and bureaucratic

corporations dominate corporate capitalism. By becoming the richest and most powerful capitalist in the world, Vought attempts to play God in this society—the ultimate, i.e., the money. The series exposes the company’s deceptive behaviour. Vought International produces “Compound V,” a chemical compound that grants individuals superpowers, to create superheroes, which is likely the most well-known component of the narrative at this point. By showing that compound V is the reason for all superpowers, it covertly questions the very existence of divine intervention in the conception of superheroes. The experiment is nevertheless kept a secret from the public. The company makes up a tale about how God chooses superheroes and gives them inherent superpowers that add value to their product. Starlight, who is the main character of the series, has her mother confess to her that she consented to the corporation injecting compound V into her as a child. Every child given Compound V has the same belief that they were hand-picked by God and will grow up to be superheroes. For instance, when Starlight was younger, she competed in the Miss Hero pageant in her community.

It appears that Vought not only develops superheroes for sale but also commodifies people with superpowers. All children with superpowers who grew up in a superhero culture and wanted to be superheroes eventually got jobs at Vought International. Vought makes incalculable profits from this production cycle, which also influences society. The rise of Vought superheroes alters society as well. Superheroes are distinguished not only by their strength but also by their rising social standing. They become well-known and frequent topics of conversation. Everything about the superheroes increases in value, much as Marx wrote of commodities: “the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities” [12]. All these real-life superheroes cause people to become fixated, not because of their “use value,” but rather because of their “sign value.” According to Baudrillard, for an object to become a consumable good, it must first “become a symbol” [13], and advertisers can give their products more symbolic value. Superheroes are commercialised to such an extent that they dominate all screens, walls, and even breakfast tables. Like all superstars, these heroes need managers, just like famous actors or athletes do. Vought International thus assumes its position as the largest superhero management firm in the world, amassing billions of dollars in revenue. Vought International’s commodity creation has a significant social impact, and it commodifies its superhero services and goods to increase revenues. Because cash is a commodity, people must have money to purchase goods and services. Everything may be marketed as goods if superheroes are considered assets by Vought, including blockbuster superhero movies and a superhero theme park. The Deep, the company’s aquatic hero, takes on the role of Oceanland aquarium host. At the Christian Fair, which costs \$170 to enter, Christian hero Ezekiel gives a sermon to attendees. The celebrity culture where the Kardashians rule—how we dress, look, eat, workout, and just exist in our own actual world—is comparable to this superhero society. In exchange for giving audiences a sense of closeness, performers receive income, honours, and social influence through celebrity culture. In

this instance, celebrities—or superheroes—become the megacompany’s weapons for acquiring financial and political clout. As people look around, they can see them as a part of every aspect of their lives, and that all translates into money. “Vought is our name. As Kripke says, we make heroes super” [14] is not only a catchphrase for the company; it accurately describes what it does. Dan Hassler-Forest wrote a book in 2012 called *Capitalist Superheroes: Caped Crusaders in the Neoliberal Era*. In it, he said that there are connections between political goals and heroes and superheroes in each decade. He also gave an example of the connection between superheroes and capitalism. In the 1980s, for example, movies like Sylvester Stallone’s *First Blood* (1982) and Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *Predator* (1987) showed how strong Ronald Reagan’s conservative ideas were. The “hard-bodied” portrayal of masculinity that served as a symbolic representation of the Reagan Doctrine was shown in these movies. On the other hand, superhero movies from the 2000s, like *Spider-Man* (2002) and *Superman Returns* (2006), echoed the neoliberal objectives of the Bush Doctrine after 9/11. According to their portrayal, the United States is “a heroic force that governs the world of geopolitics in the same manner as superheroes govern their dream worlds” [15]. Hence, the politics and economic forces of the present times become the trajectory that our superheroes follow. We live what we see.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the end, Whedon’s contribution may be an effort to reintroduce humanity to the performances, characters, and ultimately the direction the DCEU is taking. On the other hand, Snyder’s creative legacy continues to place a significant amount of emphasis on the modern interpretation of legendary gods in connection to the conventional concepts of the superhero. Justice League appears to capture the existential crisis that DCEU is going through, a crisis Marvel never quite faced because of a higher level of consistency in terms of its own continuity and tone. This is since both aspects never manage to mesh in a comfortable manner; Barry Allen’s clowning and Steppenwolf’s humourless conquest come off as two completely different pictures. This is a key factor in why Justice League looks to capture the existential crisis the DCEU is going through, a dilemma Marvel never really had to deal with because of a higher degree of consistency in terms of its own continuity and tone.

Regardless of Justice League’s box office performance, Zack Snyder’s involvement with the DC Comics universe appears to be over. Even though Geoff Johns, a comic book legend, oversees the DC movie department, there hasn’t been much talk about making sure the DCEU stays on track with what was originally planned. His approach undoubtedly has its supporters, but they aren’t nearly numerous enough for Warner Bros. to allow him to continue. Patty Jenkins’ *Wonder Woman 2* is assured due to the success of the first picture, while Matt Reeves’ *Batman* keeps circling around, watching to see how and where the second shoe will fall. No matter what the DCEU does, it will be interesting to see if the superhero genre continues to care more and more about how these modern mythological heroes connect to historical mythology and God. If the Snyder experiment with

Superman showed anything, it’s that many moviegoers and comic book readers prefer their heroes to be deified figures rather than people who are much more approachable and human. That may reveal as much about our world and how we deal with the ideas of worship and faith as it does with the superhero genre. We’re ready to accept a hero as real due to the most fundamental human longings that are at the root of our current fascination with superheroes. Irrespective of the hold that the superheroes have over us, George Gerbner and Larry Gross warn against this hero worship, as witnessing violence on television encourages imitative behaviour and passivity in the audience. “Fear may be a more critical concomitant of a show of violence than aggression... Acceptance of violence and passivity in the face of injustice may be consequences of great social concern [16]. We seem to have passively accepted the supremacy of the superheroes for lack of a stronger binding force like religion.

Due to options for escape from the everyday banal, cutting-edge special effects, and growing comic-book fan groups, superhero movies have dominated the highest-grossing movies of the past ten years. While viewing is easier than reading, certain comic book characters are also made identifiable for non-comic book readers through movies and television shows. For instance, before the release of *Iron Man* and the character’s subsequent transformation into an “A-list,” this character was regarded as a “B-list” character, as opposed to *Spider-Man*, *Superman*, or *Batman*, who are well-known among those who are not comic book enthusiasts [17]. Visual media has a lasting impact upon the minds of the viewers, as such care needs to be taken that unreal expectations are not fostered on impressionable minds, it becomes important to proceed with caution. Superhero movies should be a source of entertainment and camaraderie and not a parallel religion.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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