

Kaneki Ken's Character Arc: A Hero's Journey Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Literature has a trend that has grown its fame across the globe, called manga. They are similar in form with Western comic books, but with a different style and structure of the story's presentation. One of the key elements of a manga's story, the characters, pique the interest of the researcher. Kaneki Ken is the protagonist of the *Tokyo Ghoul* series that possesses this interesting characterization to look into. He goes through a journey that changes his characterization in a certain point in the story. To analyze this characterization, two analysis methods are used; Vogler's (1996) hero's journey theory and Sicoe's (2013) character arc theory. The hero's journey theory is used to gain an understanding of the events Kaneki goes through in his story, while the character arc theory is used to determine the kind of change he experiences. The result shows that Kaneki's journey is a tragic hero's journey, different from the traditional hero's journey, and that he experiences the fall arc, which is, essentially, a tragedy. Furthermore, analysis of Kaneki's unorthodox hero's journey leads to the discovery of how an idolized character can start a serialization of literature, and how a serial literature, especially mangas, tend to be devious towards the hero's journey theory.

Keywords: *Kaneki Ken, Hero's journey, Character Arc*

INTRODUCTION

Manga is a growing trend in the world. According to Koulikov (2016), English-language research articles about manga is increasing all around the world. In his research, he shows an increasing amount of English-language-research articles in the world from 1993 to 2015. This trend is accompanied by another growing trend in the genre of mangas. In 2005, Maria Lin, a content-writer for a manga magazine, wrote that there is now a trend among western readers of manga. Western manga-readers now prefer to read psychological and dark fantasy genres, which are arguably the minority genres among manga genres. These kinds of genres are popular for their deep thinking and character interaction, where they entice readers to pay attention to the smallest instances of the character interactions, as they may signify something important in the story. One of the most famous manga characters of the psychological genre who displays a fascinating character development is Kaneki Ken from the manga *Tokyo Ghoul*.

One of the methods to analyze a character development pattern is the character arc theory. Character arc (Sicoe, 2013) is a theory that talks about the change of a character in a story. It could be any change, such as personality change, physical change, emotional change, and behavioral change. However, most character arc analyses tend to study the change of characterization of a character. For example, Wisehart (2015) proposed a character development pattern in the form of an enneagram, a diagram consisting of nine different patterns for a character development. He claims that the enneagram follows the theory of a character arc, where a character does not remain stagnant. Further into his study, Wisehart (2015) analyzed the character arc of Maleficent from the famous movie and screenplay *Maleficent* by using this enneagram as a method. The result shows that Maleficent undergoes a Growth character arc, where she does not necessarily change, but improves her values, such as her morality, empathy, and ethic. This could be seen in the start

of the story, where she was portrayed as very apathetic towards her own children, then becomes significantly more compassionate and cares deeply for them.

The character arc framework can be used in collaboration with the hero's journey (Vogler, 1992) theory. The hero's journey is a character analysis method that studies a character from event to event. The hero's journey theory was proposed and popularized by Joseph Campbell (1949) and has been used to analyze and become a basic structure for much old and popular literature thereafter. Several examples would include *Oedipus*, *Star Wars*, and *Jane Eyre*.

The hero's journey mainly concerns itself with the journey a character experiences in order to change. Therefore, the hero's journey is a method that can fit studies related to character arcs, because the character arc theory determines the kind of change a character experiences after a journey they have experienced. The researcher also considers this theory to be able to fit the story of *Tokyo Ghoul*,

as the story brings the notion of two worlds, which is a famous notion of the hero's journey theory, consisting of the ordinary human world and the extraordinary ghoulish world.

With the use of these two theories, this research aims to uncover the character arc of Kaneki Ken, the protagonist of *Tokyo Ghoul*. The kind of character arc is determined, and the events are portrayed by the hero's journey theory. Afterwards, this research examines in greater detail regarding the events that cause the changes, how these events change Kaneki Ken, and what prominent meaning can be interpreted from the changes.

Pertaining to other studies of characters, numerous other character analyses using the hero's journey and character arc theory has been conducted on various genres of literature. Several of said analyses are Bray (2017), Black (2003), and Lewis (2013). The characters being analyzed are Hamlet from the play *Hamlet*, Harry Potter from the *Harry Potter* series, and Walter White from the television show

Breaking Bad, respectively. Bray (2017) used the hero's journey and character arc theory by combining them with one another to determine how Hamlet undergoes the events portrayed in the hero's journey, and experiences the fall character arc, despite having been through a successful hero's journey. Black (2003) and Lewis (2013) used the two theories to analyze their respective characterizations. Where Black (2003) proves the point on how the hero's journey theory used in *Harry Potter* is a compelling story structure to follow, Lewis (2013) determines that Walter experiences the Fall arc. From these studies, it can then be concluded that the hero's journey and character arc theory has been used by combining them with one another as an analysis method, and that there is no study that has been conducted by using these theories on a comic series character. This research is expected to be able to fill the gap and provide more insight on the two theories.

As a character, Kaneki has experienced some arguably interesting and variable changes. The story is set in

a dark fantasy world, where creatures who survive by eating human flesh, known as ghouls, take the shape of ordinary humans and live among human society. In the beginning of the story, Kaneki is depicted as an innocent and average college student who is in love with a girl he often saw drinking coffee in his favorite café. After asking her out on a date, which she gracefully accepts with a smile, he came under attack by her, who turns out to be a ghoul and is looking to make him her meal. Surviving the attempt, Kaneki wakes up in a hospital room, returns home, and is then shocked as he is no longer able to taste human food, such as bread or hamburger. Much to his dismay, he has been turned into a half-ghoul by an unknown party, resulting in him being unable to eat human food and being in need of eating humans.

Noticeably, Kaneki experiences a physical change, from a human to a ghoul. Further into the story, Kaneki will need to cope with his new nature as a ghoul. He will also need to find shelter from the government organization and other ghouls. These

aspects that become the driving point for Kaneki are shown in a narratological manner, according to the theory of narrative events proposed. In other words, there will be events in the story portraying how he come to terms with his new nature, how he will learn to live as a ghoul, how he will communicate with his human friends, and many more. These events are categorized by the hero's journey theory into several specific parts, before being analyzed in order to determine the change and the cause of the change in Kaneki's character arc.

The research was conducted by analyzing these events in detail, where the story is segmented into parts based on one event to another's change of narrative elements. Referring to Genette's (1980) and Meister's (2011) theory on narrative events, visual and textual items are made into a single "event". The definition of an event here means a change in the story's narrative elements, such as character, setting, conflict, and resolution if there are any. After being segmented, these events are

then fit to each of the phases of the hero's journey (Vogler, 1992) theory.

As a comic series, however, there are visual properties and images used as supporting arguments for the description of the events and characters from the research. This is in coherence with Gravett's (2005) statement regarding visual images as supporting aspects of a comic book that can be used to clarify or amplify the words used, presenting more depth in a comic book story. As these events are primarily focused on the narrative elements of the series instead of its visual properties, the series' visuals and images are not the main concern of the research, but the supporting data of the research.

As has been mentioned previously, the purpose of this research is to describe the character arc of Kaneki Ken. In detail, this paper uncovers what kinds of changes Kaneki experienced, what events caused these changes in character arc, how these events change him, and what prominent meaning can be interpreted from the

changes. Thus, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How is the hero's journey of Kaneki Ken portrayed throughout the story?
2. What implication can be derived from the journey?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The hero's journey is a theory related to the development of a character arc. It is an event-by-event analysis of the character in the story, starting from the introduction of said character, up until the point of their resolution. The hero's journey gives detailed clarifications on the events between the introduction and the resolution of the character (Vogler, 1992).

The hero's journey theory was first proposed by Campbell (1949). Thereafter, a few versions of the hero's journey theory were proposed. The version utilized in this research is Vogler's (1992) version of the hero's journey. This is because Campbell's (1949) version of the hero's journey has been criticized by any scholars for

being too mythical and general, making the meanings ambiguous and unable to be used in popular literature. The version used by Vogler (1992) has been praised for being the version that is not too mythical; therefore, it can be used to analyze several movies and popular literature. Vogler's (1992) 12-phases hero's journey structure is as follows:

1. Act I

This is the first act of Vogler's (1992) hero's journey. This is where the hero begins his journey from the ordinary world into the extraordinary world. Unlike Campbell's (1949), in this version, there will be a portrayal of the hero living his ordinary life in the ordinary world. Later on, the hero will then experience the event that makes him begin his journey. After expressing his reluctance to begin his journey, a mentor figure will appear to help and convince the hero to begin his journey. Finally, the hero will start his journey by crossing the threshold between the two worlds. The rite of events of the first act is as follows:

- a. Ordinary World
- b. Call to Adventure

- c. Refusal of the Call
- d. Meeting the Mentor
- e. Crossing the Threshold

After crossing the border between the two worlds, the hero now takes his first step towards the trials and parties he will have to encounter. The second act of Vogler's (1992) hero's journey shows the actions the hero will need to take before, and during his confrontation with the final ordeal.

2. Act II

This is the second act of Vogler's (1992) hero's journey. In this act, the hero will prepare himself for the ordeal that he must face, and then, face the ordeal. Upon arriving in the extraordinary world, the hero will meet allies and enemies that will either help or obstruct him through the tests he must pass. Through this test, the hero will then receive the power, resolution, or item he requires in order to be able to face the ordeal. Finally, the hero will face the supreme ordeal that awaits him. After overcoming the ordeal, the hero will receive a reward that is either given to him or he obtained himself.

The rite of events of the second act is as follows:

- a. Tests, Allies, Enemies
- b. Approaching the Inmost Cave
- c. The Supreme Ordeal
- d. Seizing the Reward

The journey is not yet finished after the hero receives his reward. He will need to return to his ordinary world. Before returning, he may face another ordeal. The phases of the hero's journey is finished on the third act.

3. Act III

This is the third act of Vogler's (1992) hero's journey. This act is about the hero's return to the ordinary world. After overcoming the ordeal and seizing the reward, the hero will need to resolve himself into returning into the ordinary world. Before returning, the hero will face one final ordeal. This could be in a form of the enemy's resurrection, or a ritual required to return to the ordinary world. At the end of the journey, the hero is given the freedom to live his life with his reward. The rite of events of the third act is as follows:

- a. The Road Back
- b. The Resurrection
- c. Return with the Elixir

Vogler's (1992) version is considered to be much more acceptable by scholars. The terms used in Vogler's (1992) version are considered more detailed and specified compared to Campbell's (1949) version. Furthermore, there are also characters and roles made clear in Vogler's (1992) version. For example, we learn the existence of the mentor, ally, and enemy character from Vogler (1992), whereas Campbell (1949) makes no statement of such characters, or generalize them as the father or the goddess, making Vogler's (1992) version the one to be utilized in this research.

The use of the hero's journey in this research also considers the possibility of the story's structure being different. On this point, using Voytilla (1999), Tourhout (2017), and Bronzite's (2013) arguments, it can be said that the hero's journey is a traditional structure and analysis method. Their articles argue that

structure is there as an analysis method, or as a guideline. The story can always develop itself organically, and how one analyzes the story does not always need to focus on the steps of the given theory, as the steps may be repeated, omitted, or shifted. This means it is possible for the phases of the hero's journey to be either omitted, shifted, or repeated as well. Therefore, since the hero's journey is treated as an analysis method in this research, this research was conducted in said manner.

Another theory that can then be used to analyze the events that has been segmented in the hero's journey theory is the character arc theory by Veronica Sicoe (2013). The notion of character arc has been popular among scholars and authors alike. This theory is continuously developed until there is now a common ground for its definition. The meaning of the term "character arc" have been acknowledged as a common term with a dictionary-based meaning. For example, Oxford dictionary explains "character arc" as "a strand of narrative dealing with the change and

development in the personality of an individual character (In a dramatic or literary work).” The term itself was later popularized as a theory by Jeff Gerke (2010) in his book, despite the fact that it has existed even before his work was published.

In this case, however, a much more detailed and specific definition is required. Sicoe's (2013) version of definition is regarded as one of the clearest definition there is. In her article, she elaborates the meaning of character arc, while also giving categories of character arcs. She argues that character arc can be categorized into three; the change arc, growth arc, and fall arc, also known as the positive arc, steadfast arc, and negative arc when defined by some other scholars with, essentially, the same meaning.

Below are the definitions of these character arc types according to Sicoe (2013). Firstly, the change arc is the arc where the classic hero's journey succeeds. The protagonist remains a hero. They managed to solve an ordeal by changing their personality, ideology, principle, etc. After this drastic change,

they manage to become the ideal hero they wanted to be. An example of this kind of character arc is Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit*.

Next is the growth arc. Sicoe (2013) claims that the growth arc is when the character decides to stick to their belief and not change any aspect about them at all. The character does not necessarily change themselves; rather, they overcome an inner struggle they possess, such as fear, weakness, doubt, etc. Later on, the protagonist will come out with a realization and stronger resolution in their own belief. An example of this kind of character arc is Katniss Everdeen from the *Hunger Games* trilogy.

Last, but not least, is the fall arc. The fall arc has many traits often found in a tragedy. In this arc, Sicoe (2013) explains that the protagonist makes a wrong decision or conducts a mistake. As a result, they condemned themselves into an inevitable tragedy, where they die, succumb to insanity, fall into immorality, etc. It can be stated that they corrupt themselves due to their alignment of choices. Therefore, it

can also be stated that this arc is very similar to the characterization of a tragic hero. An example of this kind of character arc is Cersei Lannister from the *Game of Thrones* saga.

Closely related to the fall arc is Aristotle's idea regarding tragedy. This is considered as an important part of the character arc that needs to be discussed during the analysis, especially when the story centers around a tragic hero. As cited by Bywater (2004), a tragedy occurs in three phases. Aristotle's three phases of a tragic hero are as follows.

- a. *Hamartia* is the error of judgment the hero makes prior to experiencing the tragedy. This is often the cause of said tragedy.
- b. *Peripeteia* is the reversal of fortune the hero experiences in his life. When the hero's life seem to be going well, this reversal marks the beginning of the tragedy.
- c. *Anagnorisis* is the realization that the tragedy happens because of the hero's error in judgment. After experiencing

the beginning of the tragedy, the hero realizes that it was them that caused said tragedy. This realization may come during, or after the tragedy's occurrence.

Should there be a character arc that falls on the fall arc category, and it turns out that the character is also considered as a tragic hero, then these three phases of a tragedy by Aristotle will most likely become useful in the analysis. Hence, Aristotle's three phases of a tragic hero will be used in the analysis or the discussion.

These claims by Sicoe (2013) were made on several specified grounds. They were also placed upon detailed explanations and examples. Several other scholars also made similar explanations and definitions regarding this theory, albeit they made it with different terms and wordings, much like the term positive arc, instead of change arc. In essence, though, their claim and elaboration do not differ much from Sicoe's (2013). However, their claims and explanations can sometimes be ambiguous, making it difficult to set the exact parameter for

each of the types of character arc. Therefore, Sicoe's (2013) version is taken to be the one utilized in this research for its detailed and specified explanations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is qualitative, as it aims to describe and uncover Kaneki Ken's character arc by using the hero's journey theory to analyze it. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is best and most often used when the aim is to explore the issue or problem at hand. The research conduct begins with inquiry, the data are collected from a textbook, and the data analysis is inductive while setting a certain pattern or theme in it. The end result of the research is in a form which includes "the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description or interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action." (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

Data Collection

The data are the English version of the chapters of the manga *Tokyo Ghoul*, written by Ishida Sui and published by Shueisha, whereas the English translation comes from the version translated by the company Mangareader. *Tokyo Ghoul* is a series consisting of several related story segments with a single theme. This segment of a story is also known as an arc.

An arc is a section of a manga that will have its own beginning and ending, portraying different themes of the story. A manga may contain only a few arc, but in some cases, a manga can contain tens of arcs with different themes on each arc. Each and every one of these arcs is interconnected to create one whole story of a manga. However, in other cases, an arc of a manga may start fresh without any connection to the previous arc. For example, in order to understand the current arc discussed in this research, it is not necessary to read from the first chapter of *Tokyo Ghoul*, but it is necessary to read this arc in order to understand the next arc of the manga.

Chapter 50 until 80 of the 6th, 7th, and 8th volume are the chapters taken in as the research data, since they are the chapters concerning most of Kaneki's change. Starting from his ordinary life where he is already a man-made ghoul, up until his presumably drastic change are the chapters between the fiftieth and the eightieth, consisting of approximately 300 pages. These approximate 300 pages portray a single arc with the most apparent and drastic change. However, several excerpts before and following the selected chapters are used in order to show and highlight the change that occurs in Kaneki's character arc. Since the data are in the form of digital comic pages, they were first downloaded from the company's website <http://mangareader.net/> before finally being analyzed.

Data Analysis

Firstly, the fiftieth until the eightieth chapter, and other following chapters are downloaded. Afterwards, segments of the story were divided and referred to as a single "event".

According to Genette (1980) as cited by Meister (2011), narrative events here means a change in the story's narrative elements, which refer to a change in character, setting, conflict, and resolution. Further into the analysis, Vogler's (1992) hero's journey theory were utilized. The phases of the hero's journey are used to define each of the segmented events. The events' title were stated as the matching phase in the hero's journey theory. Afterwards, the events were described in order to find out whether a development in character arc has taken place or not. If an event contains a development in character arc, the development is mentioned and categorized into one of the three character arcs, based on Sicoe's (2013) theory. The kind of character arc and segmented events will then be discussed to discover the reasons and interpretations that can be made from this development in character arc. The discussions center on Kaneki, character elements, and other literary elements that contribute to the change that takes place in the event, such as setting, other characters, timeline, etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter contains the findings and discussions of the research, which answer the research questions of the research. The research questions of this research are 1) How is the hero's journey of Kaneki Ken portrayed throughout the story? 2) What implication can be derived from the journey? The result shows that the events concerning Kaneki fit well to the structure of the hero's journey. As the main point of this research, analysis evidenced a portrayal of Kaneki as a tragic hero who experiences the fall arc. The tragedy and the character arc will be described along with the hero's journey of Kaneki. Upon closer analysis, this journey structure implies that the hero's journey structure deviates slightly from a manga's story structure. To better elaborate this deviation, there are discussions regarding the deviation as a trend in popular literature, and why Kaneki is included in said trend. The first point that is going to be discussed is Kaneki's tragic hero's journey.

Kaneki's Tragic Hero's Journey

Based on the analysis, it is found that the events experienced by Kaneki fit well to the structure of a hero's journey. Kaneki's story begins and ends with the same pattern of phases as the hero's journey theory, albeit with a few combinations and repetitions of the phases in a few instances. Through the analysis of the segmented events, it is found that Kaneki experiences a fall arc in his journey. The main characteristic of the fall arc is the existence of a tragedy befalling the hero.

1. Act I: The Introduction of the Two Worlds

In order to be able to better understand the journey Kaneki undergoes, below is the summarized description of the phases of Kaneki's hero's journey, starting from Act I of the journey.

1. Act I
 - a. Ordinary World
 - b. Call to Adventure
 - c. Refusal of the Call & Meeting the Mentor
 - d. Crossing the Threshold I
 - e. Crossing the Threshold II

This is Act I, where Kaneki lives in peace as a half-ghoul in his

ordinary world, and then begins crossing to the extraordinary world. There is a combination and repetition of the phases. Kaneki and Touka, his co-worker, are having a chat together. This is his ordinary world, the human world where he lives with no large conflict to take care of. They were then visited by Banjou, a member of the Aogiri Tree ghoulish organization. This is where he experiences a call to begin his journey, as Banjou brings news regarding the condition of the ghoulish world that is different from the ordinary world. When Kaneki had a chat with Banjou regarding the condition, he refused to reveal his half-ghoul identity to Banjou. This event is both the phase where Kaneki refuses to begin his journey, and where Kaneki meets his mentor. Banjou serves, not only as the one to report the conflict that is about to happen, but also as the mentor that can teach Kaneki the systems of the extraordinary world. Then, Banjou tells them that everyone at the café should run away, as they are being targeted by the Aogiri Tree organization. Soon after, they are attacked by the

organization, and Kaneki is kidnapped. The phase Crossing the Threshold happens twice: First is when Aogiri Tree attacked the café, and second is when Kaneki wakes up in the Aogiri Tree hideout after being kidnapped by them. The attack serves as the first step for Kaneki to be forcefully taken to the extraordinary world, while the kidnapping serves as the successful goal of the attack and the second Crossing the Threshold.



Figure 1. The Ordinary World



Figure 2. Call to Adventure



Figure 4. Crossing the Threshold I



Figure 5. Crossing the Threshold

Act I serves as an introduction of the two worlds in the story. With Kaneki portrayed living normally in his

world, the ordinary world is introduced as the human world that rarely faces major conflict. It is the place where

Kaneki lives peacefully. With the portrayal of Banjou's arrival, the concept of the extraordinary world is introduced. It is the ghoulish world, where the major conflict that concerns Kaneki is about to occur.

2. Act II: The Conflict and the Tragedy

The concept of the two worlds are introduced, and the hero has been plunged into the extraordinary world in Act I. The next act portrays how the hero prepares for the ordeal, along with how the hero faces the ordeal.

2. Act II
 - a. Tests, Allies, Enemies I
 - b. Tests, Allies, Enemies II
 - c. Tests, Allies, Enemies III
 - d. Approaching the Inmost Cave
 - e. The Supreme Ordeal
 - f. Seizing the Reward

In Act II, Kaneki's phase has double repetitions. The phase Tests, Allies, Enemies happens three times. Each of the events portray each of the parties he encounters. The first is when he met his allies, who are mainly Banjou and his friends in the Aogiri

Tree. They were planning an escape operation, which Kaneki participates in. Kaneki faced both his test and enemies when he conducted the escape operation, where he fought against the Bin Brothers, the officers of the organization. The fight is interrupted by Yamori, another officer of the organization who offers to let Kaneki and his friends go under one condition; Kaneki must become his underling. Kaneki accepts. However, instead of becoming his underling, Kaneki is tortured by Yamori. This event is another test Kaneki faces before he can face the final test that grants him a perk required to defeat the supreme ordeal. During the torture, Kaneki begins to question whether or not his morality is applied correctly in this world. This event is the phase Approaching the Inmost Cave, where Kaneki needs to obtain a perk that is required to defeat the supreme ordeal. By facing the final trial consisting of physical and mental torture he received from Yamori, Kaneki became arguably less idealistic and less human. He then used these traits to defeat Yamori, who is the

physical and mental torture he experienced in the phase Approaching the Inmost Cave. In order to deal with the conflict, he changes himself into someone who is less human and less idealistic, which are arguably negative traits. Upon the emergence of these negative traits, it can be stated that Kaneki experiences the fall arc in this phase. The main characteristics of the fall arc are the existence of a tragedy, and a change in characterization of the hero, where he dies or corrupts himself with negative traits. Kaneki experienced a tragedy when he was trying to save his friends by sacrificing himself to become Yamori's underling. However, instead of becoming his underling, he was tortured physically. Further into the torture, Kaneki was told to decide who Yamori should kill; a mother, or her son. This makes Kaneki's sacrifice in vain, as he sacrificed himself for the sake of these people. Therefore, in order to avoid being hurt and losing his friends again, he does not mind to become less idealistic and hurt other people in the process. These are the main reasons

why the change he experienced is the fall arc. This fall arc also makes Kaneki's journey an uncommon hero's journey, as it is rare for a character experiencing the hero's journey to change their heroic traits in the middle of the journey.

3. Act III: The Hero's Resolution

The change in characterization that the hero experiences in Act II will most likely affect the resolution that occurs. The resolution that is portrayed in the

employees' presence, Kaneki goes to save them. This is the event where Kaneki is shown to begin his journey back to the ordinary world by trying to



Figure 12. The Road Back



Figure 13. The Resurrection



Figure 14. Return with the Elixir

next act shows the deviation between the hero's journey theory and mangas.

3. Act III
 - a. The Road Back
 - b. The Ressurrection
 - c. Return with the Elixir

Kaneki completes his hero's journey with Act III matching the original hero's journey. Kaneki, who has defeated Yamori, plans on finding his friends and escape to the ordinary world. Upon realizing the café's

find his friends and escape with them. The first of his friends, Touka, is being eaten alive by her brother, Ayato. After rescuing Touka, Kaneki proceeds to fight Ayato. This is the Resurrection phase, where Kaneki must defeat the final obstacle that prevents him from returning to the ordinary world. After defeating Ayato, he was then reunited with the café's employees. However, instead of returning to the café with his friends, he prefers leaving them to go to

a world different from the ordinary and the extraordinary world. This event is the phase Return with the Elixir, where Kaneki, who now has different values because of his journey, returns to the ordinary world. However, as has been mentioned, Kaneki does not want to stay in the ordinary world. He wants to go to a world separate from the ordinary and the extraordinary world so that he can continue his journey.

Act III serves as the conclusion of Kaneki's journey. The conclusion, however, does not symbolize how the story is supposed to be. Returning with the Elixir means the hero will live peacefully in his ordinary world by using his newfound knowledge. In contrast, Kaneki ends his journey by stating that he wants to live in a world different from the ordinary world and the extraordinary world. The conclusion is found to be slightly amiss from what occurs in the story, and it is also found that this is the cause of the deviation between mangas and the hero's journey theory.

As has been mentioned previously, repetitions, omissions, and

combinations exist as a method to cope with the story. Similarly, the repetitions and combinations that occur in these phases does not represent the creation of a new analysis method, but the method in which the story develops. It is either because the segmented events represent more than one phase, or there are more than one segmented events representing a single phase. There are various methods to cope with this kind of development. In some cases, researchers would put more than one event into a single phase, as has been done by Bray (2017). However, combining events into a single phase may result in the lack of the ability to highlight the segmented events' analysis in relation with the phases. Therefore, in this research, the repeated phases would have numbers representing the amount and the chronological order of the phases' occurrence, which will most likely make the analysis of the segmented events easier.

Returning to the analysis of Kaneki's hero's journey, it can be seen that there are only a few changes to the

original hero's journey, which includes a single phase combination and three repetitions, with no omission on any phase. On one hand, this implies that the hero's journey theory fits well with a manga. However, through closer inspection of the final events, these events imply the idea that the story can still continue, making the hero's journey devious for mangas. This is arguably due to the nature of the hero's journey theory to determine the final phase of the character as the ending of the story. The final phase, Return with the Elixir, represents how the hero is content, and would like to live in the ordinary world with his new self. However, this is not the case for Kaneki. After obtaining his reward, he seeks to further his ambition and create a different world – separate from the ordinary and extraordinary world – where he can live.

Upon closer analysis of Kaneki's journey, it can be implied that the root of the deviation seem to stem from the different trends in literature. Popular literature, including manga, have a trend to continue the story's

progress indefinitely to an uncertain ending. This kind of literature is also known as a series. Popular literature nowadays tend to follow this trend. One of the most prominent reasons for a serialization in literature is most likely the amount of readers following it. A large amount of readers coming together and discussing a common subject of interest is called a fandom. Similar to manga, fandom is also a product of popular culture. The following subchapter discusses serialization and idolization, which are affected by fandom, especially in the *Tokyo Ghoul* manga as a part of popular literature.

Idolization and Serialization as an Implication of Kaneki's Journey

From Kaneki's journey, it can be implied that serialization is the cause of a manga's deviation from the hero's journey. Serialization is a prominent trend in literature nowadays, especially mangas. It is argued that one of the main reasons for a serialization of a literature is the amount of fandom following it. With a large fandom,

comes commercialization, and with commercialization, comes serialization. For example, it is revealed that the manga *Naruto* was scheduled to end right after the Summit arc. The author requested the publisher that the manga ends after the protagonist defeats his rival in the Summit arc. However, due to a large portion of the fandom requesting the clarification on the background of the protagonist's rival, the publisher denied the author's request, and asked the author to finish the manga only after the fandom no longer make such inquiries.

The example portrays how impactful a large fandom can be towards the continuation of a story. This also shows that fandoms have the tendency to want to know more about a character's story when the character has been idolized. A character is often idolized because of a specific trait that differs them from the rest of the characters in the story. Over the course of a story, some characters would undergo a process toward change; in other words, a journey. This journey is most likely the factor that gives

characters the special trait that differs them from the rest of the characters in the story. The most popular of characters from stories that gain serialization tend to be characters who managed to gain their own charm from how they conduct their journey and obtain their trait.

Naruto from the *Naruto* series is portrayed as the village's outcast in the beginning of the story. Afterwards, he is portrayed as the village's hero for defeating the villain who destroyed the village. A significant journey that leads him to possess the heroic trait for defeating a legendary villain. Another example is when Luffy from the *One Piece* series undergoes the journey to save his brother. The result shows that he failed to save him, and ended up succumbing to sadness and madness. However, he pulls himself up from it by the help of his friends, and he swore to never again experience such tragedy. For that sake, he trained under someone else's tutelage, which is something he has never done before, since he considers training a waste of time. Therefore, not only does he gain fame

for overcoming the tragic journey, but he also managed to gain fame by obtaining the traits of diligence and modesty through the journey. From these examples, it can then be inferred that idolized characters tend to be characters with a special characterization, where the characterization tend to be different from the character's former characterization. This change in characterization then help shape their identity.

Similar to the examples mentioned, the *Tokyo Ghoul* series is also a manga. The amount of fandom that follows the series and Kaneki's journey is most likely large, as the amount of arcs continued to increase after his journey, to the point where the series managed to serialize itself. In order to discover what could possibly make Kaneki so interesting, the next item discusses how Kaneki can become an idolized character who may then evoke serialization.

Idolization

In order to become an idolized character, Kaneki requires a special

character arc that distinguishes him from the rest of the characters. From the findings, it is concluded that Kaneki experiences the fall character arc. Sicoe (2013) argues that the fall arc is similar to that of a tragic hero's arc. Kaneki experiences a tragedy that changes his outlook on life. The main point of the fall arc is the tragedy that occurs, and how it manages to change the hero's personality for the worse. Based on the findings, it is argued that there are two results of a fall arc; the death of the tragic hero, or the rise of an antihero. For Kaneki, who is both a tragic hero and an antihero, this tragedy will become a large factor in boosting his fame as an idolized character of the series.

1. Kaneki as a Tragic Hero

When a hero experiences a cruel fate that befalls them, they can be called a tragic hero. The cruel fate that befalls them can be of any nature. The important aspect is that the tragedy is so great, it causes a change in the hero's characterization as an ideal hero. According to Aristotle as cited in

Bywater (2004), there are three phases that the hero goes through to be able to call the hero a tragic hero, which are hamartia, peripeteia, and anagnorisis.

Following the arguments of Aristotle as cited in Bywater (2004) regarding tragic heroes, after the three phases, the tragic hero will then succumb to the madness made from their tragedy and die. However, death is not the case in Kaneki's journey, despite the harsh tragedy that befalls him. He conducted *Hamartia* when he made the choice to keep his humanity. The humanistic value that he kept was to not harm any living being, be it a ghouls or a human.



Figure 15. Kaneki being taught his life principle by his mother since childhood

This resulted in his reluctance to fight, and his capture by Yamori. He then experiences *peripeteia*, where his fate was reversed by being tortured physically and mentally.

Afterwards, he finally conducted *anagnorisis*, where he realized that his reversed fortune was because of his own error in judgment. Instead of surrendering his fate and die in the hands of Yamori, he resolved to change his ideals and proceed to fight Yamori.

According to Aristotle's argument as cited in Bywater (2004), a story about a tragedy is supposed to inflict a *catharsis*; a sense of pity and fear among readers of tragedy. In today's society, the meaning of pity is confused with a negative and condescending tone. Sachs (2006) argues that the pity that is meant by Aristotle is true pity, where the meaning is similar to empathy or sentimentality. However, not just any character can induce this true pity. For a character to be able to induce true

pity, they must not be portrayed as being very good or very bad. If a character is portrayed as being very ideal or very strong, the tendency is to not care for what happens to them, as the characters appear very superior compared to an ordinary human. The character will appear as being too obsessed with chasing the ideal, which makes it appear that it is not something strange if the character cannot achieve their goal. On the other hand, if the character is portrayed as being very evil or very weak, it will appear that the character deserves the tragedy.

In order to cultivate a true sense of pity, the character needs to be a mediocre characterization of a human in their everyday life. By becoming very close to the existence of an ordinary human, it is argued that a character will be able to inflict a sense of empathy and sentimentality to readers of their story (Sachs, 2006). In his ordinary world, Kaneki was portrayed as an ordinary human who became a ghoul. Despite this duality of values, he tries not to harm any other living being. He even eats dead human

carcasses who committed suicide to sustain his live as a ghoul, and keep his morale as a human by not hunting living humans like other ghouls. He does not try to become truly idealistic by not eating humans, nor does he try to become very evil by hunting living humans. This mediocre characterization of an ordinary human is believed to be the factor that can induce the true pity towards the readers of his story.

The other part of tragedy is fear. Sachs (2006) defines tragic fear as the fear of experiencing what the character experiences. In order to inflict this fear, a character must experience a tragedy that is possible to happen to an ordinary human being. Kaneki's tragedy was his torture in the hands of Yamori. The form of the torture does not seem to be extravagant. The physical torture was in the form of plucking Kaneki's nails with a plier, twisting and cutting Kaneki's toes with a scissors, inserting a syringe to the center of Kaneki's eyeballs, and inserting a centipede to Kaneki's left ear. The mental torture was for Kaneki to make the choice on

who to live among his friends; a mother, or her son. Naturally, Kaneki begged to save them both, but Yamori proceeded to kill the son first, then kill the mother in front of Kaneki's eyes. All of which seem to be possible and not extravagant. Unlike the torture rack or dungeon chains often depicted in several horror stories, which seem unlikely to exist in the minds of an ordinary human's daily lives.



Figure 16. Yamori putting a centipede in Kaneki's ear; one of the feasible torture methods Kaneki experienced

With the ability to induce the feelings of pity and fear, Kaneki will be able to combine the two feelings to

create a tragedy that invites fame and attention; ultimately, making him an idolized character to follow. The fear will make his fate seem undesirable. However, because of his pitiable personality, it is possible that readers can relate themselves if they were ever to experience the horrible fate Kaneki is experiencing, evoking empathy and sentimentality. These feelings will then increase Kaneki's fame, where the fandom will want to know more about his characterization while he is facing the tragedy.

Kaneki evokes a strong sense of empathy and sentimentality through his tragedy. This, however, occurs during his phase as a tragic hero, and is the factor that can make him an idolized character. Through the research, it is found that Kaneki has one more booster for his fame, and is perhaps the reason for his growing fandom. In addition, it is argued that this is the major factor that can lead to a serialization of his story. The next factor contributes both to Kaneki's fame as an idolized character, and Kaneki's ability to serialize his story. It is Kaneki's

characterization after the tragedy. In other words, it is his characterization as an antihero.

Serialization

Through the trial he faced, Kaneki managed to defeat his ordeal and come out victorious. The price he paid, however, was to not have the same outlook on life anymore. This change of principle no longer makes him an ideal hero, nor is he a villain, as he still wishes to fulfill an arguably commendable goal. This trait of lacking morality while pursuing a heroic goal is arguably the trait of an antihero. He changed himself to an antihero for the sake of overcoming his obstacles. After overcoming the obstacle, he now has a choice with his newfound self. Kaneki can either return to the ordinary world with his old allies, or stay in the extraordinary with his new allies. The choice was neither. He chose to go and hide in a world between the two worlds with some of his old and new allies. In other words, he continues his story. It is argued that this ability to serialize his story comes from his characterization as an antihero.

1. Kaneki as an Antihero

After becoming an antihero, Kaneki decides to continue his journey to a world different from the two worlds. This point became the start of a new journey for the new antihero. He may attract the fandom to continue to want to know what awaits him in the new world he is about to venture into. He may also attract more attention by making the fandom want to know how he enacts his principle in the new world, especially now, in his characterization as an antihero. Aside from these internal factors from the story, there should also be perks that come with being an antihero. These perks are, arguably, what make antiheroes able to gain more fame compared to regular heroes.

The trait that makes an antihero different from a hero is the former's lack of heroic traits. A hero of a story tend to have an idealistic personality. Undoubtedly, they would seek a goal for the greater good. In order to achieve that goal, they would stay true to their ideals. Sometimes, they are also portrayed as humans with some form of

a supernatural gift given to them compared to other ordinary humans.

An antihero, is a hero who has experienced a tragedy so terrible, they leave several of their idealistic personalities behind in order to achieve their goal. For an antihero, there will always be a side of them that slightly portrays evilness. They will either have a good purpose with bad methods, or a bad purpose with good methods. Their lack of heroic attributes can be seen in their flawed personality, which comes from a violent background.

In Kaneki's case, his violent background comes from his torture experience. After the torture, his personality is flawed. The selfless, optimistic, and dovish personality he has are replaced with the new cruel, cunning, and hawkish personality. From then on, he decides to fight and kill anyone that disturbs the peace of the café. He does so by taking a few of his allies with him into a hideout, and start searching clues for the dangerous ghoulish organization, Aogiri Tree. He even went as far consulting another criminal organization in order to

receive information about Aogiri Tree. These are the qualities of an antihero; a flawed human in pursuit of a goal that can be either ideal or not.

From the comparison between them, the traits of an antihero appear to be more compelling for ordinary humans. It is argued that the flawed characteristics of an antihero are much more appealing, because these flawed characters are portraying the true human nature of everyday humans. Compared to the heroes that appear ideal and superior to the ordinary humans, antiheroes are flawed humans who are equal to, or may even be lower than the ordinary humans. Antiheroes reflect the personality of everyday humans, the fandom. By becoming very similar to ordinary humans, the antiheroes tend to be able to gain even more empathy and support than the regular hero. Various scholars and researchers support a similar idea. Bender (2013), Saporito (2016), and Salma (2008) propose similar arguments. As a matter of fact, Salma (2008) conducted a research that elaborates how the current trend in

society is to support antiheroes, rather than heroes. It shows how the popularity of heroes are beginning to waver, due to their nature of being too idealistic. Instead, antiheroes manage to begin gathering popularity by reflecting how much they are humans, and very similar to the fandom.

In conclusion, heroes and antiheroes can be differentiated by looking at their heroic attributes. They may both pursuit the same goal for greater good. While trying to achieve their goals, heroes tend to become idealistic and superior to ordinary humans, while antiheroes are a lot more like an ordinary human with their flawed personality and background. Their flaw, however, proves to be the main reason for their popularity. Readers can harbor feelings of empathy, and support the actions of the antihero, even more than they support the actions of the hero. Thus, when Kaneki became an antihero, he has a higher probability to attract more fandom to follow his story than when he was a regular hero, resulting in the serialization of his story.

It can now be stated that Kaneki possesses the ability to become an idolized character that makes it possible for him to serialize his story. As shown by the hero's journey analysis on Kaneki, he does continue his story, where he journeys as an antihero to a different world, making another arc for the manga. Therefore, there needs to be a representation from the analyzed structure that signals how Kaneki will continue his story with his new self. The hero's journey structure, however, does not represent that possibility. This is the deviation that occurs between the hero's journey theory and mangas.

CONCLUSION

As a character, Kaneki's development is fascinating to look into. His characterization managed to make Kaneki one of the most popular characters in the *Tokyo Ghoul* series. Through the hero's journey analysis, it can be seen that Kaneki undergoes two sub-categories of a hero: a tragic hero, and an antihero. Kaneki's hero's journey is portrayed as a journey of a tragic hero who becomes an antihero. It

is also found that the trend of serialization comes from the growth of idolized characters, who evoke fandom. With fandom, stories have the possibility to continue towards an indefinite ending, where authors become constrained to the fandom's wishes.

The hero's journey of Kaneki Ken is portrayed in a manner of a tragic hero's journey, where he experiences the fall character arc. The fall arc makes his hero's journey an uncommon hero's journey, as there are rarely any character that changes their heroic trait in the middle of the journey. From this tragic hero's journey portrayed throughout the story, it can be implied that a manga's story structure deviates from the hero's journey structure. This is arguably due to literature's current trend of serialization. Further into the discussion, it is argued that the source of serialization is the tendency of the fandom to idolize a character. The fandom of popular literature holds the power to trigger continuations of a story, especially when the fandom has an idolized character that they want to

know more about. Due to his characterization as a tragic hero and an antihero, Kaneki is argued to be one of these idolized characters that can potentially create serialization. In these kinds of serial literature, there is a tendency to continue the story towards an indefinite ending, making a deviation occur between the hero's journey theory and mangas.

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