

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

*Manga* refers to Japanese comics that began developing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pagan, 2018). It tells stories through some illustrated panels and pages. Unlike western comics, which are read from left to right, *manga* are read from right to left. A *manga's* plot is differentiated by two main things; the audience demographic, and the story's genre(s). The audience demographic is separated into four main categories. The first is *shonen* (literally 'young boy'), like Oda Eiichiro's *One Piece* which is an action adventure *manga* aimed toward teenage boys between the ages of 12 to 17. The next one is *seinen* (literally 'young man'), like Kentaro Miura's *Berserk*, a fantasy adventure *manga* aimed toward young adults. The third one is *shōjo* (literally 'young girl'), aimed toward teenage girls. An example of *shojo manga* is Natsuki Takaya's romantic comedy titled *Fruits Basket*. The last demographic is *josei* (literally 'women') which includes series like Yuki Suetsugu's romance *manga*, *Chihayafuru* (Rousmaniere, 2019).

Unlike the other genres, *seinen manga* often tackles deeper themes and adopts darker genres because of its main target demographic. It also depicts topics that are considered mature like sex, societal & political issues, philosophy, and psychology in a more explicit manner (ZenMarket, 2024). As a result, *seinen* stories often have plots that revolve around wars, existential crises, or other story threads that better resonate with adults that tend to be more experienced in dealing with those struggles (Leahy, 2023). The *manga* industry has been growing in popularity since the 2010s, with manga sales being able to reach a new record of 2.5 times the peak sales of 2007 according to Masaaki Shimizu, the general manager and publisher at Square Enix *Manga & Books* (Shimizu in Aoki, 2022). Furthermore, VP of sales and marketing at Kodansha, Yae Sahashi, has gone on to state that their sales figure in 2022 was able to outperform their numbers from 2021, which was comparatively "explosive" to their numbers in 2020 thanks to *seinen* series like *Wotakoi*, *Blue Period*, and more (Yae in Aoki, 2022).

An example of those deeper, more explicit themes can be examined through the portrayal of the effects of othering due to a person's hybridity depicted in Sui Ishida's *Tokyo Ghoul*, a psychological horror *manga* that discusses the existential dread of living among humanoid predators that prey on humans. The drama and action genres are incorporated into the series as the manifestations of the struggles the story's characters have to overcome in light of the existence of this predatory life form, like in the scenes of conflicts that make up a

majority of *Tokyo Ghoul's* story. I chose this series over other titles within the *seinen manga* sphere because it has a plot that is directly driven by the impacts of othering on the human-ghoul hybrids.

*Tokyo Ghoul* was published from September 8, 2011 up to September 18, 2014. Its sequel, *Tokyo Ghoul :re*, was published from October 16, 2014 to July 5, 2018. Both were written and illustrated by Ishida Sui and published physically in the Weekly Young Jump magazine and digitally in Shueisha's MangaPlus website. Respectively, they scored 8.53 and 8.29 in a scale of 1 through 10, rated by over 280.000 and 150.000 users on MyAnimeList. In 2014, *Tokyo Ghoul* was nominated for the "best general *manga*" category in Kodansha's 38<sup>th</sup> *Manga Awards*. It would later become the 41<sup>st</sup> popular manga out of 100 titles in TV Asahi's *Manga Sōsenkyo* in 2021, where 150.000 manga readers from Japan voted for their favorite manga (Loveridge, 2021).

In its debut year of 2013, *Tokyo Ghoul* managed to sell around 1.6 million copies in Japan, becoming the 27<sup>th</sup> best selling manga series at the time. It would become the 4<sup>th</sup> best selling manga in Japan in 2014, the year of its ending, managing to sell an estimated total of 6.9 million copies. When its sequel series debuted, it sold over 3.7 million copies. It would go on to become the fifth and tenth best selling manga in Japan in 2017 and 2018, selling over 5.3 million and 3.2 million copies in the respective years. During that same period, the franchise had sold around 2.3 billion Yen. As of 2021, it has managed to sell over 47 million copies worldwide ("石田スイ展のイントロダクションとしてビデオコラージュが来場客を出迎える!!", 2021).

Sui Ishida is a mangaka born in Fukuoka, Japan, on December 28, 1986. He is the writer and artist of *Tokyo Ghoul*, which was his debut into manga creation. The initial manga series ran from 2011 to 2014 throughout 14 volumes. He would continue to publish *Tokyo Ghoul* one-shot side stories like *Tokyo Ghoul [Jack]* (2013) and *Tokyo Ghoul: Joker* (2014) before continuing the manga's story in *Tokyo Ghoul :re* (2014 to 2018, 16 volumes). In 2016, *Tokyo Ghoul* won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Sugoï Japan Awards' best manga series category (Loveridge, 2016). Ishida would go on to create another manga series titled *Choujin X* that has been published from 2021 and is still ongoing to this day on Shueisha's *Tonari no Young Jump* website. His other notable works include the illustrations for Towada Shin's *JACKJEANNE*, a novel series published in Shueisha's Jump J Books based off of the visual novel game of the same name and writer, developed by Broccoli (Hodgkins, 2019; Loveridge, 2019).

*Tokyo Ghoul's* story is set in an alternative version of Tokyo, Japan, in the early 2000s. In this reality, there are superhuman beings that lurk amongst humans called ghouls. Ghouls physically look similar to humans, but they feed on human flesh to survive. Another distinguishing trait that ghouls have is in their specialized cells that get stored in a sac-like organ called the *kakuhou*. When this special organ is actuated, their RC cells activate, turning their corneas black and irises red, amplifying their physical strength, and manifesting a limb-like organ called the *kagune*.

*Tokyo Ghoul* follows the story of Ken Kaneki, a Japanese literature student who goes on a date with his crush, Rize Kamishiro. Later, Rize is revealed to be a ghoul and tries to devour Ken. They would then get into an accident that nearly killed them both. The story cuts to Ken on a hospital bed, seemingly recovered from the incident. However, his doctor had to transplant Rize's organs into Ken to keep him alive, turning him into a half ghoul-half human hybrid. He now has to hide his secret identity while living a double life by working as a waiter in a ghoul-run cafe called the Anteiku while moonlighting as a human carcass scavenger (Ishida, 2011).

Because of his hybridity, Ken not only has to struggle with his newfound hunger for human flesh, but also the ghouls and humans that hunt him because of his hybrid biology. The story ends in the sequel series, *Tokyo Ghoul :re*, following the defeat of Kichimura Washuu, a human-ghoul hybrid acting as a high-ranking ghoul investigator, and the Dragon, a gigantic ghoul monster. The aftermath of this massive conflict portrays a society where humans, ghouls, and human-ghoul hybrids begin to coexist (Ishida, 2014).

I chose to study the impacts of othering due to the characters' hybridity in *Tokyo Ghoul* over other topics from works in the same age range and genre, or from Ishida's other works because the effects of this phenomenon are interesting to analyze. The dynamic between humans and ghouls has already been established, Ghouls see humans as prey, while some humans hunt ghouls to ensure the safety of their race. The ghouls already treat humans as the "other" and *vice versa*, so the introduction of a third party that displays characteristics from both races, that being the human-ghoul hybrids, sheds light on how the pure parties treat a being that does not fully qualify as the "self". This study is done to scrutinize how the impacts of othering toward the hybrids are portrayed in *Tokyo Ghoul*.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The issues I would like to highlight and scrutinize in this study are what the effects of othering on the human-ghoul hybrids are, and how the hybrids cope with the impacts of othering.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This study shows certain impacts of othering toward the human-ghoul hybrids. It also highlights the ways they cope with the impacts of othering by applying a certain type of defense mechanism.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Previous studies that analyze *Tokyo Ghoul* use different approaches and theories. One study published in the *Jabberwock* journal of 2019 by Ishani Pant, entitled *Othering and Social Conflict in Graphic Narratives* approaches *Tokyo Ghoul* and *Bhimayana* analyzes the text through a visual and narrative comparison in relation to how the two texts portray discrimination (Pant, 2019, pp. 35-49). The essay also incorporates the elements of Hinduism in sociology, specifically castes. Another study was written by Hsin-chi Chang (2024) entitled *Intrusion of the other: identity, ethics and transplantation in Sui Ishida's Tokyo Ghoul*. It discusses the ethics of ghoulish organ transplantation through a humanitarian approach using the theory of ethics in medical practices, of which the author refers to the process as illegal xenotransplantation. The paper would analyze the patient's agency in transformative procedures and the societal prejudices that Ken, the main character, experiences after his transformative operation.

This paper, on the other hand, uses postcolonial and psychological concepts to analyze the impacts of discrimination on the hybrids and how they cope with it. Since this paper discusses the aforementioned topics through a social analytic approach, the data parsing method, subject matter, and conclusion are different from the papers that I had previously mentioned. The theories I applied are better suited in explaining the impacts to the hybrid characters within the context of the story.

Discrimination is a societal issue that forces minorities to adopt a certain way of life that is usually less preferable than that of the discriminators. Those non-optimal living conditions also force them to adopt a certain outlook, identity, and/or social role. This study highlights othering as a form of discrimination and its negative impacts on the people that are

seen as the “others”, which in this case are hybrids. It will also go into detail about the coping mechanisms the hybrids developed in order to deal with the aforementioned negative impacts.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

The theories and concepts I will use to conduct this study are “othering” from Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Emile Durkheim’s alienation, the frustration–aggression hypothesis by John Dollard *et al.*, Homi K. Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, and Edouard Glissant’s rhizomatic identity. Othering will be used to explain the parties that are considered as the occidents and orientals. Alienation and the aggression hypothesis will be applied to analyze the main impacts of othering: social alienation and increased aggression. The stages of mimicry and rhizomatic identity will explain the coping mechanisms developed by the human-ghoul hybrids.

#### **1.5.1 The “Self” and The “Other”**

I will analyze the social hierarchy shown in the interactions between the human-ghoul hybrids and the humans or ghouls with the help of a concept theorized by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Orientalism is a concept in postcolonial theory that details how the West would study the Orient or the East (Said, 1977, in Ranjan, 2015). Historically, orientalism was described as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient: how they are dealt with by making statements on, authorizing views of, settling, and ruling over it. It is a way that the West restructures and holds authority over the Orient (Said, 1977, p. 3). In a sense, Said states that Orientalists, people who deal with the Orient, create discourse where the West dictates how the East is portrayed in their works of literature through a West-centric lens rather than observing how the Eastern culture is actually developing. This is due to how most modern orientalists are a product of a sociocultural system that defines itself as more dominant.

This concept separates people into two groups, the “Occident” or the self and the “Orient” or the other. The Occident always refers to a familiar party that holds control on the narrative of culture. For example, European Orientalists and subsequently American area-specialists have always represented and treated Eastern culture (notably Muslim, Arab, China, *etcetera*) in a predictably negative light (Said, 1977, pp. 284-293). The Orient are the people who have minor control over the global narrative being written about them. This is due to the effects of colonialism, specifically the exploitation of resources pioneered by Britain and France (Said, 1977, p. 295). To summarize, the Orient are seen as an inferior culture that should

be feared and controlled despite factual evidence that suggest otherwise due to the Occident's claim of superiority. This cultural dynamic shows the definition of "othering" and its application in human history. It is the process of depowering and discrimination of the Occident because of social domination by Orientalism due to certain factors such as colonialism or other relevant belief systems.

In the context of the story, this concept is shown through the conflict between humans, ghouls, and hybrids. When ghouls are assigned as the Occident, they are physiologically dominant. They cannot be hurt by conventional human weaponry, are physically stronger and more agile than humans, and hence treat humans as livestock. This means that they treat beings that display human-like characteristics as the "other." This outward treatment is most apparent in the "Gourmand" arc when a group of ghouls capture humans and the hybrid Ken Kaneki to be eaten. Humans can also be seen as the dominant species. When humans are assigned as the Occident, they are numerically dominant. The story implies that humans outnumber ghouls by a considerable amount. It also shows them creating weapons capable of harming ghouls. These factors make humans treat beings that display ghoullike characteristics as the "other": as threats that need to be eliminated. This mentality is most apparent in Commission of Counter Ghoul (CCG) investigators who willingly dispatch ghouls and hybrids alike.

Therefore, the only role that could be assigned to the human-ghoul hybrids is that of the "other." The story portrays them as an unnatural and inferior party. Between the three parties, they have the smallest number and are therefore nearly unable to retaliate against the discriminatory treatment by the Occidental parties. This is best exemplified by how Ken, an artificial hybrid, becomes a victim of both ghouls and humans. I will be applying this concept to further examine the impact that othering has on human-ghoul hybrids by the "Self" in *Tokyo Ghoul*.

### **1.5.2 Alienation**

Emile Durkheim's concept will be used as the basis to analyze the aspects of alienation experienced by the human-ghoul hybrids. Durkheim introduces his concept of alienation in his book titled *The Division of Labor (De la Division du Travail Social)*. It refers to a state of personal disconnect between people in a rapidly shifting society (Durkheim, 2013, pp. 287-288). Durkheim asserts that people are like organs within a human's body. They need to regularly send signals to one another in close proximity and high frequency so they can clearly

communicate and complete their respective tasks (Durkheim, 2013, p. 288). Therefore, an interaction model where people from various fields of expertise are closely coordinating with one another is necessary because, like organs, modern humans ensure each others' livelihoods. However, he also states that an exceptional circumstance could dissolve the equilibrium present in a pre-established system (Durkheim, 2013, p. 288). An example of these circumstances can be seen in how globalization brings about a rapid societal change. Technological advancements in various fields like communication, engineering, *et cetera* create new job opportunities, which leads to a more specific specialization of tasks. This phenomenon decreases the commonality between the people, further destabilizing social cohesion. It plunges society into a state of normlessness (Durkheim, 2013, pp. 284, 288-289).

When a society's norms are unable to return to an equilibrium, the people within it start acting out monotonous routines. In his book, Durkheim (2013) describes the aforementioned state of being as thus:

And indeed, if he is not aware of where the operations required of him are leading, if he does not link them to any aim, he can no longer perform them save out of routine. Every day he repeats the same movements with monotonous regularity, but without having any interest or understanding of them. He is no longer the living cell of a living organism, moved continually by contact with neighbouring cells, which acts upon them and responds in turn to their action, extends itself, contracts, yields and is transformed according to the needs and circumstances. He is no more than a lifeless cog, which an external force sets in motion and impels always in the same direction and in the same fashion. (pp. 289-290)

Essentially, the people who live in a normless society lose the ability to use their power to influence the actions of others due to the hyper-specification of their tasks or roles. Instead of acting while in contact with the neighboring "cells", they are reduced to cogs within a machine, powerless to change the way they live. In summary, alienation is the interpersonal disconnect in society brought about by certain circumstances that rapidly change societal values. This change creates a society without clear regulations caused by the seemingly infinite amount of possible specializations available to the people. Those specializations further fragment the social cohesion, secluding people into their own areas of expertise. This seclusion makes people unable to use their power to meaningfully affect their own lives and those of others.

When applied in relation to the impacts of othering toward *Tokyo Ghoul's* characters, the human-ghoul hybrids can be seen as alienated beings. To them, the hybridizing operation

can be determined as the “exceptional circumstance” that kickstarted their rapid change. This shift can be seen in how Ken Kaneki’s surgery turns him to a hybrid, breaking down his pre-existing human-adjacent norms, making him live in a state without a straightforward guideline. His normless state prevents him from making meaningful connections with members of the pure parties, making Ken powerless in influencing how they treat and perceive him and furthering his alienation.

### **1.5.3 Reactive Aggression**

The frustration-aggression hypothesis was originally proposed in 1939 by John Dollard’s research group. They described frustration as any obstacle that prevents individuals from achieving certain goals and aggression as a primordial reaction which humans use as a demonstration of dominance (Dollard et al., 1939 as cited in Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 446). Initially, frustration is seen as a sufficient prerequisite in eliciting aggressive behavior. However, a recent study by Arie W. Kruglanski *et al.* shows that the denial of certain goals is not the sole reason for someone to be aggressive. Kruglanski’s team notes that aggression can only occur if the need provided by the unachieved goal is substantial in fulfilling the person’s essential needs (Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 448). This means that aggression is a motivational construct, one which is intentionally used in injuring other beings as a means to an end (Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 447). The team posits that a major source of frustration is the degradation of one’s significance: the perception of their social worth. As such, aggression is justified as a method to re-equalize their social standing (Kruglanski et al., 2023, pp. 448-450). Through a more thorough analysis, Kruglanski’s team concluded that aggression will always be mainly motivated by a set of basic needs, specifically the restoration of an individual’s “recognition” (Kruglanski et al., 2023, p. 447).

To reiterate, frustration happens when an individual is denied their right to fulfill a goal which is paramount to ensure their livelihoods, which in this context happens to be their social worth. This leads to aggression: hostile acts done to harm another being in order to accomplish certain goals, which happens to be restoring said social worth. An example of this concept’s application in Tokyo Ghoul’s story can be seen in how Ken Kaneki fights against Kōtarō Amon in the Owl Suppression Arc in order to ensure his social worth by the ghouls he is trying to rescue.

### **1.5.4 Mimicry, Ambivalence, Hybridity, and Rhizomatic Identity**

To further analyze the position the hybrids adopt in their attempts to cope with the impacts of othering, I will use Homi K. Bhabha’s postcolonial concepts from *The Location of*

*Culture* alongside Edouard Glissant's rhizomatic identity from *The Poetics of Relation (Poétique de la Relation)*. I will start by breaking down Bhabha's thesis. He asserts that mimicry represents an ironic compromise constructed around an ambivalence. It represents an appropriation of the "other" (Bhabha, 1994. pp. 122-123). Bhabha defined mimicry as something that is "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994. p. 127), a mere attempt at emulating a colonizer's ideology, and/or culture. The colonized mimic their colonizers, alienating their own culture in order to gain partial existence in a colonized society. This process creates an ambivalent identity for the imitators. They are neither part of their original culture because they adopted foreign cultural aspects deemed superior to that of their own, nor are they considered a representative member of the Occident's culture due to their initial disposition as the "other." An example of this ambivalent group is the Indian-British interpreters from colonial India in the 17th century (Macaulay, 1835 in Bhabha, 1994. p. 124). Even though they could partially understand and emulate the colonizers' teachings, they were unable to create their own ideas, and therefore, could not represent the "Self." Hybridity refers to the state of consciousness developed by the in-between colonized people (Bhabha, 1994 as cited in Lazuardi & Laksono, 2021). They begin to realize that in their attempt to interact with the colonizers by mimicking their culture and moving away from their original culture, they have become a group that adopts parts of both cultures, yet cannot fully fit into either one.

To summarize, mimicry is done by a certain group of colonized individuals in an attempt to gain partial presence during the colonizer's reign, while ambivalence is the state of a group that exists outside their original and colonizer's cultures due to mimicry, and hybridity is the psychological result of ambivalent mimicry. Hybrid groups see the colonizer's culture as superior to their original culture. When applied to the setting of *Tokyo Ghoul's* story, the human-ghoul hybrids can be seen as an ambivalent group in need of mimicry. An inverted example of this happens when Ken Kaneki (post-hybridification surgery) mimics the human culture of food consumption and rescinds the ghoul culture of devouring human flesh. Ken, who was originally human, regards his human culture as superior to that of a ghoul's. This indicates that his mindset is being shaped by his hybridity because unlike the human-ghoul hybrids, ghouls do not struggle with this decision.

The next concept that will be applied is Glissant's rhizomatic identity. This concept refers to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the rhizome, a decentralized network-like structure that challenges the concept of a totalitarian, fixed, and hierarchical root (Glissant, 1997. p. 11). Glissant's book, *The Poetics of Relation*, revolves around this concept

because he states that an identity is extended through someone's relationship with others. Glissant used the descendants of the Huns as an example of this concept. The Huns are nomadic conquerors. Their goal is to exterminate the prior occupants and take their land. This arrowlike nomadism manages to create a sort of melting pot where the Huns' descendants started incorporating cultural parts of the people they conquered, slowly diversifying their identity (Glissant, 1997. p. 12). Another example of this phenomenon can be observed through the effects of diaspora in the Arawak communities, groups of people that incorporate French, African, and native Caribbean cultural elements. They had to move around the Caribbean territory for a particular reason, unaffected by curiosity nor aggression (Glissant, 1997, as cited in Mulira, 2015). This circular nomadism further expands their culture, shifting their identities into something beyond that of their preconceived original state. Essentially, a rhizomatic identity develops when a group or an individual becomes connected with other parties.

This concept can be applied to the interactions between the hybrids and other parties, and how it becomes a factor in shaping their identity. An example of this concept application is in observing the identities of Eto Yoshimura, a hybrid born through a human mother and ghoulish father. When observed through her relationship with humans, she assumes the identity of Sen Takatsuki, Eto's pen name as a human novelist. On the other hand, her identity in relation to ghouls is that of the One-Eyed Owl, the leader of the ghoulish terrorist organization *Aogiri Tree*.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This paper is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is the study background which contains six subchapters: the background of the study contains a short explanation of the text's genre, a short summary of the text's premise, the author's biography, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is the analysis of the *manga Tokyo Ghoul*. This section will be used to analyze and give context to the proposed purpose of the study. It contains two main subchapters. The first of which analyzes how human-ghoul hybrids are impacted by othering perpetrated by the pure parties, while the second analyzes the coping mechanisms adopted by the hybrids. The third chapter is the conclusion of the study. I will utilize this section to recapitulate the findings of the analysis done in the prior chapters.