



Persona and Shadow: The Journey of an Anime Antihero

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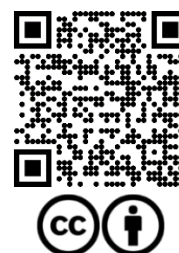
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Abstract— This paper aims to examine the character of Yagami Light in Madhouse's anime adaptation of the famous manga series *Death Note* (2006-2007). Light, the protagonist of the series, is viewed with regards to his role as an antihero despite being the hero in the anime story. He is examined through the concept of the Carl Jung's archetypes. This paper focuses on two contradictory archetypes which are the persona and the shadow, explaining the characteristics of an antihero. Henceforth, this paper discovered about the portrayal of those archetypes along with the reflection of anti-hero characteristics performed by the protagonist. Moreover, the character and series as a whole are compared to the stages of Christopher Vogler's *Writer's Journey* (2007), while Joseph Campbell's concepts in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1950) are also referenced. Each stage of Vogler's theory is examined and compared with *Death Note's* narrative, exploring the similarities as well as the deviations. Light and events of the series are explored with regards to the portrayals and variations of the stages of the Hero's Journey as derived from Vogler's theories. Unfortunately, Light is not able to complete the journey because of his defeat, death, and failure of rebirth and resurrection.



Keywords— antihero, archetypes, hero's journey, persona, shadow

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is an art form that has developed into an integral part of human lives. It has become so because it is considered as an immediate source of learning and pleasure. A simple definition of literature comes from Khatter (2023). She says literature is an artwork focused on human experience. It includes both fictional and non-fictional stories of people, places, and events from the past across all genres. From this, the meaning can be stretched to all forms and manner of storytelling including anime. Anime storytelling originated far back in Japanese art. However, it is the years after the second World War that marked the emergence of anime as a storytelling medium (Lefler, 2022). We should understand, nevertheless, that story and medium are separate. *Death Note*, for example, is not an anime per se. It is a story that uses anime as a medium.

Death Note was originally published as a Japanese manga in 2003 and then aired as a 37-episode series from year 2006 to 2007. This paper examines the anime series,

as shown in its original dub with English subtitles. The series follows the story of Light Yagami, a high school student with an ingenious mind. He later finds a notebook lying mysteriously on the ground. It is a *Death Note*, with the power that whoever's name is written on it will die. Light's original intention is to use the notebook to kill all criminals and create a world that is rid of them, but things start to become interesting when L, an eccentric genius cop, comes for his arrest and makes a dent in his plans that forces him to shift his schemes thus affecting his personality.

In light of this research, I, the researcher, intends to investigate this development and look closely at the personality and character of Light Yagami – the main protagonist who starts his journey as an innocent and smart student and through his journey he faces determined tests that are likened to the stages of a hero's journey which only a virtuous character can go through and complete. The completion of the journey rewards this character the title of hero, but Light's character in *Death Note* owns dubious confidence, morals, attitude, and manner to

execute justice that resemble villainous traits which contradict the traditional hero figure.

That is why this research aims to follow the character's struggles which encompasses his development from an ordinary person to a 'hero', using Vogler's (2007) model of the Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell (1950) and Carl Jung's archetypes of the persona and the shadow. Jung's psychological approach is a common lens in analyzing protagonists of stories. The paper includes an analysis of Light's thoughts, personality, ideals & principles, and struggles in the series' story. Through this study, I would like to share my insights on how an antihero develops in an anime, what kind of journey is gone through by this antihero, and how he portrays the persona and shadow archetype. It is my hope that this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of antiheroes.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Antiheroes have captivated audiences for decades in literature and cinema. Each one of them is said to be too good to be a villain and too evil to be a hero (Selvik, 2016). The antihero represents the grey area between these two extremes. The actions he or she makes may be highly questionable, but there is a possibility for their justification because of the reason or reasons behind them. Their attempt to balance their evil ways with good intentions is what capture our imagination. It is interesting how these antiheroes appeal to audiences despite their immorality and lawlessness. What seems to be the principal thought is that since an antihero looks more believable than a hero, it is easier to identify and relate with them. The antihero's flaws make him or her more realistic and genuine that the audience ultimately understands him or her. To make things clearer, even though the literary term, antihero, has its uncertainties, the basic description of it is of a flawed hero. The antihero, like the hero, yearns for justice, but is willing to do despicable and despicable acts to achieve it. There are no hard guidelines of what characterizations an antihero must acquire and have, leaving a big room for different understandings of the word. Moreover, just like other characters, antiheroes across tales differ from each other. Crusie, Castro, & Borsellino (2011) preach that most antiheroes have monsters lurking inside them, but what they find riveting is that "each of these characters succeed by embracing their inner monster, harnessing it in order to effect justice" (p.6).

Justice is a term Crusie et al. use when they argue for the misdeeds and evil efforts of these antiheroes saying that:

Although we are not so naïve as to believe that justice is always the primary aim of the

antihero, justice or some form of it often occupies a top spot on the list. This makes the antihero the best type of character to cheer for: a flawed, complex hero we can relate to, one who occasionally loses his or her war but never fails to do what needs to be done. No matter how brutal the task, antiheroes save the day in a manner that is not only entertaining, but often downright badass" (Crusie et al., 2011, p. 7).

Crusie et al. continues that the wrongful doings done by antiheroes are justifiable, because their aim with this rebellious and sometimes sinful behavior is to achieve justice in some form. What is complicated and controversial with these characters, but is also the reason why they are antiheroes, is the truth that this justice is often "a style of justice that is slightly outside of the law, wrought by sometimes questionable means. It is a justice that does not hesitate to step into the grey area between good and evil" (Crusie et al., 2011, p. 6).

Antiheroes almost always get away with their criminal conduct because their purpose often justifies it. They are all flawed heroes that go against the norms of conventional society, the unwritten rules of how human beings should behave. That is why they are such polarizing figures. People can usually sympathize with the antihero's cause, yet at the same time abhor their way of accomplishing their goal. Thusly, the antihero can be viewed as a hero from a different frame of reference. Because of this viewpoint, the antihero is an interesting kind of character to be analyzed under Campbell's monomythic lens. He or she is a representation of both good and evil and for that reason does not belong in any atypical classification of characters. It is intriguing to see how such a literary figure fits in an archetypal narrative structure such as the Hero's Journey.

This study aims to look closer at the complex character of Light Yagami, the antihero of the *Death Note* (2006-2007) anime series, investigating what his embodiment of an antihero is, as well as the manner and ways he develops himself in the story through his quest. Light's primary purpose for the *Death Note* is to recreate the world where it is free from crime and evil. This soon warps Light into a ruthless godlike figure he calls Kira. As Kira, Light is an idealist and an extremist who is willing to go to extreme measures in order to defend his idea of justice even if this means killing people by the thousands. This type of action, in turn, mistake audiences in considering antiheroes as antagonists in the plot they are in.

To be able to examine a personality of characters such as antiheroes, a psychoanalytic method from Carl Gustav

Jung with his persona and shadow archetypes can be used. This study refers to the definition of the persona according to Fawkes (2015),

Jung described the public face of the individual as the Persona, drawing on the Greek masks of ancient drama. Persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, a kind of mask designed to ‘impress and conceal’ and to meet societal demands (p.678).

The persona archetype gives a clear line of a character’s personality which is more likely to be concealed in order to fulfill the requirement of being part of society. People seek acceptance from the world and in order to get it, the bad side is hidden behind this archetypal mask. The hidden bad side is what is known as the shadow archetype. This archetype is defined as the dark side of someone’s personality. It consists of shameful behaviors and unacceptable aspects of the ego, (Levin, 1999). The shadow may appear in physical shape or not. However, one thing about them is certain that they are representations of real characters and represent their dreams, aspirations, visions, and expectations. That is why they resort to villainous acts and even go too far to killing. Also, they keep themselves in hiding until such a time comes or when they find themselves exposed.

Such is the case for Light as the protagonist in *Death Note*. He represents a complicated personality and push viewers to debate whether he is a good or a bad character. Hence, this paper acquires Jung’s concept to analyze the main character’s persona and shadow as a part of him in the series and even though he is the main character, his actions does not perform a conventional heroic action. Instead, he performs deeds of an antihero.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The portrayal of antiheroes in literary works must not be misinterpreted as their immanence is meant to pass on a message intended by the author. Furthermore, characterizations of antiheroic protagonists are not the definite and only description and depiction of the characters (Maryani, 2017) since they may have other characterizations that do not classify as antiheroic. To further discuss this will be out of the context of an antihero study.

I am interested in this research because antihero characters are often related to nothing but villains. Antiheroes are more than likely to have moral ambiguity attributable to possessing characterizations contradictory to that of a hero. As Kadiroğlu (2012) expresses, they do

not have high moral standards. Far from the traditional hero character, he can be indecent too. Still, there should be a good side in an antihero that credits his main role in a story. Through him or her, the author implicitly imparts his or her message and moral lessons.

In this paper, *Death Note*, the anime series, was chosen as the object of study because the series deals with a lead character who does not have heroic traits like most traditional heroes do. In addition, the antihero analyzed in this paper is a character who starts with a strong sense of justice befitting a hero but later on resists the social norms of what justice is and at the same time fights against the old system through a kind of “rebellion” (Jing, 2020, p. 75). Abrams (1999) describes this as the antihero being widely different from a conventional protagonist, but these characters do not usually start this way. They begin their journey as what seems to be a budding hero, but warps themselves into a different type of redeemer. Rather than manifesting ideal heroism, the antihero soon displays qualities of a maverick who has fragile self-esteem, takes the law in his or her own hands, and is deeply flawed (Morrell, 2008). Thus, the research questions I aimed to answer in this study are:

1. What Hero Journey does Light Yagami undergo as an antihero in the anime series, *Death Note*?
2. What antihero characteristics are performed by him during the span of the series?

IV. SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS

In relation to the research questions, the character of Light Yagami in the 2006-2007 anime version of the *Death Note* series produced by Madhouse and directed by Tetsurō Araki is analyzed by drawing on the framework of Vogler’s (2007) twelve-stage Hero’s Journey. The analysis also focused on Light’s actions and character development in his hero journey.

V. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, whereupon description is used to present, analyze and interpret data. This research design is especially relevant to the study because it involves literary analysis in the form of words or textual data. This type of research uses descriptive and interpretation from the subject rather than numbers and quantification. Patton and Cochran (2007) states that qualitative methods point to understand particular social life aspects in which they result in words rather than numbers called for in data analysis. Additionally, Hammersely & Traianou (2012) claim that the data source from qualitative studies are usually in a

form of disorderly data such as excerpts or written texts. That is why the qualitative method is a suitable approach to conduct this analysis since the collected data is in a form of scenes and sections from an anime series.

The data is taken from *Death Note* (2006-2007), the anime. The animated series is an adaptation of the 2003 manga series *Death Note* written by Tsugumi Ohba and illustrated by Takeshi Obata. The anime series was directed by Tetsurō Araki and animated by Madhouse. In collecting the data, I, the writer focused on several aspects of the main character Light Yagami: his thoughts, personality, ideals & principles, and struggles in the anime story.

This paper carried several steps to analyze the data. First, the series had been watched a number of times. A close analysis was conducted on the anime's plot as well as the summary of each episode from a website to comprehend the content of the series. Second, data was gathered in the form of pictures from the anime and the dialogue within the acts or scenes. The collected data was adjusted to address the two main problems using a critical approach in order to get appropriate topics that will be discussed. Third, the data were classified based on Vogler's (2007) Hero's Journey.

The textual evidence found in *Death Note* was analyzed using Vogler's framework of the heroic quest and the psychological approach of Jung in examining literary characters. Specifically, the data analysis is divided into two parts - the hero's journey analysis and the anti-hero analysis respectively. The hero's journey analysis focused on the main protagonist's development in the story. This journey determined what type of protagonist he became whilst the antihero examination centered on the main character's qualities and traits as an antihero. Both theories were combined in order to find out what kind of journey was undergone by an antihero. As a result, the conclusion was taken as a fact that the main character is an antihero who undergoes a hero's journey in which his characteristics are exposed and revealed with Jung's archetypes of persona and shadow as the analytical lens.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Light's Heroic Journey as an Antihero

Light's hero's journey began when he found the Death Note on the street. This journey specifically centered on Light's progress from being an innocent high school student who hates criminals to a secret crusader who kills them or within Light's perspective is mastering the use of the Death Note and cleansing the world of criminals and evildoers. To reach this level, Light had to face his own

limitations and several other obstacles which are common ingredients to a standard narrative formula. As it is expressed by Vogler in *Excepts from Myth and The Movies*, Stuart Voytilla (2003), that the fundamental objective of hero is to separate from the Ordinary World and perform a sacrifice for the service of the journey at hand to answer the call, complete the crusade, and save the world where he started his journey. It basically comprises two essentials; to serve and sacrifice. However, who does an antihero serve? What does he or she sacrifice? Apart from the research questions, these are some other questions this paper answers.

6.1.1 Ordinary World

Most stories take the hero out of his or her mundane world and into a Special World, new and foreign. The Ordinary World is the birth of origin of a hero which becomes the background of his or her life. It is at later stages in the story, compared with the Special World, where the Hero ventures in for the quest. The importance of the Ordinary World is to see the hero's normal life at the start of the story before the adventure begins.

In the anime series, *Death Note*, The Ordinary World is a beginning scene that takes place at school. The school has a role as Light's mundane and boring context of his life. His identity as a student is stamped in this setting. At this stage, Vogler (2007) stated that it is important for viewers to relate with the protagonist as a form of connection and relatedness since the journey ahead will be through his eyes. The constitution of the Ordinary World that appear in the anime can be found in 4:13 mark of episode 1. Below is the snapshot of it.



After stepping out of school, Light has thoughts of how the world is becoming rotten. Then, he sees a black notebook falling from the sky. As he picks it up, he sees the name Death Note and reads the first rule inside: "The human whose name is written in this notebook shall die". Shrugging it off as a prank, he drops it back to the ground, only to go back and seize it moments later. Curiously, he tries it out on a criminal on the TV and waits for 40 seconds to see if he will die of a heart attack as the rules state. As he is about to turn off the television, it is reported

that the criminal has collapsed and died. Stunned, Light thinks it as a coincidence.

Entering a convenience store, he tries out the power of the Death Note again and writes down the name of the bike rider he sees trying to rape a girl and put in the cause of death, 'accident'. Witnessing the biker hit by a truck seconds later, Light believes the Death Note to be real. Moments later, he arrives home, another site of his normal life. Then after greeted by his mother, Light goes to his room and look at the pages of the notebook. He is at awe at the power in his possession. Suddenly, he is surprised by Ryuk, a god of death called *Shinigami*, by his bedside.

Ryuk introduces himself as the owner of the Death Note and explains the nature of his kind and the power of the notebook. Light reveals his thoughts of using the Death Note to rid the world of evil people, but he hesitates for a moment. This is a point that needs to be highlighted since, once again, the audience experiences the Hero's Journey through the protagonist's eyes. Thus, Light's commitment to his probable plan of eradicating wickedness on earth will make a big impact. The scene highlighted Light's initial doubt and reluctance in using the notebook. This sets the stage for a Call to Adventure.

6.1.2 Call to Adventure

In Vogler's Hero's Journey, the Call to Adventure is a moment where the main character's Ordinary World is thrown into disarray. This interference is often delivered by the Herald archetype which can take the form of a message, a sudden storm, a villain's arrival, an abduction, or even death (Vogler, 2007). In Light's case, the Call to Adventure happened in his room, which shows Light and Ryuk having a dialogue. While many might assume that the Shinigami was the Herald for Light, it was the Death Note itself that fulfilled that role. The power of the notebook provided an invitation for Light to realize his surfacing thoughts of cleansing Earth of its evil wrongdoers. After confirming its capability to cause death, Light has the choice of using it for his goals or not. Ryuk only allowed the present to take its course. How Light uses his Death Note is something he is interested to see and unfold. Take a look at the scene from the 20:46 mark of the first episode which is presented in the screenshot below. Here we see Light's new found purpose of being the god and savior of the new world he is going to attempt to create, a call he accepts for his new adventure.



Campbell (1950) explains that the phase of Departure in the journey begins at this stage. The hero's destiny forces him or her to move from his or her Ordinary World to an alien, Special World. Light's Departure phase comes when he declares that he will become the God of the new world he will create. The declaration officially announces Light's venture into a new sphere of existence thus beginning his leaving of his old, dull student and normal family life. By the end of the episode, Light having the power to kill anyone he sees as evil, believes he can create a new world in the absence of its iniquitous inhabitants.

6.1.3 Refusal of the Call

Following the Call of Adventure where the protagonist experienced the disruption toward his Ordinary World, this stage will reveal the main character being forthright about his rejection towards the journey. According to Vogler (2007) the rejection can be caused by numerous aspects; fears and insecurities that have surfaced from the disruption, misgivings to make change, and preference of the comfort offered by the Ordinary World over the uncertain quest in the Special World. In Light's case, there is no ignorance from Light's Call to Adventure since he willingly declares himself as the god of the new world he is going to create. The first episode showed viewers how Light began his transformation from a normal high school student into a mad mass murderer with a god complex or someone who believes himself to be a god. Even if he had a moment of doubt about his use of the Death Note's killing ability, he quickly recollected himself by coming to the logical conclusion that getting rid of bad people is righteous and justifiable. The present justice system punishes criminals and has them executed. What Light did, to him, was no different. He willingly accepts his new calling and dives straight into his newfound adventure of purging criminals from earth. Therefore, Light does not face the Refusal of the Call phase.

6.1.4 Meeting with the Mentor

The Meeting with the Mentor is the stage where the protagonist encounters a mentor who can give them advice, wisdom, or information. The encounter has the main character gain confidence, insights, advice, training,

or magical gifts to overcome the initial fears and face the threshold of the adventure and the journey ahead. The protagonist may not wish to rush blindly into the Special World, therefore, seeks the experience and wisdom of someone who has been there before. This mentor has gone through the journey and is able to provide the essential lessons and training needed to better face the adventure's Tests and Ordeals (Vogler, 2007). In *Death Note*, the mentor figure is reflected in Ryuk's character. Light and Ryuk's first meeting is foreshadowing the Shinigami's role as mentor which later will be depicted in the anime series. Below is the screen cap from 20:49 mark of episode 1.



The above scene introduces Ryuk into Light's journey. Based on the characters' earliest conversation with each other, it can be seen that the god of death is portrayed as somehow mysterious and ominous. Ryuk tells Light he dropped his Death Note on earth because he was bored and wanted to entertain himself. Though afterwards he continues to teach and explain the nature of the notebook as expected of that of a mentor, he elucidates he will take Light's life when his time comes. Despite the warning given, Ryuk performed his mentor role in the first episode and resumes his mentorship on occasion in succeeding episodes. After the protagonist gains several lessons for his journey, Light should use what he has learned for crossing the first threshold.

6.1.5 Crossing the First Threshold

The Crossing of the First Threshold is the phase where the main lead in the story is tested for his or her preparation to enter the Special World. Campbell (1950) mentions that the lead character may face the guardian who protects the Special World from those who wish to enter it. The character must pass or defeat the guardian in order to proceed to the Special World. After his continuing massacre of criminals, Light gets to be nicknamed 'Kira' by the public. The name is derived from the Japanese transliteration of 'killer'. The deaths of criminals increase and are noticed by the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO). Abruptly, a worldwide broadcast

from the Japanese office of the ICPO is televised on live screen. A man appears and introduces himself as Lind L. Taylor, head of the probing team behind Kira, and also known simply as 'L'. L abominates the deaths of the criminals and calls Kira an actor of evil. The callout is the First Threshold that Light must overcome. Below is the screenshot of the scene 16:21 mark of the 2nd episode.



Light cracks up and proclaims that anyone who opposes him are just as deserving of death as any criminal. He then scribbles his name into the Death Note. Shortly afterwards, Lind L. Taylor suffers a heart attack and dies on live broadcast. Light celebrates his victory over L only to have it short-lived. The actual L interrupts the telecast and confesses the late Lind L. Taylor was actually a criminal who had been arrested in secret and was on death row. His death only confirmed that Kira can kill remotely. L further announces that the broadcast was not really televised worldwide but was actually confined to the Kanto region of Japan, thus confirming the fact that Kira is in the area. With these clues, L is convinced and certain that he will eventually take Kira into custody. Though he was not able to defeat the threshold guardian, Light was still able to get pass it. He is not captured yet. The Crossing not require the vanquish of the guardian by the protagonist. It is the process that is necessary to reestablish the protagonist's commitment to their journey, just like Light accepting L's challenge despite being outwitted by him. The anime at this stage has turned out to become a game of cat and mouse where the winner is whoever can deduce the other's identity, and the loser dies.

6.1.6 Tests, Allies, and Enemies

Having crossed the Threshold, the main protagonist, according to Vogler (2007), moves on to the next stage where he or she faces Tests, encounters Allies, confronts Enemies, and learns the rules of the Special World. The character needs to know who can be trusted. Allies are earned, a sidekick may join up, or an entire team forged. Enemies are encountered. A rival to the protagonist goal may also reveal himself. In *Death Note*, a rival indeed revealed himself. L established himself as Light's rival when he tricks and challenges Kira. After Light's initial

frustration when L outfoxed him, he becomes intrigued with playing against L. This is evident in the scene below during the 20:50 mark of the second episode when Light says, “He’s going to sentence me to death? Sounds interesting. I accept your challenge, L.”



As the series progresses, we come to know more of the rules of Light’s Special World, specifically on how the Death Note works. During one evening in the third episode, Ryuk notices someone following Light home. The god of death alerts Light and tells him that he can give him the eyesight of a Shinigami which can see people’s names and their lifespans in exchange for half his remaining life. Light refuses the deal, saying he wants to live a long life. Instead, he generates an idea by remembering a rule on the Death Note that allows him to manipulate people’s actions before their deaths. He then tests it out and soon finds out that it works. These actions, however, should be within the victim’s capabilities.

In the guise of taking a female classmate on a date, Light uses a Death Note-manipulated ruffian to hijack a bus he and his stalker are on. Light engineers the situation to get the man to hand over his identification card (ID). The man is a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent named Raye Penber and Light plans to kill him soon. Getting rid of this agent is the first real test for Light at this stage. The tests or what Campbell (1950) calls ‘trials’ is the road the main character takes to find out and realize his or her potential. At night as Penber enters a subway train, Light confronts him without showing his face and gets him to write down the names of all twelve FBI agents who are investigating the Kira case under L’s supervision. Penber walks away from the train, then suddenly collapses from a heart attack. Light’s first test is complete.

At the Yagami household in the 6th episode of *Death Note*, Light’s mother packs spare clothes for chief of police, Soichiro Yagami, Light’s father. Light volunteers to bring them to the police station. At the front desk he encounters Raye Penber’s fiancée and hears that she has information relating to the Kira case. Discussing the case with her, she reveals her relation to Penber and her

suspicion that Kira can use methods other than heart attacks to kill people. She also relates that Penber told her that he had shown his ID to someone on the bus. Light muses on his chance encounter with her before she had the fortune to meet with the police. How to deal with her is Light’s second test in his journey.

Upon learning that Penber’s fiancée worked with L in the past, Light seizes the chance to tell her that he is part of the Kira investigation and it would be great help if she joined as well. Deceitfully, he tells her that he would need to see some ID to confirm her identity. She gives him her driver’s license, and Light writes ‘Naomi Misora’ on the Death Note. Naomi then goes amiss and kills herself. Her death marks the completion of the second test for Light. When he gets home, he notices his three separate rigs gone in his door. This leads him to believe there may be cameras or wiretaps in the house. He tells Ryuk that if he wants to eat apples in his room without being seen, he has to locate all the cameras which he does. The intrusion in his home is Light’s third test in the journey. To solve this, Light hides a mini-TV and a piece of Death Note taped inside a bag of chips. He uses this to kill two criminals while appearing to be studying at his desk. This clears Light of suspicion to the police, but L is not convinced. Despite this, L has the surveillance removed from the Yagami home, thus culminates the end of the third test for Light.

In the 9th episode, L decides to be bolder in his approach to apprehend Kira. As he believes Light to be him, L approaches Light at school and introduces himself to him. Light is shaken, but manages to cloak any signs of unease. He realizes that he cannot presently harm L, as it would put him under suspicion again. Light gets home and rages in his room about L having caught him off guard, but laughs it off and decides to accept the new challenge L represents. The challenge is the fourth test for Light which is a more colossal trial compared to the previous others he had managed to resolve. Light addresses this test by asking L to be placed in a prison cell without television for a month to prove his innocence. Concurrently, Sakura TV, a television station, has been sent audio tapes from an anonymous individual who claims to be Kira. The Kira impersonator has Sakura TV hostage, and started killing off the newscasters. In response to this, L has Light use his superb analytical skills and listen to the recordings confiscated by the team to make out any clues in the reader’s voice. The charlatan demands to meet with the first Kira in person which Light accepts.

Light intends to find out who the other Kira is, who is believed to possess Shinigami eyes, in the 13th episode. In order to keep his identity unknown to the death god following the impostor, he gets a group of his friends to

surround him while he walks. Regardless, the second Kira, whose name is revealed as Misa, finds Light and finds out that he is the real Kira. She, then, publicly announces that she has found Kira, right after Light and Matsuda, a young member of the Japan National Task Force, looked for her in Aoyama. This makes it pretty conspicuous to L that Light is the primary suspect. Plus, the new audio tapes that appear in the 14th episode which deliberately discredit the police's effort to make the first Kira appear as an outcast make L believe that the two Kiras might have met and are working towards the original's goal.

Afterwards in the fifteenth episode, Light receives the news from L that Misa has been taken into custody on the basis of being the second Kira. The arrest of Misa becomes another test for Light which becomes the fifth one for him. L orders Watari, his handler and the Japanese police's logistics provider, to torture Misa to obtain information, but Misa relinquishes ownership of her Death Note, thus erasing her memories of its existence. This diminishes all possibilities of getting any details from her. This, however, does not completely solve the 5th test. Thus, Light concocts a plan for an absolute solution to resolve it.

To that end, Light also relinquishes ownership of his Death Note. As he does, Light suddenly has no memory of what he is and has been doing and yells at L that he is not Kira. This shakes L and has him stage an act wherein Light's father tries to kill Light and then himself out of shame. Looking at Light and Misa's reactions to it, L cuts the stunt and declares that he no longer doubts them of being Kira. This is Light's plan of working out this trial and it turns out perfectly, yet it does not end here.

Somewhere else, Misa's Shinigami, Rem speaks to a strange businessman about the Death Note. Eight businessmen then plan the next murder Kira will commit in order for their company, the Yotsuba Group, to top the market. In the 18th episode, L and his team discovers that Kira's recent killings appear to be related to the Yotsuba company. At Yotsuba, the eight members consult each other and send a message to the NPA that Kira will spare top officials if the police stop pursuing him. The law enforcement agrees, and the Kira Task Force must quit their jobs to continue working with L.

Episode 20 shows the Yotsuba conference room being bugged and the meeting there being listened to by the Kira Task Force. The Yotsuba group are planning their next killings, providing more than enough evidence to arrest them all, but a disagreement is born between L, who wants to keep investigating until Kira's identity is revealed and the rest of the Task Force, who want to arrest Yotsuba there to stop the killings. Light suggests a compromise. He calls one of the Yotsuba as L then tells him they are being

investigated, and promises he won't be arrested if he can postpone the killings for a month. The guy agrees and convinces the rest of Yotsuba to do so.

In the twenty-second episode, the Task Force finds out Yotsuba's Kyosuke Higuchi is the third Kira. With the help of the police, they successfully take Higuchi into custody. L questions Higuchi about how he kills, and Higuchi tells L about the Death Note. As Soichiro, Light's dad, touches the note, he yells out in fear; he can now see Rem. L curiously touches the Death Note too and gets shock at what he sees as seen below at the scene from the 4:30 mark of episode 24.



Light picks it up and screams. With it, all of his memories as Kira come rushing back to him, and he remembers his entire plan from the 5th test of this stage in his Hero Journey. He used both Death Notes to make a fake Kira, acquit Misa of being the second Kira, and clear himself on top of it. Light's sudden calmness raises L's suspicions of him, but soon evaporates when Higuchi dies at the scene which is also orchestrated by Light from the fifth trial. Light's plan goes into full effect when he asks Misa to recover the first Death Note. Once she is in possession of Ryuk's note, she asks Ryuk for another set of shinigami eyes so she can see L's true identity (*see the scene below at the 18:54 mark of the 24th episode*). This sequence in the series marks the end of this stage of Tests, Allies, and Enemies where Light learns who he can count on in his extreme mission getting rid of all criminals from the world, those who can impede his plan, and the full extent and power of the Death Note.



6.1.7 Approach

Also known as the Approach to the Innermost Cave, Vogler (2007) considers this as the stage in the journey where the hero makes necessary preparations for the ultimate conflict or his or her own ordeal in the Special World. The Approach stage in *Death Note* begins in the 24th episode of the series when Light's ingenious plan manifests completely which was thought of and put together in the 15th episode. Though many may consider the person, L, to be the main ordeal, it is his shrewdness and keen intelligence that appears to be the biggest obstacle for Light which will be discussed in the next section. The person, L, at this stage is a path for Light to pass through and the Cave and into the following stage.

In the course of the twenty-fifth episode, Light meets L. When the two rejoin the Kira Task Force, L confesses his plans to arrest Misa to do more experiments on the Death Note's abilities. Just after he reveals his plan, Watari dies and tries to warn L. But the warning comes too late: Rem, in her last act to protect Misa, kills L to save her. L dies in Light's arms as Light smirks in the 18:30 mark of the 25th episode, as seen below, knowing L cannot do anything about it.



Light finds Rem's ashes and snatches away her Death Note before anyone else can find it. Rem's sacrifice returns the amount of life given to Misa which she lost as a result of making the deal with Ryuk. This clears both Light and Misa of any involvement in the killings now faulted on Higuchi. The death of L and the sacrifice of Rem sets up the stage for Light's confrontation with his journey's central ordeal.

6.1.8 The Ordeal

Vogler (2007) cites The Ordeal as the stage where the hero faces his greatest fear, confronts this most difficult challenge, and experiences death. His journey lurches on the brink of failure and may very much fall into it. Light's Ordeal stage is represented by two potential would-have-been successors of L, Mello and Near. Both of them inherited the wits, cunningness, and mission of L to capture Kira. However, Mello refuses to work together

with Near, whom he sees as a competitor to succeed L, and decides to leave Wammy's House, an American orphanage where they were both raised, for good. Over the next five years, Near assembles an American investigative team called the Special Provision for Kira (SPK).

In Japan, Light, his family, and the Task Force are having tea at the Yagami household when they are alerted that the head of the police has been kidnapped. The kidnappers are demanding the Death note as ransom. Light is daunted that the kidnappers know about the Death Note. Mello is the culprit behind the kidnapping, having joined the mafia in the America. He also figures out that the Death Note is connected to the Japanese police. Trying to prevent the loss of a Death Note to an enemy, Light kills the police head, but Mello then has Sayu, Light's sister, kidnapped instead.

Informed that Sayu has been taken to the USA, Light contacts the American government as L. The SPK are ones who receive the call. Near introduces himself and lets Light know that they are aware of L's death. Light forebodes this as his biggest challenge yet. Light is starting to panic and considers killing Sayu, but concludes that he could not blame her death on Kira. Mello demands a test of the Death Note, using it to kill a mafia member. He then takes the Death Note and frees Sayu. Light contacts Near, and orders him to track the kidnapper as he escapes via helicopter. Near is annoyed, but tries to do so, yet he fails in the attempt. Both Light and Near fail to stop Mello from getting the notebook.

Light this time takes matter to his own hands. He tells Kiyomi Takada and Teru Mikami, who are both Kira worshippers, that he is Kira and asks them to help him in his crusade of justice. In episode 35, Near requests a meeting with Light and the Task Force. Light agrees, planning to kill Near when the time comes. The next day, however, Mello and his companion Matt kidnap Kiyomi Takada. Matt is shot down by Takada's bodyguards while Mello takes Takada away in a truck. Takada uses a tucked away piece of Death Note to kill Mello, then calls Light for help, but Light uses a Death Note piece in his watch to kill Takada by suicide.

With only Near and his SPK as the remaining threats to Kira's power, Light confidently arranges for their assassination during their meeting day by using Mikami, who has acquired Shinigami eyes and the Death Note, as the executor. However, the plan backfires when Near anticipates this. He notes of Mello and L's efforts as a huge contribution to his apparent win against Light. The incident reveals Light as the true Kira. Light tries to use the hidden Death Note page in his watch but is shot by his police colleague, Matsuda. Mikami jams a pen into his

heart to commit suicide after seeing Light gunned down. Light attempts an escape but collapses on a staircase in a nearby abandoned warehouse. As he was running to the warehouse, he imagined his younger self before he found the notebook and how his life could have gone differently. Light makes one final plea for his allies to save him, but soon realizes he is alone since he had killed all of them.

Ryuk returns to make good on a promise from the beginning of the series when Light is at the end of his journey, writing his name in the Death Note (*see the scene below at the 19:47 mark of the 37th episode*)



Because of Light's failure of defeating Near, he, as the hero of his journey, is not able to pass the Ordeal stage. Even in his death, Light is not resurrected unlike in other traditional hero stories. That is why Light, does not complete the Hero's journey. As an antihero, Light stayed true to his ideals and campaign of ridding the criminal element in the world at the start of his journey until he was confronted by L, Mello, and Near and started off killing his allies and manipulate his family, friends, and acquaintances. This veers him off from being a heroic antihero to a more villainous one. Sympathy for him may have come back when he was dying on the stairs and sobbed hard whilst accepting his fate in the story.

6.2 Antihero Characteristics of Light

6.2.1 Light's Persona

Setiawan, Sastrawan, Khumaedi, & Hernisawati (2022) theoretically say that the persona shapes someone to embody an image which is not the authentic personality of the person but only seeable by the society's eyes. The sole intention of the persona is to create an impression accepted by others; they also mention that this is a very fundamental equipment to survive in the social life (Setiawan et al., 2022; Fawkes, 2015). This theory can be pertained to the condition where Light is performing a rather dissimilar attitude when he deals with family, peers, and acquaintances.

From Light's very first moments in the anime, he displays fragments of his real self as he is seen as being disinterested in the events going on around him. He does

not appear to be listening to his teacher in class nor does join in on any of the conversation going around the classroom even though Light is very popular in school. He just sits at his desk with a bored look, in a world of his own. However, when he is approached by other people, he puts up a façade. He outwardly shows himself to be a perfect, straight-A student to his classmates and persons at school. Also, he presents himself as a polite child and a good brother and son to his sister and parents respectively. The same can be said when Light interacts with his allies like Misa and Takada as he projects himself as a considerate and caring man to both of them, yet his other side surfaces when he is alone or with Ryuk like when he says the lines "This world is rotten."- a line he shares with the Shinigami (*see the scene from the 3:39 mark of episode 1*).



The part when the Light adjusts his way of treating friends and family can be classified as the motive to his distinct pertinence. This scheme of behavior is well supported by Ann Hopwood in her article which says, "This is a part of the personality which comes into existence 'for reasons of adaptation or personal convenience'". Then related to the persona as the adjustment of the person with the surrounding in order to get what they desire like when Light manipulates Misa and Takada, a quotation cited from Victor Daniels' paper can be referred to. It says, "It represents conscious ego with its many variations. It is the person's adaptation to the world; the manner he or she assumes in dealing with it. Must not be mistaken for whole person," (n.d., p.5). So not only being kind and caring toward the people he considers are on his side, Light camouflages his other personality behind the persona. That true personality only emerges when he is being pressured or defeated. One of the most notable examples is in episode 9 when L reveals who he is to Light, wrecking Light's chance to remotely kill him. Light walks home without saying a single word and the camera fails to show his expression. Only when he gets into his room does he vent his rage.

Light performs his persona in dealing with the other characters in the anime apart from the gods of death, Ryuk

and Rem. In spite of this, the truth reveals as Near outsmarts Light and Light accidentally discards his mask by prematurely declaring victory at the end of last episode which ultimately exposes him as Kira. So, his true being appears and Light is seen as someone different from what he projects to others. The persona he has built breaks and his other side, his shadow self, has been laid bare.

6.2.2 Light's Shadow

When the shadow is talked about, it is usually regarded as a personality drive that consists of all obscure traits of people. According to Sabater (2023), if we identify our shadow, it comprises the dim features of our character. Barnhart (2023) supports this argument as she pertains the shadow as the repressed urges and emotions that are expressed outwardly in the conscious being as the very disliked aspects of a person. When one looks inward and glances at emotions or behaviors that are disapproved by society, he or she may choose not to recognize them as a natural part himself or herself. Violent tendencies and the quest for unbridled might are examples of the type of behavior a person may choose not to acknowledge.

As the shadow carries the traits of cruelty and thirst for power, Light has accomplished several things related to disesteemed unheroic acts. While he initially believes he is pursuing justice, his definition of justice becomes increasingly distorted as he takes on the role of a vigilante. His self-centeredness and egoism become evident as he embraces the power of the Death Note, delighting in the recognition and control he gains over life and death. The seduction of power and the desire for control over others consume Light little by little, impacting his mental state and blurring the lines between right and wrong. These catch Light unaware that his shadow, which he hides meticulously from the world, slowly takes over him and becomes Kira. Eventually, he is consumed by it.

Light progressively assumes his shadow identity and moves away from the justice that he claims to seek. The turning point of this is on the fifth episode when he kills a non-criminal, Rey Penber, an innocent former FBI agent, who has been investigating him. This action is an unacceptable aspect of ego where taking someone's life is the matter. If he is following the normal ego, he just needs to and warn him of the dangers of pursuing the case of investigating him without harming anyone. So, he is just being selfish and kills someone innocent for his cause.

From this point on Light's actions speak far louder than his cry for justice or purging evil from the world. He murders innocent people as well as criminals, and gives no thought to killing off his closest allies when it suits him. He is juxtaposed by justice and lawlessness as he murders killers, but when he starts killing innocent people to get

what he wants, he becomes a killer and criminal himself. The Kira that he represents becomes the shadow that envelopes his persona and person.

VII. CONCLUSION

Death Note, the anime series, revolves around the journey of Light Yagami as who was initially motivated by a vision of eliminating criminals and creating a perfect world, Light embraces his antihero self and his emerging new identity as Kira and takes on a self-appointed quest of justice. As he eradicates criminals, his initial intentions become overshadowed by a hunger for power and control. While possessing the qualities of an anti-hero, this paper shows that he can be seen as a hero as well, as he also undergoes stages of Vogler's (2007) hero's journey. Sadly, he is not able to complete all the stages of the journey as he gets caught and defeated by Near and dies in the Ordeal stage of the monomyth.

This paper also reveals several important points regarding the characterization of Light as an anti-hero. He is an antihero who possesses a persona of many positive traits. His mask portrays a hardworking, talented, and a natural brilliant person. He is also characterized as a highly perceptive planner and excellent problem solver that has a knack for mapping out scenarios. These traits, however, laid the foundations for an extreme level of pomposity which quickly took effect once Light claimed the Death Note as his own. His intensely strong sense of justice briskly warped as he gets corrupted by the notebook's power and consumed by his shadow.

The persona and the shadow of Light portray the concept of antihero where he rejects the traits of a traditionally virtuous and righteous hero. The persona of Light denies the traditional hero as a conceited and selfish person while he also underlines the traits of a villain through his shadow related to deceiving, manipulating, and killing. Albeit his evil deed, the concept of antihero reveals the trait where no matter how bad he may be, viewers may be sympathetic toward Light because though he is ruthless in achieving his goals, he still cares for his family as evidenced by his attempt to save his kidnapped sister. Also, his ideal ambition of creating a sin-free world tends to resonate with viewers' wish for a safe and uncruel earth.

Light's antihero story teaches audiences that it is hard to pretend to be someone else. His persona is done in order to meet the societal demand where he has been taking the mask of a young hardworking genius and caring son so he can adapt from the judgment of the society and hide his shadow self. These findings reveal Light as using his persona and shadow to show that an antihero is defying the traditional hero virtues and inviting sympathy from

audiences even though his darker side dominates his self.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS

The combination of anime and a compelling story is particularly interesting when it is embodied in genres such as the hero's journey and antihero narratives. The medium of animation is particularly well-suited to illustrate the developmental and self-identification processes that mark antiheroes. The Hero's Journey, concerned with the particular challenges attributed to development, is portrayed by Death Note in a metaphorical and exciting way. The application of the archetypal journey or monomyth by the anime together with psychological concepts like the persona and shadow proves just how valuable and appropriate they are for depicting the liminal transformations of characters and people. The medium is full of potential to illustrate these splendid storylines magnificently.

Because it is free of the constraints that are part of a group that film and television belong to, anime can construct narratives of character and personality development and transformation in an enlightening and exhilarating fashion. Madhouse's anime adaptation of Death Note is a great example of the medium's potency and fantastic tendencies. The anime series maximizes the fantastic potential afforded by the medium of anime in particular by exploring its protagonist's journey and personification of an antihero in ways that are imaginative and impressive.

The series convey the challenges inherent in development and transformation by focusing on the quest and psychology of the main character. Focusing in on the process of the character ultimately confirms that while the journey can be specific, it is a tale necessary to tell and appealing to experience. Analyzing these films within the constructs of their narrative structures reveals their more universal applicability and appeal that can be used in literary analysis and spaces that talks about psychology, development, narratives and stories such as classrooms and schools.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Anime, especially those that originate in Japan, is a home to many rich hero and non-hero narratives and most of them, if not all, are fresh tales that have yet to be examined and studied. Future researchers are recommended to study them from a narratological and literary perspective. Much can be explored from the Japanese anime and many can benefit much from their academic study.

In the end, I, the researcher, recommend the Japanese anime, *Death Note*, as a significant material for those who are interested in an anti-hero and his or her development. It is of great hope that the research can contribute to the literature on anti-hero studies.

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