Violence and Culture and Its Impact on Morality in *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond is Unbreakable*

by

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Introduction

Upon undertaking this momentous task, I went ahead and decided to be unorthodox with this senior project and have it centered on a personal passion of mine – *manga*. Setting out with this in mind, I wanted to make my project bring positive light to a medium that has, in the 2010s, been gaining a lot of traction outside of Japan. I wanted to focus on a series from a creative whom I have highly admired in recent years and dive deeper into his world, his characters and the stories he wants to show to readers. I hope that is what I have achieved in this project, bringing up questions that would aid me along the way.

In the beginning, I asked several questions. What is this saying about culture, community, tradition? Does it tell us anything about the values we deem good and how these institutions influence our decision making? Are there alternatives to traditional father and son relationships? Questions also arose concerning portrayals of violence, whether it was seductive, a part of its marketing appeal and what purpose its graphic nature served.

Firstly, I had to explain what exactly *manga* was, how you read it, some historical context so that when I went on to analyze chapters, the reader would have less difficulty understanding everything. I also provided information on my primary source, *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*, and that I was focusing on the fourth part of the series, *Diamond is Unbreakable*. From this point, I split the project into two. One part analyzes the father and son relationship of the antagonist and his father in terms of Japan's personal history with violence, culture and through the *Akedah* experience. The latter half takes an in-depth look at Yoshikage Kira, the main antagonist of the story. What makes him really intriguing to me is how every aspect of his design plays a part in his role in the narrative: a serial killer. Hirohiko Araki, who penned *Jojo's*, is widely renowned for his villains and Kira is no exception. I break him down into three main categories: fetishism,

sadism and his ideology behind his lifestyle. For this section, I heavily relied on material that covered serial killers in both fiction and the real world.

For the most part, plenty of my sources aided me in ironing out my project. I made sure to fully utilize those that I ended up using, but two in particular helped me out immensely. Harold Schechter's *The Serial Killer Files*, a historical dossier filled to the brim with not only profiles of the world's most prolific serial killers but plenty of information about the psyche and history that is serial killer culture. This source was extremely useful in my analysis of Kira, as sex is a big factor in his killings. The other source I used during the project was Hirohiko Araki's *Manga in Theory and Practice: The Craft of Creating Manga,* of which I use throughout the beginning pages. While not quoted often in the project, I read his book quite frequently to understand the process in which he creates his characters, which is surprisingly extensive. Outside of these two, the Mckissack source I used for analyzing the father and son relationship was an interesting inclusion, as it allowed me to really connect a history of violence in Japan with the violence that Kira had been causing his whole life.

Chapter One

What is Manga and How does it Work?

The art of manga (basically Japanese comic books) is a medium that has garnered respect and love in its home country of Japan, since its inception post-World War II. The age and thematic range it covers is immense, from the prolific "Shōnen" aimed towards adolescent boys that convey themes of friendship and working towards a life-long goal, and other genres, such as "Yaoi" (boy's love), that display homoerotic relationships between two male characters and its counterpart "Yuri" (girl's love) to name just a few. However, as manga becomes international, it has not reached the levels of success it had reached back home. In the West (in this case, the United States of America), it is a novel genre, budding through publishers like VIZ Media in making it accessible to English speakers. For many, this is their first experience with manga and confusion is bound to happen. These next couple of pages will attempt to breakdown how one reads manga, how a page with its panels conveys a structured narrative and how its serialization impacts the overall experience.

The primary text, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond is Unbreakable,* also referred to as *DIU* and Part 4 in the series, is obviously non-canonical. There are very few research projects that centralize this iconic series as the main source and the ones that do are largely concerned with brief synopses of themes and plots, or how western popular culture influences are present in almost every aspect of *JoJo's* and how that affects the narrative. However, a project concerned with its portrayal of violence and culture and its subsequent influence on morality is a topic that has yet to be covered. I believe this study to be valuable because of the fact that it brings into question topics that are being discussed currently, such as toxic masculinity, unchecked traumatic events that cultivate violence and how this affects culture in certain societies or on a

global scale. Studying Araki's work with this in mind, perhaps an exploration of these topics can bring an understanding of the perpetuation of violence in culture.

To truly understand the structure of manga, it is vital to acknowledge the visual and storytelling aspects that it combines. Creator of *JoJo's,* Hirohiko Araki, explains in his manga guidebook *Manga in Theory and Practice: The Craft of Creating Manga*, "what your readers will see is the artwork, but behind those drawings exist the interconnected elements of characters, story, setting and theme" (Araki 41). Since a manga is a comic, the presentation of its narrative, themes and characterizations are largely shown through visuals, which are contained in panels that make up the page. Alongside the visuals in the panel, there are also text boxes that give explanations to settings, story and more importantly, character monologues, dialogues and thoughts. But the biggest challenge is a simple barrier: how does one actually read the pages? Unlike most comics, *manga* is structured differently due to the nature of the written Japanese language. Traditional comics are read like most English works, starting from the left going to the right, top to bottom. Manga is read differently as I will explain below. While reading it either way does not have an effect on the reader's experience, if read incorrectly, the pacing of the narrative is lost and the reader could be left confused. For anyone outside of Japan, the order of panels and dialogue can become muddled and obscure the narrative. In order to clear up confusion, examining a page from *Diamond is Unbreakable* will aid in explaining how to read manga.

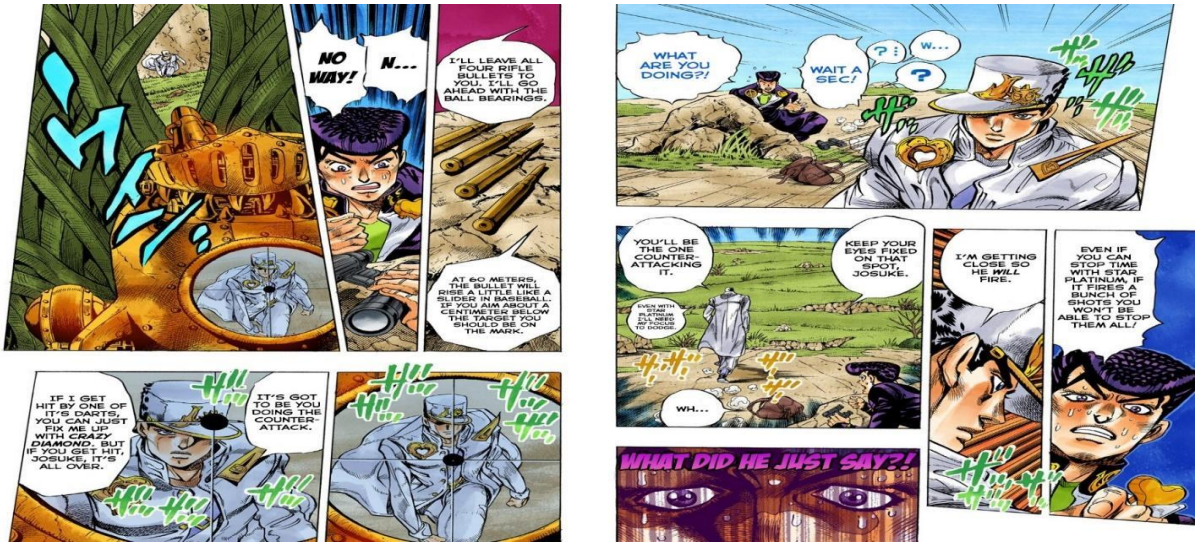

Figure 1: Jotaro and Josuke approach the sniper's nest of Bug-Eaten

The page presented in Figure 1 comes from Volume 7, Chapter 60 labeled "Let's Go Hunting! Part 5" on page 30. To understand how one must read manga and do it correctly, you must first understand the structure of Japan's written language. This written language is made up of three basic scripts – *kanji, hiragana, katakana* – and utilizes *tategaki,* the format of said scripts. The characters are aligned in columns starting from the top to the bottom, and columns going from right to left. You would start on the right page, at the top of the rightmost vertical column and read downwards. When one reaches the bottom of the column, you resume at the top of the column that is to the left and so on and so on.

While many manga have been translated to several languages, the panels and pages retain the structure of its original language. So, the direction you would read the text is applied to how the reader digests the narrative. Using Figure 1, going right to left and top to bottom, the page shows two characters, first the man sporting white, Jotaro Kujo and then the protagonist, Josuke Higashikata, kneeling behind a rock. Concerning dialogue, there are mainly speech bubbles on the page, with five of them present in this panel. Using the structure explained, the dialogue would unfold as, "W…", "…?", "?", "Wait a sec!" and "What are you doing?!" (*JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond is Unbreakable* 30). The speech bubbles have pointed ends that gesture

towards the character who is delivering them, in this example they point towards Josuke. With the basic understanding of its writing structure, the panel now makes sense. Applying this to all the panels, we see that the page paints a scene of Jotaro walking uphill, acting as a decoy and advising Josuke, who is nervous when he is tasked with eliminating the enemy. Not only does this maintain a coherent order of events, but it also displays one of the series longest running themes, the previous generation guiding the new generation. This theme does however apply to the antagonist and his father, where the relationship is not always characterized by guidance, but one that has its base in violence.

While understanding how to read manga is a necessary adjustment, the serialization of *Diamond is Unbreakable* is also key to understanding how the narrative is delivered. Serial, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is defined as "a work appearing (as in a magazine or on television) in parts at intervals." When the fourth part of *JoJo's* ran in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine, it had its original run from 1992 to 1995. There is a total of 174 chapters, which were delivered weekly over the course of those years, and every two to three months, chapters are collected and published in volumes under an imprint. These chapters were called parts and make up the 29 story arcs that constitute Part Four. With this model of publication, these story arcs can be stretched out for weeks, being covered in as little as five chapters or even as long as 10 or more. At the beginning of each chapter, a cover page with the number of the chapter, the title of the story arc with the part number and an illustration of one or more characters is used as a marker. At the end of every chapter, the final panel on the final page contains an arrow pointing to the left labeled "To Be Continued," signaling the chapter's conclusion and the promise of a follow up chapter for next week. Constructing the narrative of *Jojo's* as an episodic series was an adaptation made on Araki's part due to the weekly schedule enforced by *Weekly Shōnen Jump* he

had to adhere to. However, like many *Shōnen* mangaka, Araki uses this to strengthen his storytelling, using the limitation in pages and time restraints to make a chapter or a story arc (a collection of chapters that make up a part of the narrative) display themes relevant to the part (i.e. themes of community and justice in *Diamond is Unbreakable*). These themes can be self-contained in the story arc, such as the "Yukako Yamagishi Dreams of Cinderella" arc, where themes of love are found, but it also serves a narrative purpose in introducing a character who is pivotal in a later story arc. There are multiple story arcs that are connected together by certain themes, which in turn add to the narrative as a whole. For example, the theme of justice is found throughout most battles throughout *DIU* in multiple story arcs, where a character goes up against an enemy sent from the antagonist and at the conclusion, it pushes the narrative to its next stage. In Part 4, the story arcs cover not only the activities of Josuke and Yoshikage but also of the other resident Stand users in Morioh. This allows for the fleshing out of certain characters, such as Koichi Hirose, who mature through confrontation and this character development is trackable throughout the whole part. Others receive just proper introductions, but Koichi and others are present in a large majority of chapters and so readers would grow more attached to them compared to other, less-developed characters.

The origin of serialization in Japan can be linked back to the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The time period was characterized by rapid industrialization and adoption of Western practices, technology and ideology. One of these things they adopted was the newspaper. As explained by Graham Law and Norimasa Morita in "Japan and the Internationalization of the Serial Fiction Market," that the Meiji Restoration saw, "The newspaper was itself one of the most potent symbols of industrialization and modernization, and thus Western-style journals soon began to be produced in Japan itself" (Law & Morita 5). These newspapers would soon start to cover

domestic events and first feature novels, both Western and domestic, that were then serialized, following the example of the United States, which had been serializing and publishing novels in magazines since the 19th century, featuring the likes of Henry James, HG Wells and many more. Many magazines in Japan would adopt this structure into an anthology that would be published either every week or month. One of these magazines was the famous *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. A jump like this was made possible because in these first newspapers and even in contemporary times, "a column permanently devoted to the *shimbun shôsetsu* (newspaper novel), a short numbered and illustrated installment from an original piece of fiction that runs an average of six months" (Law & Morita 1) was established. These newspaper novels share the same structure, but are more like novels and less like manga. However, manga received the same treatment in "the comic magazines (*mangabon*) after the Second [World War]" and are the predecessor to the current day manga magazines, showcasing manga such as *Astro Boy* and *Sazae-san.* The former is a science fiction story about an android and the latter is centered on the ordinary life of Sazae, delivered in the *yonkoma* format, which is similar to how comics at the end of newspapers were structured. The genres could be varied and were usually based in fiction, with their conclusions usually ending in a cliffhanger, as in the case of *Astro Boy*, or end on a comedic note (usually a punchline to a joke) in the case of *Sazae-san*. These factors differentiated these early manga series from the standard novels and narratives found in the *shimbun shôsetsu* columns of their era.

Having a narrative split into chapters, parts and distributed on a (at least for Part Four) weekly basis can have both positive and negative effects. The action of serializing the narrative can keep the reader interested for a longer period of time. Instead of having all the material available and consumed at the reader's leisure, the chapters for Part Four were released weekly

and were in a range of 10 to 15 pages. This makes for an easier read that can be completed relatively quickly, since manga is largely made of illustrations and dialogue boxes, as compared to large bodies of text in novels. Concerning the narrative, this can lead to suspenseful cliffhangers, a pacing of story elements that is coherent and displays the interconnection of each story arc and how it impacts the entirety of the story being told. However, serialization does come with its downfalls. From a storytelling perspective, the biggest downfall was that certain plot lines did not make sense when accounting for the narrative that had been built up to that point. For example, a chapter could end with a gripping cliffhanger, leaving readers in suspense until the following week. But the next chapter would introduce a story arc that seemed to have no correlation to the overall plot and would continue for how many parts it was comprised of, completely negating the effectiveness of the cliffhanger and creating frustration in dedicated followers while scaring away potential new readers. In the current world climate of mass media consumption, this trivial method may seem outdated and it would struggle to capture the attention it once did, especially to audiences outside of Japan. Additionally, since manga is still largely published through these anthologies (with some forays into the digital world recently, i.e. self-publishing through sites like Webtoons), the translations for more recent chapters and parts are lagging behind the source material. It has gotten to the point where fandoms of certain franchises have taken the initiative to scan, translate and even digitally color chapters that are yet to have a Western release. Such is the case with *JoJo's,* with Volume 1 of Part 4 being published by VIZ Media as recently as May 7, 2019. Figure 1 was obtained through a blog that translates and digitally colors every chapter of *JoJo's* and they get by on the donations of dedicated fans. While serialization can have unique effects on storytelling, it comes with major drawbacks that can stunt its overseas presence. This form of publication and story-telling is tailored to readers

who want quick, digestible reading: one that rewards them for following up with the *manga* every week for years because of the character development, themes and superb storytelling. In the case of *Jojo's,* much of the content is mature, filled with graphic violence and violent conflicts. The series is aimed towards a more mature and adult reader, as it is categorized under the genre called *seinen,* meaning "youth" in Japanese, and is commonly published in magazines targeting the young adult to adult demographic. While the rating systems (i.e. ESRB, MPAA) for entertainment media in the Americas are used as a way for parents to gauge whether the content in it is appropriate for their children, this does not carry over to *manga.* The genre of *seinen* has a broad umbrella, reaching to readers in the range of eighteen to even forty years old. Just as novels are adapted into films or movies, *DIU* was adapted into an animated show (*anime)* in 2016 where its presentation of gore and violence was heavily censored. This occurred because streaming services *Hulu* and *Crunchyroll* had rights to stream the series, reaching an audience outside of Japan who, before the decade, did not even know what *anime* was. Outside of this censorship, Part 4 was left uncensored in its original serialization and in the current publication by VIZ Media.

Chapter Two

The Father-Son Relationship of the Kira Men

Throughout the course of *Diamond is Unbreakable* (also referred to as Part 4), the main antagonist of the second half, Yoshikage Kira, is a difficult man to find. After he is nearly caught by Josuke, Jotaro, Okuyasu and Koichi in chapters 89 to 99, nearly escaping by assuming the identity of another man, the hunt for this seemingly normal man intensifies. In this act, Yoshikage mirrors actual serial killers, as Isabel Santaularia explains in her article from *Atlantis: Revista de la Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos*, "Invisible and almost omniscient, serial killers lead outwardly ordinary lives and look like ordinary individuals" (Santaularia 10). To the general public, these murderers are indistinguishable from everyone else. The idea of a deranged murderer posing as a kind next door neighbor creates a sense of paranoia and general distrust of strangers. The antagonist Yoshikage exhibits several traits of a serial killer; single male, smart, extremely hostile towards women, with psychiatric problems from an early age, "precocious and abiding interest" in grotesque and taboo sexuality, voyeurism and an obsession with fetishism (Schechter 22-23). The next story arc "Atom Heart Father" delves more into the backstory of Yoshikage and his upbringing. More importantly, we are introduced to his father Yoshihiro Kira, who aids Yoshikage in his murderous tendencies. This father-son relationship is strange, one that is rooted in shared violence in their own lives and is also a by-product of the national trauma felt by Japan after the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

This is the seventeenth sub story arc in *Diamond is Unbreakable*, so a lot has already happened. I will begin with introductions of the characters we encounter in these chapters. Josuke Higashikata is the main protagonist, who rocks his iconic pompadour hairstyle with his

purple school uniform. He is the uncle of Jotaro Kujo and son of Jotaro's grandfather, Joseph Joestar. Jotaro Kujo is the nephew of Josuke, who is distinguished from the rest by his white colored attire and the iconic white cap he is always wearing. There are also friends of Josuke who appear as supporting characters throughout *DIU.* One of them is Koichi Hirose, the shortest of the crew who dons blond hair spiked upward and Okiyasu Nijimura, distinguished by his black and gray hair whose school uniform is adorned with golden currency pins.

Outside of the crew, Yoshikage and Yoshihiro Kira are also present in these chapters. Yoshikage is a serial killer who targets primarily women and takes one of their hands as a surrogate girlfriend (i.e. Cheirophilia, or hand partialism, is the sexual fetish for hands). The grotesque act of severing hands is one that has precedent, dating back to the end of the 17th century in the Belgian Congo. According to *The Dawn Watch,* a biography of Joseph Conrad penned by Maya Jasanoff, the severing of hands originates from a Belgian folklore where a Roman soldier named Silvius Brabo severed the hand of a giant and tossed it into the sea, freeing the city of Antwerp. However, the Belgians' use of severing hands became far crueler when it was utilized in the Congo. As Jasanoff states, "Severed hands became a way for sentries to justify collection shortfalls…soldiers would kill natives merely to cut off their hands. Sometimes…they just cut off the hands of the living" (Jasanoff 210). The reasoning behind this was simple. "The Force Publique introduced a grotesque form of reckoning into its policing: soldiers had to provide severed hands from corpses to prove that bullets hadn't gone to waste" (184). This practice is unsettling and the fact that Yoshikage shares this similarity is an indicator of his violent nature, one that has historical precedent and its influence shown through actual serial killers, i.e. Edmund Kemper. Nicknamed the "Co-Ed Killer," he committed ten murders in his active years, targeting women of all ages, the first being his grandmother whom he killed at

the young age of 15. He would rape their corpses and keep body parts for his own perverse, sexual pleasure. Astonishingly, as accounted by Schechter, Kemper was an expert in "Concealing his seething inner life from his therapists, he assumed a mask of docility and newfound religious conviction and was paroled after only five years" (*The Serial Killer Files*, 24). The ability of serial killers to avoid detection and feign normalcy is taken into consideration by Araki in creating the antagonist of *DIU.* Taking a look at Yoshikage's appearance, he is commonly shown wearing business formal attire (with a strange skull pattern on his tie) and sporting blonde hair. His profession is also normal, earning a living by working at a department store as a salesman. The clash between appearance and Yoshikage's activity is one that draws influence from music. His character design is largely influenced by the late David Bowie, specifically his 1976-77 "The Thin White Duke" persona. Sporting thickly gelled blonde hair pushed back and wearing monochromatic clothing, Bowie described this persona as an "amoral zombie" with fascist leanings who was the product of his cocaine addiction. This disconnect is apparent in Yoshikage, a man who looks normal but his actions and thoughts are those of a demented individual. Lastly, we have Yoshihiro, father of Yoshikage. When this story arc occurs, Yoshikage is 33 and Yoshihiro is now a ghost who resides in Polaroid photos and haunts the Kira household.

Despite these connections to history and music, Araki also employs his own unique ideas in *DIU,* the most iconic being the power system of "Stands." Most of the characters are referred to as "Stand users" who have "Stands." A Stand, as defined by the creator Hirohiko Araki, as a visual manifestation of one's life energy and those who possess them are referred to as Stand users. Stands are visual representations of a person's mental/spiritual strengths and weaknesses. They are host to incredible abilities and take many forms, from humanoid appearances, everyday

objects and even hair. They are either inherited or obtained through being pierced by a "Stand arrow," an ancient arrow made from the ore of an unknown asteroid, which makes its first appearance in Part Four. Much of the violence and fights in Part 4 involve Stands, amongst their other non-combat related uses. Araki made the concept of Stands to provide a visual explanation for supernatural abilities. As he describes in his interview from the artbook *JoJo 6251*, "My doubt over supernatural powers helped me come up with Stands…Stands are proof of those superpowers, basically my way of explaining how these invisible powers work" (*JoJo 6251*). The primary function they serve in the narrative is to make sense of the outlandish abilities Araki comes up with. Also, in his process of creating characters, Araki explains "I'll often think of a character's Stand…before anything else…I'll start there, and see where that leads me" (*Manga in Theory and Practice: The Craft of Creating Manga* 64). In addition to their narrative role, Stands also affect how characters come to be. A prime example is that of Yoshikage Kira's Stand, Killer Queen. Each Stand has its own unique power or ability that is either centered on combat or utility. The ability, to make anything into a bomb that leaves no trace, fits perfectly for a criminal, a violent individual or at the very least someone who wants to evade apprehension by erasing all evidence. In this manner, Stands serve narrative purposes and have an effect on the characters, as they are built around the Stand's abilities.

Figure 2: Jotaro and Josuke explore Yoshikage's room

These chapters take the aforementioned crew to the household of Yoshikage Kira, where he was raised by his father, Yoshihiro. To understand the relationship between the two, it is essential to examine the information we are presented about his upbringing, first examining the home itself. The point of view shifts from an external view of the house to Josuke and the others investigating the house for the duration of this story arc, signaling the exit of the narration on the pages beforehand. This shift confines us to their view, learning about the Kiras from their perspective. This leads to the reader becoming more engaged, as they find themselves just as curious as the crew to find out who the antagonist is. During their investigation, they encounter Yoshikage Kira's room, as shown in Figure 2. The room contains much information on Yoshikage, but also continues to paint the image of Yoshihiro as a loving father. The first bits of evidence come from a set of trophies. One of the trophies holds a plaque that says, "High School Music Competition: Violin Performance: Third Place: Yoshikage Kira" and the other two are for other events, also being third place trophies (*DIU* Vol.11, Chapter 100, p.48). Furthermore, a desk holding several books is shown, with some of them titled, "Health and Food" and "Stretching" to name a few (48). These mundane items are evidence of the love Yoshihiro shows towards his son. To raise a child who performs well at school and betters himself through self-teaching seems to result from Yoshikage's upbringing. From a purely materialistic view, his room and belongings show that Yoshihiro provided for his son. What then led Yoshikage down towards the path of murdering? The catalyst for this change can be found in the climax of Part 4 where Yoshikage reveals, "Back when I was a kid…When I saw *Mona Lisa's* hands… I got a boner…I cut out just the hands and put them up in my room for a while" (*DIU* Vol. 18, Chapter 171, p. 38). The action of cutting the artwork's hands off and keeping them in his room is the earliest instance of cheirophilia but it seems Yoshihiro never chastised his son. The permission

of this behavior by the paternal figure most likely lead the young Yoshikage to indulging more and more into his fetish which came to a climax with the murders of a young girl and her family.

The most telling belonging in Yoshikage's room, however, is the family photo album. The album provides vital background information on Yoshikage's upbringing and life, also providing information on his parents. The significance lies in this being the first crucial information they have on the serial killer, where judgements are made by both the characters and the readers. The images show the Kira family and through Jotaro's commentary the reader is introduced to Yoshikage's backstory, which includes a quick biography on himself and his mother and father.

Figure 3: Jotaro and Josuke examine pictures of a younger Yoshikage and his parents and discuss his background

Here in Figure 3, we are shown the first appearance of Yoshihiro in a family photo with his wife and a younger Yoshikage. From a physical appearance, he is shown right next to his wife, sporting a green jacket thrown over a yellow sweater vest. He is on the older side, with Jotaro noting, "His parents were already old when he was born" (47), and in the panels where Yoshihiro is shown, he sports wrinkles on his forehead and under his eyes, showing the reader the age through his facial features. In the same panels, the reader discovers Yoshihiro died when

his son was 21, the cause of death being cancer (47) Jotaro informs us that “they were a close family” and “there’s nothing suspicious in his parent’s deaths” (47). From our first introduction, Yoshihiro is an ordinary individual who, for reasons not yet revealed, harbored a boy who was anything but.

The encounter with Yoshihiro Kira is where Araki characterizes him very quickly, utilizing dialogue, character actions and panels to introduce the deranged father. From just his actions, a lot can be inferred about his nature. One of the first reactions shows just how violent he truly is, as he launches an attack towards Josuke and Jotaro. Yoshihiro grows so furious that he launches the phone at Josuke, revealing his ability to act as a poltergeist, a ghost that has the ability to cause physical disturbances, i.e. throwing objects around (38). His being a dangerous spirit and this action shows that Yoshihiro is no stranger to using violence. Continuing the pattern of violence, he brandishes a knife (34) and attempts to cut off their heads (25-24). There is also an indirect attack by Yoshihiro that almost kills both Josuke and Jotaro. In order to stop his advances, Josuke rips the photo, which in turn begins to tear himself and Jotaro apart (33-32). This is due to Yoshihiro’s Stand, Atom Heart Father, which captures the souls of people who are trapped within a photo and they are prisoners within the frame of the photo. Yoshihiro launches this attack to trap the two so their investigation of Yoshikage will come to an end. This shows the extent of his perverted fatherhood, one where the safety and love of his child leads him to adopt a toxic masculinity that is comprised of violence. He is able to fall back on this masculinity because of his samurai roots, a foundation which I will delve into later, one that is defined through violence and protecting one’s kin.

While the ability of Yoshihiro itself is supernatural, Stands in Part 4 are unique to that person, thus being a reflection of the user. This ability fits the resolve of its user, who wants to

entrap any threats to Yoshikage and eliminate them. These actions carried out by Yoshihiro show him to be a violent individual, a maleficent spirit who will kill in order to protect his son at all costs.

Figure 4: Yoshihiro yells at Josuke through the home phone

Figure 5: Yoshihiro threatens Josuke and Jotaro through the phone

However, it is in Yoshihiro's dialogue that we are introduced to the father-son relationship and learn more about the Kira men. The first lines of dialogue from Yoshihiro are not from him directly, but through a house phone. He yells through the phone receiver, "Answer the damn phone, you buffoon!" (39), directed towards Josuke. This line alone, Yoshihiro calling Josuke a buffoon shows the irritation he has towards them investigating his household: that and the stopping of the sentence with an exclamation point, as can be seen in Figure 4. Additionally, the speech bubble is shaped irregularly, indicating that the speaker is yelling. This profile of Yoshikage's father persists as he speaks more throughout chapter 102, as he explains the reasoning behind his actions. As the crew starts to realize they are in the middle of a poltergeist, Yoshihiro explains himself through several lines of dialogue, "You thought my expression was telling you to leave?! Trust me…None of you will be leaving! Ever!!" (38). Immediately following this statement is the reaffirmation, "None of you will ever leave this mansion alive!" (37). These actions further cement the nature of this character. He is a violent, vengeful spirit

who will kill anyone, even Josuke who is a high schooler. Yoshihiro's continued reminder of not letting anyone leave the house shows his aggressive nature, but it is further heightened by the addition of the word "alive" and his willingness to murder. But the reason behind this thinking is simple, when Yoshihiro explains, "I'll kill anyone that tries to harm my son!," "I will protect my child!" and "I became a ghost so my spirit could always watch over him!" (37). Here, we are given information on why Yoshihiro is taking these actions and why he became a ghost. The need to protect his child, his only son Yoshikage, was so great that even after death, he became a ghost to protect him from anyone who would try to harm him. The fact that Yoshihiro uses the words, "kill" and "protect" to describe the actions he takes to keep his son safe is a complete reversal of what the reader is shown from the chapter before. All these violent actions are solely for the purpose of protecting Yoshikage, ones that he performed while he was still living and they persist in his ghost form. The connection of killing and protecting is present in the actions of both Kira men, where in order to protect Yoshikage's way of life, they must kill to preserve it. However, this turns into a vicious cycle, where the killing never stops. As tensions continue to rise, Yoshihiro wastes no time in continuing his attack, chanting "Kill…All…Of…You…" (36), which is seen in Figure 5 with the panel containing this speech bubble having a purple background with darker purple swirls near the edges. This, along with the speech bubble, gives Yoshihiro an ominous and evil nature about him. It seems that the tendency for violence runs in the Kira family, most likely as an adaptation to the forced emasculation of their samurai masculinity by their very own country. To reclaim the masculinity they lost, the duo commits and covers up the murders of countless women. For the Kiras, violence is normalized because of their samurai ancestry and for their yearning to reclaim the masculinity they have been denied

for years. I will discuss the issue of having one's masculinity stripped away and Japanese men wanting to reclaim it later.

Figure 6: A trapped Yoshihiro laments over the inability to protect his son

Even after the battle ends in his defeat, Figure 6 displays Yoshihiro as he continues to fret for the safety of his son, visibly shaking and sweating in the upper left panel, surrounded by darkness, thinking, "Now I won't be able to protect my son! Damnit!" If they find that then I'll never be able to protect him!" (18). These thoughts solidify Yoshihiro's motives and possibly hint at the loving relationship between the father and son, even with the added factor that the two seem to show this through acts of violence. Even after attempting to murder two people, threatening them with a knife and repeatedly screaming "kill," Yoshihiro seems to justify his violent actions by stating it is all in order to protect his son. This father and son relationship is muddled, with a loving father who only wants the best for his only child at the forefront, but it is tainted by the murders the two are involved with. This relationship is further strengthened when, through his perseverance, Yoshihiro is able to escape his house with the Stand-creating arrow in his possession. The leftmost panel near the bottom of page 12 shows him wielding the arrow with a face of fervor, exclaiming, "This arrow is the only thing that can make him happy!" (12). This level of selflessness shown seems to be a product of fatherly love. Additionally, the arrow in this case serves as the symbolic connection between the two Kiras. Traditionally an object that

was created for the purpose of tearing flesh, but in the narrative of *DIU*, it also endowed them with their Stands. It is very strange and odd, but through recurring forms of violence in their relationship, Yoshihiro and Yoshikage show love for each other through their violent acts. The father and son relationship between Yoshihiro and Yoshikage seem contradictory, but with added cultural context, one can see how these acts of violence actually unite these two men. Yoshihiro only wants his son safe and to live his life, but in order for that to happen he must use violence to reach his goal. It is the same for Yoshikage, who only wants to live a peaceful life in Morioh without being disturbed, but his constant urge to kill women contradicts the peaceful lifestyle he strives for. While two love and respect each other, this perverse love is only kept stable through violence, which is the opposite of their goal: peace. In their delusion to obtain the golden age of Japanese masculinity, i.e. the age of the samurai, they end up sacrificing their peace bit by bit until it all disappears with their deaths by the end of Part 4.

All in all, it seems that Yoshihiro is a figure who is defined by his masculinity that is rooted in fatherhood and his affinity for violence. The pair of fatherhood and violence is an unconventional one, but the Kiras have an ancestral precedent for this strange relationship. To truly understand the unsettling dynamic between him and his son, understanding Japan's history with masculinity and violence could shed some light on the situation. Fraser Mckissack's article titled "Samurai Masculinity, Japan's Self Defence Force and the Uncanny Space--Time of Sengoku Jieitai," compares the modern-day figure of Japanese masculinity, Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel and the golden age of manhood, the samurai through the film *Sengoku Jietai,* where SDF personnel time travel to the Sengoku period. Mckissack puts it best as he says, "The body, and in many ways the spirit of the samurai offers a lineage of masculine virtues that still influence constructions of Japanese masculinity, from the salaryman to personnel of the SDF"

(Mckissack, “Samurai Masculinity, Japan’s Self Defence Force and the Uncanny Space--Time of Sengoku Jieitai”). The fact that the virtues of samurai masculinity “still influence constructions of Japanese masculinity” can be linked back to both of the Kiras. The reader can presume that Yoshihiro is of samurai descent as the house the Kiras reside in is located in “a seaside resort district which has existed since the age of the samurai” (*DIU,* Vol.11, Chapter 100, p. 50). Additionally, Yoshikage reinforces this idea when he shares details of his ancestry “My ancestors were part of them. But around my grandfather’s era, we lost our status and fortune” (*DIU,* Vol.8, Chapter 69, p. 78) Yoshikage, on the other hand, is a modern man who works an office job and is largely shown dressed in business formal attire, the definition of a salaryman. It seems that through this traditional form of masculinity, a violent one at that, Yoshihiro connects to his son, a prime example of modern Japanese masculinity, just as the SDF feel connected to the samurai. As is discussed in the article, the SDF hold more pacifist values when compared to the samurai, mainly because of the repercussions of Article 9, which entails Japan’s forced demilitarization after World War II. However, in the events of the film, this does not stop the SDF personnel from engaging in the violence as the author states, “Iba and his soldiers take the opportunity to unite with their samurai predecessors so as to enact the warrior masculinity that had been denied to them in the Showa Era [the modern era]” (Mckissack), just as Yoshikage does not stop his killings, instead engaging in them as frequently as he desires. The two Kira men and their relationship is one that is bound by generational violence and forms of masculinity that attempt to preserve this violence, factors that influence the kind of love Yoshihiro vehemently displays toward Yoshikage.

Furthermore, Mckissack also discusses how the SDF personnel in *Sengoku Jietai* react to the liberation of their male fantasies. He states, “It becomes clear that Article 9 has not only restricted Japanese soldiers from enacting their masculinity through acts of war, the demilitarization has directly emasculated them by preventing their sexual domination of women” (Mckissack). The cultural impact of Article 9, a clause in the Japanese Constitution that outlaws war as a means to settle international disputes concerning the state, seems to be one of the causes of the toxic masculinity exhibited in post-World War II Japan. The personnel are not given the opportunity to act on their violent impulses, but the act of time travel sends them to a period where they can have that cathartic release, through participating in war and committing violent acts against women. This closely mirrors the impact of violence in culture on Yoshikage Kira. A descendant of the samurai, he is emasculated by the laws of civilization and works as a salaryman. He lashes out against this through fetishizing women’s hands, so much so he murders the women and keeps their hands. The antagonist, through this cultural emasculation, acts out in violence to retrieve the masculinity Japan has denied him. Understanding this, the violent actions of Yoshihiro can also be viewed with this cultural context.

Figure 7: Yoshihiro cries as he soars over Morioh on a crow, arrow in hand

Towards the end of the arc, as Yoshihiro makes his escape, he screams out, “I’ll use the arrow to make dozens of enemies for you!” (8). His role as minor antagonist and the duty he feels as a father driving him forward. The most important bits of dialogue near the end of this chapter come as Yoshihiro is finally alone, flying over Morioh on a crow he captured, in search of potential Stand users and Yoshikage. He says to himself, “Ever since you were young, you needed to murder women…And nobody could stop you. But since it made you happy, I decided to help you, and now I need to find you before those people can…I need to protect my beautiful son! You are my only child!” (6). This line of dialogue is a perfect example of the perverse parody of the father-son relationship. Yoshihiro aligns “murder” with “happy,” implying a direct relationship between the two. In addition to these lines, Figure 7 displays a panel showing Yoshihiro with tears streaming down his face as he says, “You are my only child.” However, what is really interesting is the information he divulges to the reader. Apparently, Yoshikage has been murdering women his whole life and his father has helped him in covering up all those murders. This repeated action of murdering women, keeping one of their hands and then disposing of them is not justifiable in anyway. Yoshihiro’s need to protect his son is perverted because of the murder factor, where any sane person would notify authorities. But with the family history of masculinity rooted in the way of the samurai, Yoshihiro has presumably helped Yoshikage commit all of his murders and/or cover them up. The last exclamation of, “You are my only child!” helps to cement his reasoning behind his actions. Yoshihiro Kira is in all respects a loving father who only wants the best for his son, but he shows the same violent tendencies for seemingly normal purposes (i.e. Yoshikage wanting to live a simple life, but continuing to murder), making the father-son relationship one that embodies the toxic masculinity of Japan’s past, violently ending the lives of numerous innocent women.

An article by Kalman J. Kaplan titled “Isaac and Oedipus: A Re-examination of the Father-Son Relationship,” is helpful in understanding the relationship between the two Kira men. It helps to explain the odd bond between the two and how the balance of love and violence plays a part in it. Kaplan’s essay uses the father-son relationships as displayed in the Biblical Hebrew and Classical Greek cultures. Both models display the relationship with violent undertones, but the *Akedah* experience, “Abraham’s binding of Isaac” (Kaplan 7), captures the oddity of the Kira’s relationship. While Abraham and Isaac do not intentionally cause harm to others, there was the call for sacrifice, as Kaplan puts it, “First, God calls upon Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, who… is Abraham’s only son… as a sacrifice” (7). This relationship model is very similar to the Kiras, as Yoshikage is the only son of Yoshihiro and while Yoshihiro could have “sacrificed” his son by calling the authorities, he instead decides to aid him, just as God relents at the last moment before Isaac is sacrificed. This connection in violence however, while present in both stories, is viewed differently. While the *Akedah* experience puts violence as the separation between Abraham and Isaac, it acts as the prime unifying factor for the characters. In this way, Abraham shows his son that violence should be avoided, while Yoshihiro encourages it and helps to nurture violence in Yoshikage. The relationships also have another stronger parallel, when Kaplan explains, “The father knows that the son is not motivated to displace him because the son knows that he will inherit from him. The father’s identity is not threatened by the son. Indeed, he wants to see his son develop and surpass him” (8). Yoshikage inherits the house and the arrow from his father, thus usurping his father and becoming the head of the family. The relationship between the two is one of love and care for each other’s well-being (i.e. Yoshikage does not kill his father), but it is also the violence they create and keep in secret that strengthens

their bond. The *Akedah* experience helps to understand the role of violence in in the father-son relationship in *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond is Unbreakable*.

Chapter Three

Serial Killer Culture: The Peculiar Yoshikage Kira

While the father-son relationship lies at the heart of the troubled Kira, the character himself is a particular case. Through *DIU*, Kira exhibits personality traits, behaviors and rationale that would label him as a troubled individual, asides from his actual killings. All of his killings are motivated by sex, not in the action of, but are instead centered on more heinous and abnormal categorizations: fetishism and sadism. As Harold Schechter explains in the chapter labeled "Sex and the Serial Killer" in *The Serial Killer Files*, "Lacking any capacity for empathy or guilt, serial killers are unconstrained by the inhibitions that keep other people from acting out their darkest fantasies" (Schechter 205). The moral compass of such an individual is non-existent, or rather it has become disillusioned and geared for their own benefits. In creating a truly alluring villain, Araki elaborates, "By providing an outlet for the ugly feelings that we all share, we can depict a more lifelike range of emotions…you can more effectively evoke reader's empathy" (*Manga in Theory and Practice: The Craft of Creating Manga*, p. 55). Such is the case of Yoshikage Kira, who delights in committing violence against women and keeping one of their hands as a "girlfriend," but whose ideology, at its base, can resonate with many people. The definition of fetishism, "a disorder in which a person, usually a man, can only be turned on by an object associated with the opposite sex" (Schechter 217), can clearly be applied to the hand-fixation of Kira. It is in the first appearance of the character in the narrative that the perverse nature of Kira is put on display.

Fetishism

Figure 8: Kira holds the severed hand of his most recent victim

Throughout Part Four, Kira is characterized by his incessant lust for murdering women and keeping their hands as trophies. It is his belief that this life of killing is the quiet and peaceful life he strives for. However, as Figure 8 shows, it is the loss of life that fuels his desires and every action he takes in the narrative. The startling image of Kira holding the hand is presented in such a way to emphasize the odd and cruel nature of this man. Firstly, Araki utilizes action lines which are abstract lines that indicate an object or person is moving quickly, which begin at various points around the border in thin, black lines. However, Araki also uses them for dramatic effect and changes in perspective. The previous panel was framed from inside the car, and so the action lines help to emphasize the sudden change in perspective and the dramatic reveal of the severed hand. In the bottom left corner, a red purse is placed on the passenger car seat, a personal item that might have belonged to the victim. The hand itself contains two details: The nails are covered in red nail polish, another indication that the victim was female, and the stump of the hand is still dripping blood from the very recent killing. In this first impression of Kira, we can

already gauge that he is an extremely disturbed individual who has little to no regard for woman and human life.

Taking his fondness for hands and viewing it under the category of "fetishism" aids the reader in understanding this inconceivable act of serial killer culture. Schechter writes, "The fetishist is so fixated on the object itself that the actual sex partner becomes secondary" (217). The figure above comes from Volume 8, Chapter 69, page 76 of *Diamond is Unbreakable*, where Kira is shown having a conversation with a severed hand. There is dialogue from Kira that hints at the nature of the "relationship." He converses with the hand, "Are you shy?," "Is it because it's the first time you've ever been invited to a man's house?" (*DIU*, Vol.8, Chapter 69, p. 76), asking questions one would ask of a romantic interest on a date. This fixation on hands falls in line with the fetishism displayed by other killers, where the subject is entirely disposed of save for the object of obsession. The sexual and perverse nature of Kira's fetishism is further developed upon in more of his dialogue, "We're going to have a delightful weekend…Just the two of us" (p. 76). While there is no explicit telling of any sexual activity, it can be inferred from the framing of this statement that the hand will be used in a perverse manner by Kira. Schechter describes a fetish gone horribly wrong in layman's terms, "The technical term for a sexual perversion is 'paraphilia,' which literally means 'abnormal love.'" (Schechter 205). He provides an example to differentiate the sex play of "normal" people and serial killers:

> The average panty fetishist, for example, might purchase some lingerie from Victoria's Secret under the pretense of buying a sexy gift for his girlfriend-or, in more extreme cases, acquire a used pair of female underpants from a sleazy adult-oriented Web site. A serial killer like William Heirens, however, is more likely to break into the bedroom of a sleeping woman, rifle through her bureau, have an orgasm while slipping into her undies,

> then murder and mutilate her when she wakes up and discovers him in the act. (Schechter 206)

Serial killers, as seen in the example provided, take their fetish and make it the goal of their actions. It is driven solely by selfish desires, thus even their murders are self-justified if it means their lust is satiated. Schechter gauges these fixations with objects and/or body parts explaining, "the killers use [the item] to relive their crimes in fantasy, often while masturbating…[they] are essentially fetish objects, providing them with intense, perverted pleasure" (*The Serial Killer Files*, p. 218). The function of these objects as a means of pleasure for the killer fits the profile of Kira perfectly, as he deems the severed hand more pleasurable rather than the women themselves or even their corpses.

This fragmentation and humiliation of women's body parts is an action with literary precedent. Graciela Mayet speaks on this matter in her article "The Body Injured: Humiliation and Fragmentation" where she discusses Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus.* The case of Lavinia is steeped in violence perpetrated by men against women, although under different circumstances. Mayet views Lavinia's body as a "symbolic construction" (Mayet, 2), and that all the violence acted upon it is an "effect of social and cultural construction" (2). With these views on the body and violence, Mayet examines the violence taken out on Lavinia by the children of Tamora:

> In this sense, the humiliation of being children of a war captive drives the brothers to rage on a woman's body, not only to quench lustful desires but also because she represents the figure of their enemies. Mutilating her tongue and her hands, they prevent the young woman from communicating with others, separating her from the social body and diminishing their physical and psychic attributes by fragmentation and rape. (Mayet p. 2-3)

Mayet's breakdown of these violent actions behind the humiliation and fragmentation of Lavinia's body concern the motives behind the act, i.e. revenge, and the effect it has on Lavinia on a symbolic level. Taking this model, the same can be applied to Yoshikage Kira. Like the sons of Tamora, Kira too has been dishonored. As mentioned earlier, Kira has been denied his samurai ancestry because of post-war sanctions in Japan which I argue leads him into the path of violence. Also, he derives sexual pleasure from the severed hands just as the brothers satisfy their "lustful desires" by inflicting harm on Lavinia. The parallel actions of mutilation are the physical manifestations of their discontent with their circumstances in life. The only way they can cope with their emasculation, to regain masculinity, is by asserting physical and emotional dominance over the opposite sex.

The feeling of dominance and control Kira feels from having hands as trophies is not the only reason he kills. The idea of fetishism is clear in his conversation with the hand but another more graphic and disturbing instance can be found in a later chapter.

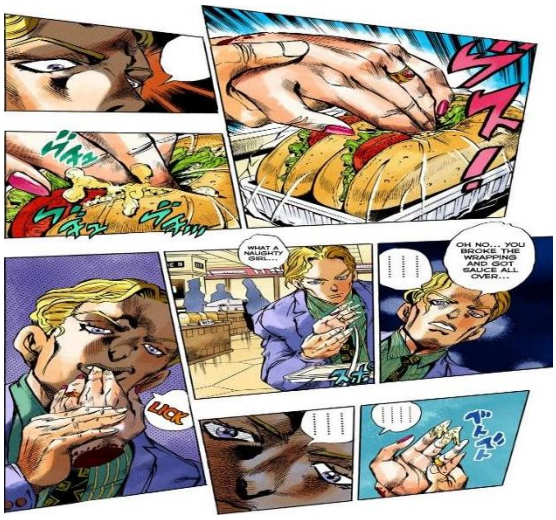

Figure 9a: Yoshikage penetrates the sandwich with the hand & converses with it

Figure 9b: Yoshikage licking the hand

Figures 9a & 9b follow each other, and the action depicted is not only unsanitary, but is very disturbing. The panels containing the action lines in Figure 9 show the breaking of the

cellophane and the hand entering the sandwich, in addition with the closeup perspective used. Immediately following this, Kira exclaims “What a naughty girl” (*DIU,* Vol. 9, Chapter 77, p. 87) and begins to lick the hand. The nature of this action may seem very bizarre, but similar acts have been committed by actual serial killers. Schechter references such a case as one who “could only get sexually aroused by eating the fingernail clippings of female corpses” (*The Serial Killer Files,* p. 218). Figure 10 is a panel that takes up a large portion of space on the page, displaying a closeup of Kira licking the hand. Several dialogue bubbles contain the word “lick” and “rero,” which is roughly translated to “lick.” Through a handful of panels, Araki creates an event where the criminally insane actions of Yoshikage Kira’s fetish are presented in such vivid detail.

The perverted obsession of women’s body parts is just one similarity Kira has to the culture of other serial killers. Another factor he takes from real killers is the sadistic tendencies he acts upon to satisfy this fetish. There is a specific type of sadism that Kira aligns with: sexual sadism. Schechter describes it as “a perversion of the erotic instinct in which the suffering of a victim is not just generally enjoyable but intensely arousing, often to the point of orgasm” (*The Serial Killer Files,* p. 207). The evolution of Kira’s sadistic actions is, like most serial killers in the same categories, had small but terrifying beginnings.

Such an example can be found in the murder of Sugimoto Reimi, Kira’s first murder victim. Reimi is the ghost of a 16-year-old girl who lived in Morioh, who informs the cast of characters of the murderous Kira, but not by name as she does not know the identity of her killer. In her recount of the incident she presents the night of her death as an urban legend, adding an element of mystery and dread. One instance in the retelling, “The dog always hid under her bed, and when she put her hand down in front of its face it sniffed it and gave it a big friendly lick” (*DIU,* Vol. 7, Chapter 66, p. 5), is the earliest evidence of Kira’s inclination towards sadism. The

"dog" was not actually a dog but a teenage Kira who had broken into Reimi's home in Morioh. The detailed actions of Kira, the sniffing and licking of Reimi's hands, are a characteristic previously elaborated on earlier. However, this was an action prior the premeditated murder of Reimi. Soon after, Kira would murder her and presumably claim her hand as his first trophy. While the licking and sniffing of Reimi's hand is not a sadistic act in of itself, it intrinsically motivates him to commit his murders. One such serial killer committed the killings of 24 boys and young men in a similar fashion. The depraved mind of Fritz Haarmann, nicknamed "The Vampire of Hanover," was active from 1918 to 1924 in Hanover, Germany. Schechter details his premeditated actions, "Picking up one of these penniless boys at the railway station, he would invite them back home, feed him a meal, then demand sexual favors in return" (*The Serial Killer Files,* p. 212). However, these actions were for one sadistic and obscene moment in where Haarmann would, "suddenly clamp his teeth around the boy's throat and tear at the flesh, reaching his orgasm as he chewed through the Adam's apple" (p. 212). Just as Haarmann and others, Kira is able to effectively deceive his victims and lure them into a feeling of safety before he strikes.

Kira displays this uncontrollable urge to inflict harm on others for his own perverse pleasures near the end of Part Four. At this point in the narrative, the serial killer of Morioh is escaping imminent capture after he loses a battle against the pair of Koichi and Jotaro. The rest of the Morioh Warriors learn the true identity of Yoshikage, but the serial killer is able to deceive them all. He assumes the identity and appearance of a father and husband (Kosaku Kawajiri), and takes over his life and lives with the wife and child, Shinobu and Hayato respectively. The Morioh Warriors continue their manhunt for Kira, which puts even more stress on the killer's mind. The *modus operandi* ("method of operation") that Kira operates by has been effective for

years, utilizing sadistic actions to satisfy his immoral and carnal desires. With the addition of his Stand Killer Queen, he was undetectable for years. The lifestyle he was accustomed to did not easily fade away and in hiding, the long-time habits became stronger and staying completely invisible became difficult. One occasion he is able to resist and the other he falls into temptation; which Araki masterfully depicts in a few powerful panels that capture the frightening inner nature of the antagonist.

Figure 10a: Kira sweats and looks flushed, a hint at his arousal

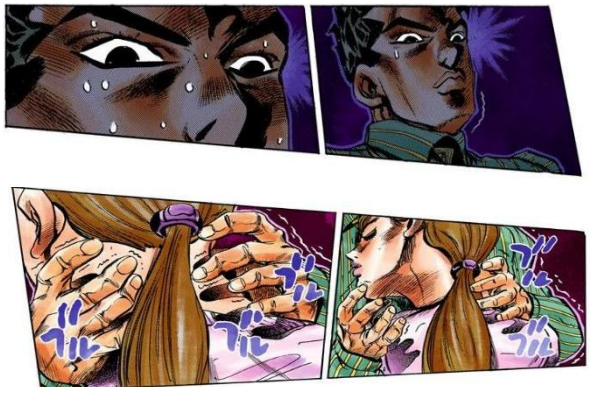

Figure 10b: Kira's hands tremble as he nearly strangles Shinobu

Figure 11: Kira blows up a woman, keeping only the hand

Figures 10a & 10b (*DIU,* Vol. 14, Chapter 127, p. 70) succeed one another and display an uncharacteristic action by Kira. These panels are dark in color, with a dark purple/almost black background in both figures that complements the dark thought that crosses Kira's mind. This thought is made apparent in the right panel of Figure 10a in the use of a visual component appearing next to his head. The closeup on Kira's face is intentional, as Araki makes Kira's urges the focal point of these panels. The following Figure 10b is a closeup of Kira's hands, action lines covering what is seen of his body to indicate trembling. This uncontrollable movement can also be read as evidence of his physical arousal. He is experiencing the urges more intensely while he is in hiding, unable to act on his desires since it would render the

Kawajiri household an unsuitable hiding spot. Figure 11 (*DIU,* Vol. 16, Chapter 145, p. 75) contains the aftermath of Kira indulging his murderous desires. The victim, a young girl named Minako, was tailed by the killer as she and her boyfriend belittled and angered Kira. The smoke in the panel is the telltale sign that Killer Queen, Kira's Stand, has just set off an explosion and disintegrated the victim. Kira is shown in the foreground, holding a severed hand and stating, "But I think you're cutest when you don't talk" (75). Minako's hand and the gallows humor is a clear indicator that his urges have been satiated. Kira's need to kill and inability to stop is a habit common to many serial killers. Vincenz Verzeni was an Italian serial killer who would strangle young women, mutilating their corpses in the fields, opening up their abdomens and yanking out their innards. Prior to his arrest, his last would-be victim (a cousin of his), "scrambled to her knees and begged for mercy. Verzeni relented and let her go" (Schechter, p. 210). This act of mercy is strange, as this was a man who confessed that "Strangling women gave 'indescribable feelings' of pleasure. As soon as he wrapped his fingers around their throats, he got an erection" (210). The action of strangulation, not any sexual act, was the source of pleasure for Verzeni. He himself stated he should be kept in prison because "with freedom he could not resist his impulses" (210). The parallel Kira has here with Verzeni is astounding: the violence against women, the pleasure derived from it, the lobbing off of body parts and the uncontrollable urge to kill again. Araki masterfully utilizes several aspects of serial killer culture to create an antagonist that is truly evil with a perverse moral compass and no regard for anyone but himself.

The full extent of Kira's sadistic tendencies culminates in his battle against Koichi Hirose. The confrontation between Yoshikage Kira and Koichi Hirose is the first display of the antagonist's sadism in action. During the ordeal, Kira had the upper hand on the younger Koichi, inflicting heavy casualties on him, such as a broken nose and stomping on his head against the

concrete. It is in two specific actions however that Kira proudly displays his pleasure from inflicting pain.

Figure 12: Kira chooses to inflict more physical pain on Koichi

Figure 12 shows a sequence in which Kira judges on whether or not he should continue to assault Koichi any further. This decision is shown by Kira's dialogue, where he contemplated, "I still have about a minute before your friends arrive. So I'll torture you to death now" (*DIU,* Vol. 11, Chapter 95, p. 84). Understanding the context prior to this confrontation, Josuke and Okuyasu had been notified by Koichi via a phone call that the serial killer was attacking him. The conscious decision Kira makes here truly speaks to his affinity for inflicting pain, willing to risk his identity if it means he can completely destroy his opponent. His decision is solidified when the following bottom panels contain Kira stomping on Koichi's fingers and shoves the same foot into Koichi's gaping mouth in order to stifle his screams of pain (84). Not only does

he enjoy the violence he inflicts on women, but Kira feels immense satisfaction when he asserts his dominance over others who attempt to challenge him.

Just as he uses violence to subjugate women and his adversaries, it is also his primary response whenever Kira feels his masculine pride comes under attack. In addition to his affinity for inflicting pain, Kira also reasoned that he would further torture Koichi because of his hurt pride, stating "If I don't, I'll never be able to get over the public disgrace you've inflicted on me today" (84). When Koichi picks up on the fact that Kira is sensitive about his pride, he uses this to his advantage to buy time for Josuke and Okuyasu.

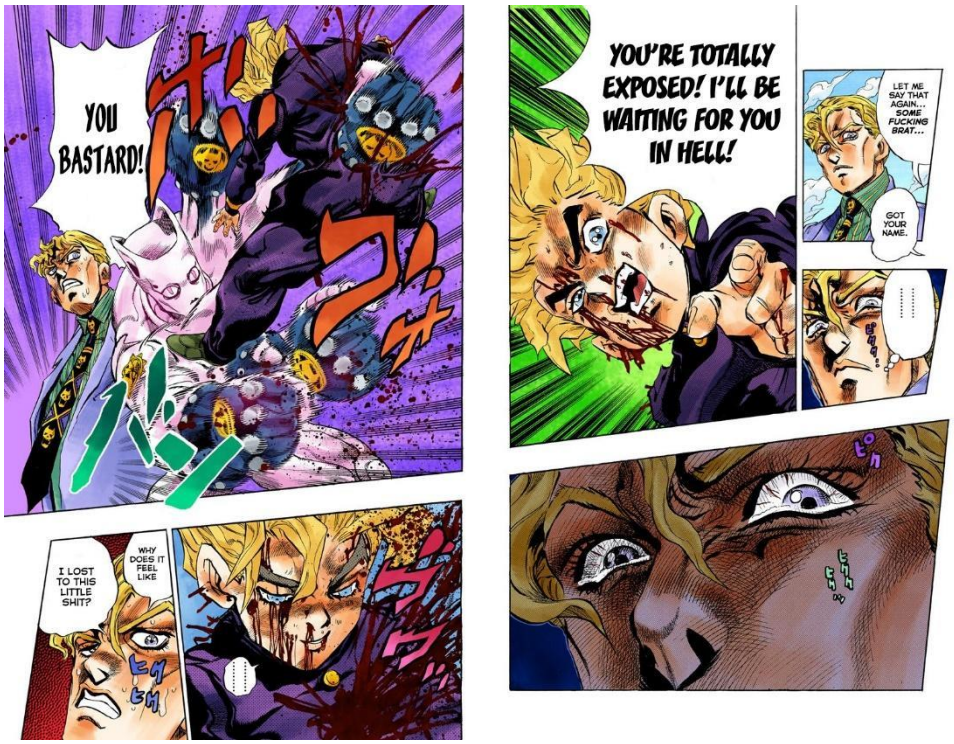

Figure 13: Koichi goads Kira, who responds by incapacitating him

Kira's response, as depicted in Figure 13, is elicited by Koichi, using this opportunity to attack him on a psychological level. After discovering his name, Koichi heckles Kira, "Some fucking brat…got your name. You're totally exposed!" (*DIU,* Vol. 11, Chapter 95, p. 82). The panels on this page zoom in closer and closer onto Kira's face, who is visibly hurt by Koichi's words. Each subsequent panel gets darker and darker, with the bottom panel's background

almost completely blacked out. Also, there are tears in Kira's eyes, a sign that this remorseless killer is hurt by Koichi's taunts. This assault drives Kira to react with violence, screaming out "You Bastard!" as Killer Queen punches a hole through Koichi's chest, emphasized by the purple action lines in a large panel (82). His sense of defeat is confirmed when, after seeing Koichi's sly smile, he blurts out "Why does it feel like I lost to this little shit?" After having the upper-hand throughout the whole battle, Kira feels like he has lost because of this one exchange. To understand the sense of defeat experienced by Kira, it will help by viewing the sexual nature of his murders in terms of dominance.

It is clear that Kira is driven by both lustful and sadistic desires, but it is also because they give him a sense of dominance over others. As Harold Schechter explains, "Sadistic pleasure isn't just about the infliction of pain. It also has to do with the assertion of power – the lust to dominate, to reduce a victim to a state of total submission" (The Serial Killer Files, p. 216). In the long list of his murder victims, Kira has mostly killed women. This altercation with Koichi shows him actively killing the young school boy because the dominance he asserted over him has seemingly vanished. All the women Kira had murdered were under his complete control, luring them in and keeping their hands as trophies to assert his dominance. Schechter outlines, "In its most extreme form, the serial killer's need for control involves turning another human being into a completely passive object, a kind of doll that belongs entirely to him" (216). This last act of defiance by Koichi, even after Kira tortures him to assert control, rattles the psyche of this demented individual. He is a victim that he has no control over, with a powerful Stand to defend himself and is not mentally falling apart to the predatory actions that have worked for years. Putting his sense of defeat in terms of dominance, Yoshikage Kira reacts rashly and almost childishly when things do not unfold according to his plan.

Chapter Four

Ideology: Why Does Kira Kill?

Not only does the plagued mind of Kira take pleasure in his fetish and the sadistic actions he takes to quench it, but he also justifies his way of life through purely selfish and apathetic means. Taking joy in causing suffering onto others and deriving pleasure from it are perfectly encapsulated in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" in the character of the "Misfit." An essay by John Desmond in the literary journal *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* argues why the Misfit commits violence for what seems to be no reason. The Misfit provides his own explanation, "enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can – by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness" (Desmond, 4). The argument being made by Desmond is that the Misfit resents the resurrection of Jesus because "it upsets the human code of justice he wishes to base his life upon" (4). In a religion where one central figure, in this case Jesus, acts as the moral compass, the Misfit cannot abide by that, whether he believes in the resurrection or not. He is unable to process this unprecedented act of grace because he is an individual who has only lived by his evil and selfish code of life. In this manner, Yoshikage Kira is a man who only knows one way of life and will take any action against anyone. Just like the Misfit, Kira is a man who only derives pleasure from meanness in order to defend his way of life. This way of life is perfectly encapsulated in the speech delivered by Kira right before his battle with one of the Morioh Warriors.

The encounter between Yoshikage Kira and Shigechi, a Stand user, is not only a first impression for the Morioh Warriors, but also for the reader. Before the battle between the two begins, Kira delivers a lengthy monologue that details his routine and mindset for the "calm"

lifestyle he embodies. The majority of his monologue, unlike that of The Misfit, centers itself mostly around the daily routines and other seemingly non-related aspects of his life. One detail he shares is his current state of health, where he shares that "During my yearly check-ups, my doctor always says everything's perfect" (*DIU,* Vol. 9, Chapter 80, p. 57). Juxtaposing this with his actions previously explored, it is all a ploy to conceal his true murderous intentions, just as Edmund Kemper did to remain hidden.

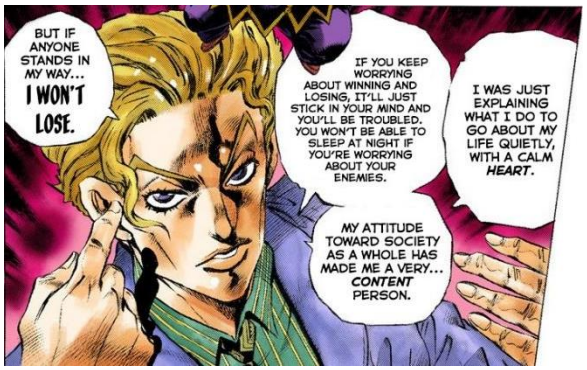

Figure 14: Yoshikage explaining how he goes on about living his "calm" lifestyle

Figure 14 displays the conclusion of his monologue, where his outlook on his lifestyle and how he rationalizes it is explained. He starts off with "I was just explaining what I do to go about my life quietly, with a calm heart" (57). Kira stresses that, in his mind, that his life is quiet and every action he undertakes is performed with a "calm heart." The choice of diction here again directly opposes the violence he inflicts on women, but fits him in how he goes about concealing his murders and living out other facets of his life. Kira is able to completely destroy any evidence or witnesses and maintains a career and home like any other citizen. His nature of avoidance is also touched upon, "If you keep worrying about winning and losing, it'll just stick in your mind and you'll be troubled" (57). While Kira means this strictly in the sense of avoiding conflict, positioning this in the life motto of The Misfit, no pleasure but meanness, it can be read in a different light. Yoshikage is not concerned with the morality or consequences of his violent

actions. His only concern is the pleasure he reaps from said actions. This feeling is obtained by murdering women and keeping their hands as his personal toys. In addition to his murders, the sense of dominance he feels over his victims and his consistent evasion from authorities all fuel his desire to continue living this lifestyle. His sadistic tendencies are just a means to an end, allowing him to satiate his lustful desires. The "meanness" for Kira is every action he takes to preserve his serial killer lifestyle and the "pleasure" is that everything that comes with living said lifestyle; the killings, the sense of dominance and the endless satisfaction of his cheirophilia urges. This confirmation by Yoshikage ends with a threat to Josuke and the others, "But if anyone stands in my way…I won't lose" (57). Up until the climax of *DIU,* the serial killer of Morioh stands firmly by his words, even until his final breath.

It is actually at the climax of Part Four, the final showdown between a reinvigorated Kira and the Morioh Warriors, where crucial details of Yoshikage's past are revealed. Unfortunately, Hirohiko Araki does not provide any specifics surrounding the up-bringing of the young Kira for the majority of *DIU*. Any information of his past is delivered through the Morioh Warrior's investigation on him or in pieces of exposition from Kira's dialogue. It is primarily for this reason that mapping the history of Yoshikage's killer tendencies is a challenge. But, the origin point, or the inciting incident that explains why he does what he does is actually delivered by Yoshikage himself. In his death throes, Kira shares his first realization of his hand fetish when he was just a child. While this explanation is just buying him time to retaliate against Josuke and the others, it is a crucial piece in the puzzle that is the killer's psyche.

Figure 15: Yoshikage shares his fetish origin story with a reasonably terrified woman

Figure 15 shows Kira sharing his story with a woman – a paramedic – who arrived due to all the commotion caused by the battle. He begins with, "Back when I was a kid…You know Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, right? I saw it in an art book" (*DIU,* Vol. 18, Chapter 171, p. 38). This establishes that the story he is about to tell is one from his childhood and that it is centered around the famous Mona Lisa, a painting that is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and important works of visual art to ever exist. He continues to say, "When I saw Mona Lisa's hands, folded by her knee…How do I say this? It's a bit crude, but...heheh…I got…a boner." The part of the painting that drew Kira's attention is, not surprisingly, the folded hands of Mona Lisa. He recalls this moment like it is a cherished childhood memory, the background color of the panel being a very light pink as he reminisces. Additionally, his delivery of the story indicates that he is embarrassed, with Araki utilizing several ellipses and phrases such as "How do I say this?" and "It's a bit crude," to simulate a sense of apprehension in Kira's speech. The

exclamation of “I got…a boner” is also delivered in this tone of embarrassment, despite it clearly being sexually charged as Kira relays this memory to a woman whose hand he is clearly holding in the same panel. The piece of dialogue that reveals the initial perversion of his fetish is delivered bluntly, this panel containing a close up of Yoshikage’s face covered partially by a shadow, “I cut out just the hands and put them up in my room for a while. I’d like to…cut yours…off too.” The action of cutting out Mona Lisa’s hands is not only a foreshadowing of his future killings, but it is the earliest incident preceding those violent acts. Schechter references the top ten general characteristics of serial killers, which was presented in 1984 at the International Association of Forensic Sciences. This list, compiled by Robert Ressler and John Douglas of the FBI Behavioral Science Unit in cooperation with Professors Ann W. Burgess and Ralph D’Agostino, has the tenth characteristic listed as, “10. They display a precocious and abiding interest in deviant sexuality and are obsessed with fetishism, voyeurism, and violent pornography” (Schechter 23). In the case of Kira, this behavior was exhibited early on in his childhood (“precocious”), the earliest display of “deviant sexuality” being the cut-out hands of the Mona Lisa. This feeling would abide for the rest of his life, right up until his death.

Conclusion

Since *Jojo's* is a series that has been serialized for several decades, why would I choose to hyper focus on this part in particular? Why center my whole project on a fictional serial killer? If you take a look at what people in contemporary times are consuming in their media, one subject consistently emerges —: violence. Whether it is animated and hilarious or shown through viscera in live action, the appeal of violence in media is at an all time high. Just take a look at the streaming service Netflix alone, which released a documentary series and a movie (starring Zac Efron) centered on the life and killings of the infamous and charismatic Ted Bundy in the same year. People loved it, and it sparked a short run of Netflix produced mini-doc series focused on serial killers both fictional and real. This is because as the entertainment industry has grown and people consume more of it, the violence displayed on screen has made many, if not all of us, desensitized to even the most brutal portrayals of violence. The films directed by Quentin Tarantino are probably the most famous examples of ultra-violence in entertainment and he released his first film in the 1990s. However, serial killer entertainment is more personal, unlike the countless renditions of war in the media. You will not find a dictator hell-bent on ruling the world next door, but the kindly neighbor two houses down may very well be putting a plan in motion where you are the source of his entertainment. Perhaps we are drawn to it because, deep down inside, there is a part of us that wishes to act on our violent tendencies and media allows us some form of cathartic release. I believe the reason serial killer entertainment in particular is appealing to people is because the danger is real and nearby, not far away in a battlefield a hundred years ago. We know that there are children with shattered upbringings full of abuse and neglect and that some out there are now serial killers, feral beasts who will prey on you for their own sick perversions.

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