

To What Extent Does *Chimera Ant* Teach Us About Humanity?

A Thematic Look at *Hunter x Hunter*'s *Chimera Ant* Arc

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Abstract

Hunter x Hunter (2011) is a Japanese animated television series produced by Madhouse production studio. It is an adaptation of a manga of the same name. *Chimera Ant* is a story arc within the show that deals with post-humanism and the complex nature of humanity. My research question for the extended essay was, “To what extent does *Chimera Ant* teach us about humanity?” To investigate my research question, I watched and analyzed the *Chimera Ant* story arc, paying close attention to the character development and thematic reasoning behind character actions. I used knowledge of film language and context behind the medium of animation in order to create a mirrored character analysis of the protagonist and antagonist of *Chimera Ant*. Analyzing these two characters, along with the context of the medium of Anime, allowed me to construct a look at human nature through the symmetrical story arcs of these two main characters. After having done this, I concluded that *Chimera Ant* explores the human condition to a great extent, and uses the focus of these two characters as proof. The protagonist, Gon, shows the potential for evil in the best of us, and how good intentions can lead to bad actions. The antagonist, Meruem, shows the other side of humanity and identity. His arc teaches us the complexity of worth and strength within humans, and shows that good can come from even the most evil. Overall, *Chimera Ant* displays all sides of human nature including the good, the bad, and the ugly.

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Introduction

Chimera Ant is a story arc in the Japanese animated television series *Hunter x Hunter* (2011). *Hunter x Hunter* was originally a manga written and illustrated by Yoshihiro Togashi. In 2011, an animated version of his work was produced by the Japanese animation production company Madhouse. Complete in narrative, thematic presentation, dramatic storytelling, and the creation of an incredible visual atmosphere; *Chimera Ant* is an impressive feat in storytelling. Yet what makes it so special is how it tackles its themes, and through this attempts to answer one of life's most complex questions; what does it mean to be human? So does it succeed? To what extent does the Japanese animated television series *Hunter x Hunter* (2011)'s *Chimera Ant* arc answer what it means to be human?

Characters and Themes

What does it mean to be human? The topic of human nature is one of the most complex and debated topics in the history of mankind, and *Chimera Ant* ambitiously attempts to come to a conclusion. In doing so, it creates a network of 14 dynamic characters with integrated, multi-faceted character arcs that showcase character development in all aspects of humanity. The most important arcs, which are mirrors of each other¹, are that of the protagonist Gon Freecss, and the antagonist Meruem, the King of the Ants. It has already been proven that this topic can be explored intellectually in this medium; issues surrounding identity and the individual have appeared in critical works before.² One of the most famous examples being the look into the human condition in the film *Ghost in the Shell*³ (Ruddle).

Gon – The Fall of a Hero

“You underestimate the human capacity for malice.” (“Zero × And × Rose”). Humanity is a double edged sword, for every good person in the world there exists a monster. Togashi uses the *Chimera Ant* arc as a method of informing viewers that these two traits are not mutually exclusive. The author used multiple Ants throughout this arc to display the potential for good within the bad, yet this phenomenon is not a one way street. Sometimes the people with the most “good” in their hearts have the potential for the most evil. Even the best of humanity has the potential to fall.

Gon Freecss, the headstrong protagonist of *Hunter x Hunter*, is a 12 year old boy with the objective to find his father who abandoned him as a kid. Gon is the embodiment of the all loving

¹ The split identity, or mirrored thematic characters are generally indicative of specific cultural concerns in dealing with the issues of identity (Ruddle). This is shown in this anime to explore post-humanism and the human condition.

² Moist and Bartholow have recently noted that “issues surrounding the status of the individual seem to be especially culturally resonant for Japanese society. In much anime, this general theme is expressed in futuristic tales in which postmodern and post-human themes dominate” (Moist 39).

³ Thanks to works such as these, Anime as a medium can be considered a “cultural product genuinely worthy of intellectual study.” (Napier 18).

hero, a common idealistic character type that is loved by all. He is the fool who is known for his childish ideas and the naivety that somehow wins in the end. The kind-hearted curious child with the goal of exploration and adventure on the way to finding his dad.

This child becomes a monster⁴(Figure 1).



Figure 1: Hunter x Hunter Episode 34 “Power x To x Avenge” shows Gon on the left early in the show, while the scene from Hunter x Hunter Episode 127 “Hostility x And x Destruction” on the right shows a visibly different Gon during the events of *Chimera Ant*.

Gon is sent to a friend of his father’s named Kite. Kite immediately is established as a father figure to Gon through flashback. Gon and Killua begin the careful extermination of the Chimera Ants in the early stages where Gon and Killua gain both experience and confidence. Pride, the culmination of experience and confidence, is a fine line to walk, and Togashi shows what happens when you cross the line into the realm of hubris. The false sense of security is what ends up being the group’s biggest downfall, resulting in the death of Kite. Important to the development of the character, the two kids are left to wonder what happened to Kite, and do not actually watch him die. This lays the groundwork of portraying Gon’s character at this time, naïve and optimistic.

⁴ Gon’s transformation is a statement on the monstrous side of humanity, but it especially makes sense due to the location of the Anime’s origin. Napier puts it best when he says in his book “Given the dark events that have permeated Japan's twentieth century, it is hardly surprising that many of anime's most important texts...are not simply dystopian but deeply apocalyptic, suggesting a society with profound anxieties about the future . The end of the world is an important element in postwar Japanese visual and print culture.” (Napier, 29)



Figure 2: Hunter x Hunter “Light x And x Dark”. The zoomed in shot of his face produces a tunnel vision due to the small field of view of the camera, therefore giving the impression that Gon is enormous and important. The confident smile and the glimmer drawn into his eyes express his optimism.

“Gon, you are light.” (“Light x And x Dark”). The director uses Killua’s perspective in this scene to display how the world see’s the main character (Figure 2). He is directly compared to “light” in the dialogue, and the artists change the visible color pallet to a gold tone to showcase this connection to the viewer. Color is a running visual symbol that changes with Gon throughout the arc. This gold tone is commonly inferred in media as a kind and loving embrace. This one shot describes the character, the light that will overshadow the darkness. Even after seeing Kite get his arm cut off by a creature that is more powerful than any he had seen before, he can show this expression. The build-up of this personality is necessary to highlight the downfall of a hero, and to show the potential for despair exists in all, even a child (a symbol of innocence and purity).

It is important to note the message that all humans have an infinite potential for evil and despair, not that all humans will have an infinite amount of evil within them. A catalyst is needed in order for a being to break down, and the monstrous actions of Pitou are an impetus to Gon’s transformation. While Gon remained positive, Pitou used the time with Kite to turn him into a monstrous being, recreating him into a soulless zombie. When Kite is finally retrieved and brought to Gon, we see the guilt of what he had caused Kite to become begin to affect his mental states: “I’m sorry Kite, its our fault that you’re like this. Get some rest. We’ll take it from here.” (“Grudge x And x Dread”). This declaration of acceptance for the situation is a turning point for Gon, and is the start of his journey into darkness. Gon backs away, and a visual shot of Gon’s face tells the viewer the thought process of this change (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Hunter x Hunter “Grudge x And x Dread” shows the thought process of Gon’s change. The distraught sadness displayed on his face, which is almost brought to tears, is shown in a close-up and blurry shot of his face from a side angle. Yet as the expression on his face changes to anger, the camera becomes more focused and sharp, while still trembling. This is a visual representation of his focus now being fueled by anger, and that this new rage will be the anchor that tethers him to his revenge.

Weeks go by, and the audience now gets to see what Gon has become, devoid of hope and a drive for revenge. As the buildup of emotion swirls within, the release of this built up fury looks into the deepest pockets of our protagonist’s soul, beginning with the confrontation between Gon and the monster Pitou. The struggle of reason and logic compared against human emotion is in full effect for this confrontation. The scene begins as Pitou is healing the dying Komugi, and Gon approaches her with Killua in his wake.



Figure 4: Hunter x Hunter “Revenge x And x Recovery” shows a grotesque image of Gon’s mentor flashing across the screen as Gon sees Pitou healing a girl. This scene of torture portrays his mentor as an allusion to tortured souls such as the monster in Frankenstein.

As Gon approaches the scene, the audience is treated to a subjective shot, through the main characters eyes, as a stark reminder of his perception of the situation. A comparison shot of Komugi being healed is superimposed with a shot of Kite’s scarred body being tortured by wire (Figure 4). This immediately showcases to the audience that Gon’s rationale is gone, and that all he can see before him is the producer of Kite’s torture.

Reason and logic is hard to maintain control of when emotion comes into play, and this costs Gon his biggest friendship and link to humanity in the process. He begins to question

Pitou, and speaks to her for the first time saying, “Do you remember me?” (“Revenge x And x Recovery”). This choice of a first question is very telling of his character at the moment, before all else he prioritizes her remembrance of him. He screams at her to leave the girl and “Fight

me.” (“Revenge × And × Recovery”). When Pitou responds that she must save the girl first, Gon snaps.



Figure 5: Hunter x Hunter “Revenge × And × Recovery”, a scene showing the darkness begin to crawl over his face. The shadow slowly crawls over his face, a darkness that is slowly taking over his being. His eyes now drawn with streaks of black as the cogs in his mind try to process why this creature would be saving the girl. The lack of music in this scene, with no audio but Gon’s voice, quickly builds tension to the spastic explosion that is soon to follow.

The camera zooms in on a close up of Gon’s face as he questions Pitou’s response (Figure 5). The scene continues as it zooms into the single window in the room, showing nothing but black on the other side, as if the window is actually looking in towards Gon’s heart. Then the camera is showing Gon from the back in a complete backdrop of darkness with his Nen aura slowly growing as the only audio one can hear is that of Gon’s spastic breath as he gets angrier and angrier.



Figure 6: Hunter x Hunter “Revenge × And × Recovery” showcases Gon in a fury of emotion, again filling of the majority of the screen to show his importance and impact on the scene. The left screenshot shows his incredible anger through a polychromatic caricature of himself, and the right shows the raw sketch form that is being over laced or superimposed throughout the shot. The contrasting shots show the complex emotions that are going through Gon.

Gon begins his tirade, and as he explodes at Pitou verbally through one of the most emotionally charged voice acting performances ever done, the visuals flicker between his, dark-filled, rage induced face and what is merely a monochromatic, black and white sketch of the same image (Figure 6). When drawing, a sketch is the rawest form of a being, it is only fitting that as the raw emotion of Gon is let out, visually his most raw form is also shown.

Meanwhile, what remains of Gon’s moral compass is in his dear friend Killua, whom tries to talk some sense into Gon. Trying to show him reason, Killua explains how they were the

ones who indirectly harmed this girl, and that they should let Pitou heal her. At the brink of monstrosity, Gon is finally calmed down by Killua, but not without a cost.



Figure 7: Hunter x Hunter "Revenge × And × Recovery" shows a low angle close up shot of Gon as he battles the demons in his head. Anime is known for its use of facial expression to convey emotion, and this scene shows the conflict within. The left eye shows his anger within through the drawing of the eyebrow position while the right eye shows his confusion and exhaustion. The low angle gives Gon dominance and further points out the position of power he is in right now.

The camera again zooms in for a close-up of Gon's face as he begins to realize his mistakes (Figure 7). Still over-ridden with anger, Gon is beginning to realize what he is doing. He is sacrificing an innocent girl in the name of revenge, and is both disgusted with himself, yet still has such conflicting emotions due to the still apparent overwhelming anger. Gon expected a villain, and when Pitou did not cooperate he was left lost. The result is a completely shocked state, with the visual expression on his face telling you the whole story without a single line of dialogue.



Figure 8: Hunter x Hunter "Revenge × And × Recovery". Gon is slumped on the ground on the brink of losing his humanity, while the supposed monster ant is doing everything in her power to heal an innocent girl, and Killua can do nothing but watch as he loses his friend to his emotions. All of this shot is framed within the broken fragments of the wooden Gungi game board, an important symbol in the Ant Kings character arc for his learned humanity.

Gon gains back his composure, yet not his old personality (Figure 8). Claiming to be composed, even when the character is visibly not, he abandons Killua's friendship and exclaims that from now on he will handle Pitou alone, letting his sense of revenge destroy his relationship.

After letting Pitou heal Komugi, and leading her to the soulless Kite, it appears to Gon that he will get his old mentor back, and the audience is led to believe that Gon can return to the way he used to be. Yet after being informed that it would be impossible to heal Kite, and that he is dead for good, Gon finally is pushed over the edge and falls into the deepest hell of despair. His character style changes. His eyes are no longer black and harsh, but an empty, golden brown



Figure 9: Hunter x Hunter "Anger × And × Light". The camera zooms in on his eye as it begins to fill with a black color, showing the darkness overtaking his soul.

without a trace of character left. Gon is left a husk, seemingly without the will to continue on. Yet when Pitou announces that she has to kill Gon now, the beginning of one of the most horrific and emotionally draining transformation sequences occurs. Gon, both literally and figuratively, turns into a monster. It is a common trope in Anime to have the main character experience a final transformation in order to defeat the villain, and normally the audience is cheering along. Yet with Gon the audience is left to wallow in their despair⁵. The concept of "Nen" is important for the impact of this scene. Nen is

the name for the power characters in this show have and is the manipulation of a being's own life aura. Nen can be made more powerful if you set a condition, or a catch-22. You have to give something up in order to get something in return. Gon chooses to give up everything for this one act of revenge. He trades away his decades of potential in life, and trades it away for one quick beating. The color pallet in the scene immediately gets darker as his now red and black colored aura begins to swirl around him while he announces, "I don't care if this is the end..." ("Anger × And × Light"), revealing that he is going to trade his life away to kill Pitou (Figure 9). The transformation only worsens (Figure 10).

⁵ Similar to Gon's monstrous transformation, this can be compared to a critically acclaimed film *Akira* where the grotesque nature of this transformation shows the intention that this is not a positive one (Napier, 45).



Figure 10: Hunter x Hunter "Anger × And × Light". Again, as used before, Gon becomes nothing more than a monstrous sketch of black and white (shown left), showing that this is nothing but his true, raw, self being displayed through this scene. With absolutely no purpose but to kill Pitou, Gon's transformation completes, and he is left a grown adult now (shown right). Children are often used as visual symbols of innocence, and now after the completion of his transformation, he is nothing but a grown vessel for revenge.

In the dramatic climax of Gon's character arc, after beating Pitou to death and her subsequent revival through Nen, the style artwork changes to reflect when Kite had lost his arm to Pitou (Figure 11 and 12). Pitou now has taken Gon's arm in a symbolic show of the consequences of Gon's actions tied to his revenge for Kite. The color has now been rid of Gon's world, and everything is left to a bleak black and white, with the only color remaining being his red blood as a symbol of his hatred and revenge. The music transitions into an instrumental, somber piece to invoke a depressive atmosphere along with the color. A short monologue is given by Gon where he expresses that "I'm kind of happy... I finally get to be the same as Kite was then. I feel like I've been redeemed some" ("Anger × And × Light"). This shows how much the whole process has actually been eating away at our protagonist, and in this twisted fate, he is able to find at least some closure. Nothing matters anymore to Gon except for his task, and in a final act of showcasing his willingness to lose it all, he stabs Pitou's corpse with his own severed



Figure 11: Hunter x Hunter "Light × And × Darkness". Scene when Kite loses his arm as viewed from the eyes of Gon. Gon's world had gone black and white, with the only focus being on the red blood spewing from his mentors arm.

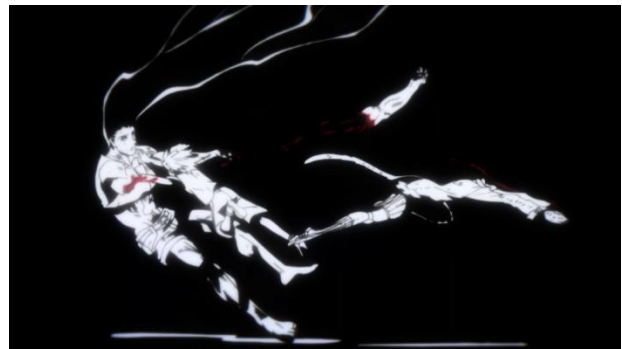


Figure 12: Hunter x Hunter "Anger × And × Light". Again, such as when Kite lost his arm, Gon's whole world goes black and white, with the only focus on the red blood coming from his arm. This scene, visually, brings Gon's story arch full circle, allowing for closure.

arm, exclaiming “You can have my right arm” (“Anger × And × Light”) before using up all his remaining life aura to decimate Pitou for good.

For now, Gon has played his role in the story (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Hunter x Hunter "Anger × And × Light". The last time we see Gon in *Chimera Ant* is a final close-up of his face before he is reduced to a crippled husk of a body to be later saved by Killua in a later arc of the show. While he is visibly stronger, we can see his facial expression is of sadness. Throughout the whole arc we have seen many close ups of our protagonist, yet none convey the trauma of this scene. As the protagonist is surrounded by the red and black flames of his destruction, we see tears forming in his eyes, and the pain that he had to go through for this. This is a low-angle shot to give importance to Gon.

Gon began the traditional all-loving hero and became a lesson in part of human nature. Even our best qualities, when taken to the extremes, have the potential to turn us into monsters. Gon's confidence results in the death of his father-figure. His upbeat optimism led to an inability to accept this death. Finally his unwavering loyalty turned into an unhealthy obsession to both heal and seek revenge for Kite's death even at the cost of his friendships and his own being. The values and emotions one sets themselves with are a dangerous tool if taken too far, one that can turn the brightest future into the darkest hell.

Meruem – Finding Humanity and Identity

While Gon is the embodiment of what can go wrong, we find hope in the most unexpected places, the antagonist. The antagonist is none other than the King of the Ants, Meruem, and the audience gets to witness his entire lifespan throughout *Chimera Ant* (Figure 14). Where Gon represents hubris, obsession, and revenge, Meruem's arc showcases humility, strength, worth, and individuality in a paralleled and mirrored thematic look at humanity. In a story of darkness, there is still light, and the story of how a fragile girl named Komugi was able to turn a monster into man⁶.



Figure 14: Hunter x Hunter "The Strong × And × The Weak" shows the first shot we see of the King on the left. He is drawn with much sharper shapes and has much sharper eyes, portraying a sense of malice. Hunter x Hunter "This Day × And × This Moment" shows one of the last scenes with the King, and his character is drawn much more smooth, with less sharp eyes and a sense of calm around him.



Figure 15: Hunter x Hunter "The Strong × And × The Weak". The King brutally decapitates a fellow Ant, his silhouette standing in a bright red background. Red is a common symbol for both malice and power.

The King is born a sociopath, killing his mother after birth and brutally decapitating a fellow ant for not obeying him the first time he said something (Figure 15). "Don't make me repeat myself" ("The Strong × And × The Weak") he says, and this is a common phrase that is said throughout his arc. This quote embodies his initial philosophies on life and characterizes what he is, dominate. He is born the King of Ants, the culmination of years of evolution for the most powerful being in the world whose strength is matched by no others. He has no name (that he is aware of) because he does not need one, he merely has a title, and is

identified by this massive strength. A person's worth is their power, it even takes him nearly

⁶ Change is one of the defining themes of this character, and also a reoccurring theme in Anime. Animation is a great medium to showcase change due to its ability to also use visuals along the way. Napier says it best, "The animated space becomes a magical tabula rasa on which to project both dreams and nightmares of what it is to be human, precisely as it transforms the human figure." (Napier 36).

killing Pitou to gain respect for her, saying “I was trying to kill you. You have earned my respect.” (“The Strong × And × The Weak”).

Yet change is the theme, and soon the King meets a girl named Komugi. Bored while waiting for his planned takeover of a country, the King finds fun in beating the best board game players in the world at their own game before killing them. Komugi is the embodiment of fragility, a blind, sick, and poor girl who is also the world’s best Gungi player (a fictional board game similar to chess). As they begin their first game, a shot of them playing is shown that foreshadows just how this relationship will change the king (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Hunter x Hunter "Check × And × Mate" shows the first time they play this game. The shot figuratively transports the characters into another world where only they exist. Nothing else matters, and in the world of darkness, light shines down on the two, with the Gungi board in the middle showcasing the connection that these two soon will have. Balance shot, symmetrical shot that shows that the King and Komugi are actually on equal footing, even though the King is technically more powerful.

The King loses at something for the first time in his life, and thus begins the unraveling of his philosophy. The King refuses to see her worth, exclaiming “It’s but a matter of time” (“Check × And × Mate”) until he beats her. They play countless more times, and as frustration begins to grow in the King, he decides to attack her mentally. He decides that they should wager, and in hopes of overpowering her with an oppression of fear, says that if she loses the next game, he will rip her arm off. Yet if she wins she can have anything she wants. Instead, claiming that her worth in life is her strength in Gungi, she insists that if she loses, she will kill herself. Showing a stronger resolve in her offer than the King, Komugi ends up humiliating the all-powerful Ant. A shot of the King being faced by Komugi appears, and the audience can tell through the hidden eyes and relaxed posture, that the King lost the exchange. Yet due to the inflated ego of the King, he decides to rip his own arm off to make up for his resolve. Yet when faced with a physical threat of death this time, Komugi remains unafraid, and demands the King to heal himself before they play again, slowly giving the King reason to believe that there is more than physical strength to an identity (Figure 17). How can he say he is the most powerful being if he cannot even beat a physically helpless girl in a battle of will?



Figure 17: Hunter x Hunter "Resolve x And x Awakening". Komugi refuses to falter in the face of death. The King again says "Don't make me repeat myself." Yet Komugi does not listen to his order. The loss of his arm is a parallel to Gon who ends up losing his arm. Yet when Gon loses it, he sees it as him finally being worthy to Kite, while when the King loses it, it is embarrassing and brings down his worth.

When discussing identity issues, a name is a very important symbol for a person. A major turning point for the character is the first and only time he asks a character what their name is. After asking Komugi her name, she responds with the same question, which throws the King into turmoil (Figure 18 and 19). Can he define himself other than, King?



Figure 18: Hunter x Hunter "Gungi x Of x Komugi" shows the turmoil through this tilted shot. Visually it is shown as the camera is suddenly tilted, and the world goes dark as the King's thought process spirals into confusion.



Figure 19: Hunter x Hunter "Gungi x Of x Komugi". Then a close up shot of the King's eyes show the first time he begins to reflect, and shows the wide eyed stare of a man who does not know who he is.

As the planned takeover grows near, the King decides to stop letting this girl into his head, and in an attempt to prove to himself that power means all, goes to kill her. Instead he ends up saving her from a hawk, and continues to question what he is doing, saying "What is this creature? What do I want to do with her?" ("Gungi x Of x Komugi"). As a parallel to Gon, a shot of the window shows a clear sky implying the beginning of purity inside the King. The same windows shows darkness for Gon (Figure 20 and 21).



Figure 20: Hunter x Hunter "Gungi × Of × Komugi" shows a low angle shot of the window as the King looks up through it. The ambient light is soft and the window (used as a view into the King's perspective) is a tilted shot (showing confusion). The clear sky symbolizes the purity and innocence that is developing within the King.



Figure 21: Hunter x Hunter "Gungi × Of × Komugi" shows the opposite of the shot in Figure 20. The same window that appears before is now looked at by Gon. What would be a balanced shot is now asymmetrical due to a crack by the window. This symbolizes Gon's former balanced personality now showing cracks. While the King saw purity, Gon's perspective is nothing but darkness.



Figure 22: Hunter x Hunter "Monster × And × Monster" shows a surreal perspective shot from the King as he discovers the injured Komugi. The scene is in black and white except for the red blood, showing how the King has lost all focus except for his anger of the situation. There is no sound throughout this sequence, adding to the terrifying ambiance of the scene (without sound the viewer becomes naturally uncomfortable).

As the invasion from the Hunters begin, another parallel to Gon is shown when the King finds Komugi severely harmed. Similar to the climax of Gon's sequence, the King loses all focus, reduced to raw emotion, and his world becomes black and white with the color of red (Figure 22). Unlike with Gon though, the King pulls himself out of his rage to ensure Komugi can be healed.

The King then finds himself under the attack of the Hunter Netero. Yet as Netero presses for a fight, the King only reciprocates when the promise is made that if he wins, he will find out his name⁷ (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Hunter x Hunter "Zero × And × Rose" shows a scene of contemplation by the King. With the striving for an identity, the King battles Netero. The audience can see the change in demeanor the King now has towards humans, constantly applauding Netero for his strength. In one specific monologue, the scene is transformed into an artistic style in order to show how the King is astounded by this battle. The shot's art style changes to an abstract style resembling that of old shadow puppet shows, creating a connection to the past of humanity. Also, the bright light of humanity is shown dazzling the King while he himself is upside down and off balance, showing his perspective on the scene before him.

While the King does defeat Netero and learn his name, his overconfidence catches him in a trap, and he is caught in the explosion of a nuclear weapon. While the blast does not kill him, he is poisoned from the bomb. With his worth as a King demolished, he seeks the only thing he cares about, to play more Gungi with the only person he cherishes, Komugi.

Meruem found strength in the fragile, and worth in the individual. Komugi chooses to stay with the King and play Gungi till his death, in doing so poisoning herself too. Their final scene together demonstrates all that is good for humanity. Meruem finally realizes that he will never beat Komugi in this game, and that will forever be her strength (Figure 24). The man born to rule a species, exclaims in this situation, "I was born for this moment." ("This Day × And × This Moment"). Komugi demonstrates to him that people are not as simple as their power, but are complex creatures with multiple layers. One cannot measure humanity on one condition, people are multifaceted and provide value in countless ways.

⁷ It is not uncommon for Anime to use traditional art style to get a point across (Lamarre, 334). The cultural context of a traditional battle would illuminate the honor of a samurai such as shown with the new honor of the King.



Figure 24: Hunter x Hunter "This Day × And × This Moment" shows a scene that illuminates Meruem as the counter to Gon. In awe of Komugi, Meruem sees the world as a bright and wonderful place, with a subjective view being shown of bright colors and a wondering gaze of the King. A profile shot as he stares at Komugi is shown, and once again we see a perspective shot from the King. This scene is an example of expressionism, as the color pallet has now changed to warm, gold tones and has created a new visual representation of the King. This nice, calm world is now what the King sees as he stares at Komugi for the beginning of his final moments. This can be compared to how Gon appeared in the beginning of the arc, as shown in Figure 2.

As the most powerful creature dies in the arms of the world's most fragile, he does not want his identity to just be of pure power (Figure 25). He asks to be called his name one last time, and as he slips into unconsciousness hears for the last time, "Goodnight, Meruem, I'll be joining you soon" ("This Day × And × This Moment"). The King started as a sociopathic ruler, and ended as Meruem, a representation of the ability for humanity to grow. There is the potential for change, even in the darkest of beings.



Figure 25: Hunter x Hunter "This Day × And × This Moment" shows the final time we see Meruem in the series. The art style changes to a much softer drawing, giving a sense of peace to our antagonist. The raised angle shot gives the impression that the King is no longer the all-powerful. The white light encompassing him symbolizes the good that has infiltrated his character, and due to this is given closure in his story, both through dying with the one he cared about and through his mentality. He dies an individual.

Conclusion

Human nature is complex, and the mirrored arcs of the two major characters of the *Chimera Ant* arc showcase this. Through the narrative, characterization, and visual animation, *Chimera Ant* shows the multidimensional concept of humanity. The show discusses the nature of identity, and the worth of a human being while simultaneously demonstrating the dangers that humanity can possess. Yet the common theme is that no matter what, people change. The good can become bad, or the bad can realize the good; in the end it shows the constant evolution of humanity⁸.

Word Count: 3973

⁸ Anime can have serious, intellectual looks at real life complexities. Ward mentions animation “can represent to viewers not some stylized fantasy world, but reveal something about the world of actuality. The animated worlds depicted are, actually, part and parcel of our world” (Ward 114).

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