



A psychoanalysis reading of David Martinez's character in the Netflix animated series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse the internal conflict experienced by David Martinez through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. This study is based on the issue that many modern animated series, including *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*, present complex character psychology that is often overlooked, particularly regarding internal conflict and personality structure. In this context, David's character reflects a dynamic psychological struggle involving the id, ego, and superego that warrants deeper analysis. The urgency of this study lies in its contribution to literary and film studies, especially in highlighting the importance of psychoanalytic approaches to better understand character development, moral transformation, and human behaviour as represented in contemporary media. The study focuses on identifying the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego within David Martinez's character. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research explores how David's personality evolves throughout the narrative. The findings reveal that while David initially displays strong impulses driven by the id, his psychological development later shifts toward superego dominance. His actions transition from impulsive self-gratification to morally driven decisions rooted in guilt, responsibility, and a desire to protect others. Finally, David's character reflects a deep internal struggle among primal desires, realistic constraints, and moral obligations, with the superego emerging as the most dominant force influencing his behaviour and decisions. It can be concluded that David experiences inner development from impulsive drives (id) to moral dominance (superego), where his transformation is a form of redemption and achievement of the highest moral values.

Keywords: character development; Cyberpunk Edgerunner; inner conflict; psychoanalysis

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INTRODUCTION

Analyzing literary works, such as novels, films, and animated series, is important to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings conveyed within the work. Besides functioning as a medium of entertainment, literary works also contain various life values through themes, plots, narratives, and characters. One of the most important elements in literary narratives is the character, because characters act as the medium through which the author communicates ideas, conflicts, and moral messages to the audience. Through the depiction of characters

and their development throughout the story, audiences are able to interpret the deeper meaning of the narrative presented in a literary work.

In literary studies, characters and characterization are closely related concepts. Characters refer to the individuals who play roles in the story, while characterization refers to the way those characters are portrayed and developed throughout the narrative. According to Aminuddin (2014), characterization refers to the traits, attitudes, and personalities formed within each character. Meanwhile, Nurgiantoro (2013)

states that the main character dominates most of the storyline and plays the most significant role in the development of the narrative (p. 259). The presence of the main character is often closely related to the emergence of conflicts that drive the narrative's development. Raminda and Prihandini (2024) explain that conflict is a central aspect of narrative because it drives character development and increases audience involvement in the story (p. 506). Through the narrative structure and the inner conflicts experienced by the characters, deeper psychological aspects of the characters can be identified. Through these inner conflicts, the psychoanalytic structures proposed by Sigmund Freud (1923), such as the id, ego, and superego, can be observed within the characters' personalities.

To understand the psychological aspects behind characters' behavior, literary analysis often employs psychological approaches. One of the most influential psychological approaches in literary studies is Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory. Freud (1923) proposes that human personality consists of three main structures: the id, ego, and superego. The id is the most primitive part of the personality that operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate satisfaction of instinctive desires without regard for reality or consequences. The ego functions as the mediator between the id and external reality by operating on the reality principle. Meanwhile, the superego represents the moral values and social norms internalized by an individual, serving as an internal control that guides behavior in accordance with ethical standards (Freud, 1923). Through these three personality structures, psychoanalysis can be used to explore inner conflicts experienced by fictional characters.

Several previous studies have applied Freud's psychoanalytic theory to analyze characters in films. Marcelina and Juanda (2025) analyzed the character of John Wick in the film *John Wick* (2014) using Freud's theory of id, ego, and superego. Their findings showed that John Wick's inner conflict stemmed from the dominance of the id in the form of anger and a desire for revenge after the loss of his wife and dog. However, his actions were still controlled by the ego, which planned his strategies rationally, and the superego, which maintained certain moral codes such as respecting the rules of the Continental Hotel.

Similarly, Fitriani (2019) examined the psychological aspects of Arthur Fleck in the film *Joker* using Freud's psychoanalytic framework. The study found that Arthur's transformation into the Joker was influenced by traumatic life experiences and social rejection. The id appeared in the form of suppressed anger and aggressive impulses, while the ego attempted to respond to the harsh reality of life through violent actions. Meanwhile, the superego still existed as a moral awareness that restrained him from harming certain individuals. Another study conducted by Wardhani and Saptanto (2023) analyzed the characters of Raya, Sisus, and Namaari in the film *Raya and the Last Dragon*. Their findings revealed that the characters experienced psychological conflicts between instinctive desires, rational considerations, and moral values, which were represented through the interaction of the id, ego, and superego.

Based on these previous studies, Freud's psychoanalytic theory has been widely used to analyze characters in literary works, especially in films. These studies highlight how inner conflicts and psychological struggles shape characters' behaviors and decisions. However, most previous research focuses primarily on live-action films, whereas fewer studies examine psychoanalytic aspects within animated series, particularly those that present intense psychological pressure and rapid character transformation. This indicates a research gap in understanding how psychoanalytic structures are represented in animated narratives that combine visual intensity, dystopian settings, and complex character development.

One animated series that strongly reflects these aspects is *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*. Released in 2022 as a spin-off of *Cyberpunk 2077*, the series stands out not only for its dystopian cyberpunk setting but also for its emotionally intense and tragic character development. Unlike many other series with similar themes, *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners* presents a protagonist whose psychological transformation occurs rapidly under extreme social pressure, economic inequality, and repeated traumatic loss. The narrative focuses on the life of David Martinez, a teenager who struggles to survive in the harsh environment of Night City, where violence, exploitation, and moral ambiguity dominate everyday life.

The significance of choosing this series lies in its unique portrayal of psychological

deterioration and moral transformation within a relatively short narrative structure. David's character does not merely represent a typical heroic or anti-heroic figure; instead, he embodies a complex interplay between ambition, survival instinct, emotional attachment, and moral responsibility. His decisions are shaped not only by internal desires but also by external pressures that continuously challenge his psychological stability. This makes David Martinez a compelling subject for psychoanalytic analysis, as his character vividly illustrates the tension between the id, ego, and superego in a highly oppressive environment.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the personality structure of David Martinez in the animated series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners* using Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory. Based on this objective, the research question of this study is: How are the id, ego, and superego represented in the character of David Martinez in the animated series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*?

METHOD

According to Endraswara (2008, p.7), literary works are "works of art created by humans with the author's mental state and thoughts in a semi-conscious state that are written into a work form consciously."

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive research. Bogdan and Taylor (2011) define qualitative types as research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviour (p. 4). This study carefully and precisely records data in the form of words, sentences, and discourses that contain inner or psychological conflicts from the character of David Martinez.

This study employed a qualitative research method, which focused on descriptive analysis rather than numerical data. The data of this research were obtained from the animated series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*, particularly from scenes, dialogues, and character actions related to the psychological condition of the main character, David Martinez. The data collection process was conducted by watching the series repeatedly, identifying relevant scenes, and selecting dialogues that reflected the psychological elements of the id, ego, and superego.

After the data were collected, the researcher analysed them using Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory. The analysis was carried out by categorizing the selected data into three personality structures: id, ego, and superego. Each scene and dialogue was then interpreted to explain how these psychological aspects influenced David Martinez's behaviour, decisions, and inner conflicts throughout the narrative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, it is revealed that David Martinez's character experiences an inner conflict within himself that is based on various problems and tragedies that befall him. David Martinez in *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners* is a tragic figure, representing an individual who is trapped in an inner conflict between instinctive drives, rational considerations, and moral values that have been ingrained since childhood. As the story progresses, David is depicted as a figure who is increasingly controlled by the urges of the id of ambition, the need to prove himself, and the desire for power that continues to force him to go beyond the limits of his own body and soul. Despite the ego's efforts to balance the pressure with the reality around him, as well as the influence of the superego in the form of his mother's hopes and values that continue to haunt him, neither is strong enough to stop the destructive pace he has chosen. In the end, this internal conflict not only shapes David's character but also destroys him, indicating that an imbalance between the id, ego, and superego can lead someone to self-destruction both physically and psychologically. David is not only a victim of the brutal world of Night City, but also of a never-ending battle within himself.

Findings

To find out more about the inner conflict David Martinez experiences, David's character is analysed using Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory of the id, ego, and superego.

Before the dialogue in Figure 1 occurs, David has just experienced a series of traumatic events that deeply affect his emotional and psychological condition. His mother has died after a violent incident, leaving him alone and struggling to survive in the harsh environment of Night City. In addition, David is constantly confronted with social inequality and humiliation from the

elite students at Arasaka Academy. These circumstances create intense frustration and anger within him, pushing him to seek a drastic way to change his situation. In Figure 1, David visits an underground ripperdoc carrying a powerful cyberware known as the Sandevistan, which is highly dangerous and sought after by many people. Instead of selling the device for money, David insists on having it implanted into his own body.

Figure 1
Id (22:00)



Doctor: That the big bad Sandy? not a badge or fixer in town who's not looking for that beut. I tould yoyu thought ... ain't gonna find anyone sane to willing totake it off your hands

David: I'm not here to sell. I want this fused here. High time I chromed the fuck up.

In the dialogue between David and the doctor in Figure 1, David's id has completely taken control of him. These instincts are anger and thirst for power to fight the injustice experienced by him and his mother. As a result, David comes in a hurry not to sell dangerous goods that are targeted by many parties, but rather to install them on himself, a decision that explicitly shows the urge to change his fate in an extreme and instant way. The harsh and determined phrase "High time I chromed the fuck up" illustrates an explosion of desire from within him, a form of resistance to life conditions that he may have long felt as unfair, narrow, or humiliating. This decision is not born from rational or moral considerations, but from a strong urge to become something stronger, tougher, and perhaps more respected, even though it means sacrificing safety or common sense.

However, on the other hand, the doctor's dialogue that warns David of the consequences he might experience becomes David's superego itself. The doctor's warning that no sane person would want to install the device illustrates the voice of the superego

that remains present in the conversation as a barrier, so that David wants to think rationally and not be hasty in taking action. There is tension between the strong urge to change drastically and the presence of danger signals from the installation of a device called Sandevistan. Interestingly, there is no hesitation from David; there is no inner negotiation that shows moral considerations or social values that hold him back, which indicates that the pressure of values (social morals, community views, or group identity) no longer has a strong place in his decision. This can be a sign that in David's inner narrative, the moral voice or collective conscience has been suppressed or deliberately silenced, replaced by an urgent need to go beyond the limits of his old self.

Therefore, the dialogue in Figure 1 illustrates the inner conflict of a person who is driven by frustration and the will to transform himself radically, without regard to the risks or social norms that apply indirectly through the Doctor he meets. His choice is not just an impulsive action, but a response to inner pressure that has reached a boiling point, where the urge to survive in a social system that oppresses him is defeated by the desire to fight and regain control of himself, even though it means losing control of what people consider to be sane thinking.

Figure 2
Id (03:07)



Katsuo: you gonked Martinez? we are at school! The cameras. Have you lost your...

David: what? You afraid of getting caught? 'Cause I know I sure as shit ain't. come on.

Before the dialogue in Figure 2 takes place, David has recently begun using the Sandevistan cyberware that he secretly installs in his body. The device significantly enhances his physical abilities, allowing him to move and react far faster than ordinary humans. However, the installation of this

cyberware also intensifies his emotional instability and growing frustration. Returning to Arasaka Academy after experiencing humiliation and social discrimination from his wealthy classmates, David encounters Katsuo Tanaka, one of the students who previously mocked and bullied him. The confrontation occurs in the school environment, which is strictly monitored by surveillance cameras and governed by strict institutional rules.

In the dialogue in Figure 2, David, who is controlled by his id, namely his anger, immediately meets Katsuo to vent his frustration during his time at school through his anger. When Katsuo reprimands David for kicking him suddenly, Katsuo reminds David that violence in the school environment will violate school rules while being watched by cameras. Even so, David's reaction does not reflect any fear, regret, or moral awareness. On the contrary, his challenging answer, "What? You afraid of getting caught? 'Cause I know I sure as shit ain't", indicates a strong urge to reject the prevailing authority, rules, and social consequences. He shows an attitude that is not only impulsive, but also challenges the normative values that usually become controls in educational environments or the general public.

Within the framework of Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalysis, David's response reflects an inner dynamic driven by complex internal and external pressures. The id's drive in the form of strong anger from within him acts without considering the risks or consequences of his actions, an indication that his self-control and moral awareness are in a weak position. This dialogue shows that David's actions are not merely reactive, but also a form of identity statement; he refuses to be controlled by a system that may be considered to have ignored or belittled him. Fear of authority or the punishment system is no longer a determining factor in his behaviour, indicating a shift from fear to anger driven by anger and emotional disappointment.

Katsuo's reaction, which still takes into account the presence of cameras and school rules, strengthens the contrast with David's attitude. This underlines that in the social dynamics around him, David begins to take a different path, David begins to refuse to play by the rules, and chooses a path determined by his own drives and anger. The tension between the desire to escape from the social system and the pressures of the environment that try to pull him back is at the heart of this

inner conflict. Awareness of the existence of norms remains around him, but David responds to that awareness not with obedience, but with increasingly strong rejection.

It can be seen that this dialogue describes the psychological condition of a person who is in a phase of total resistance to the social structure that restrains him, which can be called the superego, where the inner urge to fight, challenge, and free oneself from fear begins to dominate. This dialogue is not only a reflection of momentary emotions, but also a depiction of David's soul, which begins to ignore the role of values, consequences, and self-control over the inner condition that continues to move away from balance and towards destruction which may feel more liberating than submission.

Figure 3
Id (21:45)



Lucy: you and I are worlds apart

David: In what way? I'm going to take you there myself. Fly you to the moon.

Before the dialogue in Figure 3 occurs, David and Lucy have just begun to develop a closer relationship after Lucy saves David during a confrontation with the Arasaka Academy students. Lucy introduces David to the world outside the rigid structure of the academy, exposing him to a different way of living in Night City. During their time together, Lucy reveals her long-held dream of going to the moon, a place she imagines as peaceful and free from the harsh realities of the city. However, Lucy also expresses emotional distance by stating that she and David come from very different worlds, reflecting her awareness of the differences in their backgrounds, experiences, and personal struggles.

In the dialogue in Figure 3, David's id takes a more subtle but still overt form, especially in the way he responds to Lucy's statement that "You and I are worlds apart." Lucy voices an awareness of the fundamental

differences between them in terms of background, life values, trauma, and future hopes. The statement is not just an acknowledgement of social distance, but also a kind of emotional wall that shows the connection between them. Although it may exist emotionally, in reality, it remains difficult to reach.

However, David's reaction actually shows an attitude of rejection of these boundaries. "In what way? I'm going to take you there myself. Fly you to the moon." This is not just a romantic expression or poetic dream, but a very strong statement about David's will (id) and determination to break through boundaries that are considered impossible. He refuses to accept these differences as obstacles and instead offers a substitute for reality with a promise that is a fantasy and full of idealism. Psychoanalytically, this reflects an inner drive to overcome the alienation and limitations of his life in an almost utopian way. The promise of "flying to the moon" is a symbol of escape and conquest. getting out of the bitter reality (ego) into a freer space, although it may not be realistic for their conditions at that time.

Then, behind David's words lies an inner conflict that no longer explodes as before, but settles in the form of a desire to form a new meaning in his life through his relationship with Lucy. David's id's desire to help Lucy's dream of going to the moon is something that is difficult and not just anyone can do. In that condition, David's superego clashes with his id's desire to become someone who can fulfil other people's dreams. Previously, David had also lived with his mother's wishes to go to school and become the top person in the Arasaka company. However, the accident that kills David's mother makes David empty and aimless. He has also done various resistances by beating Katsuo and dropping out of school. Thus, Lucy's presence that saves him finally manages to fill the emptiness inside David and without thinking twice, he immediately makes a promise to take Lucy to the moon. From the narrative, we can see the conflict in David's soul, where on the one hand, he is aware that reality is not on his side. But on the other hand, he tries to go beyond that reality with determination and dreams, even at the expense of common sense or awareness of his own limitations.

Then, the dialogue in Figure 3 reflects the fragile and reckless side of David's psychology as someone who not only wants

to love, but also makes that love a means of liberation from the world that has been oppressing him. The rejection of the distance expressed by Lucy is not only an emotional impulse, but also a form of resistance to the social reality that separates them. In that almost absurd promise, there is an inner conflict between the need to connect, the desire to overcome reality, and the will to be more than just a victim of a situation that has befallen them in the past.

Figure 4
Ego (15:04)



David: Maybe I drop out. Find some work or whatever.

David's Mom: Do you hear yourself?

David: C'mon, seriously. You know we can't afford those repairs. Plus, you got no idea just how bad I stand out compared to all of them. Anyone sides a true blue corpo gets shit on. Even if I do graduate, they'll never accept me. No kid from Santo will ever be a suit. I don't wanna be one anyway.

Before the dialogue in Figure 4 occurs, David is facing the consequences of his recent actions at Arasaka Academy. After confronting Katsuo and damaging school property during the altercation, David realizes that the financial burden of repairing the system is beyond what he can afford. At the same time, he becomes increasingly aware of the social gap between himself and the wealthy students who dominate the academy. Coming from the Santo Domingo district, David grew up in a lower socioeconomic environment that is far removed from the corporate elite represented by Arasaka. This situation creates a moment of reflection for David, where he begins to question whether continuing his education in such an environment is meaningful or even possible.

In the dialogue in Figure 4, it can be seen that David's inner conflict begins with his low socioeconomic background and the reality of

his life. In the scope of Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalysis, the tension between the id, ego, and superego appears subtly but strongly in the scene in Figure 4. The desire to "drop out" reflects the urge of the id, part of the personality that is oriented towards escaping pressure, seeking instant comfort, and avoiding suffering. He wants to give in to a social system that feels oppressive without thinking about the long-term consequences.

On the other hand, the voice of the superego is present in the form of social norms and community identity pressures. Phrases such as "no kid from Santo will ever be a suit" and "anyone sides a true blue corpo gets shit on" show how the collective values and limitations of the community have been ingrained in him. The superego asserts that trying to be part of an elitist system is considered a betrayal of one's origins, even something that is morally and socially impossible. The final rejection with the sentence "I don't wanna be one anyway" can be read as a reaction from the superego reaffirming its group identity, or as a defense mechanism of the ego to save self-esteem and reject something that is felt to be impossible to achieve.

However, this dialogue does not stop at the impulsive drives of the id and superego. In fact, most of his conversation is dominated by the ego, which is the part of the soul that tries to adapt to reality. His statement about providing a solution from dropping out and not being able to pay for the repair of the school system that he damaged, followed by feelings of inferiority because he feels different from other people, and pessimism that even if he graduates, he will still not be accepted in the corporate world, reflects a rational thought process. Despite its bitterness, ego here is very active in considering the situation realistically, aware of the social and economic limitations that hinder him.

Then, the dialogue in Figure 4 is a complex portrait of a person caught in the crossroads between the inner drive to be free from suffering (id), realistic awareness of social inequality (ego), and moral pressure from the environment and his social identity (superego). The three pull each other, forming an inner narrative that reflects the reality of lower-class life in an injustice of social structure.

Moreover, before the dialogue in Figure 5 takes place, David has already become an active member of Maine's crew and has

gained more experience working as an edgerunner in Night City. Unlike his earlier phase, where his actions were largely driven by anger and impulsive decisions, David now operates within a dangerous professional environment that requires coordination, strategy, and responsibility toward his teammates. In this situation, David is preparing for a risky mission and attempts to guide Julio, a younger and less experienced member of the group, by reminding him to act cautiously and avoid unnecessary risks.

Figure 5
Ego (01:14)



David: Just remember to stay behind me.
And be smart. Don't rush

Julio: You mean you want me to take back, hey I ain't no newb, man.

In the dialogue in Figure 5, the inner conflict that occurs seems more stable, but can still be analysed through Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic framework, especially the tension between the id, ego, and superego in David as a character who was previously driven by emotional urges and impulsive actions. In this conversation in Figure 5, David actually shows an important psychological shift, namely, the role of the ego that begins to take control. The statement "Just remember to stay behind me. And be smart. Don't rush." indicates an awareness of danger, self-control, and responsibility for the safety of others. This is a form of realistic consideration, where David is not just chasing results or adrenaline, but trying to mediate between the desire to act (id) and more reasonable situational demands (ego).

However, when Julio responds defensively, "Hey I ain't no newb, man", it creates an interesting dynamic. Julio feels belittled or distrusted, which implies tension between individuals in a high-risk situation. This is where friction arises between the personal drive to prove oneself (id) and the larger social role of teamwork and

responsibility for the safety of co-workers (superego). Although David has not responded to Julio's reaction, being in a position that shows that he is trying to control impulsive drives and take a more strategic and rational position.

In this scenario, it can be seen that David is trying to balance the various elements within himself. The desire to act quickly and heroically (id) is still present in the background, but is no longer dominant. He begins to show signs of psychological maturity, where the ego takes over as a mediator between the internal world and the dangerous external reality. The superego in this context appears implicitly, through the desire to be responsible and protect teammates. This is a form of moral value that may have begun to form along with the traumatic experience and death of two colleagues and seniors who died due to his helplessness, Maine and Dorio.

In the narrative arc, the dialogue in Figure 5 reflects David's psychic development phase, which begins to show a more stable integration between instinctive drives (id), realistic considerations (ego), and moral values (superego). Unlike previous actions, which were more driven by instinctive impulses and emotions, now David tries to become a figure who can be relied on and thinks strategically. However, Julio shows that the environment around him remains full of ego and resistance, which challenges David's inner stability. The dialogue in Figure 5 emphasizes that psychological conflict not only occurs within oneself but also in social interactions, where identity, responsibility, and perception collide.

Figure 6
Superego (18:41)



Lucy: I didn't want any of this. I didn't wanna watch you die...

David: It's the only way I could protect you from this damn city. Just too many I couldn't save before. My mom, Maine,

and the others in our crew. I couldn't let that happen. Not to you, too.

Before the dialogue in Figure 6 occurs, David is already in a critical condition after pushing his body beyond its limits by using excessive cyberware and repeatedly activating the Sandevistan. The situation in Night City has escalated into a violent confrontation involving Arasaka forces, and David realises that his survival is becoming increasingly unlikely. At the same time, Lucy has finally reached him after desperately trying to rescue him from the dangerous situation. Faced with the reality that David is approaching the point of no return, Lucy expresses her emotional pain and refusal to accept the tragic outcome that seems inevitable.

In the dialogue in Figure 6, David's inner conflict reaches its deepest and most complex emotional point, very thick with superego nuances. When Lucy expresses her pain and rejection of the tragic situation that David experiences in the form of "I didn't wanna watch you die ...". David responds with a statement that describes the internalization of moral values, a sense of responsibility, and the burden of the heart due to past failures by saying "It's the only way I could protect you from this damn city. Just too many I couldn't save before. My mom, Maine, and the others in our crew."

The statement in Figure 6 shows that David's decision to sacrifice himself is not just an impulsive or reactive act. Instead, he is driven by a moral urge that has been deeply embedded in him, the desire to atone for past failures and protect the people he loves. The superego here is present as an inner structure that drives David to act in accordance with ideal values: sacrifice, protection, and redemption. This is the embodiment of the highest moral principles that have been formed by bitter experiences, loss, and guilt. He no longer acts for himself, but to fulfil his moral responsibility to others.

At the same time, there is a silent struggle between the various dimensions of David's psychology. The id, which is used to dominate through the drive for power, self-verification, and resistance to the system, is no longer the center of decision-making. The ego, which for some time tries to navigate reality, seems to have allowed the superego to take over completely, even if it means sacrificing his own life. In David's mind, self-sacrifice is the only way to fix past failures. A

harsh and tragic but logical moral reasoning, especially in the context of his inner being oppressed by the burden of loss that he has experienced enough.

The dialogue in Figure 6 is a culmination of the psychological conflict that has shaped David's journey from the beginning. He is no longer an impulsive kid who wants to "chromed the fuck up," but someone who has internalized all the wounds of his past into an extreme moral commitment. The superego that has completely dominated makes his last act not an escape or an explosion of desire, but the final form of responsibility that he feels obliged to bear himself at the highest price.

Then, the conversation in Figure 6 shows David's tragic inner transformation from a young man who wants to fight the system for himself to someone who destroys himself to protect others. In his inner structure, moral values and social responsibility are not only present, but have also become the main principles that drown out personal drives, even his own survival instincts, leading him to absolute self-destruction.

Figure 7
Superego (21:45)



Lucy: Falco! Turn back!

Falco: No can do. It was David's final request. If I turn around now...he dies for nothing. We already have our reward money. David wants us to split it, you and me. He also told me to tell you...

David: Sorry. Wish we could go to the moon together.

Before the moment in Figure 7 occurs, David has already decided to confront the overwhelming forces of Arasaka alone to allow Lucy and Falco to escape from Night City. Lucy, who realises that David is sacrificing himself, desperately asks Falco to turn the vehicle around to rescue him. However, Falco refuses because he is determined to fulfill David's final request. This situation illustrates that David's final decision

has already been made, and the consequences of that decision are now unfolding through the actions of the characters who survive him.

In the dialogue in Figure 7, the inner conflict that was previously stored within David is now conveyed through Falco, as an extension of his last will. The sentences "It was David's final request. If I turn around now...he dies for nothing," and "David wants us to split it, you and me," contain a very strong moral weight, showing that David's final decision is completely driven by a sense of responsibility, sacrifice, and ethical values that have taken root in him. Through his request not to be saved and for the money from his last work to be shared with Lucy and Falco, David reaffirms his position as someone who now lives and dies for others.

The inner conflict that is built here is very much in line with the dominance of the superego in David's psychic structure. There is no longer any room for the id, which once urged him to pursue power, recognition, or escape from suffering through violence or physical strength. Even the ego, which usually acts as a balance between instinctive and moral drives, has also surrendered control completely to the superego. David chooses to die not out of despair, but as the highest moral choice to ensure that the people he loves can survive and have a future. A decision that prioritises values, dignity, sacrifice, and the past promise he made to Lucy.

David's last words, "Sorry. Wish we could go to the moon together," are a form of recognition of personal failure and the limitations of reality that he cannot change, even though his desire is very strong. This statement implies that the dreams, hopes, and love that once drove him to fight the world and became the reason he lived must now be sacrificed for something greater: Lucy's safety. In that sentence, there is sadness, but also sincerity and a form of love that is no longer possessive or romantic, but completely altruistic. He not only accepts that his death is in vain, but also makes it meaningful, especially for Lucy, whom he loves.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the inner conflict experienced by David Martinez develops progressively throughout the narrative and is closely related to the interaction between the id, ego, and

superego within his personality structure. This result supports previous psychoanalytic studies that highlight how the dynamics between these three psychological elements play a crucial role in shaping a character's development in literary and visual narratives. Similar findings can be seen in the research conducted by Marcelina and Juanda (2025), which also applies Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory to analyse the psychological conflict experienced by fictional characters. Their study reveals that the struggle between instinctive desires and moral values becomes the central factor influencing a character's behaviour and decision-making process. In a similar way, the present study demonstrates that David Martinez's actions are often driven by strong impulses of the id, particularly his anger, ambition, and desire to prove himself in a harsh social environment. Both studies show that the imbalance between the id, ego, and superego can significantly influence the direction of a character's life.

In addition, the findings of this research are also consistent with the study conducted by Fitriani (2019), which emphasises that inner conflict in literary characters often arises from the tension between personal desires and social or moral expectations. Fitriani (2019) argues that the psychological structure proposed by Freud (1923) provides a useful framework for understanding how characters negotiate between instinctive impulses and social values. Similarly, in the case of David Martinez, the conflict between his desire for power and recognition and the moral values inherited from his mother becomes a recurring psychological struggle that shapes his behaviour throughout the story.

Furthermore, Wardhani and Saptanto (2023) highlight that psychoanalytic analysis can reveal how traumatic experiences and environmental pressures influence the formation of a character's personality. Their research suggests that psychological conflict is often intensified by external factors such as social inequality, loss, and emotional trauma. This perspective is also reflected in the findings of the present study, where David's psychological development is strongly affected by the harsh social conditions of Night City, the death of his mother, and the loss of his companions. These experiences gradually shift the balance of his psychological structure, moving from the dominance of the id in the early stages of the

narrative toward the dominance of the superego in the final stages.

However, this study also presents several differences from the previous research. While Marcelina and Juanda (2025), Fitriani (2019), and Wardhani and Saptanto (2023) generally show that psychoanalytic conflicts lead to character development or psychological resolution, the present research demonstrates a more tragic outcome. In David Martinez's case, the increasing dominance of the superego does not result in psychological harmony but instead leads to self-sacrifice and ultimately self-destruction. This suggests that the balance between the id, ego, and superego does not always produce stability; under certain social and emotional circumstances, it can also push an individual toward extreme decisions.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing body of psychoanalytic literary criticism by showing that the interaction between the id, ego, and superego in modern narrative media, particularly animated series, can produce complex and tragic character transformations. By analysing David Martinez's inner conflict, this research expands the application of psychoanalytic theory in contemporary narrative studies and demonstrates how psychological structures interact with dystopian social environments to shape a character's fate.

Despite providing insights into the psychological structure of David Martinez through Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic framework, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses only on selected scenes and dialogues from the animated series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*, particularly those that clearly illustrate the dynamics of id, ego, and superego in David's character. As a result, not all episodes or narrative elements of the series are examined in detail. Second, due to time and scope limitations, this research primarily concentrates on the main character, David Martinez, and does not analyse the psychological development of other important characters such as Lucy, Maine, or Falco, who may also contribute significantly to the narrative's psychological dynamics.

In addition, this study applies only Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory as the main analytical framework. Other psychological approaches, such as Jungian psychoanalysis, trauma theory, or sociopsychological perspectives, are not included in this analysis. Future research can

expand this study by examining a broader range of scenes, incorporating other characters, or applying multiple theoretical perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of psychological conflict within the narrative.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of David's character in *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*, it is found that he experiences intense internal conflict and that his development over time involves complex dynamics between the id, ego, and superego based on Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic theory. At first, David shows strong id dominance and is driven by an impulsive desire to escape social suffering, proves himself through physical strength, and seeks existence in a harsh and unfair world. However, as the story progresses, his inner conflict becomes increasingly complicated by the presence of the ego trying to navigate the harsh reality and the superego, which begins to internalize moral values, a sense of responsibility, and the burden of the past.

David's psychological dominance gradually shifts from instinctive impulses to a stronger superego character. He begins to act no longer for himself, but for others, especially to protect Lucy and atone for the mistakes and losses he experienced previously. This culminates in an extreme decision to sacrifice himself, reflecting the peak of the superego's control over all aspects of himself, until David heads toward his destruction. At the end of his life, David becomes a representation of an individual who is not only dominated by moral values and guilt, but also makes morality the sole reason for his existence.

Then, it can be concluded that David's character is a manifestation of inner transformation driven by the conflict between instinctive desires, the demands of reality, and the moral pressures he faces. The dominance of the superego in the final phase of his life leads him to the highest form of sacrifice, where he makes himself a tool to protect others. Through Sigmund Freud's (1923) psychoanalytic approach, David is understood as a tragic figure who struggles beyond instinct and logic in order to fulfill a very high moral ideal, which ultimately determines the direction of his own life and death.

The findings of this study also provide several implications for general readers and

students of literature. For general audiences, this research demonstrates that popular media such as animated series can contain deep psychological meanings that reflect real human experiences, including inner conflict, trauma, and moral struggle. Understanding these psychological dynamics allows viewers to interpret characters and narratives more critically rather than seeing them merely as entertainment. Meanwhile, for students of literature, this study shows how psychoanalytic theory can be applied to analyse modern visual narratives, not only traditional literary texts such as novels or short stories. By examining the interaction between the id, ego, and superego in fictional characters, readers can gain a deeper understanding of how psychological structures shape character development, narrative tension, and thematic meaning in contemporary storytelling.

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